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A CASE STUDY OF CO-TEACHER RELATIONSHIPS FOR ENGLISH
LANGUAGE LEARNERS IN A SUBURBAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

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by

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ABSTRACT

A CASE STUDY OF CO-TEACHER RELATIONSHIPS FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS IN A SUBURBAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Jaime Bottcher

English Language Learners (ELLs) in the United States are faced with many academic challenges including those of language acquisition, lack of background knowledge, fear of participation and unknown academic language. These challenges mixed with the ever-growing demands of the educational system, resulted in State and local educational agencies to make a distinct shift away from segregated instructional services for ELLs, by either requiring or recommending integrated co-teaching as an optimal way to educate them. Although a large number of teachers and administrators are unfamiliar with collaborative practices for ELLs, school districts have nonetheless implemented integrated co-teaching models to comply with guidelines. However, the basic establishment of professionals in an assigned classroom does not create a collaborative teaching partnership. The development and success of these partnerships relied on many different factors.

This study explored the development of co-teaching relationships in an elementary public school setting organized to serve ELL students through an integrated model. This study examined the co-teaching relationships between general education (GE) and Teachers to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) in an elementary school and described how these teachers constructed collective efficacy beliefs that affected the development, implementation, and sustainment of a successful co-teaching relationship.

This research utilized a qualitative case study methodology. Data was collected through focus groups with co-teachers, an interview with administration, observations of collaborative sessions and a review of documents (i.e. lesson plans, school improvement plan). This study provided guidance on how teachers of ELLs construct collective efficacy beliefs that affect the development, implementation and sustainment of a successful integrated co-teaching model. Furthermore, this study provided information for school administrators so that they may recognize key elements and strategies that will guide them in fostering successful co-teaching partnerships amongst their staff. The outcome of this study, identified key elements and strategies to guide administrators and teachers in fostering successful co-teaching relationships that benefit all students.

DEDICATION

This accomplishment is dedicated to those that inspired and encouraged me through this journey. This achievement represents the pinnacle of my academic success and was not possible without the support and motivation from many others.

To my mother who has always inspired me by being an example of strength. Through difficult life lessons, you have taught me to work hard and persevere. I am forever grateful to you for believing in me and encouraging me to always persist.

To the teachers who I have learned from each day over the past 18 years. Your dedication and love for what you do transcends your day to day routines. This accomplishment represents the extraordinary work you do and the massive impact you have on students.

To the students who inspire me to learn more every day. Over the years, every challenge you faced has been my challenge as well. Without knowing, you have captured my curiosity, and ignited my hope for a better tomorrow. You are the reason why this accomplishment is so meaningful to me.

To my amazing family members including my mother in law, brothers and sisters who stepped in to care for my children when I needed to research, write or work. Thank you for spending meaningful time with the boys to support this dream of mine. Your kindness was more than I had imagined and I am grateful to have you all.

To my boys Tyler, Christian and Nicholas, who have been patiently watching over this process. Thank you for always checking in while offering smiles, hugs and jokes. Watching you grow was the reason why I decided to expand my education into school leadership. I hope to one day support you with an accomplishment that holds this much meaning to you. Working hard for your dreams with determination and creativity is a privilege that you will also understand in time. There is nothing greater than my love for you. You have always and will always will inspire me to be a better human.

To my husband Chris. I know you understand how much this meant to me. I am so blessed to have a partner who has always accepted and encouraged my desires to reach academic and professional goals. Through everything you have been loving, patient and thoughtful. I appreciate your willingness to make this possible by allowing me to have the time I needed. Thank you for all the support each day. I love you.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION.....	ii
LIST OF TABLES.....	vi
CHAPTER 1.....	1
Introduction.....	1
Purpose of the Study.....	3
Theoretical Framework.....	5
Teacher Expectations.....	9
Significance of the Study.....	11
Research Questions.....	12
Definition of Terms.....	12
CHAPTER 2.....	16
Introduction.....	16
Theoretical Framework.....	16
Review of Related Research.....	17
National and State Standards.....	18
Changing Roles of Teachers.....	20
Co-Teaching.....	22
Integrated Co-teaching Examples.....	25
Professional Development.....	27
Deficit Perspective.....	30
Conclusion.....	31
CHAPTER 3.....	35
Methods and Procedures.....	35
Specific Research Questions.....	36
Setting.....	36
Participants.....	37
Data Collection Procedures.....	38
Trustworthiness of the Design.....	41
Research Ethics.....	44
Data Analysis.....	45
Role of the Researcher.....	47
CHAPTER 4.....	50
Findings.....	50
Theme 1: Fundamental Design Elements.....	51
Theme 2: Analogous Core Values.....	60
Theme 3: Administrative Support.....	71
Summary.....	79
CHAPTER 5.....	81
Discussion and Conclusion.....	81
Implications of Findings: Research Question 1.....	82
Implications of Findings: Research Question 2.....	84
Implications of Findings: Research Question 3.....	87
Theoretical Contributions.....	90

Limitations	91
Recommendations for Future Practice.....	92
Recommendations for Future Research.....	95
Conclusion.....	95
APPENDIX A: LETTER OF CONSENT (SUPERINDTENDENT).....	97
APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT FORM (PRINCIPAL).....	98
APPENDIX C: INFORMED CONSENT FORM (TEACHER).....	100
APPENDIX D: INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL.....	102
APPENDIX E: FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW PROTOCOL	104
APPENDIX F: PRINCIPAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL	106
APPENDIX G: OBSERVATION TOOL.....	107
APPENDIX H: DOCUMENT EVALUATION TOOL.....	109
REFERENCES.....	110

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Description of Participants.....	38
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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

United States schools are growing culturally and linguistically more diverse as the nation's population continues to increase the amount of students from a wide range of countries to American schools. English Language Learners (ELLs) are the fastest growing segment of the public school population. Over the past 15 years, the number of ELL students has nearly doubled to around 5 million. According to the United States Department of Education's Office of English Language Acquisition (OELA), the number of ELLs identified increased from 4.3 million in 2002–03 to nearly 4.9 million in 2015–16. In addition, ELLs represented approximately 10 % of the students in U.S. public schools in the school year 2015-16.

According to the National Center of Educational Statistics (NCES), by 2025, an estimated 25 percent of public school students will be ELs. This number indicates that ELLs are no longer oddities in our schools but rather, normalities. With the pressure of recent regulation changes and increased academic demands for all students, it is expected that ELL students “will meet the same challenging state academic content and student academic achievement standards as all children are expected to meet” (No Child Left Behind, 2001). However, there is little guidance from state or government agencies on how to create a system that focuses on effective collaborative practices that are required to create increased student achievement with ELLs. Moreover, academic demands continue to increase, in turn widening the gap between ELLs and general education students.

In addition to navigating cross cultural context, ELLs have simultaneous tasks: to acquire proficiency in the English language while also learning academic content in the very language they are in the process of learning. Teachers of ELLs are faced with the challenge of dual tasks to service these students effectively. The challenging academic standards and new assessments have impacted the academic achievement of ELLs. As the number of ELL students continue to rise, their level of academic achievement continues to lag significantly behind their native English speaking peers. The following statistics show a harsh reality to this point.

On the National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP) exams for reading in 2013, ELLs performed poorly and well below their English speaking peers on the fourth and eighth grade (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2013b). In fourth grade, the achievement gap between average scores of ELL students and non ELL students was 39 points (a larger gap than 2011). Sixty-nine percent of the fourth-grade ELLs performed Below Basic while only 28% of the non ELLs did. Only 7% of the ELLs scored Proficient or Advanced in Reading, whereas 38% of the non ELLs were proficient. In eighth grade, the achievement gap between average scores of ELL students and non ELL students was 45 points (also a larger gap than 2011). Seventy percent of the eighth grade ELLs performed Below Basic but only 20% of the non ELLs did. Only three percent of the ELLs scored Proficient and none as Advanced, while 33% of the non ELLs were proficient and four percent were advanced.

It is suspected that state policies play a role in the achievement gap as well. For example, some states limit the number of years students can receive language support and move them out of these programs sooner than they should be even though research

strongly demonstrates that students need more time with specialized language support (Saunders & Goldenberg, 2010).

We know that conversational fluency develops inside and outside of the classroom (also known as social language or basic interpersonal communicative skills, BICS) and can be attained in 1-3 years (Thomas & Collier, 2002). However, the language that is critical for educational success-academic language (or cognitive/academic language proficiency CALP) (Cummins, 2000)- is more complex and develops slowly and systematically in academic settings. Programs that do not accommodate the time needed for the acquisition of academic language do these students a disservice.

Purpose of the Study

ELL students in mainstream classrooms are faced with many academic challenges including those of language acquisition, lack of background knowledge, fear of participation and unknown academic language. These challenges mixed with the ever-growing demands of the educational system, creates a large performance gap between ELL students and mainstream students throughout the State. Although it is expected given their linguistic challenges and learning needs, there is little guidance from the State in support of how to create a system that focuses on the achievement of this population. For the past 50 years, with the support of legislative mandates, lawsuits, and support movements, numerous school systems are now moving away from a policy of providing pullout services to students with limited English proficiency into a newer integrated model to include their scaffolded instruction in the general education environment. For the past five years, many State and local educational agencies have made a distinct shift

away from segregated instructional services for English learners, either requiring or recommending co-teaching as an optimal way to develop students' English language skills. The vision is established by the belief that all English learners need to develop their language skills while learning the mainstream curriculum.

Integrated co-teaching for ELLs is a new instructional model however, there is a distinct commonality in co-teaching for special education through an inclusion model. The success of co-teaching in inclusion is directly linked to the relationship success between the general education teacher and the special education teacher (Eccleston, 2010). While research on co-teaching relationships is limited, in co-teaching classes where the teachers spent substantial time working together, students reported on the benefits of having two teachers within the classroom. Some of the benefits consisted of the class being more interesting with two teachers, and receiving more individual help and attention while gaining a better understanding of the subject (Conderman, 2011).

There is a gap in literature on the development of a co-teaching relationship between a general education and the ESOL teacher. Scruggs, Mastropieri, and McDuffie (2007) suggested future research to address the ways in which individual schools are able to develop truly collaborative or genuine relationships, and the specific successes that can be achieved by such practices. This study will contribute to the body of knowledge necessary to address this problem by revealing the perceptions of general education teachers and ESOL teachers in regards to collaborating in different ways and developing shared beliefs. Findings will help teachers and administrators gain a better understanding of the ways GE teachers and ESOL teachers can build co-teaching relationships from a general education and ESOL teacher's perspective. For many ELLs, the learning

opportunities they receive are different from their native English speaking peers. They are often not challenged enough when it comes to engaging critically and have difficulty grasping content to catch up to their peers (Callahan, 2003; 2005). To provide the best instructional practices for ELLs, teachers must be willing to accommodate their learning needs, collaborate with experts to provide them with equitable learning opportunities.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical foundation for this study is the social cognitive theory. This view of human interactions and functioning emerged primarily from the work of Albert Bandura. Bandura believed that what individuals think and feel about themselves has an impact on their own behavior (Burney, 2008). Social cognitive theory is relevant to this study as it provides a theoretical understanding of how the attitudes and beliefs of general education and ESOL teachers affect co-teaching relationships. This theory addresses the components associated with the efficacy and attitudes of teachers. Defining how teachers' beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions about integrated co-teaching impacts their relationships and the successful application of co-teaching will frame the research of this study. The research questions developed for this study are aligned with the social cognitive theory by exploring the specific concepts of the theory.

Social cognitive theory is a psychological model of behavior that emphasizes a dynamic interactive process to explain human functioning (Burney, 2008). Social cognitive theory emphasizes that learning transpires in a social context and that a great amount of what is learned is gained through observation. This theory attributes a central role to cognitive processes in which a person can observe others and their environment,

reflect on observations along with their own thoughts and behaviors and adjust their own self-regulatory functions as a result.

This study used the social cognitive theory to examine co-teacher relationships. The social cognitive theory considers a unique way in which individuals can acquire and maintain behavior while considering the social environment in which the individual performs the behavior. The theoretical concepts of self efficacy and collective efficacy are both meaningful to this study as they provide a greater understanding of attitudes and perceptions of co-teacher relationships. Self efficacy beliefs are influenced by a person's specific capabilities and are subjective to environmental factors that create barriers or facilitate gains. Through high levels of trust and collaboration collective efficacy builds expands when teachers see the positive impact it has on student learning. These elements along with social influences have an impact on relationships and learning environments.

Self-efficacy

The theoretical concepts of self-efficacy and social cognitive theory are both relevant to this study as they provide a framework for understanding the attitudes that the GE and ESOL teachers have toward integrated co-teaching. Social cognitive theory is founded on an agent perspective (Bandura, 2001). Bandura viewed individuals as agents involved in their own development (Burney, 2008). According to Bandura (2001), to be an agent is to apply purposeful guidance over an individual's functioning and the course of events by his or her own actions. In this study GE and ESOL co-teachers, as agents, must be interested in their own development process in order to explain their individual and collaborative function.

Self-efficacy is a vital concept of social cognitive theory. Among the mechanisms of personal agency, there is not one that is more pervasive or central than a person's self-efficacy, belief about their capability to exercise control over events that have an impact on their life (Bandura, 1989). Self-efficacy is defined as the perception an individual has on his or her own ability to organize and successfully execute the courses of action necessary to achieve elected types of performance (Yilmaz, 2009). A person's self-efficacy belief serves as a significant set of proximal determining factors of human motivation, affect, and action (Bandura, 1989). Individuals function on action through the intervening process of cognitive, motivational, and affective intervening processes (Bandura, 1989). Self-efficacy is important to this study as this study will focus on taking experiences of co-teachers into account and allowing them to contribute vital input. This will provide the opportunity for adjustments to the integrated co-teaching model for development and to make it an effective and successful program.

Self-efficacy is a major component in teaching and learning as having self-confidence and assurance in the ability to teach is essential in creating an integrated co-taught classroom. This study will provide information on how self-efficacy affects the success rate in the co-taught classroom. For example, according to (Yilmaz, 2009), teachers that possess a high level of self-efficacy perception can contribute to the foundation of an education and teaching life that is more efficient in comparison to teachers that possess low self-efficacy perception. These teachers have faith in their ability to implement teaching in an effective manner and do their job willingly and affectionately. They have confidence that they can establish communication with students who present challenges by putting forth extra effort as well as providing them

with an education. Most importantly, teachers with high self-efficacy perception set high expectations for their students and put forth high effort to include the families in the educational process (Yilmaz, 2009). Given the research and expectations thus far, this is undoubtedly necessary in an integrated co-taught class of ELLs.

On the contrary, teachers with low self-efficacy perception tend to have a weak belief in their ability to implement teaching in an effective manner. They do not view themselves as being effective in classroom management and attempt to resolve disciplinary issues through negative sanctions (Yilmaz, 2009). Therefore, teachers who do not feel efficacious in their classroom management skills may not be as likely to apply effective strategies (Reinke, Herman, & Stormont, 2013). Teachers with low self-efficacy perception do not do their job affectionately and they tend to only meet with the families in the course of parent meetings (Yilmaz, 2009). Determining low self-efficacy of teachers in this study will uncover gaps in teacher preparedness in such elements as pedagogy, cultural understanding and collaboration.

Collective efficacy

Bandura introduced an additional theory known as collective efficacy, which is built on the theory of self-efficacy. Both theories derived from social cognitive theory, which emphasizes the concept of human agency and an individual's belief of having control over situations that they are faced with. According to social cognitive theory, the choices that are made by organizations and individuals are influenced through the strength of their efficacy beliefs (Goddard et al., 2004). In terms of co-teaching, when teachers as a group in a school believe that the staff as a whole can be successful, they will be more likely to persevere with their own personal efforts to achieve such success

(Goddard et al., 2004). In terms of this study, having even a small belief in collective efficacy is essential for efforts to be successful. If these teachers collectively believe they can achieve more, they will. In addition, stronger collective teacher efficacy seems to encourage individual teachers to make a more effective use of the skills they already have.

While Bandura stressed that the self-efficacy views that an individual holds, plays a critical role in their functioning, he also acknowledged that people do not work in isolation and that they develop views about the collective competencies of the group (s) to which they belong (Klassen et al., 2011). Bandura defined collective efficacy as “the groups’ shared belief in its conjoint abilities to organize and implement courses of action that are necessary to produce given levels of attainments” (p. 477). Collective efficacy beliefs affect group performance in various fields of operation such as sports, politics, business, and most importantly, education (Klassen et al., 2011). Although the two are conceptually diverse, the ideas of perceived self and collective efficacy are mutually derived from social cognitive theory. These ideas both serve similar functions and operate through a similar process (Bandura, 1998).

