HOW TEACHER AND PRINCIPAL BELIEFS INFORM INCLUSIVE PRACTICE IN THE SECONDARY CLASSROOM THROUGH CO-TEACHING

A Dissertation in
Educational Leadership

by

Jill Trostle Wenrich

Copyright 2012 Jill Trostle Wenrich

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

May 2012
The dissertation of Jill Trostle Wenrich was reviewed and approved* by the following:

Susan C. Faircloth  
Associate Professor of Education  
Dissertation Advisor  
Chair of Committee

Kai A. Schafft  
Associate Professor of Education

James Nolan  
Professor of Education

Nona A. Prestine  
Professor of Education

Preston Green  
Professor of Education and Law, Professor-in-Charge, Educational Leadership Program

*Signatures are on file in the Graduate School.
ABSTRACT

Little is known about the dynamics of the relationship between principal and teacher in a co-teaching classroom at the secondary level. Increasing our understanding of how teacher and principal beliefs, actions and interactions inform the co-teaching process within the secondary classroom will allow us to identify the advantages and disadvantages of this inclusive practice. This can help to explain why a school would choose this type of inclusive model.

Using an embedded multi-case study design, this study explored how teacher and principal beliefs, actions and interactions in regard to the co-teaching model informed inclusive practice in the secondary classroom. Specifically, this study collected data from two high schools located in a rural area of Pennsylvania, who utilized the co-teaching model as a means of inclusive practice.

Three broad conclusions were drawn from this research. First, not only teachers, but principals as well, make decisions and effectively respond to the co-teaching classroom based on the perceived needs of students. Second, both teachers and principals gain professional development opportunities through collaboration which occurs within the co-teaching partnership. Third, co-teaching not only benefits students, it also benefits the co-teachers, principals, and other members of the school community. Lastly, dialogue is the key to the development of a successful co-teaching partnership. Not only must the two teachers in the co-teaching partnership communicate on a daily basis, two-way, reciprocal communication must occur between teachers and their principal.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Tables .......................................................................................................................... viii
List of Figures ........................................................................................................................ vix

Chapter 1. INTRODUCTION ................................................................................................. 1
  Co-Teaching .......................................................................................................................... 4
  Statement of the Problem and Research Question .......................................................... 5
  Conceptual Framework ..................................................................................................... 8
  Significance of this Study ................................................................................................. 9
  Researcher Subjectivity ................................................................................................. 10
  Summary ............................................................................................................................ 11

Chapter 2. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE .................................................................... 12
  Introduction ....................................................................................................................... 12
  Historical Overview ....................................................................................................... 13
  Teacher Beliefs ................................................................................................................ 13
    Benefits ............................................................................................................................ 14
    Adverse Effects ............................................................................................................ 15
  Teacher as Practitioner ................................................................................................... 15
  Principal Beliefs ............................................................................................................... 16
    Benefits of co-teaching for students ............................................................................. 17
    Adverse Effects ............................................................................................................ 18
  Co-Teaching .................................................................................................................... 18
    Rationale for co-teaching ............................................................................................ 19
    Benefits of co-teaching for teachers .......................................................................... 19
    Design ............................................................................................................................. 21
    Personnel ....................................................................................................................... 22
  Instructional Considerations ........................................................................................... 23
    Strategy One: One teaching, one observing ............................................................... 23
    Strategy Two: Station teaching .................................................................................. 25
    Strategy Three: Parallel teaching ............................................................................... 25
    Strategy Four: Alternative teaching ........................................................................... 26
    Strategy Five: Teaming ............................................................................................... 27
    Strategy Six: One teaching, one assisting ................................................................. 27
    Variations ....................................................................................................................... 29
  Summary ............................................................................................................................ 30

Chapter 3. METHODOLOGY ........................................................................................... 31
  Logic of and Rationale for Approach ............................................................................ 32
  Research Design ............................................................................................................ 33
  Site and Sample Selection .............................................................................................. 34
  Relationship Building ..................................................................................................... 36
  Potential Limitation of Using Purposive Sampling in this Study ................................. 37
  Research Strategy/Instrumentation ............................................................................. 37
Appendix C: Interview Protocols ................................................................. 133
Appendix D: Class Observation Guide ........................................................ 137
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Study Participant Characteristics……………………………………………………….50
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1 Conceptual Framework…………………………………………………………………..8
CHAPTER 1

Introduction

President Lyndon B. Johnson signed into law the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) in 1965 (National Education Association, 2008). This law is the foremost education law defining the federal requirements for public schools in the United States of America. In 1966, Congress amended the original ESEA to specifically address the education of children with disabilities. In 1975, in an effort to extend help with education to this specific population, President Gerald Ford, along with the U.S. Congress, introduced landmark legislation titled Public Law 94-142 (PL 94-142), also known as the Education for all Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA). The intent of this law was to improve opportunities in education for children with disabilities and adults by providing them with a free appropriate public education (National Education Association, 2008). Specifics of the law as defined by Boyer (1979, p. 299) were as follows:

For children six to seventeen the law specifies that states and local school districts must:

- Make every reasonable effort to locate handicapped children and give first priority to the most severely disabled.
- Evaluate the learning needs of each child, in consultation with parents and special education advisors, and develop an individual education program to meet these needs.
- Place each child in the least restricted environment possible, whether this is a hospital, a state institution, a private day school, a public school special education program, or a regular classroom.
- Periodically evaluate the child’s progress and make program changes if needed, again, with parents and specialists helping to make decisions.
- Set up impartial hearing, appeal, and other due process procedures under which parents can challenge school decisions. (p. 299)

Public Law 94-142 was amended in 1986 and became Public Law 99-457 which extended the law to include children with disabilities from birth, and in 1990 became PL 101-476, which required transition services for children from the age of sixteen (Bailey & du Plessis, 1997).

President George H. W. Bush, along with the U.S. Congress, introduced The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) as an extension of the EAHCA, in 1990. The IDEA parallels the EAHCA in that it is a law ensuring services to children with disabilities throughout the United States. The law, reauthorized in 1997, is designed to protect the rights of students with disabilities by ensuring they receive a free and appropriate public education (FAPE), regardless of ability. It also strives to grant equal access to students with disabilities and provide additional educational services. As the federal government continued to advocate for the rights of children with disabilities, state and local school districts were ultimately responsible for the implementation of educational services.

In 1994, during the presidency of William J. Clinton, a lawsuit brought to the United States District Court in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, known as Gaskin v. Pennsylvania Department of Education, was filed on behalf of Pennsylvania public school students with physical, behavioral and developmental disabilities. The lawsuit set a precedent for the education of students with disabilities in our nation’s public school system. According to the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) (2008), the lawsuit alleged students with disabilities had been denied their federal statutory right to a free appropriate public education in regular classrooms with necessary supplemental aids and services. In particular, the plaintiffs alleged PDE
systematically failed to enforce the provisions in federal law requiring local schools and school
districts to offer a full continuum of support services allowing children with disabilities to be
educated in regular classrooms.

Signed into law in 2004, The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act,
which amended the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), requires all students be
taught core academic subjects by teachers highly qualified in those academic areas. According to
the Council for Exceptional Children (2005) it “has led to a rethinking of how to develop
schedules and deploy staff so that all students receive the education to which they are entitled.”
Other changes to the Individual Education Plan (IEP) process, due process and discipline of
students with disabilities have been made which reflect greater opportunities for success within
the general education classroom setting (Families and Advocates Partnership for Education
(FAPE), 2004).

Since the inception of government initiatives such as the Elementary and Secondary
Education Act, Education for all Handicapped Children Act and the Individuals with Disabilities
Education Act, educators have been working to develop practices, which address the needs of all
children, including children with disabilities. Shaped by policy, the need for educational
practices that address the needs of children with disabilities within the regular education
classroom emerged. One such practice is an inclusion model referred to as co-teaching (Bailey &
du Plessis, 1997; Dieker & Murawski, 2003; Dugan & Letterman, 2008; Mayberry & Lazarus,
2002).
Co-Teaching

Co-teaching was developed in order to help teachers effectively work with children with disabilities within an inclusive setting in the regular education classroom. Dieker and Murawski (2003) define co-teaching as two teachers, a regular education teacher and a special education teacher, team teaching while taking the needs of all students, not only those with disabilities, into consideration. According to Dugan and Letterman (2008):

Team teaching has surfaced as one mechanism to try new and innovative techniques to spark student interest, inquiry, and learning outcomes. Educators have used team teaching for a variety of reasons. Co-teaching has been used as a tool for integrating material from different disciplines and remedying problems. It is also the most common form of inclusion utilized within the secondary classroom setting. (p. 11)

Many (Bailey & du Plessis, 1997; Bertin, 1996; Burrello et al., 1996; Dieker & Murawski, 2003; Friend, 2007; Friend & Cook, 2007; Keefe et al., 2004; Klooo & Zigmund, 2008; Mayberry & Lazarus, 2002; Morris, 2006) have written about the structural and technical aspect of the co-teaching model, which provides the framework within which co-teachers work. More important, however, is the human aspect, the co-teachers and principals, whose beliefs and actions/interactions are what truly transform the design of the co-teaching classroom into a viable option for the practice of inclusion for students with disabilities.

However, much of the existing research fails to examine how the beliefs teachers and their principals hold in regard to the practice of co-teaching, as well as their actions based on those beliefs, can influence instructional practices within the co-teaching model. According to Adams and Cessna (1991) teachers’ shared beliefs about co-teaching and learning are fundamental to successful co-teaching. Meyen et al. (1996) explain the following:
If partners for co-teaching do not agree on their beliefs about the ability of all children to learn, the rights of children to experience success in their classroom, regardless of their ability level, and their own role in student learning, they are likely to encounter difficulties when they share a classroom. Further, because teachers’ instructional beliefs guide their practice, they also could find they do not agree on the general atmosphere that makes teaching and learning successful. (p. 170)

Statement of the Problem and Research Questions

The National Center for Restructuring and Inclusion (1995) describes co-teaching as the most common model for teaching students with disabilities in the general education classroom. This is in response to the increasing numbers of students with disabilities included in the regular education classroom. According to Isherwood and Barger-Anderson (2007), many school districts in Pennsylvania have recently been forced to reconsider their special education delivery models to make them more inclusive. The other factors driving changes in special education in Pennsylvania and across the United States include the “… focused attention on students with increasingly diverse learning characteristics achieving high academic performance in general education” (Villa et al., 2004 as cited in Isherwood & Barger-Anderson, 2007, p. 122), and school districts struggling to find highly qualified special education teachers at the secondary level as a result of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. Because of these issues, schools are adopting co-teaching models as a way of increasing inclusive practices, reducing special education segregation and addressing the lack of qualified special education teachers at the secondary level (Isherwood & Barger-Anderson, 2007, p. 121).

Isherwood and Barger-Anderson (2007) also argue that as co-teaching continues to be a means for inclusive practice, it is important to conduct research, which will identify how
effective implementation of this model can occur. An adequate research base for teachers, administrators and school policy makers must be developed as models of best practice are formed, in order for school districts to meet the state and federal mandates for inclusion of special education students in the regular education classroom. Walter-Thomas (1997) also cites the need for research that determines what components of the secondary school could affect successful implementation and adoption of co-teaching relationships between regular and special educators (p. 123).

A number of collaborative constraints for successful implementation of the co-teaching model at the secondary level have been identified. For example, Cole and McLeskey (1997) identified the following constraints: an emphasis on a wide range of complexity within curricular material, a lack of academic skills and learning strategies which are inherent in students with disabilities, teachers prepared as content specialists with little knowledge regarding adaptations for students with disabilities, an increased pressure for accountability-usually in the form of standardized proficiency testing, and increased autonomy among teachers at the secondary level. Worrell (2008) denotes similar barriers, which he identifies as the “seven deadly school ‘sins’ of inclusion” (p. 43). They are: negative teacher perspectives; lack of knowledge regarding special education terminology, issues and laws; poor collaboration skills; lack of administration support; limited instructional repertoire; inappropriate assessment procedures; and conflict between scheduling and time management (p. 43).

One might assume teachers will embrace the concept of co-teaching, but as Friend and Cook (2007) explain, this is not always the case. According to Friend and Cook, “Teachers initially may resist the perceived increase in student diversity that accompanies co-teaching, but as they implement more effective instructional interventions through their partnerships, they
learn to value the arrangement” (p. 116). As teachers work through their partnership in the classroom or possibly before the partnership begins, questions may arise. How those questions are answered, or if they remain un-an-swered, will inform the teacher’s practice or actions within the classroom.

Principals are also of vital importance to co-teachers working within their buildings. Teachers, specifically those who are placed in co-teaching situations, depend on the principal for support of their actions. Thus, the belief system of the principal regarding what a co-teaching classroom will look like and how the teachers will develop their instructional practices within these classrooms will help to inform the design of the co-teaching model. According to Morris (2006), the principal’s role is one of support. The principal shares the message with the school staff that he/she is fully committed and supportive of the co-teaching model, thus showing ownership to the faculty. The principal also has the responsibility of helping the teachers understand what co-teaching looks like, how proper implementation can occur, and be supportive of their endeavors to make the process beneficial to all involved.

Unfortunately, we know little about the dynamics of the relationship between principal and teacher in a co-teaching classroom. In response, this study will extend exploration of the co-teaching model as it relates to the practice of inclusion at the secondary level, taking into account teacher and principal instructional and leadership practices and how they inform the design of the co-teaching classroom. This study seeks to investigate how the beliefs teachers and their principals hold in regard to the practice of co-teaching influence instructional practices within the co-teaching model in the secondary classroom. In doing so, the following questions were addressed in this study:

1a. What beliefs do principals hold regarding co-teaching?
1b. How do these beliefs translate into leadership practices in relation to the co-teaching classroom?

2a. What beliefs do co-teachers hold regarding co-teaching?

2b. How do these beliefs translate into instructional practices in the co-teaching classroom?

3. To what extent do principal and teacher beliefs regarding co-teaching align with their leadership and/or instructional practices?

**Conceptual Framework**

This study is grounded in the belief that both teachers and principals together shape and inform the design of a co-teaching classroom through their beliefs, actions and interactions (See Figure 1). In designing this study, I worked from the assumption that teacher and principal beliefs and actions work together to influence and inform the design of the co-teaching classroom.

*Figure 1. Conceptual Framework*
Significance of this Study

There is a need to research the development and implementation of the co-teaching model as it relates to the beliefs and actions of teachers and principals within schools, respectively, and how those beliefs and actions influence the co-teaching design. In today’s educational climate, expectations from the Federal and state government as well as the local community and parents of individual students are extremely high. However, according to Samuels (2008), “Federal and state officials collect data about the characteristics of students with disabilities and certain outcomes for those students, but little is known about the quality of education they receive” (p. 5). One way of helping to ensure we meet these expectations is to include students with disabilities in a general education classroom with necessary support. One support model that has gained favor is that of co-teaching. However, according to Zigmond (2004), there is a lack of agreement in the co-teaching research about what constitutes meaningful impact.

Principals are of vital support to the teachers within their building. According to Berman and McLaughlin (1978) nearly every study of teacher performance and satisfaction find administrative support to be essential to teacher success. Teachers, specifically those who are placed in co-teaching situations, depend on the principal for support of their actions. Thus, the belief system of the principal regarding what a co-teaching classroom will look like and how the teachers will develop their instructional practices will help to inform the design of the co-teaching model. The principal has the responsibility of helping teachers understand what co-teaching looks like and how proper implementation can occur. He or she should also be supportive of the teacher’s endeavors to make the process beneficial to all involved. Increasing our understanding of how teacher and principal beliefs, actions and interactions inform the co-
teaching process within the secondary classroom will allow us to see the advantages and disadvantages to this inclusive practice. This can also help to explain why a school would choose this type of inclusive model.

**Researcher Subjectivity**

In conducting research studies, it is important that any previously held bias be acknowledged. James et al. (2008) characterize bias as coming from the people involved in both collecting and providing the evidence. They state:

Researchers may have a preconceived notion about the evidence they are likely to find in their investigation. Unconsciously they may ask questions phrased in such a way as to heighten the chance the respondent will answer as expected. Likewise, the respondent may have biases about either the researchers or their topic and may not be willing to disclose personal ideas or feelings. (p. 68)

Similarly, Corbin and Strauss (2008) argue that:

sometimes researchers become so engrossed in their investigations that they don’t even realize that they have come to accept assumptions or beliefs of their respondents. The researcher must walk a fine line between getting into the hearts and minds of respondents, while at the same time keeping enough distance to be able to think clearly and analytically about what is being said or done—a good reason for the researcher to keep a journal of his or her responses or feelings. (p. 80)

Researchers are also cautioned about the limitations of qualitative research due to the “sensitivity and integrity of the investigator” (Merriam, 1998, p. 42). In response, Bogdan and Biklen (1998) urge “qualitative researchers [to] try to acknowledge and take into account their own biases as a method of dealing with them” (p. 34). In light of these concerns, it is important
to acknowledge that I have implemented several co-teaching classrooms within a secondary school. I also believe in the benefits the co-teaching classroom can afford students of all abilities, if the program is implemented with fidelity. Although some may perceive this to be an issue of concern, I firmly believe that my prior experience with co-teaching classrooms is a strength that will enable me to better understand, analyze and report the findings of this study.

Summary

The purpose of the study was to investigate how teacher and principal beliefs, actions and interactions in regard to the co-teaching model will inform inclusive practice in the secondary classroom through the practice of co-teaching. Questions addressed in the study are:

1a. What beliefs do principals hold regarding co-teaching?

1b. How do these beliefs translate into leadership practices in relation to the co-teaching classroom?

2a. What beliefs do co-teachers hold regarding co-teaching?

2b. How do these beliefs translate into instructional practices in the co-teaching classroom?

3. To what extent do principal and teacher beliefs regarding co-teaching align with their leadership and/or instructional practices?

In order for educators to make an informed decision as to the legitimacy of the use of co-teaching, as it applies to their building or district, further exploration of the co-teaching phenomenon is needed. Educators need to know how teachers’ and principals’ beliefs and actions interact to influence the co-teaching classroom in order to gain a better understanding of co-teaching and its potential use within their context.
CHAPTER 2

Review of the Literature

This chapter reviews the literature on the use of co-teaching as an inclusive practice at the secondary level. Specifically, this chapter examines the literature in regard to the development and implementation of a co-teaching model as it relates to the beliefs, actions and interactions of teachers and principals. Researching how teachers and principals influence the practice of co-teaching within the general education classroom affords the opportunity to gain insight into current and past exploration of the co-teaching model itself.

Introduction

Successful inclusion of students with disabilities into the regular education classroom is based on a belief system - the belief, that all students are entitled to equitable access to learning opportunities, and the pursuit of excellence in education. It goes beyond physical space/location and incorporates basic values that promote social awareness within the regular education setting (Burrello et al., 1996). One way to facilitate academic achievement and social awareness for all students is with team teaching or co-teaching as it is often referred.

Dieker and Murawski (2003) define co-teaching as two teachers, a regular education teacher and a special education teacher, team teaching while taking the needs of all students, not only those with disabilities, into consideration. According to Dugan and Lettermen (2008), “Team teaching has surfaced as one mechanism to try new and innovative techniques to spark student interest, inquiry, and learning outcomes” (p. 11). Educators have used team teaching (also known as co-teaching, collaborative teaching, or cooperative teaching) for a variety of reasons. Co-teaching has been used as a tool for integrating material from different disciplines.
and remedying problems (Dieker & Murawski, 2003). It is also the most common model of inclusion utilized within the secondary classroom setting.

Many have written about the co-teaching model (Bailey & du Plessis, 1997; Bertin, 1996; Burrello et al., 1996; Dieker & Murawski, 2003; Friend, 2007; Friend & Cook, 2007; Keefe et al., 2004; Kloo & Zigmund, 2008; Mayberry & Lazarus, 2002; Meyen et al., 1996; Morris, 2006). However, lacking in this research is an investigation into the beliefs and actions of teachers and principals, as well as their influence on the co-teaching classroom.

**Historical Overview**

According to Warwick (1971), in the 1960’s co-teaching emerged as a way to reorganize secondary schools in the United States. As an option of instructional delivery in the special education classroom, co-teaching occurred between pairs of special education teachers who shared teaching responsibilities within the self-contained classroom. Mainstreaming of special education students into the regular education classroom gained favor throughout the 1970’s special education teachers and general education teachers began to work in constructive and coordinated ways to increase expectations of students with disabilities within the same classroom environment as their non-disabled peers (Bauer, 1975).

By the late 1980’s co-teaching was the most discussed instructional method to meet the needs of a student with special educational needs within the general education setting. Today, co-teaching continues to be utilized and discussed within the general education setting.

**Teacher Beliefs**

According to Adams and Cessna (1991) teachers’ shared beliefs about teaching and learning are fundamental to successful co-teaching. Teachers are partners in instructional practice. Their attitudes and beliefs about the ability of their students to succeed in the
classroom no matter what the circumstance must be as one, for if they are not, the possibility of failure or difficulties within the classroom are great. Agreement on classroom practice is paramount to the success of the learner.

