The Effects of Co-planning on Co-teaching Service Delivery Models

Amber Elizabeth Buss

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Co-teaching requires collaboration between the general and special education teachers. Researchers such as Murawski and Deiker (2004) stress the importance of co-planning, co-instructing, and co-assessing students. With intentional time to co-plan and training, general education and special education teachers can implement a variety of co-teaching service delivery models in order to create an effective learning environment for all students. This qualitative study provided the opportunity for the fifth-grade co-teaching team to develop a system for co-planning to support the needs of students with special education services in the general education setting. The goals of the research included identifying the effects of the co-planning time on the co-teaching service delivery models. Findings indicated that co-planning did impact the implementation of co-teaching service delivery models within the fifth-grade co-taught setting. The results showed that co-teachers were able to implement a variety of co-teaching models into their classrooms, allowing for an increase in instructional opportunities for students as well as enhancing student engagement.

KEYWORDS: Co-teaching, Co-Planning, Co-Teaching models, Students with Disabilities, Inclusion, Least Restrictive Environment, Common Planning
THE EFFECTS OF CO-PLANNING ON CO-TEACHING SERVICE DELIVERY MODELS

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THE EFFECTS OF CO-PLANNING ON CO-TEACHING SERVICE DELIVERY MODELS

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I grew up with a mother that believed in the power of learning and continually wanted better for her daughters. Neither one of my parents attended college but saw a significant value in education and stressed the importance of higher education and better opportunities. It was during my college years that my mother went back to school to earn her Associate Degree. I know she wanted more for herself, as well as wanted to model that for her children and she made it happen! I am forever grateful for the endless opportunities, support, and encouragement my mother provided me. Although she may not be here in person to see me to the end, I know she was with me every step of the way!

My professors in the EAF department at Illinois State University had a tremendous impact on my path as an educator. What many of them do not know is they are the reason that I wanted to keep coming back for more. I am very thankful that I had the opportunity to work alongside several of these professors on my committee. I would like to express my deepest appreciation for Dr. Elizabeth Lugg. This endeavor would not have been possible without her. From some of my first interactions with her to now, she always believed in me as a student and as an educator. I am extremely grateful for her leadership.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

The middle school site in which this study took place is located in a rural district in central Illinois, with an enrollment of approximately 350 students. To maintain anonymity, the school will be referred to using the pseudonym Jefferson Middle School throughout this study. There are nearly 1200 students enrolled in the district from grades K-12. Based on the Illinois State Board of Education [ISBE] 2019 Report Card, the student demographics at the middle school included the following: 90.9% White, 1.1% Black, 4.7% Hispanic, .3% American Indian, and 3% two or more races. The percentage of students identified that same year as low-income was 37.7%, compared to the district at 34.1% and the state at 48.8%. The low-income percentages slightly fluctuated throughout the previous five years ranging from 31% to 42%. Ten percent of the students qualified for special education services at the building level, compared to 12% at the district level. The five-year trend for the percentage of students with an individualized education plan (IEP) remained consistent. Although the special education numbers did not fluctuate much, there was an increase in the number of students who moved into the district with significant supports, as well as an influx of students identified as needing various supports, such as a 504 plan or interventions. The percentage of students who qualified for special education services are outlined in the following disability categories: Speech and Language 6%, Specific Learning Disability 35%, Autism 15%, Emotional Disability 15%, Intellectual Disability 3%, and Other Health Impaired 27%. Of these students, the percentage of students who received special education and related services in accordance with their IEP fall into the following demographic groups: 94% White, 3% two or more races, and 3% Hispanic.

The middle school provides a continuum of special education services and placement
considerations for all students with disabilities. All decisions regarding the placement of a student with a disability in a special education service delivery model is made by the IEP team, which includes parents or guardians of the student, with the intentions of placing the student in the least restrictive environment. At this middle school, the least restrictive placement option available is consultation with a resource study hall. Within this model, the special education teacher provides the general education teacher with guidance regarding the supports and accommodations the student requires within the learning environment to be successful. Often times, the student attends a resource study hall with the special education teacher as an additional support to make sure the student keeps up with homework. The next placement on the continuum is in general education classrooms with in-class special education assistance. This model is often referred to as the co-taught classroom. Students most often placed within the co-taught setting are those who require additional services to access curriculum within the general education setting. One such service that is common in the general education classroom involves direct support for individual students administered by the special education teacher using accommodations or modifications to the general education curriculum and assessment. In addition, the special education teacher provides individualized or small group instruction to meet the academic and behavioral needs of the students within the classroom.

If the student’s academic or emotional needs have a significant impact on his or her ability to participate in the general education setting, the IEP team may determine that the student requires a more restrictive learning environment. The middle school for this study houses a resource room where students receive individualized instruction delivered in small groups or one to one. Students are often placed in the resource setting for one or more classes in which they require greater assistance than what can be provided in the co-taught setting. Within the
resource classroom, the special education teacher and often times a classroom paraprofessional work with groups of students from two different grade levels and with varying abilities within one class period. These decisions are made on an individualized basis according to the students’ needs. Students are often placed in the resource classroom for an entire academic period when needing this support.

If the student’s academic or emotional needs have a significant impact on his or her ability to learn in the general education environment, the IEP team may determine that the student requires a more restrictive learning environment in a pull-out or instructional setting. Within this service delivery model, special education teachers have more specific training in remediating academic or social emotional deficits. Often times, students in these programs require an alternative learning curriculum. Decisions are made on an individual student basis, but if appropriate, these students are often mainstreamed into the general educational classroom electives. For students whose educational needs require services beyond those of which the middle school can provide, the district utilizes nearby approved nonpublic schools. In these situations, the nature and severity of the students’ disability significantly impacts educational performance which may require more intensive resources in a therapeutic day setting for the student to be successful in accessing the curriculum. This would be considered the most restrictive along the continuum of services provided at the middle school.

Beginning in the 2018-2019 school year, each building was categorized into one of four designations based on the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Each school was given one of the following designations: exemplary, commendable, underperforming, and lowest performing. ESSA requires that states establish student performance goals, hold schools accountable for student achievement, and include a broader measure of student performance beyond test scores
ESSA was established in 2015 to address equity and equal opportunity for all students. The current indicators for determining performance include 75% academic measures and 25% student quality/student success indicators. The middle school for this study was rated as underperforming for the following reasons (Illinois State Board of Education, 2019). There was a twenty-point discrepancy between the all-student group and the low-income student group for English Language Arts (ELA) proficiency. There was a fifty-point discrepancy between the all-student group and the children with disabilities student group for ELA proficiency. There was a discrepancy of twenty-six points between math proficiency of the all-student group versus the children with disabilities student group and a sixteen-point discrepancy between the all-student group versus the low-income student group. Each school identified as underperforming was required to put a building-level team together and work through the Illinois Quality Framework Supporting Rubric. Though this needs assessment rubric, including all students in general education instruction was identified as an area of needing improvement. These conversations helped educators at the middle school realize that students who required more support than accommodations and/or modifications were often pulled out into an instructional setting. Given that research shows that co-taught models produce better outcomes for students, the building level administration and staff made a commitment to support the needs of students within a co-taught or inclusive service delivery model.

Beginning in the 2018-2019 school year the district hired an additional special education teacher. At this time, each grade level had a special education teacher assigned to the team with an additional special education teacher to provide life skills instruction for those students needing that support and/or identified as cognitively impaired. During the 2019-2020 school year, forty-five students at the middle school qualified for special education services. During the
planning stages for the 2020-2021 school year, educators identified the concern that even though there were co-teachers in all of the general education classrooms, the trend of pulling special education students out of the general education environment to provide them with specialized instruction within a pull-out service delivery model continued.

The building administrators and special education staff worked together to create a visual or service delivery map similar to that described by Theoharis and Causton (2014) and Theoharis et al. (2016), which involves a visual representation of how students receive their special education services. This visual representation allowed the team to see a complete picture documenting how and where services were being provided across a setting. This process gave the staff a complete picture of how resources were being utilized, including which special education teachers worked with which general education teachers, which students were pulled from which classrooms, and which paraprofessionals were used where. This strategy helped demonstrate which students were included from the general education classroom and where they were being excluded. The next step involves rethinking service delivery structures and creating a new service delivery map to create teams of professionals to serve all students inclusively (Theoharis & Causton, 2014; Theoharis et al., 2016). Going through this process, the team found that many of the co-taught classrooms had very few students who qualified for special education services, whereas there were on some occasions two to three times as many students being serviced in a pull-out or instructional classroom. This process not only gave the staff a complete picture of the school but also helped shift the teachers’ perspectives beyond their classrooms so they could begin to have conversations building wide (Theoharis et al., 2016).

The middle school core classes include math, reading, and language arts. A special education teacher provides co-taught instruction in each of the core classes. A pull-out
instructional class is offered for each of these core classes in which students would not participate in the general education instruction. Overall, there were more special education students being pulled out of the general education classroom who received their core instruction in a pull-out instructional classroom than in a co-taught setting. In grades 5 through 8, there were twelve students receiving services in a co-taught setting in math and eighteen students receiving their special education services in a pull-out setting (see Table 1).

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Level</th>
<th>Types of Service</th>
<th>Co-Taught</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pull-Out</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>8</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In language arts, nine students received special education services in a co-taught class versus nineteen who received their specialized instruction in a pull-out services delivery model (see Table 2).

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Level</th>
<th>Types of Service</th>
<th>Co-Taught</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pull-Out</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
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<td>8</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>9</td>
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Across the middle school setting in English classes, thirteen students received their
special education services in a co-taught setting, whereas twenty-four students were pulled out of the general education class for English instruction. The data shows that in this middle school, overall, the number of students receiving specialized instruction in a pull-out setting exceeded the number of students in a co-taught service delivery model. Nine students were serviced in a co-taught setting, while twenty-four students were pulled out of the general education class for English instruction (see Table 3).

Table 3
Number of Students in Pull-Out Versus Co-Taught English Classes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Level</th>
<th>Types of Service</th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pull-Out</td>
<td>Co-Taught</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
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<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>13</td>
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Providing co-taught special education services within the general education environment is not new, yet districts have found it to be a difficult practice. Research suggests that there is a strong positive relationship between time spent in general education classes and math and reading achievement for students across a range of disabilities (Cosier et al., 2013). In addition, students with disabilities who are educated in inclusive settings have higher grades and earn higher scores on standardized measures than students who are placed in separate special education classrooms (Rea et al., 2002). Segregated practices can have a negative impact in several ways. For instance, when students are in pull-out programs they miss critical content and there is the chance of social stigma or isolation from peers. Theoharis et al. (2016) also expressed the concern that pull-out programs often have an overrepresentation of students of color and low-income students. Many leaders have turned to inclusive reform to comply with federally
mandated demands such as LRE (Theoharis et al., 2016) because numerous researchers have
documented that students with and without disabilities benefit both academically and socially
from inclusive practices (Austin, 2001; Dieker, 2001; Cosier et al., 2013; Rea et al., 2002;
Frattura & Capper, 2007). Studies have also found that with inclusive classrooms, the academic
and social benefits extend beyond students with disabilities, having a positive impact on those
without disabilities as well (Theoharis et al., 2016). Theoharis et al. (2016) described inclusion as
“placing students with or without disabilities in general education classes and educating
everyone by implementing differentiated and universally designed instruction” and “delivering
special education and related services to students with disabilities in general education
classrooms, as opposed to placing students in separate rooms and/or rearranging our adult
support services so that special education students can be educated together” (p. 6).

Through the process of creating a service delivery map (Theoharis & Causton, 2014), we
found that as a building there were more special education students being pulled out of the
general education classroom who receive their core instruction in a pull-out instructional
classroom than in a co-taught setting. This is a problem because the research shows that there are
academic and social benefits for all students in an inclusive classroom. The next step involves
rethinking service delivery structures as a building and creating opportunities to serve all
students inclusively (Theoharis & Causton, 2014; Theoharis et al., 2016).

**Research Purpose**

Co-teaching requires collaboration between the general and special education teachers.
Murawski and Deiker (2004) stressed the importance of co-planning, co-instructing, and co-
assessing their students. With intentional time to co-plan and training, general education and
special education teachers can implement a variety of co-teaching service delivery models in
order to create an effective learning environment for all students. This study was designed to work with the fifth-grade co-teaching team at one middle school in central Illinois to document educator reactions to the co-planning and implementation of co-teaching approaches in this building. The findings will help establish effective co-teaching delivery models.

**Research Questions**

The following research question guided this study:

How do the educators describe the co-planning process and implementation of co-teaching service delivery models in the fifth-grade co-taught classrooms?

The sub-questions include the following:

a. What were the effects of co-planning time on the co-teaching service delivery models used in the fifth-grade co-taught classrooms?

b. What lessons can be learned from a co-planning process for increasing the co-teaching service delivery models within the fifth-grade classrooms?

**Definition of Terms**

Several terms used during the study are defined in this section.

**Inclusion.** Inclusion is the instruction of all students, with and without disabilities, in a general education classroom (Austin, 2001, p. 245).

**Co-teaching.** Co-teaching is defined as a general education teacher and special education teacher, who may or may not have the same area of expertise, jointly delivering instruction to a diverse or blended group of students in a single physical space (Cook & Friend, 1995, p. 2).

**General education teacher.** A general education teacher is a professional who develops and implements differentiated instruction to students at all levels, including students with special needs.
Special education teacher. A special education teacher is defined as a teacher who works with students who have a wide range of learning, intellectual, emotional, and physical disabilities.

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). Placement in the Least Restrictive Environment requires that, to the maximum extent appropriate, students with disabilities are educated with children who are not disabled (Illinois State Board of Education, n.d.).

Common planning time. Common planning time is a regularly scheduled time during the school day when teachers who teach the same students meet for joint planning, parent conferences, materials preparation, and student evaluation (Kellough & Kellough, 2007, p.394).

Theoretical Framework

Researchers have focused their efforts on integrated service delivery models in schools and districts (Capper & Frattura, 2009; Frattura & Capper, 2007; Frattura & Topinka, 2006). Frattura and Topinka (2006) and Capper and Frattura (2009) shared the concern that through educational practices in support of separateness that not only have we constructed a normed group of students whom we label the “general education students,” but we have also defaulted to another group of students known as the “non-general education students.” Students in this group are those who do not meet the criteria of academic, physical, emotional, social, or behavioral success of the norm or “general education students.” When students do not fit into that dominant group, educators look for another subculture in which to track and marginalize these students. A few examples of these programs may include the following: special education programs, at-risk programs, reading and math programs, and Title I. Although these programs are designed and intended to help students succeed, they take away more emotionally and socially than they provide academically (Capper & Frattura, 2009; Frattura & Topinka, 2006).
Frattura and Topinka (2006) defined separate programs as those that are arranged by units of homogenously grouped students who have not been successful in the general education setting. For example, there may be units of students who are on the autism spectrum, have a cognitive disability, or have learning disabilities. These units or programs often have specific eligibility to qualify for the program. Students who deviate from the norm are placed in these programs for part of or all of their day. In many districts, if students do not meet the eligibility requirements for the programs available, educators often create new categories for segregation. Frattura and Topinka (2006) outlined several concerns regarding segregated programming. First, in homogenous settings such as the ones described, instructional techniques and materials are often developed using the group norms rather than focusing on the individual goals and objectives of the students. Second, instruction is predominately driven by available supports, classes, and instructional resources within the environment. Research on effective teaching shows that students in these programs do not have access to high quality teaching and learning (Darling-Hammond & Falk, 1997), yet schools continue to segregate students. In my past and current educational experiences in special education, I have seen students placed in these separate programs all utilize the same curriculum, often very outdated curriculum and resources, because that what was available to the class. Capper and Frattura (2009) noted that separate programs often limit these students’ opportunities for further education beyond high school. I have also witnessed students move as a group to lunch, recess, music, art, and physical education classes. It is such practices that consistently facilitates societal oppression (Frattura & Topinka, 2006).

Capper & Frattura (2009) identified several problems associated with separate programs. First, separation not only puts the blame on the student and creates a label, but it also tracks and
marginalizes students based on race and social class. Second, the more students served in restrictive segregated programs, the higher the cost of education. Significant fiscal and human resources are tapped when it comes to placement in a separate programs. Educators often utilize a great deal of time and resources to determine which program a student may qualify for. Capper & Frattura (2009) shared an example from a Wisconsin school district in which it cost more than $2000 to evaluate one student to determine eligibility for special education. In this situation, if a district of 4,500 students averages 225 evaluations a year, a total of $443,713 would be spent on evaluations alone (p. 9). Another expense involves hiring teachers who have licensure and expertise for those specific programs. There may also be additional materials, space, and administration support involved. As an example, Capper and Frattura (2009) noted that if districts serve students with disability labels 25% to 60% outside the regular class, then the cost for this education increases to $5,122. If they provide a program for these students in a separate public facility, then the cost increases to $6,399 per student (p. 9). Third, separate programs result in some students receiving services and other being denied services. Often times, there is the perception that students must fail before they receive the services or support they need. Fourth, separate programs fragment a student’s day. Students often spend the largest part of their day away from their classroom receiving special instruction, resulting in a disconnected school day and missed instructional opportunities. Fifth, rather than focusing on what can be done differently to support all students, school officials focus on what is wrong with the students. This quote stood out to me as being the reason why we should focus on this work at the middle school: “The most damaging aspect of separate programs is the underlying belief that there is a right way and only one way to be a student and a learner” (Frattura & Topinka, 2006, p. 331). In conjunction, educators often think that special programming is the solution to fix students. Last,
separate programs can prevent the transfer of students’ knowledge back into the integrated environments, which often leads students to fail when they transition back into the integrated or general education setting. Just as Capper and Frattura (2009) gave the example of students who feel safe in separate settings, school districts must determine what can be done to make sure all students feel safe in every environment.

**Integrated Comprehensive Systems for Equity**

It is important that educators change the supports provided to begin moving away from separate programming to integrated services for all learners. For the purposes of the dissertation, I utilized the five cornerstones of a comprehensive systems for equity as detailed by Frattura and Capper (2007) as a theoretical framework. Frattura and Capper (2007) shared the concern that too many students who are labeled “at-risk” are being placed in segregated, alternative classrooms or schools and spend large parts of their day outside the general education classroom. Practices such as this result in a high percentage of students dropping out of school or not being employed after high school. There is also the concern that segregated practices put a financial toll on districts. To overcome these challenges, Frattura and Capper (2007) recommended school leaders rethink how students are educated, placing more students in heterogeneous learning environments that result in higher student achievement and more promising post-school outcomes. Frattura and Capper (2007) described the difference between segregated programs and integrated comprehensive services across five categories.

**Core Principles: Focusing on Equity**

Frattura and Capper (2007) described a segregated program as one in which a source of student failure is the student who needs to be fixed to fit into the system. Within this system,
students are often not helped until after they fail, so their individual needs are overlooked and they are often slotted into programs. Within a comprehensive service model, the source of student failure is the system, with a focus on the system needing to accommodate the student. The primary focus of teaching and learning within the integrated comprehensive service (ICS) model is prevention of student failure and building teacher capacity. Student needs are met on an individual basis.

**Equitable Structures: Location**

Segregated programs separate students either at the classroom level or push students to attend a school they would not if they did not have a label. Frattura and Capper (2007) outlined assumptions that often inhibit change. For instance, it is easier and more cost effective to cluster students with similar labels in schools and/or classrooms. Another assumption is that educators can provide individual support only in a setting separate from the students’ peers. Within an ICS model, students receive services within the same setting as their peers. Segregated programs also fragment a student’s day by moving from one location to another to receive support, whereas, in an integrated comprehensive service model there are no separate classrooms or schools set aside for students with labels. In segregated programs, students are homogeneously grouped by categories, marginalized by social class, sectioned off with students of similar labels for extended periods of time, and shuffled in homogenous groups from class to class (Frattura & Capper, 2007). On the other hand, an ICS model allows for flexible grouping patterns used throughout the day depending on the content and the students’ needs.
Staff within segregated programs adhere to their “expert” roles and develop territories. Frattura and Capper (2007) described assumptions that inhibit change in this area. One example would be that certification in a specialty area indicates that a person has skills that no one else can ever learn. Within an ICS model, staff share knowledge and expertise with each other and with students and build each other’s capacity to work with a range of students.

The curriculum and instruction in segregated programming is separate from the core teaching and learning of the school, whereas in an integrated comprehensive service model, the supports are built around differentiated curriculum and instruction. Instruction in segregated programs is often driven by available supports, classes, and instructional resources and students are often denied access to content-based instruction, which adversely affects performance on standardized assessments (Fratura & Capper, 2007). Assumptions that inhibit change in this area are that special education teachers cannot support students who have not been identified or labeled and that educators are incapable of differentiating curriculum and instruction. On the flip side with ICS, all students receive curriculum and instruction to meet their needs.

Separate funding and resources with a focus on fixing student deficits often occurs in segregated programming. Frattura and Capper (2007) expressed the concern that separate programs are costly due to replication of resources and staff. Integrated comprehensive services use funding and resources to build teacher and system capacity with a focus on prevention of
student struggle.

When students are supported in segregated programming, there is a cost with students falling further behind. Causton and Theoharis (2013) noted that inclusive school reform looks not only at the students with disabilities but also other marginalized students, prioritizing full-time access to the general education curriculum, instruction, and peer groups to reach both social and academic potential.

To summarize, researchers such as Capper and Frattura (2009), Frattura and Capper (2007), and Frattura and Topinka (2006) shared reasons why segregated programming is not what is best for all learners. Capper & Frattura (2009) stated this concept clearly in their study:

When we meet the needs of all students of all abilities by providing services rather than establishing separate programs, we set the stage for a broad range of teachers to teach together. Thus, we bring together teachers with a range of expertise to share their strengths related to good teaching. In doing so, we are better able to meet the needs of students who did not have their needs met in separate programs. (p.11)

Schools must change the way they provide services to all students. School leaders must push for all students to be educated in heterogeneous learning environments, resulting in opportunities for students to reach their maximum learning potential.

**Limitations**

There were several limitations to this study. First, the research was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic. During this time, all students and families were given the option to participate in in-person instruction or a virtual format of instruction. If families chose the virtual
format, they were asked to make a semester-long commitment. Given these choices, not all fifth-grade students participated in in-person instruction during the research. There were twelve students who chose to do at-home learning, which was 10% of the fifth-grade student enrollment. It is also important to note that the fifth-grade special education teacher was assigned to provide the specialized instruction to all middle school students who chose the remote learning option. Due to this additional job responsibility during the pandemic, she was no longer providing services in the science and social studies co-taught classrooms with these same fifth-grade students as planned. In addition, many of the students on the special education teacher’s caseload are supported in a special education study hall at the end of each day. Due to this change in responsibility, another special education teacher provided this service to these fifth-grade students. The limitation here was that prior to this change in job responsibility, the special education teacher would have also provided the co-taught instruction in both science and social studies as well as the resource study hall. When implemented with the grade level teacher, the resource study hall is a time that the co-teacher can not only assist with some of the homework assignments, but also provide additional small group or one-on-one instruction to those students who did not master a concept during the co-taught lesson.

There were additional challenges related to the pandemic. Participants were asked to participate during a time in which there were many unknowns. Although teachers were providing full-time, in-person instruction at the time of the study, at any given time, a staff member, a class, and/or the district had the chance of moving to remote learning with very little notice and preparation.
Significance of the Study

One delimitation of this study was that the research was limited to one school district in rural, central Illinois. This study was also limited to the inclusion of students in fifth grade and did not include other grade levels at the middle school nor at the elementary or high schools. This research, in turn, will provide guidance for not only the middle school but also other co-teaching teams within the district that the middle school is located. Also, the results of this study will be useful for other educational leaders and teams as part of a process of increasing the effectiveness of co-teaching teams.

Summary

Through a qualitative approach, this study was designed to work with the fifth-grade co-teaching team to document educator reactions to the co-planning and implementation of co-teaching approaches at the middle school. The findings will help establish effective co-teaching delivery models. Four more chapters follow. Chapter II is a comprehensive literature review with a focus on co-teaching service delivery models. In Chapter III, the topics discussed include the research design and specific details of how the study was conducted. The remaining chapters focus on the actual research conducted for this study. The results are provided in Chapter IV, followed by an interpretation of the findings in Chapter V.
CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

History of Inclusion

Up until the early 1970s, many children with disabilities were excluded from educational opportunities. It was not until the early 1970s that legislation opened the door for all children with special education needs to receive a free and appropriate public education. In 1975, congress passed the Education for all Handicapped Children Act (PL94-142), which has been reauthorized as the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA). IDEA emphasizes educating students in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). While IDEA supports the inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom, many schools continue to serve students with disabilities in traditional special education systems based on pull-out service delivery models (Fierros & Conroy, 2002). Researchers have found that the quality of instruction in these separate special education settings does not compare to that in the general education setting (Vaughn & Linan-Thompson, 2003).

The No Child Left Behind [NCLB] Act of 2001 focused on ensuring that all students, including those with disabilities, meet set benchmarks measured by standardized assessments. Since then, the Every Student Succeeds Act (2015) has replaced NLCB. Although these two different laws have some similarities, there are a few significant differences. With ESSA, each state is given the opportunity to develop its own plan for support and accountability. ESSA allows states significant greater local authority and flexibility over standards, goals, measures for students’ success and outcomes, and supports for districts (Illinois State Board of Education, 2022). With ESSA, states must consider more than just test scores when evaluating schools and require districts and schools to have a plan for supporting students who have a high drop-rate and/or are consistently struggling.
Theoharis et al. (2016) expressed that these ideas are furthered with the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) in 2004, pushing for rigorous standards and increased academic progress for all students in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). One way that districts have met these federally mandated demands is to implement co-teaching models by arranging a special education teacher and a general education teacher to jointly plan and deliver instruction to ensure the success of all students (Condermon, 2011).