Teacher Expectations

Curriculum in a co-taught class must contain both grade level content and language development standards. The challenge co-teachers face is to translate those goals into essential learning outcomes-what the students need to know, understand and be able to do (Erickson, 2006; Wiggins & McTighe, 2005, 2011) and contain a scope and sequence of the content, the choice of resources and expected progressions (Hattie, 2012), and what formative and summative measures will indicate attainment of goals

(Jung & Guskey, 2012). Many teachers of ELLs have good intentions but lack specific knowledge of the complexities of teaching grade level content and language simultaneously. These well intentioned teachers often use teaching practices that unintentionally communicate low expectations and deny ELLs access to the education they deserve. Teachers relying on their perspectives recognize that these students do not have the same level of language skills as their native English speaking peers and often hold them back from content-based instruction until they gain a level of language proficiency equal to their peers. When students are approached from this deficit perspective, students who are English learners are often defined as fundamentally lacking. Co-teachers having the same understanding, goals, and expectations for their students plays a role in the success of the partnership and student achievement. Based on the elements discussed above, the following framework will be utilized.

Co-planning

Co-planning is undeniably the most important component of the collaborative instructional cycle (Dove & Honigsfeld, 2017). When planning does not exist, teachers are essentially “pushing in” as they would be without purposeful preparation or intention. When teachers collaboratively co-plan they share ideas, strategies and expectations to create a dynamic and cohesive environment for students. A critical element of collaborative planning is understanding and appreciating each partner’s range of talents, knowledge and skills. Creation and commitment to co-planning routines and structures often impacts the success or failure of a team.

Significance of the Study

This study has significance for research, policy and practice related to ELLs. Since the most recent changes to CR-Part 154, school districts across New York state have been required to develop an integrated co-teaching model to educate ELLs. While co-teaching has a longer existence in the field of special education, co-teaching in ENL is a more recent trend (Bahaminde & Friend, 1999). Very few studies concentrate on co-teaching as a way to serve ELLs, and there is a small but incipient research base that highlights both the strengths and weaknesses that ESOL and GE teachers perceive in their co-teaching of ELLs in a GE classroom.

There is a need for research on co-teaching for ELLs in several key areas: (1) the criteria for effective co-teaching and how to evaluate it; (2) the effect of co-teaching on student outcomes; and (3) ways to develop and support effective co-teaching. While the findings of this study may be unsuitable to assist other populations of co-teachers; it will lead to more refined research questions about effective co-teaching of ELLs in the GE classroom in this suburban context.

One of the intents of this research is to explore the perceptions of GE and ESOL teachers' co-teaching relationships. The outcome of this study will help to further the understanding of the dynamics of the relationships from each teachers' perspective while working in a co-teaching classroom. Identifying and exploring these experiences and perceptions will contribute vital input, provide opportunities for adjustment and develop and make a more effective and successful integrated co-teaching program.

This study will also contribute to the field by offering guidelines for New York school districts as they move from traditional pull-out services to inclusive practices by

providing research on how GE and ESOL teachers can develop relationships. Gathering data on these co-teaching relationships will be useful in specifying methods in which co-teachers can build successful relationships.

This study will examine the development of a co-teaching relationship in a school setting organized to serve ELL students through a co-teaching model. It will describe how an elementary education teacher and an ESOL teacher construct collective efficacy beliefs that affect the development, implementation, and sustainment of a successful co-teaching relationship.

Research Questions

The following questions guide my study:

1. How do general education and ESOL teachers in a suburban elementary school perceive a successful co-teaching model?
2. What factors facilitate successful co-teaching relationships?
3. How do general education and ESOL teachers construct collective efficacy beliefs that affect the development, implementation and sustainment of a co-teaching relationship?

Definition of Terms

Achievement Gap: the difference in the performance between each ESEA subgroup (as defined in this document) within a participating LEA or school and the statewide average performance of the LEA's or State's highest achieving subgroups in reading/language arts and mathematics as measured by the assessments required under the ESEA.

Collective efficacy: the collective belief of teachers in their ability to positively affect students.

CBI: “Content-based instruction” a significant approach in language education (Brinton, Snow, & Wesche, 1989), designed to provide second-language learners instruction in content and language simultaneously

ENL: “English as a New Language” is a research-based English language development program, formerly known as English as a Second Language (ESL), comprised of two components: a content area instructional component in English (including all core content, i.e. English language arts, math, science, or social studies) with home language supports and appropriate scaffolds, and; an English language development component (stand-alone and/or integrated ENL).

ELL: “English Language Learner” is a student who speaks or understands languages other than English and who scores below a State designated level of proficiency on the New York State Identification Test for English Language Learners (NYSITELL) or the New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT).

English proficiency level: A student’s performance on the New York State Identification Test for English Language Learners (NYSITELL) or the New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT) indicates the student’s level of English language proficiency. Those levels are: Entering, Emerging, Transitioning, Expanding, or Commanding.

ESOL: “English to Speakers of Other Languages” is certification that is granted to teachers when they have completed studied in teaching students who speak a language other than English

GE: “General education” is the program of education that typically developing children should receive, based on state standards and evaluated by the annual state educational standards test. *this term is used interchangeably with mainstream education

Integrated ENL: In Integrated ENL classes, students receive core content area and English language development instruction, including the use of the home/primary language as support and appropriate EL instructional supports to enrich comprehension. Integrated ENL classes are taught by a teacher dually certified in the content area and ENL or are co-taught by a certified content area teacher and a certified ENL teacher.

KUDs: “Know, understand, do” is a strategy for incorporating a common goal while differentiating for all learners. Clearly identifying what learners need to know, understand and be able to do as a result of the lesson.

NYSITELL: “New York State Identification Test for English Language Learners” is an assessment that is administered once during the ELL Identification/Reentry process. It is designed to determine if a student is an ELL after the student’s enrollment in the NYS public school system, as well as his or her instructional requirements in a GE or ENL program.

NYSESLAT: “New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test” is an annual assessment designed to measure the English language proficiency of all English Language Learners enrolled in grades K-12. It is one component of the State’s compliance with Federal laws that mandate annually assessing and monitoring the English Language proficiency progress of all ELLs.

Self-efficacy: a term developed by Albert Bandura, an individual's belief in his or her innate ability to achieve goals.

TESOL: “Teacher of English as Second or Other Language” explains personnel qualified to teach Stand-alone English as a New Language, is certified by the State and has been trained in cultural competency, language development and the needs of English Language Learners.

CHAPTER 2

Introduction

Several federal and state mandates have been implemented over the last 20 years that have placed a great deal of attention on the education of ELL students. These mandates have attempted to provide a stronger, more focused and inclusive academic experience for ELLs. The integrated co-teaching model became a process by which these students should be educated and districts were charged with the implementation of the delivery model. This study is important to the field of education as it can provide data to gain a better understanding of the way general education teachers and ESOL teachers can build and sustain successful co-teaching models. The purpose of this literature review is to explore the evolution of this delivery model, understand the common perceptions of educating ELLs to support the need for this study. This chapter also reviews Bandura's (1977) Social Cognitive Theory as the theoretical basis of the research.

Theoretical Framework

This study used the social cognitive theory to examine co-teacher relationships. The Social cognitive theory is a view of human interactions and functioning emerged primarily from the work of Albert Bandura. Bandura believed that what individuals think and feel about themselves has an impact on their own behavior (Burney, 2008). Social cognitive theory is a psychological model of behavior that emphasizes a dynamic interactive process to explain human functioning (Burney, 2008). Social cognitive theory emphasizes that learning transpires in a social context and that a great amount of what is learned is gained through observation. This theory attributes a central role to cognitive processes in which a person can observe others and their environment, reflect on

observations along with their own thoughts and behaviors and adjust their own self-regulatory functions as a result.

Social cognitive theory is relevant to this study as it provides a theoretical understanding of how the attitudes and beliefs of general education and ESOL teachers affect co-teaching relationships. The social cognitive theory considers a unique way in which individuals can acquire and maintain behavior while considering the social environment in which the individual performs the behavior. The theoretical concepts of self efficacy and collective efficacy are both meaningful to this study as they provide a greater understanding of attitudes and perceptions of co-teacher relationships. Self efficacy beliefs are influenced by a person's specific capabilities and are subjective to environmental factors that create barriers or facilitate gains. Through high levels of trust and collaboration collective efficacy builds expands when teachers see the positive impact it has on student learning. These elements along with social influences have an impact on relationships and learning environments.

This theory addresses the components associated with the efficacy and attitudes of teachers. Defining how teachers' beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions about integrated co-teaching impacts their relationships and the successful application of co-teaching will frame the research of this study. The research questions developed for this study are aligned with the social cognitive theory by exploring the specific concepts of the theory.

Review of Related Research

In order to understand the recent changes in educating ELLs, the literature review will begin by describing the national and state mandates that have influenced its evolution. In supporting these mandates, it is necessary to include the implications they

have had on teachers and the public school system. Adjustments made to fulfill mandates for these students require understanding the changing roles of teachers and co-teaching, professional development and diminishing the belief of deficit perspective as part of the review for further understanding.

National and State Standards

With the enactment of NCLB in 2002, funding and support for ELL instruction was identified. Through Title III and “language instruction education programs, teachers of ELs had to meet two requirements for their students:

1. teach English, and
2. teach academic content, as outlined in state English language proficiency (ELP) and academic standards.

In January 2011, the NYS Board of Regents adopted the NYS P-12 CCLS, which include the Common Core State Standards. These standards serve as a consistent set of expectations for what all students should learn and be able to do, so that we can ensure that every student across New York State is on track for college and career readiness. The justification in eliminating previous standards for ELL students included the belief that all students should be held to the same high expectations outlined in the Common Core State Standards. Although accepted, these standards give little support to the academic challenges that ELLs face. In addition, the general guidelines for educating ELL students have been recommended through CCLS, none are specific enough to build effective educational systems for these students.

Beginning in 1996, the New York State Board of Regents began increasing demands on ELL students and educators to increase academic achievement. The later

release of Commissioner's Regulations Part 154 (CR-Part 154), continued the effort by outlining service delivery models to support ELL students. Over time, this plan has been revised to meet the needs of changing demographics and academic research. In its current form, the document outlines the identification process, proficiency determination, and explains program requirements for ELLs. The greatest change to the document was in the service delivery model implemented in the 2015-16 school year. Based on the students' level of proficiency as defined by the yearly NYSESLAT exam, students are required specific minutes of instruction in an integrated co-taught model.

In order to assist with the implementation of CR part 154 and to support the CCLS, New York State's Office of Bilingual Education and World Languages released the Blueprint for English Language Learner Success. The principles outlined in the document were aimed to clarify expectations and provide guidance for districts, schools, administrators and teachers to ensure that ELLs are successful in meeting the rigorous standards and succeed academically. Although the principles of the document are vast in terms of expectations for the district, the principles related to the teaching of ELLs are significant for this study. Three principles that promote the shift in which ELLs should be instructed are included here:

1. Providing integrated language and content instruction to support language development through language focused scaffolds. Bilingual, ESOL, and other content area teachers must collaborate purposefully and consistently to promote academic achievement in all content areas
2. Articulating specific content and language goals in all instructional areas

3. Creating intentional learning opportunities for all teachers to collaborate and design instruction, analyze student work, and develop rigorous lessons.

The Blueprint's intent to ensure the highest level of academic success and language proficiency creates the implication that all teachers, regardless of certification and experience, are teachers of ELs.

Changing Roles of Teachers

The instruction of ELLs has been an ongoing area of research for many years. As the amount of ELLs in the U.S. rises year after year, mainstream teachers, ESOL teachers and school administrators are faced with the challenge of educating them based on their unique needs. Instruction used to fall solely on the ESOL teacher, but now it is the responsibility of all staff. In the past, classroom teachers were encouraged to leave the instruction of these students with a specialist. As times have changed, and educational funding and growth have been tied to the advancement of all students who are registered in specific classes, teachers have been searching for strategies to help this population.

With the change of recent policy requirements and the implementation of the CCSS, the roles of teachers began to change. For ELLs to learn content (as defined by the CCSS) and language simultaneously, three critical components: teachers, standards, and assessment must be equally developed. If one component is neglected, the other two will not flourish as they constantly interact and influence each other (Staehr Fenner, 2013).

According to a 2013 study by the TESOL International Association, "given the current roles of ESOL teachers and the shifts in instruction that must take place for ELLs to achieve within the CCSS framework, participants agreed that the time has come to describe how ESOL teachers' roles will also need to change. Participants noted that

ESOL teachers must be redefined as experts, advocates, and consultants” (Staehr Fenner, 2013). General Education and ESOL teachers must now have the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to work with ELLs so that these students are instructed effectively. Teachers must now also design their instruction for ELLs around CCSS standards that outline the rigorous content for which students are responsible. In addition, teachers must determine the academic language ELLs need to acquire at each stage of English language proficiency so that students can access all content.

All teachers of ELLs must now also share responsibility for ensuring that ELLs are prepared for CCSS as well as the NYSESLAT assessments. Given the emphasis on standards and assessment, teachers were provided with the CCSS standards for students. However, teachers are often not provided with how to implement them in an effective and meaningful way (i.e. professional development). Teachers’ needs and levels of preparation to teach ELLs should be central to teacher education and professional development, but they have not been the focus. Compounding the ESOL teacher training issue is the fact that, although most ELLs spend the majority of their school day with general education teachers, and unfortunately, no national standards exist for teacher education programs to prepare content-area teachers to work with ELLs. For example, only 20 states require that all teachers have training in working with ELLs, but the breadth, depth, and quality of this training varies widely (Ballantyne, Sanderman, & Levy, 2008). Coleman and Goldberg (2012) suggest six possible effective modifications that general education teachers can begin using to create more effective instruction that is aligned with the CCSS. They state:

Target both language and content objectives in all lessons; make instruction and expectations extremely clear, focused, and systematic; employ visuals, charts, and

diagrams to aid comprehension; use the primary language for support (e.g. preview what students will read and use cognates for vocabulary instruction) and; choose reading matter with familiar content; provide additional practice and repetition (p 48).

In addition, Coleman and Goldberg (2012) argue that although English language development (ELD) instruction must be a priority, it cannot replace content area instruction. They affirm this idea by stating “Ideally, content instruction and ELD instruction should complement and reinforce each other.” It is clear that in order to make significant progress in improving the outcomes for ELLs, changes are needed in the way that teachers are prepared and supported to better support the regulations and policies. Given the current reform efforts in CCSS, CR-PART 154 and teacher evaluations, teachers are unsupported in their efforts to get things right for the ELLs whose educational performance requires urgent attention.

Co-teaching

The origins of what is called co-teaching can be traced to several related trends from the second half of the 20th century (Friend et al., 2001). Since its initial presence in the late 1980s as a strategy for supporting inclusion, co-teaching has been a reliable, but definitely not a collective feature of the special education scene, existing along other with other approaches that are more customary to special education such as self-contained classrooms and resource rooms (Pugach & Winn, 2011). In previous requirements of the ENL program, ELLs received language and academic instruction included in their school day, provided in an isolated room by an ESOL specialist, similar to a resource room program. This previous pull-out setting benefited ELLs by having small group instruction and the ESOL specialist having the ability to make adaptations to the general education curriculum. However, with educational demands increasing and the changes in

NYS regulations, it has become a less desirable approach. In fact, New York State is only requiring it for Entering and Emerging level students for up to 36 minutes daily. The most desirable method of instruction is now integrated co-teaching.

There is limited information and data available on successful co-teaching models for English language learners due to its recent innovation. The Long Island Regional Bilingual Education Resource Network (LIRBE-RN) defines co-teaching programs for ELLs as a collaboration between the ESOL teacher and General education teacher to co-plan, co-deliver and individualize instruction for all students in a class. In addition, these teachers work together creatively to accommodate language proficiencies, cultural diversity and educational backgrounds of the students in the class (LIRBE-RN, 2014).

According to NY CR-Part 154, Subpart 154-2, Integrated English as a New Language shall mean a unit of study or its equivalent in which students receive core content area (i.e. English language arts, math, science or social studies) and English language development instruction. This unit of study must be co-taught by a qualified ESOL teacher and general education teacher. When an integrated program is used, teachers have several options to consider when determining the roles and responsibilities of the teachers involved and the instructional needs of the students. For example, Dove and Honigsfeld (2010), propose important questions about the format of integrated ENL that are essential to making the program successful. For example, will the ESOL specialist teach a stand alone ENL curriculum in a designated area of the general education classroom, or will he/she support the general education curriculum by differentiating the lesson being taught by the classroom teacher? Most importantly, “Will

the ESOL teacher and the general education teacher collaboratively plan to carry out the instruction following one of several possible co-teaching models? (p. 11).

The social and academic challenges faced by ELLs are tremendous and continue to rise from year to year. Strong collaboration between ESOL and general education teachers can address the many factors affecting ELLs including linguistic, socio-economic, cultural, and academic. Collier and Thomas (2004) discuss the importance of keeping ELLs connected to the mainstream curriculum and recognizing the challenges they face to catch up to their English-speaking peers, "If students are isolated from the curricular mainstream for many years, they are likely to lose ground to those in the instructional mainstream, who are constantly pushing ahead. To catch up to their peers, students below grade level must make more than one year's progress every year to eventually close the gap" (p. 2). When considering this population, districts are striving to provide the best educational situation for them to promote social and academic growth in a variety of ways. This involves deep collaboration between teachers, new programs and stronger communication between the school and parents, and specific teaching strategies increasing academic success.