Friend and Cook (2007) explain co-teaching brings issues of increased diversity, but as the teachers implement effective instructional interventions through their partnership, they learn to value the co-teaching arrangement. Many veteran teachers believe co-teaching is a "professional marriage" (p. 129). Just as in a marriage, Keefe et al., (2004) confirm there are many challenges, “but when it works the feelings of accomplishment, trust, mutual respect, and camaraderie are indescribable. There is joy in sharing success, in having someone to celebrate with” (p. 41).

**Benefits.**

Teachers who have experienced the affects of co-teaching personally believe there are more positives than negatives to this form of instructional delivery. According to Friend and Cook (2007), co-teachers often report a sense of collegial support with the co-teaching model. They also believe teachers receive emotional support from someone with whom they share both classroom successes and challenges which enable them to better serve the students within their classroom. Mayberry and Lazarus (2002) summarize the major benefits for those who co-teach as the following:

- “Shared responsibility for all students in the room.
- An ongoing collaborative relationship for support.
- Encouragement for trying out new strategies-they can jointly take risks that they might not have taken as individuals.
- Appreciation for the varying kinds of expertise on the team.
A synergy that comes from the joint effort.

The building of strong working relationships by working together in a co-teaching situation.” (p. 43)

**Adverse Effects.**

Disappointment in co-teaching is expressed by some secondary teachers, not because of lack of effort on the part of the teacher, but more so because of lack of experience in how to address issues of support and/or the inability to define the role of both teachers before the students arrive in their classroom (Dieker & Murawski, 2003). Dieker and Murawski also reiterate if teachers try to co-teach in multiple classes without any prior experience, they often find themselves overwhelmed and unwilling to co-teach in the future (p. 10).

According to Meyen et al., (1996) co-teaching is not a comfortable arrangement for all professionals. Issues of sharing responsibility, modifying teaching styles and preferences, and working closely with one another represent serious challenges for some. Students know when team teachers do not get along. They can sense hostility even if the teachers pretend they have an amicable relationship (Keefe et al., 2004).

**Teacher as Practitioner**

As teachers work within the co-teaching paradigm they must both be equally responsible for the “what” and the “how” of teaching. Together, they must agree what will be taught and how the objectives will be addressed to meet the needs of all of the students within their classroom. The combined power of the two teachers must transcend instruction within the classroom that would be typical of a one teacher classroom. High levels of engagement and critical thought are the hallmark of an effective co-teaching classroom (Friend & Cook, 2007).
Based on professional experience, a regular and special educator working collaboratively to design and deliver a lesson to students in both regular and special education in a single workspace can benefit all those involved in the program. Regular and special educators have such different educational backgrounds that to combine the two resources in one classroom can only make for a productive, comprehensive, positive learning environment (Morris, 2006). Friend and Cook (2007) extend this thought by stating the following:

Two qualified professionals can arrange instruction in a number of creative ways to enhance learning options for all students, not just for those with disabilities. All students can have more opportunities to participate actively in their learning and thus instructional intensity is increased. Co-teaching allows teachers to respond effectively to the varied needs of their students, lowers the teacher-student ratio, and expands the professional expertise that can be directed to those needs. (p. 117)

**Principal Beliefs**

Many principals are aware of the concept and importance of inclusion; however, do they have an understanding of the support needed to give the process an opportunity to succeed? According to Bergman and McLaughlin (1978), nearly every study of teacher performance and satisfaction finds that administrative support is essential to teachers’ success. Implementation of the co-teaching model requires a change in the way teachers teach and interact with each other in the classroom. It is the principal’s responsibility to support these changes. The principal’s support is necessary in order for the co-teaching model to be effective. Unfortunately, Dieker and Murawski (2003) report that change is difficult, especially at the secondary level. However, when changes are implemented with thought, time and planning, co-teaching can ultimately be beneficial for all students.
According to Friend and Cook (2007), administrators play a key role in co-teaching success by clarifying expectations, arranging shared planning time and appropriate schedules, as well as assisting teachers in problem solving when dilemmas occur. If co-teaching is to be a feasible service delivery option, it is necessary to ensure teachers’ schedules are coordinated and that teachers with particularly challenging groups of students are paired with a co-teacher. Facilitating problem solving as well as rewarding co-teachers efforts is crucial. As co-teaching partnerships mature, administrators must clarify the standard in the school that any teachers may be asked to co-teach, not just the individuals who volunteer.

**Benefits of co-teaching for students.**

According to Mayberry and Lazarus (2002) co-teaching has a number of benefits, which outweigh the challenges.

It is a practice that should be supported by teachers, administrators, and families. The model provides students with special needs the extra support they need to succeed in the general education classroom. Further, the model prevents the general education teacher from feeling like he or she has been given the students who need special assistance without receiving any assistance him- or herself. (p. 43)

The strongest argument is for the benefit that inclusion affords to the included child with a disability (Bailey & du Plessis, 1997), as well as students without disabilities. For example, two qualified professionals can arrange instruction in a number of creative ways to enhance learning options for all students, not just for those with disabilities. All students can have more opportunities to actively participate in their learning, which will increase instructional intensity (Friend & Cook, 2007). The active engagement of students is paramount to student achievement.
Adverse Effects.

Concerns about teacher workload, stress, and training, as well as resources, are issues that plague the co-teaching model (Bailey & du Plessis, 1997). For example, Mayberry and Lazarus (2002) reiterate when one teacher is absent; a substitute should be obtained to preserve the co-teaching model. Further, if the administrator calls out one or more of the teachers to cover another room in the building, the co-teaching classroom will suffer and the teachers will become resentful. Administrators must also respect class size if the co-teachers are willing to take on classes with ten or twelve students who have been identified as having special needs. If they are given the same number of students as two teachers who are not co-teaching, the purpose of co-teaching is diluted or lost.

Co-Teaching

Co-teaching has been described by many (Bailey & du Plessis, 1997; Bertin, 1996; Burrello, Burrello & Friend, 1996; Dieker & Murawski, 2003; Friend, 2007; Friend & Cook, 2007; Keefe et al., 2004; Kloo & Zigmund, 2008; Mayberry & Lazarus, 2002; Meyen et al., 1996; Morris, 2006) as a process which involves two professionals, one a general educator and the other a special educator, who deliver instruction to a diverse or blended group of students in a single classroom. This single classroom will address the needs of students with disabilities as well as students who may be at risk for failure that may, or may not, be under the special education umbrella (Mayberry & Lazarus, 2002; Dieker & Murawski, 2003; Friend & Cook, 2007). Burrello et al., (1996) extend co-teaching to include speech language therapists and para-professionals, but only in a limited way.
Rationale for co-teaching.

Several reasons why the co-teaching model is considered a viable practice for inclusion in the secondary school setting have been identified (Meyen et al., 1996; Mayberry & Lazarus, 2002):

- Increases instructional options for students with a shared responsibility for all students in the room.
- Improves program rigor and continuity by encouraging new strategies within the classroom by taking risks as a joint venture.
- Reduces the stigma of being identified as a student with special needs.
- Increases support for teachers, para-professionals and service specialists that is an ongoing collaborative relationship.
- Offers a variety of expertise due to multiple educators working together as one.
- Fosters a connectedness and family like atmosphere that comes from collaborative efforts.

Benefits of co-teaching for teachers.

There are many benefits that come from a co-teaching model. Whenever two teachers are afforded the opportunity to mesh their expertise into one, which allows them to not only teach the class, but become more prescriptive in their instruction, there is great benefit that is transmitted to the students. It is from this perspective that a primary role of co-teaching is to increase opportunities for students to be successful by utilizing multiple instructional strategies to engage students (Meyen et al., 1996).

According to Schulte et al. (1990), although research supporting the value of co-teaching is limited, some research (Klingner et al., 1998; Rea et al., 2002; Hunt et al., 2003; Magiera &
Zigmond, 2004; Morris, 2006) is beginning to emerge demonstrating greater academic gains for students when their teachers receive consultation and participate in co-teaching. One way of understanding this part of the co-teaching rationale is to think of co-teaching as an opportunity to increase the instructional options for all students. For example, although co-teaching occurs because students with disabilities need support services in a general education classroom, gifted and talented students may also benefit because more options can be created for individualizing their learning. Likewise, students who struggle to learn but who are not eligible for special education or other support services gain the benefit of a reduced student-teacher ratio and the instructional variety that co-teaching brings.

With two teachers in the classroom students are often more involved in the learning process simply due to the fact that instead of having one teacher in the room there are now two teachers in the general education classroom. The fact that there are two teachers in the classroom also lowers the student to teacher ratio, which allows the teachers to give more individual help to the students who need it the most. In a regular education classroom, often times a student with a disability might have had to leave the classroom for special services. With the co-teaching model the student with a disability, as well as the regular education student, receives specialized instruction within the classroom. According to Meyen et al. (1996), “there are two types of program fragmentation which may be reduced through co-teaching: temporal continuity of the students’ learning opportunities and curricular continuity of the instruction and instructional process” (p. 159). In other words, in the co-teaching classroom, student learning will be part of a fluid process, which will enhance their opportunities for growth within the classroom.
Design.

Co-teaching is at its best when the entire school community is committed to providing all students with the education they are entitled to. In effect, co-teaching should become a part of the school’s culture (Barth, 1990). According to Bolman and Deal (2008):

An organization’s culture is revealed and communicated through its symbols. Symbols take many forms in organizations. Myth, vision, and values imbue an organization with purpose and resolve. Vision turns an organization’s core ideology or sense of purpose, into an image of the future. (pp. 254-255)

Culture is a process of reality construction that allows people to see and understand particular events, actions or situations in meaningful ways.

In addition to making co-teaching a part of the school culture, according to Morris (2006), schools need to ensure that parents are educated as to how a co-taught class will be structured and what the difference is between a co-taught class and a typical regular education classroom. Lines of communication need to be created among students, parents, teachers, co-teachers, support staff, and administrators in order for a district to design and implement a co-teaching program (pp. 29-30). This is important because co-teaching is a collaborative effort, with everyone working towards the same means to an end. “In this model, students are ‘ours’ not ‘yours or mine’” (Mayberry & Lazarus, 2002, p. 42). It is important for everyone involved to work collaboratively. According to Lick (2005), “To create a school culture based on collaborative inquiry, it is essential to generate synergy that occurs when the teamwork of a group is working so well that the group’s efforts produce the maximum results from the available resources” (as cited in Ontario Principals’ Council, 2009, p. 12).
**Personnel.**

When determining how a co-teaching model will emerge within the high school setting, several factors must be taken into consideration: First, the concept of co-teaching must be introduced to the school staff. It should be introduced as part of the inclusive process and although not everyone will co-teach every year, most general education and special education teachers may participate in the co-teaching model at one point and time in their career (Friend & Cook, 2007).

Second, not only do teachers have a role in the co-teaching model, so do the para-professionals who will work with the regular education teachers in their classrooms. Paraprofessionals, as well as the special education teachers will need to discuss their roles and responsibilities with the regular education teacher. Each one of these contributors to the co-teaching model will need to be aware of who is responsible for directing their work on a day-to-day basis (Friend & Cook, 2007).

Third, as the regular education teacher and the special education teacher or the regular educator and the para-professional interact within the classroom it is vital the students see there is a partnership between the two (Burrello et al.,1996; Friend, 2007). According to Friend and Cook (2007), “Co-teachers should be sure to develop the habit of using ‘we’ language – ‘our students,’ ‘our classroom,’ the lessons we planned” (p. 119). It is crucial to the implementation of the co-teaching program that both teachers collaborate with one another concerning the ongoing instruction within the classroom (Morris, 2006; Burrello et al., 1996).

Fourth, the teachers’ personalities, attitudes toward special education, and their professional views or philosophies, play a very important role in developing a relationship with a co-teaching partner. Feedback to one’s co-teaching partner so that the relationship can grow and
mutual respect can be gained is necessary. As part of that feedback the sharing of classroom management style is crucial so that daily routines and procedures can be defined within the classroom (Vance, 2001, as cited in Morris, 2006, p. 33).

Last and most important is time for the co-teachers and/or para-professional staff to periodically meet to discuss the program, both its successes and its difficulties (Friend & Cook, 2007). Harris and Harvey (2000), (as cited in Morris, 2006) confirm that common planning time is critical for the success of a co-teaching model. They believe when teachers have time to develop/prepare daily lessons with collaborative instructional objectives and define grading parameters it allows the co-teaching partners to gain a sense of ownership, which will allow the program to be successful. According to Burrello et al., (1996), “For every problem, there is at least one solution”3. Critical thinking and brainstorming is essential to maximize the co-teaching design. It is important, however, to take one final step to ensure success. That step is making sure there is a tool for evaluation in place. The evaluation tool can be formal or informal, regardless of which is used, teachers should conference with their administrators at the end of the school year to reflect on their experiences and discuss the needs of the program (Bertin, 1996).

**Instructional Considerations**

Six main strategies, considered the foundation of co-teaching instruction, are identified (Friend & Cook, 2007; Burrello et al., 1996). Each of these strategies is briefly described below. Co-teachers are encouraged to inter-mix the use of all six identified strategies in order to account for stagnation within instruction and optimize the capacity for children to learn.

**Strategy One: One teaching, one observing.**

In this model, one teacher has primary responsibility for designing and delivering instruction to the entire group while the other takes a more passive role, observing student
behaviors and making notes to support instruction. It is possible to deliver instruction to a large or small group, individual, or another teaching arrangement. The purpose of the observing teacher is to observe students to see if they are actively participating and asking questions. One teaching, one observing requires little planning time and, can provide instructional opportunities for both teachers. The general education teacher is able to identify the appropriateness of a student’s response to instruction and make a determination as to whether or not a particular student response is different from that of his/her peers. Early in the school year the teachers can use one teach, one observe to learn about each other’s teaching styles and become more comfortable with the co-teaching arrangement. This arrangement gives the general education teacher an opportunity to focus on what the students are learning as both teacher and observer are able to inform the instruction and record observations (Burrello et al., 1996).

A possible hindrance to this arrangement can occur if one of the two teachers is used as an assistant, rather than a co-teacher. It is imperative that both teachers have equal responsibility for the instruction within the classroom. The two teachers must reverse their roles from time to time in order to assure this will not happen (Burrello et al., 1996).

Teachers should also have conversations as to exactly what or who needs to be observed and the frequency thereof. During planning time, discussion of the observations and instructional decisions are made based on what has occurred within the classroom. According to Friend and Cook (2007), co-teachers must use a system for recording classroom observations within class lists, seating charts or formal behavioral data forms.

Burrello et al., (1996) also identify an approach called one teach, one drift, which they consider a part of the one teach, one observe strategy. In this approach, one teacher manages the classroom while another teacher circulates around the classroom, answering questions, helping
the students get back on task, or helping the student with their individual work. Bertin (1996) identifies this approach as the lead and support approach. If this approach is used too often, the strategy begins to look like a job share strategy, rather than co-teaching.

**Strategy Two: Station teaching.**

Station teaching, also referred to as the duet approach (Bertin, 1996), requires both teachers to be actively engaged in the instruction of students. Both teachers are responsible for the planning and instruction of the content of the curriculum. Stations are created collaboratively by both teachers for students to work in small groups that rotate from one station to another as is predetermined by the teachers. A third station, created for independent work, peer tutoring or work with a student teacher, para-educator or another individual is utilized within the classroom. Ideally, students would move from station to station. This form of teaching is a recommended review strategy. This instructional delivery method can be advantageous due to differences of teaching styles and abilities of the co-teachers. Each teacher has a clear teaching responsibility. In addition, teachers are able to cover more material due to the small group size. In this arrangement, students can benefit from lower student-teacher ratio, and the integration of students with disabilities within the assigned groups. There is a maximization of equality for both student and teacher (Friend & Cook, 2007). Two of the most common problems in using station teaching concern the amount of noise, movement in the classroom and pacing of the instruction.

**Strategy Three: Parallel teaching.**

Parallel teaching, seen as a way to lower the teacher-student ratio within the classroom, allows the teachers to collaborate on instruction. Each is responsible for delivering that instruction to a heterogeneous group comprised of approximately half of the students in the class,
and as Dieker and Murawski (2003) point out, may be a better option for some lessons. Equal distribution of student diversity is considered when making group assignments. The teachers do not exchange groups because each group acquires the same instruction. Students are placed with a defined purpose in mind to nurture their social skills or even to separate students who are having difficulty within the classroom. It can also serve the purpose of differentiation by allowing one group to have a different requirement than the other, yet both groups will be learning the same content but in different ways. Both teachers must be comfortable with the content of the instruction and the instructional delivery. According to Dieker and Murawski (2003), “students could then return to the large group and teach one another about their newfound and cultural backgrounds as the class progresses, enabling students to see collaboration modeled between two adults with differing experiences” (p. 11).

Parallel teaching gives all students an opportunity to actively participate in class and allows for more creative teaching activities, such as each teacher taking a particular point of view in presenting a topic or issue, orientation of the students to this viewpoint, and bringing the students back together for large-group instruction. If one group of students has significantly different instruction from the other, it will be difficult to make judgments about student mastery. It is extremely important that both teachers know the material equally well. Students, especially at the secondary level where grade point average is a very important component of a student’s education, may complain that the disparity leads to unfairness during assessments (Friend & Cook, 2007).

**Strategy Four: Alternative teaching.**

In alternative teaching, one teacher works with a small group of students while the other instructs the large group in some content or activity, that the small group can afford to miss. The
small group is formed for purposes of re-teaching, pre-teaching, or enrichment as well as a need for further differentiation, to include remediation or even gifted instruction allowing for a greater range of learning needs (Dieker & Murawski, 2003). Alternative teaching is a strategy for providing highly intensive instruction within the general education classroom. Another purpose is to ensure that all students in a class receive opportunities to interact with a teacher in a small group, meeting individual needs and allowing students who normally would have been pulled out of the classroom for instruction, to stay in the classroom with their peers. Both teachers must take responsibility for the small group at various times throughout instruction. The greatest risk in alternative teaching is that students with disabilities may begin to feel targeted by repeated grouping for pre-teaching, re-teaching or enrichment. A segregated environment may result if the purposes of the group are not varied (Friend & Cook, 2007).

**Strategy Five: Teaming.**

In teaming, both teachers are responsible for planning, instruction and monitoring student work, whether students are working as individuals or in groups. This approach requires the highest level of trust and commitment of the co-teachers. Co-teachers who team frequently report that it results in synergy, or one brain and two bodies, enhancing student participation and energizing them as professionals, sometimes even prompting them to try innovative techniques and activities that they would not have tried alone. Some co-teachers consider teaming the most rewarding approach. Of the six co-teaching approaches, teaming requires the greatest level of mutual trust and commitment (Friend & Cook, 2007).

**Strategy Six: One teaching, one assisting.**

In this model, one teacher actively gives instruction to the class while the other supports the instructional process by walking around the room assisting students who need help, have
questions or need re-direction. There is little planning, if any, necessary for this form of co-teaching. It also gives special services providers an opportunity, in situations in which they may not feel competent, to lead instruction (Friend & Cook, 2007).

Unfortunately, one teaching, one assisting is fraught with problems and should be used sparingly in the classroom. It sometimes becomes the sole or primary co-teaching approach in many classrooms, particularly when planning time is scarce. The classroom teacher generally takes the lead role, and the special services provider becomes an assistant. Not only does this deny an active teaching role to the special educator but it also undermines that person’s credibility, especially with the older students. Second, a classroom in which one teacher continuously moves around the room during large group instruction can be distracting to students (both visually and auditory). Third, this co-teaching approach includes the risk of encouraging students to become dependent learners. When one teacher is always available to help on student demand, students who crave adult attention but who should be capable of doing assigned work may develop a habit of saying that they cannot do a certain task in order to get extra attention and assistance. Co-teachers need to be very alert to this possibility. If they have students needing adult attention, they should give the attention needed, but not at the cost of a student’s independent learning skills (Friend & Cook, 2007).

According to Friend and Cook (2007),

Educators can take advantage of the positive aspects of this approach and avoid the negative aspects by limiting their use of this approach and by ensuring that when it is used, each teacher leads instruction and each teacher takes the role of assisting. Co-teachers should use this approach only when it will not distract students from their
learning and when no other co-teaching approach seems appropriate for the instructional situation. (p. 128)

Variations.

Variations on Friend and Cook’s (2007) co-teaching model have emerged as well. Bertin (1996) refers to this method as “speak and chart”. One distinct difference in the “speak and chart” method of noteworthiness is the fact that while one teacher is leading the discussion the other is giving visual reinforcement of the discussion. Klingner et al. (1998) used the strategies of parallel teaching, station teaching, and team teaching, and enhanced the concept of one-teaching, one assisting by using the assisting teacher to provide brief intensive instruction to individuals, pairs or groups of students as well.