Lynne Cook and Marilyn Friend (1995) described co-teaching as “two or more professionals delivering substantive instruction to a diverse or blended group of students in a single physical space” (p.2). They elaborate on this definition by identifying the following four key components of co-teaching:

1) Co-teaching involves two or more educators. For the purposes of this research, that includes one special education teacher and one general education teacher. The general education teacher specializes in understanding the structure and pacing of the curriculum, whereas the special education teacher specializes in identifying unique learning needs of individual students and enhancing the curriculum and instruction to meet those needs.

2) The second component of co-teaching is that educators deliver substantive instruction, emphasizing that both educators are actively involved in the instruction of all students.

3) Educators teach a diverse group of students, including those with disabilities.

4) Instruction is delivered primarily in a single classroom or physical space (Cook & Friend, 1995).
It is important to note that the goal of co-taught instruction is to not only to make it possible for students with disabilities to access the general education curriculum, but also to benefit from specialized instructional strategies necessary to learn and generalize new skills (Friend et al., 2010). Co-teaching is commonly defined as the general and special education teachers planning, delivering, and assessing instruction together in single classrooms (Cook & Friend, 1995; Dieker & Murawski, 2003; Murawski & Dieker, 2004; Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1996; Walther-Thomas, C. et al., 1996; Zigmond & Magiera, 2001). Zigmond & Magiera (2001) expressed the importance that co-teaching draws on the strengths of the general education teacher, who is the expert in curriculum and pacing, and the special education teacher, who is an expert in adapting the curriculum and differentiating instruction to meet the individual needs of all students.

Co-Teaching Benefits

Co-teaching can benefit both the students as well as the educators. Special educators and general educators have different training and areas of expertise, which can be beneficial to each other as well as all the students in the classroom. The different expertise that these teachers bring to the table can be helpful during the planning stage, utilizing their strengths to ensure that the lesson is differentiated, increasing the instructional opportunities and success for all students (Cook & Friend, 1995; Murawski & Dieker, 2004).

Cook and Friend (1995) also noted that co-teaching provides increased support for teachers. Special education teachers can increase their knowledge in content and general education teachers gain skills in classroom management and curriculum adaptation from the special educator (Austin, 2001). Teachers may also take more risks and try new strategies in pairs that they would not typically try alone (Cook & Friend, 1995).
Another advantage of co-teaching is that it can reduce the stigma for students with special needs (Cook & Friend, 1995). Cook and Friend (1995) emphasized the importance of students with special needs being taught within the general curriculum with modifications and support, instead of being pulled to the side of the classroom for instruction, noting that this can create even more of a stigma for students with special needs.

Co-teaching can significantly improve program intensity and continuity for students with special needs (Cook & Friend, 1995). When students are being removed from the general education classroom in a pull-out service delivery model, not only are they losing instructional time traveling between locations, but the curriculum often does not compare to what is offered in the general education classroom. Cook and Friend (1995) expressed concerns that the curriculum for a student receiving services in a pull-out program is often fragmented: “When general education and special education services are separate, either a separate curriculum or lack of congruence in the curriculum and services is the common result” (p. 4). From experiences at the middle school, even when the special educator and general educator work together to provide continuity of service for students who receive instruction in a pull-out model, students with special needs often have a difficult time generalizing these skills when they return back to the general education setting. Another concern I share is that the general education teacher has the training and expertise in the grade level standards and content, while the special education teacher’s training is in instructional strategies and mastery of skills. Together, they make a great team to support the needs of all students. Individually, the content and instruction can become fragmented.

With improved program intensity and continuity comes improved academic and behavior performance of students. Austin (2001) surveyed co-teachers’ perceptions of co-teaching and
found that they felt their students improved academically. Both teachers and students indicated that co-teaching contributed positively to student behaviors in the classroom. Dieker (2001) also interviewed fifty-four secondary level students with and without disabilities and found that all students reported benefiting from the co-taught classroom. Cosier et al. (2013) conducted a study examining the relationship between hours in general education and achievement in reading and mathematics for students with disabilities. Their research focused on more than 1,300 students between the ages of six and nine years old within 180 school districts. They found that a strong positive relationship existed between the time spent in general education and the resulting achievement in mathematics and reading for students across disabilities.

A study conducted by Rea, McLaughlin, & Walther-Thomas (2002) investigated the relationship between placement in inclusive and pull-out special education programs and academic and behavior outcomes for students with learning disabilities. They found that students with disabilities included in general education classrooms achieved better outcomes on some measures than peers in pull-out programs and comparable outcomes on others. They have identified the following five key findings from this study:

1) Students with learning disabilities served in inclusive classrooms achieved higher course grades in language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies than students with learning disabilities in pull-out programs. Rea et al. (2002) suggested that with adequate support and accommodations, students with learning disabilities can make achievement gains in the inclusive setting.

2) Students with learning disabilities achieved higher scores on language and mathematics subtests than students with learning disabilities in pull-out programs. The students serviced in inclusive programs achieved comparable scores on the reading
comprehension, science, and social studies subtests. With this finding, Rea et al. (2002) questioned the assumptions that many educators make in that small group instruction will necessarily result in improved scores.

3) Students with learning disabilities served in inclusive classrooms demonstrated comparable scores to those in pull-out programs on reading, writing, and mathematics subtests of a state proficiency test.

4) Students with learning disabilities in inclusive classrooms did not experience more in-school or out of-school suspensions than did students in pull-out programs.

5) Last, students with learning disabilities served in inclusive classrooms attended more days of school than those in pull-out programs. Rea et al. (2002) suggested that better attendance could be an indication of greater student satisfaction around quality instruction and social experiences that may have produced a positive effect on attendance (Rea et al., 2002).

Supports for Successful Co-Teaching Partnerships

Reoccurring themes related to the challenges of co-teaching most often had to do with lack of common planning time, insufficient training and support, and scheduling and placement of staff and students in co-taught settings. Many of these challenges can be addressed through administrator training and support through various methods outlined in this section (Friend et al., 2010; McLesky & Waldron, 2002).

Professional Development

One challenge for co-teachers is that their training and areas of expertise are very different. General educators are the experts in curriculum, standards, and pacing, whereas, the focus of special educators includes the process of learning, highly individualized instruction, and
nature of some students’ needs, along with an emphasis on teaching until mastery (Friend et al., 2010). This often results in the special education teacher not feeling comfortable with the curriculum and in turn becoming the teaching assistant in the classroom (Friend, 2007). This can become even more difficult at the secondary level when the content becomes increasingly challenging. Cole and McLeskey (1997) shared that delivery of the same content is much more feasible at the elementary than at the secondary level in which the content knowledge is more emphasized and adaptations are minimal. Weiss and Lloyd (2002) spent time in co-taught classrooms at the middle and high school level, where they found that general education teachers were identified as content specialists and special education teachers took on the role of an instructional aide in the classroom.

Professional development is a critical component for creating and sustaining co-teaching partnerships (Friend, 2007; Austin, 2001). An essential component of the professional development is fostering the roles and responsibilities each teacher will have in the co-taught classroom (Washburn-Moses, 2005). Researchers such as Cook and Friend (1995) as well as Murawski and Lochner (2011) created checklists co-teachers can use to assess their readiness for co-teaching and building an effective relationship. These checklists can help co-teachers not only identify differences in common classroom issues such as grading and discipline, but also come up with a plan for addressing these things as a team in a co-taught classroom.

Walsh (2012) shared a story about the importance of a systematic and continuous professional development plan. Howard County developed a program in 2002 called Designing Quality Inclusive Education (DQIE) in which they work with school teams to develop their co-teaching teams. They met with co-teachers and administrators off site four days per school year. Their professional development model emphasized the “Power of 2” (Friend, 2016), focusing on
strategies to take advantage of the skills of both teaching professionals and address the individual needs of all the students in the classroom. As part of this program, each participant completed a needs assessment to identify school supports and well as teaching skills and strategies to improve the quality of their co-taught instruction. The most frequently identified roadblock from the needs assessment was funding to provide co-teachers time to plan together on a consistent basis. According to Walsh (2012), upon completion of the DQIE professional development program, related increases in less restrictive environments for students with disabilities correlated with positive trends in performance of students with disabilities on state assessments. The data showed that students with disabilities in the eight elementary schools involved during the 2008-2009 school year advanced proficiency in reading by 11% and mathematics by 14.5% as compared to increases of 1% in reading and no change in mathematics among students with disabilities in other elementary schools not involved in the DQUI professional development. Walsh (2012) correlated the significant increase in the reading and math performance of special education students in co-taught classrooms supported by DQIE professional development to the year-long professional development provided to co-teachers in these schools. Scruggs and Mastropieri (1996) reported that teachers consistently stress the need for training to effectively implement inclusion and co-teaching models. Thirty percent of all teachers surveyed believed that general education teachers do not have enough expertise and training on inclusion and co-teaching models (Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1996).

Walther-Thomas et al. (1996) recommended that most new co-teaching partners benefit from three to five days of preparation before classroom implementation with professional development sessions focused on the following topics: co-planning, co-teaching service delivery models, instructional considerations, ongoing performance assessment, and interpersonal
communication such as problem solving and conflict resolution. Another form of professional development that is not always considered is giving co-teachers the opportunity to visit other classrooms that model co-teaching practices as well as creating professional learning communities in which co-teachers can come together to discuss accomplishments and challenges of co-teaching practices (Friend, 2007; Friend & Pope, 2005; Walther-Thomas et al., 1996).

**Assignment of Teams**

When assigning students to co-taught classrooms it is important to consider the number and needs of the students being placed in one classroom. Researchers have expressed concerns that students with disabilities are often placed in classes that are already full, creating a very difficult environment for the co-teaching team to meet the needs of all the students (Murawski & Dieker, 2004; Zigmond & Magiera, 2001). Friend (2007) recommended keeping the percentage of students with disabilities below one-quarter in elementary classes and one-third in middle and high school classes. With this in mind, Zigmond and Magiera (2001) noted that this can be a challenge in smaller schools where it commits the special education teacher(s) to working with only a few students with disabilities during co-teaching and other service delivery options may not be available.

Researchers such as Friend (2007) recommended that special education teachers be assigned to just one team, especially at the secondary level. The challenge is that special education teachers are often assigned to work with multiple teachers during the same class period, prohibiting them from having the time to not only develop a rapport with the general education teacher, but also not giving them planning time to work together to develop lesson plans that ensure that all students are learning (Murawski & Dieker, 2004).

There are ways in which teams can be structured to ensure successful co-teaching
experiences. At the high school level, it is important to cluster special education teachers according to content so that individual special education teachers work within the cluster most closely aligned with their expertise. This allows the special education teacher to focus on being an expert in one content or subject area. Dieker (2001) outlined other ideas for co-teaching models or teams. In the shared support model, special education teachers supported two general education classrooms (Dieker, 2001). In an equal support model, co-teachers shared the same classroom for the entire day (Dieker, 2001). The cross-family support model was set up so that for a classroom of students with emotional disorders, the English Language Arts and Math teachers brought their class to the special education classroom one day a week (Dieker, 2001). In the alternative support model described by Dieker (2001), the general education and special education classrooms were across the hall from each other. Some days they would team teach and other days they would split classes and content. Other times they would teach a lesson together and then split the students when it came time for independent learning activities. The last model, labeled limited support, involves the general and special education teachers sharing the same room and same students for one instructional period (Dieker, 2001).

Across several research studies, many teachers expressed the importance of co-teachers volunteering to teach together. Vessay (2004) studied three pairs of early childhood education co-teachers and concluded that the effect of their collaboration was positive when both teachers volunteered to make a commitment to the co-teaching partnership. Mastropieri et al. (2005) noted that voluntary co-teachers tended to report more positive perceptions than did teachers who were assigned co-teaching assignments. On the other hand, research by Ward (2003) mentioned that others felt co-teaching should be mandated but phased over years and accompanied with sufficient training and support.
Common Planning Time

One of the most significant challenges to a successful co-teaching partnership is the lack of common planning time (Friend, 2007; Keefe & Moore, 2004; Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1996; Walther-Thomas et al., 1996). For success with co-taught instruction, several of the well-known researchers recommended co-teachers focus on three components: the planning stage, the instruction of students, and the assessment phase (Cook & Friend, 1995; Dieker & Murawski, 2003; Murawski & Dieker, 2004; Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1996; Walther-Thomas et al., 1996). These researchers expressed that an essential component to building a successful co-teaching partnership is built-in common planning time. Kohler-Evans (2006) surveyed teachers in fifteen school districts regarding their co-teaching experiences. Common planning time was identified as the number one factor that affected their relationship with their co-teaching partner. In Murray’s (2004) study with forty general education teachers, weekly common planning time was identified as an essential component to co-teaching success.

Building in common planning time can be a challenge, but Friend (2000) identified some ways that administrators could support co-teachers by adding in some additional planning time for co-teachers. First, co-teachers could be compensated for summer planning. This would allow co-teachers the opportunity to set up their classrooms, discuss roles and responsibilities, and outline expectations for students in the classroom. Second, co-teachers could receive continuing education credit for meeting together to plan and reflect on co-teaching practices. Third, administrators could utilize district staff development days as time for the general education and special education teachers to work together.

During the planning session, typically the general education teacher can share knowledge
of the curriculum, standards, and pacing while the special education teacher shares information about individual student goals and plans. Prior to planning, Murawski and Dieker (2004) recommended that the general education teacher bring an overview of the content, curriculum, and standards to be addressed to an initial meeting. With this information prepared ahead of time, co-teachers can begin planning sessions by discussing what content will be covered and how it will be taught with the various co-teaching service delivery models. Conderman (2011) emphasized that co-teachers should utilize a planning pyramid to help differentiate learning outcomes for students. A pyramid planning tool would allow co-teachers to identify what each student is expected to achieve as a result of the lesson or what accommodations and/or modifications each student needs for the identified learning task.

During the conversation about how the content objectives will be taught, it is important to discuss not only adaptations but also co-teaching styles. It is necessary that there are times the special education teacher takes the lead on planning as well (Murawski & Dieker, 2004). Dieker (2001) expressed the importance of co-planning, noting “when there was limited planning time, unless the lesson as team taught, the special educator often indicated not knowing where the lesson was headed” (p. 21). He stressed the concern that in situations like this, the special education teacher was gaining knowledge as the students were gaining knowledge, limiting the ability for the special education teacher to accommodate students’ needs (Dieker, 2001).

It is also essential to analyze data together and evaluate student performance (Dieker, 2001). Conderman (2011) pushed this even further by stating that co-assessing should involve not only student achievement, but also professional partnership, such as what went well, areas for improvement, and next steps in the curriculum. Administrators should strive to build in regular common planning time for co-teachers during the school day.
Co-Teaching Service Delivery Models

One of the benefits of co-teaching is that the general educator and the special educator can work together to create teaching approaches and instructional strategies to meet the needs of all learners (Cook & Friend, 1995). Cook and Friend (1995) described six co-teaching styles or service delivery models. Although no model is better than the other and are all likely to be utilized within a co-taught classroom, they are presented in in what Cook and Friend (1995) determined to be a developmental order in terms of the planning, trust, and comfort with one another that is required between the two teachers.

One Teach, One Observe

Cook and Friend (1995) described this service delivery model as one in which one teacher leads the whole group while the other teacher observes and collects data. The advantage of this co-teaching model is that more detailed observation of students engaged in the learning process can occur. This model allows one teacher to take a step back from his or her everyday teaching role to gather classroom data from a different perspective. With this approach, for example, co-teachers can decide in advance what types of specific observational information to gather during instruction and can agree on a system for collecting the data. The co-teachers should analyze the information together but should also alternate who leads and who observes. This approach could be useful in gathering data for an upcoming IEP meeting for a student. The disadvantages of this model may be that one teacher takes more of a passive role, where students do not view him or her as teacher in the classroom but rather a teacher’s aide.
One Teach, One Assist

With this model of co-teaching, one teacher keeps primary responsibility for teaching, while the other teacher moves around the classroom providing individual assistance to students as needed. This model might be used when one teacher feels more comfortable with the content or when specific students require more individualized attention throughout the lesson.

Several researchers argue that “this model could be useful in the beginning stages of co-teaching” (Cook & Friend, 1995; Scruggs et al., 2007, p. 406). Westburg (2001) studied nine elementary co-teaching pairs and reported that the most utilized co-teaching style being used by co-teachers is one teach, one assist. It was noted that the general education teacher was most frequently the lead teacher, while the special education teacher usually moved about the classroom and interacted with individual students (Westburg, 2001). Cook and Friend (1995) recommend co-teachers working together to switch the lead teacher role as frequently as possible. Within this model of co-teaching, the general education teacher often takes the lead role in instruction, whereas the special education teacher is likely to facilitate reviewing for an exam or modeling a specific strategy he or she is familiar with.

Cook and Friend (1995) described several advantages to this co-teaching approach. First, this model often requires the least amount of planning. This service delivery option often helps with student behavior as the proximity of the additional teacher helps keeps students on task. The supporting teacher can also observe behavior that is not always seen by the teacher during instruction. With co-teachers using this service delivery model, students typically receive individual help in a timely manner.

While there are advantages to utilizing this model at times, there are disadvantages that
exist with this co-teaching method (Cook & Friend, 1995). While students may receive timely individual help, students may begin to expect one-on-one assistance from the supporting teacher. In addition, assisting students one at a time might not be the most effective way to support students. Having the supporting teacher walk around the classroom can be distracting to many students. One major disadvantage of using one teach, one support is that it affects the functioning of a co-taught classroom. Students may perceive that one teacher has more control than the other. Most often, the general education teacher is seen as the lead teacher and the special education teacher is seen as the teacher’s aide.

**Parallel Teaching**

In parallel teaching, the teachers plan the instruction together and are both covering the same information, but they divide the class into two groups and teach simultaneously (Cook & Friend, 1995). This co-teaching model differs from station teaching in that each teacher is delivering the same lesson or content and the students do not rotate. Parallel teaching may be used when smaller groups are preferable to one large group or when there is a great deal of information being covered, such that it can be split up between two groups. This keeps the academic rigor the same but lessens the content responsibility for each group.

Examples of when this model might be used is when researching two contrasting viewpoints or sides of an event, or when researching different parts of a project. In parallel teaching, co-teachers can choose to start and/or end the lesson together as a whole class. When the two groups come back together, each group can present the information they learned to the other group in the format of a debate, play, song, poster, etc. The students later discuss this issue together and use a problem-solving approach to address their differing points of view.
advantage for students within this model is that the product can be differentiated based on the students. Students with IEPs should be distributed between both groups (Cook & Friend, 1995).

Cook & Friend (1995) identified the advantages and disadvantages of parallel teaching. This service delivery model allows teachers to work in smaller groups, which can foster increased participation and more individualized attention for students. Teachers have the ability to separate certain students for various academic and behavioral reasons. The parallel teaching model enables students to learn, engage, and be supported in complex social skills such as disagreeing with a classmate on a given topic. An example of this might be two groups researching different parts of the same project. Two groups could research two contrasting viewpoints or sides of an event and come back together to share or even have a debate. The main challenge of parallel teaching is that planning is critical for this service delivery option to work as both teachers must be competent in the content knowledge to teach the lesson. The pace of the lesson is critical as both teachers must finish at the same time. One last disadvantage is that there must be enough flexible space in the classroom to accommodate two groups and keep the noise level down.

**Station Teaching**

In this co-teaching approach, both teachers divide the instructional content and each take responsibility for planning and teaching part of it. Students are divided into equal, heterogeneous or skill-based groups and work at classroom stations with both teachers. Each teacher then delivers the content to one group and subsequently repeats the instruction for the other group. Additional stations can be run independently by the students or with a teacher’s aide or classroom volunteer. Each group of students rotates through each station; however, each group
of students might not do the same lesson or activity allowing for an opportunity to differentiate instruction for the various learners in the classroom (Cook & Friend, 1995).

Station teaching allows for endless ideas for differentiation to meet the needs of all learners. In math, the stations may be organized by math strategy preference or by math problem solving ability. One group may be working on one-step word problems, another on two-step word problems, and the last group on mixed one and two-step word problems. Within this same classroom, one group may be learning a new concept while another group may be practicing the concept taught last week. Reading can be differentiated by skill level while keeping the content of the passage, article, or book the same.

Cook & Friend (1995) outlined several benefits of using this model within the co-taught setting. Students benefit from working in smaller groups, with a more focused ability to address different ability levels and learning styles. When students receive instruction in stations, each group can the content at their level without the other groups noticing the differentiated instructional levels of other students. This model allows flexibility in grouping and students can change between the groups fluidly. An example of this may include a math lesson in which both the general education teacher and the special education teacher are teaching the same basic content to each group as they rotate through, but the difficulty level, the instructional strategies, and the level of support needed by the students may be different. Often times there are fewer behavior problems because of higher student engagement and lower student-teacher ratio. Many students need frequent breaks and station teaching provides students with attention difficulties to get up and move frequently. Another advantage of station teaching is that each teacher has clear responsibilities and both teachers are seen in the lead teaching role.
Although there are many benefits to station teaching, there are challenges as well (Cook & Friend, 1995). This model of co-teaching requires a great deal of planning and organization of materials by the co-teachers. Timing is critical and it can be frustrating for both teachers and students if they do not feel like they were finished with the activity. For students who struggle with independence, they may have a difficult time remembering what group they were in or where they are supposed to go after each rotation. It may be helpful for teachers to have visuals to show students who is in which group and where each group is going for rotation. Some students may also have a difficult time maintaining focus while working in independent station.

**Alternative Teaching**

Sometimes students with disabilities benefit from instruction in smaller groups. With alternative teaching, one teacher instructs the larger group while another works with a smaller group that requires more specialized attention (Cook & Friend, 1995). An advantage to this style of co-teaching is that the special educator remains in the classroom to informally observe the large group instruction, but the individual needs of students are met in small groups. In this model of co-teaching, it is important that groups vary by purpose and student inclusion. Cook and Friend (1995) note the greatest risk in this approach is stigmatizing students with disabilities by grouping them for re-teaching repeatedly, with or without other students included as group members. Students who participate in the small group should not always be only those with disabilities. A student struggling with a math concept may participate in the small group instruction and then transition back to the larger group when he or she has mastered the skill. Disadvantages may be that the students might view the teacher working with the larger group as the teacher in control. Space and noise level can also be a disadvantage, often times leading some special educators to pull students into a special education setting.
Team Teaching

Cook and Friend (1995) described team teaching as a model in which both teachers work together to plan and deliver the instruction to the whole class. The lessons are taught by both teachers who are actively engaged in conversation as well as classroom management. An example of an activity or lesson that might be done in a team-teaching model could be making a class chart. In this situation, one teacher might be writing answers on the chart paper while the other teacher is calling on students for more responses. In this situation, both teachers would be discussing the students’ responses and deciding what to put on the chart. Another example may be one teacher reading a book aloud to the class while the other teacher is recording their answers on chart paper. Cook and Friend (1995) expressed that this approach encourages risk taking, where teachers may try things in pairs they would not try alone. Another advantage to team teaching is that both teachers play an active role and in turn students view both teachers as equals. Team teaching can be very engaging for students. At the same time there are challenges to this style of co-teaching (Cook & Friend, 1995). Some of the biggest challenges are that preplanning takes a considerable amount of time and the teachers’ roles need to be clearly defined. While students are often more engaged, this service delivery model lessons lacks the ability to attend to individual needs during instruction. When both teachers are instructing the whole class, there is limited teacher-to-student interactions and individualized support given to students.
Summary

A summary of the six co-teaching models are outlined in Table 4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service Delivery Model</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One Teach, One Observe</td>
<td>One teacher leads the whole group while the other teacher observes and collects data.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One Teach, One Assist</td>
<td>One teacher keeps primary responsibility for teaching, while the other teacher moves around the classroom providing individual assistance to students as needed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parallel Teaching</td>
<td>The teachers plan the instruction together and are both covering the same information, but they divide the class into two groups and teach simultaneously.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Station Teaching</td>
<td>Both teachers divide the instructional content and each take responsibility for planning and teaching part of it. Students are divided into equal, heterogeneous or skill-based groups and work at classroom stations with both teachers. Each teacher then teaches the content to one group and subsequently repeats the instruction for the other group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternative Teaching</td>
<td>One teacher instructs the larger group while another works with a smaller group needing more specialized attention.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team Teaching</td>
<td>Both teachers work together to plan and deliver the instruction to the whole class. The lessons are taught by both teachers who are actively engaged in conversation as well as classroom management.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The steps we have already taken within the building included in this study follow similar steps to that of Theoharis and Causton (2014). By creating a service delivery map (Theoharis et
al., 2016), the special education department gave the entire team a big picture of the special education services being provided and helped shift their perspectives beyond their classrooms and students so they could see the school-wide impact. The school created a team consisting of a special education teacher, general education teachers, administrators, and school support staff to focus on the process of creating a new service delivery map and developing a more inclusive learning environment within the fifth-grade team. While planning for the 2020-2021 school year at Jefferson Middle School, the team agreed to work together to support the success of all students through the co-taught service delivery models.

As the Director of Instruction for the district involved in this study, it was important for this researcher that the co-teaching teams identified and utilized the co-teaching approach that best matched the learning objectives, the students’ needs, and the teachers’ areas of expertise to implement a successful co-teaching partnership in which both teachers experienced both lead and passive roles (Conderman, 2011). Starting with the fifth-grade team allowed the professionals more time to establish relationships, create effective and efficient planning and teaching routines, and to develop confidence in their new roles (Walther-Thomas et al. 1996). The goal was then to develop a co-teaching structure that could be replicated districtwide. An overview of the qualitative approach is provided in Chapter III.
CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to document educator reactions to the co-planning and implementation of co-teaching approaches at the middle school. The findings will help establish effective co-teaching delivery models. This study was designed to work with a fifth-grade co-teaching team to develop a common planning structure that would support the implementation of a variety of co-teaching service delivery models within the co-taught classroom. This chapter outlines the methodology used to conduct the study which includes the research design, participant selection, ethical consideration, and data collection and analysis procedures.

