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# Special Educator's Role within the Co-Taught Classroom

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**Abstract**

Co-teaching is defined as two or more teachers sharing the responsibility for teaching some or all of the students assigned to a classroom. It involves the sharing of responsibility among teachers for planning, instruction, and the evaluation for a classroom of students. I conducted a self-study of my role as a special education co-teacher co-teaching in a 3rd grade classroom. I collected data of my daily experiences: planning with a general education teacher, supporting students' learning within the general education classroom and correspondence through emails in regard to planning and students' needs. I have looked at the inclusive classroom through a researcher's lens, identifying my role as a special education teacher in regard to supporting students with disabilities who need specialized instruction to be included in an environment that is least restrictive.

Keywords: co-teacher, collaboration, Specialized Designed Instruction, parallel teaching, alternative teaching, one teach, one assist

**Introduction**

Every day, I walk into a classroom with children sitting behind their desks working on their assigned morning math problems. At a glance, it's not obvious which students have an Individual Education Plan (IEP), a 504 plan, difficulty learning and retaining mathematics, or difficulty reading at grade level.

However, after additional observation, students can be easily identified who are pulled out of the classroom, by specialized teachers based on their educational needs. Some of these teachers, or service providers, may include Reading Teachers, Speech Teachers, Occupational Therapists, Physical Therapists, and Special Education Teachers. The students who gather on the carpet with the general education teacher are academically at grade level, while the students who are pulled by the service providers mentioned receive either interventions based on Response to Intervention (RTI) or specialized instruction based on their learning needs.

After even more observation, students return to the classroom sitting on the perimeter of the classroom rug, waiting for instruction. The general education teacher identifies the objective of the morning, while the special education teacher calls a small group of students over to a table in the back of the classroom. The general education teacher provides direct instruction, the special education teacher provides instruction to another group of students, while the classroom aide supports the student's learning. The classroom itself is not unique, but it is a co-taught classroom.

The practice of co-teaching has the potential to be a strategy for meeting the needs of all students. Working in partnership with another teacher, bouncing ideas off of one another, planning and orchestrating the perfect lesson, having two pair of eyes and four hands, creating something that is better than that which each partner brings …what better way to teach? (Kohler-Evans, 2006, p. 1)

My position as a special education teacher is complex and I have many roles that I perform during the school day. My schedule is divided among planning instruction, implementing instruction, assessing students, collaborating with staff and managing students individualized education plans (IEPs).

As a co-teacher, I am assigned to work with students with disabilities in their classroom. In this setting, I am responsible for curriculum modification. My role is to assist the general education teacher in modifying curriculum to meet the learning style and needs of the students with a disability. I administer pre-and post-testing using group standardized tests and provide testing accommodations to students based on their IEP plan.

I attend annual review meetings that are held by the IEP Committee to discuss the progress of each child with a disability and to plan the next year's Individual Education Plan. I am also responsible for the triennial evaluation process – an evaluation that takes place every three years to determine if the conditions for the original classification are still present or need to be modified. I monitor the IEP and make necessary modifications and accommodations. During the day, when I pull out students for specialized instruction, I am responsible for day-to-day classroom management, planning and instructing, managing and evaluating instructional assistants and other paraprofessionals, developing behavior management plans and more. I work with students who have a wide range of learning, mental, emotional, and physical disabilities. I differentiate general education lessons and teach various subjects, such as reading, writing, and math, to students with mild and moderate disabilities.

**Research Problem**

The co-teaching model has been compared to a marriage, which requires effort, flexibility, and compromise (Weiss, 2012). Co-teaching is a model in which two certified teachers – one general educator and one special educator – share responsibility for planning, delivering, and evaluating instruction for a diverse group of students which include students with disabilities using six instructional

approaches (Friend & Cook, 2010; Shin, 2015). Through my research, I have found that the model that co-taught classrooms implement most often is the one teach, one assist model of instruction. In most studies, researchers have identified the special education teacher as being a supportive role in the co-taught classroom and not as an equal educator (Scruggs, Mastropieri & McDuffie, 2007).

The purpose of my case study was to identify the role and responsibilities I have as a Special Education Teacher in a co-taught classroom and the daily challenges I encountered collaborating, planning, differentiating instruction, and providing students with disabilities with specialized instruction.