According to Walther-Thomas et al. (2000), a more recent variation used the strategies of parallel teaching, station teaching, and alternative teaching and replaced the one teaching-one assisting strategy with a strategy they termed interactive teaching. In the interactive teaching form two teachers share whole group instruction, alternating the role of instructional leader for five to ten minutes allowing both teachers to serve as the primary educator (Walther-Thomas et al., 2000).

Yet another option identified by Kloog and Zigmond (2008) is to use a co-teaching framework, which describes the number of lessons, given at the same time, by two fully certified teachers in a classroom. An advantage of this alternative framework is that it focuses on the number of instructional groups in a co-taught class and not on the nature of the interactions between the two teachers. It recognizes team teaching as just one of several configurations in which only one lesson is occurring, and not as the ideal model of co-teaching.
Summary

As with any model or strategy, variations continue to surface as teachers become more comfortable with their roles. Co-teaching demonstrates a collaborative approach to teaching that can be beneficial to all students if presented in a well-implemented design process. However, each classroom is unique and what will work well in one classroom, may not necessarily work well in another.

As the design of co-teaching continues to evolve, students’ needs will be able to be addressed in better ways. Teachers willing to enter a collaborative co-teaching relationship need to receive education on the different models and approaches of co-teaching (Morris, 2006). According to Dieker and Murawski (2003),

When co-teaching is done in a purposeful manner, the teaching team considers not only the needs of students with disabilities, but also the needs of all students. As the diversity of our nation’s classroom continues to expand, models such as co-teaching are needed at all levels to ensure the success of each student, especially at the secondary level where the greatest learning gaps occur. (p. 11)

It is incumbent upon researchers to continue to analyze the co-teaching classroom and how the partnerships between teachers and school administrators evolve. This has implications for the students and teachers within the co-teaching classroom and educational leadership in general.
CHAPTER 3

Methodology

This study explored the co-teaching classroom in secondary school settings, using an embedded multi-case study design. The embedded multi-case study pulls together data from several different case studies in an attempt to answer a specific set of research questions or to shed light on a particular phenomenon. According to Yin (1994), the case study has a distinct advantage, in comparison to other research strategies when “a ‘how’ or ‘why’ question is being asked about a contemporary set of events over which the investigator has little or no control” (p. 9). In this type of case study, the units (co-teaching classrooms) to be analyzed are embedded within the selected schools (Yin, 2003, p. 40). This study’s design is considered to be an embedded multi-case design due to choosing two cases (two high schools), each with a principal and two co-teaching classrooms, one reading and one math. According to Yin (2009),

Although all designs can lead to successful case studies, when you have the choice, multiple-case designs may be preferred over single-case designs. Even if you can do a ‘two-case’ case study, your chances of doing a good case study will be better than using a single-case design. Single case designs are vulnerable if only because you will have put ‘all your eggs in one basket’. More important, the analytic benefits from having two (or more) cases may be substantial. (pp. 60-61)

Herriott and Firestone (1983) go on to explain evidence from multiple cases is often considered more compelling, and the overall study is therefore regarded as being more robust.

In this study, information was primarily gathered through interviews with practicing teachers and principals. The study included both regular and special education teachers working in four co-teaching classrooms (two co-teaching classrooms from each school) and the principals
of the two buildings in which these classrooms are located. Interviews; classroom observations; examination of documents, such as letters, memos and/or e-mails, which are pertinent to communication between the teachers and principals in the selected co-teaching classrooms; and field note analysis were utilized.

Research questions addressed in this study include:

1a. What beliefs do principals hold regarding co-teaching?
1b. How do these beliefs translate into leadership practices in relation to the co-teaching classroom?
2a. What beliefs do co-teachers hold regarding co-teaching?
2b. How do these beliefs translate into instructional practices in the co-teaching classroom?
3. To what extent do principal and teacher beliefs regarding co-teaching align with their leadership and/or instructional practices?

Logic of and Rationale for Approach

In order to answer the questions posed above, the utilization of a qualitative approach was necessary. Kirk and Miller (1986) define qualitative research as “social, cosmopolitan, and above all, objective” (p. 10). The qualitative approach contends that to understand the current conditions of education, one must describe and analyze in an ecologically valid manner the values, behaviors, settings and interactions of participants in educational settings (Rist, 1982). In this study, ecologic validity is gained by going into the co-teaching classroom and observing what is occurring in that classroom. When educators choose to use co-teaching as an inclusive practice, they must not only know the options for co-teaching itself, but must also be aware of how the beliefs and actions/interactions of teachers and principals inform the design. This will
allow them to make informed decisions as to the usefulness of the co-teaching classroom as it applies to them.

The qualitative researcher’s goal is to obtain a better understanding of human behavior and experience. Qualitative researchers also seek to grasp the processes by which people construct meaning and describe what those meanings are (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). As a qualitative researcher, I asked the question, “what is going on [within the co-teaching classroom]”? (Rist, 1982, p. 440).

Wolf and Tymitz (1976-1977) describe this process of data collection and interpretation as “naturalistic inquiry which attempts to present ‘slice-of-life’ episodes which are documented through natural language representing as closely as possible how people feel, what they know, how they know it, and what their concerns, beliefs, perceptions, and understandings are” (p. 12). The research questions posed in this study directly relate to the “slice-of-life” episodes involving the co-teaching classroom. For example, teachers were observed as they engaged students in the teaching and learning process. How the teachers work together to present the information vital for their students’ understanding and interpretation is a slice-of-life within the co-teaching classroom. This study also included interviews with principals. How the principals’ thoughts and understandings about co-teaching interact with the teachers’ thoughts and understandings is also representative of a slice-of-life episode.

**Research Design**

To better understand principal and teacher beliefs and actions regarding the co-teaching classroom, I used a four-phase qualitative research process as described by Kirk and Miller (1986). This process includes: an ordered sequence of invention, discovery, interpretation, and explanation (p. 60). Invention denotes a phase of preparation, or research design, which
produces a plan of action. The discovery phase, which involves observation and measurement, or data collection, produces information. Interpretation denotes a phase of evaluation, or analysis that produces understanding. Finally, explanation denotes a phase of communication, or packaging that produces a message.

**Site and Sample Selection**

In this case, the phenomenon of interest was teachers’ and principals’ beliefs and actions regarding the design and implementation of the co-teaching classroom. Merriam (1998) tells us the key is understanding the phenomenon of interest from the participants’ perspectives, not the researcher’s. This is sometimes referred to as the emic or insider’s perspective. In this case study, the teachers and principals were the key to my understanding of the co-teaching classroom. The real world situation in this case was the context in which the co-teaching classroom exists.

The teachers and principals who participated in this study currently work within secondary schools, which utilize the co-teaching model as a means of inclusive practice. These schools are located within a Pennsylvania Intermediate Unit (IU). IUs are defined as organizations or entities which serve a given geographic area’s educational needs. Intermediate units were created by the Pennsylvania General Assembly in 1971. The state’s goal is for IUs to meet student and community needs in a cost effective manner by providing services best offered on a regional basis. This includes special education and technical education provided to both public and non-public schools. Each intermediate unit has its own board of school directors that is composed of board member representatives from public school districts in its service area (July 5, 2009, paiu.org).

This study included two secondary schools within two school districts in the selected IU. The IU utilized in this study was selected due to the close proximity to the school in which I
currently work. Two co-teaching classrooms from each school were utilized. All districts, seventeen in total, within the IU, were contacted initially to discuss their interest in participating in this study. Initial contact was made with the co-teaching coordinator at the Intermediate Unit. The IU coordinator then contacted the districts in the IU who presently have co-teaching arrangements within their secondary school system. The IU contact received permission from two of the districts to forward their contact information. Upon receipt of the contact information, I made personal telephone calls to the Superintendent of Schools in the two districts and introduced the study to ensure the district met the criteria of having an established co-teaching classroom at the secondary level. The premise of the study, time demands, and potential risks were explained, and the superintendent of each respective school district contacted the secondary school building principal to obtain permission to conduct the study in his building.

The two high school principals were given a set of three questions to answer via e-mail. They were:

1. How many years have you served as the building principal?
2. Were co-teaching classrooms in existence at your building before you became principal?
3. Have you had any training on co-teaching as an inclusionary practice?

The responses to the first two questions allowed me to conclude the two high school principals chosen were important to this research because they are the building principals who started the co-teaching initiative within their respective buildings. Data from the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) also showed that at the beginning of their tenure as high school principals, during the 2004-2005 school year, there was not a single student with an individualized education plan (IEP) within these two schools, who was proficient or advanced on the Pennsylvania State assessment (PSSA). All had basic or below basic indicators. The most
recent data, for the 2009-2010 school year, as cited on the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) website, showed some students with IEPs are now deemed proficient or advanced on the PSSA assessment - eighteen and fifteen percent in Math achievement, as well as eight and five percent in Reading achievement respectively. It is important to note that for the purposes of this study, it was not my intent to establish a cause/effect relationship between co-teaching and improved test scores; however, this improvement in scores was of interest to me and contributed to the selection of the two schools for this study.

The two high school principals in this study were asked to identify the co-teaching pairs in math and reading, which exist in each of their schools. These were teachers who co-taught at least one class during the school day. If more than one co-teaching pair in math and reading existed within a particular school, I chose the four co-teaching pairs, two from each school. One of the schools had two co-teaching pairs to choose from in each subject, the other did not. From that school, I chose the co-teaching pairs which were similar in subject matter to the co-teaching pairs in the other school. The principals gave me permission to contact the identified teachers to invite them to participate in the study.

**Relationship Building**

Relationship building was an important part of the research process. Bogdan and Biklen (1998) encourage researchers to “make your interests known and seek the cooperation of those you will study” (p. 74). They assert that one must “communicate clearly to those with whom you spend time that you are there to learn from them how they feel about what they do and what they see as strengths and weaknesses” (p. 218). Whyte (1984) also describes the importance of building a relationship, getting to know each other, and putting the subject at ease. This was
particularly important to this research in order to obtain information, which is authentic to the case, not fake or contrived. A rapport was built with the teachers and principals by engaging in meaningful dialogue, which gave them an understanding of the case study itself and of my intent in conducting this study.

**Potential Limitation of Using Purposive Sampling in this Study**

As previously described, the study used purposive sampling to identify the sample of schools and classrooms. McMillan (2008) argues that the selected sample may not be representative of a specific population, and the results of the study are dependent on the unique characteristics of the sample studied (p. 123). This limitation was taken into consideration when the results of the study were analyzed.

**Research Strategy/Instrumentation**

As previously described, teachers and principals in two secondary schools participated in this study. A complete overview of the steps involved in this study are outlined below:

**Steps in the Methodology**

1. Identified two (2) secondary schools.

2. a. Contacted the principals and asked them to identify the co-teaching classrooms in each of their schools which met the criteria. (Math/Reading co-teaching classrooms)

   b. Asked each principal to recommend one math and one reading co-teaching classroom to participate in the study. If more than one co-teaching pair was recommended, I chose the co-teaching pair which was most similar in content to the other.

3. Sent welcome letters and informed consent forms to each participant.

4. Received consent forms.
5. E-mailed the participants clarifying any further questions, and setting date, time and location for the initial interview.

6. Conducted initial principal interview in each school (45-60 minutes).

7. Conducted initial teacher interview, both regular and special education teacher, from each classroom (45-60 minutes).

8. Conducted initial classroom observation for each co-teaching classroom (1 class period). An observation guide for each class was created (see Appendix D).

9. Participants reviewed field notes/transcripts.

10. Conducted 2nd principal interview in each school (45-60 minutes).

11. Conducted 2nd teacher interview, both regular and special education from each classroom (45-60 minutes).

   **Note:** Additional interviews were conducted on an as needed basis.

12. Conducted 2nd classroom observation for each co-teaching classroom (1 class period).

13. Participants reviewed field notes/transcripts.

14. Conducted data analysis.

   As outlined above, each participant received a welcome letter (see Appendix A) and an informed consent form (see Appendix B) fully detailing all aspects of the research process and listing the requirements for participating in the study. Upon receipt of the signed informed consent forms, the participants were contacted, asking them if they had any further questions, and setting a date, time and location for the initial interview. Following the initial interview an observation of each co-teaching classroom ensued. A second interview was conducted to clarify any statements made in the first interview or any questions, which arose during the classroom observation. Principal interviews were held on the same day as teacher interviews.
Data Collection Techniques

In this study, interviews were conducted with teachers, both regular and special education, practicing in a co-teaching classroom, and their building principals. According to Bogdan and Biklen (1998), “an interview is a purposeful conversation, usually between two people but sometimes involving more that is directed by one in order to get information from the other” (p. 93). “The interview is used to gather descriptive data in the subjects’ own words so that the researcher can develop insights on how subjects interpret some piece of the world” (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998, p. 94).

A structured interview, which is concerned with general ideas about the co-teaching classroom, was incorporated (see Appendix C). The individuals chosen to be interviewed were teachers identified by their respective building principal as teachers who co-taught at least one class (math or reading) during the school day. Those interviewed were asked open-ended questions pertaining to their co-teaching practices, which directly related to the research questions in this study. Open-ended questions pertaining to co-teaching practices, which directly related to the research questions in this study, were answered by each of the building principals as well. Rubin and Rubin (1995) call this type of interview guided conversation. Mischler (1991) states: “The researcher, in this case, encourages the subject to talk in the areas of interest and then probes more deeply, picking up on the topics and issues the respondent initiates. The subject plays a stronger role in defining the content of the interview and the direction of the study in this type of interview” (p. 95). According to Bogdan and Biklen (1998), “a key strategy for the qualitative interviewer is to avoid as much as possible questions that can be answered by ‘yes’ or ‘no’” (p. 95).
In addition to the interviews, a minimum of two classroom observations for each co-teaching pair were conducted. The purpose of the classroom observation was to observe the teachers in action in an attempt to assess the extent to which the teachers enact or practice their beliefs regarding co-teaching in the classroom. According to Patton (1987), observations are the means to validate what is reported in interviews. According to Yin (1994), “By making a field visit to the case study ‘site’, you are creating the opportunity for direct observations. Assuming that the phenomena of interest have not been purely historical, some relevant behaviors or environmental conditions will be available for observation” (p. 86). I chose direct observation as a means of confirming the existence of the co-teaching model as well as the espoused versus actual happenings within the co-teaching partnership. This helped to confirm the information provided during teacher interviews. Direct observation of the building principal was not necessary to confirm the existence of the co-teaching model; however, as I was analyzing the data from the initial principal interviews, I looked for evidence within the teacher interviews and/or classroom observation documentation, which would confirm what the principal espoused, was actually enacted. If there was no evidence readily apparent, further probing was conducted through the use of a second, semi structured interview with both principal and teachers.

A second, semi structured, interview was conducted with both teachers and principals after the initial observation, to clarify responses from the first interview as well as answer any questions that emerged after the initial classroom observation. Classroom observations were not discussed with the principal. However, if further clarification was necessary, questions regarding what was observed were asked in the second principal interview in order to probe further. According to James et al. (2008), this type of interview maps out pertinent questions, including probing sub questions. “Semi structured interviews allow the opportunity to digress from the
primary question and probe a response to understand more clearly what is seen as a provocative remark on the part of the interviewee” (James et al., 2008, p. 73). The use of more than one interview is important because “interviews are cumulative, each interview building on and connecting to the other” (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998, pp. 95-96). All interviews were tape recorded, with permission from the interviewees (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). Field notes were also taken during the interviews and analyzed at a later time.

A second classroom observation was utilized to confirm the information from both interviews and the initial observation. According to Yin (1994), “A common question about recording interviews has to do with the use of tape recorders. Whether to use such devices is in part a matter of personal preference. The tapes certainly provide a more accurate rendition of any interview than any other method” (p. 86). Documents (e.g., e-mails, memos) showing communication to and through the participants, which relate to the practice of co-teaching, were used as confirmation of practice.

**Data Analysis Strategies**

According to Huberman and Miles (2002):

Qualitative data analysis is essentially about detection, and the tasks of defining, categorizing, theorizing, explaining, exploring and mapping are fundamental to the analyst’s role. The methods used for qualitative analysis therefore need to facilitate such detection, and to be of a form which allows certain functions to be performed. These functions will vary depending on the research questions being addressed. (p. 309)

Defining data analysis even further, Bogdan and Biklen (1998) state: “data analysis is the process of systematically searching and arranging the interview transcripts, field notes, and other materials that you accumulate to increase your own understanding of them and to enable you to
present what you have discovered to others” (p. 157). According to Merriam (1998), “the right way to analyze data in a qualitative study is to do it simultaneously with data collection. Data that have been simultaneously analyzed while being collected are both parsimonious and illuminating” (p. 162).

During the interview process, I not only took notes, but also analyzed the information shared and redirected questions as needed in order to come to a thorough understanding of the interview responses. After the interview data is collected, Bogdan and Biklen (1998) remind us to “regularly review your field notes and plan to pursue specific leads in your next data-collection session” (p. 161). These notes were shared only with individual respondents. Confidentiality and anonymity are also essential, thus both were maintained by presenting the information in such a way as to not reveal an individual’s identity. The information from the teacher interviews was used to define the classroom observation protocol. This information guided me as I worked to confirm or disconfirm teachers’ espoused beliefs versus their enacted beliefs.

Bogdan and Biklen (1998) emphasize the importance of searching through the data for regularities and patterns as well as for topics the data cover, followed by writing down words and phrases to represent the topics and patterns. These words and phrases are coding categories. They are a means of sorting the descriptive data the researcher has collected so that material bearing on a given topic can be physically separated from other data. Some coding categories form while collecting the data. These coding categories should be written down for future use. In this study, data were sorted into the identified categories as they emerged. As I began to sift through and make sense of the information collected throughout the study, codes were established and revised as necessary. Information from the classroom observations, field notes,
and any e-mail documents which gave pertinent information to the study were also part of the descriptive data which were sorted into the coding categories.

Corbin and Strauss (2008) define coding as “taking raw data and raising it to a conceptual level” (p. 66). They also make the following analogy: “A researcher can think of coding as ‘mining’ the data, digging beneath the surface to discover the hidden treasure contained within the data” (p. 66). Miles and Huberman (1994) recommend beginning with a list of codes derived from the literature, then revising the codes as the researcher compares the codes against actual data. To assist with this process, NVIVO 8 qualitative data software, which marks codes and tallies the location of coded passages, was utilized.

**Reliability and Validity**

According to Kirk and Miller (1986), objectivity in qualitative research is partitioned into two components: reliability and validity. They come to an understanding that “loosely speaking, ‘reliability’ is the extent to which a measurement procedure yields the same answer however and whenever it is carried out; ‘validity’ is the extent to which it gives the correct answer” (p. 19). Yin (2009) elaborates:

The general way of approaching the reliability problem is to make as many steps operational as possible and to conduct research as if someone were always looking over your shoulder. A good guideline for doing case studies is to conduct research so that an auditor could in principle repeat the procedures and arrive at the same results. (p. 45)

Following these guidelines, I defined each step taken in order to operationalize the study. The steps outlined helped to establish reliability and validity for the study.

Accurate, comprehensive and detailed interview transcripts also significantly increase reliability. According to McMillan (2008), “One of the most common analytical techniques to
enhance the credibility of a qualitative study is triangulation” (p. 296). According to Bogdan and Biklen (1998), the term triangulation “was first borrowed in the social sciences to convey the idea that to establish a fact you need more than one source of information” (p. 104). Denzin and Lincoln (2003) identify four basic types of triangulation: data triangulation, investigator triangulation, theory triangulation, and methodological triangulation. Data triangulation is the use of a variety of data sources in a study. Investigator triangulation is the use of several different researchers or evaluators. Theory triangulation is the use of multiple perspectives to interpret a single set of data. Methodological triangulation is the use of multiple methods to study a single problem. The type of triangulation utilized in this study was data triangulation.

James et al. (2008) further substantiate triangulation by instructing us to use a variety of research methods to compare diverse sources of data pertaining to a specific research problem or question. This also helps to enhance the validity of the results (p. 60). Yin (1994) adds credence to this process: “The use of multiple sources of evidence in case studies allows an investigator to address a broader range of historical, attitudinal, and behavioral issues” (p. 92).

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2003),

Validity in qualitative research has to do with description and explanation and whether or not the explanation fits the description. In other words, is the explanation credible? In addition, qualitative researchers do not claim that there is only one way of interpreting an event. There is no one ‘correct’ interpretation. (p. 69)

Interviews are critical to enhancing the validity of the data collected as part of this study. Interviews permit the researcher to tap into the experience of others in their language, utilizing their value and belief framework (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). The interview protocol was developed carefully to obtain the essential information that allowed the respondents to express their beliefs
and actions as they related to their teaching practices within the co-teaching classroom, as well as what role their principal’s beliefs and actions played in influencing the co-teaching design within their classroom. At the end of the interview, both teacher and principal, I summarized what had been said to check for clarity and accuracy.