Since no two ELLs are at the same level of language acquisition, placing the focus entirely on this is not the most effective way to create a sound educational experience for them. According to the Alliance for Excellence in Education (2005), teachers should develop English as a second language as well as create literate students. In order to do this, it is recommended to teach grade level curriculum (including new concepts and necessary academic terms) to build background knowledge and build vocabulary. Also, students should also be involved in structured lessons

through guided interaction so that students can read, write, listen and speak interactively. Next, the use of metacognition through modeling and the explicit teaching of think-alouds will aid in the reading proficiency of all students. The use of authentic assessment instead of testing on the memorization of concepts and facts allows the students to demonstrate their understanding of concepts in a natural and spontaneous manner.

Also, in order to complete classroom tasks, students need explicit instruction of concepts, academic language and reading comprehension strategies. Cappellini (2005), encourages the use of meaning based context and universal themes grants the students opportunities to relate academic concepts to their everyday lives so that they would be more motivated to learn. Finally, the use of graphic organizers and visuals (including photographs, charts, and maps) helps them to recognize critical information and make content more comprehensible to ELLs.

Integrated Co-teaching Examples

The Saint Paul Public Schools district, in Minnesota, has the largest enrollment of ELLs in the state, with 40% of all students receiving ENL services. Their massive population of ELLs along with their teachers and administrators have faced the challenges of NCLB and decided to abandon “traditional pull out programs in which non-English speaking students are removed from their classrooms several times a week to work in small groups with specially trained ELL teachers. Instead, ELL services are delivered through a collaborative model in which ELL and mainstream teachers team teach. The goal: to teach language through, not prior to, content. As a result, ELL instruction is closely aligned with and integrated into the district’s standards-based

curriculum” (Pardini, 2006, p.21). All teachers and students are faced with the same curriculum, standards, and reform initiatives. Their method has shown proven results. Dove & Honigsfeld (2010) explain the developments:

Between 2003 and 2005, the gap in reading achievement between the district’s ELL and non- ELL students fell from 13 to 6 percentage points, as measured by the percent of students showing proficiency on the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment. In math, the gap fell from 6.7 to 2.7 percentage points. The district’s ELL students also did well when compared with their peers statewide, outscoring them in each of the last three years in reading and math as measured by the Test of Emerging Academic English (p 35).

Up until 2002, The New York City Department of Education had concerns about the education of their ELL population. Being the largest school district in the country, with over 1 million students throughout 1400 schools, they had no consistent way of educating ELLs (The Council of the Great City Schools, 2009). It was necessary that reform take place. First, they adopted a common curriculum and then implemented an alignment of an ELL instructional program. This curriculum and instructional alignment played a key role in the district’s efforts to improve teaching and learning for ELL students. Prior to the reform, language support for ELLs consisted of daily pull-out programs. In addition, the instruction ELLs received during this time was not monitored properly or aligned with the general education curriculum, which limited the student’s exposure to necessary content (The Council of the Great City Schools, 2009).

After the reform, the pull-out approach was replaced with a push-in or self-contained model whereas ESOL specialists worked in conjunction with general education or content area teachers to use many of the same instructional techniques and curriculum. The results of the reform proved to accomplish greater success for these students. From the years 2002 through 2008, student achievement of ELLs on the New York State

English Language Arts exam rose steadily by 25% (The Council of the Great City Schools, 2009).

General education and ESOL teachers who share in the responsibility of educating ELLs have mainly done so in separate classrooms with unlike curriculums and resources. Quality teachers in both of the above mentioned districts have much in common. First, they understand and accept the educational goals of their program. While being considered for such teaching roles, they have agreed to the policies and objectives of the programs along with using their expertise in the development. They have also focused on effective collaboration. This includes joint planning, curriculum mapping, developing instructional materials, co-teaching, writing report cards, preparing for conferences, reflecting on student assessment data, and creating goals for students. Finally, they have committed themselves to the use of best teaching practices for ELLs through the teaching of grade-level curriculum and content. They created classrooms where ELLs learn academic content at the same time they learn language.

Professional Development

Centralized training sessions that focus on specific areas such as language acquisition strategies, collaborative teaching, and cultural sensitivity have been traditional professional development experiences. This was true for Saint Paul Public Schools as well until recently. According to The Council of the Great City Schools, (2009), St Paul Public Schools have employed ELL resource coaches who work with selected schools in the district on various projects, plans or issues. Since the coaches were chosen based on their expertise and previous work in the District, they also receive ongoing training to help them manage the many issues and questions asked by

administrators and teachers from the schools they coach. These coaches have excessive knowledge about the laws and mandates that govern the education of ELLs as well as best instructional practices and programs. They provide professional development through visiting teachers on a weekly basis, observing teachers, working with school improvement teams to help create school-wide goals, help foster collaboration and co-teaching efforts, and support administrators with scheduling, state guidelines and staff issues. The presence of these coaches has created professional development that lasts longer than a five hour meeting with colleagues and has impacted instruction and collaboration in a more meaningful and cohesive manner.

According to The Council of the Great City Schools (2009), when involved with reform efforts, the New York City Public Schools looked carefully at their professional development attempts and created a system that was true to the program they were implementing. First, they acknowledged the need for specialized training for ESOL teachers to develop literacy across curriculum so that the emphasis would be taken off teaching acquisition in isolation. Next, they created a model of instructional strategies to be used by all teachers working with ELLs. In addition, they used any time and money necessary to create multiple professional development meetings that aligned ESOL teachers, mainstream teachers and administrators so that curriculum was the heart of the instruction. Finally, they used these sessions as examples of what highly qualified instruction looked like so that administrators could consistently identify it in all classrooms.

In review of the successes of St. Paul Public Schools and the NYCDOE, it is apparent that collaboration between mainstream and ESOL teachers brings about

significant change. When deeper collaboration of mainstream teachers and ESOL teachers exists, the teachers gain knowledge outside of their expertise, and develop an educational system that fosters the learning of content and language simultaneously with clear expectations. Coleman and Goldenberg (2012) share suggestions based on research collected when teaching ELLs academic content.

First, they stress making “academic content as accessible as possible for those students, and promote oral and written English language development as students learn academic content” (p.48). They also emphasize the need for effective teaching strategies containing both clear goals and objectives, practice, peer interaction, adequate assessment and reteaching. However, ELLs additionally require guided instruction with oral reading fluency, vocabulary, reading comprehension, writing, and enhanced literacy instruction targeting complex skills and concepts. In order to provide this precise and effective educational experience, a collaborative teaching model must be developed. According to Dove and Honigsfeld,(2010), “When school goals embrace diverse student needs and teachers’ collaborative practices support all learners’ social, emotional, academic, and linguistic development, all students are better able to achieve” (p. 32). Students are able to achieve because of the expertise and partnership created by the teachers.

The general education teacher possesses content and curriculum knowledge along with best teaching practices, while the ESOL specialist incorporates the specific needs of the ELLs with strategies for successfully teaching this student group. This powerful manner in which these collaborating teachers use their skills have proved to directly affect student achievement. In addition to the data discussed above, Dove & Honigsfeld,

(2010) affirm, “When teachers are able to consistently work together as teams, ELLs class participation and academic performance are often much improve” (p.33).

Deficit Perspective

When students are approached from a deficit perspective, students who are English language learners are often defined as fundamentally lacking. Many teachers of ELLs have good intentions but lack specific knowledge of the complexities of teaching grade level content and language simultaneously. These well intentioned teachers often use teaching practices that unintentionally communicate low expectations and deny ELLs access to the education they deserve. Teachers relying on their perspectives recognize that these students do not have the same level of language skills as their native English speaking peers and often hold them back from content-based classes until they gain a level of language proficiency equal to their peers.

Although many schools in the United States have a rich history of embracing students who are ELL, others have erected barriers (Olnek, 2004). A fundamental reason for these barriers is service delivery models that are deficit-oriented. Valencia (1997) explains that from a deficit-based perspective, “a student who fails in school does so because of internal deficits or deficiencies. Such deficits manifest, it is alleged, in limited intellectual abilities, linguistic shortcomings, lack of motivation to learn and immoral behavior” (p. 2). In addition, teachers’ misconceptions and lack of understanding of EL students can lead to overrepresentation of ELLs among referrals to special education (Fein et al., 2011; Huerta, 2010). The educational needs of ELLs require that we understand the diversity among our student populations and plan and deliver instruction that is tailored for the individual needs of this group (Artiles & Ortiz, 2002; Haager,

Klingner, & Vaughn, 2007; Haynes & Zacarian, 2010). Until this is done, it is likely that we will continue to over identify a large number of students as having disabilities when they do not.

Cheatham, Jimenez-Silva, Wodrich, and Kasai (2013) stated that teachers may make presumptions about ELLs that are biased by media or stereotypes and may therefore teach from a deficit perspective and suppose a negative work ethic (Madrid, 2011).

Teachers need training on the academic and social behaviors that are particular to ELL students, as well as on how to differentiate instruction based on students' language acquisition and reading skills. Raising the capacity of all educators to approach students who are ELL from an asset-based perspective entails specialists with expertise in working with students who are ELL collaborating with general education teachers. These specialists, including bilingual teachers, ESOL teachers, and bilingual resource specialists, are key resources to helping all educators better serve students who are ELL and their families.

Conclusion

Co-teaching is the practice of two teachers being jointly responsible for the learning of ELLs and/or Special Education (SPED) students along with their non-ELL and non-SPED peers in a single space (Cook and Friend, 1995). Instead of “pulling out” students from the GE classroom setting for separate English as a New Language (ENL) instruction, schools are mandated to use inclusion models, where an ESOL teacher and a GE teacher co-teach ELLs and non-ELLs together in the same classroom. Co-teaching in an inclusion or push in model can take a variety of forms, including SPED teachers, GE

teachers or other service providers co-teaching in a single space (Cook & Friend). For this study, co-teaching involves two co-teachers sharing a single GE classroom full time or an ESOL teacher co-teaching in the GE classroom at regularly scheduled times (Honigsfeld & Dove, 2010).

In the past, English Language programs were stand-alone in their curriculum and delivery of instruction. However, recent insight has explained that language acquisition is not an isolated subject, rather it should be skillfully supported within the context of the classroom. As teachers are beginning to move from isolation to collaboration, the isolation cycle will begin to break, allowing for “respecting, acknowledging, and capitalizing on differences in expertise” (Elmore, 2000, p. 25). Teachers with general education and content-specific expertise will have the ability to offer their knowledge of content and general education curriculum, and local, state, and national content-related standards and assessments to all other teachers on staff. In addition, ESOL specialists will have the opportunity to share their expertise in second language acquisition, cross-cultural understanding, bilingualism and biculturalism, and literacy development. As a result, teacher knowledge expands and all students benefit (Honigsfeld & Dove, 2012). GE teachers contribute strategies and knowledge that are different from the ESOL teacher. The difference in these strategies and skill sets is valued since students need both content and language skill development.

While research on co-teaching for ELLs is limited, there is a distinct commonality in co-teaching for special education through an inclusion model. The success of co-teaching in inclusion is directly linked to the relationship success between the general education teacher and the special education teacher (Eccleston, 2010). The co-teaching

model provides support to students with learning disabilities, and it also delivers opportunities for higher performing learners to be challenged academically (Hepner & Newman, 2010). While research on co-teaching relationships is limited, in co-teaching classes where the teachers spent substantial time working together, students reported on the benefits of having two teachers within the classroom. Some of the benefits consisted of the class being more interesting with two teachers, and receiving more individual help and attention while gaining a better understanding of the subject (Conderman, 2011).

ELL students in general education classrooms are faced with many academic challenges including those of language acquisition, lack of background knowledge, fear of participation and unknown academic language. These challenges mixed with the ever-growing demands of the educational system, creates a large performance gap between ELL and mainstream students throughout the State.

Given the ELL achievement gap and ELLs' dual task of learning both English and academic content at the same time, the need for support in the area of ELL education is critical. For teachers, the challenge is to ensure that ELLs "develop oral and written language skills that will make them academically competitive" (Goldberg & Coleman, 2010 p.63). The challenge was further punctuated by many states with the adoption of the Common Core Learning Standards (Common Core State Standards, 2010) for English Language Arts and Math which aim to have the same high academic expectations of all students, including ELLs.

There is a shortage of data and literature on the development of a co-teaching relationship between a general education and the ESOL teacher. Scruggs, Mastropieri, and McDuffie (2007) suggested future research to address the ways in which individual

schools are able to develop truly collaborative or genuine relationships, and the specific successes that can be achieved by such practices. Since the basic establishment of professionals and an assigned classroom does not ensure a truly collaborative teaching partnership. This study will examine collaborative teaching partnerships by analyzing goal setting, planning, teaching, assessment and reflection. It will assist teachers in identifying partnership strengths and challenges that affect student outcomes. In addition, it will provide administrators with a resource of expectations for co-teaching relationships.

CHAPTER 3

Methods and Procedures

This qualitative study explored teachers' perspectives of successful co-teaching relationships in a suburban elementary school in New York. A case study design was executed for this study. The case study included focus groups, interviews, observations and a review of artifacts. A case study approach is particularly useful when there is a need to attain an in-depth appreciation of a problem, experience or phenomenon of interest, in its natural real-life environment. (Yin, 2014). Using a qualitative case study design allowed for research to be conducted in the context of real life while studying the experiences of elementary school teachers and ESOL teachers who are currently in a co-teaching relationship. This study provided a way to develop a greater understanding of the characteristics that have allowed the co-teaching relationship to develop over a six to eight week period of time beginning in January 2020 and ending in March 2020.

This study focused on gaining greater understanding of teacher perceptions of effective ways general education teachers and ESOL teachers can build and sustain co-teaching relationships. Through an exploration of participant observations, data collected through individual and focus group interviews, and a review of relevant documents such as student achievement data, lesson plans, and the school improvement plan, this study concentrated on how co-teachers built a co-teaching relationship and construct collective efficacy beliefs that affected the development, implementation and sustainment of successful co-teaching relationships.

Specific Research Questions

The following questions have guided my study:

1. How do general education and ESOL teachers in a suburban elementary school perceive a successful co-teaching model?
2. What factors facilitate successful co-teaching relationships?
3. How do general education and ESOL teachers construct collective efficacy beliefs that affect the development, implementation and sustainment of a successful co-teaching relationship?

Setting

The District chosen for this study was part of the co-teaching movement prior to the establishment of CR-Part 154 and roughly since 2010. Therefore, professional development and systems had been initiated years prior to the introduction of the mandates set forth by NYSED. Therefore, it would suggest that significant time has been spent on refining the partnerships and practices in place. The research site chosen for the study is an elementary school belonging to a school district in New York State that served a population of over 18,000 students in 2018-19 school year. This District is comprised of 18 schools, 1,137 certified teachers and 35 administrators. According to NYSED (2020) this district is largely a Latino community totaling 84% Latino students enrolled in the 2018-19 school year. In addition, the District reported to have served over 6,000 ELs in the 2018-19 school year (NYSED, 2020). This District contains one of the largest population of ELLs in New York State outside of the New York City Department of Education. Similar districts and schools in the area were compared since they had significant similarities in terms of subgroup percentages.

The particular school chosen for the study serviced 690 ELLs for the 2018-19 school year through a co-taught model involving more than 10 teachers. Results in 2019 NYSESLAT scores indicate that this particular school outperformed the District and neighboring schools with similar compositions in student population. The scores show that the school had a consistently larger percentage of students who score at the highest levels of performance, expanding and commanding from Kindergarten to 5th grade. Classes in the school are established by using a model in which ELLs and GE students are organized in a classroom with a GE teacher. Extended literacy blocks are created for a co-taught period in which an ESOL teacher joins the class for instruction.

Participants

Three co-teaching pairs of elementary school GE teachers and ESOL teachers were chosen as participants of the study. They were selected based on their certification (TESOL and General Education), years of experience in co-teaching (5 or more) and years of service (5 five or more) in the district. A list was obtained from administration of the teachers who met the criteria. There were three ESOL teachers, three general education teachers and one building principal that were eligible participants. Written consent to take part in the study was obtained prior to the research being conducted. Prior to the start of the study, a letter of consent indicating the purpose of the study, confidentiality and record maintenance procedures was provided to the seven participants to ensure confidentiality as denoted in Appendix B. These consent forms were emailed to the teachers with permission of the administrator. Prior to the interviews, participants were asked to read, sign and return to informed consent form. The informed consent form was reviewed on the day of the scheduled interview. This review included audio

recording, transcription procedures, and electronic and written documentation procedures. The average time of each individual interview was 30-45 minutes. The individual interviews were conducted for five hours. The sample size was seven participants; three were general education teachers, three were ESOL teachers and one building principal.