**Rationale**

I chose to complete a self-study of my role teaching ELA and Writers Workshop in a co-taught 3rd grade classroom. My success at co-teaching is dependent on the planning and collaborative encounters I have with my co-teacher. I do not have a space or a desk in the classroom that houses my materials, however I am responsible for the learning and successes of the students. My ability to plan instruction is dependent on my collaboration with my co-teacher. I reach out to my co-teacher daily and check in consistently in the event that she needs to change the daily lesson plans. According to researchers Friend and Cook, "Co-teaching seems to be a vehicle through which legislative expectations can be met while students with disabilities at the same time can receive the specially designed instruction and other supports to which they are entitled" (Friend, Cook, Hurley-Chamberlain & Shamberger, 2010 p. 3).

My self-study identified areas that I need to improve and provided me with insight how to improve my planning. Co-teaching has created a sense of vulnerability that I never experienced as a classroom special education teacher. I depend on the collaboration of another professional to

successfully complete lesson plans and fear the days when I have to be flexible and fit my own plans into another block of time due to changed plans.

**Purpose for the Project**

The purpose of this project was to identify my role within the co-taught classroom. Through my research, I identified the co-teaching models of instruction that we implemented according to the instruction that was taught.  I identified the lessons that I differentiated along with the implementation of specialized instruction and my role effectively collaborating with my co-teacher. These three specific research questions guided my study:

What is my role as a special education teacher in a collaborative co-taught classroom?

How do I co-plan and co-assess?

How do I collaborate with my co-teacher to effectively support and implement specialized designed instruction to students with disabilities?

## Literature Review

 To gain a better understanding of the important role of a special education teacher, supporting students with in an inclusive classroom, this literature review begins by providing a  legal and theoretical framework of the role of a special educator in an inclusive classroom. To help contextualize the research questions, prior research concerning collaboration and planning practices between co-teachers is also reviewed.

**The Road to Inclusion**

Inclusion pertains to the placement of a student with disabilities in a regular education classroom. In order for the students to be successful within the general education classroom, a special

education teacher provides special education instruction to the student. The special education teacher can provide instruction to the students using the push in or pull out model. The model is dependent on the student's level of need and support. The special education teacher can also provide instruction at a separate location, known as pulling out. The special education teacher can instruct the student on specific skills, materials from the classroom, or reteach materials to provide the student with an opportunity to access the general education curriculum. (Blankenship, Boon & Fore III, 2007).

In 1954, the United States Supreme Court made a landmark decision that changed the viewpoint of segregation in public schools. In the case Brown vs. Board of Education, African Americans won their civil fight for equal opportunities in the education system.  This made it unconstitutional to separate students based on race because the court ruled that the segregated schools were separate but not equal. (Blankenship, Boon, &Fore III, 2007). This historical court decision not only impacted students of race, but it provided a new lens to look at how students with disabilities were also being educated separate from their peers. Chief Justice Warren stated,  "To separate them from others of similar age qualifications solely because of their race generates a feeling of inferiority as to their status in the community that may affect their hearts and minds in a way unlikely ever to be undone" (Blankenship, Boon, & Fore III, 2007, p.2).  During this time period, the majority of special education students were being educated in separate schools because of their disabilities. These students were often placed in restrictive environments. The environment was a setting where a student was removed from the regular education environment. The landmark decision of *Brown vs. Board of Education* encouraged the push for the special education movement. The fight for the inclusion of students with disabilities became a civil rights issue in the federal courts.

**The Education for All Handicapped Children Act Public Law 94-142**

The United States Congress passed The Education for All Handicapped Children Act Public Law 94-142 (1975). The law changed the model for educating students with disabilities. Federally mandated policies such as The Education for All Handicapped Children Act stated, "All students with special needs have the right to a free and appropriate public education" (Blankenship, Boon, & Fore III, 2007 p. 3). Public Law-94-142 was implemented on a national level to provide students with access to education regardless of their disabilities. The law made several improvements for the education of students. First the law enabled students with disabilities to be identified and educated. Next, the law outlined the steps to evaluate students and provided due process for the protections for the students and families. The law also provided States with financial incentives to comply with P.L. 94-142 (Blankenship, Boon, & Fore III, 2007).