After review of the participants’ answers to the interview questions and a second classroom observation, I scheduled a second interview of both teachers and principals to probe more extensively into the topics and issues the respondents identified, as well as what I observed (teachers only), utilizing a semi-structured interview approach. Participant review of the transcript from the first interview also occurred prior to the second interview for both teachers and principals. According to Yin (1981):

Rather than serving only as a courtesy to those who have cooperated with the research team, the [transcript] review should be seen as a minimal procedure for validating the data collection process. Though the informants may disagree with the interpretations in the case study, they should not find that the basic facts have been misconstrued. Moreover, they should find that the presentation of facts and interpretations is balanced, i.e., reflects the different perspectives of the participants in the case. (p. 106)

A member check system which asked the participants to review the interview transcripts as well as the classroom observation notes was also used to ensure accuracy of the field notes. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2003), “we may cross-check our work through member checks and audit trails. As a rule, in writing up the narrative, the qualitative researcher must decide what form the member check will take” (p. 69). This study asked the participants to review transcripts from the interviews and observations and report any inaccuracies to me as part of the member check protocol.
Lastly, Yin (1994) presents four tests which are common to all social science methods. They are construct validity, internal validity (not for descriptive or exploratory studies), external validity and reliability (p. 33). Construct and external validity were important in this study. The use of multiple sources of evidence as well as an established chain of evidence applies to construct validity. External validity was achieved by establishing similarities between the cases. In addition to validity concerns, reliability was important to this study. The use of NVIVO 8 allowed me to develop a case study database which provides a chain of evidence that enhances the reliability of the research findings as described by Yin (1994):

Every case study project should strive to develop a formal, presentable database, so that, in principle, other investigators can review the evidence directly and not be limited to the written reports. In this manner, a case study database markedly increases the reliability of the entire case study. (p. 95)

Limitations of the Research Design

Oversimplification of a complex phenomenon.

According to Guba and Lincoln (1981), case studies can oversimplify or exaggerate a situation, leading the reader to erroneous conclusions about the actual state of affairs. Furthermore, they caution readers may think that case studies are accounts of the whole: “That is, they tend to masquerade as a whole when in fact they are but a part of a slice of life” (p. 43).

Individual perceptions.

Researchers must also be concerned about the potential impact of their individual perceptions. According to MacDonald and Walker (1977), “At all levels of the system what people think they’re doing, and what in fact they are doing, may be sources of considerable discrepancy. Any research which threatens to reveal these discrepancies threatens to create
dissonance, both personal and political” (p. 186). In response, I attempted to minimize the impact of such a threat by building a rapport of professionalism, which would help to facilitate growth and understanding of the phenomenon, which, in this case, is how teacher and principal beliefs inform inclusive practice in the secondary classroom through co-teaching.

**Summary**

In this study, information was gathered with the intent of analyzing and interpreting the beliefs and actions of teachers and principals and how the two interact to inform the design of the co-teaching classroom. I did this by using an embedded multi-case design. I chose to use multiple units of analysis, four co-teaching classrooms (two in each school), as well as multiple sites (two high schools), which enabled the exploration of differences within and between the cases. Participant interviews, observations, document analysis and transcript checks were used in order to obtain and triangulate data which enhanced the overall depth and quality of this study (Yin, 2003, p. 99).
CHAPTER 4

Findings

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate how teacher and principal beliefs, actions and interactions, with regard to the co-teaching model, inform inclusive practices in the secondary classroom. Specifically, this study addressed three questions:

1a. What beliefs do principals hold regarding co-teaching?
1b. How do these beliefs translate into leadership practices in relation to the co-teaching classroom?
2a. What beliefs do co-teachers hold regarding co-teaching?
2b. How do these beliefs translate into instructional practices in the co-teaching classroom?
3. To what extent do principal and teacher beliefs regarding co-teaching align with their leadership and/or instructional practices?

Data was collected over a three-month time period during the spring of 2011. The data collected was in the form of multiple interviews with both regular and special education teachers who were assigned to co-teaching classrooms in either the subject areas of math or reading, principal interviews, classroom observations, and a review of relevant documents. Using NVIVO 8 software, the data was categorized into themes. The following categories were utilized for coding purposes:

- Background information on all individual participants.
- Principal beliefs and leadership practices.
- Teacher beliefs and instructional practices.
• Alignment of beliefs and practices.

This study made use of an embedded multi-case design; therefore, the cases are presented individually, followed by a cross-case analysis.

**Case A**

**Site Description**

Site A was a high school within a small, rural school district, which spanned approximately 81 square miles. The district included three elementary buildings, one middle school and one high school. The high school utilized in this study enrolled approximately 475 students in grades 9 - 12. The ethnicity of the student population within the high school was as follows: 93.2% white; 3.1% Hispanic; 2.0% black; 1.4% Asian and .2% Native American. The economically disadvantaged population was 30.1%. Approximately 54 (11%) of the 475 students in grades 9-12 received learning support services. The average student/teacher ratio was slightly more than 13, which indicates there are approximately 13 students for every one teacher in the school.

**Site Participants**

The teachers chosen for this study were identified as co-teaching pairs (one regular education teacher and one special education teacher) in math and reading who co-taught at least one class during the school day. At this particular site, only one pair in each subject met the criteria for inclusion in the study. The principal supplied teachers’ names and they were contacted and asked to participate in the study (see Appendix A & B).

For the purpose of the study, each teacher participant and principal were assigned a number and letter, (i.e. 1a, 1b, 2a, 2b) in order to keep their identities anonymous. The co-teaching pair was identified by the same number (e.g., 1 or 2). The average number of total
teaching experience was slightly more than 10 years. The average number of years in a co-teaching classroom was slightly more than one year, and the average number of years in the co-teaching partnership within this study was one (see Table 1). It is also important to note that the co-teachers in school A were assigned by their principal to co-teach due to the type of class they were assigned to teach and the population of students (the number of IEP versus non-IEP students) in that class. One teacher stated: “I guess any of the applied (non-college preparatory) classes in general were just teamed up as co-teachers”.

Table 1

*Study Participant Years of Teaching*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site A</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Participant</td>
<td>Total Years</td>
<td>Total Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teaching</td>
<td>Co-Teaching</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1A</td>
<td>21 years</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>1 year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1B</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>1 year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2A</td>
<td>6 years</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>1 year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2B</td>
<td>13 years</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>1 year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AVG.</td>
<td>10+ years</td>
<td>1+ years</td>
<td>1 year</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There was one building principal for Site A. He served as building principal for seven years. He acknowledged that there has been very little professional development on the topic of co-teaching during his tenure at this school. Co-teaching classrooms were not present in this building prior to the principal’s employment within the district. This was substantiated by the three initial questions administered to the building principal at the beginning of this study. This information was used in selecting the participating schools. In this building, co-teaching classrooms were assigned to the co-teachers by the principal, and were observed by the building principal on a regular basis through the use of walk-through and formal evaluations, just as any other classroom within the school.

The teachers and the principal were interviewed two times each. The first interview was a structured interview, which was concerned with general ideas about the co-teaching classroom. Those interviewed were asked open-ended questions pertaining to their co-teaching practices, which directly related to the research questions in this study (see Appendix C). Two classroom
observations for each co-teaching pair were also conducted, with the observations occurring after each of two interviews. The purpose of the classroom observation was to validate what was reported through the interview process in regard to the co-teaching classroom. Validation of principal interviews was confirmed through the teacher interviews, classroom observations and/or documents. A semi-structured interview of the teachers and principal was conducted after the initial observation, which clarified responses from the first interview and answered any questions that emerged after the classroom observation. As information was coded and analyzed from the interviews/observations and/or documents provided, it also became necessary to make requests, via e-mail, for further clarification and/or documentation.

**Principal Beliefs**

In exploring the beliefs the principal held in regard to the co-teaching classroom, answers were sought to the following question: What beliefs do principals hold regarding co-teaching? The principal in Case A described the co-teaching model as “best suited for the students and the way our program [and] our curriculum is laid out in the high school.” This was confirmed by teacher 1A who stated she was assigned to co-teach based on the class she was assigned to teach. He also exhibited a strong passion for all students within the school, and believed the primary goal of the co-teaching classroom is student success through the efforts of teacher collaboration, an understanding of student differences, and responding to the needs of all students (those with and without Individualized Education Plans or IEP) within the classroom. Other examples of the principal’s beliefs are presented below:
Strong ideals/beliefs about schooling.

It is very apparent that this principal believed if students require help they will receive the help they need within the co-teaching classroom whether they are a student with an IEP or not. This is evident based on how the principal defined differences between a student with a disability and a regular education student:

“The IEP, that's it. One is labeled, one is not. Most of the students here in one of the co-teaching classes need the help. That's why I tell them [teachers] if they are not labeled it doesn't matter, and they work with them, that's the key. Not all students are labeled, some should be, and some shouldn't be.”

Those differences expressed by the principal were also mirrored by the special education teachers who confirmed that they work with not only the IEP students, but the non-IEP students as well. Teacher 1B stated: “It’s the teachers helping everybody in the classroom, a collective effort.”

Collaboration.

The principal also believed a more coherent relationship between the special education teachers and the regular education teachers exists since instituting the co-teaching classrooms. In his tenure as building principal, he has witnessed increased collaboration as evident in the following statement:

“We seem to have more cohesiveness between the special education department and the rest of the regular education teachers; because there used to be an animosity [between regular education and special education]. I see more regular education teachers doing so much more for the special education students now, than ever before. I really think that is
not just because of mandates; but I think really the co-teachers in there with them, they see what they [special education teachers] are actually doing.”

This was confirmed through teacher interviews. Three of the four co-teachers expressed positively that they have a better understanding of the special education students as well as cohesiveness between the special education and regular education departments. Teacher 1A stated the following: “I would say there is much more communication, interventions happen more quickly.” As evidenced below, this collaboration also extends outside a particular co-teaching classroom to other co-teaching classrooms throughout the school:

“The collaboration between lets them [teacher peers] see, wait we do have a co-teacher, yeah we do, what are you doing in your co-teaching, well this is what we are doing, oh we don't do that, hey that sounds like a pretty good [idea]. Then they start talking amongst one another and that's when, when they do that, that's when things [instructional practices] happen.”

**Understanding student differences.**

The principal also noted, “Teachers helping one another to understand the differences in the students is the key”. He believed the co-teaching classroom affords teachers an opportunity to understand special education in general.

“They [regular education teachers] just see mandates thrown at them all the time and I think by having a co-teacher in there to explain things, look this is the reason that this has to be done like this. They have a better understanding and out of that understanding come[s] the ability to help students succeed.”
Responding to the needs of all students.

This principal also believed the co-teachers work in a more global effort, not in isolation, to meet the needs of all of the students within the co-teaching classroom as exhibited through the role of the special education teacher:

“They know they are there for not just the IEP students. They are there for all of the students. They help out all the kids. Their primary focus is, if there is an IEP student, they are first and then they rotate to other students to help out.”

Both the special education teachers interviewed confirmed their role was to focus primarily on the special education students and then include regular education students who may need help as well.

Principal Leadership Practices

The second question in this study explored the leadership practices exhibited by the principal in relation to the co-teaching classroom. Principal A’s responses helped to answer the following question: How do these beliefs translate into leadership practices in relation to the co-teaching classroom? The principal in Case A exhibited leadership through two lenses, structural and human resource (as defined by Bolman & Deal, 2008); with the two working together to make the best choices possible for the students. Bolman and Deal (2008) discuss the structural frame as putting people in the right roles and relationships, while the human resource frame involves changing people through training, rotation, etc. Bolman and Deal (2008) also state the following:

The human resource approach emphasizes dealing with issues by changing people (through training, rotation, promotion, or dismissal), the structural perspective argues for
putting people in the right roles and relationships. Properly designed, these formal arrangements can accommodate both collective goals and individual differences. (p. 47)

Bolman and Deal (2008) assert that the structural frame is based on six assumptions:

1. “Organizations exist to achieve established goals and objectives.
2. Organizations increase efficiency and enhance performance through specialization and appropriate division of labor.
3. Suitable forms of coordination and control ensure that diverse efforts of individuals and units mesh.
4. Organizations work best when rationality prevails over personal agendas and extraneous pressures.
5. Structures must be designed to fit an organization’s current circumstances.
6. Problems arise and performance suffers from structural deficiencies, which can be remedied through analysis and restructuring.” (p. 47)

The human resource frame is built on core assumptions, as outlined below:

1. “Organizations exist to serve human needs rather than the converse.
2. People and organizations need each other.
3. When the fit between individual and system is poor, one or both suffer.
4. A good fit benefits both.” (p. 122)

In this case, Principal A’s leadership practices are shown through scheduling practices which utilize both the structural and human resource frame; his focus and vision for the co-teaching classroom; the building of relationships and collective capacity through dialogue, the monitoring and evaluation of staff and the affirmation of their accomplishments; and the understanding of
the importance of professional development which focuses on the human resource frame, as evident through the interview process (principal and teachers) as well as classroom observations.

**Scheduling.**

As stated above, when creating the co-teaching assignments, the building principal took into consideration not only the structural aspect of the co-taught classroom, but also the human resources that affected the co-taught classroom. Considerations for classroom demographics and size, as well as what co-teacher would fit well with another co-teacher were made. He stated: “You know, when it [class size] gets [to] four or five IEP students, then, I try to find someone [co-teacher] for them. And then again, you have to look at the students because there may be four of five IEP students in there that are high functioning, that are getting A's & B's. Well then there is no need for a co-teacher. I have to look at the function of the students as well as how many.” He also admitted that each year there will be changes to the schedule and changes to what co-teacher will fit with what co-teacher: “Do they need a co-teacher based on students, based on how their schedules change? It truly depends on the number [of students with IEPs in a regular education classroom]. Both regular education teachers confirmed the placement of special education teachers in their classrooms as co-teachers based on the number of students with IEPs scheduled into the regular education classroom. The co-teaching pairs were notified by the principal as to whether or not the co-teaching classroom would be needed for the next school year due to the number of students with IEPs.

**Vision.**

The principal also had a vision for the co-teaching classroom:

“I want it to be a learning place for the kids. That they are getting the help they need. That's the key for anything. If they are getting the help that they need in the classroom. If
they are not getting the help, if there is bickering, they are not going to get the help that they need. So that's where I need to keep an eye on and I haven't seen that this year so that is good.”

That vision was confirmed by co-teacher 1A who stated:

“Ultimately what we want to do is empower them [students] to want to learn, share their ideas that they are learning with one another and stretch themselves beyond what they think they are capable of. That is the benefits of co-teaching!”

In order to build capacity for that vision, the principal values dialogue. When asked how he engaged teachers in understanding and contributing toward the vision, he stated: “Talking, I mean that’s it. If we don’t talk about it, you don’t know anything is wrong.” Teacher 1B explained when she goes to the principal with questions, he is very supportive.

**Focus.**

The goals and objectives of the school were established in order to meet the needs of all students within the co-taught classroom.

“I get them together and say okay this is what we need. I give them a goal. Here is what we need. Where are we this year? Where were we last year? Where do we want to be at the end of this year? Now we need to find a way to get there. I am not the content knowledge of everything. Okay, I know this is where I would like to be. You are the person who is the expert in that field. How do we get there? Where should I send you if you don't know? Where should I go if we don't know? What should we find out? How can we find this out? Get the experts in and try to get us, here is the point where we want to be, here is where we are, let's find a way to get there and then we work together and try to make it happen.”
As this quote demonstrates, in this school, the focus is truly on the needs of the students. The co-teaching classroom exists as a means to serve the entire student population of the school. According to Principal A, “We chose a co-teaching model because it is best suited for the students and the way our program, our curriculum, is laid out in the high school.”

**Relationship building.**

This principal built relationships within the co-teaching pairs by developing consistency and providing support. In developing consistency in the co-teaching pairs, the principal was very cognizant of the personality factor:

“Personality is a big factor. Nothing else really matters, but if they can't get along they are not going to get along, and that is trial and error. Know that you are going to be co-teaching in something, but I am not sure in what or who with, but that is where the match comes in. That's where it becomes difficult. Who is best suited with this person. I know the personalities, which is good being here, my 7th year. What personality is this person, what personality is this? I can put those together, but I can't put those together because they will be oil and water.”

This was confirmed in an interview with teacher 1B who stated she was placed with her particular co-teacher due to her ability to work with others.

In this school, the principal also provided support for the teachers, as needed, by purposefully connecting peers with each other.

“I also had some of the special education teachers talk at faculty meetings. We have a new special education director. I had her come in and talk about, here are the mandates, and here is what we have to do. That way they are hearing it, not from only me all the time, and not from the special education teacher, but in the classroom and the special
education teacher as well. Here is the IEP, special designed, remember the SDIs [specific designed instruction]? Yes, okay here is what they are. This is what you need and what they are showing is to the teacher what they really need to do in the classroom, not all the fluff. Here is exactly the law, here is what you need. Don't worry about this stuff, that doesn't pertain to you. Show them, and that helps the teacher to understand. I had a lot of light bulbs go on just because of the co-teaching because they are getting it all the time. I have some teachers now that are adapting their own tests, not giving it to the special education teacher and that was the goal. Don't hand it over and say adapt this test. No, you adapt the test because then you know the student better. And that's happened, so that worked.”

**Dialogue.**

Reciprocity and two-way communication was also an important element of dialogue for this principal, as exhibited in the following statement:

“Talking, I mean that's it. If we don't talk about it, you don't know anythings wrong. By listening to them at the end of the year and by bringing them in for their final eval[uation] and asking them okay talk to me about this. What didn't you like? What did you like? Letting me know that so I can try to make it better next year for them and we will go from there.”

Final evaluations were in process at the time of this study.

**Capacity building.**

This principal viewed his role within the co-teaching classroom as a minimal one; however, he continued to build capacity for co-teaching:

“If they [teachers] have any questions, they come to me. I did have a co-teaching
meeting at the beginning of the year. I also ask them if they need anything. If they don't need anything sometimes you just need to leave them alone. Everything is going well, the students are doing well, they are functioning, they are getting along, they are getting the work done, the regular education teacher as well as the special education teacher, there are no problems, okay. If you need me, tell me. Sometimes hands off is better, just wait.”

This approach was confirmed through teacher interviews. Teacher 2A explained they are able to decide how to work the co-teaching partnership. He also explained there were many more interactions with the principal during the initial set up of the co-teaching partnership, but once the co-teachers settled into a routine he has left the classroom to their judgment.

The principal also afforded the teachers latitude within the co-teaching classroom. In allowing the co-teachers to determine what the co-teaching arrangement looks like he enabled them not only to take ownership but also provided opportunities for collective inquiry into instruction, a way of building capacity. He understood that it takes time for the co-teaching partnership to develop and he was willing to allocate the time necessary to create a successful co-teaching partnership.

“They start asking questions of each other, not at me and that's the best part. When I get to sit back and let it happen. I get to take notes, okay that's where we are going, and I can interject when I need to. That takes time and that's developed.”

**Monitoring/evaluating.**

Although the principal played a minimal role in the actual co-teaching process, he did engage teachers in conversations around the definition of student success. He asked:

“What grades did the students get? Did we have to reconvene IEP's because they were failing? How many phone calls were made? All of that's documented, so I check the data.
How is it? How did the students do overall? Did they learn something? Were they able to move on? In each case that was crazy I saw movement. That's where I come in. I say so you don't like this person because why? They are hard. Ok, they think they know everything. Are the kids learning? Yes or no, it is an easy answer, one or the other. That's a big play. If they are getting along, and even if they are not getting along, if the kids are showing success then there is a reason they are showing success. And if I can say, hey look, these three students who were not successful, now they are successful because the two of you were together, hum. And a lot of times, because of the students, that makes the change. And then I put the two of them together and say here you go, here are the problems, let's talk about it and get it out in the open.”

This was confirmed in an interview with one of the special education teachers. When the partnership was not going well discussion ensued both with the principal and the co-teacher in order to help move the partnership forward.

**Situational awareness.**

The building principal was aware of issues, which occurred throughout the co-teaching classrooms, and made adjustments as needed. He noted, “Personality, we found out a couple times that it didn't work so we changed it. Personality is a big factor. Nothing else really matters, but if they can't get along they are not going to get along, and that is trial and error.”

One reservation, which was shared by this principal, was a concern for complacency within the co-teaching classroom. According to the principal,

“Complacency [is a concern], where someone might take advantage and sit back and try to do nothing if they don't have to. Then we also have, you know, if you have an ego. You have someone with an ego, and they love that, because they want to run their class.
So therefore, that complacency will be allowed to a degree, and then it is hidden because if you go in to observe, well that persons doing stuff. It’s kind of hard to catch too, but I think that's part of it, and I don't think I have much of that, but I know there is some.”

The complacency mentioned by the principal was confirmed in one of the co-teaching pairs, both during the second classroom observation and the second interview of teacher 2A. He stated: “I think that you sit back and you get into a certain role for just so long that you kind of just come in and I think that is what has happened here.”

**Affirmation.**

The principal also recognized and celebrated student and teacher accomplishments, as well as difficulties, in making decisions that affect all:

“I have to see how the students did. You made a big impact on those students. So, is there something we can do to fix that [co-teacher’s relationship] because the impact on the students is more important than I getting along with this person? So there is the tight rope.”