²³ Table 1
Description of Participants

Participant	Title	Assigned Grade Level	Years as Co-teacher in District
Participant A	ESOL Teacher	5	6
Participant B	ESOL Teacher	Kindergarten	5
Participant C	ESOL Teacher	4	7
Participant D	General Education Teacher	5	5
Participant E	General Education Teacher	Kindergarten	5
Participant F	General Education Teacher	4	7
Participant G	Administrator	K-5	N/A

One focus group was conducted for a total of 1.5 hours. The focus groups consisted of three general education teachers and three ESOL teachers. All of the participants were female. All notes and recordings collected during the study will be secured in a locked storage cabinet for six years. At the end of the six-year storage period, all documents will be destroyed and shredded. The protection of participants was applied by open coding the data collected, no names were used and all data remains confidential.

Data Collection Procedures

This case study included the following multiple sources of evidence to increase its validity: (a) seven individual interviews; (b) one observation of each partnership during an instructional period; (c) one focus group interview with all six participant teachers; and (d) a review of relevant documents including State and local student achievement data, lesson plans, and the school improvement plan.

Semi-Structured Interviews

To begin the study, one individual interview with each participant was conducted for approximately thirty-fourty-five minutes. A semi-structured individual interview was held with each of the study participants with the use of an interview protocol guide that consisted of 14 questions. Interviews allowed for participants to share their perspectives, stories and experiences that were audiotaped and transcribed. The researcher prompted as needed for more information throughout interviews. Interviews were held on the elementary school campus in the classrooms of the participants. The average time for each interview was 40 minutes. The interviews were conducted for a total of five hours. In addition, the participant was asked to share perceptions about the model, collaborative practices and how it has contributed to success or challenges.

Observations

During instructional time, one observation of each co-teaching pair was conducted to examine the relationship that exists between them. The forty-five minute observation detailed the roles and responsibilities, equity and congruency in each partnership. The observations allowed the researcher to collect relevant information while the teachers were providing instruction and working as a team and associate the findings in connection to the interviews. The researcher conducted one 45 minute observation of each co-teaching partnership. Handwritten field notes were taken to record the observation data. These field notes consisted of descriptions of the environment, examples of shared roles and responsibilities, demonstration of respect for one another, collaboration in assessment protocols, support for students reaching the learning objectives and equal interaction and responsibility with students. The instrument

protocol for guiding the classroom observation is included as Appendix D. Through this instrument, the researcher recorded evidence of practices that created a successful co-teaching model. Through the data collected from the interviews, the researcher was able to code for similar themes which enhanced the focus group discussion.

Focus group

After the completion of the observations, a focus group with the six participants was conducted. During this session, twelve prepared semi-structured questions were asked (Appendix B). Focus group research delivers prompt results while covering a variety of thoughts, opinions, involvements, needs, evaluations, or concerns from a group of participants (Gaižauskaitė, 2012). The goal of focus group research is discussion among participants. The active interaction that occurs of participants is an additional value of using a focus groups method when compared to survey research answers or individual interviews alone (Gaižauskaitė, 2012). This particular focus group exercise was conducted on the elementary school campus and lasted 1.5 hours. In addition, questions were adjusted based on the information obtained from the individual interviews and observations. This focus group gave the participants the opportunity to share their perceptions and beliefs related to the impact this collaborative model has had on their practice and students' achievement. In addition, the sharing of possible challenges, successes and suggestions for the model was shared and discussed. Through the data collected from the interviews, observations and focus group the researcher was able to code conversations for similar themes and concepts.

Review of Documents

Lastly, documents relevant to the study, such as, the School Improvement Plan, lesson plans and student achievement data on local and state summative assessments was reviewed. In these documents, evidence of ELL students as part of school wide goals and their overall academic achievement was identified. The review of lesson plans assisted the researcher in understanding the planning of learning experiences, examples of relationship building and student goals for each partnership. The instrument for reviewing the documents is included as (Appendix E).

Trustworthiness of the Design

Case studies benefit from having several sources of evidence such as focus groups, interviews, direct observations, documents, physical artifacts, archival records and participant observations (Yin, 2014). For this study, data was collected from the following sources: one focus group and seven individual interviews, observations of co-planning and a review of relevant documents such as student achievement data, lesson plans and the school improvement plan. Using a qualitative, case study research design allowed for the opportunity to research within the real-life context in order to describe the experiences of elementary school general education and ESOL teachers in a co-teaching relationship. Their perceptions and my observations of these experiences allowed for greater understanding of a successful co-teaching relationship.

According to Yin (2014), there are three tactics available to increase the construct validity of case studies: (a) collecting multiple sources of evidence, (b) establishing a chain of evidence, and (c) engaging with others to review a draft of the narratives report. The researcher employed all three tactics for this study. This study included

multiple sources of evidence to establish credibility and enhance accuracy of findings (Yin, 2014): individual and focus group interviews, teacher observations and a review of relevant documents such as student achievement data, lesson plan and the school improvement plan. Using multiple sources of evidence, permits data triangulation and the development of converging lines of inquiry (Yin, 2014). The validity of the interview questions, focus group questions, and observations was determined by studying effective co-teaching strategies and tools by researchers, Andrea Honigsfeld and Maria Dove. A chain of evidence was established during data collection (Yin, 2014), to allow readers to follow the steps from data collection, data analysis, the coding and development of themes, data interpretation, and creation of a narrative report.

Member checking was carried out to establish credibility and trustworthiness (Carlson, 2010). The participants were asked to perform member checks and to review a draft of the narratives report to check for accuracy. Yin (2014) suggested member checking as a way to strengthen validity of results. Member-checking is an essential technique used in determining the representation of responses from the data and analysis (Fraenkel et al., 2012). For member checking purposes, after the data for this study was transcribed, the transcriptions from the narratives were returned to each participant via email. Participants were encouraged to review the researcher's findings and clarify any misconceptions. This provided participants with the opportunity to examine the transcripts to verify their accuracy, reflect and comment on the findings, and address possible errors.

The researcher used a qualitative case study research approach to conduct a qualitative study to explore the perceptions of co-teaching relationships. In order to

answer the research questions, the researcher collected data through individual interviews, focus groups and a review of relevant documents including student achievement data, lesson plans and the school improvement plan. Data was gathered from the responses to the interviews from each general education teacher and each ESOL teacher. The responses were then coded for similar themes within each group. The researcher reviewed all of the data to examine what similarities and differences existed from the two groups. Data collected in this study was analyzed using the continuous comparison of new data to the previously analyzed data during the entire analysis phase (Harding, 2013; Kolb, 2012). The constant comparative method was used to examine information obtained from the interviews, observations, focus groups and relevant documents and be compared with each other. This triangulation of different data sources of information was employed to establish accuracy and credibility of the findings.

The researcher followed specific case study protocols to ensure reliability of the data collected for this case study: an overview of the case study to include issues, objectives, and topics being examined, field procedures as a source of information, credentials and access to sites, and specific case study questions that the researcher must be mindful of throughout the data collection (Yin, 2014). To increase reliability the researcher used the process of member checking. Participants were asked to review the transcribed interview data for accuracy and errors. The name of the district, school or teachers were not named to allow for confidentiality and to protect the identity of all of the above.

Research Ethics

The District in this study has introduced co-teaching for ELLs prior roughly since 2010. Therefore, it would suggest that significant time has been spent on refining the partnerships and practices in place. The research site chosen is an elementary school belonging to a school district in New York State that served a population of over 18,000 students in the 2018-19 school year. This District contains one of the largest populations of ELLs in New York State outside of the New York City Department of Education. Similar districts and schools in the area were compared since they had significant similarities in terms of subgroup percentages. The District reported to have served over 6,000 ELs in the 2018-19 school year (NYSED, 2020).

The researcher obtained electronic (email) permission from the Assistant Superintendent (Appendix I) to conduct the research. The Institutional Review Board (IRB) of St John's University also gave permission before this study was conducted (Appendix H). Participants were informed on the purpose of the study. Participants were provided with an informed consent letter prior to the initiation of interviews. These consent forms were emailed to the teachers with permission of the administrator. Prior to the interview, participants were asked to read, sign, and return the informed consent form (Appendix A & B). The informed consent form was reviewed with the participants on the day of the scheduled interview. This review included taped recording and transcription procedures, and electronic and written documentation storage procedures.

All notes and recordings collected during the study will be secured in a locked storage cabinet for six years. At the end of the six year storage period, all documents will be destroyed and shredded. The protection of participants was applied by open coding the

data collected, no names were used during the project, and all data remained confidential. The name of the school was also not used throughout this study to allow confidentiality and protect the identity of the school.

Data Analysis

To answer the three research questions, research data for this study was collected through individual and focus group interviews, observations, and a review of relevant documents such as student achievement data, lesson plans, and the school improvement plan. Data was gathered from the responses of the interviews from each participant. All interviews and focus groups were audio recorded. After completing each individual and focus group interview through audio recording, they were uploaded to Rev.com for transcription. Each transcript from the individual interviews and focus group discussions were printed and carefully reviewed. After a thorough review of the transcripts and the practice of member checking, the transcripts were uploaded to the Dedoose software program for storage and organization of the data in preparation for analysis.

Data collected in this study was analyzed using the constant comparative method. The constant comparative method is a procedure in which any newly collected data is continuously compared with previous data that was collected throughout the entire study (Harding, 2013; Kolb, 2012). The constant comparative method was used to examine information obtained from individual interviews, observations, the focus group discussion and relevant documents. The researcher carefully reviewed the interview transcripts and identified repeated themes. The collection of school improvement goals and lesson plans allowed the researcher to draw further conclusions or add to existing themes. This process allowed me, the researcher, to uncover important information

through the data collection and identify areas that need a further data collection or opportunities to address emerging questions.

The data analysis process included open and axial coding through the use of Dedoose software. The Dedoose software does not perform automatic coding but determines themes with the control of the researcher. Open and axial coding methods were used to analyze data and identify conceptual categories and themes. The researcher reviewed all of the data to examine what similarities and differences existed. The researcher highlighted and made notes of key words and phrases on the transcripts, and coded the essential responses that answered the open-ended questions. The researcher used open coding to compare, conceptualize, and place the data into categories. The researcher highlighted and made note of key words and phrases on the transcripts that answered the open-ended questions. Open coding allowed the researcher to verify categories and create labels, decreased the chance of missing an important category, and ensured significance by generating codes with emergent fit to the fundamental area under study (Holton, 2010). Open coding also allowed the researcher to identify patterns that formed categories. Through open coding I was able to identify categories through the interviews with the co-teachers, administrator and a review of essential documents. Using the Dedoose software, categories were then developed by grouping together open codes that were interrelated based on thematic content.

Axial coding allowed the researcher to reconstruct the data and make connections between the categories. In this stage, a parent node was created to represent a broad category of interrelated ideas or information. Codes that were generated in the open coding stage were subsumed to the appropriate thematic category based on similarities in

content. The final results of the axial coding resulted in themes based on each thematic category, representing the experiences or perceptions that occurred in many participants (Kolb, 2012). Use of the open and axial coding methods allowed the researcher to identify conceptual categories, themes and concepts. The use of axial coding allowed me to focus on core categories from the open coding data and make connections further between the categories identified. Returning to data collection or reanalyzing data to address additional and/or important findings was necessary. Using selective coding, the final process of developing a substantiated explanation was written using the relationships between the categories founded in the axial coding model.

These methods also allowed the different data sources to be analyzed and interpreted to answer the study's research questions. The result was a list of codes representing the experiences and perceptions of the participants, organized around different labels or names. For instance, the statements, "It is more effective and beneficial for the students to have two teachers that can help them. To understand them, how they are, or how they learn, and just being able to give them that concrete instruction every day. We make sure that (instruction) happens." was coded as a benefit of the co-teaching model. The final result was a list of codes representing the experiences and perceptions of the participants, organized around different labels or names.

Role of the Researcher

Qualitative inquiry is influenced by the belief system from which a researcher approaches the study (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). My position as a researcher in this study is grounded in the belief system that I have constructed in the 19 years of service to the public school system. This belief system aligns itself with how information is gathered

and interpreted by the researcher. Three philosophical beliefs have guided the development of this study. First, is my belief that teachers are the largest influencer in a child's education. Second, I believe that teachers can be empowered to teach all students. And third, teachers working together can increase student achievement more effectively than teachers working in isolation. My beliefs have been influenced by not only my 15 years of being a classroom teacher and co-teacher, but also in my 4 years as an elementary school administrator. I have been involved in working with general education and ESOL teachers in working together collaboratively to increase student achievement. My efforts have included organizing planning sessions, reviewing the delivery of instruction in an inclusive environment, relationship building, goal setting and using student data to drive instruction.

Through this process, I have maintained my belief that all teachers can be empowered with the tools to teach all students. I believe that general education and ESOL teachers working together can have a powerful impact on student learning. My intimate experiences and strong beliefs about co-teaching have driven my desire to learn about it through the lens of others. Approaching this study with experiences that have significantly shaped my beliefs about the subject brought challenges to conquer. It was necessary through all phases of the study to separate my experience from the information and observations I made. While my beliefs influenced the desire to conduct the study, I applied the concept of empathetic neutrality and mindfulness as detailed by Patton (2002). In the context of qualitative research, empathy can be linked to the phenomenological doctrine of *Verstehen* (Patton 2002). *Verstehen* explains that understanding and the necessity of the researcher to realize that studies of humans differ

from studies of nonhumans. As the researcher, I understand that humans structure their beliefs through experiences, cultural influences and values. Throughout the study, I exercised the *Verstehen* tradition of the ability to understand the participants' beliefs by observing and interacting with each of them. Each observation and interaction was followed by applying empathetic introspection and reflection on the data attained (Patton 2002). Throughout the case study, the researcher followed specific protocols to ensure the reliability of the data collected. This included procedures for interviews, focus group, observations and the review of documents to maintain correspondence to the research questions. This chapter included an in depth description of the data collection and analysis procedures of this qualitative study.

CHAPTER 4

Findings

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the development of successful co-teaching relationships in an elementary school setting in a suburban community in New York in which ELL students are outperforming their grade level peers throughout the District. The school is organized to serve ELLs and general education students through a co-taught model throughout the school. This study also explored how elementary school ESOL and General education teachers construct collective efficacy beliefs that affected the development, implementation and sustainment of a successful co-teaching relationship. This study addressed a gap in the literature by exploring the ways in which individual schools are able to develop collaborative relationships between ESOL teachers and general education teachers and the specific success that can be achieved by such practices. The constant comparative method was used to examine and compare information obtained from individual and focus group interviews. The researcher followed specific case study protocols to ensure the reliability of the data collected. This included procedures for interviews, focus group, observations and the review of documents to maintain fidelity in addressing the research questions. This chapter includes an in depth understanding of the findings from this qualitative case study.

There were three overarching themes that emerged from the data analysis process. The first major theme was Fundamental Design Elements. Three sub-themes emerged within Fundamental Design Elements which were, Thoughtful and Deliberate Classroom

Schedules, Parity and Utilization of High Quality Curriculum and Research Based Instructional Practices. The second overarching theme to emerge was Analogous Core Values. Belief in Abilities, High Expectations, and Commitment to Success were the three sub themes that emerged with the second overarching theme. The third and last overarching theme to emerge from the data analysis was Administrative Support. Within Administrative Support there were two sub themes, Strategic Planning and Shared Decision Making. The case study approach allowed for the following research questions to be answered: (a) How do general education and ESOL teachers in a suburban elementary school perceive a successful co-teaching model?; (b) What factors facilitate successful co-teaching relationships?; and (c) How do general education and ESOL teachers construct collective efficacy beliefs that affect the development, implementation and sustainment of a successful co-teaching relationship? The summary section of this chapter includes the findings of this study pursuant to the research questions.

Theme 1: Fundamental Design Elements

There was a universal belief amongst the all participants that there were specific elements that were implemented in the structural design of the integrated co-teaching model that produced increased success over time. These elements were identified as Thoughtful and Deliberate Classroom Schedules, Parity and Utilization of High Quality Curriculum and Research Based Instructional Practices These elements required the teachers to be viewed as architects and were supported by the school's values and culture. Through various attempts at partnerships and the implementation of specific criteria for success, these fundamental elements evolved and produced greater

opportunities for success. Each element was implemented with thoughtful purpose and cultivated overtime to meet the school's needs.

Thoughtful and Deliberate Classroom Schedules

First, the school had established a fixed instructional schedule for these co-taught classrooms. All participants expressed that after reviewing student needs regularly and supplying administrators with feedback, over time the integrated classroom schedules had evolved into adequate systems that supported the ability to meet student needs. These schedules were made in advance of all other schedules and incorporated a 90 minute literacy block in addition to other collaborative instructional times. Participant B (ESOL teacher) explained, "Our principal makes the ENL classroom schedules before any other in order to ensure regulation compliance for our ELLs and it shows that the education of ELLs is of importance to us as a building."

In addition, instructional time is deemed sacred and therefore, no spontaneous events or related service providers can interrupt. The literacy block was structured to support the execution of a balanced literacy approach through the daily implementation of a whole class mini lesson, guided practice and small group instruction. By incorporating a consistent method of lesson execution every day, learners have little distraction and a common understanding of expectations. Therefore, in return students consider their instructional time as determined and meaningful. Participant E (General Education teacher) stated, "Students are never surprised or ask what we are doing next. They always know what is next because our approach is the same, only the content changes."