Research Questions

1) How do educators describe the co-planning process and implementation of co-teaching service delivery models in the fifth-grade co-taught classrooms?
   a. What are the effects of co-planning time on the co-teaching service delivery models used in the fifth-grade co-taught classrooms?
   b. What lessons can be learned from a co-planning process for increasing the co-teaching service delivery models within the fifth-grade classrooms?

Research Design

A qualitative approach was selected for this dissertation in practice. Creswell and Creswell (2018) outlined the characteristics of qualitative research that are important to note and relevant in this study. Qualitative researchers tend to collect data in the natural setting where participants experience the problem being investigated. Qualitative researchers gather multiple forms of data themselves through interviewing, examining documents, and observing behavior.
Once the data is obtained, the researcher establishes a set of themes that describe the findings of the study.

Most importantly, this qualitative research is an emergent design, in which some of the process may change after the researcher begins to collect data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The importance behind qualitative research is to learn about the problem or issue from participants and to address the research to obtain that information. For this study, my focus was on the process of utilizing a co-planning approach to implement co-teaching service delivery models.

Site Selection and Participants

The middle school serves students in grades 5 through 8 with a total enrollment of 350 students during the 2020-2021 school year and approximately 100 of the students enrolled in the fifth-grade class. At the time of the study, there were five special education teachers and nineteen content general education teachers. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there were twelve fifth-grade students who chose at-home learning, with three of the twelve being students who received specialized instruction and one of the twelve who possessed a 504 plan. The percentage of students who were enrolled but chose to participate in remote learning was twelve percent of the fifth-grade.

The participants of this study included one co-teaching team, which consisted of one math general education teacher, one language arts general education teacher, one special education teacher, one school psychologist, and one district administrator. Table 5 gives a description of each participant in the study. Participants were identified through purposeful sampling (Clark & Creswell, 2012). Purposeful sampling allows the researcher to select participants and research sites that are associated with the problem being studied (Creswell, 2007). Participants must be knowledgeable about the subject being studied and be willing to participate in the study.
Table 5

Description of Research Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title/Pseudonym</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Director of Instruction</td>
<td>White female, mid-thirties, 15 years of experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 1</td>
<td>White female, mid-twenties, 3 years of experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 2</td>
<td>White male, mid-twenties, 4 years of experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Education Teacher</td>
<td>White female, mid-thirties, 15 years of experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Psychologist</td>
<td>White female, mid-thirties, 15 years of experience</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Participants’ pseudonyms or titles will be the identifiers throughout the remainder of the dissertation.

The middle school was chosen for this research, particularly one fifth-grade co-teaching team. There are several reasons this grade level was chosen. Beginning with the 2017-2018 school year, the district moved to attendance centers, with PreK through second grade students at one elementary building, third and fourth in the next elementary building, fifth through eighth grade at the middle school, and ninth through twelfth grade in the high school. Often times, fifth-grade students are categorized into an elementary model rather than a middle school or middle school. One challenge this often presents is that the IEP team, which includes parents, teachers, and administrators, are worried about that transition for students with IEPs to the middle school setting. The IEP team often has discussions around the concern with an increase in expectations both academically as well as functionally. As a result, the IEP team often places students in a pull-out or instructional setting for their reading and math instruction to make sure their instructional needs are being met.

Another reason behind choosing this team was that beginning in school year 2020-2021,
fifth grade was departmentalized for the first time. Prior to this transition, the special education teacher only had to collaborate with one general education teacher in planning to meet the needs of all students. With the departmentalization, the special education teacher was expected to co-teach with four different content teachers. The focus of this study will be on the special education teacher working with the English Language Arts and Math teachers within the fifth-grade team.

One final reason for choosing this team was because they were the first class in the middle school, and the intention of setting students up to be successful in the general education setting could potentially carry them through their high school career. Ultimately, this team could have a tremendous impact and set the stage for inclusion throughout the remainder of the students’ educational careers.

**Ethical Considerations**

Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval of this research was obtained and permission was granted from the school district prior to data collection. All participants of the study received a copy of the IRB consent form. By selecting participants within the district where I am an educational leader, there was a greater chance that I could positively impact the educational environment. With that also comes several challenges. Gaining trust from this co-teaching team was imperative. It was important that the participants knew that I was not there in an evaluative nature, especially during classroom observations. Fortunately, it had already been established that in my role as the Director of Instruction, I would not participate in the evaluation of staff. However, there was still a chance, as a district administrator, that my presence could affect some of the teacher responses.

After permission was granted from the IRB, an initial meeting was held with the group to give an overview of the rationale behind the work that the team would be doing. All participants
were asked to participate in the study individually and given the opportunity to sign the consent. The meetings of the co-teaching team took place at the school in which the study was conducted.

**Timeline**

This research study took place in a 90-day Cycle of Inquiry. The proposed timeline for meetings for the co-teaching team is listed in Table 6.

**Table 6**

*Timeline of Co-Teaching Team Meetings*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approximate Date</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>December 2020</td>
<td>Professional Learning Activities</td>
<td>Middle School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 2020</td>
<td>Focus Group Session 1</td>
<td>Middle School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 2020</td>
<td>Focus Group Session 2</td>
<td>Middle School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 2020</td>
<td>Focus Group Session 3</td>
<td>Middle School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 2020</td>
<td>Focus Group Session 4</td>
<td>Middle School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 2020</td>
<td>Focus Group Session 5</td>
<td>Middle School</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Data Collection Procedures**

Multiple forms of data collection were obtained to capture the best picture of the research as possible. The data collection procedures for the purposes of this research study are outlined below.

**Professional Learning Activities**

Participants were asked to engage in three professional learning activities for approximately one hour in length before school. These sessions took place within the fifth-grade classroom. Prior to each meeting, participants were asked to read two chapters of *Co-Teach! Building and Sustaining Effective Classroom Partnerships in Inclusive Schools* by Marilyn Friend (2018). The reading assignments took approximately 30 minutes each. During professional
learning sessions, participants engaged in reflective discussions around each chapter. The discussion topics for each session are included below:

- **Professional Learning Session 1:** An introduction of co-teaching and overview of educational legislation were presented. Participants engaged in conversations around the rationale for co-teaching.

- **Professional Learning Session 2:** The focus during this session was on the instructional roles and responsibilities of co-teachers. Participants learned about the six co-teaching approaches as well as selecting co-teaching approaches.

- **Professional Learning Session 3:** This session focused on specially designed instruction, the evaluation of student learning, and the co-teaching planning process. Participants engaged in conversations around weekly and daily planning strategies.

**Co-Teaching Reflection Tool**

Prior to planning sessions with the co-teaching teams, each teacher individually rated the team’s implementation of co-teaching approaches using the 2011 Co-Teaching Reflection Tool developed by the Maryland State Department of Education, Division of Special Education/Early Intervention Services. The reflection tool helped the team reflect on and enhance current co-teaching practices. Teachers were asked to individually check the rating of initiating, developing, or sustaining that best described their co-teaching teams’ current status of collaboration and implementation of co-teaching approaches. Each teacher also used the same tool to individually rate the teams’ implementation of co-teaching approaches following the 90-day cycle of inquiry.
Planning Meetings

During the discussions within the professional learning activities, co-teaching teams developed a structure for co-planning. The special education teacher planned separately with the general education math teacher and the general education English Language Arts teacher. Each co-teaching team decided on the best day and time for planning. Co-teaching teams were asked to share their lesson plan books as well as co-planning notes for purposes of discussion and document analysis.

Participants engaged in six sessions with the fifth-grade co-teaching team that focused on co-planning as well as a reflection around co-teaching strategies and implementation. Field notes were taken. These sessions lasted approximately one hour in length and took place in the fifth-grade English Language Arts classroom.

Journaling

In between focus group sessions, participants were asked to participate in bi-weekly journaling activities that involved reflection upon experiences and conversations that took place. Each co-teacher was asked to complete a bi-weekly Google Form that reflected upon his or her co-teaching experiences over the course of two weeks. Journaling was chosen as a way to provide document for analysis. Bowen (2009) describes the importance of this tactic in research:

1) Documents can provide data on the context within which research participants operate. Such information and insight can help researchers understand the historical roots of specific issues.

2) Information contained in documents can suggest some questions that need to be asked and situations that need to be observed as part of the research. Documents can also
point to questions that need to be asked or to situations that need to be observed, making the use of document analysis a way to ensure research is critical and comprehensive.

3) Documents provide supplementary research data. Documents also contain data that can be observed.

4) Documents provide a means for tracking change and development.

5) Documents can be analyzed as a way to verify findings from other sources, increasing the credibility of the findings.

There are concerns to be aware of when using document analysis as a form of collecting data. There is a chance that documents will not provide all of the necessary information needed to answer the research questions exactly, which requires some investigative skills on the researcher’s part. There are often gaps in the data leading to more searching or reliance on gathering additional documents than originally planned (Bowen, 2009). Bowen (2009) expressed the importance of the researcher thoroughly evaluating and investigating the subjectivity of documents in order to preserve the credibility of the research.

Unfortunately, participants only completed one journaling activity before I chose to discontinue the Google forms. Participants were not very thorough in their responses and I did not feel this was the best way to gather information from them, but rather through our discussions during our co-teaching team meetings.

**Natural Observations**

The school psychologist and I observed each co-teaching team in their natural setting two times for one class period (approximately 40 minutes) throughout the study to provide coaching opportunities in the classroom. In this situation, I was acting in the role of observer as participant. Although one limitation to this type of data collection is that the researcher may be seen as
intrusive, there are several advantages that outweigh the limitations. Advantages noted by Creswell and Creswell (2018) include that the researcher has first-hand experience with the participant and can record information as it occurs. Observations can also be useful in exploring topics that may be uncomfortable for participants to discuss (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

**Data Analysis**

Multiple forms of qualitative data were collected for the purpose of this study. Data analysis in qualitative research involves coding, categorizing the data collected, and thematic analysis. The following steps recommended by Creswell and Creswell (2018) were used during the data analysis process. First, all data described in the data collection procedure was organized and prepared for data analysis. This included typing up all field notes. The next step involved reviewing the data and coding. Creswell and Creswell (2018) described coding as the process of organizing the data by bracketing chunks representing a category. Creswell and Creswell (2018) recommended using this coding process to generate five to seven themes from the data, followed by the interpretation of the corresponding themes. Creswell and Creswell (2018) outlined the process of interpretation as the following: summarize findings, compare findings to the literature, discuss a personal view of the findings, and state limitations to the research.

**Trustworthiness and Credibility**

Validity strategies were incorporated into the research study. First, there was an opportunity for data triangulation by examining the evidence from multiple sources. Triangulation is a comprehensive way to use more than one method to collect data on the same topic. Creswell and Creswell (2018) described this process as one in which the researcher examines evidence from multiple sources to build themes in the research data.

A process called member checking was also used to check the accuracy of qualitative
findings. Creswell and Creswell (2018) stated that this is a process of taking the final report, specific descriptions, or themes back to the participants to determine whether they feel they are accurate. This process involves a follow-up interview with each participant to provide them with an opportunity to review and comment on the findings of the research. Member checking was used as a way to remain transparent with the participants about the information that was gathered during our meetings (Glesne, 2016).

Positionality Statement

Qualitative researchers must consider his or her positionality in relation to the research. Throne (2012) defined positionality as considering one's own position in relation to the research participants and research setting as this may impact all stages of the research process. Foote and Bartell (2011) identified that personal experiences may influence the process and outcomes of the research.

The research focus for this study was mainly chosen based on experiences in my professional career. Although I grew up with a few family members and friends who had children with significant disabilities, my awareness of special education students during my own school experience was relatively low. Generally speaking, as a teenager, I had always shown a great interest in children that had intellectual disabilities. To my knowledge, there were not any students with this level of support or instruction needed at the school I attended growing up. Until consolidating later in my high school career, I had an average of fifteen students in my classes through middle school.

Having always had a passion for supporting students with disabilities, I chose a degree in special education, with an emphasis on working with students with more significant deficits. At the time I received my degree, the certification was for Trainable Mentally Handicapped (TMH)
and Educable Mentally Handicapped (EMH). I started my educational career as a special education teacher in a separate public therapeutic day school. For seven years, I taught children in an environment completely separate from their general education peers. The placement decision was made by the IEP team, with both the district and parents as part of that process. These students were placed in this setting as the team did not feel that they could be successful in the general education classrooms. This was my dream job! I had the opportunity to work with young children in a small group setting and often 1:1 to support their communication, social, and readiness skills. My goal was always to provide students with the tools necessary to successfully transition back to their home schools, into the general education environment with their peers. As I worked with other educators to help transition these students back to their home schools to the classrooms with their typical peers, I started to realize that this is where some of these students should have been receiving specialized instruction all along. These students should have had the opportunity to learn and interact with their typical peers. It was during these transitions back to their home school that I decided to go back to school to be a school administrator. During this time, I worked directly with other general and special education teachers, but I was never in a position where I was considered a co-teacher. In the role of a special education administrator, I felt that I had the opportunity to support more of these students within their home schools.

It wasn’t until I started working in a public school as a special education coordinator and as the director of instruction that I realized the importance of exposure to general education peers and curriculum. Moving into educational administration showed me that I not only have the obligation to educate students in the least restrictive environment, but I also have the ability to provide adequate training to both the general education teachers as well as the special education teachers who are responsible for working together to meet the needs of all their students.
For the purpose of this study, I think it is important to know that as the researcher I am also a school administrator in the building I am doing the research. There is a degree of trust that had to be established as the researcher and a school administrator. My current role as the director of instruction is not responsible for evaluating teachers, but rather seen as someone to support district staff on best practices.

**Summary**

The goal of this chapter was to outline the research methodology used to answer the research questions. A discussion of the procedures, study participants, and data collection were outlined. Chapter IV will provide the study results and demonstrate that the methodology described in Chapter III was followed.
CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS

School Background

The purpose of this study was to document fifth-grade educators’ reactions to the co-planning and implementation of co-teaching approaches at one middle school. The district the middle school is located in annually serves nearly 1,200 students across three rural communities.

The middle school where the study took place enrolls about 350 students in grades five through eight annually. The 2019-2020 school year data showed that about 90.9% of students were white, 1.1% were Black, 4.7% were Hispanic, and 3% were American Indian. About one-third of the student population received free or reduced lunches, and ten percent received special education services. Also, there were thirty-one certified staff members employed, which included nineteen general education teachers, five special education teachers, five specialist teachers, one school psychologist, and one social worker. In addition, there were six paraprofessionals and three administrators, namely one Dean of Students, one building Principal, and the Director of Instruction.

Members of the Study

The research in-collaboration team was comprised of five educators, all of whom were stakeholders of the school (see Table 7). For the purpose of this study, I purposively selected the fifth-grade team and have assigned pseudonyms for each to maintain anonymity. Members of the fifth-grade team consisted of one general education math teacher, one general education literature teacher, and one special education teacher. The core reading and math teachers were the only general education participants. There were two co-teaching teams, one that consisted of the math and special education teachers and one that consisted of the reading and special education teachers. In addition to the co-teaching team, the research team also included me, the
Director of Instruction, as well as the school psychologist. It was extremely important to me that I invited participants whom I thought would be open to change. I was clear in our initial meetings that participation in this research was completely voluntary and anything shared or observed during our time together would not affect their employment. Every person I asked agreed to participate. I was very surprised to soon find out that the team was very anxious to get started. While I was working through the proposal process, team members frequently reached out questioning when we could start our important work.

The special education teacher, Lori, had been on staff at the school for five years but served as a special education teacher for a total of twelve years. During these twelve years she worked in rural middle schools. The general education math teacher, William, was in his second year of teaching at the middle school at the time of the study. During his first year, he taught all subjects. His second year, the 5th grade became departmentalized and he was the math teacher for all students. The general education literature teacher, Melanie, was in her second year of teaching at the middle school at the time of the study. During her first year, she taught all subjects. Her second year, the 5th grade became departmentalized and she was the literature teacher for all students. Jamie had been working in the district as the school psychologist for fifteen years. Although she covered all grade levels, she spent a majority of her time at the middle school and high school.

Up to the point of the research process, I had worked in the field of special education for nineteen years, having first started off teaching special education for a special education cooperative for seven years. From, there I was the special education coordinator supporting districts throughout the county for eight years prior to coming to this middle school as the Director of Instruction.
Table 7

Research Team

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Team Member</th>
<th>Role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lori</td>
<td>Lori has been a special education teacher for twelve years. She has taught in a nearby rural school district prior to coming to Jefferson Middle School five years ago.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William</td>
<td>William was in his second year of teaching at Jefferson Middle School at the time of the study. During his first year, he taught all subjects. His second year, the 5th grade became departmentalized and he was the math teacher for all students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melanie</td>
<td>Melanie was in her second year of teaching at Jefferson Middle School at the time of the study. During her first year, she taught all subjects. Her second year, the 5th grade became departmentalized and she was the literature teacher for all students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jamie</td>
<td>Jamie has been working in the district as the school psychologist for 15 years. Although she has covered all grade levels, she has spent a majority of her time at the middle school and high school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researcher</td>
<td>I have worked in the field of special education for nineteen years, having first started off teaching special education for a special education cooperative for seven years. From there I was the special education coordinator supporting districts throughout the county for eight years prior to coming to Jefferson Middle School as the Director of Instruction.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All of these members were included in the research team. There were two co-teaching teams, which consisted of the special education teacher, Lori, and the general education teacher, William, as the math co-teaching team and the special education teacher, Lori, and the general education teacher, Melanie, as the Language Arts co-teaching team. For the purpose of the research, all participants came together, including Jamie and myself to form the research team.

For the sake of consistency during the COVID-19 pandemic, the members of the study participated in meetings that took place remotely via Zoom. There were a series of three research team professional learning meetings, six co-teaching team meetings, macro planning sessions
between co-teaching partners, and observations. Finally, I conducted individual interviews with each participant.

Holding meetings on Zoom allowed all members to converge even during unforeseen circumstances. Also, I utilized the Zoom recording tool for each meeting so that I would have a record of all the discussions, questions raised, etc., and a way to assist me in analyzing the data gathered during the discussions for my research after the meetings had concluded. The recordings were also extremely helpful for the purpose of reviewing the team’s previous session and commitments, as well as for planning the next session together. When explaining these reasons for the use of recording our sessions, participants had no concerns or questions and all agreed in writing to be part of the research moving forward. Below, I provide excerpts from each meeting to document what occurred and how the meetings helped inform the work of the educators. After each excerpt or documentation, I provide a summary to highlight the main points gathered from each meeting. Finally, I outline themes generated from the data gathered from these meetings, in addition to individual interview data from meetings with each educator. The information presented below provides the findings of the study.

**Excerpts from the Research Team Professional Learning Meetings**

The research team was comprised of two general education teachers, one special education teacher, the school psychologist, and me. There were three professional learning meetings in which all members of the research team participated. During each of the team professional learning meetings, the research team was expected to read sections of *Co-Teach! Building and Sustaining Effective Classroom Partnerships in Inclusive Schools* (Friend, 2018) and have conversations with the team focused on what they learned and how these practices could be implemented in their classrooms. My role in the study was to not only create a safe
place for discussions to occur, but also to facilitate discussions by using prompting questions to encourage dialogue between the participants. To foster productive discussion around the text, I used the following questions as prompts if I needed a way to start the conversations over the chapters for each session:

1) What did I learn?
2) What did I think was interesting?
3) What do I still have questions about?

Below I provide excerpts from each meeting as well as a summary that documents the takeaways from each meeting.

**Research Team Professional Learning Meeting #1**

The research team participated in three professional learning meetings prior to the collaborative work as co-teaching teams. During these three sessions, the goal was for individuals to learn and engage in conversations around what co-teaching is, elements of effective co-teaching partnerships, the six co-teaching service delivery models, and planning for a co-planning structure.

Participants came to the first professional learning meeting on December 3, 2020, having read Chapters 1 and 2 in Friend’s 2018 book. The participants were engaged via Zoom. This meeting was already scheduled prior to one of the staff members being quarantined for being exposed to a positive COVID-19 case. It was important for me to start our conversation by reminding staff of the work we were doing and how we were building a co-planning structure for not only our team but also a structure that we could share with other teams both within and outside of the district, even during a global pandemic. From there, I shared a few highlights of
the district’s story over the past couple of years that focused on including and supporting our special education students. In brief, that story began during the 2017-2018 school year when we started having the discussion about providing all our special education students access to the general education curriculum in science and social studies. Although the work to change their services was not difficult, the continued effort to support their needs and differentiate instruction within those settings was an area of professional learning and growth for co-teaching teams. Then during the 2018-2019 school year, the building was identified as underperforming based on the ESSA standards. The data for each school was categorized by ten measures of performance, which included growth (Illinois State Board of Education, 2019). The underperforming designation indicated that one or more student groups were underperforming at or below the “all students” group in the lowest performing 5% of schools. The middle school involved in this research was considered a targeted school based on the scores and growth of its special education subgroup. With this designation, we were provided additional funds, tools, and resources to support our success.

Prior to receiving this designation, the district hired an additional special education teacher, which allowed the middle school to have a special education teacher at each grade level. The idea behind this was to provide a special education teacher in all subject areas to administer special education instruction within the general education classrooms. It was during the 2019-2020 school year that the special education department and administration began to look at how students were being serviced as a whole. As part of these conversations, we identified that we had more students in the pull-out instructional setting than we did in the general education co-taught settings. At this point, we made the commitment as a 5th grade team to work on our service delivery model to support the special education students within our general education
classrooms. This story led to the reason why we were meeting even during one of the most challenging times during a pandemic. Following the story about the work that we had already done, it was important for me to create an environment that was safe for open and honest conversation. I emphasized that I was learning with and from all of the team members and that hopefully together we would build a structure that not only the team could use but could be replicated with other teams. I made sure to tell the team that I was learning alongside them, which also meant reading the same text with them which I had not done prior to our time together. Following our initial discussion about the work we had already done in our building, we had a discussion around the text we read prior to our meeting.

Outlined below are some of our conversations about Chapters 1 and 2. I started the discussion with one of my guiding discussion questions “What did I learn?” hoping to help others feel comfortable and prompt the conversation with the team. We referred back to the text that “co-teaching should never be treated primarily or exclusively as a means for socialization. An academic or pre-academic should always be addressed” (Friend, 2018). Reflecting with the team, I shared that although I completely agree with this statement, I have made previous comments to teams that what we care about is that students are placed in the general education classrooms for socialization. This brought up further discussion about the importance of students learning skills such as raising their hand, working with a group, and preparing materials.

Lori referred to the chapters and the outline of what co-teaching is and what it should look like:

Melanie and William are very open to letting me provide instruction. I feel like it is hard because they teach each subject five times a day and they only have me in their classrooms once a day. It’s systematic for them because it is routine. I see it a lot in math
because I want to jump in all the time but he is so routine and systematic. It just comes naturally to them and I don’t want to interrupt them. I think to myself I have this strategy that may be helpful to some students but maybe he will say it in five minutes. I have given a couple of hints or strategies and I think William uses them in other classes. I think that is something over the course of the year that we have to work on.

William followed up with the following statement:

I think at least five times this year I have taken things from 2nd hour that I learned from Lori and told it to 3rd and 4th hour classes, and then when students come back to me the next day for 1st hour, telling the students, Lori taught us this. It was a great strategy!

The team discussed the challenges as they transitioned to being departmentalized, through which each general education teacher instructs the same subject five times a day with only one section being co-taught. The previous year each general education teacher taught all subjects with a special education teacher in his or her room all day to support the same students. Lori expressed her feelings about this change:

Last year I had the luxury of being with the same general education teacher every hour and we had more time to talk. This year I am co-teaching with a different general education teacher each class period and I don’t have that same time with each teacher. The one downside of working with a different general education teacher every period is now I don’t have that time with them, whether that be between classes or small increments of downtime between instruction.

The team also had a discussion around the special education teacher’s comfort level with the content. William directed this comment to Lori:

Correct me if I am wrong Lori, but I think you are pretty comfortable with the math
content to the point where if you really wanted to, we could each do half of the instruction, in which you are not sitting in the back of the classroom. Lori agreed with him and expressed that she felt the first year involved learning the content enough to feel comfortable teaching it. It was during these conversations that staff reflected on their current practices.

I referred the team to the text on page 8: “The determination of whether two professionals in a classroom are co-teaching is less about the quantity of time they spend together than the intentionality of their shared work and its planning, implementation, and evaluation” (Friend, 2018). One teacher commented, “I marked some things that I struggle with that Marilyn Friend said co-teaching is not.” I took note that it appeared she was reflecting on some of her current practices, which she was not ready to share yet. I reminded the staff that our conversations were not evaluative in any way and that I wanted us to be able to talk through and reflect on our current practices as we go through this process.

**Summary of Research Team Professional Learning Meeting #1**

To wrap up the first professional learning session together, the following are a few important themes to note:

1) The team faced the challenge of being departmentalized. That is, one teacher teaches the same content multiple times a day and only one of those sections is co-taught. This also increases the number of general education teachers the special education teacher works with, decreasing the amount of time they have to spend together.

2) The team identified the characteristics of co-teaching, as well as what is not co-teaching.