**Understanding the importance of professional development.**

He also recognized, in his capacity of being the lead learner and role model, that he too must continue to learn more about co-teaching in order to extend the teachers’ professional growth opportunities:

“I need to learn more. It's non-stop. We also talk about it at administration meetings and our special education director helps us through quite a bit of the new regs [regulations] and so forth with us, and that helps. So between all of us combined we send it to everyone else and that helps.”
Teacher Beliefs

In exploring the belief teachers held in regard to the co-teaching classroom, answers were sought to the following question: *What beliefs do teachers hold regarding co-teaching?* The teachers at Site A believed the following elements are relevant to their district’s co-teaching partnerships: relationships (both student and teacher) and the interactions of those relationships, as well as the structure of the co-teaching classroom itself.

**Relationships.**

In regard to what an effective co-teaching classroom looks like all of the co-teachers in this school made reference to the relationship of the two teachers and the relationships of students. The following are testimonials to these references: “The first thing you have to have is a very good relationship and the kids need to be able to see that you have that.” Another teacher described it in this manner:

“It’s a partnership. Co-teaching is both teachers actually very involved in both the teaching aspect and with the students. So you know they’re both not, it's just not one person teaching and one person just sitting in the back monitoring, but it's both people that work fluently together.”

Another important aspect was the relationship between students receiving and not receiving special education services. As one teacher indicated: “They need to be working together and learning from one another, they need to be interactive.” Another teacher added: “The more that they [special education students] are surrounded by their regular ed [ucation] peers the better.”
Communication and flexibility.

Necessary components of the co-teaching relationship, stressed by the teachers, were communication and flexibility. One teacher stated: “You need to communicate [to each other] clearly. Communication is really important and flexibility is essential.” Flexibility was also stressed by a teacher in the following quote: “You have to make sure that you are able to meet somewhere along the continuum in order to see growth from the kids. This individual’s regular education counterpart also expressed flexibility as being essential. Another stated, “Not only are my kids my kids but they're your kids too. So I want your feedback as much as I hope that you would want mine.” Yet, another teacher described the partnership with the word “mesh”. “Do they [co-teachers] mesh in the classroom; do they work off of each other?” Another talked about teamwork, both teachers being on the same page, and active involvement in teaching.

Role of the principal.

In regard to the role of the principal, the teachers who were interviewed believed the principal is responsible for the structural (scheduling) aspect of the co-teaching classroom as well as for support of their endeavors within the co-teaching classroom. One teacher stated the principal is responsible for the “overall structure” of the classroom. Another presented information in the following way: “I need someone to deal with the mechanics outside of my classroom.”

Three teachers acknowledged there was a trust in the relationship between the co-teachers and with that trust evolved empowerment as exhibited in the following statement: “We are empowered to implement it [co-teaching] in the way we see fits our classroom needs.” Another confirmed: “They [the administrative team] just kind of set it up for us, got it going. But besides that, it's kind of been left up to us how we want to handle it.” Another stated, “He [the principal]
has control of the broader framework but not necessarily the day to day implementation of what we do. We are empowered to determine that."

**Challenges of co-teaching.**

The teachers at Site A also believed the main challenges of co-teaching included class size, which is a structural component, and the development of relationships between the teachers (human resource) for effective implementation of the co-teaching model. In regard to class size, both sets of co-teachers at Site A expressed inequity, as described below:

“It is hard to work with eighteen learning support kids all at one time and try to keep all of them focused. It would be nice if it was, quite honestly, ten to fifteen kids [per class]. Ideally, that would be perfect for me. I have two classes. I don't have the learning support make up in that class as much as the first class [co-taught class]. But I only have fifteen students in that class.”

This same concern was expressed by another teacher from the other co-teaching pair within this site: “I think the overall class size is big. I was talking with my colleague who has the other Communication Studies Twelve [class]. He has nine students and I have twenty two.” This is due to scheduling issues and the thought that if there are two teachers (co-teachers) the class is similar in size.

In regard to building relationships, one teacher stated: “The biggest challenge is lack of time and the number of preps [scheduling references].” This was evidenced by the lack of planning time. As one teacher noted, “We have no common planning times, no times to get together.” Another stated: “Trying to keep both of us involved in the classroom at the same time so the kids actually see us both as teachers and not one as a teacher and one just as a, what’s a nice way of thinking, glorified aide.”
Other drawbacks identified were classroom management issues, as well as the fact that the co-teaching classroom may not meet the needs of all students. As one teacher stated, “I think that there should still be pull out classes for kids who are not on a post-secondary education track.” Another stated the following, “I think sometimes the learning support students may feel reluctant to participate because of peer judgement or criticism.”

**Benefits of co-teaching.**

Reported benefits included co-teachers coming together from different disciplines to work with students; the rigor and high expectations of the regular education classroom; and the ability to support all students.

“You have two people being put together from completely different backgrounds, and not only is her background different from mine because she is a regular ed [ucation] teacher, it's different because she is an English teacher too. I get the best of both worlds. I think she learns from me and I think that I learn from her.”

The following was also stressed as a benefit:

“You know they used to be pulled out for English and Math, even if they wanted to go to college. Why not put them in the regular ed [ucation] classes with support? I think it is very good for them. I think it has been a good experience and I think it gives them a much better idea and prepares them a lot more for that post-secondary education setting. The regular ed [ucation] classes are much more rigorous and the expectations are higher. I think it's been a good experience for most of them.”

Teachers were also able to interact more with the students in order to support the rigorous work and high expectations within the regular education setting as stated in the following: “A benefit to the co-taught classroom is being able to have more interactions with the students.”
There is also a benefit of growth, not only student growth, but also growth within teacher practice. In regard to student growth, one teacher noted:

“I think the benefits are that the learning support students are in the content area classes and are getting the same instruction as the regular ed[ucation] students and you see their growth as far as what they are able to achieve.”

Another teacher provided the following summation:

“I think she has learned how to modify and adapt even if I am not with her next year. I think she has a better understanding of what it means to implement specially designed instruction for kids with IEPs.”

And, another teacher stated the following: “I actually learned stuff that I haven't had in years. It has been a long time [in reference to Algebra II material] so it was good to refresh on stuff like that, so yeah, I learned quite a bit.”

**Teacher Instructional Practices**

In exploring how the beliefs teachers hold in regard to the co-teaching classroom translate into instructional practices; answers were sought to the following question: *How do these beliefs translate into instructional practices in the co-teaching classroom?* In response to this question, the following instructional practices were exhibited: help through a student lens; scaffolding of material; planning of instruction; and creation of assessments, support, and collaboration. The following section describes these practices as they were demonstrated in the two co-teaching classrooms at Site A.
Classroom 1.

Classroom one identified the co-teaching model utilized within their classroom as a teach-one assist. In this model, one teacher actively gives instruction to the class while the other supports the instructional process by walking around the room assisting students who need help, have questions or need re-direction (Friend & Cook, 2007). This was also confirmed by classroom observations which indicated responsibilities of the classroom fall mainly on the regular education teacher. This is also demonstrated in the following quote: “I'm the main teacher. I am the one that does pretty much the main lectures, you know. I am the one that organizes everything.” This individual was also responsible for the majority of the planning as well as assessments within the class.

The special education teacher explained her role within the co-teaching classroom as the following: “She [regular education teacher] does a majority of the teaching and I'll pipe in from time to time and when they are doing individualized help I will go around and help.” However, the role of the special educator has become more involved as the partnership moved forward, but continued to utilize an assisting role: “She'll give me the kids. This make sense, can you go over it for me? Can you grade some of the kids work? And it doesn't matter if it is my kids [special education] or another student in the class.” As a result of these interactions, there has developed a more shared responsibility for the collecting and grading of papers in this class. The special education teacher admitted that the students with disabilities in this class were her primary focus and as the partnership continued to develop there is a sense of accomplishment expressed in the following: “I think that she [regular education teacher] trusts me and sees that I'm capable.” This statement is confirmed by the regular education teacher:

“Since it is our first year working together, as a content area teacher, I'm leading
class discussion and planning the lessons and creating the assessments and then she is functioning in the support role where she's working in small groups, modifying the assessments, making suggestions as far as lesson planning. If we stay in this co-teaching pair and she is more familiar with the content, then it would be more of bouncing ideas back and forth between each one another. I might do the engaged part of the lesson and then she would teach a component and then I might pick up something else and we might bounce ideas back and forth with one another. But we are not there yet because of just lack of collaborative time together and she is just getting familiar with the content right now.”

The special education teacher has become more comfortable with the content being taught within the classroom. She believed there is a benefit to her not being familiar with the content and utilized her unfamiliarity of the content to strengthen the students’ understanding of the content. She stated:

“So I am learning when they are learning, if that makes sense. The content teacher, they are kind of on auto pilot and if they are not effectively explaining something they don't really know how to revert, you know back into [the basic content]. So what is it like for someone else who is just learning this information? Often times the questions that the kids have are questions that I have, so if they are not comfortable saying it, I have no problem raising my hand and saying, okay is this what you mean? Can you clarify?”

In this model, one teacher actively gave instruction to the class while the other supported the instructional process by walking around the room assisting students who needed help, had questions or needed re-direction. There was little planning, if any, necessary for this form of co-teaching.
Friend and Cook (2007) explain that one teaching, one assisting is fraught with problems and should be used sparingly in the classroom. It sometimes becomes the sole or primary co-teaching approach in many classrooms, particularly when planning time is scarce. The classroom teacher generally takes the lead role, and the special services provider becomes an “assistant.” Not only does this deny an active teaching role to the special educator but it also undermines that person’s credibility, especially with the older students. Second, a classroom in which one teacher continuously moves around the room during large group instruction can be distracting to students (both visually and auditory). Third, this co-teaching approach includes the risk of encouraging students to become dependent learners. When one teacher is always available to help on student demand, students who crave adult attention but who should be capable of doing assigned work may develop a habit of saying that they cannot do a certain task in order to get extra attention and assistance. Co-teachers need to be very alert to this possibility. If they have students needing adult attention, they should give the attention needed, but not at the cost of a student’s independent learning skills.

Friend and Cook (2007) also state:

Educators can take advantage of the positive aspects of this approach and avoid the negative aspects by limiting their use of this approach and by ensuring that when it is used, each teacher leads instruction and each teacher takes the role of assisting. Co-teachers should use this approach only when it will not distract students from their learning and when no other co-teaching approach seems appropriate for the instructional situation. (p. 128)
Classroom 2.

Classroom two utilized a combination of the one teach - one assist model and parallel teaching, which utilized split instruction from time to time, with mixed groups of students (IEP versus non-IEP). The following statement by the special education teacher confirmed the structure of the co-teaching classroom, “My role has been, whether it’s been like a help for the special ed [ucation] kids, which is the majority of the class or whether it has been to teach the lesson to my group that we split, that’s been a big help.”

The regular education teacher also confirmed the parallel teaching model in the following statement: “Everybody wants a piece of everything that is going on, and when you have the co-teacher in there, its almost like you take the class and divide it in half and that's one of the biggest benefits of having co-teachers, you are kind of tag teaming the classroom which makes it much, much less stressful.” Friend and Cook (2007) explain that parallel teaching, seen as a way to lower the teacher-student ratio within the classroom, allows the teachers to collaborate on instruction. Each teacher is responsible for delivering instruction to a heterogeneous group comprised of approximately half of the students in the class, may be a better option for some lessons.

Equal distribution of student diversity is considered when making group assignments. The teachers do not exchange groups because each group acquires the same instruction. Students are placed with a defined purpose in mind to nurture their social skills or even to separate students who are having difficulty within the classroom. It can also serve the purpose of differentiation by allowing one group to have a different requirement than the other, yet both groups will be learning the same content but in different ways. Both teachers must be comfortable with the content of the instruction and the instructional delivery (Dieker &
According to Dieker and Murawski (2003), “students could then return to the large group and teach one another about their new found and cultural backgrounds as the class progresses, enabling students to see collaboration modeled between two adults with differing experiences” (p. 11).

Friend and Cook (2007) also explain that parallel teaching gives all students an opportunity to actively participate in class and allows for more creative teaching activities such as each teacher taking a particular point of view in presenting a topic or issue, orientation of the students’ to the view point, and then bring the students back together for large-group instruction. If one group of students has significantly different instruction from the other, it will be difficult to make judgments about student mastery. It is extremely important that both teachers know the material equally well. Students, especially at the secondary level where grade point average is a very important component of a high school student's education, may complain that the disparity leads to unfairness during assessments.

There is also a scaffolding of material for all students. According to the special education teacher, “I make sure when teaching a concept, I want to see that students can get step one before step two can be approached.” The special education teacher also pointed out the focus on students with disabilities in the classroom:

“I try to center myself toward the lowest learners, the lowest of the lowest to try to help them through because I think they need the most help. So I try to take the low level learners and focus my, not to say that if a higher functioning kid has a question that I won't take that question, I certainly will. I try to just monitor, and again there are those four or five kids that will struggle and I make sure they are up to speed.”
Finally, in the beginning of the school year the partnership within this classroom optimized collaborative planning opportunities, but as the school year progressed, less time was devoted to the partnership. According to the regular education teacher:

“In the beginning when there was a lot of time I would meet up with him and we would actually communicate okay this is what we are going to do today and this is how things are going to evolve and we would set our day together or even the week. As the year has been going on it has been getting busier and busier and we have not been able to do that quite as much. So right now I just prep for the class normally as I would for any other class and you know, we kind of work it out together when we are there.”

Alignment of Principal and Teacher Beliefs

The third question in this study, *To what extent do principal and teacher beliefs regarding co-teaching align with their leadership and/or instructional practices?*, explored the alignment of leadership and instructional practices, respectively, with the beliefs exhibited by the principal and the teachers. The co-teaching classrooms observed both utilized the practice of the one teaching, one assisting strategy. Friend and Cook (2007) explain in this model, one teacher actively gives instruction to the class while the other supports the instructional process by walking around the room assisting students who need help, have questions or need re-direction. There is little planning, if any, necessary for this form of co-teaching. It also gives an opportunity to special services providers in situations in which they may not feel competent to lead instruction.

The two co-teaching classrooms have appropriately chosen a model which is adaptable to the conditions, both from a structural and human resource perspective, that exist within their respective classrooms. Both co-teaching pairs are emerging co-teaching pairs due to the amount
of time they have worked together in developing the instructional strategies utilized within the co-taught classroom, as well as the amount of time to develop a working relationship, which will facilitate student learning within the classroom. This is the first year for each of the co-teaching pair’s partnership.

The principal understands that it will take time for the co-teaching classroom to develop so he allowed the teachers to determine how to utilize their time and effort to best meet the needs of the students. In classroom one, the special educator understood the limitations of her role in the classroom and therefore worked with her co-teaching partner to deliver the best method of instruction possible to the students. This was confirmed in the following statement:

“I think, in the end, and I think it takes some time to get there. It [co-teaching] would, ideally, have the regular ed[ucation] teacher and the special ed[ucation] teacher sharing responsibilities but at this point with my first year getting in and getting used to the curriculum it's kind of hard to do that.”

In regard to the limited planning time that is needed for the co-teaching model utilized one teacher also stated: “If there is a lull in teaching, if they are working on something individually, but with the whole class, you can usually talk about it then. That's usually when a lot of it [planning] happens. Everyone is, well especially at this time of the year, everyone is pressed for time.”

In classroom two a similar situation existed:

“I [regular education teacher] am the more dominant one in the classroom so I am the one that pretty much starts [the] class. I go through the lectures and what not and then when it comes time to, more of the activities, that's when we kind of both work together. Now we have, off and on, when he's felt more comfortable with certain topics, he has taken
over and we kind of work back and forth with each other and like I said, [if] there is something that he is not comfortable with or he hasn't done and it just. I don't think it would be fair for me to go and you should do this or do that so I primarily take over most of the lectures and at the same time when I am lecturing, he's free [to] kind of step in and take over and kind of re-explain something. That's how we kind of have been working this year and anytime that we can kind of work off [of] each other he is allowed to take over.”

All of the teachers and the building principal expressed the opinion that the co-teachers learn from one another through the co-teaching model. Teacher 2B stated:

“I think the learning support teacher should be learning off the content teacher about the material every single day they are there especially if they don't know what it is. I think the content teacher should be learning from the learning support teacher about better assessment of the students, better instruction with those particular students and again that comes with a lot of interaction and communication with them [the co-teacher].”

Another example of teachers learning from one another was evident from the following statement made by teacher 2B: “I have suggested adaptations that he [the regular education teacher] has used.”

There is also evidence that the principal’s concern about complacency was valid:

“I know if I was in a classroom and pretty much was not doing a whole lot of anything I would lose motivation more. I think, it's more of just I think that you sit back and you get into a certain role for just so long that you kind of just come in and I think that is what has happened here. The role has been the same.”

Overall, both the special education teachers and the regular education teachers saw their
role as meeting the needs of students in the co-teaching classroom. Teacher 1A stated the following: “Ultimately what we want to do is to empower them to want to learn and to share their ideas that they are learning with one another, and stretch themselves beyond what they think they are capable of. I think that's the benefit of co-teaching. I just wish we had more time to collaborate and share ideas and also more time to get training.”

Summary of Case A

As the co-teaching classroom materialized, it was apparent the building principal was responsible for the initial placement/assignment of the co-teaching pairs. The co-teachers were empowered through the principal to formulate what type or design of co-teaching would evolve as the partnership progressed. With the empowerment of the co-teachers, a collaborative professional learning community began to take shape between two departments, special education and regular education, which was a benefit to both teachers and their students. The co-teaching partnership transformed into a type of professional development through both the leadership practices of the building principal and the instructional practices of the teachers within and outside of the co-teaching classroom, demonstrating that teacher and principal beliefs and actions work together to influence and inform the design of the co-teaching classroom.

Case B

Site Description

Site B was a high school within a small, rural school district, which spanned approximately 85 square miles. The district included three elementary buildings, one middle school and one high school. The high school utilized in this study enrolled approximately 700 students in grades 9-12. The ethnicity of the student population within the high school was as follows: 91.3% white, 3.7% Hispanic, 4.1% black, and 1.0% Asian. The economically
disadvantaged population was 31.2%. Approximately 70 (10%) of the 700 students in grades 9-12 received learning support services. The average student/teacher ratio was slightly more than 13, which indicates there are approximately 13 students for every one teacher in the school.

Site Participants

The teachers chosen for this study were identified as co-teaching pairs (one regular educations teacher and one special education teacher) in math and reading, who taught at least one co-teaching class during the school day. At this particular site, two pairs in each subject met the criteria for inclusion in this study. The principal supplied those individuals’ names and courses taught to me. I then chose the pair of co-teachers, which best matched the course descriptions at the other site. These individuals were then contacted and asked to participate in the study (see Appendix A & B).

For the purpose of this study, each teacher participant and the principal were assigned a number and letter, (i.e. 3a, 3b, 4a, 4b) in order to keep the identities of the participants anonymous. The co-teaching pair was identified by the same number (i.e. 3 or 4). The average number of total teaching experience was seven years and two months. The average number of years in a co-teaching classroom was less than one, specifically, nine months and the average number years of experience in the co-teaching partnership within this study was less than one, specifically eight months. (See Table 1)

There was one building principal for the site. He has been the principal of this school for seven years. Co-teaching classrooms were not present in this building prior to the principal’s employment within the district. Co-teaching classrooms were assigned to the co-teachers by the building principal. These classes were observed by the building principal on a regular basis.
through the use of walk-through and formal evaluations, just as any other classroom within the school.

The teachers and the principal were interviewed two times each. The first interview was a structured interview, which was concerned with general ideas about the co-teaching classroom. Those interviewed were asked open-ended questions pertaining to their co-teaching practices, which directly relate to the research questions in this study (see Appendix C). Two classroom observations for each co-teaching pair were also conducted, with the observations occurring after each of two interviews transpired. The purpose of the classroom observation was to validate what was reported in the interview. Validation of principal interviews was confirmed through the teacher interviews, classroom observations and/or documents. A semi-structured interview of the teachers and principal was conducted after the initial observation, to clarify responses from the first interview as well as answer any questions, which were formed after the classroom observation. As I began to code and analyze the information gleaned from the interviews/observations or documents provided, I found it necessary to make requests, via e-mail, for further clarification or documentation.

**Principal Beliefs**

In exploring the beliefs the principal held in regard to the co-teaching classrooms, I sought answers to the following question: *What beliefs do principals hold regarding co-teaching?* The principal in Case B described the co-teaching model as a means of “getting away from self-contained classrooms, specifically for special ed[ucation] students, and also providing a kind of adapted or more differentiated approach for those students who had lower ability that weren’t necessarily identified.” The primary goal of the co-teaching classroom was to provide opportunities for success of not only students who had Individualized Education Plans (IEP) but...
also those students who struggled in a more traditional setting. The principal stated: “For those students who kind of fall between the cracks, those who are not identified but those who may struggle, there is a benefit.” These opportunities were addressed through the development of relationships among teachers as well as the use of differentiation, which afforded opportunities to respond to the needs of all of the students within the co-taught classroom. Teacher 3B confirmed: “Regular education students have also benefited just from slowing down the material, getting another idea of the same thing”.