The schedule also included multiple planning periods each week and daily common lunch and prep periods for the co-teachers. This was intentional in order to increase time spent collaborating on planning, lesson preparation or reflection as needed. Without sacrificing instructional time, administrators found unique ways to build in additional time for teacher collaboration. Participant F (General Education teacher) explained that “planning, discussing and reflecting on lessons is fluid and happens during planning periods but also before school after school and on lunchtime walks.” When asked what planning consist of, Participant A (ESOL teacher) explained that “planning as a grade level and as a co-teaching team requires time to review pacing guides, determine learning targets and create learning activities and assessments.” In addition, the thoughtful planning of student grouping, engagement ideas and material gathering is then a task that is completed at lunch, after school or at an additional planning session. Through social studies or science curriculum, they incorporate literacy to further develop and sharpen their skills. Participant B states “I always find text that supports a concept in Social Studies and Science so all students can have access to curriculum in different ways.”

Time spent planning, teaching or assessing is intentional for these teachers. This influences the classroom structure by creating an environment of consistency and deliberate practice. It would appear that the deliberate scheduling created by the administrator, had a consequential effect on the teachers’ approaches to their classroom systems.

Parity

According to Honigsfeld and Dove (2018) parity is when both teachers in a co-teaching partnership feel significant and valued for their teaching practices and all students view them as equals. Throughout this study there was a significant amount of parity that was entrenched and honored. Unified words and phrases such as “our students” and “we” were embedded in the interviews and observations. All participants had a consistent understanding of the classroom as a learning environment that ensured valuing all constituents. Along with evidence in the interviews, this was displayed through the signs on the doors with both teachers' names, their acknowledgement and respect for each other through planning and their ability to abandon the philosophy of being possessive over students. Participant E (General Education teacher), explained that during her first experience as a co-teacher, she was protective and would often refer to the student space as “my classroom” and found the experience to be invasive. Through her most recent partnership, she has evolved by watching the “students respond so well and feeling a dynamic connection” with her partner. This, she claims, has been “the most important aspect” to her.

The collaboration between the pairs was rooted in a deep understanding and respect of each other as professionals. When discussing what makes the model successful, Participant C (ESOL teacher) referred to her partner as “an expert who works to be better every day, even though she is beyond amazing.” With little professional development in the area of co-teaching there was still a significant amount of trust in each other's capabilities that existed. Participant C (ESOL teacher) indicated, “we understand each other’s strengths and we use that to our advantage.” Participant D,

(General Education teacher of 20 years), indicated that she assumes that “when you are asked to be part of a co-teaching team, there is an understanding that you work well with others and you believe in what you do or you wouldn’t be able to accomplish the goals.” In addition, Participant D suggested that “knowing the person you will co-teach with and her level of professionalism has been key in the success of the model.” She states, “It takes time but knowing I can trust that person as a professional, has made a big difference.”

Even though one teacher is an expert in ESOL and the other in general education, the teachers choose not to segregate or group students according to the ELL label for instruction. Participant B stated that student groupings were based on “learning needs for the upcoming units” and that they worked to “ensure that all students feel valued and respected, not different from their peers.” This message mirrored the collaborative approach the teachers subscribe to for themselves in the classroom. As simple as it may seem to group students by teacher expertise or certification, they valued their own sense of learning and understood the negative impact that could have. Participant F viewed that type of approach as “not being inclusive and instead creates a detachment from their goals.” They do not want the students to see their teachers as assigned to subgroups but rather teachers to all. In fact, Participant B explained that “the students have never called me the ENL teacher, nor do they know my certification area. They see us both as their teachers equally.” Participant B shared that she worked with a teacher that did not allow her to take on certain tasks and this resulted in resentment. She stated, “The students know if you are not happy and it affects the environment in many negative ways. If you have a happy, productive partnership, you have happy, productive students.”

The teachers in each partnership had an unwritten policy of acceptance for one another's judgement. This was evident through the observation of planning periods. Participant F, (General Education Teacher), took a proactive approach when planning a review of previously learned concepts while integrating upcoming standards. Her partner, Participant C, (ESOL teacher) listened to her idea and although admitted she could see challenges, was eager to dive in. Participant C stated, "This integration will not be easy but we can't hold them back. We must be positive and energetic about it and know what they need moving forward and I trust you. The students always rise to the challenge."

Participant B stated that even "during a lesson if her partner indicates that the students are having difficulty with a concept after it's taught, they immediately try a different approach as a reteach of the concept." In addition, they spend time after the lesson is taught to give feedback to each other on how the students engaged or met with success according to what they observed. Although this can be viewed as an unfavorable experience, these partnerships find it beneficial and crucial to their practice. Participant B explained, "Having a partner that knows the students as deeply as I do and, in some cases, even more so when it comes to socio economic issues, has helped my instructional practices. My partner gives me feedback so that I can reach all the students because she wants them to be successful and I want the same."

Overall, there was mutual respect for each other and the students that they teach. The understanding that they are experts but also partners created a strong foundational aspect that influenced a successful relationship. The wholehearted belief that they

wanted to be seen as a team, echoed through their classroom displays, their equitable approach and consequently, their students.

Utilization of Quality Curriculum and Research Based Instructional Practices

The ESOL teachers in this study understood that a quality curriculum for ELLs can make a significant impact on their teaching and learning. As State standards continue to become more complex and the needs of our students continue to intensify, teachers must work to reach those standards through dynamic approaches, no matter the students' challenges. Although standards can be complicated to interpret and execute, having a curriculum that is standards aligned, contains rigorous lessons and allows for flexibility can alleviate the burden this places on teachers. Teaching practices have evolved over time to be more student centered and data driven. These practices are often described as research based practices and are expected to be a standard in classrooms around the country. The reality is, it is easier to do what you know versus implementing what the research suggests. In the case of the participants in this case study, a quality curriculum and the use of research based practices are nonnegotiable when it comes to measuring success.

Although purchasing or creating a curriculum can be expensive, schools cannot properly function without it. Curriculum is always available for purchase and there are hundreds of companies selling curriculum products they deem as worthy for schools. However, participants in this study believed that acquiring and implementing a quality curriculum played a significant role in the success of their co-teaching model. When planning for their classes together, teachers used District created curriculum maps and curriculum resources that were standard aligned. Participant C indicated that “switching

to this curriculum tightened our planning time, positively impacted our instruction and we saw greater student outcomes. Instead of trying to match lessons to standards and try to plan the learning activities and assessments, we spent time working on our craft.” Participant F added, “This type of quality curriculum greatly impacts teaching and learning in all classrooms however, when you have a co-teaching model, it puts you on the same page without having to work at it. There are no disagreements or negotiations in what we are teaching because we are in agreement that this curriculum is standards aligned and challenges our students.” Interestingly, the teachers in this study were equipped with a curriculum that was vetted and adopted through the District but they did not see progress in the way that they had hoped after a few years of use. After trying to enhance this curriculum and creating additional learning opportunities, they decided to research and persuade their administration to purchase a quality curriculum. After adoption and implementation of the quality curriculum, student engagement and outcomes began to rise and their confidence in each other began to escalate. Participant C recalled the experience, “When we switched curriculums we saw our kids become empowered with the knowledge and practice they were receiving daily. We quickly realized that a significant change had taken place and we were inspired.”

As important as a curriculum was, so was that of regularly incorporating research based practices. When planning together most participants discussed their approaches together. For example, Participant C asked her partner, “How do you see the summative assessment here? Are you thinking a group project that would require a presentation this way we can include cooperative learning?” Also, when planning, Participants B and E worked to adjust learning targets so that they were “broken down and bite size” when

planning skill based lessons. The use of formative assessment was discussed by all three sets of co-teachers through their planning sessions. For example, Participant B mentioned the reason why they needed to offer an ample amount of formative assessment opportunities, “ongoing, formative assessment is the only way we know if a student really understands a concept because we can’t wait for the end of a unit to decide to move on or not. We move on and individualized learning as much as possible.”

There were no negotiations when executing lessons and teachers follow a systematic approach so that students are never surprised by what happens at any point of the day. Participant E, explained that “students learn through a gradual release model daily. They even understand the terminology of the gradual release model, I do, We do, You do.” Participant B, shared:

Through the use of visuals, think alouds and small group instruction, students have the opportunity to meet the learning target with success. We made a decision very early that we were going to be direct and explicit with our instruction and not use any approach that didn’t support student growth. And although it is easy to choose worksheets off of various websites, we knew that our kids needed authentic learning opportunities to succeed.

Adapting to a common language with their students has also been a practice they subscribed to that has had a positive impact on their relationship. When deciding to address their students as “scholars” and “researchers” it was an idea that was brought to Participant F by her partner and she immediately agreed. They also were very specific in their approach to lessons. Participant A explains:

We are intentional and direct with the students by telling them exactly what they will learn each day, teaching the skill, checking for understanding and assessing. We are also consistent in our use of terms with the students. For example, we use the terms academic vocabulary, learning target, learning activity and assessment regularly even though we don’t have to, but it keeps us all focused and provides clarity to what we are expecting.

The initiative taken to adopt and implement a quality curriculum shows great understanding of the requirements needed to bring student learning and cohesiveness to their classrooms. Deciding to use a common language and to include the students as partners has encouraged an environment of transparency and responsibility for the learning community.

Analysis of the data revealed that the fundamental design elements of thoughtful and deliberate classroom schedules, parity and utilizing a high quality curriculum as well as research based instructional practices were proven to be positive contributors to the co-teaching relationships. However, these design elements showcased the school's culture as collaborative, committed and focused. The culture of the school must have a desire to be successful as well as the mindset and determination to create success it desires. By creating thoughtful schedules, incorporating high quality curriculum and having a concrete sense of parity, the positive attributes of the school's culture shines through.

Theme 2: Analogous Core Values

The second overarching theme that emerged from the research was that in order to have a successful partnership, your partner must have similar core values. These core values are the foundation of their educational practices and define the expectations for themselves and their students. Overwhelmingly, all participants shared that partners with similar student expectations, work ethic, commitment to success and a desire to reach their own greatest potential, was a combination for success.

Belief in Abilities

Throughout the study, all participants had a tremendous amount of confidence in their students' abilities as well as their own efforts. The student make-up of the classes in

which the participants taught included over 50% of ELLs. Although it was understood that these students would need alternative teaching practices, additional academic support and regular modifications it was discussed as trivial and welcomed.

Although it was explained that formal professional development was minimal, teachers had confidence in their practice. Participant 5 stated, “We attended a co-teaching workshop, I believe it was a two day workshop, a couple of years ago, which was helpful. It just gave us different models of co-teaching and how we could implement it.” As well as Participant 6 stating, “ I committed to this not knowing much or having any training.” Participant 4 shared, “We received a book that we reviewed to help us form a relationship with our co-teacher. We also fill out a questionnaire to understand areas we should work on.” This was compelling since they were committed, successful, and had positive opinions about their current experiences. Determining what made them believe in the design and create successful results was simply within their own desire, knowledge and expectations. When discussing their capacity to accomplish a successful model, there was much said regarding personal goals and beliefs. For example, Participant 5 shared:

A textbook can only take you so far and we needed to live in it, practice it and continue to get better. As we have more questions, we buy more books, share them and try new techniques. We aren't afraid to try something and either keep it or toss it depending on its level of success. We enjoy reading and learning new things but we trust ourselves to know what our kids need.

The participants shared a strong sense of self efficacy and that extended to their teaching practices and level of collaboration. There was acknowledgement to being committed to understanding District initiatives as part of the reasons they believe they could approach this model without trepidation. Participant 1 explained, “In this District, we've learned

that you must have a strong understanding of cultural sensitivity, be able to apply different approaches to learning and you cannot be productive in a silo. This is true in and out of co-teaching.” Participant F described her learning experiences as a teacher has been different than she expected:

When I first began teaching here I didn't know if I could do it. The intensity and needs of the students was greater than I expected and I didn't know if I would be successful. I was overwhelmed but when I reached out to others, they shared their approaches and I had support and people to learn from. The truth is, I have learned more than I could imagine here. We call it time on task when we want kids to get better at a skill. Well, that's what this is, we get plenty of time on task reviewing data, creating and implementing interventions, that it becomes who we are.

Participant B shared her philosophy of teaching, “I always say, keep trying until you get it right. I say it to myself and my students all the time because I know that we can all be successful. It's just getting there and we all get there. We've tried approaches and we've found our niche with this group. It becomes a sense of pride and accomplishment for us.” Participant C shared, “We also know that in this environment it is sink or swim. We want to swim and we want our kids to swim. We want to see them (the students) with a sense of pride for what they can do. Because they don't know what they can accomplish.” Participant F honored the difficulties of her position and her commitment to the responsibility by stating “It is quite difficult to reach 30 ELLs, struggling students, behavioral students and medical issues in one class but that is my reality and my partner matters. I wouldn't change my situation because the amount of growth I am able to see among these children inspires me.”

All of the participants in the study clearly accept the challenges their students face. But they also have strong beliefs that their students will be successful in spite of them. They consider acknowledging the students' challenges as knowing the student

individual needs and how to approach instruction to gain a positive learning outcome. Participant B was speaking about her students when she stated, “We have no preconceptions about them or their abilities. We assess them, address the deficits and focus on reaching grade level standards.” Participant D explained, “There is no situation that would stop me from thinking that they can’t learn the objective of the lesson. If they (they students) don’t understand it, I find a way to reteach it so it makes sense to them.” The participants of this study understand that having a biased or distorted opinion of student success is dangerous and unproductive. Participant C explained a past experience:

A previous partner and I couldn’t agree on learning targets because she wanted to teach the standards from the previous grade level. Her thought process was that they were too low to reach current grade level standards. We had this issue all year and I am not sure I changed her mind by the end. It is difficult to convince someone that different learning approaches don’t mean we adjust the learning outcomes.

Participant E shared her experience:

All of our ELL students won’t learn at the same rate, in the same amount of time and without certain supports but they all do learn the concepts. With the different levels of proficiency in our class, we are always mindful of the support we put in place so that they will receive the proper intervention to meet with success.

Participants also shared that they believe their approach with their students plays a significant role in the student’s belief in themselves. Using a communicative style with their students, they are able to share honest feedback and next steps to build a sense of pride, trust and commitment together through learning. Participant A describes an unmotivated student who made changes in his performance after having regular check-ins with her:

After each easy task, I consistently spoke with him every day and communicated specific positive feedback. Then I gradually built up the tasks to be more

difficult. Each day I offered feedback and then empowered him to help other students. He didn't know he could even do that and it really changed his outlook on himself. I want all students to see themselves that way.

Helping students to believe in themselves working with them to cultivate hope builds their own self efficacy and inspiration. It seems that all participants in this study believed that if you were part of a learning environment, you had the ability to learn and grow exponentially no matter the circumstance.

High Expectations

Most participants in this study made mention to strong beliefs on having and maintaining high expectations for themselves and their students. Throughout discussions it was clear that partners had a firm understanding the NYSED Next Generation grade level standards and used this as their measure of expectations. It was clear that there was no confusion about expectations or standards for their students and how to use them effectively. Participant C explained how the standard was used in her partnership, “We know the learning standards, we create learning targets to achieve them and it has never been a question of will the students learn this or can they do this. My partner and I believe that it's just finding the road to get there and that is embedded in our learning activities.” When asked about their educational philosophies, Participant E stated, “We have similar educational philosophies. We treat our kids like we treat ourselves. We set the expectations high and we want them to reach as high as they can. We understand when or if they don't reach the goal but we focus on aiming for it. Having perseverance and clarity is important for us as well as the kids. We hold ourselves accountable for achieving our instructional goals and they understand that they are accountable

too. According to Participant F, solid expectations are a critical part of their partnership.

Participant F stated:

It is important that we have the same perspective on students' expectations. We both want to challenge the students and so we plan for that. We work on that in every planning session. We constantly say, what do we need to do to bring this to the next level, to challenge the students to reach higher? We also want the students to know that they can challenge themselves. So we talk about that with them when we conference. When they understand that they can accomplish more, they start to feel more confident.

Participant C acknowledged the use of high expectations and their approaches in instruction, “Our expectations are very high but we give them the tools to be successful. When the children don’t do well, we modify or reteach so that they can be successful. It’s very important that we don’t blame the students for not understanding something that they weren't taught or taught properly. We have to honor their unique learning styles and really have some essential strategies to assist them instantly when they need it.” While sharing what they’ve learned regarding student expectations,

Participant B explained:

We worked hard to adjust to meeting the students where they were at and not where we thought they should be. That mindset changed our approach and our success rate. Once we began to focus on growth in small increments and according to what they needed, we saw improvement. Initially, we were trying so hard but only looking at the big picture and focused on what we thought they should be able to do. We realized that this was the opposite of what was going to bring success because they kept falling short and we felt like failures.

When explaining an example of substantial growth, Participant B spoke about a specific situation, “We had a young student last year who was in our lowest reading group but scored a four on the New York State English Language Arts Assessment (NYSELA). We were so proud and new that she was going to carry her skills into different learning experiences.”