3) The team recognized the importance of co-planning and implementation of co-teaching practices.
The team came together for the second professional learning session the following week, December 10, 2020. All participants were engaged via Zoom. The team’s discussion focused on co-teaching instructional roles and responsibilities from Chapter 3 and co-teaching approaches from Chapter 4 of Marilyn Friend’s *Co-Teach! Building and Sustaining Effective Classroom Partnerships in Inclusive Schools*. The learner outcomes, which we used to focus our conversation, outlined by Friend (2018, p. 53) for Chapter 3 include the following:

1) Clarify the unique contributions that each professional makes to the co-teaching partnership.

2) Explain the importance of a shared philosophy, prerequisite skills, and collaboration in forming strong and effective co-teaching partnerships.

3) Analyze topics that co-teachers should address in order to strengthen their partnership and avoid miscommunication.

4) Discuss matters related to classroom procedures and behavior management that co-teachers may need to negotiate in their co-taught classroom.

The learner outcomes outlined by Friend (2018, p. 81) in Chapter 4 are as follows:

1) Explain six approaches for delivering co-taught instruction, including examples of the opportunities they provide, challenges they may pose, and variations of them.

2) Analyze factors that should influence the approaches co-teachers implement.

3) Generate ideas to make the best instructional use of two professionals in the classroom for students with diverse needs.

The co-teaching team had already engaged in several conversations about the challenges
faced between content pacing and mastery. The general concern was that while the special education teacher is concerned about students not mastering the skill or concept, the general education teacher is concerned about the need to keep moving forward to cover the expected curriculum in the time allotted. Friend (2018) expressed that a key characteristic of co-teaching is the blending of the general education teacher’s expertise and the special education teacher’s expertise to enhance students’ educational success. The general education teacher is responsible for the curriculum and even more specifically what needs to be taught, in what order, and how this content fits into the curriculum scope and sequence. They are also experts in the pacing of this content, navigating how to get through the content in the time allocated (Friend et al., 2010). The difference in training is that the special education teacher is the expert in the process of learning with an emphasis on mastery. Friend (2018) noted that special education teachers tend to prioritize helping students master specific concepts and skills, even if that means not completing all the content that is supposed to be addressed. These differences in expertise lead to differences in beliefs about how to provide classroom instruction. Friend (2018) recommended co-teaching teams have discussions and a classroom in which teaching and learning reflect the blending of the best of each perspective.

Chapter 4 focused on the six co-teaching models. The team discussions regarding each model are reflected below.

**One Teach, One Assist**

William started off by sharing that after reading Chapter 4 he felt like there were a lot of things he shouldn’t be doing. He commented, “It is the one teach, one assist category. A lot of times it is just me upfront and Lori is walking around and wanting stuff to do and I don’t give her anything to do. It is all on me.”
I reminded him of the conversation from the previous week that it is about reflection, specifically reflection as a team and how to improve as a co-teaching team together. The team had a conversation that they feel that they gravitate towards one teach, one assist given the structure of the schedule discussed last week. With five sections of the same math class but only one section with the special education teacher providing co-taught instruction, the teachers felt like this was the model they gravitated towards the most. Given that Friend (2018) recommended this co-teaching model to be used the least, the team asked themselves, “How does this co-taught section look different than the rest of the sections?”

**Station Teaching**

As the team began to talk about the different styles or models of co-teaching, some concerns or obstacles were shared regarding station teaching. The class periods at the middle school are forty-two minutes. Prior to departmentalization, the teachers could choose to run over the 42-minute period or use two periods if that fit in their schedule. With the updated structure, the instruction for each content area must be provided within the 42-minute class period and then the students move on to the next subject. The team addressed concerns that forty-two minutes was not enough time to utilize station teaching. Again, this brought up the issue between content pacing versus mastery. Lori expressed concerns that “the pacing is too fast.”

William referred to some ideas shared by Friend (2018) on page 88. One idea was that during the first half of the first day of a lesson, the teachers might team teach. During the second half of that period, the students could complete the first of three stations. When students return the next day, they would complete the two remaining stations. Melanie also shared an idea she used in the past in which she would do a ten-minute mini lesson for all the students in the class. Following the mini lesson, the students who grasped the concept quickly would transition to the
independent station for the remainder of the class, while the co-teachers worked with the other two groups who needed more instruction. During the transition between stations, one of the co-teachers would check in with the independent station. The team also had a discussion that running the stations in this format would eliminate the challenge of needing each station to be independent of one another since students would be getting whole group instruction prior to the stations. Friend (2018) referred to something similar when she described a variation of station teaching called incomplete stations. In this model, students participate in two out of three stations. Friend (2018) gave the example that in the first station the students who are high achievers work on writing. In the second station, the general education teacher meets with them to provide feedback and review concepts. The students who are struggling with the content the most begin with the general education teacher to go over a basic version of the key concepts. Then they move to the special education teacher for additional direct writing instruction. This model of utilizing incomplete stations provides teachers an opportunity to work with students for a longer period of time while also addressing their specific learning needs.

Parallel Teaching

The co-teaching partners had never utilized the parallel model of co-teaching. Friend (2018) recommended that if co-teaching is new, teams may begin with parallel or station teaching.

Alternative Teaching

The conversations around alternative teaching focused on supporting both the students who are struggling and also the students who could use some enrichment opportunities. William shared that he “thought about a morning check-in time where I think it is changing every day, as opposed to the same six students being pulled out. This could be used as a morning check-in for
academics and/or social emotional.”

**Team Teaching**

The conversations regarding team teaching focused on one teacher leading the discussion while the other teacher models note-taking on the board. William expressed that he would like to plan for this model of co-teaching when stations are not being implemented. One conversation the team centered on switching the roles so that both teachers are fully engaged in the delivery of the instruction. Melanie shared with the team that last year she and Lori had utilized this model often. She explained that: “Lori would teach the lesson at the front of the class. I would be on the document camera with the notebook, doing it along with the students and adding things in where it was needed. That worked really well. I really enjoyed our Language Arts class.”

Melanie also commented the following about team teaching:

It was definitely beneficial having a full day together last year. I thought it was really beneficial when Lori and I would have the opportunity to talk right after the lesson we just taught. It is helpful to have the conversation this is what works together so this is what we should do tomorrow based off of the information we have today.

The team further examined the comment about the difference between working with one co-teaching partner all day versus the challenges of having the special education teacher in the classroom for only one period of the day. Jamie made the following statement about this topic:

I think that is a challenge at the middle school and high school for all grade levels and special education teachers. How do you bounce from class to class as a special education teacher and feel like you are fully integrated into each of those classes you are going to throughout the day? That is really hard!

Following the conversations about the co-taught instructional models, Melanie shared
with the team, “I think we did a lot of those things not knowing what they were. This helps to validate what I am doing.” Following this comment, Amber reiterated the importance of being more intentional about planning for the implementation of these practices. William shared the following thoughts with the team:

I think a good way to start would be to pick one of the easier models and see how we can start planning for and implementing that model once a week. That should probably fall on the general education teacher who is doing the curriculum planning. How can I set up a lesson this week so we could do station teaching? And then we could do the actual planning of the stations together.

Jamie responded that this may take some trial and error on the co-teachers’ part. Melanie felt that the biggest challenge at the moment was the planning time and that they did not have any shared planning time other than before or after school. If the special education teacher was not providing remote learning services to students related to the COVID-19 pandemic, she would have shared planning time with one of the two general education teachers. The research team wrapped up this conversation and I encouraged the co-teaching team that there had already been growth in our discussions and reiterated that “it is all about reflection and learning together as a team.”

**Summary of Research Team Professional Learning Meeting #2**

To wrap up the second professional learning session together, the following themes are important to note:

1) The differences in teaching expertise came up again during the team meeting. The team had discussions regarding the curriculum pacing and mastery of content.
2) The research team discussed the six co-teaching models and challenges to work through. The team shared that they naturally gravitate towards the model that requires the least amount of intentional planning: one teach, one assist. The team stressed concerns about being able to implement station teaching in one class period, which is forty-two minutes.

3) The research team had discussions about the challenges of planning. With the departmentalization, the special education teacher must plan with multiple teachers. The co-teachers also do not have a shared planning period. Without these supports built in, the team questioned how they would work to fully integrate special education teachers into each class.

Research Team Professional Learning Meeting #3

The team met for the third and final round of professional learning on December 17, 2020. All participants were engaged via Zoom. This week the team focused on Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 of Co-Teach! Building and Sustaining Effective Classroom Partnerships in Inclusive School by Friend (2018). The learner outcomes identified by Friend (2018, p. 113) for Chapter 5 include the following:

1) Analyze the meanings of common instructional terms and explain their application in co-teaching.

2) Describe characteristics of specially designed instruction, including the domains in which it typically occurs and the forms it often takes.

3) Assess your use of SDI in co-teaching and outline a plan to increase its implementation within the six co-teaching approaches.

4) Critique various methods used to evaluate and assign grades for the learning of students with special needs in general education settings and apply them to your co-teaching.
The learner outcomes identified by Friend (2018, p. 139) for Chapter 6 are as follows:

1) Outline the components of a contemporary model for co-teaching planning.

2) Use time-efficient strategies for macro, day-to-day, and on-the-spot planning for co-teaching.

3) Ensure that the physical and other arrangements in the shared classroom enhance student learning and minimize disruptions.

4) Articulate beneficial co-teaching classroom procedures and routines.

When prompted with the question “What are some things that you took away and learned from these two chapters?” William commented that “Chapter 5 made me reflect on the need to address the individualized needs of our students. We don’t address the individualized needs near as much as there needs to be.” The team felt that both chapters took the roles of the special education teacher and the general education teacher and separated them more. Lori commented, “It is my understanding that the general education teacher does the planning, and the special education teacher needs to modify the content and make sure the accommodations are being met.”

The co-teaching partners began having conversations about their planning time and what that might look like within their current schedule or structure when one of the general education teachers, William, brought up the macro planning tool on page 147 of the text (Friend, 2018). Murawski and Dieker (2004) expressed the importance of teachers having designated planning time to discuss their instruction. Friend (2018) shared that the way educators typically view planning time is that they need one planning period per week with each teaching partner or one planning period each day with the expectation of having a single partner. With the time and funding dilemmas districts and educators are facing, Friend (2018) encouraged educators to think
about co-teaching planning time from a different perspective, from a contemporary planning model. This three-part model includes the following:

1) Periodic face-to-face planning- Friend (2018) encouraged educators to shift their thinking about how much time can be reasonably arranged and how it can feasibly be scheduled and efficiently used. Since finding time in the master schedule for co-teachers to plan together can be a challenge, Friend (2018) recommended that teams work with their administrators to find a means to provide coverage for co-teachers for at least an hour once every three to four weeks for macro planning.

2) Electronic planning- In this model, co-teachers use electronic planning as their primary means of outlining details and dividing up co-teacher responsibilities for the day-to-day instruction.

3) On the spot planning- Even when both face-to-face and electronic planning have been effective, sometimes co-teachers need just a few minutes to touch base.

With these co-planning components in mind, Friend (2018) outlined a co-teaching planning process, in which the general education teacher is expected to come to the macro planning meeting having reviewed the upcoming curriculum beforehand and be able to explain the upcoming curriculum, projects, and activities. During their planning discussions, co-teachers review instructional points, student data, and look for patterns in co-teaching routines. The co-teachers would end their discussion reflecting on past instruction and partnership. Following the meeting, the special education teacher prepares any materials or specialized strategies necessary for the instruction and plans for meeting IEP goals. Based on a one-hour planning session, Friend (2018) outlined the planning protocol. The macro planning protocol outlines these steps and the time allocated to each topic (Appendix A).
The team discussed various ways to implement the macro planning protocol within their current schedule. William shared that he had short periods of time with Lori to discuss their lesson while the students were completing a bell ringer. He shared that he felt by using the macro planning tool it would “clear things up for each person to do beforehand or after for the special education teacher.” He went on to say, “If we do something like this beforehand that 2-3 minutes before each lesson is way more useful because we have both looked at the plans beforehand. I felt like both these chapters took these two roles and separated them more for us.” Lori commented back, “This helps make it very clear that the general education teacher does the planning of the core content and the special education teacher needs to modify and make sure the accommodations are being met.”

Following much discussion about ways to incorporate the macro planning process and protocol into their routine, the team made the commitment to utilize the macro planning protocol for both co-teaching teams. William recommended meeting one time a month, whereas Melanie expressed concerns that she was continuously adjusting her instruction and her plans did not stay the same. The team agreed on meeting at the beginning of each month, intentionally following the macro planning protocol suggested by Friend (2018). Each team would do a two-week check in to make any necessary adjustments. Each co-teaching team would have its first macro planning meeting in January. The team also committed to meeting as an entire team monthly to check in on the process and determine if any adjustments needed to be made.

Lori expressed, “I feel like this is a strong team and I am excited to improve it. I just hope next year we continue to focus on it, giving us the time to plan together and create something that is sustainable.” I reiterated to the team that the goal of our work together was to develop a structure that was not only sustainable for our team, but hopefully a structure that would also
work for other co-teaching teams as well.

Summary of Research Team Professional Learning #3

To wrap up the third and final professional learning session together, the themes below are important to note:

1) The team made a commitment to utilizing the macro planning protocol outlined in Friend (2018) on page 147. Each co-teaching team would meet once a month with a bi-weekly check-in to make any necessary adjustments.

2) The research team would meet once a month to reflect on the process and make any necessary adjustments.

Macro Planning Sessions

Each co-teaching team made the commitment to meet once a month and follow the macro planning template, in addition to attending a two-week check-in. During these macro planning sessions, one of the teachers filled in notes in the macro planning template found in Appendix B. The expectation of the general education teacher was that prior to the macro planning meeting, the general education teacher reviewed the upcoming curriculum for discussion at the meeting. The outline used during the macro planning session between teachers was as follows:

1) The general education teacher outlined upcoming curriculum, content, and activities and projects for material that would be addressed within the co-taught class.

2) Both teachers reviewed student data. This helped them identify student learning status, gaps in student learning, and specialized student needs that may affect instructional decisions.
3) Both teachers discussed points of difficulty in the upcoming instruction. What are the possible barriers to student learning? How could these challenges be lessened or overcome? How could student IEP and language learning goals be incorporated into this instruction using specially designed instruction?

4) Both teachers examined patterns for their co-teaching. They should consider the six co-teaching approaches and variations, identify patterns in the class of when review, assessments, and other predictable activities occur, and decide when and where the six approaches might be best employed.

5) This time was reserved for partnership discussions, including co-teaching concerns, communication, housekeeping items, and successes/issues related to the past four-week period (Friend, 2018).

Over the course of the research, the math co-teaching team documented five macro planning sessions (Appendix C) and the literature co-teaching team documented four macro planning sessions (Appendix D). The discussions had during these meetings are shared in the excerpts from the co-teaching team meetings. Each co-teaching team also held bi-weekly check-ins but did not always document these conversations.

**Excerpts from the Co-Teaching Team Meetings**

The research team came together six times over the course of the semester to review commitments, share experiences, successes, and challenges, and adjust the co-teaching practices and commitment of our team. Participating in these meetings included both co-teaching teams as well as the school psychologist, Jamie, and myself. I have provided excerpts from each meeting.
Co-Teaching Team Meeting #1

Following three professional learning sessions as a team, the team met on January 21, 2021, to discuss the process and implementation thus far. The team met via Zoom and each meeting lasted approximately 25 minutes. Prior to this team meeting, each co-teaching team had met for a macro planning session. A summary is described below.

William and Lori met for their first macro planning session on January 25, 2021 and followed the same macro planning outline. I was also present in this macro planning session. During this gathering, the co-teaching team decided that in addition to meeting they would reconvene the following week to align with a new chapter, adjusting the planning session for the first and third week of the month. During the discussion on points of difficulty in the upcoming instruction, the special education teacher voiced concerns regarding the pacing of the content. The special education teacher expressed thoughts that some of the special education students may require more time to master content, whereas the general education teacher was concerned about the pacing of the content and getting through the chapters within the designated timeframe. The current math curriculum, *Go Math*, outlines the number of days recommended for each lesson. There was a discussion regarding how to provide some additional support to students who needed the content pace slowed, needed more practice, etc. It was brought up in conversation that maybe the special education students who needed more practice or content provided at a slower pace could double up on a station during station teaching to give them more practice on fewer concepts. It makes sense that co-teachers would have ongoing discussions focused on pacing versus mastery of content given the researchers (Friend, et al., 2010) shared that general educators are the experts in curriculum, standards, and pacing, whereas, the focus of special educators adds expertise related to the process of learning, highly individualized
William noted that he would like to see station teaching during all math lessons that were outlined to be a two-day lesson. Both co-teachers agreed on starting with groups based on skill level. A discussion occurred about station teaching and how to implement it. As the co-teachers began planning for station teaching, William and Lori discussed the best ways to implement the independent station by asking the following questions: Do you have three different problems? How do the students in the independent station complete problems without daily instruction? They considered using a review or a problem from the previous day to implement at the independent station so students could work more independently. They also shared the concern that they did not feel students were able to complete tasks independently without disrupting the other groups. After a discussion, they decided that the independent station could be spent on giving more time with vocabulary for upcoming lessons. They agreed on matching the front (term) with the back (definition). Lori committed to prepping this station prior to the lesson. There was also a discussion about potentially differentiating the independent station based on the skill levels of students. Based on previous conversations, William was concerned about providing those higher-level students with enrichment. This may be a way to provide enrichment opportunities during station teaching.

As the co-teachers reflected on where they were at in the co-teaching process, they decided to meet again the following week as it was important that their macro planning sessions be scheduled prior to the month or unit. Both William and Lori noted that it helped during team teaching to have one writing while the other was instructing. William also stated that it would be helpful to have increased instructional time for the 2021-2022 school year since the middle school is looking to revise the schedule, allowing for twenty more minutes in each class period.
During the last reflection in the macro planning process, William noted that this planning for math instruction is for one period of the day. He expressed concerns that he teaches the same lessons solo for the remainder of the day and is not able to utilize all of the strategies implemented in a co-taught setting throughout his other sections of math instruction.

William and Lori began the co-teaching team meeting by sharing that they facilitated their first macro planning session. As the general education teacher was expected to do, William came to the meeting with a four-week outline of the curriculum. He explained that the two of them went through the macro planning tool but didn’t feel that it took them as much time as they thought. He added that they did have short periods of time before and after class to touch base each day, which could have resulted in them not needing as much planning time to go through the macro planning tool. When the team first committed to using the macro planning tool, William expressed concerns about having to plan that far in advance. After his first macro planning session with Lori, he recognized the benefit to using a four-week lesson plan template for all his classes. Lori also shared the following about their process:

The model forced us to look at which students were potentially struggling more. I know when Melanie and I macro planned we identified three additional students that we would provide additional targeted support. I know William and I did too. We looked at FastBridge scores\(^1\). With Melanie we were working on a novel, so we were looking at classroom data for that novel. That part I enjoyed. I don’t feel like I necessarily look at the other kids outside of the special education students. I felt this forced us to and that was a very positive thing.

Following the conversation and reflection on the macro planning session, the team

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\(^1\) Fastbridge is a universal screening tool the district utilizes, which uses both curriculum-based measures (CBM) and computer adaptive tests for reading and math measures.
discussed the implementation of co-teaching models. William shared that once a week he would like to try parallel teaching. Their parallel teaching structure at the time involved the general education and special education teacher each handling a different problem and then switching groups. This allowed all students to work in a small group but receive the same instruction. Both teachers noted the increase in confidence and participation in some of the students from the parallel teaching structure. Commenting about one specific student, Lori said, “I feel like our classroom set up has given her the confidence and I feel like the small group has helped her to distinguish that and open up a bit.” Lori brought up the idea of differentiating the same problem based on the groups. William stated that he finds team teaching beneficial, with a focus on one teacher leading the instruction and the other writing the process out on the board. He is concerned that without being intentional about it, they fall back to the One teach, One assist method of co-teaching. He expressed wanting to do some of the guided problems as a whole group in a team-teaching format and then split up into parallel teaching with smaller groups.

Melanie and Lori conducted their first macro planning session together on January 8, 2021. During this planning session, the general education teacher outlined the upcoming curriculum with plans to wrap up the current novel and begin the *Land of Stories* by the end of the month. During their discussion regarding student data to identify learning needs, they identified two students who required additional support in addition to the students with IEPs in the classroom. They also discussed more interactive read-alouds with the upcoming novel. In the next section of the planning tool, teachers analyzed points of difficulty with the upcoming instruction and how these challenges could be lessened. Teachers also considered how student IEP goals could be incorporated into instruction. It was during this session that the teachers discussed having more check-ins during the read-alouds, as well as having a teacher position
themselves in relation to some behavioral needs. Lori collected data during oral reviews for comprehension and fluency goals that were addressed during independent work time. During the conversation about the six co-teaching approaches, the co-teachers discussed utilizing station teaching during activities and a teaming approach while the text was being read through audio. Melanie brought up the concern about how to incorporate a constructivist style of supporting student inquiry within a co-taught model.

Melanie and Lori shared with the team that they were in the middle of a novel when they met for their first macro planning session. Although the students were participating in literacy circles, through the macro planning process the co-teachers identified areas of concern and modified the groups, splitting the students into groups based on their skill level. One of the teachers shared that one group of students was able to read the text on their own, one group was facilitated by the general education teacher, and one group needed extensive support which was moderated by the special education teacher. Melanie continued to express concerns about how to utilize the co-teaching models with a constructivist teaching style. She said, “I would like to see if there are any models of co-teaching that are more like social constructivist teaching where the kids are helping each other to learn through projects and creating things. I think we can still use the models but with more of the student engagement and leadership part of it.”

The team ended the meeting by committing to trying to assemble as 5th grade co-teaching teams every two weeks.

**Co-Teaching Team Meeting #2**

Prior to the co-teaching team meeting, Melanie and Lori conducted a macro planning session. They met for the second time on January 28, 2021, as a mid-point check in. After an update of the content to be covered, the co-teachers discussed giving particular students tracking
tools to assist with read-a-louds during class. They also decided that the special education teacher will read aloud questions to a group of students during independent work time. The special education teacher brought up the concern that she felt that they needed to stop to discuss the text more often when reading the audiobook. Both teachers also reflected on their own practices, each sharing something they should work on.

William and Lori also conducted a macro planning session on February 1, 2021, in preparation for a new chapter. As discussed in an earlier macro planning session, the upcoming lesson would take two days allowing them to utilize a station teaching model on the second day. When reviewing the student data, they identified that a majority of the students mastered the least common multiple. For two students, Lori decided to continue to target them with more specific instruction. As they discussed points of difficulty and how these challenges could be lessened, they agreed upon being purposeful in reviewing the previous days’ lesson. IEP goal data was collected through the spiral curriculum (specifically independent practice problems). As the co-teachers discussed patterns for co-teaching, they talked about using teaming for introducing and reviewing most topics. They decided to incorporate stations on day two of the lesson. They met again on March 15, 2021. During the discussion, William shared that for the next couple of weeks the students would be doing some review in preparation for state assessments. During this session, they reviewed student data from Prodigy to determine the overall understanding of multiplying fractions. Following the review of data, they decided that Lori would give a step-by-step handout to students who were struggling to grasp the concept of changing improper fractions. Lori also expressed needing to be more aware of grades on independent activities to collect data on story problems for IEP objectives.

The team met via Zoom on February 11, 2021, with the meeting lasting approximately
thirty-five minutes. The team started the conversation by reflecting on the macro planning process. Lori and William committed to macro planning every four weeks with a two-week check-in. William expressed that planning ahead for their macro planning session is “a lot of work.” Lori shared with the team that she did not feel like she needed to see the general education teacher’s lessons plans for the four weeks out but found it most beneficial to look at the data to see what students needed most for support. I gathered the teachers were questioning whether they needed to follow the complete macro planning process and expressed concerns about the lack of planning if the complete process was not followed. William shared that the most important aspect of planning for him was to decide what days he and the special education teacher were going to use different co-teaching models as opposed to just utilizing the one teach, one assist model. The team then had a conversation about the planning structure and how it could potentially look different for different co-teaching teams. I reminded the team that they are developing a system that works for them, and in the end, something they can sustain. After going back and forth, the team decided to continue with the current macro planning structure and revisit in another month.

The math co-teaching team shared an experience with station teaching. On the first day of the lesson students being introduced to new vocabulary. On the second day, students were divided among three groups, one independent and two teacher-led stations. William and Lori expressed concerns with having three stations without all students being independent as many of the students were not actively engaged in the independent station. William shared, “It didn’t go as good as I would have hoped it would.”

One conversation that was ongoing during this research between the general education teachers, William and Melanie, and the special education teacher, Lori, involved the topic of
mastery versus pacing. During macro planning and team discussions, the team debated the
difference in training and the viewpoint between the general education teacher and the special
education teacher. The general education teacher’s purpose is to focus on curriculum pacing,
whereas the special education teacher’s focus is on specially designed instruction and mastery of
skills. Following multiple conversations on this topic and trust between the team members, Lori
began to express concerns that she did not feel students were mastering a skill or concept being
taught in the classroom. She shared a story with the team:

I will compliment William because I was struggling last week and was concerned
because I did not think in general the class was understanding the content. When I
expressed this to him, his immediate reaction was that we have to keep moving, but he
came back to me later in the day and we talked through it and decided to take a step back
and focus on the least common multiple and common denominators for the entire day. I
questioned if I overstepped but I think from talking through it together we both
established that they all needed more support in this area.

I encouraged these difficult conversations the team was beginning to have. When Lori
commented about feeling bad because she may have overstepped in “his room,” William quickly
chimed back expressing, “It is not my room when you are in here. When you are in here, it is our
classroom.”