**Strong ideals/beliefs about schooling.**

The principal exhibited a belief that if students require help, they will receive that help whether they are a student with an IEP or not; all students, with a need, deserve the benefits the co-teaching environment affords. “Really the whole point of the co-teaching model is to reach a particular segment of students. Most of them identified, some are not identified that maybe probably should be or could, in some areas. So, that's what we strive for in the co-taught environment.”

There was also a belief that there were slight differences, if any, between students with and without disabilities within the co-teaching classroom:

“Only to the extent of where you might offer adaptations. The content for the regular ed[ucation] student may be unaltered. It may just be exactly as presented; whereas the expectation for the learning support student might be modified tests, modified materials in some way. There are times too where there are no modifications, where everybody is on the same page.”

Teacher 4B explained that “students with disabilities have the chance to access the general ed[ucation] curriculum. All students have the ability to learn, some just need a
little more support and that’s my job to make sure all of their adaptations and modifications are implemented.”

**Development of relationships among teachers.**

Co-teachers must be able to develop their relationships both inside and outside of the classroom. According to the building principal:

“Really the only way that they [co-teachers] can develop their interaction within the classroom is if they meet with each other.” He also states: “The only way that people develop that rapport, that relationship is through interacting with each other. You hope that the interpersonal relationship builds on its own and that they figure out how to work together.”

Teacher 3A confirmed this thought in the following: “We are getting to know each other better and our strengths and weakness, teaching styles and I think that’s a good thing.” Meyen, Vergason and Whelan (1996) extend this by explaining positive relationships are foundational to all interactions in the classroom. The establishment of such relationships requires ongoing cooperation on the part of both teachers in a co-teaching classroom. Three of five elements identified as part of the cooperative process by Villa, Thousand and Nevin (2008) are face-to-face interaction, positive interdependence and interpersonal skills. These skills were developing within each of the co-teaching classrooms. One special education teacher stated: “I feel given time we will definitely perfect our system of co-teaching. There is a learning curve, especially building a relationship with anybody.”

**Differentiation.**

Co-teaching was viewed as a necessity: “Getting away from self-contained classrooms, specifically for special ed [ucation] students, and providing a kind of adapted or more
differentiated approach for those students who have lower ability that weren't necessarily
taught. The principal also believed the special education teacher has more of an
instructional strategy base and is able to help with the differentiation within the classroom:

“There is a greater familiarity with IEPs and knowing what does this mean in an IEP.
Again, not to say that a regular ed teacher doesn't read them, but I think a special
ed[ucation] teacher reads them all of the time and understands what the adaptations are
and it's just something they [special education teachers] have a comfort level with.”

One special education teacher described herself as a facilitator, providing adaptations as needed.

**Responding to the needs of all students.**

The principal also believed in meeting the needs and differing levels of ability of all
students:

“Different ability levels. Kids that could benefit from the co-teaching environment. I
think too that we capture a wider [student population], it's not strictly special ed
[ucation]. It involves those students who are not necessarily identified through the
process that would struggle elsewhere and it provides a good alternative.”

Teacher 4A explained there really is not a difference between a special education student and a
regular education student: “The difference is where you gear your lesson toward
[differentiation]. Lessons need to be meaningful regardless of special ed[ucation] or regular
ed[ucation].”

**Principal Leadership Practices**

The second question, *How do these beliefs translate into leadership practices in relation
to the co-teaching classroom?*, explored the leadership practices exhibited by the principal in
relation to the co-teaching classroom. The principal in Case B exhibited leadership practice
through two lenses, structural and human resource as previously presented. Structural leaders focus on implementation (Bolman & Deal, 2008). The human resource frame was very influential on the co-teaching classroom; however, it is important to point out that one cannot exist apart from the other. According to Bolman and Deal (2008), “The human resource leader is viewed as a facilitator and catalyst who uses emotional intelligence to motivate and empower subordinates. The leader’s power comes from talent, caring, sensitivity, and service rather than position or force” (p. 361). In this case, the principal’s leadership practices are shown through the scheduling practices utilized; his focus and vision for the co-teaching classroom; the dialogue which was apparent by the building of relationships and capacity of the staff; as well as the monitoring/evaluation of staff and the affirmation of their accomplishments and professional development.

**Scheduling.**

From a structural view, the principal was concerned about class size and the co-teaching assignment: “Really the best thing that I can do is control class size. My role is basically to put people together where they are going to be successful and also guard those sections.” He also believed the co-teaching classrooms are unique and deserve special attention: “They are a unique entity to where they [the co-teaching classroom] don’t become filled to full capacity.” He identified the optimum class size as, “fifteen students where eight to nine would be identified [IEP students].” Teacher 4A explained that her particular class was to be composed of 25% students with disabilities, but over time the special education student population became more significant in number. The principal did confirm there was a scheduling issue due to the addition of students into the class after the master schedule was completed.
The principal also explained that co-planning time within the schedule was important. It allows the teacher’s time to discuss student needs and create an instructional plan. According to him, “The co-planning time remains to be a constant in the schedule and again that is something that I have control over and can make happen.” Time for co-teachers to periodically meet to discuss the co-taught classrooms success and its difficulties is crucial (Friend & Cook, 2007). Co-teaching planning time is within the schedule however teachers are free to use that time as they see fit as stated by teacher 4A: “Most of the times I have someone coming in for help either from my class or from another class. I use that time to make parent phone calls, get caught up on grades so we (co-teachers) have not really used our common plan time specifically for co-teaching.”

Vision.

The principal had a vision of unification for the co-teaching classroom. He embraced a “true sharing of responsibilities, equity in what is happening, [moving to a point] to where each teacher is viewed by the student as just another teacher, an instructor. I would not really see a difference between what is happening in a co-taught classroom versus just a one person classroom.” Teacher 4B confirmed: “You should not be able to pick out the students with disabilities and should not be able to make a clear distinction between the special ed[ucation] teacher and the regular ed[ucation] teacher.

Focus.

The principal had a deliberative and purposeful goal which was to ensure the right teachers were placed into co-teaching pairs, as evidenced in the following statement: “From my own observation, really the best thing that you can do is put people together that complement each other but also put them together for a long enough period of time.”
Relationships.

The principal had a seasoned understanding of the importance of forming relationships. He explained, “We practice in isolation so often and sometimes it is intimidating when somebody else is trying to tell you how you should do things or why you should do things.” In order to facilitate the relationship process teachers were given opportunities to interact. “The teachers have the opportunity to get together on a daily basis and really the only way that they can develop their interaction within the classroom is if they meet with each other”. This was evident by the scheduling of common plan time.

He utilized his relationships and experience to afford new partnerships an opportunity to grow and make forward progress. He explained:

“What we have emphasized through the whole thing, whenever I have newer teachers entering the co-teaching realm, I will refer to other instructors. This is a good example of what it ought to look like, and we emphasize from the start that we recognize there will be a period of growth, that it's not going to develop within a year, but also that we want to see both teachers actively engaged. We don't want one teacher to take a very predictable role in the classroom daily.”

Dialogue.

Dialogue was a key to the success of the co-teaching classroom. The principal practiced leadership through communicating with the teachers in a respectful manner. According to him, “I rely very heavily on feedback from the teachers and past experience, informal discussion where we just sit down [and discuss] what works”. The principal also acknowledged that he played an important role in the development of the co-teaching pairs by “providing the right feedback, but most of it just comes down to the teacher reporting out with me.” Teacher 4A explained that the
principal is allowing them (co-teachers) to find the path that works best for them: “He is allowing us to explore and work and find the path that is working for us.”

**Capacity building.**

The principal utilized his leadership role to enable teachers to build capacity through the relationships they built together:

“You hope that the interpersonal relationship builds on its own and that they figure out how to work together. When we first talk to teachers about this, a lot of times, they are given obviously ample time to get together, but I usually relay that story about this is how it develops over time, don't try and force it. First off get to know each other interpersonally, get to know one another. I don't expect to see a well oiled machine three weeks into it. I understand that it takes time. I usually tell teachers it takes a couple of years for it to happen, if it's going to happen. So that's usually where we start and then through regular observation and discussion afterwards.”

Teacher 4A agreed: “Because it is the first year we are doing this, he is kind of trying to let us find a way, a working way between the two of us and our class.”

**Monitoring/evaluating.**

The principal showed an understanding and patience in regard to the monitoring and evaluation of the co-teaching classroom:

“We kind of emphasize from the start that we recognize there will be a period of growth, that it's not going to develop within a year, but also that we want to see both teachers actively engaged. We don't want one teacher to take a very predictable role in the classroom daily.”
Situational awareness.

An observation noted by this principal was of the importance of personal chemistry in order for the co-teaching pair to be successful.

“There has to be a certain personal chemistry. I have tried to put some people together and we do not get beyond personal differences. The first thing that has to exist is a chemistry between them, that’s gotta be a part of the mix. The other thing is time, because sometimes that inter-personal chemistry that develops takes time to develop and you can't make it happen. The only way that people develop that rapport, that relationship is through interacting with each other. I’ve had the ability to watch it now for a couple of years and we have pulled some people away from others, and we have put some people together. I think when you identify how one teacher might compliment another, you kind of evaluate their strengths and weaknesses, and really pay attention to that. I think that there has to be that give and take. You have to get right personalities together. I think you can have situations too where you have one that is more dominant than the other and that person clearly takes the lead in the room.”

He also hoped that individuals would develop the necessary relationships throughout their co-teaching experience. “You hope that the interpersonal relationship builds on its’ own and that they figure out how to work together. They have to make it work.” Teacher 3A stated it in this manner: “That is the whole point of it; the whole ‘co’ part is to bring each other’s strengths to the table or perspectives to the table so we can make a better and more enriching environment.”

Affirmation.

The principal recognized and celebrated student/teacher accomplishments as well as difficulties which occurred within the co-teaching environment:
“I would say there is not as much collaboration as there should be. I think that it could be a benefit to co-teaching models. But, we're not quite there yet. There is still very much a mentality here that you deal with this section of students and you deal with all the rest of them. And, at the end of the day, there could be a lot of great learning from the special education department just in strategy. Strategies can be used across the board by all kinds of students. So, I don't think that we are there. I think that they could be but that kind of falls in line with PLCs [professional learning communities] and that is something that we all would like to see over the course of our career.”

Teacher 4B stated that she is aware that not everyone believes in the co-teaching classroom, but everyone is able to benefit from one another.

**De-emphasis of professional development.**

At this school, there have been several co-teaching trainings offered to teachers; however, the principal did not participate in these trainings. His understanding of the training was that it was only for the teachers. He did acknowledge that he could have participated, however, time did not allow for his participation. He stated:

“I have not participated in any of the co-teaching training. All of my teachers have had one or two sessions with the IU. It was training geared specifically toward that, co-teachers. The expectations from me would not be any different if I would see them in their individual classrooms. I just look at it as one classroom with a sharer, that if I go in six times, I would hope that I would not see the same teacher in the same role.”

He termed the development of the co-teaching pairs as a type of “evolution”. He stated: “I've watched the teachers grow together.”
Teacher Beliefs

In exploring the beliefs teachers held in regard to the co-teaching classroom, answers were sought to the following question: *What beliefs do teachers hold regarding co-teaching?* The teachers at Site B believed the following elements are relevant to their district’s co-teaching partnerships: relationships (both student and teacher) and the interactions of those relationships as well as the structure of the co-teaching classroom itself.

**Relationships.**

In regard to what an effective co-teaching classroom looks like the co-teachers at Site B addressed both teacher and student relationships as exemplified in the following teacher statement: “Consistently shared responsibilities of two teachers adapting things as needed.” Another co-teacher described the co-teaching classroom in the following manner: “You shouldn't be able to pick out the students with disabilities and really shouldn't be able to make a clear distinction between the special ed [ucation] teacher and regular ed[ucation] teacher.”

**Communication and flexibility.**

Necessary components stressed by the teachers at Site B were communication and flexibility. The following was a statement which characterized the teachers at this site: “There has to be a give and take on the part of both folks to understand the content, and understand the students, understanding the student needs and maybe limitations, that ties in with how to best adapt as needed. You can't really adapt if you don't know the material.” Another teacher discussed having similar expectations within the classroom: “To have the same set of standards as far as classroom discipline is important. But also the same level of flexibility where as let's re-teach, re-test, that didn't work well; open communication.” Yet another teacher stated the following: “I think both teachers need to be willing to work together, willing to work for the benefit of the kids in the
room. I think both people need to be invested in the program, want to do it. I think it has a lot to do with the amount of want in doing it.”

**Role of the principal.**

In regard to the role of the principal, teachers saw the principal as having a minimal role within the co-teaching classroom. However, they did realize that this was a choice and that he was there for support, if needed, as shown in the following statement: “He is allowing us to explore and work and find the path that is working for us.” This is an important point as it is also the principal’s responsibility to support changes that occur within the co-teacher’s classroom. According to Dieker and Murawski (2003), the principal’s support is necessary in order for the co-teaching model to be effective.

**Challenges of co-teaching.**

The teachers believed the main challenge of co-teaching to be that of time to develop relationships between the teachers (human resource). This was necessary for the effective implementation of the co-teaching model. One teacher expressed the following: “Personalities, and our time management together, when we are able to connect. Being able to share openly and feel like what you say is confidential between the two of you, to solve a problem, make headway or make progress or brainstorm ideas.” Another stated: “Finding the time to focus on instructional strategies and content.”

In comparison, from a structural aspect, class size was less of an issue, with demographics of the class being more of a concern as expressed in the following: “Time, time to work together. We both have one common plan but we also have other responsibilities that have to be handled and closure on those [responsibilities], having time to coordinate more effectively and also, a big challenge has been behavior, student behavior.”
**Benefits of co-teaching.**

Reported benefits of co-teaching were co-teachers coming together from different disciplines to work with students, the power of two, the rigor and high expectations of the regular education classroom, and the ability to support all students. It was apparent that teachers understood the importance of core content for all students: “Students with disabilities have the chance to access the general ed[ucation] curriculum.” The utilization of the combined strength or power of two individuals was noted as well:

“We each have our unique strengths and when there are two adults in the room and where I'm not excellent in Math content, my co-teacher is. Where they’re not informed on special education practices, such as abiding by their IEP, that's my area. I am knowledgeable in different ways to adapt material where they understand how to break down difficult concepts into smaller parts. So, I think our strengths balance.”

Also of benefit was a type of renewal for a veteran teacher. According to this teachers, “I've been doing this for so many years that you get pigeonholed in this is my path of instruction and someone else has a different take on it and it just adds new vision.”

**Teacher Instructional Practices**

In exploring how the beliefs teachers hold in regard to the co-teaching classroom translated into instructional practice, answers were sought to the following question: *How do these beliefs translate into instructional practices in the co-teaching classroom?* The following instructional practices were exhibited: helping students understand concepts and competencies by scaffolding material, planning of instruction, and support.
Classroom 1.

Classroom one utilized the one teach-one assist model. This was confirmed by the classroom observations. In this model, the responsibilities of the classroom fell mainly on the regular education teacher as evident by the following statement: “I basically do most everything.” The special education teacher explained her role within the classroom as the following: “The regular education teacher pretty much develops the instructional stuff on her own. She teaches it and I just assist. I have recently started doing a unit that she gave to me to teach, but even in that respect it is pretty much what she would like to be taught in the classroom, how she would like it taught.” Fortunately, more shared responsibility has emerged as the co-teaching partnership evolved. The regular education teacher explained how the special education teacher had taken the lead for a particular unit. She stated to her co-teacher: “I'll help out the way you want me to but most of the responsibility [for content] will be on you.” This was confirmed through the observation process.

The regular education teacher also explained in order to attend to behavior issues (immaturity, emotional support concerns); the co-teachers decided that for this particular class a certain structure was needed for student success to occur within the classroom: “We went with really basic seat work [in order to help with behavior].” This was a compromise that was developed in order to address the needs of both teachers as well as the students: “We need to teach with each other’s strengths in mind.”

Classroom 2.

Classroom two utilized a one teach-one assist model in which the classroom teacher generally took the lead role, and the special services provider became an assistant (Friend & Cook, 2007). This was noted during a classroom observation, as well as the following statement
made by the special education teacher:

“It is more of an educator-facilitator role. My role in the room is mostly behavior management. Most of my time is spent circulating, if they are not understanding a concept, reviewing it with them and going through a problem step by step. More giving the intensive support that students’ need, and providing one on one support if they are not following along with the group.”

In regard to student needs, teachers indicated the need to differentiate instruction:

“At different times we kind of both swing back and forth. Sometimes it's, well that wasn't challenging enough for them or this was too easy or this was too challenging or I feel like more adaptation [is needed] so that we are challenging the kids that need the challenge and we are simplifying for the students who need a bit more simplification.”

The regular education teacher also talked about facilitating learning through differentiation as well as grouping:

“Two adults milling and facilitating the learning that we can break down and often times we will break down into three groups where and again because we have such, such significant needs, the special education teacher will take one group, I will take another and then we will have another group which is kind of monitoring themselves there. We have maybe I'm gonna say three students that are pretty strong and they can monitor themselves and then every once in a while we can go back and ask how are you doing? What do you have questions on?”

This was an example of a type of station teaching variation.

Station teaching, also referred to as the duet approach (Bertin, 1996), requires both teachers to be actively engaged in the instruction of students. Both teachers are responsible for
the planning and instruction of the content of the curriculum. Stations are created collaboratively, by both teachers, for students to work in small groups that rotate from one station to another as is pre-determined by the teachers. A third station, created for independent work, peer tutoring or work with a student teacher, para-educator or another individual is utilized within the classroom. Ideally, students would move from station to station. This form of teaching is a recommended review strategy. This instructional delivery method can be advantageous due to differences in teaching styles and abilities of the co-teachers. Each teacher has a clear teaching responsibility. In addition, teachers are able to cover more material due to the small group size. In this arrangement, students can benefit from lower student-teacher ratio, and the integration of students with disabilities within the assigned groups. There is a maximization of equality for both student and teacher (Friend & Cook, 2007). Two of the most common problems in using station teaching concern the amount of noise, movement in the classroom and pacing of the instruction, however, these were non-existent in this classroom.

Alignment of Principal and Teachers Beliefs

The third question in this study, *To what extent do principal and teacher beliefs regarding co-teaching align with their leadership and/or instructional practices?*, explored the alignment of leadership and instructional practices, respectively, to the beliefs exhibited by the principal and the teachers. The co-teaching classrooms observed both utilized the practice of one teaching, one assisting. Friend and Cook (2007) explain in this model, one teacher actively gives instruction to the class while the other supports the instructional process by walking around the room assisting students who need help, have questions or need re-direction. There is little planning, if any, necessary for this form of co-teaching. It also gives an opportunity to special services providers in situations in which they may not feel competent to lead instruction
The two co-teaching classrooms in Site B have appropriately chosen a model, which is adaptable to the conditions, both from a structural and human resource perspective, which exist within their respective classrooms. Both co-teaching pairs are emerging co-teaching pairs due to the amount of time they have worked together in developing the instructional strategies utilized within the co-taught classroom, as well as the amount of time to develop a working relationship which will facilitate student learning within the classroom. This is the first year for each of the co-teaching pair’s partnership.

The principal, as stated previously, allowed the teachers to form an interpersonal relationship in order to figure out how to work together to best meet the needs of the students. In classroom one, the regular education teacher and the special education teacher did exactly that. They figured out what the needs of the classroom were for both the students and themselves. This is confirmed in the following statement by the regular education teacher: “Each pair of co-teachers need to work out what is best for them. I just feel like he [the principal] is available if we want to talk about it, but I think you just need to work it out.” In classroom two, a similar situation existed as evidenced by a statement made by the regular education teacher in the co-teaching pair: “We are trying to find what works. The student population is very needy so I have mentioned to him [principal] on different occasions that we are trying this and trying that and he's been supportive and he will say okay, you find what works.”

The teachers in both classrooms confirmed the principal’s thoughts as far as the cultural divide that remains evident between regular education and special education. It was also evident they were working towards the unification of regular and special education, needed to support all of their students. According to the special education teacher:

“The general opinion of students without disabilities at the high school level is that if
they don't have a disability, they do not need to listen to a special ed[ucation] teacher.

There is a general understanding among regular ed[ucation] students that they don't have to listen to special ed [ucation] teachers because they are not a special ed[ucation] student.”

The teachers also exhibited the practice of utilizing dialogue to enhance their understanding of the co-teaching classroom and develop the relationships the principal believed are so important to the development of their instructional practices. Confirmation of this is expressed in the following: “We have gotten to a place now where I talk to a co-worker [to extend ideas as to how to make the co-teaching partnership work well].”