Participant D acknowledged the confidence they have in their students to succeed, “We know that there are some kids who will make slow, slow progress but we always get to a place where they start to pick up. They surprise themselves and it’s great to watch. We just don’t give up on them or make excuses. We feel like this is a life lesson for them too.” Although the participants understood the intensity of what they were working towards, they had certainty that the expectations they created for the students were attainable based on previous and present student successes and their efforts. Participant A explained, “Our students have shown tremendous success by increasing proficiency levels. We regularly assess them, reteach, ensure they are on target and then continue to increase expectations.” In addition, Participant E stated, “Having had the experience to know what these specific learners may need has made me a more effective teacher. I’ve learned to have longer wait times, to give them practice through turn and talks and share out in a way that they are comfortable. I can jump right in with techniques now because I know they work.” Participant A also explains her expertise and belief in her work, “I don’t pay attention to their ELL status when it comes to expectations. I get to know the student and I’m comfortable with the standards so we work on our techniques to reach all the students. It’s not a matter of whether they can or can’t, it’s how will we get them there.” Participant D agreed with this as she explains her focus and understanding, “There are specific needs that our ELL students have and since we’ve been doing this for a while together, we can prepare and work to improve their learning. We have to be mindful of watering material down or losing track of the grade level standards because that can happen if you lose focus.”

The participants were candid as they discussed expectations and how that translates to their students. “We don’t pressure our students, but they know that we believe in them and they want to do well once they know that they can. Also, keeping the students interested in learning has affected their attitudes. For example, always finding a way to celebrate their learning and asking them if they have any ideas when fixing mistakes. This way they start to think of themselves as problem solvers or experts. I will always guide them appropriately but I depend on their input so that I can foster independence and problem-solving skills. It is important to us that our students see us as guides because they are just as smart as us. We want them to make mistakes and learn in the same way we do.” Participant E stated a small mention of colleagues who may not have the same level of expectation for ELL students, “I have colleagues that don’t have the same perspective as me because they believe that the gap is too large and these students will never reach the potential of others. It has been a mindset that has started to change but it's still there in some ways. If I had to co-teach with that type of teacher, it would be difficult. When administrators pair co-teachers, this is so important.” Participant C shared her reasoning, for high expectations, “We know why we’re here, we know why we took on this profession. We try to be the best we can for the children and that means not lowering the bar. Many of these students can outperform general education students, they just need the opportunity.”

Based on what the participants shared on committing to high expectations, they were strategic in their approach by supporting, encouraging and crafting a course to success with their students. It was clear that they want them to meet with success but I are committed to achieving their goals with them. There is no doubt as to why when

asked about teacher expectations, Participant D was crediting the students when she stated, “They accomplish so much and they inspire us. They give us the confidence to get better every day.”

Commitment to Success

Participants of the study shared throughout their interviews a commitment to their students, their administrator, to themselves and each other. Much like any relationship, commitment is essential to success and so it is not surprising that this core value has emerged from the data. However, in the profession of education where teacher burnout is high and expectations continue to rise, commitment remains consistent for these partnerships. Through interviews it was clear that experiencing success was something that they were committed to achieving. They considered their current partnerships successful for different reasons but had made a strong commitment to creating and managing it.

All participants in the study explained the lack of traditional or formal professional development given by the District but cited their own completion of classes, study of professional books and engagement in webinars to enhance their practice. This indicates a strong commitment to their professional learning on the topic of co-teaching for ELLs. Participant B shared, “My partner shares books that she finds useful and we read them together. It is actually a great way to learn because we read about something and then we try it. This will sometimes change our practice or systems. What's great is that we try it together and decide if it works for our kids.” Participant D explained how she prepared herself for the co-teaching model without training:

After teaching for a while I learned I was going to be a co-teacher for ELLs and I immediately was nervous. I had never done it before and I wanted to learn about

it. So, I read a lot that summer, watched a lot of videos so I could understand the basics. I was so focused on the technical part of co-teaching that I underestimated how important our relationship was. I learned pretty quickly how dedicated my partner was when we started planning together. She was just as focused on learning the content which was new to her as I was on the ELL techniques. It was a great match.

Participant E explained her request to visit other co-teachers to observe, learn and ask questions:

After a few months of co-teaching I was concerned that I was not doing enough or that I could do better. Although I read the book, I watched videos, I really wanted to see how others in my situation were doing it. We inquired about visiting another school in the District with the Principal and after we did, I learned different techniques and how other partnerships work. It truly was a helpful experience and I'm glad we were given the time to do it. Now we invite others to our classroom because maybe you will learn one great thing to try and it's worth it.

Participant B explained the professional obligation you subscribe to when becoming a teacher, "Things change all the time in education, it's something that we have to adjust to. We are always reinventing things. This approach was a reinvention and we're doing it because it's better for kids. I believe that and I want to be good at it because what we were doing wasn't working." In addition, participants expressed gratitude for their co-teachers' efforts to adapt and change. Participant F recognized her partner in this way: "When we started co-teaching we knew each other and our work ethics but we didn't realize how much we had to learn about each other's teaching styles. My co-teacher jumped right in and studied the standards and asked me questions about expectations and she hasn't stopped. I was so surprised and appreciative of her dedication to all our students, not just the ELLs."

In addition to a commitment to their craft, the participants indicated a strong commitment to the co-teaching model. The model in which there was limited training for, had significant elements that supported student success and the teachers had experienced

it first-hand. Coupled with the belief in their students to be successful and high expectations, having structures that encouraged greater student gains, was inspiring. Participants expressed their specific desires for the co-teaching models to continue and become more widespread. Participant D explained, “The way this model works allows for small group instruction throughout a large part of the day. Having small groups with individual needs met every day is tremendous. I can see (student) growth daily. I know that together we are giving them (the students) more of what they need. I couldn’t do that alone.” Participant A states, “the students have two experts in the room. They know that they have more of our attention and the students work collaboratively so much better because we are able to manage them more successfully than we would if were alone.” Participant A explains the ability to structure their instruction in the model, “We are able to produce a solid mini lesson, provide follow up and run guided reading groups in 60-75 minutes every day. By having that time together, we really get to meet with each student in a small group every day. The students really benefit from that.”

The co-teachers also expressed that their commitment to the model doesn’t go unnoticed by the students. They explained that their team mentality filters into the classrooms and the students emulate it: “The students view themselves as a team. We have an understanding that we are all dedicated to learning. Just like a team has a coach, they do too. We are there to help them grow as learners and they are committed to supporting each other as learners.”

Through planning sessions, teachers used standards, curriculum guides and made mention of the school wide goals they were focused on for every student. For example,

in a guided reading planning discussion Participant F stated, “I need to expose him to more fiction books, he is having difficulty with fiction and he will never reach our school reading goal.” In the review of documents, it was noted each student will demonstrate one year's growth in one year's time. This was a school wide goal and did not differ between ELL and non ELL students in school. Teachers were focused on these goals as they supported the District’s expectations for students. There was no abandonment of these goals for ELLs but instead a thoughtful planning and work on how to attain them.

Committing to the success of your students is expected as an educator. The level of commitment varies among teachers and it was clear that these teachers were strongly committed to their students. This was evidenced by the dedication to their practice, their intentional team mentality and remaining true to the schoolwide goals and how they pertain to each individual student. The matched level of commitment continues to motivate them as well as their students.

Theme 3: Administrative Support

In every school, administrators are responsible for creating systems and making decisions that support student learning. Administrators make decisions according to the needs of their building and this requires understanding of all programs and information and a shared decision making approach. Administrators place student expectations and growth at the center of their focus and having an approach that includes teacher feedback is crucial. The structures, schedules, and partnerships in this study highlighted the administrative support that provided opportunities for success to occur.

Strategic Planning

Administrators who are strategically planning are regularly reviewing student data, conducting observations and using expectations to guide them. Participant C stated “due to regulations for our ELLs, we are mandated to provide a certain amount of minutes of ENL instruction and therefore, our schedules are created based on NYSESLAT proficiency levels and the minutes of instruction the students require. So, our schedules are created first to ensure that we are in compliance with mandates.” In addition to following mandates, creating opportunities beyond the mandated minutes of instruction are provided. For example, Participant G (Administrator), explained how she began a block schedule to better promote extended learning time in the schedule:

I have created a block schedule so that I'll have, let's say, eight teachers are teaching literacy from 9 a.m. to 10:40 and then from 10:40 to 12:15 eight other teachers have a block of literacy. Then at one o'clock from one to 2:30 there's another teacher. So they all have 90 minute blocks of literacy where they have to do guided reading and writing. This is when the ENL teacher would be a co-teacher and support literacy. These blocks are what gets created first and then I move to math, and then the other content areas.

As she now enters her eighth year as principal, she also explains how and why she decided to create a block schedule for her school:

When I first got here, there was a schedule where there were 30-40 minutes of instructional time sporadically throughout the day. On times when the teachers were supposed to teach writing, I would visit and the teachers weren't doing writing. That was the only block of time that they had their whole class. I would ask, “Aren't you supposed to be doing writing, and you're not doing writing?” They would tell me that it's the only time that they can do math because that's the only time they have all of their kids.

Participant G realized that this schedule was not going to work if she wanted effective use of time and increased student learning. She explains how she addressed this:

I didn't make any changes from January all the way through June. I just kept observing classrooms, taking notes, taking notes, taking notes, and it was like this

across the board in every room. And then the kids would constantly be pulled out for ENL speech, OT, PT, whatever it was. So then I decided, okay, we're not going to do it that way. I'm going to give the teachers block times where no one's going to be allowed to pull any student out and we're going to focus on literacy. I decided that in my first year and began it in my second year. I realized that we needed to get the literacy down pat. So, for every classroom teacher, I gave them a 90 minute literacy block of time.

After creating and practicing a schedule that was built to focus on literacy, Participant G added an additional layer to enhance student success. She explains how she was able to utilize experts and create learning environments that focused on individual student needs. Participant G (administrator), added:

Once this schedule was made, I had the reading teachers and ENL teachers push in during the literacy time and that's how every student got a small group lesson in the classroom. During the small group instruction, I wanted the teachers to focus on writing and guided reading groups. So then during this time, no one's allowed to pull out any kids for services. That time is sacred for literacy instruction. When the regulations for co-teaching reached us a year or two after this change, we were prepared. We had a push-in schedule that worked. We just needed to have a more co-teaching mindset rather than push-in. Creating that model required research and professional development for the teachers.

Using data to guide decisions has been an instrumental part in scheduling as well.

Participant G (administrator) recalls making a schedule for her ESOL teachers this year:

Looking at student data, I found out that the math skills in one classroom were weaker than the others. So, I added support from their ESOL teacher. The ESOL teacher is going back in the afternoon to provide 45 minutes of math support in addition to the 90 minutes of literacy instruction. I am able to do this this year but I don't know what next year brings. Also, the kids know her and it's nice for continuity rather than assigning someone else to support them.

Participant B supported the use of data in scheduling, "Once we moved to a block schedule, our students began to show greater gains. We were watching their success rate and shared it with our administrator throughout the year. And when we started to see our math scores drop, she arranged for more support. Reviewing and responding to data has been a regular practice for several years now."

Understanding student needs and expectations is an integral part of school administration. Participant G (Administrator), understands the student needs in her building. She explains this, “These kids come in very weak. Their language skills are very low. So, I'm providing them with the support that they need. I can see that it's working and they are making gains because when you look at the data, I see that they are actually exceeding the general education students. It's really very interesting.”

Partnerships are decided by the administrator but not without careful insight and observation. Participant G explained the process she subscribes to:

First, I generate a list of teachers who could work together because they have similarities in their personalities and work ethic. I also have to figure out if the general education teacher I am assigning has enough cultural sensitivity and open-mindedness to work with someone else. Then, I ask the teachers if given the opportunity, who would they want to work with and why. I take that information and most of the time, our partnerships match. It's interesting. What I've discovered is that if you just assign people to work together, you don't have teacher buy in. You need teacher buy in to make the model work.

Participant G highlighted this when explaining an unsuccessful partnership she had to adjust: “There was one time that I partnered friends thinking that they would work out well. It turns out that their differences in the classroom created issues. One teacher could not accept the inflexibility and spontaneity of the other teacher's approach in the classroom. They both ended up unhappy and that affected their teaching.”

The strategic process in which structures, schedules and partnerships that were created to support the co-teaching model was a process that the teachers were partially engaged in but essentially determined by the school principal. Creating a successful co-teaching model requires the administrator to thoughtfully and critically uses data and feedback while remaining focused on student achievement. This support is undeniably a significant factor in the success of the co-teaching partners.

Shared Decision Making Practices

Working collaboratively with administrators on goal setting, curriculum implementation, schedules and structures has been a significant element in the success of these partnerships. It was shared that through meetings, planning sessions and data review cycles, collaboration between teachers and administrators resulted in creating positive change and a committed approach. In order to seek feedback for change, administrators need to trust and value their teachers. In this case it was clear that there was a reciprocal trust that was unsaid but nevertheless existed.

When the participants explained their need for a larger amount of instructional time to accomplish their goals, it was addressed and understood by reviewing data and schoolwide goals. For example, Participant D explained this well:

When we first started co-teaching together, we constantly felt like our lessons were unfinished. We thought carefully about what we needed and tried to find our own solution to present to our principal. When we finally met with our principal we showed her our data and student struggles. We worked on a plan together to really focus on the needs of the kids as they were shifting. She is always open to hearing our realities and perspectives. We are lucky to have that support. She will check in with us at the beginning of the year to make sure we can accomplish the school wide goals in the schedule that she plans.

Participant G explained how she supports them from an administrative lens, “I don't try to dictate to them. I set expectations for them. I do tell them that I want to see a co-teaching model and that means they co-plan, co-teach and co-assess. They understand that there are two teachers but I want them to work as one. I also have to make sure that I give them enough time and resources to do what I'm asking of them and if I don't, I need for them to tell me.”

When concerns about curriculum arose, the several Participants shared their approach. The teachers had concerns that the curriculum they were using did not meet the

needs of their students and they did not see the gains they had hoped for. Therefore, they worked with their administrator to explore other options. Participant C shared:

We were really noticing that as the standards changed, our curriculum wasn't meeting them and our kids weren't going to learn what they needed to. We researched and implemented different things but eventually we found a program that we thought would work. We spoke with our administrator and it took some time but she agreed with us and we received a new reading program. Right now we are piloting it and it's working really well. It's challenging the kids and we're happy with how it links to content areas.

In this case, it was clear that the administrator trusted the teachers to understand the new learning standards and current programs. This type of feedback and research was valued and eventually created positive changes for students.

Administrators have their beliefs on what makes a successful co-teaching partnership and sometimes that view can be different from a teacher's. It seems logical that partnerships with the greatest student outcomes are the most successful and because those teachers are successful in structures, practices and student achievement they may influence a new partner positively the next year. This is sometimes how new partnerships are made in an effort to spread high performing teachers as a method of professional development and to increase student achievement in other areas. Participants in the study indicated that they are aware of when or if this has happened to them and how struggling with a partner that has a different work ethic or set of core values has been discussed with administrators. For example, Participant A explained, "I have co-taught with teachers that are the complete opposite of me in their expectations. They don't plan ahead, they don't use formative assessment or any type of research-based strategies and I felt like I was there to teach them. It became frustrating because we never worked as a partnership. I did what I had to do but I never felt on the same page or that we were really advancing the kids the way we could." Participant C discussed this with her administrator at the end

of the year and the next year, her partnership was different. The best of intentions were planned for by the administrator but by listening to feedback and valuing professionals, changes were made.

Also emerging from the data was the understanding that co-teaching partnerships have the ability to share honest feedback to their administrator in regards to the state of their co-teaching relationships. Participant B explained a time she had to request a new partner for next year, “We have been given expectations in working together and when you work with someone who doesn't acknowledge them or take their job seriously, it won't work. I've had to speak to my principal about it once and she helped me through the rest of the year. I really felt like the kids didn't get what they deserved and that bothered me the most so I knew we weren't a good match.” Participant E explained how after a few years she was able to choose her partner, “We have been lucky enough to request to work with people that we wanted to co-teach with. I'm sure if the principal didn't agree, it would not have happened but it did and it's been great because our styles complement each other and we are both truly dedicated to our profession.” Participant G shares her view on partnerships:

Co-teaching is a marriage. You need to have a good marriage between teachers, because it's crucial. If you have a good marriage, they're able to communicate and they want the same outcomes. I've created excellent partnerships and some that needed changes. But what I've noticed is their communication and attitude toward what they are doing is key. You really have to know your teachers. If you know what the data says about them as a teacher, their strengths and challenges, you can make successful teams. The co-teaching model is something that I wish I could have in every single classroom because the impact a good co-teaching team has on student learning is amazing. But this doesn't happen without the teachers helping me to understand what works and what doesn't.

Through the study it was understood that through interviews, teachers and administrators had a relationship that existed with trust and a shared decision making approach. The administrator acknowledged that her decisions are thoughtful and that they require the input and expertise of the co-teachers. Seeking out information, researching, observing and planning with an administrator has had a large impact on the success of the co-teaching teams. Clarity and communication between administrators and co-teacher are essential in creating success.