The math co-teaching team circled back around to station teaching and the concerns with
students being able to be independently engaged in the station. I shared that it may have a more
positive impact at the beginning of the year when teachers set up classroom expectations for each
co-teaching model. Given the timing, there was a challenge with teaching students a new routine
in the middle of the school year. One idea that was shared was to use technology for the third
station. I ended that conversation by saying I thought the biggest thing was that the team was reflecting on what went well and what could use some adjusting. William inquired about some professional development that Melanie had participated in during the previous school year, specifically noting the need for wanting to learn more about station teaching. I shared information on the “Power of 2” as presented by Marilyn Friend (2016) to give them the opportunity to see each co-teaching model in action.

I had a scheduled observation in a co-taught literature class on January 28, 2021. During our team session, the co-teaching partners were asked to follow up on the plan for that day and what co-teaching model they were utilizing. The co-teaching partners were very honest about the lack of a plan between them as well as neither one of them remembering that I was coming to observe. One of the teachers had been gone the day before due to COVID-19 related matters. At that point, we let the other members of the team leave our session and we had a conversation about the real, daily struggles of co-teaching but also the need to do better. Discussion centered on how they could have done that same lesson within a different co-teaching structure. I commented about their reflection on the macro planning tool for that day. The co-teachers had already self-assessed and noted during the macro planning process that one needed to be more engaged when students are working and one needed to stay focused during content. I asked Lori and Melanie how Jamie can help them move forward. They both shared observations and feedback. When asked if she minded if Jamie came in unannounced, Melanie welcomed this and even commented that she had not planned. She said, “I would rather have a full idea of my classroom then just a glorified version of my classroom. If I know you are coming, I’m going to make sure my lesson is top notch and I have practiced it but that is not what is happening every day.” Based on the observation, I gave very specific feedback that they needed to have an
objective for each lesson and clearly be able to communicate that with each other. I explained that communication, with both understanding what the expectations are of each other and what you are doing, was probably their biggest challenge at the moment. Prior to wrapping up our session for the day, I reminded the team that the conversations we were having were within our team and would not be shared for evaluative purposes.

Co-Teaching Team Meeting #3

The team met via Zoom on February 25, 2021, with the meeting lasting approximately 32 minutes. William was not able to meet on this day due to a family circumstance. Prior to this session, I had shared the *Power of 2* video by Marilyn Friend (2016). The focus of this video was to demonstrate the six different co-teaching models. I started the conversation by asking the team if they had any takeaways after watching the video. Lori commented, “I thought they did a really good job but wonder if they are that fluid if they are not being recorded.” Both Lori and Melanie did express concerns that they thought co-teaching is easier to do both at the elementary level and when the students are self-contained in one classroom all day. The co-teachers reflected on their co-teaching practices based on what they saw in the video. They shared a story about how they work together in a team-teaching situation. Melanie described their common practice:

> A lot of times we’re listening to the recording of the book. I’ll give Lori the mouse to stop the recording so that she can ask comprehension questions and then we get to an assignment, which I will facilitate. So, it is like we switch roles throughout the lesson.

In the *Power of 2* video, Friend (2016) shared that during station teaching there were three stations and every student participated in the teacher station, but it depended on how often or how long based on the needs of the students. Melanie noted that she has tried to be intentional about creating heterogeneous groups, rather than skill level groups. She said, “They have a
difference in skill levels so that they can peer teach and help each other out.” Jamie shared the following comment:

I would imagine when you are talking about grouping like that, it is also a matter of just trying it a few times because it’s almost like the first day of school, like the first time you implement it is new to them. You are probably going to feel like it doesn’t go well. So, I guess I would also just say don’t get discouraged by that because I think it is almost something they have to learn to use that strategy.

In regard to the transitions and expectations within each model, I shared that when I was watching the video, I was thinking these kids do this, probably a couple of times a week, so they are used to it and know what the expectations are for each activity or co-teaching model. The teachers brought back up the concern about students being able to engage in the independent station or activity. The video encouraged using a low-level task at this station to start, which brought up the concern that some of these tasks do not take long to complete. I wrapped up by commenting to the team that they should keep expectations low to start in terms of what you can expect them to do independently and then build independence over time.

When asked how planning was going, Melanie stated that she felt like it was going well, commenting that they were just going through each chapter and the materials were posted on Google classroom. Melanie then asked Lori how she felt it was going from her perspective. In response, Lori shared that Melanie was already aware of this but she believed they should stop after each chapter and answer comprehension questions. She said, “I think we should stop and do the work after each chapter so that the students can wrap up the chapter before moving on to the next, but then the kids want to keep going and so when they are excited in the book it is hard for me to be like no Melanie you need to stop and answer comprehension questions.”
Again, this discussion was a productive reflection on the difference between the training and expertise of the general education teacher and the special education teacher. Since their last conversation about this during their macro planning session, Melanie stopped throughout the novel to ask or answer comprehension questions. Both Lori and Melanie expressed interest in seeing other co-teaching teams, especially with a focus on middle school and a departmentalized grade level. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic had an impact on the teams’ ability to visit other districts to observe and meet with other co-teaching teams.

Following my most recent classroom observation and discussions with the team members, I recommended that Melanie and Lori specifically communicate the objective of each lesson with each other. To further this, Melanie would come to each planning session with the lesson objective outlined for each day. From there, Lori and Melanie would use the daily lesson objectives to identify and plan for the specific co-teaching models. Following these conversations and the team’s status at the time, I encouraged them to set a goal that the team would intentionally plan for one different co-teaching model each week. The team committed to the goal of intentionally planning one lesson each week in which each co-teaching team would utilize a different model, other than the one teach, one assist method.

Co-Teaching Team Meeting #4

William and Lori conducted a macro planning session on March 15, 2021. During their discussion, William shared that for the next couple of weeks the students would be doing some review in preparation for state assessments. During this session, they reviewed student data from Prodigy to determine the overall understanding of multiplying fractions. Following the review of data, they decided that Lori would give a step-by-step handout to students who were struggling to grasp the concept of changing improper fractions. Lori also expressed needing to be more
aware of grades on independent activities to collect data on story problems for IEP objectives.

During the macro planning session between Melanie and Lori on March 16, 2021, the general education teacher outlined the upcoming chapters in the novel. The co-teachers decided that they were going to implement station teaching on Wednesdays. They reviewed and utilized student data to determine groups for the stations based on the skill level of the students. A discussion occurred regarding the fact that when reading in groups the groups will finish at different times. The co-teachers decided that when this occurs the groups will be given additional in-depth enrichment activities to complete. The team discussed potentially using parallel teaching as the co-teaching model for the upcoming novel. During the reflection component of the macro planning session, the special education teacher continued to express concerns that during the read a-louds there should be more discussion about comprehension. Melanie encouraged the special education teacher, Lori, to stop and prompt more discussions.

The research team met via Zoom on March 17, 2021, with the meeting lasting approximately thirty minutes. All team members were in attendance. The pair of co-teachers started having a conversation regarding an assessment that was happening on this day, which led to Lori mentioning to the team, “I really liked the way William decided to do this chapter assessment. You can share it with the team as it was your idea. I just love it.” He shared that as the students were gearing up for spring break, he thought it would be helpful to find another way to give an assessment rather than a paper/pencil test. He assigned each student twenty problems on Prodigy. Both the general and special education teachers were able to pull students individually and record their progress on a Google form. Although he was going to use this assessment format with all his classes, he noted that it was much easier to administer this form of assessment with a co-teacher in the classroom.
I asked Melanie and Lori to talk about how their macro planning was going following our most recent conversations. Each week the team followed the sequence of the macro planning tool and took notes based on their conversations. Lori commented, “I’m excited because we are implementing station teaching each week until we are done with our current novel.” Jamie observed station teaching in the literature class on March 9, 2021. Following her observation, she shared feedback in writing with Lori and Melanie. The feedback to their lesson can be seen in the section of this study labeled “Observations.” Both Melanie and Lori described their perspectives on the feedback presented by Jamie but also gave their own insight into how the lesson went.

Melanie shared this with the group:

There is definitely some things I would change. I realized after the first group that I had written all the answers on the board. I didn’t erase them before the next group came up so they were already looking at the board and reciting the answers verbatim. It is just something I need to do better as the students transition between stations.

Lori stated the following:

I like Jamie’s recommendation. She recommended breaking the independent group up into two different locations. I thought that was a great idea because I did not realize how large that group was. Depending on the size, I like the idea of splitting the independent station up into two separate groups.

As the team wrapped up the discussion for the day, I asked the math co-teaching team consisting of William and Lori the question “How have your perceptions of what you’re doing changed since we started this process?” William quickly chimed in and said, “I really feel like if there was one person I wanted to co-teach with, it would be Lori. She is just always willing to adapt and change and is not afraid to call me out on something.” I followed up by asking about
one strategy they were doing that had been beneficial and William shared, “Anytime you can split the students up and do smaller group work the students benefit from it.” William also explained that he and Lori found it extremely beneficial to have one teacher talking while the other is writing, with the opportunity to switch these roles. They expressed their frustration that they had not done this well due to less planning and some life situations that had recently happened. The conversation then led to asking the question, “How do we pick back up even when we get off track?” When schedules change and things come up that interfere with planning time, the co-teaching team found it difficult to intentionally plan for and implement co-taught instruction. There may be times that the team is not able to plan due to various factors or the schedule changes due to state testing. Although there are going to be times this happens, the team had a conversation about the importance of picking up where they left off and getting back to intentionally engaging in co-planning and co-taught instruction.

Following the conversation with the math co-teaching team, a similar conversation was had with the English Language Arts co-teaching team, Melanie and Lori. I asked the question, “How has your perceptions changed and what do you feel is something that is working within your co-taught setting?” Melanie started off by saying, “I wish she was in my class every hour because my first hour is completely different than all of my other classes, particularly because I have the ability to do station teaching or parallel teaching.” She also shared that she felt the text they read together as a group was extremely helpful in this process, commenting, “I like having names to put to the different styles. I feel like we have a stronger team because we both have that background understanding.” I asked Lori’s perspective after hearing from both the general education teachers. Lori stated that she felt that in the beginning she was reserved in expressing her thoughts as “it was her classroom” and now she felt like they had a relationship in which she
could express her thoughts about what the classroom instruction should look like.

I ended the meeting by saying I really did think the discussions they were having were not conversations everyone could have, and that they were all growing by doing that. I was blown away by the team’s ability to work through this. As I had said many times, our goal as a team was to develop a structure that works for our team, plan for sustainability, and then figure out how we would use that to build and support other teams.

Co-Teaching Team Meeting #5

The team met via Zoom on April 8, 2021, with the meeting lasting approximately 24 minutes. All the team members were in attendance. I started the conversation by referring back to the last co-teaching team discussion we had. One of the general education teachers quickly chimed in and shared, “We have been doing a terrible job at co-teaching this past week. All of my plans went out the window with testing.” I reminded the team not to get discouraged and stay on track. The team had a conversation about where we would like to be at the end of the school year. With only one more macro planning session, I asked the team what the last thing we want to accomplish as a team should be. Melanie said to Lori, “I might need some accountability. I tend to change my plans last minute.” The team committed to one final goal of being more intentional and planning for one co-taught lesson each week, with the focus on choosing a different co-teaching model each week.

I added the following summary:

What I am hearing you guys say is this will be important to think about not only your team continuing this next year but other teams. There have been so many bumps in the road and I know there are probably more due to the COVID-19 pandemic but there are still natural things that happen and in our case someone had a baby, people were sick, and
state testing all occurred. There are so many things that can get us off track, but the important factor is how we get back on track. I think without being intentional, it’s easier just to let it go. The typical thing to do would be to fall back into one teacher one assist. The team furthered this discussion. William shared, “It’s going to be the default you fall back to. I have noticed it with myself. When this happens, I know what I am going to be teaching but I don’t communicate that with my co-teacher.” Lori followed up with, “It’s also the end of the year and everyone is tired. It takes work to co-teach. Both of you are open to keep going so I think we just push through and we will get back on track.” Lastly, I finished with the following statement:

It is always going to be easier and more natural to go back into more of the one teach, one assist model and you guys have shown and proved that you can get back on track. I think that might be the biggest takeaway that comes out of our time together. How does your team get back on track with the intentionality of planning co-teaching structures within the classroom? I have heard the team say that several times today.

Co-Teaching Team Meeting #6

The final macro planning session between Melanie and Lori was held on April 26, 2021. As they prepared for the last novel of the year, they committed to utilizing the station teaching model during this entire unit. During conversations regarding student learning and needs that may affect instructional decisions, the co-teachers agreed that teacher led activities would continue until students had a clear understanding of the content. As both teachers discussed points of difficulty in the upcoming instruction and possible barriers to student learning, the general education teacher expressed concerns with the student behavior working in groups, whereas the special education teacher expressed concerns with the students’ ability to understand
William and Lori facilitated their final macro planning session on April 27, 2021. William outlined the content with the focus being on covering essential standards in Chapter 10 and 11 of the Go Math text. Again, Lori expressed concerns with the pacing and the focus on covering skills versus reaching mastery with the remaining time. Also, Lori agreed to provide students with a formula cheat sheet for Chapter 11. During a discussion about patterns for co-teaching, William and Lori discussed utilizing parallel and small group co-teaching models for the remainder of the year. This would enable them to work with smaller groups to individualize the instruction and allow for more small groups and partner work.

The research team met via Zoom on April 29, 2021, with the meeting lasting approximately 27 minutes. All team members were in attendance. I summarized the last conversation the team had. We had a lot of bumps. We were just finishing with state testing. We had staff out for COVID related matters. It was just one thing after another. Much of our conversation revolved around the fact that issues are going to come up even during a non-COVID year, and how to get back on track. It would be much easier to think that there is no point in continuing to strive towards the goals we set with only one month left to the school year. Prior to this meeting, each co-teaching team finished their final round of macro planning. At the last meeting, the team committed to identifying one co-teaching model a week that they were going to utilize in both classrooms, reading and math. Each team followed through on this commitment to end the year. Concerns or reflections that came up in conversations at this time were the continued conversation around pacing versus mastery. Lori also shared a reflection that she needed to be more intentional about working with all students, rather than always targeting the students with IEPs. Lori shared this story with the team:
William did a quick review over the concept and they watched a video. Then they were assigned specific problems on Prodigy to do related to this concept. He was able to monitor their progress on the computer and then when students were struggling with various concepts, he would let me know and I would work with that individual student or groups of students.

As we wrapped up our time together as a team, the team reflected on the process of deciding to serve students with special education needs in the co-taught setting. Just a year ago, the IEP team made the decision to serve a student who had always had his instruction in the special education setting only in the general education setting with co-taught support instead. Lori shared with the team this student’s FastBridge scores and this comment:

I have been working with this student in the reading lab and we have been reading a book together. He reads out loud and can get through a page on his own, which is great progress from the beginning of the year. Yesterday, his group partner was helping him with the words he did not know. This student’s FastBridge score went up seven points in reading and six points in math from the start of the year.

Lori then shared this with the team, “Tomorrow I go back to the elementary to see if we can advocate to support another student in the co-taught setting who has had previous pull-out special education services.” She shared the concerns of the 4th grade special education teacher when making these decisions. These concerns are similar to those of this team as they think about transitioning students to the sixth-grade team. This conversation led to discussions regarding not only how we sustain this within this co-teaching team, but also how we take what we learned to help develop this or a similar structure within other teams.
Observations

Throughout our time together as a co-teaching team, Jamie and I were able to observe a total of four times between the two co-teaching classrooms. Scheduling observations was a challenge for multiple reasons. The typical obstacles were finding a time that worked for everyone between observer schedules and the hour the co-taught session was happening. In addition to the typical challenges faced by schedules, COVID-related factors caused issues with staff member absences and trying to limit the number of times and people being in and out of classrooms. A summary of the observations is described below.

I did an observation in the co-taught math classroom on January 25, 2021, while Lori and William were co-teaching. There were 23 students in the classroom. They were parallel teaching, in which they were each working through a set of problems with half the class. Students appeared to be engaged and participating within the groups. Given the COVID impact, there were a few adjustments they made that may have been different if COVID was not a factor. Due to district guidance, the co-teachers were trying not to mix groups of students so when dividing up into two separate groups, the teachers kept these groups the same and the teachers rotated between the groups. The students were also wearing masks and were expected to be quieter so it did not impact the learning environment.

I also observed in the co-taught literature classroom on February 3, 2021. The co-teachers utilized a one teach, one assist model. Students had been reading a novel and were expected to work independently to copy the riddles down, which were to be used at a later time. During the observation, it appeared Lori felt comfortable jumping in, giving additional directions when needed. She also checked in frequently with one student, providing a scribe. During this observation, it appeared that the co-teachers had not discussed the objective of the lesson.
Feedback was shared during the co-teaching team discussion.

Jamie conducted an observation in the co-taught literature classroom on March 9, 2021. After listening to the teams’ discussions, commitments, and challenges the past couple of months, it was helpful to have another perspective. Not only has Jamie been a member of our research team and someone who I frequently worked closely with on a daily basis to meet the needs of our special education population, she had an extensive background in program evaluations. She also gave another perspective from a non-evaluative role. During her classroom visit, she noted the following observations. Both teachers participated in opening class. While Melanie prompted the students to clean up the room, and handed out the activity and supplies, Lori took attendance, checked in with individual students, and gave oral directions for the task. Lori asked the students to recall the characters from the story, then told the students that they were starting a character flip book that they would continue to work on throughout the story. Lori explained the assembly of the flip book, while Melanie showed the students visually on the projector. Melanie asked messengers to collect scrap paper. Melanie provided the verbal and visual instruction on the order of the book while Lori stapled. Melanie explained the stations and separated the class into groups. Both Melanie and Lori added details about a character to the book with a small group and the third station was independent coloring. The students rotated through all three stations. After the stations were complete, Melanie led the class in another activity.

Following the observation, Jamie shared the feedback in writing with the co-teachers and then the team discussed the feedback in the next co-teaching team meeting. Jamie’s feedback to the co-teachers is described here. Knowing that Melanie and Lori had been given feedback to identify a clear objective for each lesson, Jamie specifically watched for this. It was noted that
Lori did connect the assignment to the novel and let the students know that they would continue to work on it. She shared that it seemed that both teachers understood the objective for the class period. To continue progress in this area, she recommended that they think about the objective from the student standpoint, referring to a question that could have been asked in this specific lesson: “Could you talk about why it is important to think about/understand characters when you read?”

Jamie gave the co-teachers feedback on the multiple learning modes occurring in the classroom during her observation, giving feedback that “This is such a huge benefit of co-teaching for all students. Your visual learners and auditory learners were all getting what they need. Awesome!” She shared that students seemed engaged and attentive and all had a chance to participate, which is another advantage of co-teaching and specifically station teaching. Jamie also stated that when the students were done cutting, the plan for Lori to do verbal instruction and Melanie to do visual instruction did not continue. She shared that although she did not think of it as a huge deal as the project was almost complete, it could be something to reflect on. She prompted them with the question, “When we get off track during a lesson, how do we prompt each other to go back to the plan?”

Jamie also provided feedback to Lori and Melanie in regard to the stations she observed. One of the groups was larger than the other two, which was also the last group to do the independent station. She recommended considering pre-determining groups, which would also allow the teachers to strategically place students in certain groups. Another idea would be to try establishing clear boundaries for the independent stations. For example, allow no more than three students standing at the back counter or putting crayons in two locations and asking the group to split into two smaller sections. Overall, Jamie exclaimed that she was really impressed. She
shared with the team that they had clearly discussed the co-teaching plan before class, the objective was clear, and they took turns leading the class. She also mentioned that there were awesome benefits to the students. Even the students at the independent station were on-task.

**Interviews**

I met with each participant individually to conduct a final interview. The interview protocol was prepared in advance and used consistently for all of the interviews. During the last couple of weeks of school, I worked with each person to find a date and time that worked best with their schedule. The first interview was held with Lori in person. After meeting online for all of the other meetings, I felt that she was not as comfortable as she and the other participants had been when meeting remotely so I decided to meet remotely with the remaining teachers. Jamie and I met in person as well.

**Interview #1**

I conducted an interview with Lori on May 24, 2021, lasting approximately twenty-five minutes. Lori shared that she has been a special education teacher for twelve years, having taught in another district prior to coming to Jefferson Middle School five years ago. Lori described her previous experiences as not being a co-teacher but rather a “glorified aide.” She shared that most of the special education students were pulled out of the general education classroom for reading and math, receiving those services in a special education or instructional setting. She stated that “there was only one year where I provided services in a general education reading class.” The special education students attended general education classes for science and social studies, which is where she provided her co-taught services. She explained that there was one caseload manager for each grade level so she worked with the same grade level teachers each year.

Lori shared that the co-teaching process the 5th grade team went through not only made
her more aware and conscientious about the different strategies or styles, but also pushed and encouraged her to incorporate a variety of co-teaching styles. In her assignment at the time of this study, Lori worked with the same group of students for the entire morning as they transitioned between their classes. While she felt there were pros and cons to being with the same group of students all morning, she believed that this is a benefit to all students. Being the one teacher with them the entire morning, she thought that most of the students felt comfortable coming to her for help even when they were not comfortable with the general education teacher. She stated, “I can build those bonds with the other students and then when they were comfortable coming to me for help I was able to support them too. I am the one that is their consistent and it creates an opportunity for all kids to feel successful.”

Lori was asked the following: “In what ways did the co-planning process shift your perception over the course of our time together?” Lori shared, “Even from my perspective co-teaching is hard. I went into it with an open mind but I didn’t really know if we would be successful or not. I didn’t know if they would really follow through, but we really did in both reading and math.” She went on to state that she pushed to incorporate literature circles describing it as “something that we accomplished and I think it went well.”

Next she was asked, “What are some things that you learned to support not only the implementation of what we did but also sustainability?” Lori shared, “It is a lot of consistency, even though those planning sessions became a hindrance over time. It held us accountable and made us think outside the box.” As a team we committed to incorporating one co-teaching model each week. She commented, “I don’t think if we were to meet as a group on a routine basis that we would necessarily be incorporating a variety of the co-teaching models into our lessons.”

Prior to my interview with Lori, we learned that the general education math teacher
resigned and we would have to replace him for the upcoming school year. As we thought about the transition of a new general education teacher to this team, Lori commented, “I just hope whoever is hired, he or she wants to co-teach. We have worked really hard at this.” In discussion about adding a new member to our team or working with other teams, I asked Lori, “How do you think we can take what we learned and help other teams implement this process in the district?” She explained the importance that she felt her team was open to and wanted to work together to improve their co-teaching partnership:

I don’t think I ever believed that co-teaching works, but it does work. We pushed kids out into the general education class and I was the first person who was unsure if they should have been placed here. I still don’t know how they will do next year, but this year they were able to work through it because I was a co-teacher there to support them.

As we talked about next steps of implementation across the district, she recommended that it would be beneficial for the next co-teaching team to come in to observe and talk with the 5th grade team about their process. She expressed the importance of having some common planning time to talk and plan together, which varied based on the co-teaching partners and content area. Again, Lori expressed accountability and commitment as being the key factors to the co-teaching success. In her words, “You have to have a co-planning schedule and someone to check in and hold your team accountable.”

Interview #2

I conducted an interview with Jamie in person on May 26, 2021. The interview lasted approximately eighteen minutes. She commented on the structure of the sessions and how she felt this was important to encourage people to have conversations. Rather than attending one workshop, the team read together and had frequent accountability meetings. Jamie stated,
“Knowing that everybody has had the same training gives everyone common language and permission to try new things too because really we all heard this information we all know this is best practice so it’s okay for me to ask for this or to say this is what I want to try.”

Jamie expressed concerns that as a district we do not have the people power to implement something similar to this model created and be able to follow up and hold each other accountable, stating that the accountability cannot come solely from the administrators. She proposed next steps to include adding the 5th grade science and social studies teachers to the team for the upcoming school year. She also recommended the 5th grade co-teaching team being involved in the training of the next team. Furthermore, she encouraged adding in layers of accountability within one team to help with sustainability: “We saw the general education teachers taking ownership and I never thought I would see that.” As we think about taking what we learned from this and implementing in with the next team she suggested, “I think one way they can help more than anything is letting the next team come in and see the work this team is doing.”

Interview #3

I conducted an interview with William virtually on May 25, 2021, lasting approximately twenty-one minutes. Before we even began our conversation, William shared, “Of all the professional development I have done in this district I have really enjoyed this one and think it was super relevant to our classroom and students. This will definitely improve districts scores and morale for the students.”

William shared concerns that he felt it may be difficult for many teachers to be willing to plan ahead, hold regular planning sessions with the special education teacher, and implement co-teaching structures into their classrooms. He stated, “I have learned that I have got to be willing
to give up some control in my classroom, which wasn’t that hard for me, but it is easier when there is certain structure in place that is designed for that.” He also expressed that this willingness to do so may depend on the special education teacher. In his words, “If you have someone like Lori who is willing to work with pretty much anyone then I think it is going to be easier for the general education teacher to be on board.” I followed up with the question, “What is it about Lori that makes co-teaching go well?” He responded with the following:

She is willing to admit when she does not know something and then she is willing to put in the work ahead of time so that she is prepared. She, more than most teachers, just really cares about the students so it’s like she is just always making sure you know they are included in whatever you are doing and she wants them to have a positive experience. She knows how to read the room and adjust to the different needs and personalities.

He then shared, “If you are doing it right the students don’t really know the difference between a general education teacher and a special education teacher. I really do feel like you can get those students at both the lower but also the higher end a little bit more.” Realizing this is not an option with the current funding situation, he recommended having co-teachers in every classroom.