**Summary of Case B**

The use of co-teaching in the classroom was a means of removing the inherent isolation in practice, which often occurs within the classroom (e.g., Isherwood & Barger-Anderson, 2007), as exhibited by the following statement: “Ultimately, what every teacher does, they do in isolation every day.” This statement was made in reference to the non-co-teaching classroom teachers. It was also stated that, “We practice in isolation so often and sometimes it is intimidating when somebody else is trying to tell you how you should do things or why you should do things.” This is supported by Isherwood and Barger-Anderson (2007) who wrote that teaching traditionally occurs in isolation. According to Cole and McLeskey (1997), increased autonomy among teachers at the secondary level also supports the isolation argument. This increase in autonomy is due to the subject specific course structure at the secondary level. If there is only one teacher for a specific course, it is natural for them to work alone.

Regular education teachers are also seen as beneficiaries of the instructional strategies within the special education teacher’s toolkit. It is through the pairing/scheduling of co-teachers
within the regular education setting, as well as supporting the co-teaching pairs through dialogue, that the principal was able to influence the design of the co-teaching classroom. These empowered teachers to determine what form of co-teaching will take place within the classroom. The co-teaching partnership transforms into a type of professional development through both the leadership practices of the building principal and the instructional practices of the teachers within and outside of the co-teaching classroom, demonstrating that teacher and principal beliefs and actions work together to influence and inform the design of the co-teaching classroom.

Cross Case Findings

Principal beliefs.

In exploring the beliefs the principals in each case held in regard to the co-teaching classroom, answers were sought to the following question: What beliefs do principals hold regarding co-teaching? Both principals held a similar belief, that the role the co-teaching classroom played within their school was one of responding to the needs of all students through differentiation of instruction. It was evident that whether a student has an IEP or not, the emphasis was not on the student’s label, but the differentiation of instruction that was needed to meet the needs of the students. In both cases, the student was of utmost importance.

In both cases, the combining of the two departments, special education and regular education, was seen as strength. However, one site, A, seemed to be further ahead in the development of the collaborative partnerships than the other. The principal from Site B readily admitted there was not as much collaboration as there should be. He stated: “We’re not quite there yet.” DuFour and Burnette (2002) explain that a collaborative culture does not result from a principal’s hope or invitation. A collaborative culture results from a systematic effort to engage staff in ongoing, daily, job-embedded professional growth in an environment designed to ensure
In analyzing the data collected for this study, it is evident that the lack of collaboration in Site B may be due to the missed professional development opportunities of the principal. Time in his schedule did not allow for him to participate. Principal B stated, “I have not participated in any of the co-teaching training.” The Ontario Principals’ Council (2009) describes principals who inspire their faculties and are looked upon as role models as principals who exhibit the qualities of a lifelong learner, intellectually engaging themselves in learning experiences and celebrating their personal professional growth. Some might argue that failure to participate in professional development activities is not a trait of a lifelong-learner or someone who is intellectually engaged in the work of his or her school. This principal’s lack of emphasis on professional growth may limit his ability to build capacity for collaboration within the co-teaching model.

Although collaboration is seen to a lesser degree at Site B, both principals are striving for the same end; that of a collaborative effort, building relationships in order to respond to the needs of all students, with the regular education teacher having a better understanding of the instructional strategies and differing needs of all students. The principal at Site A stated the following: “I can tell you in the co-teaching here they have been helping one another understand differences in the students. I think that is key because I think a lot of regular ed [ucation] teachers do not understand a special education student. I think that is really beneficial to everyone and I think that’s helping the student succeed.” The principal at Site B stated the following: “I have watched the teachers grow together. [Teachers] provide[d] a kind of adapted or more differentiated approach for those students who had lower ability that weren’t necessarily identified.”
Principal leadership practices.

The second question in this study, *How do these beliefs translate into leadership practices in relation to the co-teaching classroom?*, explored the leadership practices exhibited by the principals in each case, in relation to the co-teaching classroom. Just as the principals’ beliefs are similar, so are their leadership practices. Both individuals operated from the structural and human resource frame. From the structural aspect, both individuals are concerned with not only the demographics of the class but also the co-teaching pair placed together in the classroom. In assigning co-teaching pairs, the personalities and ability of the teachers to work within the co-teaching environment were critical. This is an important aspect of the human resource frame.

Both principals had a focus, that of putting the right people together and ensuring they were there for support to help the teachers develop their instructional practices. Successful facilitation of relationships within the co-teaching partnership can accommodate both collective goals and individual differences (Bolman & Deal, 2008). Ongoing dialogue between the principal and co-teachers was essential. Building capacity of the co-teachers by allowing the partnerships to develop on their own occurred at both sites as well. Both principals understood the development of the partnerships taking time and were willing to allow for that time to occur.

Both principals also recognized weaknesses within their co-teaching partnerships and were eager to improve the model as was necessary to continue the development of both the teacher and their students. Both wanted to provide professional development to their co-teaching pairs as was necessary for the forward progress of the co-teaching model.

Ensuring a balance of students with and without IEPs was also important, but more so was the range of the students’ ability. Both principals held a similar vision for the co-teaching
classroom, affording students opportunities to be successful. One spoke directly to student needs while the other discussed student needs through a teacher lens by discussing the teachers’ ability to work together and deliver instruction in an equitable manner.

**Teacher beliefs.**

In exploring the beliefs teachers held in regard to the co-teaching classroom, answers were sought to the following question: *What beliefs do teachers hold regarding co-teaching?* Relationships (both student and teacher) and the interactions of those relationships were of utmost importance to the co-teaching classroom. Teachers, at both sites, believed the co-teaching classroom afforded partnerships for teachers and students where everyone was working together toward student achievement within the classroom.

In both schools, the teachers jointly expressed the need for open communication and flexibility in order to address the needs of the students within the co-teaching classrooms. This open communication and flexibility extended to the principal’s role as well. They all agreed the principal was responsible for the structural aspect of the classroom in regard to the scheduling of co-teachers and students, but they also understood the need for trust within their relationship.

They also recognized the importance of the principal’s capacity to empower and support them in the day-to-day implementation of instruction in the co-teaching classroom. Teacher 4A stated the following: “He has not been very active. Again, he is just kind of trying to let us find a way, a working way between the two of us and our class. I have mentioned to him on different occasions that we are trying this and trying that and he’s been supportive; you find what works [for the two of you].” Teacher 1B explained the principal’s capacity to empower and support in the following statement: “If I go to him with questions he is very supportive when I go to him
and ask him questions”. Teacher 1A stated: “We are empowered to implement it in the way we see fits our classroom needs.”

Finally, the teachers identified the importance of having two individuals complement each other by sharing their strengths. This helped to increase rigor within the instructional practices while affording opportunities for students and teachers to learn from one another. It is apparent that both teachers worked together for the benefit of students.

**Teacher instructional practices.**

In exploring how the beliefs teachers held in regard to the co-teaching classroom translate into instructional practices, answers were sought to the following question: *How do these beliefs translate into instructional practices in the co-teaching classroom?* The teachers’ beliefs appeared through a role of shared responsibility. Both teachers were responsible for all students within the class, with the special education teacher placing students with disabilities as a priority while continuing to support other students within the classroom as well, through the use of differentiated instructional strategies. All of the co-teaching pairs utilized the one teach, one assist model with additional variations of parallel teaching and station teaching. The one teach-one assist model was appropriate due to the collaborative limitations in both cases.

**Alignment of principal and teachers.**

The third question in this study, *To what extent do principal and teacher beliefs regarding co-teaching align with their leadership and/or instructional practices?*, explored the alignment of leadership and instructional practices, respectively, to the beliefs exhibited by the principal and the teachers. In both cases, principals’ and teachers’ beliefs and practices aligned with one another. In both sites, all stakeholders (teachers and principals) are working toward the same end, that of meeting the needs of students through differentiation of instruction, utilizing
the strengths and weaknesses of all stakeholders, and truly continuing to work on the formation of a professional learning community, where students and teachers alike benefit from working together with their principals, toward a common goal of student success.

**Summary**

The cross case findings show that both principals saw the role of the co-teaching classroom as a means of responding to the needs of all students. In both cases, principals’ and teachers’ beliefs and practices aligned with one another in that all stakeholders were working toward the same end, that of meeting the needs of students. They utilized the strengths and weaknesses of all stakeholders to work toward the formation of a professional learning community. A belief in shared responsibility was also evident through the use of the one teach, one assist model within the co-teaching classrooms. Students and teachers alike benefited from working together in order to achieve student success.

The combining of two traditional departments (special education and regular education) became a means of building relationships, which informed the classroom in order to respond to the needs of all students. Teachers believed the relationships (both student and teacher) and the interactions of those relationships, as well as the structure of the co-teaching classroom, were of utmost importance. Open communication and flexibility were key tenets of the co-teaching classroom, as well as trust within these relationships, and the principal’s capacity to empower and support them.
CHAPTER 5
Conclusions and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to extend exploration of the co-teaching model as it relates to the practice of inclusion at the secondary level. It specifically focused on teacher and principal instructional and leadership practices and how they informed the design of the co-teaching classroom. Findings related to the beliefs principals and teachers held in regard to the co-teaching classroom; the leadership and instructional practices exhibited by the principals and teachers respectively; and the alignment of leadership and instructional practices as shown through their actions.

Much of the existing research (Bailey & du Plessis, 1997; Bertin, 1996; Burrello et al., 1996; Dieker & Murawski, 2003; Friend, 2007; Friend & Cook, 2007; Keefe et al., 2004; Kloosterman & Zigmund, 2008; Mayberry & Lazarus, 2002; Morris, 2006) fails to examine how the beliefs teachers and their principals hold in regard to the practice of co-teaching, as well as their actions based on those beliefs, influence instructional practices within the co-teaching model. Educators need to know how teachers’ and principals’ beliefs and actions influence the co-teaching classroom in order to gain a better understanding of the co-teaching model and its potential use. This study revealed useful data that will give educational leaders and teachers greater insight into how the co-teaching classroom evolves.

Summary of the Findings
In examining the two sites in this study, evidence suggests two lenses that affect the actions of principals and teachers. One is of a structural nature and the other from a human resource perspective (Bolman & Deal, 2008), with the two working together to make the best choices possible for the students. In determining what students are enrolled within the co-teaching classroom as well as what teaching pairs are assigned to deliver instruction within the classroom, the principal utilizes a structural lens. The human resource lens is shown through teachers learning to collaborate and communicate as part of a professional learning community.

This study also found that the co-teaching classroom has the potential to serve as a means of removing the inherent isolation in practice, which traditionally occurs within the classroom. Friend and Cook (2007) “raise the issue of structural isolation in order to raise our awareness of the difficulties in collaborating and to stress that even if we have learned of the importance of collaboration and embrace its value, we still may need to work with colleagues who do not” (p. 17).

The need for special and regular education teachers to work closely together is evident in the following statement made by a regular education teacher: “I would have to seek out a learning support teacher’s help outside of class to do interventions.” Another regular education teacher stated the following: “The learning support teacher should be learning off the content teacher. The content teacher should be learning from the learning support teacher about better assessment of the students, [and] better instruction with particular students. That comes with a lot of interaction and communication with them [the co-teacher].”

One might argue that since the co-teaching pairs in this study utilized the one teaching, one assisting model more often than not the “co” in co-teaching is not evident. As stated previously, this type of co-teaching not only denies an active teaching role to the special educator
but it also undermines that person’s credibility, especially with older students (Friend & Cook, 2007). This was evident in only one of the co-teaching pairs in this study, the youngest teacher with only one half year of experience in both teaching and co-teaching. She stated: “The student’s don’t really understand why I don’t have to get up in front of the class and teach.”

According to Henderson and Kesson (2004), “professional collaboration occurs when teachers and leaders recognize they cannot improve their craft in isolation from others” (p. 160). This is demonstrated in the co-teaching classroom where regular education teachers are often beneficiaries of the instructional strategies within the special education teacher’s toolkit. In this case, the special education teacher is viewed as the learning process expert, ensuring the content is accessible to students with and without disabilities (Heitin, 2011).

Successful pairing of regular education and special education teachers is one of the responsibilities of the principal. This is a critical role, as confirmed by the principal at Site B who indicated that: “You must carefully select what co-teaching pairs are established. Discussion points initiated through teacher classroom observations continue to shape the co-teaching classroom.” He also stated: “The only way they can develop their interaction within the classroom is if they meet [and dialogue] with each other.” Teachers are then empowered to collaborate and communicate as a means to inform the design of the co-teaching classroom to benefit all students within the classroom.

In addition to the successful pairing of the co-teachers, time must be given consideration in developing those successful pairs. The development of more sophisticated models of co-teaching takes time, as expressed in the following statement by Principal B:

“It started with two teachers who really didn’t know each other personally or professionally, so that first couple of months had to do with people just kind of getting to
know one another. Within the first year, the person who was the more savvy content expert, and this particular example was Social Studies, she kind of led the way with a lot of the instruction in the classroom. We were fortunate because we could keep the same pairs of teachers. By the second and third year, what you saw is more kind of a handing off where one teacher would stop an activity and the other teacher would pick up an activity, or where as it seemed to flow.”

Successful collaboration also requires dialogue between the regular education and special education teacher. This on-going collaboration and dialogue is seen as a form of professional development. It is through collaboration and dialogue that both teachers and principals understanding of the co-teaching process continues to take shape and grow. This growth enables a progression toward the ultimate goal of creating a professional learning community within the school. The creation of such a community is beneficial to all and will ultimately lead to increased student success. According to Principal B,

“You have the learning support person [the special educator] there that can help the regular ed[ucation] teacher with particular strategies, and that’s really what special ed[ucation] teachers are masters of… finding different ways to present the material. At the end of the day, there could be a lot of great learning from the special education department just in strategy. Strategies can be used across the board by all kinds of students. That kind of falls in line with PLC’s [professional learning communities] and that is something that we all would like to see over the course of our career.”

In a similar fashion, Principal A stated the following: “I can tell you in the co-teaching [classrooms] here they have been helping one another understand the differences in the students. I think that is key because I think a lot of regular ed[ucation] teachers do not understand a special
education student. I think by having a co-teacher in there to explain things that is really beneficial to everyone and I think that’s helping the students succeed.”

According to the Ontario’s Principal Council (2009) “researchers conclude that a structure for greater collaboration among teachers that is implemented properly and sustained over time results in a strong professional community that, in turn, contributes to improved student learning” (p.7). Most of all, co-teaching benefits students and can be done successfully at the secondary level, as exhibited by the participants within this study. Not only is the inherent isolation lessened in regard to teachers’, but student isolation is also lessened by placing students with disabilities in regular education classes instead of the traditional self-contained classroom. This is apparent in the following statement by one of the classroom teachers in this study: “Some of the students who had been in an isolated English class previously and may not have had the opportunity to read a book like Night, performed well and articulated some good ideas.”

Conclusions

In examining the findings from these cases, three conclusions can be drawn. First, I found not only teachers, but principals as well, make decisions and effectively respond based on the perceived needs of the students. In these two cases, this is done through the utilization of co-teaching classrooms. Similar findings were published by Friend and Cook (2007) who argued that co-teaching allows teachers to effectively respond to the needs of their students. When the power of two [co-teachers] (Burello et al., 1996) is enacted it affords teachers the ability to present a more cohesive and thorough examination of not only the course material, but also the means of differing instruction needed to meet the needs of their students. What one teacher does not know or understand provides an opportunity for the other to present the information in a
manner which affords the students greater opportunity for success. As principal B stated: “That is quite a gift.”

Second, both teachers and principals gain professional development opportunities through collaboration. Sparks and Hirsh (1997) discuss the need to move away from traditional forms of professional development which allow teachers the opportunity to be passive recipients while an expert exposes them to new ideas or trains them in new practices (p. 1). They state:

“Research and experiences have taught us that widespread, sustained implantation of new practices in classrooms, principals’ office, and central offices requires a new form of professional development which must affect the knowledge, attitudes, and practices of individual teachers, administrators, and other school employees, but it also must alter the cultures and structures of the organizations in which those individuals work. (p. 2)

Speck and Knipe (2005) state the following:

High-quality professional development is a sustained collaborative learning process that systematically nourishes the growth of educators (individuals and teams) through adult learner-centered, job-embedded processes. It focuses on educators’ attaining the skills, abilities, and deep understandings needed to improve student achievement (pp. 3-4).

In line with Speck and Knipe’s description of professional development, I submit the co-teaching classroom as a form of professional development. The co-teaching classroom affords the opportunity for teachers to gain in their knowledge of not only instructional strategies, but also practices which benefit their students as well as opportunities to gain in depth understandings regarding their work. According to Fullan (2010), “There is only one way to get depth and that is in the daily workplace through learning in the setting in which you work” (p. 53). This is demonstrated in a statement by a teacher in site A: “Often times the questions that
the kids have are questions that I have so if they are not comfortable saying it, I have no problem saying [to the regular education teacher] is this what you mean? Can you clarify? And she [the regular education teacher] changes it.”

Benefits transmitted to students through the collaborative efforts of co-teachers include increased instructional options, improved program rigor and continuity, increased support through on-going collaboration and various kinds of expertise due to multiple educators working together as one (Meyan et al., 1996; Mayberry & Lazarus, 2002). Principals also utilize the information gained through the collaborative process to discuss and determine what needs to be done differently, if anything, to better meet the needs of the students (Site A principal).

In conducting this study, I have also learned that co-teaching not only benefits students, it also benefits the co-teachers, the principal, and other members of the school community. This is also noted by The Ontario Principals’ Council (2009) who write: “A collaborative team of the principal and teacher provides the best vehicle for creating the environment that is necessary for an effective learning community” (p. 26). Not only does co-teaching result in professional development within the co-teaching classroom, but outside the co-teaching classroom, thereby creating a more effective learning community. Principal A talks of the professional development in the following statement: “Because of the co-teaching, they [the faculty in general] are getting it [an understanding of differentiation for students]”. Co-teaching affords both teachers and principals an opportunity to hone their craft from both an instructional and leadership aspect respectively.

Huberman (1989) describes five stages of a teacher’s professional career:

- Career entry, from the first to the third year, is a time of both survival and discovery.
• Stabilization, from four to six years, is a time when a sense of instructional mastery is achieved.

• Experimentation and activism, from seven to fourteen years, is a time when they are willing to try out new approaches.

• Self-acceptance and serenity-conservatism, from nineteen to thirty years, is a time when greater relational distance from their pupils occurs.

• Disengagement begins to occur, from thirty-one to forty years, supervision is often seen as an unwanted intrusion. (pp. 10-11)

Huberman (1989) goes on to say that in the best of schools, the stages are less important. All teachers, regardless of the length of their experience, are pushing ahead to new growth. I bring this point forward as proof that the two schools utilized in this study are examples of schools doing co-teaching successfully, regardless of the variance in years of teaching experience within the co-teaching partnerships. The co-teaching partner with twenty plus years of experience explains: “I’ve been doing this for so many years that you get pigeon-holed in this is my path of instruction and someone else has a different take on it and it just adds new vision.”

Lastly, and most important, as an extension of Burrello et al., (1996) who argue critical thinking and brainstorming is essential, I argue that dialogue is equally important. Simply providing time for co-planning may not be sufficient for the co-teaching classroom to develop. Dialogue is the key to the progression of co-teaching over time. Not only must the two teachers in the co-teaching partnership communicate on a daily basis, two-way, reciprocal communication must occur between these teachers and their principals. Without such dialogue, the co-teaching classroom is incapable of transforming into the “power of two” as described by Burrello et al.,
The relationships that develop and form within and outside of the co-teaching classroom, through teachers, principals and students, are vital to the success of the co-teaching classroom.

**Implications for Practice**

After consideration of the findings and conclusions drawn from this study, several recommendations can be made for those considering the implementation of co-teaching classrooms at the secondary level. From the structural frame, principals must determine class size based on not only the number of students assigned to the classroom, but also the range of ability of the students in the co-teaching classroom. Mayberry and Lazarus (2002) explain that administrators must respect class size if the co-teachers are willing to take on classes with ten or twelve students who have been identified as having special needs. If they are given the same number of students as two teachers who are not co-teaching, the purpose of co-teaching is diluted or lost. Given the importance of class size and demographics, which was emphasized by the individuals in this case study, this must be considered when developing the co-teaching classroom schedule.

In addition to the structural aspect of the schedule, there is the human resource aspect, that of the assignment of the co-teaching pairs. In order to consider placing two individuals together in a co-teaching classroom, some common ground in the teachers’ belief systems must be established. The one common ground which must exist is the belief that the teachers have been placed together in a co-teaching classroom to meet the needs of all of the students in the classroom, not just the regular education students or the students with IEPs. Both teachers must have the “we” attitude, a belief in the “power of two” (Burrello et al., 1996).

According to Friend and Cook (2007), “Co-teachers should be sure to develop the habit of using ‘we’ language – ‘our students,’ ‘our classroom,’ the lessons we planned” (p. 119). It is
crucial to the success of the co-teaching program that both teachers collaborate with one another concerning the ongoing instruction within the classroom (Morris, 2006; Burrello et al., 1996).

This belief is the absolute base that must be established before the partnership can be formed. As Mayberry and Lazarus (2002) explain: “In this model, students are ‘ours’ not ‘yours or mine’” (p. 42).