The analysis of collected data shows that ESOL teachers and general education teachers at the elementary school level create successful partnerships with the implementation of several components and supports. First, they are architects in their design of classroom structures. This requires trust, equity and the use of powerful learning tools. Next, they have parallel values that drive their practice and partnership. Finally, they have organizational support as professionals that extends beyond their classroom and allows for consistent progress.

Data analysis identified three overarching themes: Fundamental Design Elements, Analogous Core Values and Administrative Support. Within the first overarching theme of Fundamental Design Elements three sub themes emerged that revealed structural components necessary to build a strong co-teaching foundation. The second overarching theme of Analogous Core Values uncovered three sub themes that defined the paralleled professional integrity of the participants. Comprising two sub themes, Strategic Planning and Shared Decision Making, the third overarching theme of Administrative Support detailed actions taken by administrators in support of co-teaching partnerships. A detailed description of these findings according to research questions takes place in Chapter 5.

Summary

The first research question in this study investigated general education and ESOL teachers' perceptions regarding a successful co-teaching model. The analysis of the data found that teachers believed that if they were similar in their approach or practice, they were more successful. The teachers believed that when the students had consistency in attitude and approach, they were more successful as well. The participants believed that having a partner that you are assigned to rather than being part of the process of choosing, had negative consequences on their relationship and student achievement. A negative consequence between the two partners was described as having a focus on different goals and outcomes. This consequence can cause confusion and or an undesired outcome for students.

The second research question in this study investigated the factors that facilitated a successful co-teaching model. Analysis of the data found that the participants created structures that resulted in success for the students. These structures included organizing and prioritizing minutes of instruction as well as creating dynamic schedules. They also had a firm understanding of the value they each brought to the team. This was evidenced in their level of trust and value in each other's abilities. In addition, participants placed high regard for the use of a high quality and standards-based curriculum for their students. This element is not overlooked when teachers are measuring the success of their students and themselves. Possessing similar professional goals, expectations and a commitment to student learning emerged as a significant factor that facilitates success for the co-teaching partners. Finally, administrative support was vital in that it allowed the participants the ability to be part of the planning and data review process when making

decisions. Co-teachers' experience and perspectives were welcomed and valued by their administrator. When two teachers do not share the same values, expectations or goals, negative consequences can appear. For example, teachers may not have the same opinion on professional learning and therefore not engage in new teaching practices. This negatively impacts student outcomes. These negative consequences can be avoided by building consistency in school-wide expectations and increase accessibility and focused professional development for everyone.

The third and last research question in this study investigated their collective efficacy beliefs and how that supports the co-teaching model. The analysis of the data resulted in participants having a firm understanding and positive beliefs of their partner's knowledge, skills and efforts as part of a co teaching model for ELLs. Although there were instances discussed that explained the lack of trust with previous partners, positive experiences regarding the expertise that exists in the building was mentioned. Noticeably, there was discussion of mutual respect and trust in their partner due to the alignments in expectations, abilities, professional growth and their commitment to education. This is an example of partners who have high self efficacy as well as high collective efficacy. The negative consequence to these findings can be found by pairing teachers that do not have the same level of efficacy. In order to avoid the negative consequences of sustaining co-teaching models for ELLs, building efficacy in teachers is essential.

Chapter 5

Discussion and Conclusion

This dissertation presented a case study of ESOL and general education teachers working in an elementary school in a suburban Long Island school district. It explored teachers' perceptions of a successful co-teaching model for ELL students. Data collection included individual interviews with co-teachers and an administrator, a focus group interview, an observation of a co-planning session and a review of school improvement goals and lesson plans.

Data analysis revealed four major findings of this study. First, teachers in a successful co-teaching model must have essential components that are focused on having a good working relationship, positive beliefs about the model and the students it serves, as well as a deliberate structural design. Second, the attitudes and perceptions that co-teachers have about learning, as well as the ability to demonstrate self and collective efficacy creates a productive and dynamic co-teaching relationship. Third, collective efficacy between co-teaching partners is dependent on the partners application of collaborative based practices, positive beliefs about co-teaching and accepting accountability as a team. Fourth, since successful co-teaching models are dependent on essential structures, similar core values and expectations, school leaders should maintain focus on creating school wide expectations, strategic planning and professional development for all. This chapter will discuss the major findings of the study as it corresponds to each research question along with a discussion of the findings as it relates to the context of the literature reviewed in chapter two. This chapter closes with recommendations for future practice and research.

Implications of Findings: Research Question 1

The significant findings that resulted from this case study indicated that ESOL and GE co-teachers perceived a successful co-teaching model for ELLs to be: (a) participants' positive beliefs in the model (b) co-teaching partners with good working relationships, and (c) the consistency of a deliberate structural design. First, the participants had an overwhelming belief in the success of the model, their students and themselves. For the model to be successful, teachers must realize that the value of peer integration and the belief that peers' experiences and knowledge contribute to an enhanced delivery of instruction and greater student outcomes. These teachers, regardless of their expertise, believed that organizational learning takes place through the learning of group members. This finding supports the social cognitive theory as explained by Goddard et al. (2004), "all efficacy belief constructs are future oriented judgements about capabilities to organize and execute the courses of actions required to produce given attainments in specific situations or contexts" (Goddard, et al., 2004). Adapting, supporting and maintaining expectations for all students regardless of their label or English proficiency level, provides the foundation for developing a successful co-teaching model. Participants of the study believed the benefits to using a co-teaching model with ELL students included inclusive co-taught lessons and increased support for diverse ELL students. ELL students are also able to interact more with their English-speaking peers, receive daily small group instruction and increase their overall academic growth. As findings revealed, teachers who subscribed to these created opportunities for the success of their students and themselves.

Next, good working relationships focused on parity and similar teaching philosophies were indicators of the model's success. Parity exists when both teachers in a partnership feel significant and valued for their contributions. Based on the data analysis, the parity between the teachers enables a good working relationship and similar teaching philosophies creates a consistent focus. The partnerships described the need for co-teachers that encouraged their expertise and viewed their professional responsibilities the same. The indicators for success were having mutual respect, feeling valued for their teaching practices and being viewed as an equal through similar philosophies. In addition, understanding that the expertise another professional shares can add value to your practice. General education teachers recognized the expertise of ESOL teachers in providing instructional strategies for ELL students. In a similar manner, the ESOL teachers trust the experience and content experience of general education teachers. This finding is evident in the work of Robert et al. (2011) who said that while effective teachers have their own self efficacy, effective schools are characterized by collective beliefs of teachers in the competencies of the instructional staff to assist students in learning and developing. In this regard, the findings of the study revealed that the participants of the study are members of an effective school that believes in co-teaching as an effective model in teaching ELL students. This is evident among the participants' responses concerning their trust in their co-teacher's competencies in instruction.

Third, the consistency of a deliberate structural design for instruction factored into the participants' perceptions of the model's success. Having had different administrative approaches to scheduling, teachers saw improvements in teaching and learning in using a scheduling approach that supported the student's needs through data. Under NYS CR

Part 154, ELLs are entitled to specific minutes of instruction ranging from 36-72 minutes daily. The original schedule for the co-teaching model met the requirements but did not extend past them. According to the data, this unfortunately did not address the gaps that occurred in student achievement and the inequities in partner relationships. While understanding the importance of literacy development in ELL students while consistently reviewing data and valuing teacher feedback, the time spent co-teaching increased to support 90 minutes or more of literacy. In addition, the use of gathering and using data to shift approaches within instructional blocks, is a regular, ongoing process that requires consistency and reflection from the teachers and administrators. Ultimately, the use of student data to understand and support the student needs, academic achievements, areas of growth and the time needed to achieve them was considered in the model's design process.

Implications of Findings: Research Question 2

When determining the factors that facilitate a successful co-teaching relationship, this case study uncovered two findings. First, positive attitudes and perceptions about learning are essential in creating an environment that promotes a strong belief in students' abilities to succeed. Effective teachers reinforce their positive beliefs about learning to their students. They internalize techniques and strategies to a degree that the techniques are often transparent. They become ingrained and a natural part of their practice (Marzano, 1992). Teachers in this study did not blame the ELL students for a lack of academic achievement or the need for specialized learning, instead they made the necessary accommodations to ensure success for the ELLs such as, identifying their individual challenges in order to focus instruction, creating scaffolds to reach grade level

standards and building confidence through successful learning experiences. There are many factors that could contribute to a teacher's positive beliefs. For example, those who have more training in teaching ELLs, have greater exposure to language diversity, or who speak another language may have stronger beliefs toward ELLs in a co-teaching setting. It would be expected that teachers with more positive attitudes toward ELL students would perceive that the district provided sufficient resources to assist in the instruction of ELL students. We also would expect that the more positive their attitudes toward ELL students, the more frequently teachers would view their building as offering a positive, supportive environment for ELLs and acknowledge the contributions of diverse languages and cultures to the mainstream school setting.

This study revealed that the participants were well trained and had a substantial cultural and academic understanding of ELLs. As emphasized in the results of the study, teachers with similar beliefs about their students' ability to learn placed goal setting and high expectations in the forefront of their practice. Teachers that share goals in improving the academic performance of their students demonstrated a good working relationship. Teachers in co-teaching understand that congruent expectations and goals for students will anchor them in one direction, which makes their working relationship more effective. Availability to your partner through planning sessions, highlights the dedication and collaborative approach successful partnerships have. This characteristic between general education and ESOL teachers demonstrates parity and a focus on student learning particularly in classroom management, instructional planning and effective delivery of instruction for ELL students. Furthermore, when teachers can acknowledge the gaps in their own learning and believe that they can learn and grow as their students do, they are

operating from a growth mindset (Dweck, 2007). This approach keeps teachers open to learning from colleagues, workshops, books and from students. Throughout this study it was found that participants were committed to the success of their students reaching high expectations which consequently resulted in welcoming professional growth for them as well.

The second major discovery that addressed research question two was the inherent principles of self and collective efficacy. John Hattie (2016) identified collective efficacy as the first on a list of factors that influence student achievement. Hattie's research indicated collective teacher efficacy as three times more influential and predictive of student achievement than socioeconomic status, the effects of home environment and parental involvement (Hattie, 2016). In this study, co-teacher's confidence in each other's abilities and their belief in the impact of the team's approach were key elements that set their partnerships apart. It is implied that the school culture was designed to increase collective teacher efficacy which affected the teachers' attitudes and student beliefs. Research also suggests that self-efficacy beliefs can enhance a teacher's ability to respond effectively to stressful and challenging situations. For example, research has indicated that teachers with strong, positive efficacy beliefs about their teaching ability are more likely to take risks and use new techniques (Guskey, 1988; Stein & Wang 1988), and to experiment and persist with challenging strategies that may have a positive effect on student achievement (Hani, Czerniak, & Lumpe, 1996; Ross, 1992). The partnerships believed that their commitment to the needs of the students and their belief in student capability is collective and necessary for their co-teaching relationship. This included the understanding that academic achievement of ELLs must

be addressed with specific teaching practices and a growth mindset. Based on the interviews an assumption can be made that the participants in this study had training on the academic and social behaviors that are particular to ELL students, as well as on how to differentiate instruction based on students' language acquisition and reading skills. The capacity of the participants to educate ELL students from an asset-based perspective suggests ESOL specialists have significant expertise in ELL education and collaborate well with general education teachers. In addition, the collective beliefs among general education and ESOL teachers in this study was evident in the interview responses of the participants. Both general education and ESOL teachers have been reliant on the individual's expertise in instructional planning and delivery of effective instruction. Goddard et. al. (2004) claimed that actions to strengthen both self and collective efficacies in teaching involves conversing in the faculty room, the community, or media about the capacity that teachers have to inspire students, professional development opportunities, conversations, feedback about achievement and workshops among others.

Implications of Findings: Research Question 3

The third research question focused on how general education and ESOL teachers construct collective efficacy beliefs that affect the development, implementation and sustainment of a successful co-teaching relationship. In seeking answers to the third research question, the following elements were discovered as essential: (a) collaborative teaching practices, (b) beliefs about co-teaching and, (c) the effects of accountability on achievement.

This study uncovered that the participant's exposure with activities enhanced their teaching accountabilities and influenced the development of their collective efficacy

beliefs. The positive beliefs about co-teaching shaped the participant's motivation and performance which positively impacted student achievement and engagement.

First, collaborative teaching practices were exposed throughout the study by all participants. The use of differentiation and scaffolding instruction emerged as widely used strategies to facilitate student learning. Participants noted that the ability to plan, execute and debrief about lessons is an important aspect of their work together. Included was the ability to create small groups, varied approaches to learning targets and opportunities for remediation and enrichment as needed. The study of the co-teaching relationships at this suburban elementary school revealed that collective efficacy develops when teachers share the belief that co-teaching for ELLs requires differentiated instruction and scaffolds to students with different learning needs in order to reach grade level standards. As these teachers have worked on building a relationship, they incidentally revealed their own self and collective efficacy beliefs and implemented them, resulting in the establishment of a strong relationship. The high self efficacy that characterized the participants, provided knowledge in planning, implementation and the ability to share accountability that therefore resulted in the success of the students and the school.

Next, the second finding important to the development of collective efficacy beliefs was the belief about co-teaching for ELLs. Co-teaching is defined as "two or more professionals delivering substantive instruction to a diverse blended group of students in a single physical space" (Cook & Friend, 1995, p. 14). In the early 1990s, co-teaching became researched and understood as a way to better address the needs of special education students. Only recently has the notion of co-teaching to benefit ELL students

become more prominent due to regulations and the need to increase academic achievement for ELLs. Honigsfeld and Dove (2008) conclude that co-teaching with an ESOL teacher a) becomes an effective support for inclusive practices to accommodate the needs of diverse ELL students; b) helps all students meet national, state, and local standards; and c) establishes a vehicle for creative collaboration between ESL and mainstream teachers. Participants of this study believe that ELL and GE students flourish academically and socially alongside each other in an integrated environment. In addition, participants believe that the strategies and time spent working collaboratively are educational advantages offered to their students. Factors discussed that promoted this belief include strategies that the co-teaching environment can easily engage in: a reduction in the student/teacher ratio, an increase in instructional options for all students, an increase in diversity of instructional styles, and greater student engagement and student participation levels. In addition, this sharing of expertise has helped to improve existing instructional programs, classroom climate, and academic and social learning outcomes for all students (Friend & Bursuck, 2006). To further support the reasons why participants have such strong beliefs in the model, research done by Walsh (2012) shows that co-teaching can be considered a high-leverage strategy capable of accelerating achievement to close the achievement gap in reading and mathematics.

Also, effects of accountability on teaching was the third factor that surfaced in the development of collective efficacy beliefs. Collective efficacy is further developed when teachers recognize the effects of their accountability on teaching. This pertained to the perceived effect on the teaching of general education and ESOL teachers because of increased accountability placed on teachers the last several years. According to Sileo

(2011), parity of teachers' accountabilities is essential in teachers understanding their contributions to shared responsibilities in instructional planning, lesson execution, collaboration with parents, grading and discipline among other tasks. This study shows increased accountability on teachers as their original lens and perspective has now evolved into a collaborative responsibility. In short, participants in this study demonstrated responsibility and acceptance for understanding the varied approaches and expectations needed to effectively educate ELL and GE students. In addition, participants in this study have exhibited the ability to share and learn from each other's expertise. This study emphasizes that co-teaching relationships have proven successful when shared collective efficacy beliefs include a focus on accountability in a supportive school culture.

Theoretical Contributions

This study utilized the two concepts of self efficacy and collective efficacy under Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory. According to self efficacy theory, individuals can affect their own capabilities, depending on the level of belief in their own capacity and competency (Bandura, 1977). It is understood that the stronger one's self efficacy the more diligent one's efforts would be. Three factors that influence self efficacy: behaviors, environment, and cognitive factors (Bandura, 1977). In this study, self efficacy theory implies that by influencing general education and ESOL teachers to believe that they have the knowledge and skill set to reach standards, and providing support to do so, powerful collaboration occurs there is improvement in students' academic performance. Therefore, if teachers manifest self efficacy, their students are likely to perform with a greater sense of resilience.

An essential element in the Bandura's self efficacy theory is the delivery of information to influence change in behavior. Efficacy beliefs develop from four main resources that include (a) mastery experiences, (b) vicarious experiences, (c) social persuasion, and (d) physiological and emotional states (Bandura, 1989). Therefore, it would seem that general education and ESOL teachers in this study have been provided with opportunities to experience the four main resources to develop an effective co-teaching relationship. According to self-efficacy theory, individuals can affect their own capabilities, depending on the level of their belief in their own capacity and competency (Bandura, 1977). An individual can change the behavior with self-motivation and determination required to make the change happen (Bandura, 1989). The information that resulted from this study supports the existing theory pertaining to successful co-teaching relationships between general education teachers and ESOL teachers.