He, too, expressed the importance of accountability by recommending a Google document so that someone is accountable for monitoring the macro planning notes for each grade level. His words were as follows:

If you could look at it and get a brief overview of all the grade levels and then you might ask the co-teachers, ‘I saw you were going to utilize the parallel teaching model this lesson. How did that go?’ Or you might come in and observe and give feedback. If there is not accountability it is just easy to slip. It like you just revert back to what you normally do.
William noted that when he and the special education teacher were utilizing the station teaching and/or parallel teaching in which students were in smaller groups he saw less behavior issues and more independence in the students. He also felt that in a smaller group he was able to get students more engaged and active in their discussions. When considering next steps, he recommended making sure planning time is set aside at least every other week for the special education teacher and general education teacher to sit down and go through the macro planning process together. As part of the macro planning process, he noted, “It was important for me to do the work up front so that Lori has this and can do some work behind the scenes to meet the needs of some of the students.” As we wrapped up our conversation, he said, “I think it boils down to the right people that are willing to learn new things. And how do we not let it slide through the cracks? You need someone under you to be the Co-Teaching Director.”

Interview #4

I conducted an interview with Melanie remotely on May 25, 2021, lasting approximately twenty-two minutes. She commented on the positive nature of what she felt was a professional learning community: “I think that was very successful and it made us feel almost like a little co-teaching club. I think it helped that we were all three on board from the beginning. I think it will probably be difficult to get some people on board but it truly helps our students.” Melanie expressed the difference between the two co-teachers she had in her room during the 2020-2021 school year. She explained, “There is a difference in the cohesiveness of our teaching. We don’t have the planning period together and she hasn’t been in my classroom before and she is not in the co-teaching team.” Melanie shared that although this was her first teaching experience in her career, she had done some team teaching with the general education teacher during her student teaching experience. She stated, “I can relate a lot of those things we did in student teaching but I
actually have a name for it now.” Having transitioned into the role of the classroom teacher, she was expected to co-teach her first year. She shared, “I feel like this helped validate that we were doing what we were supposed to be doing and then give us the confidence to continue to do that and do it even more and implemented with more purpose.” She reported that she thinks the students definitely benefited from co-teaching:

- If we could have two teachers in every classroom I think that would be ideal. Students benefit from the one-on-one attention, the small group attention, and even the whole class when the other is going around and supporting students. It is helpful to get those students where they need to be and help when where they are struggling. The challenge now is that we have this support in one of our classes that you teach and the rest of the sections you are teaching by yourself.

- As far as planning goes, Melanie noted that prior to departmentalizing, she and the special education teacher had a common planning time. Although it was a bit more challenging to find the time to plan together since they did not share that common period this year, they still found the time follow the team’s commitment to macro plan. One of the benefits of the macro planning format that she highlighted was being able to reflect on what they thought went well but most importantly what they thought did not go well and needed to change as a co-teaching team. She shared that they were able to have some difficult conversations, giving feedback to one another, that they would not have had otherwise. During one of their conversations, Lori said to her, “I think the decision you made with one of the seating arrangements was a bad call and I think that those students should move.” Melanie’s responded, “I think you are absolutely right and we moved them the next day. Without someone reflecting and telling me that they would have stayed there and got nothing done.”
Regarding future common planning, she recommended continuing the monthly macro planning sessions with bi-weekly or weekly check-ins. Even more specifically with literature, she suggested meeting at the beginning of a novel, with mini macro planning check-ins in the middle and end of the book. One challenge that this co-teaching team experienced was the fact that lessons plans changed frequently. Melanie reported, “I am very much dependent on my formative assessment so I frequently change my plans based off of the assessment.” She felt that even though there might be last minute changes, she talked about how the book study allowed them to be on the same page with the different co-teaching models and could quickly have a conversation about the lesson and which model it may work best with.

Throughout our teams’ conversations, the teachers mentioned several times that Lori would call her special education students “my kids.” Melanie put great emphasis and focus on talking about “our kids” from a co-teaching standpoint. Throughout this experience, she held Lori accountable for using “our kids.”

Following a comment Melanie made that she “really likes station teaching,” I asked a follow up question: “What are the benefits of stations?” She responded, “There are so many benefits. Students are always moving. If students get up and restart I think their behaviors are always going to get better. They are also going to experience different styles of teaching.” She also commented that students would be given the opportunity to work on something independently: “I think those students definitely benefit from the co-teaching that we have been practicing throughout the year.”

As we transitioned our conversation to next steps and sustainability, the first concern Melanie shared was that since William was leaving the district we needed to hire someone that was willing to “jump on board” with the work that we had done as a team. She recommended
keeping the macro planning meetings going for the upcoming year but also including the other 5th grade content teachers, including science and social studies. She outlined the following:

I really think it needs opened up to everyone on the team. I think we should all have the same training and expectations of co-teaching. Following this work we did, Lori gets to co-teach in math and literature, but then she goes to science and social studies and she’s standing in the back of the room doing one teach, one assist. I think the other teachers would be open to this, but they just do not have the tools yet.

She also expressed the importance of the monthly co-teaching team check-ins for the purpose of accountability: “The co-teaching team was very intensive and you had to monitor us and hold us accountable as we did it but it helped us get to where we are.” As we think about transitioning this format to another team she shared that she would be willing to lead another group through this same process.

As we look at transitioning this work to another team she expressed concerns that some people are “stuck in their ways and don’t really want to change.” She suggested offering some kind of incentive but most importantly recommended sharing a testimonial with other staff letting them know the difference that it made in the team’s teaching. Lastly, Melanie described the benefit of the style of professional learning that we did as a team. Her ending remarks were the following: “I think that the professional learning community is really important because you’re continually changing and you’re helping to give your students something new and better, and the students change.”

Co-Teaching Reflection Tool

Each teacher was asked to complete the Co-Teaching Reflection Tool (Appendix E) prior to as well as following our work together (Maryland State Department of Education, 2011). Each
teacher completed the first co-teaching reflection tool independently during our first two weeks of professional learning activities. Teachers were encouraged to be honest as this was a tool to be used for reflection only and not for evaluative purposes. In part one of the tool, each teacher individually checked the rating of initiating, developing, or sustaining that best described their co-teaching team’s current status of collaborative implementation of co-teaching approaches. The categories included in this section were planning, instruction environment, physical environment, discipline, and school environment. In part two of the tool, each teacher individually checked the rating of initiating, developing, or sustaining that best described each team’s implementation of the following co-teaching approaches: one teach; one assist, station teaching, parallel teaching, alternative teaching, and team teaching.

Two out of the three teachers completed the Co-Teaching Reflection Tool (Maryland State Department of Education, 2011) prior to our professional learning and team meetings. In part one, both teachers marked that they felt like they were in the developing category for four out of the five categories. One characteristic they highlighted was that most often one teacher planned for instruction, assessment, behavior, and integration of technology, while teachers planned to jointly deliver the lesson. While one teacher marked developing for school environment, the other one selected initiating, highlighting the following: minimal time for co-planning, few resources provided, feedback provided to co-teachers reflects limited understanding of the co-teaching framework, and limited professional development specific to co-teaching. There were similar results in part two, with both teachers indicating that they felt their co-teaching team was developing in most co-teaching models. One teacher indicated that team teaching was initiating given that co-planning does not consistently occur.

Three out of three teachers completed the Co-Teaching Reflection Tool (Maryland State
Department of Education, 2011) following our professional learning and team meetings. In part one of the tool, all teachers indicated that they were in the developing or sustaining status of collaborative implementation of co-teaching approaches. In regard to planning, all three teachers noted that they felt they were still in the developing phase. One included comments that they were close to sustaining. Two teachers indicated developing and one sustaining in regard to instructional environment. Indicators in this category included the following: students learn more and engage more with one teacher than another, one teacher tends to lead instruction while the other provides student support, and one teacher primarily communicates with students. All three teachers indicated that they felt that the physical environment was in the sustaining phase. Indicators of this are as follows: both teachers have shared access to all resources and materials, both teachers have appropriate and reasonable workspace in the learning environment, and space allows for grouping and student movement for interactions in the implementation of the various co-teaching approaches. All three teachers noted that they felt discipline was in the sustaining phase, with indicators being the following: both teachers share responsibility for establishing and communicating expectations for all students, students respond to both teachers equally in regard to instruction and discipline, and both teachers ensure that all students adhere to classroom expectations. As for school environment, all three teachers categorized their team in the developing phase.

In part two of the reflection tool, all three teachers indicated that they were in the developing or sustaining categories of all co-teaching models. Two out of the three teachers shared that sustaining best describes their implementation of the one teacher, one assist co-teaching approach. Two of the three teacher selected developing for the other co-teaching models, whereas one teacher chose developing as best describing the team’s parallel teaching
model and sustaining describing the others. The tool was used to help the team reflect on their co-teaching implementation, and, overall, each individual saw growth in their teams’ ability to implement a co-teaching model.

Conclusion

The data collected for this study came from a variety of sources, which included the minutes from the professional learning meetings, the research team meetings, and the macro planning meetings held by each co-teaching team. Data was also collected from observations and individual interviews. Through coding of the data, key themes emerged.

Answers to Research Questions

This study sought the answers to three research questions with a focus on the co-planning process. The questions were as follows:

1. How do the educators describe the co-planning process and implementation of co-teaching service delivery models in the fifth-grade co-taught classrooms?

2. What were the effects of co-planning time on the co-teaching services delivery models in the fifth-grade co-taught classrooms?

3. What lessons can be learned from a co-planning process for increasing the co-teaching services delivery models within the fifth-grade classrooms?

The answers to the research questions follow below.

Question 1: How do the educators describe the co-planning process and implementation of co-teaching service delivery models in the fifth-grade co-taught classrooms?

I will begin by providing an overview of the co-planning process and commitment the co-teaching teams made. Following the logistics of the process, I will share how educators describe the co-planning process. The themes that emerged through this process include commitment and
accountability, relationships and trust, and interaction, collaboration, and reflection.

**Logistics.** Having read *Co-Teach! Building and Sustaining Effective Classroom Partnerships in Inclusive Schools*, (Friend, 2018) as part of the professional learning, the team committed to follow Friend’s (2018) macro planning protocol as their co-teacher planning process (p. 147). During the planning sessions, the co-teaching teams followed Friend’s (2018) macro planning process, which includes the following:

1) The general education teacher outlines the upcoming curriculum, content, activities, and projects for material that will be addressed within the co-taught class.

2) Both teachers review student data. This helps them identify student learning status, gaps in student learning, and specialized student needs that may affect instructional decisions.

3) Both teachers discuss points of difficulty in the upcoming instruction. What are the possible barriers to student learning? How could these challenges be lessened or overcome? How can student IEP and language learning goals be incorporated into this instruction using specially designed instruction?

4) Both teachers discuss patterns for their co-teaching. They should consider the six co-teaching approaches and variations, identify patterns in the class of when review, assessments, and other predictable activities occur, and decide when and where the six approaches might be best employed.

5) This time is reserved for partnership discussions, including co-teaching concerns, communication, housekeeping items, and successes/issues related to the past four-week period.

The team committed to monthly macro planning meetings between the general and special education teachers on a routine basis. In addition, each co-teaching team chose to have
bi-weekly or weekly check-ins to make any necessary adjustments based on formative assessments. As part of this macro planning process, each team committed to planning for and utilizing at least one co-teaching model other than one teach, one assist weekly.

The themes that emerged through this process include commitment and accountability, relationships and trust, interaction, collaboration, and reflection.

Commitment and Accountability. Educators expressed the importance of the co-teaching team members being open and willing to be involved in the co-teaching process. Lori shared during the final interview, “You have to have a commitment from all team members.” She furthered this statement by saying the “general education teacher and the special education teacher have to be willing to work together.” Melanie also shared, “I think it helped that we were all on board from the beginning. I think it may be difficult to get some people on board with this process, but I think it ultimately helps our students.”

In this case, it was also a commitment from the team to implement a co-planning structure. The team developed a co-planning process that they agreed to follow. This process involved scheduling a time to co-plan on a regular basis as well as adhering to a co-planning process during their scheduled time together. William expressed the importance of documenting these conversations and decisions during the co-planning process. He furthered this by recommending that for accountability purposes that it would be critical to put the co-planning tool and notes into a Google document for someone to review and get an overview of where each grade level is in the process of their co-teaching implementation.

Although the co-teaching partners did not always share a common planning time, both teams were creative in finding time to follow the team’s commitment to macro plan. All the educators stressed the importance of being consistent with regularly scheduled macro planning
meetings as well as mid-point check-in meetings. As Lori said, “It is a lot of consistency, even though those planning sessions became a hindrance over time. It held us accountable and made us think outside the box.” As stated earlier, William believed that creating a Google document that would house the macro planning notes for each grade level could be monitored by someone to ensure accountability for the co-planning teams.

As far as recommendations for future co-planning, the educators suggested continuing the monthly macro planning sessions with bi-weekly or weekly check-ins. Even more specifically with literature, Melanie recommended meeting at the beginning of a novel, with mini macro planning check-ins in the middle and end of the book. All the educators also expressed the importance of the monthly co-teaching team meetings for the purpose of accountability. Melanie specifically noted that even though the meeting schedule can be intense, these planning sessions held everyone accountable. Lori furthered these thoughts by saying, “You have to have a commitment. You have to have a schedule. You have to have someone to check in and hold you accountable.”

From my perspective, it was critical for our team to set the next meeting date prior to wrapping up each co-teaching team discussion. It was also important for each co-teaching team to share plans for their next macro planning session. This held the team accountable to these dates and planning sessions as a group.

**Relationships and Trust.** When talking about a commitment from the team members, I shared that it was important to have a commitment from all team members. As William stated, “I think it boils down to the right people that are willing to learn new things.” With that being said, he also expressed the importance of the co-teacher partners and their relationship. Although he believed that it might be hard for some general education teachers to give up control in their...
classroom, he also said, “I feel like the success of the team has a lot to do with the special education co-teacher.” He went on to describe characteristics about Lori that support the success of their team. He expressed, “She is willing to work with pretty much anybody and is flexible.” He also shared that she is willing to put in the work ahead of time, really cares about the students, and most important making sure that all students are included and wants each student to have a positive experience in class. Melanie agreed that it was definitely eye opening to see the difference between co-teaching with Lori and another co-teacher. When asked to clarify, she shared that she and the other co-teacher she works with do not engage in a co-planning time together, this is the first year the co-teacher has been in her classroom, and she is not part of the co-teaching team. When describing her relationship with Lori, she explained, “I feel like we have a good solid relationship.”

**Interactive, Collaborative, and Reflective.** Melanie described the co-planning process as “intense” and that open and honest dialogue was critical to the success of the team. Jamie shared that that this process forced people to have the conversations, stating “unless you force the conversations they do not happen and people fall into old habits or make assumptions about what the other person wants versus sitting down and talking it through.”

Lori noted that the benefit of the macro planning format for her co-teaching team was being able to reflect on what they thought went well but most importantly what they thought did not go well and needed to change as a co-teaching team. She shared that they were able to have some difficult conversations, giving feedback to one another, that they would not have had otherwise.

In summary, from my perspective, all three of these emerging themes were an important part of the process and took ongoing work. Although Lori had worked with each individual
general education teacher the prior year, the co-teaching team had not worked together. It took some time during our professional learning activities to engage in deeper conversations about their co-teaching practices. This time together and these conversations helped build the trust within our team. This trust not only fostered conversations that were more interactive, collaborative, and reflective in nature, but also it allowed us to hold each other accountable for the commitments we made as co-teaching partners and as a co-teaching team.

**Question 2: What were the effects of co-planning time on the co-teaching services delivery models in the fifth-grade co-taught classrooms?**

The themes that emerged through this process include student engagement, different teaching styles, a consistent teacher across environments, and teacher validation.

**Student Engagement.** Through the co-planning process, educators were able to implement various co-taught services delivery models within the fifth-grade classrooms. Throughout this process, I heard them share the success stories focused on student engagement. Melanie highlighted that station teaching became a favorite model, with student engagement increasing. She noted that the students’ behavior benefited from the transitions by getting up and moving throughout the class period. William also shared that he saw behavior concerns decrease when utilizing station and parallel teaching, specifically stating, “I saw behavior issues decrease a little bit, which I thought was surprising because there is one independent station and students are moving around the classroom.” He went on to share that knowing the expectations of each station and getting more individualized attention from the co-teachers had an impact on student engagement and behavior. Lori also expressed the importance of establishing routines and expectations at the beginning of the year for what parallel and station teaching look like. Melanie detailed the following during her interview:
I think the students definitely benefit from the co-teaching that we have been practicing throughout the year. The students are getting one on one and small group attention. Even during whole group instruction someone is going around helping students when they are struggling. Honestly, if we could have two teachers in every classroom I think that would be ideal.

**Different Teaching Styles.** Through the co-planning process, teachers found that the students benefited from the implementation of different teaching styles and methods of instruction. Melanie expressed that with co-taught instruction, students get different teacher perspectives as well as are introduced to different teaching styles. Melanie shared that the independent station in her co-taught class was usually “less intense” and “gives students a break from teacher led instruction.” She provided an example of a recent activity that their class completed in station teaching during which students worked in small groups with the co-teachers to identify elements of a story, but then during the independent station, they had the opportunity to draw out their characters. She shared that the independent station “allows them to do fun things like drawing which are important things because they are visualizing and they are getting that type of visual learning.”

During feedback from observing on March 9, 2021, Jamie documented multiple learning modes occurring in the classroom during her observation, giving feedback that the structure of co-teaching positively impacts all students since various learning styles can be addressed with two different teachers handling instruction at the same time. She noted that students seemed engaged and attentive and all had a chance to participate, which is another advantage of co-teaching and specifically the station teaching model.
Consistent Teacher across Environments. With the current co-teaching structure, the same group of students transitioned together throughout their morning. This allowed Lori to be the co-teacher with the same group of students the entire morning. Lori shared, “All the students feel comfortable with me. I am their consistent.” She went on to explain that with this structure she had the opportunity to build relationships with all the students, not just the special education students. She felt that this structure created an opportunity for all students to feel more successful. She shared, “We pushed students out into the general education environment I did not know if they should have been out. They were able to work through it because we were together as co-teachers and I was there to support them.”

Teacher Validation. Even though there were times throughout the process when the teachers questioned the need for consistent co-planning and the structure they committed to as a team, in the end, they expressed the importance of continuing the monthly macro planning sessions with bi-weekly or weekly check-ins. The co-teaching teams made the commitment to utilize one co-teaching model other than one teach, one assist weekly. Melanie shared with the team, “I feel like this process helped validate that we were doing what we were supposed to be doing and then give us the confidence to continue to do that and do it even more and implemented with more purpose.”

Question 3: What lessons can be learned from a co-planning process for increasing the co-teaching services delivery models within the fifth-grade classrooms?

The themes that emerged throughout this research process included the following: building co-teaching teams, professional learning, common planning, and commitment and accountability.
**Building Co-Teaching Teams.** All the participants of the co-teaching team noted the importance of the teachers in this process of putting co-teaching teams together. Both Lori and Melanie expressed the importance of choosing teachers that are open to working together. Melanie explained that the team for this study was likely effective because all three teachers were willing to work together from the start. William agreed and added that it also helped that they were all interested in learning and trying new strategies. William expressed some concerns that many general education teachers might not want to give up any control over their classrooms; however, having a strong special education teacher like Lori can help them get acclimated to the co-teaching models.

**Professional Learning.** In his exit interview, William stressed that the professional development provided by participating in this study was not only beneficial to him as a teacher and the students in his classes but could also serve as an effective training model for other teachers in the school.

Prior to working with this team, I did not have a specific plan for how we were going to frame our discussions, implement a co-planning process, and ultimately integrate co-teaching models into our classroom. Although this was risky, I made it very clear to the participants that I was a member of their team and I was learning and growing with them. I shared with them that I would be reading the text with them each week and we would be coming up with a structure that worked for our team together. As a team, we started by reading *Co-Teach! Building and Sustaining Effective Classroom Partnerships in Inclusive Schools*, written by Marilyn Friend (2018). All the participants commented on the atmosphere of the professional learning community that developed. For three consecutive weeks our team came together having read the same material. I facilitated each discussion often starting with guiding questions such as: 1)
What was something you learned? 2) What was something you found interesting? and 3) What was something you still have questions about? Jamie commented that the structure of the sessions was an important element to encourage people to have conversations.

Co-Planning. Even though there were times when the teachers questioned the need for consistent co-planning, in the end, they expressed the importance of continuing the monthly macro planning sessions with bi-weekly or weekly check-ins. Teachers were asked to take notes during the macro planning sessions. I reviewed them prior to our co-teaching team meetings to help guide discussions. Having sat in on one macro planning session, which allowed me to help facilitate some of the discussion as well as add to the team’s notes, I would recommend that an administrator or support person such as the school psychologist in this situation be present during these meetings to help moderate and ask further questions. By being there as a facilitator, I was able to see things from a different perspective as well as ask additional questions that furthered their conversation.

Commitment and Accountability. A strong recommendation from the participants of this research was that the group should continue to have regularly scheduled meetings to hold one another accountable. Prior to each meeting, I watched the videos from the previous team meeting to remind myself of not only the discussions we had but the commitments we made so that I could follow up on the steps we had taken to honor those agreements. The team members discussed the importance of accountability. Lori explained that had they not met as a team regularly that they likely would not have incorporated the various co-teaching models when developing their lessons.

The team had long discussions about how to get back on track when we did not follow through on our commitments. There were times in the year when it would have been easier to
just say things like “well there is only a month left in the school year,” but rather we asked,
“What do we want to accomplish in our last month of the school year?” Most often, this is when
the team was clear in their commitments and stuck to them. When these situations happened, my
question to the team was always “How does your team get back on track with the intentionality
of planning co-teaching structures within the classroom?

Jamie recommended that the team be expanded to include other teachers even within the
fifth-grade staff, such as the science and social studies teachers, prior to starting another grade
level team. Melanie strongly agreed that the other teachers in the building should have this same
opportunity so that the special education teachers become an integral part of every classroom in
which they co-teach.

During conversations regarding how to implement with other grade level teams, Jamie
recommended having them come in to observe not only a co-taught class but also a co-planning
session. She recommended, “We need to have another team come in and observe and be
committed to the next round. I think this team can be involved in training others.” One concern
that was brought up by Jamie involved the personnel to implement something similar to this
model and have the ability to follow up and hold each other accountable. Jamie added that “all
the accountability cannot come from the administrators.” It was recommended that the 5th grade
co-teaching team be involved in the training of the next team. Jamie suggested bringing in a new
team to have them observe in the fifth-grade co-taught classrooms, setting up a similar structure
with professional learning in which team members are reading a text together, and then
identifying goals for the following year. Jamie also recommended adding in layers of
accountability within one team to help with sustainability: “We saw the general education
teachers taking ownership over this process and I never thought I would see that.” Melanie even
offered, “I would be willing to go to a team and talk with them and lead a group.” Overall, I think these reflections show that if the team builds the structure and holds each other accountable, it can work. Therefore, I would recommend monthly co-teaching team check-ins for the purpose of accountability.
CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

While professional development, particularly in a professional learning format, centered on the co-planning process had not previously been done in this school building, I was confident that there would be a team interested in engaging in the professional learning activities outlined for this study. Throughout this entire process, I was continuously amazed by the participants in the group and their unending willingness to share their feelings, try new things, grow, and try again. I hope through these experiences that I will be able to help other teams implement a co-planning process within their schools.

This chapter will provide recommendations for school leaders who may be interested in building co-teaching teams. This chapter is divided into four sections. Section I provides a summary of the study and a discussion of the findings. Section II lays out recommendations for future practice. In section III, limitations of the study are presented and section IV concludes with the recommendations for future research.

Discussion of Findings

The purpose of this study was to document educator reactions to the co-planning and implementation of co-teaching approaches at the Jefferson Middle School. Through a collaborative process, this study was completed utilizing the Carnegie Project Education Doctorate (CPED) guiding principles to answer a complex problem of practice (CPED, 2021). The research team worked together to develop a co-planning structure that would support the implementation of co-teaching service delivery models within their classrooms. The research team was comprised of one general education math teacher, one general education language arts teacher, one special education teacher, one school psychologist, and one district administrator. Multiple forms of data were collected through professional learning activities, co-teaching team
meetings, macro planning sessions, and interviews. The study answered the following research questions:

1. How do the educators describe the co-planning process and implementation of co-teaching service delivery models in the fifth-grade co-taught classrooms?

2. What were the effects of co-planning time on the co-teaching services delivery models in the fifth-grade co-taught classrooms?

3. What lessons can be learned from a co-planning process for increasing the co-teaching services delivery models within the fifth-grade classrooms?

Findings for the study were presented according to the stated research questions. The results to research question one, “How do the educators describe the co-planning process and implementation of co-teaching service delivery models in the fifth-grade co-taught classrooms?” revealed several conclusions regarding the importance of commitment and accountability, relationships and trust, and interaction, collaboration, and reflection. One benefit of the selected team was that they volunteered to be part of this process. As I listened to the teachers talk about the commitment and accountability needed for both co-planning as well as co-teaching to be successful, I believe this is a critical component to developing a team that is dedicated to the work it takes to build successful co-teaching teams. Melanie shared in one interview that having all members of the team on board made a difference and in the end positively affected their students. This furthers the research by Mastropieri et al. (2005) that voluntary co-teachers tended to report more positive perceptions than did teachers who were assigned co-teaching assignments.

One ongoing conversation during macro planning sessions that both groups of co-teaching partners had focused on pacing versus mastery. Both co-teaching teams worked through
the balance of not only covering content, but also giving students the opportunity to master content. The general education teachers tend to be the experts in curriculum, standards, and pacing, whereas the focus of the special education teacher is on the process of learning and highly individualized instruction with an emphasis on teaching until mastery (Friend et al., 2010). Friend (2007) stated that this often results in the special education teacher not feeling comfortable with the curriculum and often becoming the teaching assistant in the classroom. Lori shared during her final interview that she was a glorified aide in the co-taught setting in her previous district. The trust and relationships built through both the professional learning activities as well as the co-planning planning process gave teachers the tools to be able to have interactive, collaborative, and reflective conversations so that both were partners in the process and shared equal teaching roles.