As the co-teaching partnerships develop, the principal must provide ongoing support. The principal must provide time, on a daily basis, for the co-teaching pair to meet and discuss students and instructional strategies and to reflect on their teaching practice. At site A the principal built in planning time, in addition to their common plan time, for the co-teachers every 6th day of the building schedules cycle. He explained the 6th day in the following: “A collaboration day to talk to their [regular education] counterparts, if they need to. Some have taken advantage and some have not.” This is a very valid statement as co-teacher 1b stated: “I can’t afford to be missing a whole day worth of classes, because then I have a whole day of making up to do with not only myself and learning that material I missed, but with kids, and with the teachers. It’s good in theory, but it affects me. I can miss a period here and there, and that’s fine.”

This same teacher also explained that, as a special education teacher, she uses her common planning time for working with students or working on IEP’s, etc.: “Most of the time it’s used for helping kids, other times its just may be doing IEP’s or paperwork, or running around doing something. A similar outlook was expressed by teacher 3b at Site B: “We do not have a specific time set aside for common plan time. We have the same plan period. Mine is usually taken up with special ed[ucation] paperwork.” With most of the special education teachers planning time being utilized for student help and/or paperwork, their needs to be a clear
distinction between planning time and co-teaching planning time in order to facilitate progress within the co-teaching partnership.

Time for professional development is also important. According to Henderson and Kesson (2004), professional development needs to be consistent, connected, and purposeful. It requires workload support on a daily or weekly basis. To help facilitate learning, teachers must be given time to reciprocate their thoughts, ideas, and beliefs about what is going on instructionally within the classroom. This must be done in an atmosphere of trust and respect, where teachers feel safe in saying what needs to be said in order for the co-teaching partnership to make progress and to begin to build a professional learning community. The Ontario Principal’s Council (2009) defines a professional learning community as the following: “A culture where teachers work actively in teams with the shared purpose of producing successful learning outcomes for all students” (p. 119). Such dialogue must occur on a regular basis in order to decrease frustration levels, which may impede student and teacher progress within the co-teaching classroom.

In order to facilitate the time necessary for effective dialogue to occur collaboration time should be built into the structure of the co-teaching schedule. This scheduled collaboration time should be separate and unique from the teachers’ normal preparation period which is in a typical secondary teaching schedule. This will not be an easy task in today’s educational climate. It is evident that budgetary issues are at the forefront of school district concerns. As one of the co-teachers noted: “I don’t know what next year holds because of the changes in staff because of our budgetary issues.” If reductions in staff occur, it will make the building principal’s job of scheduling the co-teaching classrooms even more difficult.

Teachers may lose valuable preparation time due to a full class schedule, precipitated by
possible budget cuts. Even with these budgetary concerns, the benefits of the co-teaching classroom must be considered. Regular and special educators have such different educational backgrounds that to combine the two resources in one classroom can only make for a productive, comprehensive, positive learning environment (Morris, 2006). Schools should not allow budgetary concerns to cast a shadow over the valuable resource such as the co-teaching classroom. If individuals are given the appropriate amount of time to have meaningful dialogue and collaborate with one another, the entire system will become a more cohesive unit.

According to Lick (2005), as cited by the Ontario Principals’ Council (2009), it is essential to generate a collaborative synergy. This occurs when the teamwork of a group is working so well that the group’s efforts produce the maximum results from the available resources. The team, in this case, is composed of the co-teachers and the building principal working toward a common goal, student success. It is through a common belief in the co-teaching classroom that together they can meet the perceived needs of the student as well as make progress toward becoming a professional learning community. According to the Ontario Principals’ Council (2009), “Successful collaborative teamwork that results in improved student, teacher, and leadership capacity is the most significant attribute of professional learning communities” (p. 12).

As practitioners, principals and teachers alike review this study they should be cognizant of the structures and practices that developed within the co-teaching classrooms in this study. This will help them to identify possible barriers, which may exist within their school setting, to a successful co-teaching partnership/relationship, and enable them to plan/respond accordingly. When educators choose to use co-teaching as an inclusive practice, they must not only know the options for co-teaching itself, but must also be aware of how the beliefs, actions/interactions of
teachers and principals inform the design. This will allow them to make informed decisions as to the usefulness of the co-teaching classroom as it applies to them.

**Recommendations for Further Research**

In this study, I sought to explore how teacher and principal beliefs regarding the co-teaching classroom inform the inclusive classroom. Given the exploratory nature of this study, additional studies are recommended to expand upon and clarify the findings that emerged from this study. Additional studies will help to expand our understanding of the beliefs and practices of teachers and principals within the co-teaching model. Additional information on principal beliefs and their practices is needed, since this study included only two principals, one from each building.

I worked from the assumption that teacher and principal beliefs and actions work together to influence and inform the design of the co-teaching classroom. According to Yin (2009),

> A theory must be tested by replicating the findings in a second or even a third neighborhood, where the theory has specified that the same result should occur. Once such direct replications have been made, the results might be accepted as providing strong support for the theory even though further replications had not been performed. This replication logic is the same that underlies the use of experiments and allows scientists to cumulate knowledge across experiments. (p. 44)

In order to confirm my assumptions regarding co-teaching, additional studies should be conducted using multiple sites and classrooms in other parts of the state or country. This study was conducted in two rural school districts and could be further expanded to include urban settings as well. Morse (2001) argues any discussion in regard to instruction of special education students must recognize uniqueness which is applicable to urban special education students. He
states: “The lack of a trained, stable workforce could adversely affect the work these schools perform (p. 7).

Follow up studies of the co-teaching pairs within this study may be beneficial as well. The co-teaching pairs in this study were in the emergent stage of their co-teaching partnership utilizing the one-teach, one-assist model. They chose this form of co-teaching because there is little planning, if any, necessary for this form of co-teaching and it also gives an opportunity to special services providers in situations in which they may not feel competent to lead instruction (Friend & Cook, 2007). It would be beneficial to know how the partnerships progress over time, to see whether or not they begin to include other models of co-teaching such as station teaching, alternative teaching, teaming, etc. as described in the literature review section of this study.

Additional studies should also include co-teachers with several years of experience in order to explore the finding that the co-teaching classroom serves as a means of professional development for both co-teachers and principals. As the co-teaching pairs develop and grow, it is apparent that these individuals can learn from one another and develop their instructional practices which is a form of professional development. Due to the limited years of co-teaching experience within the co-teaching pairs in this study, it is difficult to know the extent to which the development of teachers within the co-teaching setting could be a result of the natural evolution of the art of teaching. Teaching is a process of transformation. As a teacher grows in his or her craft their students also develop. Teacher growth and student growth occur in tandem as part of a natural process. Many factors such as the culture within which they teach and learn, the culture of the profession (culture), and teacher and student personal and social growth work together to form the essence of educational outcomes (Henderson & Kesson, 2004). Each of
these factors should be taken into consideration in order to better understand how the co-teaching classroom operates.

**Summary**

The data presented in this study provided evidence of two frames, structural and human resource, which directly affect the actions/interactions of principals and teachers in the co-teaching classroom. The human resource frame is significant to the overall performance of the co-teaching classroom. The building of relationships through the co-teaching classroom provides a need for not only individuals, but also the school as a community. A good fit will benefit both (Bolman & Deal, 2008). The structural frame is also important due to its role in guiding the principal in determining which students are enrolled within the co-teaching classroom as well as what teaching pairs are assigned to deliver instruction in these classrooms. The two frames work together to best serve students.

In addition to the importance of the human resource and structural frames, three conclusions are drawn from this study: First, teachers and principals believe the co-teaching classroom provides the means by which to meet the needs of all students by providing two teachers, one regular education teacher and one special education teacher, within one classroom. Through a collaborative effort, what one does not know or understand the other will help to explain or implement. This provides teachers and principals opportunities to jointly make decisions and respond to those decisions based on the perceived needs of all students through the co-teaching classroom.

Second, both teachers and principals gain professional development opportunities through the co-teaching process which are job-embedded and have the potential to increase their instructional and leadership practices. According to Sparks and Hirsh (1997),
Job-embedded learning links learning to the immediate and real-life problems faced by teachers and administrators. It is based on the assumption that the most powerful learning is that which occurs in response to challenges currently being faced by the learner and that allows for immediate application, experimentation, and adaptation on the job. (p. 52)

Utilizing the co-teaching classroom as the vehicle for job-embedded learning, a collaborative culture, which is typically absent at the secondary level, can develop and grow. Through the collaborative efforts of the co-teachers and their principals, a collective wisdom will ensue in order to best meet the needs of all students. Fullan (2010) discusses closing the gap for all children, as well as raising the bar and being serious about high expectations for all. He states: “People with this sense of moral purpose really do believe that every child can learn given the right approach and amount of time” (p. 62). He also states: “Teachers become believers (and their moral commitment and energy zooms) when they themselves experience and are part and parcel of significant new achievements” (p. 63).

Third, dialogue is the key to whether or not the co-teaching partnerships have an opportunity to progress through time. According to Roth and Tobin (2002), “Co-teaching is central to creating shared experiences that become the ground from which understanding of praxis is developed in professional conversations” (p. 9). The co-teaching partnership’s ability to develop over time is contingent upon the principal’s ability to provide not only the structural framework, within which the co-teaching partnership exists, but also the guidance and understanding of the co-teaching partnership. This will help to facilitate the necessary dialogue needed for success. Without the two-way, reciprocal communication that occurs between both teachers and principals, the co-teaching classroom is incapable of transforming into the “power of two” (Burrello et al., 1996).
Endnotes

1 Also known as co-teaching, collaborative teaching, or cooperative teaching.

2 United States federal law that reauthorized a number of federal programs aiming to improve the performance of United States’ schools.

3 Direct quote from video clip.

4 Pseudonyms utilized.


References


Appendix A

Sample Welcome Letter to Principal Participants

Date

John Q. Public
Academic High School
Academic School District
101 Academic Lane
Academic, PA 11111

Dear John Q. Public:

Thank you for agreeing to be a participant in my doctoral dissertation case study. In order to participate you need to currently be a principal at the secondary level who has an established co-teaching classroom within your school. It is my understanding from your Superintendent that you meet this criterion.

I have enclosed two copies of the Informed Consent Form for Social Science Research. Please read this form carefully. If you agree to participate in the study, you will need to sign and return one copy of the consent form. You should keep the second copy for your personal records. I have enclosed a self-addressed, stamped envelope for you to return the consent form to me. In order to expedite the study, I am asking that you return the signed consent by (insert date). As soon as I have received your signed consent form, I will contact you to schedule a date, time and location for the initial interview.

Feel free to contact me by email or phone (jtwpennstate@yahoo.com or [redacted]) if you have questions or need additional information regarding the study.

Once again, I thank you for your willingness to participate in this study and I look forward to meeting you.

Sincerely,

Jill T. Wenrich
Doctoral Candidate, Penn State
Sample Welcome Letter to Teacher Participants

Date

John Q. Public
Academic High School
Academic School District
101 Academic Lane
Academic, PA 11111

Dear John Q. Public:

Thank you for agreeing to be a participant in my doctoral dissertation case study. In order to participate you need to currently be teaching in a co-teaching setting at the secondary level. It is my understanding from your principal that you meet this criterion.

I have enclosed two copies of the Informed Consent Form for Social Science Research. Please read this form carefully. If you agree to participate in the study, you will need to sign and return one copy of the consent form. You should keep the second copy for your personal records. I have enclosed a self-addressed, stamped envelope for you to return the consent form to me. In order to expedite the study, I am asking that you return the signed consent by (insert date). As soon as I have received your signed consent form, I will contact you to schedule a date, time and location for the initial interview.

Feel free to contact me by email or phone (jtwpennstate@yahoo.com or [cell phone number]) if you have questions or need additional information regarding the study.

Once again, I thank you for your willingness to participate in this study and I look forward to meeting you.

Sincerely,

Jill T. Wenrich
Doctoral Candidate, Penn State
Appendix B
Principal Consent Form

Informed Consent Form for Social Science Research
The Pennsylvania State University

Title of Project: HOW TEACHER AND PRINCIPAL BELIEFS INFORM INCLUSIVE PRACTICES IN THE SECONDARY CLASSROOM THROUGH CO-TEACHING

Principal Investigator: Jill T. Wenrich, Doctoral Candidate
600 Ninth Street
Selinsgrove, PA 17870
jtw152@psu.edu

Advisor: Dr. Susan C. Faircloth
Associate Professor of Education
Suite 200 Rackley Building
The Pennsylvania State University
University Park, PA 16802
(814) 863-3775
scf2@psu.edu

1. Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this study is to investigate how teacher and principal beliefs inform inclusive practices in the secondary classroom through co-teaching.

2. Procedures to be followed: Participation in the study will require completion of a brief email questionnaire regarding effective co-teaching classrooms, and participation in two interviews, one structured and the other semi-structured. Interviews will be recorded. Interview audio recordings will be stored and secured at the researcher’s home residence in a locked/password protected file, known only to the researcher. The researcher will be the only individual to have access to the recordings which will be destroyed after a 3 year period after the closing of the research project. Transcripts of the first interview will be provided to participants for their review and feedback. The researcher will have no contact with students other than to observe co-teachers in action.

3. Duration: Each interview will last approximately 45 to 60 minutes.
4. **Statement of Confidentiality:** Your participation in this research is confidential. Your confidentiality will be kept to the degree permitted by the technology used. No guarantees can be made regarding the interception of data sent via the internet by any third parties. Data will be stored and secured at the researcher’s home residence in a locked/password protected file. In the event of a publication or presentation resulting from this research, no personally identifiable information will be shared.

5. **Right to Ask Questions:** Please contact Jill T. Wenrich with questions or concerns about this study.

6. **Voluntary Participation:** Your decision to participate in this research is voluntary. You can stop at any time. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer.

You must be 18 years of age or older to take part in this research study. If you agree to take part in this research study, please sign your name and indicate the date below.

You will be given a copy of this form for your records.

_____________________________  _______________________
Participant Signature (Principal)  Date

_____________________________  _______________________
Person Obtaining Consent  Date
Teacher Consent Form

Informed Consent Form for Social Science Research
The Pennsylvania State University

Title of Project: HOW TEACHER AND PRINCIPAL BELIEFS INFORM INCLUSIVE PRACTICES IN THE SECONDARY CLASSROOM THROUGH CO-TEACHING

Principal Investigator: Jill T. Wenrich, Doctoral Candidate
600 Ninth Street
Selinsgrove, PA 17870
jtw152@psu.edu

Advisor: Dr. Susan C. Faircloth
Associate Professor of Education
Suite 200 Rackley Building
The Pennsylvania State University
University Park, PA 16802
(814) 863-3775
scf2@psu.edu

1. Purpose of the Study: The purpose of the study is to investigate how teacher and principal beliefs inform inclusive practices in the secondary classroom through co-teaching.

2. Procedures to be followed: Participation in this study will require completion of a minimum of two interviews, one structured interview and the other semi-structured, as well as two classroom observation visits. Interviews will be recorded. Interview audio recordings will be stored and secured at the researcher’s home residence in a locked/password protected file, known only to the researcher. The researcher will be the only individual to have access to the recordings which will be destroyed after a 3 year period after the closing of the research project. Transcripts of the first interviews will be provided to participants for their review and feedback. The researcher will have no contact with students, other than to observe the co-teachers in action.

3. Duration: Each interview will last approximately 45 to 60 minutes. In addition, a minimum of two classroom observations will be held during the specified time in which the class meets. Additional interviews and/or observations may be conducted as needed.
4. **Statement of Confidentiality:** Your participation in this research study is confidential. Data will be stored and secured at the researcher’s home residence in a locked/password protected file. In the event of a publication or presentation resulting from this research, no personally identifiable information will be shared.

5. **Right to Ask Questions:** Please contact Jill T. Wenrich at [contact information] with questions or concerns about this study.

6. **Voluntary Participation:** Your decision to participate in this research study is voluntary. You can stop at any time. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer.

You must be 18 years of age or older to take part in this research study. If you agree to take part in this research study, please sign your name and indicate the date below.

You will be given a copy of this form for your records.

______________________________________________  __________________
Participant Signature (Teacher)  Date

______________________________________________  __________________
Person Obtaining Consent  Date
Appendix C

Principal Interview Protocol

The following questions will be addressed in this study:

1a. What beliefs do principals hold regarding co-teaching?
1b. How do these beliefs translate into leadership practices in relation to the co-teaching classroom?
2a. What beliefs do co-teachers hold regarding co-teaching?
2b. How do these beliefs translate into instructional practices in the co-teaching classroom?
3. To what extent do principal and teacher beliefs regarding co-teaching align with their leadership and/or instructional practices?

Interview #1

The first set of interviews will be structured with the goal of learning from the initial interview to formulate questions for later interviews. The following questions will be used in order to facilitate direct exploration of the research questions:

- In your opinion, why did the school choose a co-teaching model? (Question 1a)
- What does an effective co-teaching classroom look like? (Question 1a)
- What are the necessary components or essential elements for the co-teaching model to be successful? (Question 1a)
- What is your role within the co-teaching classroom? (Question 1a)
- How do the participants involved in the co-teaching model develop their instructional practices? (Question 1b)
• What influence or ability to alter the design, do you believe you have had on the instructional practices within the co-teaching classroom? (Questions 1a & 3)

• What have been some of the main challenges for you in designing and creating an effective co-teaching environment? (Questions 1a & 1b)

• What do you see as the benefits of the co-teaching model? (Question 1a)

• What do you see as possible drawbacks of the co-teaching model? (Question 1a)

• What professional development have you participated in as it relates to co-teaching? (Background information)

• How often do you observe this co-teaching classroom? Is this number typical for all classroom observations? (Background information)

• Was this co-teaching assignment voluntary or assigned? (Background information)

• Which model of co-teaching is utilized during this class? (Background information)

• Is there anything else you would like to add regarding the co-teaching classroom? (Background information)

*Question #3 will also be addressed by classroom observations, 2nd round interviews and data analysis.
Teacher Interview Protocol

The following questions will be addressed in this study:

1a. What beliefs do principals hold regarding co-teaching?

1b. How do these beliefs translate into leadership practices in relation to the co-teaching classroom?

2a. What beliefs do co-teachers hold regarding co-teaching?

2b. How do these beliefs translate into instructional practices in the co-teaching classroom?

3. To what extent do principal and teacher beliefs regarding co-teaching align with their leadership and/or instructional practices?

Interview #1

The first set of interviews will be structured with the goal of learning from the initial interview to formulate questions for later interviews. The following questions will be used in order to facilitate direct exploration of the research questions:

- How long have you been co-teaching? How long has this co-teaching partnership been established? (Background Information)
- Why did you choose to co-teach? (Question 2a)
- What does an effective co-teaching classroom look like? (Question 2a)
- What are the necessary components or essential elements for the co-teaching model to be successful? (Question 2a)
- What is your role within the co-teaching classroom? (Question 2a)
- How do you develop your instructional practices? (Question 2b)
• What role does the principal play in the co-teaching classroom? (Question 2a)

• What influence or ability to alter the design, do you believe your principal has had with this co-teaching classroom? (Questions 2a & 3)

• What have been some of the main challenges for you in designing and creating an effective co-teaching environment? (Questions 2a & 2b)

• What do you see as the benefits of the co-teaching model? (Question 2a)

• What do you see as possible drawbacks of the co-teaching model? (Question 2a)

• What professional development have you participated in as it relates to co-teaching? (Background Information)

• How often does your principal observe this co-teaching classroom? (Background information)

• Was this co-teaching assignment voluntary or assigned? (Background information)

• Which model of co-teaching is utilized during this class? (Background Information)

• Is there anything else you would like to add regarding the co-teaching classroom?

Note: Question #3 will also be addressed by classroom observations, 2nd round interviews and data analysis.
Appendix D

Class Observation Guide

- Co-teaching model utilized –
- Instructional practices –
- Evidence of beliefs regarding co-teaching, within physical structure of classroom –
- Teacher to Teacher interactions observed –
- Teacher to Student interactions observed –
- Questions to be answered –
EDUCATION

Degrees
- M.Ed., Curriculum and Instruction, The Pennsylvania State University, 2004
- B.S., Music Education, Lebanon Valley College, 1984

Certifications
- PA Letter of Eligibility, 2011
- PA School Administration (K-12), 2004
- PA Music Education, 1984

EMPLOYMENT

Director of Curriculum & Instruction, Mifflinburg Area School District, 2010-present
- Elementary Principal, Mifflinburg Area School District, 2009-2010
- Assistant High School Principal, Mifflinburg Area School District, 2005-2009
- Middle School Instrumental Music Teacher, Lebanon School District, 1994-1999
- Substitute Teacher, Lebanon School District, 1984-1988

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS
- Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development
- International Reading Association
- National Association of Elementary School Principals
- Pennsylvania Association of Elementary and Secondary School Principals
- Pennsylvania Association of Elementary and Secondary School Principals
- Pennsylvania Association of Federal Program Coordinators
- Pennsylvania School Boards Association