Limitations

Due to the nature of qualitative research and the case study approach, the small sample size may seem to provide a limited basis for generalization beyond this particular study. A question that may be raised is "How can you generalize from a single case?" (Yin, 1984). However, understanding the setting, participants' experience and size of the study it can be determined whether the findings are suitable in a separate circumstance. Using replication logic, each case study should be viewed as a single experiment. When a researcher identifies important findings within a single case study, other researchers can replicate this with further examination. Any subsequent case study either predicts comparable results or predicts different results, but for expected reasons. According to Yin (2003), each study replicated within a multiple case study increases the

certainty of the results. The important outcome of this type of replication can be the further development or expansion of theories.

Another limitation of this study was the bias of the researcher pertaining to co-teaching. The researcher is a former ESOL teacher that participated in a co-teaching model for several years. The researcher's own experience could cause bias in the study. Therefore, it was necessary to consider all the data obtained and analyze it with a clear and unbiased approach. The practice of continually re-evaluating the responses, and ensuring that pre-existing assumptions did not interfere with analysis was critical throughout the study. As a result of the participants potentially knowing this, the participants may have different measures of comfort in the interviews or focus group. However, in order to minimize the bias, the interview and focus group protocols were open-ended to prevent the participants from simply agreeing or disagreeing, and guide him or her to provide a truthful and honest answer. In addition, questions were phrased in a manner that allowed the participants to acknowledge that their answers were meaningful and impactful to the study.

Recommendations for Future Practice

Since the most recent changes to CR-Part 154, school districts across New York state have been required to develop an integrated co-teaching model to educate ELs. While co-teaching has a longer existence in the field of special education, co-teaching in for Els is a more recent trend (Bahaminde & Friend, 1999). Few studies have addressed the perceptions that ESOL and GE teachers have regarding their co-teaching relationship or an analysis of co-teaching as a way to serve the needs of ELLs. As a

result of mandates and policy, teachers have been required to begin co-teaching as a service delivery model for ELLs while little preparation or training was provided.

The findings of this study indicate that administrators must establish specific practices to support the creation and sustainment of successful co-teaching partnerships between general education and ESOL teachers. The first recommendation supports the need for building efficacy in teachers. A person's self efficacy belief serves as a significant set of proximal determining factors of human motivation, affect, and action (Bandura, 1989). When teachers are confident in their abilities, persist through challenges, and continuously evolve in their practices, students will significantly benefit. Building a collaborative environment is key toward building a culture of self and collective efficacy. When teachers understand the dynamics and expertise in other classrooms and with other professionals, trust and confidence will build in each other's ability to guide all students to success. Providing opportunities and time to share ideas with each other and to work together toward building school-wide best practices will support the development of collective efficacy. School leaders can facilitate by providing co-planning time, indicating models of excellence, and outlining norms and expectations for teachers in order to build or revisit a collective school mission.

Another recommendation for administrators is to develop a collaborative approach to leadership at your school. Collaborative leaders find a balance between leading initiatives and fostering cooperative learning between professionals with diverse ideas (DeWitt, 2017). Although collaborative leaders must have a managerial side, they're focus must be on co-creating classroom and building level goals with stakeholders. This includes, researching, reflecting and having discussions around

influences that matter (DeWitt, 2017). Maintaining dialogue based on achievements, challenges and evidence will allow a deeper dive into student needs and ultimately a shared decision making practice. When teachers can share ideas, evidence and research with school leaders that actively listen to inform their decision making a greater sense of trust and a positive impact on student learning can occur. In addition, empowering teachers to take on leadership roles gives educators a true stake in their school's progress. When teachers have a role in making important school decisions, feel their voices are heard, and can actively participate in building school culture, efficacy is raised. When teachers and school leaders work together toward c-constructed goals, a shared belief in the direction of the work and the ability to effect change with students cultivates.

Since school leaders and teachers place learning at the center of what they do, a dedication to their own learning is essential. A third recommendation for future practice included a need for implementing a redesigning professional development for teachers. Focused and ongoing professional development is needed to ensure that teachers develop a solid and consistent understanding of best practices, school-wide approaches and goals. Through a collaborative leadership approach, professional development can be less of a budgetary constraint and furthermore result in an authentic method that produces a greater sense of commitment in stakeholders. For example, utilizing the experience of your staff and allowing teachers to co-construct professional development topics, facilitate training sessions, and share their own successes can lead to teachers who are active participants in their development, rather than passive receivers. This builds a culture of efficacy and promotes the idea of working together to improve school-wide

practices. According to DeWitt (2017), we should look within our current structures to identify areas for professional development. Specific expenses can include flipped faculty meetings, collaborative inquiry practices, professional learning communities, instructional rounds and shared decision making teams.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study has the potential for further study that could replicate the methodology and interview protocol employed in this study with teachers from different school districts in different settings in order to produce a larger body of research. While the findings of this study are limited since they address solely elementary school general education and ESOL co-teachers, future studies could examine the perceptions of co-teachers with teachers who teach in middle school or high school. Also, this research could be useful for the development of future educational policies that address ELL education. This study can contribute to the understanding of educating ELL students by highlighting successes and challenges as more states move from traditional pull-out services to inclusive practices. The findings of this study could also become the basis of a larger quantitative study that measures social studies teachers' challenges and successes regarding the implementation of an integrated co-teaching model for ELLs. A broad quantitative investigation of administrative approaches to planning for integrated co-teaching models based on the findings of this study would be helpful in expanding the present study's discoveries.

Conclusion

This case study explored the perceptions of general education and ESOL teachers' co-teaching relationships in an integrated co-teaching model. Data gathered on these co-

teaching relationships is useful in specifying methods in which co-teachers can build successful relationships. The results of this study indicated the participants' perceptions of successful co-teaching relationships by uncovering the need for co-teachers to have self and collective efficacy beliefs, specific fundamental design elements, analogous core values and administrative support. Identifying and exploring these experiences and perceptions contributed to a body of research by providing opportunities for adjustment in current collaborative environments. In addition, it informs instructional leaders of factors they can implement in order to positively influence the development of more effective and successful integrated co-teaching programs. Research on the impact of collaborative teaching strategies for ELLs is limited when it comes to the authentic experiences of co-teachers. The existing gaps between understanding the successful factors of co-teacher relationships and an integrated co-teaching model for ELLs must continue to be investigated. Only by including the perceptions of general education and ESOL co-teachers in designing, implementing and sustaining successful co-teaching models will widespread success in these models occur.

APPENDIX A: LETTER OF CONSENT (SUPERINTENDENT)



██████████ Assistant Superintendent of Schools
██████████ Union Free School District
██████████
██████████, NY ██████████

Dear Dr. ██████████

I hope this email finds you well. As a doctoral candidate of St. John's University, I am conducting a research study to learn more about the perceptions of co-teachers (both general education teachers and Teachers to Speakers of Other Languages) supporting students who are English Language Learners within a collaborative setting. This study is titled, *A Case Study of Co-teacher Relationships for English Language Learners in a Suburban Elementary School*. In order to complete the study, participation from two elementary school principals and three co-teaching partnerships is needed. I would love the opportunity to conduct my study in your school district. The study includes: individual interviews with six teachers and two principals regarding collaboration in the co-teaching setting

- three classroom observations (one of each partnership) to help the researcher understand the application of procedures and practices in the co-teaching setting
- one focus group interview with the six teachers concerning successes and challenges within the co-teaching setting
- a review of teacher shared documents (School Improvement Plan, lesson plans, anonymous use of student achievement data on State assessments).

Since this study has been approved by the IRB, in order to begin this case study, your approval is needed. With your approval, I will begin the recruitment process. The subjects in this study will be voluntary and kept confidential. I have included the teacher and principal consent forms for your consideration. If you should have any questions, I am available.

Looking forward to hearing from you,

Jaime Bottcher
St. John's Doctoral Candidate

APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT FORM (PRINCIPAL)



Dear Principal,

You have been invited to take part in a research study to learn more about the perceptions of co-teachers (both general education teachers and Teachers to Speakers of Other Languages) supporting students who are English Language Learners within a collaborative setting. This study will be conducted by Jaime Bottcher, student in the Administrative and Instructional Leadership Department of the School of Education at St. John's University as part of her doctoral dissertation. Her faculty sponsor is Dr. Catherine DiMartino, Ph.D., SJU Administrative and Instructional Leadership Department of the School of Education.

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to do the following:

1. take part in one individual interview concerning collaboration in this co-teaching setting;
2. allow for one classroom observation to help the researcher understand the application of procedures and practices in the co-teaching setting

Participation in this study will involve no more than forty-five minutes of your time: approximately forty-five minutes to complete the individual interview.

There are no known risks associated with your participation in this research beyond those of everyday life. Although you will receive no direct benefits, this research may help the investigator better understand the perceptions co-teachers employ in their daily support of English Language Learners within a general education setting.

Your interview will be audio taped. You may review the tape and request that all or any portion of the tape be destroyed. Confidentiality of your research records will be strictly maintained by the researcher using a personal system of record keeping, coding and keeping consent forms separate from data to protect your identity with any information you have provided.

Participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate or withdraw at any time without penalty. For interview you have the right to skip or not answer any questions you prefer not to answer.

If there is anything about the study or your participation that is unclear or that you do not understand, if you have questions or wish to report a research-related problem, you may contact Jaime Bottcher at [REDACTED] or the faculty sponsor, Dr. Catherine DiMartino at [REDACTED] St. John's University School of Education, Sullivan Hall 521, 8000 Utopia Parkway, Queens NY 11439.

For questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the University's Institutional Review Board, St. John's University, Dr. Raymond DiGiuseppe, Chair [REDACTED] or Marie Nitopi, IRB Coordinator, [REDACTED]

You have received a copy of this consent document to keep.

Yes, I give the investigator permission to use my name when quoting material from our interview in her dissertation.

No, I would prefer that my name not be used.

Agreement to Participate

Subject's Signature

Date

APPENDIX C: INFORMED CONSENT FORM (TEACHER)



Dear Teacher,

You have been invited to take part in a research study to learn more about the perceptions of co-teachers (both general education teachers and Teachers to Speakers of Other Languages) supporting students who are English Language Learners within a collaborative setting. This study will be conducted by Jaime Bottcher, student in the Administrative and Instructional Leadership Department of the School of Education at St. John's University as part of her doctoral dissertation. Her faculty sponsor is Dr. Catherine DiMartino, Ph.D., SJU Administrative and Instructional Leadership Department of the School of Education.

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to do the following:

1. take part in one individual interview concerning collaboration in the co-teaching setting;
2. take part in one focus group interview concerning success and challenges within the co-teaching setting; and
3. allow for one classroom observation to help the researcher understand the application of procedures and practices in the co-teaching setting

Participation in this study will involve no more than two hours of your time: approximately thirty minutes to complete the individual interview, sixty minutes for the focus group interview and forty minutes for the classroom observation. The interviews will be held two weeks apart.

There are no known risks associated with your participation in this research beyond those of everyday life.

Although you will receive no direct benefits, this research may help the investigator better understand the perceptions co-teachers employ in their daily support of English Language Learners within a general education setting.

Your interviews will be audio taped. You may review these tapes and request that all or any portion of the tapes be destroyed. This includes your participation in the focus group interview. Confidentiality of your research records will be strictly maintained by the researcher using a personal system of record keeping, coding and keeping consent forms separate from data to protect the identity of subjects with any information they have provided. Your responses in the focus group will be kept confidential by the researcher, but the researcher cannot guarantee that others in the group will do the same.

Participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate or withdraw at any time without penalty. For interviews you have the right to skip or not answer any questions you prefer not to answer.

If there is anything about the study or your participation that is unclear or that you do not understand, if you have questions or wish to report a research-related problem, you may contact Jaime Bottcher at [REDACTED] or the faculty sponsor, Dr. Catherine DiMartino at [REDACTED] St. John's University School of Education, Sullivan Hall 521, 8000 Utopia Parkway, Queens NY 11439.

For questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the University's Institutional Review Board, St. John's University, Dr. Raymond DiGiuseppe, Chair [REDACTED] or Marie Nitopi, IRB Coordinator, [REDACTED]

You have received a copy of this consent document to keep.

Yes, I give the investigator permission to use my name when quoting material from our interview in her dissertation.

No, I would prefer that my name not be used.

Agreement to Participate

Subject's Signature

Date

APPENDIX D: INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. What is your name and your position at _____ elementary school?
2. What are your responsibilities in your role as a co-teacher at _____ elementary school.
3. What are some of the ways in which you and your co-teacher at _____ elementary school work together?
 - Do you plan together?
 - How do you split responsibilities?
 - Did you create systems together? Classroom management, routines, co-teaching models, assessment criteria?
4. How would you describe your relationship with your co-teacher?
 - Do you have similar educational philosophies?
 - Do you trust her/his expertise?
 - Do you have any instructional or personality differences that affect your relationship in the classroom?
5. How have the increased expectations for achievement for all students including ELs, changed the way you teach?
 - Can you define specific expectations?
 - Can you provide examples of a change you made to meet the needs of the learners so they could reach specific expectations?
6. What are your beliefs about the co-teaching model?
 - Can you share positive or negative feedback pertaining to the model?
7. What teaching strategies do you use as a team to increase student achievement?

- Are there specific models or practices you use that has made an impact on student achievement?
8. What action plan/strategies do you have in place for working with your teaching team to facilitate collaboration?
 9. Do you think that working as a team is more effective in helping students achieve more? If so, why?
 10. What types of professional development have you been offered to prepare you for co-teaching?
 11. What types of professional development have you been offered throughout the year to sustain your co-teaching model?
 12. Do you have a common planning time?
 - How often is it and what is the length of time?
 - What is the format of the time you spend together?
 13. If you were a school leader, what would you ensure co-teachers had to be successful?
 - What changes would you make to the program?
 14. Would you like to add anything?

APPENDIX E: FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. What is your name and position at _____ elementary school.
2. What does the term co-teacher mean to you?
3. Can you describe your relationship as a co-teaching team.
 - What makes it work well?
 - What are the challenges?
 - How do you share responsibilities?
4. What does your team believe about achievement for general education and ELL students?
 - Do you see differences in the way you instruct both groups? If yes, please explain
 - Do you see differences in what they can accomplish?
 - Is there data to support these beliefs?
5. What does your team believe about the co-teaching model?
6. How does your team work together to design and deliver instruction for all your students?
 - Do you plan together?
 - Do you reflect or debrief after lessons or assessments?
7. What has most impacted your beliefs about working with other teachers?
8. What challenges has your team faced in regards to working as a team?
9. How often do you communicate with parents?
 - What is the major purpose of communication with parents?

- Do parents understand the structure and model by which their child is educated?

10. What role, if any, has relationship building played in the development of your co-teaching team?

11. Do you believe that all of the EL students in your class have the ability to be successful through this model?

- Do you believe that they can attain the same level of success as general education students?

12. Do you feel confident in creating a productive and appropriate co-teaching classroom for all of your students?

- To feel more empowered to do so, what would you need from your administrator?

APPENDIX F: PRINCIPAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. What is your leadership position at _____ elementary school?
2. How long have you been the _____ at this school?
3. Have you had experience as a co-teacher for ELLs?
4. What are your beliefs about the co-teaching model?
 - Can you share positive or negative feedback pertaining to the model?
5. What strategies did you use to choose co-teaching pairs?
6. Do you believe that co-teachers need to plan together? If so, how often?
7. How do you suggest that co-teachers share responsibilities?
8. How has the co-teaching benefited students in your school?
9. What challenges have you faced with the co-teaching initiative?
10. What action plan/strategies do you have in place for the co-teaching teams to facilitate collaboration?
11. Were there been professional development opportunities offered to prepare the co-teachers prior the start of the initiative?
12. What types of professional development have been offered throughout the year to sustain the co-teaching model?
13. Has the co-teaching model for ELLs changed the expectations for the subgroup?
 - Can you explain why or why not?
14. Has the co-teaching model for ELLs increased the achievement for the subgroup?
 - Can you provide details or data to explain why or why not?
15. If you could make any changes to the model, what would they be?

APPENDIX G: OBSERVATION TOOL

Co-Teaching Observation Tool

	No Evidence	Emerging Evidence	Adequate Evidence	Exceptional Evidence	Evidence/Comments
Equity between the co-teachers is established from the onset and maintained throughout the lesson					
Language and content Objectives are addressed by both teachers					
Teaching roles and responsibilities are shared					
Co-teaching models are used					
Students are grouped purposefully in meaningful ways throughout the lesson					
Co-teacher interact with students and each other in ways that enhance					

student learning					
Co-teachers are familiar with and respond to the learning needs of all the students					
Co-teachers implement appropriate differentiated strategies for teaching and academic language and content					
Co-teachers demonstrate respect and collegiality for each other throughout the lesson					
Co-teachers collaboratively conduct formative and summative assessments					

Adapted from Honigsfeld & Dove (2018), pp.258-9

APPENDIX H: DOCUMENT EVALUATION TOOL

Document Evaluation

<u>Name of Document</u>	<u>Retrieved from</u>	<u>Goals indicated or Noted Achievements</u>	<u>Written/Provided by</u>

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