Findings for the second research question, “What were the effects of co-planning time on the co-teaching service delivery models in the fifth-grade co-taught classrooms?” revealed that by incorporating a co-planning process, the co-teachers were able to implement different teaching styles and methods of instruction, which ultimately increased student engagement in the classroom. Although both teachers were reluctant to try various co-teaching models in the beginning, specifically parallel teaching and station teaching, they quickly became two of their favorite co-teaching models to implement in the classroom. Melanie shared that station teaching became a favorite model, with student engagement increasing. William also noted that he saw behavior concerns decrease when utilizing station and parallel teaching. He went on to share that knowing the expectations of each station and getting more individualized attention from the co-teachers had an impact on student engagement and behavior.

These findings were similar to those found by researchers such as Theoharis et al. (2016),
Cook and Friend (1995), and Murawski and Dieker (2004). Researchers have uncovered that there are academic and social benefits for all students in an inclusive classroom (Theoharis et al., 2016). Students also benefited from multiple teaching styles. Special educators and general educators have different training and areas of expertise, which can be beneficial to each other as well as all the students in the classroom. The different expertise that these teachers bring to the table can be helpful during the planning stage, utilizing their strengths to ensure that the lesson is differentiated, increasing the instructional opportunities and success for all students (Cook & Friend, 1995; Murawski & Dieker, 2004).

Findings for the third research question, “What lessons can be learned from a co-planning process for increasing the co-teaching service delivery models within the fifth-grade classrooms?” revealed several factors. First was the importance of building co-teaching teams. All three teachers participating in this study expressed the importance of choosing teachers that are open to working together. Researchers Vessay (2004) and Mastropieri et al. (2005) found that the effect of their collaboration was positive when both teachers made a commitment to the co-teaching partnership.

In addition to the co-teaching partnership, both of the general education teachers commented on the professional learning communities and the impact this had. William shared that this type of professional development was most effective and would most likely have a positive ripple effect for student achievement. Researchers have also expressed the importance of professional development for creating and sustaining co-teaching partnerships (Friend, 2007; Austin, 2001). Walther-Thomas et al. (1996) recommended that most new co-teaching partners would benefit from three to five days of preparation before classroom implementation with professional development sessions focused on the following concepts: co-planning, co-teaching
service delivery models, instructional considerations, ongoing performance assessment, and interpersonal communication, such as problem solving and conflict resolution. Another form of professional development that is not always considered is giving co-teachers the opportunity to visit other classrooms that model co-teaching practices as well as creating professional learning communities in which co-teachers can come together to discuss accomplishments and challenges to co-teaching practices. (Friend, 2007; Friend & Pope, 2005; Walther-Thomas et al., 1996).

Researchers have identified that one of the most significant challenges to developing a successful co-teaching partnership is the lack of common planning time (Friend, 2007; Keefe & Moore, 2004; Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1996; Walther-Thomas et al., 1996). Building in common planning time can be a challenge, but Friend (2018) gave some suggestions that encouraged our team to think differently about how to create a co-planning structure. The research team came up with creative co-planning options as we looked towards sustainability but also supporting other teams. Co-teaching teams met one time a month to work through the macro planning process. In addition, co-teaching teams met bi-weekly to check in on these plans and make any necessary adjustments. Co-teachers were also encouraged to do on-the-spot planning before or after class. Melanie shared that on-the-spot planning was extremely effective for her and the special education teacher as they already had the curriculum outlined and were able to discuss slight changes or details. In addition to these co-planning structures, accountability was extremely important. To hold co-teaching teams accountable, William recommended creating a Google document through which someone would be accountable for monitoring the macro planning notes for each grade level.
Implications for Practice

The recommendations for practice are based on the results of the study as well as additional research that supports the implementation of co-teaching models. These recommendations include putting district policies and procedures in place for creating a system in which co-teaching teams develop and implement a co-planning structure within their teams or building. The recommendations are categorized into the following themes: building co-teaching teams, professional learning, co-planning structure, and co-teaching clubs.

Building Co-Teaching Teams

Given the fact that teachers tend to report more positive perceptions when they volunteer to be a co-teacher than when teachers are assigned co-teaching assignments (Mastropiere et al., 2005), I would recommend beginning this process by building co-teaching teams with teachers that volunteer. I think the key to this is working with teams so that they see the benefit of co-teaching and want to be part of this process. Throughout this research, William shared that he felt every classroom should have co-teachers. Administrators should build a system in which every teacher sees the benefit and feels this same way. This may not be an easy process to get all teachers to volunteer; however, if they are given the opportunity to collaborate with their co-teaching colleagues, see the benefit of having an additional educator in their classroom to support the needs of all the students, and observe the co-teaching structures in place, they are more likely to be one of the teachers who wants a co-teacher in his or her classroom. This aligns with what Cook and Friend (1995) highlighted in their research that co-teaching provides increased support for teachers and allows them to take more risks and try things in pairs that they would not typically try alone.
In addition to starting with co-teaching volunteers, I would recommend districts make co-teaching an expectation as all new teachers are hired. As part of the onboarding process, teachers would participate in the professional learning component, during which they would learn about the various types of co-teaching models as well as the co-planning structure for their team, building, and district.

**Professional Learning**

Once the co-teaching team is determined, professional development is a critical component for creating and sustaining co-teaching partnerships (Friend, 2007; Austin, 2001). I would recommend that staff participate in professional learning activities as a team. Rather than attending one workshop, the team should read together and have focused discussions about the content and how they see these practices being implemented into their classroom. As the facilitator of the professional learning, I learned alongside them, which I think was a key component to the trust we built as a team. In her final interview, Melanie shared that this team approach to training ensured that they were using common language and encouraging each other to try the new strategies in their classes. Our research team used the book *Co-Teach! Building and Sustaining Effective Classroom Partnerships in Inclusive Schools* (Friend, 2018) to guide our professional learning discussions. Depending on the team and how they learn best, I would also recommend watching *The Power of 2* (Friend, 2016). Both of these resources have similar objectives which include the following: defining co-teaching, elements of effective co-teaching partnerships, six- co-teaching approaches, and planning.
Co-Planning Structure

Ideally, co-teaching teams would have time prior to the school year to do the work that is needed to build successful co-teaching teams and a co-planning process. Without a structure for co-planning prior to the start of the school year, special education teachers risk becoming what Lori expressed as being a “glorified aide” in the classroom. If co-teaching teams were given the opportunity to walk through this process prior to students arriving, they could engage in their co-planning process and be able to implement various co-teaching models at the start of the school year. This would also help students as they build new routines at the beginning of the year.

Regarding the professional learning activities, I would recommend that teams develop a co-planning structure that works for their team or building. In this study, the research team chose to use the macro planning tool written by Marilyn Friend (2018). Each co-teaching team made the commitment to participate in macro planning sessions on a monthly basis, in addition to bi-weekly check-ins and on-the-spot planning. The team chose to utilize the tool recommended by Friend (2018) for all macro planning sessions, which included having conversations about the upcoming curriculum, review of student data, barriers to student learning, patterns of co-teaching, as well as ending each discussion with reflection. There are various tools such as Dieker’s (2007) *The Co-Teaching Lesson Plan Book* that could be utilized for co-planning purposes, but I would suggest co-teaching teams identifying and committing to implementing a plan that they can be accountable for.

During macro planning discussions, I would recommend teams identify patterns of co-teaching that can be systematically implemented. There were a couple of examples throughout this research in which teachers found patterns for implementing various co-teaching models. For
instance, when there was a two-day lesson in math, the co-teachers decided they were going to use that extra time to implement station teaching. Another example would be to implement the team-teaching model for introducing and reviewing topics.

Co-Teaching Club

Even after teachers participate in professional learning activities together, I would recommend that co-teaching teams create a structure for continued conversations about the implementation of co-teaching practices within the classroom setting. Melanie brought up the idea of a “Co-Teaching Club.” As covered by other researchers, this form of professional learning would give co-teachers the opportunity to visit other classrooms with a focus on observing various teams’ co-teaching practices; then in turn, the co-teacher teams could come together to discuss accomplishments and challenges to co-teaching practices. (Friend, 2007; Friend & Pope, 2005; Walther-Thomas et al., 1996). This team would also be responsible for holding co-teaching teams accountable. I would recommend there be a facilitator of the team that would review macro planning session notes, encourage next steps, and review goals.

Given the challenge of teachers’ contractual hours as well as teaching obligations, it would be important for this structure to be an expectation and part of the building culture. The co-teaching team meetings would need to be built into the schedule for co-teaching teams. Co-teaching teams would also need to be given the opportunity to observe other co-taught classrooms. Without this being part of the culture, these meetings and classroom observations would be difficult for co-teaching teams to accomplish.
Next Steps

Following this research study, several steps will be taken at both the team and building level. The plan for the 2021-2022 school year will be to include the additional fifth-grade science and social studies teachers. Given that there will be some new teachers, professional learning activities will need to occur so that everyone has the same background knowledge. Melanie has offered to put together some activities that would give these teachers background knowledge on the different types of co-teaching models. This team will continue to follow the macro planning process and meet as a team monthly to develop goals, monitor these goals, as well as share successes and struggles. In addition, this team will visit other districts to observe and visit with other middle school co-teaching teams.

In addition to the steps that this team will take, the plan is to replicate this process with the seventh-grade team. Beginning in the 2022-2023 school year, the seventh-grade team will participate in professional learning activities together and develop a co-planning structure that works for their team. In conjunction with myself, the co-teaching team from this study will have a lead role in facilitating the professional learning and planning sessions with the seventh-grade team. Given the feedback from the fifth-grade team, the professional learning for future teams will be a combination of videos and discussion activities. One advantage to this is that the professional learning can take place during the school day, most likely a school improvement day. This team will identify a structure for planning, including a co-planning tool, as well as a structure and time for co-planning that works for their team.

Limitations

Despite the methods used to establish reliability and validity, this study did present some limitations. One limitation of this study was that the model was only used with one grade level
within a rural setting. Within this setting, the special education teacher was only in one period of each core class each day. Due to this structure, the general education teachers are not always able to implement the same style of instruction throughout all sections. Specifically for this research, each teacher was initially asked to journal or answer some open-ended questions weekly. After a couple of weeks this was discontinued as I found that not all of the teachers completed the weekly questionnaire, but I also gained much richer information through our co-teaching team discussions.

One of the biggest challenges of this process was the impact the COVID-19 pandemic had on this research project. Although the district was in-person for the entire school year, there were multiple grade levels that were moved to remote instruction for various lengths of time due to positive COVID cases within the grade level. The fifth grade was not one of the grade levels moved to remote instruction, but the staff and students always had the fear at any given moment they could be providing instruction and learning in a different format. Even though the district was providing in-person instruction to students, the district staff tried very hard to socially distance during this time to help limit the exposure. This presented challenges for the co-teaching team to meet in person, thus all of our meeting and collaboration time was held via Zoom. This also impacted opportunities for members of the team to get into classrooms to do observations. Other COVID challenges that arose included staff being quarantined and taking time off for vaccinations and needed recovery. In addition to COVID, there were family situations that presented obstacles for staff to attend our scheduled meetings, plus some were absent for a length of time which impacted the ability for the co-teaching team to work together consistently.

The scheduling of the meetings presented minor challenges, but I think important to note as I consider how to replicate the process in other grade levels moving forward. The teachers in
the district have one and a half plan periods a day, which typically gives them time to meet with other colleagues, assist students who may need additional support, plan for lessons, make copies, answer email and voicemail, and attend to other daily duties of a typical classroom teacher. For most teachers, during the remaining class periods of the day, they are assigned instructional cases. In this situation, the special education teacher was supposed to have one scheduled planning period with at least one of the general education teachers. Because of COVID-19 and remote learners, the special education teacher was assigned to work with these students during this time. Although she had a planning period, it was no longer during the same time as the general education teacher. Just like many other schools, the district had a shortage of substitute teachers to cover for teachers when they are absent or are required to attend meetings or workshops. The shortage of subs increased during the COVID-19 pandemic. As the Director of Instruction, I was not scheduling the daily or weekly meetings for the entire building staff. I had to work with the team individually to find a time that worked for each of them as this was something additional to their assigned duties. Our meeting times had to be before school, which often presented daycare challenges for the staff involved.

Another challenge was the timeframe of this research. Classroom routines and expectations had already been established prior to the team’s implementation of the six models of co-teaching. One recommendation Lori presented moving forward was to implement routines into the classroom for the students at the beginning of the year. Given the timing of this research, routines for station teaching in particular were incorporated very late in the year when expectations had already been established.

As I thought about the sustainability of the work that was done by this team, I have concerns with the transition of a new math teacher as well as future teacher turnover and
transitions. How will we bring another member of the team on board? Several members of this team continued to stress the importance of accountability for sustainability. The one question that comes to mind is how we continue with this level of support to sustain the work the team is doing but then add other teams. A couple of members of the team mentioned helping to facilitate the next group, but this would require some level of training and supervision also.

**Recommendations for Research**

Given that there was a benefit for educators as well as students through this research process, it is clear that additional research focused on utilizing co-planning should occur. The study could be expanded to additional grade levels and/or departments. In addition to furthering the study with other grade levels, researchers could examine any of the following topics: different areas of student performance, how the implementation of co-teaching service delivery models impacts various groups of students with or without disabilities, and how educators can use this information to make decisions about the best ways to support students in the general education setting. As mentioned in the limitation section, asking teachers to journal after each lesson or respond to open ended questions would provide more insight into specific factors that may influence co-teaching.

Overall, by expanding future research to include a wider range of schools and student populations, studies could uncover answers to the following important questions:

1. Does utilizing the process outlined in this study increase student achievement?
2. How does co-teaching impact student learning?
3. In what ways does implementing different co-teaching models enhance student learning?
Conclusion

This study provided the opportunity for the fifth-grade co-teaching team at one middle school in central Illinois to develop a system for co-planning. The goals of the research included identifying the effects of co-planning time on the co-teaching service delivery models. Findings indicated that co-planning did impact the implementation of co-teaching service delivery models within the fifth-grade co-taught setting. The results showed that co-teachers were able to implement a variety of co-teaching models into their classrooms, allowing for an increase in instructional opportunities for students as well as increasing student engagement.

The findings of this study support other components of research in this area. Co-teaching provides teachers with the opportunity to provide students with special education services in the general education classroom. Researchers such as Cook and Friend (1995) identified advantages to co-taught instruction. One significant advantage to co-teaching is that the teacher-student ratio is increased, potentially enhancing instructional opportunities for all students. On the other hand, ongoing challenges include administrator support, common planning time, and training. Co-teaching requires collaboration between the special education and general education teachers. Murawski and Dieker (2004) stressed the importance of co-planning, co-instructing, and co-assessing their students. When teachers take time to co-plan, co-teaching implementation is more successful (Dieker, 2001; Dieker & Murawski, 2003). With training and intentional time to co-plan, general education and special education teachers can implement a variety of co-teaching service delivery models in order to create effective learning environments for all learners. This research will impact future practice both at Jefferson Middle School and also districtwide.

Considerations for further studies were also provided. Some suggestions include expanding the co-planning structure to other grade levels, or looking at different groups of
student performance, analyzing how the implementation of co-teaching service delivery models impact various groups of students with or without disabilities, and determining how this information can be used to make decisions about how to best support students in the general education setting.
REFERENCES


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### PRE-MEETING

General education teacher reviews upcoming curriculum for discussion at the meeting.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TIME ALLOTED</th>
<th>TOPIC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>12 minutes</strong></td>
<td>1. The general education teacher outlines upcoming curriculum, content, and activities and projects for material that will be addressed within the co-taught class.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>10 minutes</strong></td>
<td>2. Both teachers review student data. This helps them identify student learning status, gaps in student learning, and specialized student needs that may affect instructional decisions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>15 minutes</strong></td>
<td>3. Both teachers discuss points of difficulty in the upcoming instruction. What are possible barriers to student learning? How could these challenges be lessened or overcome? How can student IEP and language learning goals be incorporated into this instruction using SDI?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>15 minutes</strong></td>
<td>4. Both teachers discuss patterns for their co-teaching. They should consider the six co-teaching approaches (and variations), identify patterns in the class of when review, assessments, and other predictable activities occur, and decide when and where the six approaches might best be employed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>8 minutes</strong></td>
<td>5. This time is reserved for partnership discussions, including co-teaching concerns, communication, housekeeping items, and successes/issues related to the past four-week period.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### POST MEETING

Special education teacher, EL teacher, or the other specialist prepares any specially designed instruction and develop as needed accommodations or modifications that are student specific. They also prepare general strategies that contribute to instructional differentiation.
### APPENDIX B: MACRO PLANNING TEMPLATE

#### PRE-MEETING
General education teacher reviews upcoming curriculum for discussion at the meeting.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TIME ALLOTED</th>
<th>TOPIC</th>
<th>NOTES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12 minutes</td>
<td>1. The general education teacher outlines upcoming curriculum, content, and activities and projects for material that will be addressed within the co-taught class.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 minutes</td>
<td>2. Both teachers review student data. This helps them identify student learning status, gaps in student learning, and specialized student needs that may affect instructional decisions.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 minutes</td>
<td>3. Both teachers discuss points of difficulty in the upcoming instruction. What are possible barriers to student learning? How could these challenges be lessened or overcome? How can student IEP and language learning goals be incorporated into this instruction using SDI?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 minutes</td>
<td>4. Both teachers discuss patterns for their co-teaching. They should consider the six co-teaching approaches (and variations), identify patterns in the class of when review, assessments, and other predictable activities occur, and decide when and where the six approaches might best be employed.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 minutes</td>
<td>5. This time is reserved for partnership discussions, including co-teaching concerns, communication, housekeeping items, and successes/issues related to the past four-week period.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### POST MEETING
Special education teacher, EL teacher, or the other specialist prepares any specially designed instruction and develop as needed accommodations or modifications that are student specific. They also prepare general strategies that contribute to instructional differentiation.
APPENDIX C: MATH MACRO PLANNING NOTES

**PRE-MEETING**
General education teacher reviews upcoming curriculum for discussion at the meeting.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TIME ALLOTTED</th>
<th>TOPIC</th>
<th>NOTES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12 minutes</td>
<td>1. The general education teacher outlines upcoming curriculum, content, and activities and projects for material that will be addressed within the co-taught class.</td>
<td>No projects during this Unit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 minutes</td>
<td>2. Both teachers review student data. This helps them identify student learning status, gaps in student learning, and specialized student needs that may affect instructional decisions.</td>
<td>In addition to students with IEP’s, additional support will be given to C, J, and H (looked at FastBridge data).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 minutes</td>
<td>3. Both teachers discuss points of difficulty in the upcoming instruction. What are possible barriers to student learning? How could these challenges be lessened or overcome? How can student IEP and language learning goals be incorporated into this instruction using SDI?</td>
<td>Basic division processes are lacking. Multiplication facts are lacking. We are going to provide multiplication charts and compatible number charts. Review normal division steps with the whole group at beginning of class. IEP goals and objectives are addressed through the spiral review of each lesson. Students will be provided with additional scaffolding for word problems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 minutes</td>
<td>4. Both teachers discuss patterns for their co-teaching. They should consider the six co-teaching approaches (and variations), identify patterns in the class of when review, assessments, and other predictable activities occur, and decide when and</td>
<td>Station teaching will be used a minimum of once a week (two stations). This can be easily done in lessons that take more than one day (Lesson 5.2, Lesson 5.3, Lesson 5.8).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**DATES:** 1/11 and 1/25
Complete all of chapter 5 and begin 2-3 days of Chapter 6.
where the six approaches might best be employed.  

All other lessons will utilize the teaming approach.

| **8 minutes** | **5. This time is reserved for partnership discussions, including co-teaching concerns, communication, housekeeping items, and successes/issues related to the past four-week period.** | **NA** |

**POST MEETING**

Special education teacher, EL teacher, or the other specialist prepares any specially designed instruction and develop as needed accommodations or modifications that are student specific. They also prepare general strategies that contribute to instructional differentiation.

| **PRE-MEETING** | **DATE: 1/25** |

**GENERAL EDUCATION TEACHER**

Review upcoming curriculum for discussion at the meeting.

| **TIME ALLOTTED** | **TOPIC** | **NOTES** |

| **12 minutes** | 1. The general education teacher outlines upcoming curriculum, content, and activities and projects for material that will be addressed within the co-taught class. | • We decided we will meet again next week in order to get aligned with a new chapter. This will adjust the planning session for the 1st and 3rd week of the month.  
• Will start chapter 6-fractions with unlike denominators  
• 3 stations: 2 teacher led stations, one independent- vocabulary |

| **10 minutes** | 2. Both teachers review student data. This helps them identify student learning status, gaps in student learning, and specialized student needs that may affect instructional decisions. | • Station teaching- Groups will be based on skill level for at least the 1st lesson. |

| **15 minutes** | 3. Both teachers discuss points of difficulty in the upcoming | • Spec ed teacher voices concerns regarding pacing of content. Special |
What are possible barriers to student learning? How could these challenges be lessened or overcome? How can student IEP and language learning goals be incorporated into this instruction using SDI?

- General education teacher expressed concerns that some of the special education students may require more time to master content. The gen ed teacher is concerned about content/pacing and getting through the content/chapters within the designated time frame. Go Math outlines the number of days recommended for each lesson. Need to continue to think about how to provide some additional support to students who need things paced, more practice, etc. Maybe special ed kids double up on a station to give them more practice on fewer concepts?
  - More time could be given to vocabulary--need to master for upcoming lessons/chapters. Special education and general education teacher discussed best ways to implement independent station with vocabulary flashcards. They decided on matching front (term) with back (definition). Could differentiate this station- some kids match, some kids identify terms.
  - Discussion was had about station teaching and how to implement. Do you have 3 different problems? How do the students in the independent station complete problems without daily instruction? It was recommended to use a review or problem from the day before to use as the independent station so students can work more independently.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>15 minutes</th>
<th>4. Both teachers discuss patterns for their co-teaching. They should consider the six co-teaching approaches (and variations), identify patterns in the class of when review, assessments, and other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- General education teacher would like to see stations teaching or parallel teaching during all 2-day lessons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Station teaching- Groups will be based on skill level for at least the 1st lesson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Incorporate more learning during whole group instruction.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
predictable activities occur, and decide when and where the six approaches might best be employed.

| 8 minutes | 5. This time is reserved for partnership discussions, including co-teaching concerns, communication, housekeeping items, and successes/issues related to the past four-week period. | Team decided to meet again next week so that planning and instruction line up better. It is important that macro planning be scheduled prior to the month/unit.  
General education and special education teacher both noted that it helps during team teaching to have 1 write while one is instructing and vice versa.  
General education teacher noted that it will be helpful to have 60 minute versus the current 40 minutes for math instruction. JH schedule is looking to be changed for the 2022 school year.  
General education teacher noted- this is planning for 1 hour of his day. He teaches the same lessons solo the remainder of the day. He is not able to utilize all the strategies implemented in a co-taught setting throughout his other math sections.  
Based on previous conversations, general education teacher was concerned about providing those higher-level students with enrichment. Discussed ways to provide enrichment opportunities during station teaching. |
| POST MEETING | Special education teacher, EL teacher, or the other specialist prepares any specially designed instruction and develop as needed accommodations or modifications that are student specific. They also prepare general strategies that contribute to instructional differentiation. | Special education teacher is going to make flash cards for the independent learning station. |
**PRE-MEETING**  
General education teacher reviews upcoming curriculum for discussion at the meeting.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TIME ALLOTTED</th>
<th>TOPIC</th>
<th>NOTES</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>12 minutes</strong></td>
<td>1. The general education teacher outlines upcoming curriculum, content, and activities and projects for material that will be addressed within the co-taught class.</td>
<td>No upcoming projects. Lesson 6.7 will be two days (second day will be stations).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>10 minutes</strong></td>
<td>2. Both teachers review student data. This helps them identify student learning status, gaps in student learning, and specialized student needs that may affect instructional decisions.</td>
<td>Student data demonstrates that majority of students mastered LCM. The two targeted students will continue working with more specific instruction.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **15 minutes** | 3. Both teachers discuss points of difficulty in the upcoming instruction. What are possible barriers to student learning? How could these challenges be lessened or overcome? How can student IEP and language learning goals be incorporated into this instruction using SDI? | Some challenges: Lesson 6.6 (mixed numbers), reducing, Lesson 6.7 (renaming), Lesson 6.8 (multistep problems)  
Continue to review previous day lesson frequently.  
IEP goal data is collected through the spiral curriculum (specifically problems on the back of homework pages). |
| **15 minutes** | 4. Both teachers discuss patterns for their co-teaching. They should consider the six co-teaching approaches (and variations), identify patterns in the class of when review, assessments, and other predictable activities occur, and decide when and where the six approaches might best be employed. | Teaming is used for introducing/reviewing most topics. Lesson 6.7 is a 2-day lesson. Day one will be teaming, and day 2 will be stations. |
| **8 minutes** | 5. This time is reserved for partnership discussions, including co-teaching concerns, communication, housekeeping items, and successes/issues related to the past four-week period. | Lori is concerned about when William goes on baby leave. |
**POST MEETING**
Special education teacher, EL teacher, or the other specialist prepares any specially designed instruction and develop as needed accommodations or modifications that are student specific. They also prepare general strategies that contribute to instructional differentiation.

**PRE-MEETING**
General education teacher reviews upcoming curriculum for discussion at the meeting.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TIME ALLOTTED</th>
<th>TOPIC</th>
<th>NOTES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12 minutes</td>
<td>1. The general education teacher outlines upcoming curriculum, content, and activities and projects for material that will be addressed within the co-taught class.</td>
<td>-2-3 weeks we will going over dividing fractions and prepping for state testing-we are covering concepts in class that will be assessed on state testing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 minutes</td>
<td>2. Both teachers review student data. This helps them identify student learning status, gaps in student learning, and specialized student needs that may affect instructional decisions.</td>
<td>-used scores from Prodigy assignment to determine overall understanding of multiplying fractions (including reducing/converting improper to mix)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 minutes</td>
<td>3. Both teachers discuss points of difficulty in the upcoming instruction. What are possible barriers to student learning? How could these challenges be lessened or overcome? How can student IEP and language learning goals be incorporated into this instruction using SDI?</td>
<td>-kids will continue to struggle when changing improper fractions=give step-by-step handout -pacing=trying to cover specific topics before state assessment -Lori needs to be more aware of grades on independent activities in order to collect data on “story problems”-IEP objectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 minutes</td>
<td>4. Both teachers discuss patterns for their co-teaching. They should consider the six co-teaching approaches (and</td>
<td>-8-3: whole group &amp; teaming -8-4: whole group &amp; parallel teaching</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
variations), identify patterns in the class of when review, assessments, and other predictable activities occur, and decide when and where the six approaches might best be employed.

8 minutes

5. This time is reserved for partnership discussions, including co-teaching concerns, communication, housekeeping items, and successes/issues related to the past four-week period.

POST MEETING
Special education teacher, EL teacher, or the other specialist prepares any specially designed instruction and develop as needed accommodations or modifications that are student specific. They also prepare general strategies that contribute to instructional differentiation.

PRE-MEETING
General education teacher reviews upcoming curriculum for discussion at the meeting.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TIME ALLOTTED</th>
<th>TOPIC</th>
<th>NOTES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12 minutes</td>
<td>1. The general education teacher outlines upcoming curriculum, content, and activities and projects for material that will be addressed within the co-taught class.</td>
<td>-Essential standards within chapter 10 &amp; 11 will be covered/introduced -group work lead discussions/projects will occur on a more frequent basis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 minutes</td>
<td>2. Both teachers review student data. This helps them identify student learning status, gaps in student learning, and specialized student needs that may affect instructional decisions.</td>
<td>-Both teachers have reviewed student data enough over the course of the year that they are able to determine success rates for students with upcoming lessons/chapters</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 15 minutes | 3. Both teachers discuss points of difficulty in the upcoming instruction. What are possible barriers to student learning? How could these challenges be lessened or overcome? How can student IEP and language learning goals be incorporated into this instruction using SDI? | -pacing  
-focus will be on introducing skills vs. mastery of skills (concerning for Laura due to not enough time!)  
-chapter 11: students may struggle with the implementation of formulas  
Provide -formula cheat sheet  
-Lori will collect data when papers are returned (multi-step story problems) |
| 15 minutes | 4. Both teachers discuss patterns for their co-teaching. They should consider the six co-teaching approaches (and variations), identify patterns in the class of when review, assessments, and other predictable activities occur, and decide when and where the six approaches might best be employed. | -focus will be on station work for the remaining of the year  
-less teacher directed --more student-driven through small partner/group projects (parallel teaching) |
| 8 minutes | 5. This time is reserved for partnership discussions, including co-teaching concerns, communication, housekeeping items, and successes/issues related to the past four-week period. | -pacing of content  
-introduction vs. mastery |

**POST MEETING**

Special education teacher, EL teacher, or the other specialist prepares any specially designed instruction and develop as needed accommodations or modifications that are student specific. They also prepare general strategies that contribute to instructional differentiation.
**PRE-MEETING**  
General education teacher reviews upcoming curriculum for discussion at the meeting.  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>TIME ALLOTTED</strong></th>
<th><strong>TOPIC</strong></th>
<th><strong>NOTES</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 12 minutes        | 1. The general education teacher outlines upcoming curriculum, content, and activities and projects for material that will be addressed within the co-taught class. | -will wrap up current novel and begin Land of Stones by end of Jan.  
-Land of Stones will be audio version  
-plan is to complete unit on paper |
| 10 minutes        | 2. Both teachers review student data. This helps them identify student learning status, gaps in student learning, and specialized student needs that may affect instructional decisions. | -M, C, and G, in addition to students with IEPs need additional support  
-more interactive read alouds with upcoming novel |
| 15 minutes        | 3. Both teachers discuss points of difficulty in the upcoming instruction. What are possible barriers to student learning? How could these challenges be lessened or overcome? How can student IEP and language learning goals be incorporated into this instruction using SDI? | -constant check ins during chapter reads  
-teacher will position themselves in relation to behavioral needs  
-collect data during oral reviews for comp ?s / overall theme / etc.  
-fluency goals will be addressed during independent time |
| 15 minutes        | 4. Both teachers discuss patterns for their co-teaching. They should consider the six co-teaching approaches (and variations), identify patterns in the class of when review, assessments, and other predictable activities occur, and decide when and where the six approaches might best be employed. | -station teaching = visualize char. activities  
teaming = audio version  
since we run this classroom in a constructivist style, we are setting up lessons to allow students to explore and socially learn. Teachers will be equally walking around and supporting student inquiry and challenges as we go. If you want to label this, I would say “teaming” |
### POST MEETING

Special education teacher, EL teacher, or the other specialist prepares any specially designed instruction and develop as needed accommodations or modifications that are student specific. They also prepare general strategies that contribute to instructional differentiation.

### PRE-MEETING

General education teacher reviews upcoming curriculum for discussion at the meeting.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TIME ALLOTTED</th>
<th>TOPIC</th>
<th>NOTES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12 minutes</td>
<td>1. The general education teacher outlines upcoming curriculum, content, and activities and projects for material that will be addressed within the co-taught class.</td>
<td>Over the course of the next two weeks, we will cover chapters 6-13 in <em>The Land of Stories</em> by Chris Colfer. We will be completing the Wishing Spell Items sheet during the Chapter 6 reading and continuously fill in the plotting sheet as we read the entirety of the book.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 minutes</td>
<td>2. Both teachers review student data. This helps them identify student learning status, gaps in student learning, and specialized student needs that may affect instructional decisions.</td>
<td>J’s group needs support and quizzes need to be read aloud. Otherwise, not enough data is available. Data will be reviewed after more is collected.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 minutes</td>
<td>3. Both teachers discuss points of difficulty in the upcoming instruction. What are possible barriers to student learning? How could these challenges be lessened or overcome? How can student IEP and language</td>
<td>Stopping and discussing needs to happen more often within the audiobook. We need to express to a student his roles in his group.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
learning goals be incorporated into this instruction using SDI? Give students with IEPs tracking devices for reading time.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>15 minutes</th>
<th>4. Both teachers discuss patterns for their co-teaching. They should consider the six co-teaching approaches (and variations), identify patterns in the class of when review, assessments, and other predictable activities occur, and decide when and where the six approaches might best be employed.</th>
<th>Lori will lead the read aloud questions and both teachers will continue to walk around and assist during group and individual working time.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 8 minutes  | 5. This time is reserved for partnership discussions, including co-teaching concerns, communication, housekeeping items, and successes/issues related to the past four-week period. | Melanie needs to walk around more during work time (self-assessment)  
Lori needs to stay focused during content (self-assessment) |

**POST MEETING**
Special education teacher, EL teacher, or the other specialist prepares any specially designed instruction and develop as needed accommodations or modifications that are student specific. They also prepare general strategies that contribute to instructional differentiation.

**PRE-MEETING**
General education teacher reviews upcoming curriculum for discussion at the meeting.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TIME ALLOTTED</th>
<th>TOPIC</th>
<th>NOTES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 12 minutes    | 1. The general education teacher outlines upcoming curriculum, content, and activities and projects for material that will be addressed within the co-taught class. | -upcoming chapters in novel were outlined. Decided to do station teaching on Wednesdays--character traits & quoting accurately from text  
-readings will be completed by teachers and within small groups  
-began discussion on next novel |
<p>| 10 minutes    | 2. Both teachers review student data. This helps them identify | -teachers reviewed quarterly grades. Even though all students did |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15 minutes</td>
<td>3. Both teachers discuss points of difficulty in the upcoming instruction. What are possible barriers to student learning? How could these challenges be lessened or overcome? How can student IEP and language learning goals be incorporated into this instruction using SDI?</td>
<td>- Discussion occurred over the fact that when reading in groups, groups will finish at different times due to reading paces. When this occurs, groups will be given additional activities to complete. (Higher groups will be given more in-depth activities).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 minutes</td>
<td>4. Both teachers discuss patterns for their co-teaching. They should consider the six co-teaching approaches (and variations), identify patterns in the class of when review, assessments, and other predictable activities occur, and decide when and where the six approaches might best be employed.</td>
<td>- The next 2 weeks, on Wednesday, station teaching will occur. Group reading will also occur. - In the upcoming novel, parallel teaching will be the main co-teaching strategy used.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 minutes</td>
<td>5. This time is reserved for partnership discussions, including co-teaching concerns, communication, housekeeping items, and successes/issues related to the past four-week period.</td>
<td>- Melanie expressed concerns regarding the number of chapters grouped together in between activities - Lori encourages Melanie to stop and discuss while reading.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**POST MEETING**

Special education teacher, EL teacher, or the other specialist prepares any specially designed instruction and develop as needed accommodations or modifications that are student specific. They also prepare general strategies that contribute to instructional differentiation.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TIME ALLOTTED</th>
<th>TOPIC</th>
<th>NOTES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 12 minutes    | 1. The general education teacher outlines upcoming curriculum, content, and activities and projects for material that will be addressed within the co-taught class. | -Complete final FastBridge assessment  
-Complete “Love That Dog” poetry unit/novel  
-When the novel is complete, the remaining of the school year will be working on students creating their own movie of a previous novel. |
| 10 minutes    | 2. Both teachers review student data. This helps them identify student learning status, gaps in student learning, and specialized student needs that may affect instructional decisions. | -Groups for “Love That Dog” will be determined based on FastBridge scores. Until FastBridge scores are available, we will be doing whole class instruction.  
-Teacher led activities will continue until students have a clear understanding of expectations (poems) |
| 15 minutes    | 3. Both teachers discuss points of difficulty in the upcoming instruction. What are possible barriers to student learning? How could these challenges be lessened or overcome? How can student IEP and language learning goals be incorporated into this instruction using SDI? | -Behavior concerns when working in groups  
-interpretations of poems-will they understand and be able to justify their understandings  
-Reading out-loud to improve fluency.  
-Comprehension data for IEP goals will be gathered through daily assignments |
| 15 minutes    | 4. Both teachers discuss patterns for their co-teaching. They should consider the six co-teaching approaches (and variations), identify patterns in the class of when review, assessments, and other predictable activities occur, and decide when | -parallel teaching/station teaching during this unit will occur daily |
and where the six approaches might best be employed.

| **8 minutes** | 5. This time is reserved for partnership discussions, including co-teaching concerns, communication, housekeeping items, and successes/issues related to the past four-week period. | Lori’s main concern with this novel is the students’ overall ability to clearly understand the poems within the novel. Melanie’s main concern is behavior |

**POST MEETING**
Special education teacher, EL teacher, or the other specialist prepares any specially designed instruction and develop as needed accommodations or modifications that are student specific. They also prepare general strategies that contribute to instructional differentiation.
APPENDIX E: CO-TEACHING REFLECTION TOOL

Co-Teaching Reflection Tool

School        Co-Teacher(s)        Date  Click here to enter a date.

PURPOSE: This tool is designed to assist co-teaching teams by facilitating reflection upon their co-teaching implementation in order to enhance or refine existing practices.

Directions-Part 1
In each of the category areas, each teacher should individually check the rating of initiating, developing or sustaining that best describes their co-teaching team’s current status of collaborative implementation of co-teaching approaches. The categories included are planning, instructional environment, physical environment, discipline and school environment.

Initiating: Two teachers have been assigned to the same classroom and have begun to develop a co-teaching partnership and establish responsibilities to be shared.

Developing: Co-Teachers are sharing many responsibilities, modifying their thinking and implementing evidence-based co-teaching practices in an observable way.

Sustaining: Co-Teachers consistently share responsibilities and collaboratively implement evidence-based co-teaching practices through seamless planning, delivery and assessment of instruction.

1 This document was developed and produced by the Maryland State Department of Education, Division of Special Education/Early Intervention Services (June 2011) with funds from the [U.S. Department of Education, Grant # H323A070980-09].
## Co-Teaching Reflection Tool

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initiative</th>
<th>Developing</th>
<th>Sustaining</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Planning and Instruction</strong></td>
<td><strong>Planning and Instruction</strong></td>
<td><strong>Planning and Instruction</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- One teacher addresses the planning and adaptations necessary for students' specific needs including Universal Design for Learning</td>
<td>- One teacher plans for instruction, assessment, behavior and integration of technology</td>
<td>- Both teachers equally share in the lesson development appropriate to the approach of co-teaching utilized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- One teacher plans content delivery</td>
<td>- One teacher adapts plans for students with disabilities instruction, assessment and behavior using Universal Design for Learning</td>
<td>- Identification/alignment to and use of State Curriculum (SC) and/or Core Learning Goals (CLG)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Each teacher understands the outcome of the lesson and separately monitors student progress</td>
<td>- Teachers plan to jointly deliver the lesson</td>
<td>- Incorporation of modifications, accommodations, Universal Design for Learning and differentiation to address diverse learning needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Special education teacher plans for IEP implementation</td>
<td>- One teacher monitors student progress and adjusts instruction accordingly</td>
<td>- Planning for implementation of instruction and assessment aligned to the SC and individualized goals to be addressed for all students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Teachers maintain separate gradebooks</td>
<td>- Teachers begin to develop a consistent grading policy</td>
<td>- Selection of appropriate instructional and assessment delivery, based on students' needs and content, including the integration of technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Incorporation of classroom management procedures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Both teachers monitor student progress and adjust instruction accordingly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Both teachers agree upon a consistent policy for grading and homework</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2 This document was developed and produced by the Maryland State Department of Education, Division of Special Education/Early Intervention Services (June 2011) with funds from the [U.S. Department of Education, Grant # H323A070090-09].
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Co-Teaching Reflection Tool</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Initiating</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Students are learning and engaged by only one teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Special educator only provides assistance to the students identified with disabilities and collects and analyzes data in isolation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- One teacher’s name is included on all written materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Special educator develops assessments for students identified with disabilities and provides grades to the general educator.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- One teacher develops assessments and collects and analyzes data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- One teacher implements agreed upon policy for grading and homework</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

3 This document was developed and produced by the Maryland State Department of Education, Division of Special Education/Early Intervention Services (June 2011) with funds from the [U.S. Department of Education, Grant # H323A070090-09].
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Physical Environment</th>
<th>Initiating</th>
<th>Developing</th>
<th>Sustaining</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Resources and materials are viewed as property of one teacher or the other</td>
<td>Access to all materials in the work environment may be limited</td>
<td>Both teachers have shared access to all resources and materials</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One teacher has no assigned area in the learning environment</td>
<td>Work space is shared but is somewhat limited</td>
<td>Both teachers have appropriate and reasonable work space in the learning environment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No flexibility in use of space for co-teaching approaches and the encouragement of student movement for interactions</td>
<td>Space restricts selection of co-teaching approaches and appropriate student movement for interactions</td>
<td>Space allows for grouping and student movement for interactions in the implementation of the various co-teaching approaches</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4 This document was developed and produced by the Maryland State Department of Education, Division of Special Education/Early Intervention Services (June 2011) with funds from the (U.S. Department of Education, Grant # H323A07000-09).
### Co-Teaching Reflection Tool

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discipline</th>
<th>Initiating</th>
<th>Developing</th>
<th>Sustaining</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• One teacher is responsible for establishing and communicating expectations</td>
<td>• Some shared responsibility for establishing and communicating expectations</td>
<td>• Both teachers share responsibility for establishing and communicating expectations for all students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Each teacher disciplines a specified group of students</td>
<td>• The majority of discipline is handled by one teacher</td>
<td>• Both teachers ensure all students adhere to classroom expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• One teacher is solely responsible for implementing Behavior Intervention Plans</td>
<td>• One teacher has primary responsibility to implement Behavior Intervention Plans</td>
<td>• Both teachers share responsibility to implement Behavior Intervention Plans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Students respond to one teacher only in regard to instruction and discipline</td>
<td>• Students respond primarily to one teacher in regard to instruction and discipline</td>
<td>• Students respond to both teachers equally in regard to instruction and discipline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Teachers independently decide upon behavior practices to use within the classroom</td>
<td>• Teachers use some of the behavior practices within an existing school-wide approach</td>
<td>• Teachers use behavior practices consistent with any existing school-wide approach(es)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

5 This document was developed and produced by the Maryland State Department of Education, Division of Special Education/Early Intervention Services (June 2011) with funds from the [U.S. Department of Education, Grant # H333A07000-09).
### Co-Teaching Reflection Tool

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Environment</th>
<th>Initiating</th>
<th>Developing</th>
<th>Sustaining</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>· Minimal or no time for job embedded co-planning and co-teaching</td>
<td>· The schedule provides limited time for job embedded co-planning and co-teaching</td>
<td>· The schedule provides time for job-embedded co-planning and co-teaching</td>
<td>· Needed resources are provided including: scheduling, space, appropriate student grouping, instructional materials and technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>· Few resources are provided including: scheduling, space, appropriate student grouping, instructional materials, and technology</td>
<td>· Limited resources are provided including: scheduling, space, appropriate student grouping, instructional materials and technology</td>
<td>· The environment supports collaboration and problem-solving by staff</td>
<td>· The environment supports collaboration and problem-solving by staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>· Teachers work in isolation to address barriers or problems</td>
<td>· The environment provides some support for collaboration and problem-solving by staff</td>
<td>· Some members of the school community embrace collaboration and co-teaching as an integral part of instruction and assessment</td>
<td>· The school culture embraces collaboration and co-teaching as an integral part of instruction and assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>· The school community does not embrace collaboration and co-teaching as an integral part of instruction and assessment</td>
<td>· Limited professional development specific to co-teaching is provided</td>
<td>· Limited professional development specific to co-teaching including job-embedded professional development is provided</td>
<td>· High quality professional development specific to co-teaching is provided based upon teacher and student needs including job-embedded professional development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>· Minimal or no professional development, including job-embedded professional development specific to co-teaching is provided</td>
<td>· Some feedback is provided to support enhancement of co-teaching and collaborative practices which reflects partial understanding of the co-teaching framework, but may focus more on one teacher than another</td>
<td>· Feedback and coaching is provided to support enhancement of co-teaching and collaborative practices as reflected in the co-teaching framework</td>
<td>· Feedback and coaching is provided to support enhancement of co-teaching and collaborative practices as reflected in the co-teaching framework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>· Feedback provided to co-teachers reflects limited or no understanding of the co-teaching framework and focuses more on one teacher than another</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

6 This document was developed and produced by the Maryland State Department of Education, Division of Special Education/Early Intervention Services (June 2011) with funds from the U.S. Department of Education, Grant # H323A07000-09.

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Co-Teaching Reflection Tool

**Directions - Collaborative Reflection**

Complete the following section collaboratively with your co-teaching partner. Begin by sharing your responses to Part 1 of the co-teaching reflection tool with your co-teacher. Compare your ratings (initiating, developing, or sustaining) and discuss your individual and team strengths and areas for improvement. Reflection Tool Part 3 may be helpful in recording your action plan that will guide your next steps in enhancing your co-teaching skills.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Co-Teaching Categories</th>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Areas for Improvement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Planning for Instruction and Assessment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 1 rating: Choose an item.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 2 rating: Choose an item.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructional Environment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 1 rating: Choose an item.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 2 rating: Choose an item.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Environment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 1 rating: Choose an item.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 2 rating: Choose an item.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discipline</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 1 rating: Choose an item.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 2 rating: Choose an Item.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Environment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 1 rating: Choose an item.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 2 rating: Choose an item.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7 This document was developed and produced by the Maryland State Department of Education, Division of Special Education/Early Intervention Services (June 2011) with funds from the [U.S. Department of Education, Grant # H323A070000-09].
Co-Teaching Reflection Tool

School  Co-Teacher(s)  Date  Click here to enter a date.

Directions Part 2-Instructional Delivery

In this section, you will individually describe your team’s implementation of co-teaching approaches. Check the rating of sustaining, developing or initiating that best describes your team’s implementation of each co-teaching approach.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Co-Teaching Approach</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Initiating</th>
<th>Developing</th>
<th>Sustaining</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Teach 1 Assist ¹</td>
<td>One teacher is responsible for teaching. One teacher circulates throughout the classroom providing unobtrusive assistance to students as needed. • No co-planning occurs, although the lesson plan may be exchanged • No opportunity to switch roles-lead/assist • This approach is used exclusively • Special education teacher only assists students with disabilities</td>
<td>• Limited co-planning occurs, with one teacher developing the lesson separately • The same teacher leads predominately, while the other usually assists • This approach is used predominately • Students interact mostly with one teacher or the other teacher</td>
<td>• Co-planning occurs consistently • Each teacher has the opportunity to lead and to assist based on the instructional activity • This approach is used strategically • Both teachers share responsibility for maintaining the learning environment for all students • Special educator’s role clearly reflects a focus on student’s IEP needs</td>
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### Co-Teaching Reflection Tool

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| **Station Teaching** | Two teachers divide content and students. Each teacher then teaches the content to one group and subsequently repeats the instruction for the other group. If appropriate, a third "station" could give students an opportunity to work independently. | - Separate content is planned by each teacher and delivered at each station, although resources may be exchanged.  
- One teacher makes all the decisions about objectives, skill development, pre-teaching, etc.  
- Students rotate through a series of stations that may not be closely related.  
- Teachers group students with disabilities separately. | - Lessons are planned separately.  
- Decisions regarding main objective, needed skill development, and pre-teaching for lesson are developed in isolation.  
- Students rotate through two separate content stations and an independent/partner activity.  
- Teachers group students without predetermined criteria.  
- Students with disabilities are unevenly distributed among groups. | - Co-planning occurs consistently.  
- Decisions for lesson, including main objective, needed skill development, and pre-teaching are collaboratively developed.  
- Students rotate through two cohesive content stations and, if appropriate, a related independent/partner activity.  
- Teaching team uses predetermined criteria to group all students, and students with disabilities are part of each group. |

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2 This document was developed and produced by the Maryland State Department of Education, Division of Special Education/Early Intervention Services (June 2011) with funds from the [U.S. Department of Education, Grant # H334A090099].

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**Co-Teaching Reflection Tool**

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| **Parallel Teaching** | On occasion, students' learning would be greatly facilitated if they just had more supervision by the teacher or more opportunity to respond. In parallel teaching, the teachers are both teaching the same information, but they divide the class group and do so simultaneously. | - Co-planning does not occur, but teachers may exchange materials and resources  
- Each teacher delivers different/unrelated content  
- Special educator has separate group for students with disabilities and teaches modified content | - Co-planning occurs sometimes but lessons are planned separately  
- One teacher is responsible for teaching grade level content  
- One teacher has a separate group for students with disabilities to teach content using a variety of instructional strategies | - Co-planning occurs consistently  
- Each teacher presents the same content to divided group using strategies designed to meet individual student needs  
- Teaching team uses pre-determined criteria to group all students, including students with disabilities  
- Students with disabilities are a part of each group |

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3 This document was developed and produced by the Maryland State Department of Education, Division of Special Education/Early Intervention Services (June 2011) with funds from the U.S. Department of Education, Grant # H133A100009.
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| Alternative Teaching¹ | In most class groups, occasions arise in which several students need specialized attention. In alternative teaching, one teacher takes responsibility for the large group while the others work with a smaller group. | - Co-planning does not occur  
- Special educator always leads smaller group  
- Small group is static and composed only of students with disabilities  
- This approach is the primary mode of instruction, so students with disabilities are usually working separately from the rest of the class | - Co-planning occurs sometimes  
- One educator predominately leads the large group  
- Small group is composed of students who are struggling with a particular concept or skill; grouping is adjusted periodically  
- This approach is used primarily or exclusively for remediation for acceleration of struggling students | - Co-planning occurs consistently  
- Both teachers share responsibility for leading smaller teaching groups  
- Small groups are formed flexibly and fluidly to address instructional needs  
- This approach is used creatively to address a variety of student needs, including remediation for acceleration, pre-teaching, and enrichment |

¹ This document was developed and produced by the Maryland State Department of Education, Division of Special Education/Early Intervention Services (June 2011) with funds from the U.S. Department of Education, Grant # H323A0900069.
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<td><strong>Team Teaching</strong></td>
<td>Both teachers are sharing the delivery of, and have equally active roles in leading the class. Both teachers are actively engaged in the delivery of core instruction.</td>
<td>- Co-planning occurs rarely, if ever &lt;br&gt; - One teacher delivers all the content information &lt;br&gt; - Special educator delivers only supplemental instruction, not core content instruction &lt;br&gt; - Student Interactions are based on teacher roles (Special Educator or General Educator)</td>
<td>- Some co-planning occurs sometimes &lt;br&gt; - One teacher (usually the general educator) delivers majority of core content &lt;br&gt; - Each educator delivers a prescribed section of the lesson &lt;br&gt; - Student Interactions and engagement are primarily with the one teacher delivering content</td>
<td>- Extensive co-planning occurs consistently &lt;br&gt; - Both teachers share delivery of core content to the entire class &lt;br&gt; - Teachers use a “conversation” style to deliver instruction simultaneously &lt;br&gt; - Student Interactions with both teachers demonstrate cohesive delivery of instruction and promote high levels of student engagement &lt;br&gt; - Special educator leads accountability for IEP monitoring</td>
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### References


5. This document was developed and produced by the Maryland State Department of Education, Division of Special Education/Early Intervention Services (June 2011) with funds from the U.S. Department of Education, Grant # P132A080009.