**Individuals with Disabilities Education Act**

The Education for All Handicapped Children Act Public Law 94-142 was later transformed into the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 1990 and was revised again in 1997. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) ensured that all students with disabilities were educated "to the maximum extent appropriate" with "children who were not disabled" (Blankenship, Boon, & Fore III, 2007, p.2). In 1997, students with disabilities were placed in general education classroom settings. This brought the philosophy of "inclusion" across the nation. Inclusion is the educational practice of educating children with disabilities in classrooms with children without disabilities (Webster, 2016). IDEA states, "Students should only be removed from the regular education environment when circumstances make it unfeasible to educate that student in the general education environment, after the school has provided aids and services" (Blankenship, Boon, & Fore III, 2007, p.2). IDEA created mandates that stated, "All students should receive education in the least restrictive

environment (LRE)" (Blankenship, Boon, & Fore III, 2007, p.3). Public Law 94-142 (1975) and the Individuals with Disability Education Act (IDEA) of 2004 are legislative policies that led to the inclusive practices that are used today to educate all students with in a least restrictive environment (Blankenship, Boon, & Fore III, 2007, p.3).

**Co-Teaching**

In the 1980's, the implementation of Inclusion brought a view of acceptance and an idea that special education and related services could be offered in the general education settings. A partnership began that expanded beyond the traditional boundaries of professionals, but explored a new concept known as co-teaching (Friend, Cook, Hurley-Chamberlain & Shamberger, 2010). Co-teaching was viewed as a way to follow the mandated special education legislative law that stated, "special education students were to be educated in the least restrictive environment" and ensured that students with disabilities were able to interact with their peers (Friend, Cook, Hurley-Chamberlain & Shamberger, p 3).

In 2001, due to the legislative changes of The No Child Left Behind Act, Co-teaching increased in popularity. According to researchers Friend, Cook, Hurley, Chamberlain and Shamberger, The No Child Left Behind Act states, "all students, including those with disabilities, access the general curriculum, be taught by highly qualified teachers; and be included in professionals' accountability for achievement outcomes" (Friend, Cook, Hurley-Chamberlain & Shamberger, 2010, p.3). The No Child Left Behind Act also states, "all students, including those with disabilities and other special needs, meet set benchmarks measured by standardized assessment" (Blankenship, Boon, & Fore III, 2007, p.3)

Prior to 2001, federal regulations mandated that students with disabilities participate in the general education assessment, however the students could be exempt from the assessments. The No Child Left Behind Act required all students to participate in assessments and professionals are held

accountable for students' achievement outcomes.  The results of student assessments are reported to the federal government. This change in education has brought changes to the model of education that students with disabilities receive. Students with disabilities need to be able to demonstrate passing scores on state assessments in order for schools, districts, and states to make average yearly progress. Special educators are not generally content-area specialists and students need to have access to the curriculum and a teacher trained in the content-area. In order to satisfy this mandate, students need to be taught by highly educated teachers and students with disabilities need receive their special education services from a special education teacher (Blankenship, Boon, & Fore III, 2007).

In 2004, The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act renewed an increased awareness on educating students in the least restrictive environment. Co-teaching has been a model that has allowed school districts to meet legislative expectations and provided students with disabilities the specially designed instruction along with other supports to which they are entitled in accordance to their Individual Education Plan Chamberlain & Shamberger, 2010; Blankenship, Boon, & Fore III, 2007).

Co-teaching was implemented because of federally mandated laws. School districts needed to implement a cost-efficient, legal way to teach special education students. Co-teaching allows districts to obey federally mandated laws that require students with disabilities to be educated in a least restrictive environment. The goal of co-teaching is to increase achievement for all students: those with and without disabilities (Friend, Cook, Hurley-Chamberlain & Shamberger, 2010).

**Co-Teaching**

Co-teaching is a special education model in which two certified teachers, one general educator and one special educator, share responsibility for planning, delivering, and evaluating instruction for a diverse group of students, including students with disabilities (Shin, 2015). It allows special and general education teachers to address the increasingly diverse learning needs of all students within the general education classrooms through collaboration.  In particular, teachers collaborate and plan lessons to successfully instruct a diverse population of students with various needs within one classroom environment.

**The Six Models of Co-Teaching**

| Co-Teaching Method | Description |
| --- | --- |
| One Teach, One Observe | One teacher observes specific characteristics while the other teaches. After the class session, both teachers analyze the information together. |
| One Teach, One Assist | One teacher presents material to the class while another circulates through the room and provides unobtrusive assistance to students. |
| Parallel Teaching | Two teachers present material to the class simultaneously by dividing the class group. |
| Station Teaching | Teachers divide class group and content, and teach one group first, then the other. |
| Alternative Teaching | One teacher instructs the larger group while another works with a smaller group needing more specialized attention. |
| Team Teaching | Both teachers work together to deliver content to the class at the same time. |

Figure 1. Friend and Cook (1996) identified six approaches to co-teaching that provide ways for two teachers to work together in a classroom. They include: one teach-one observe; one teach-one support; parallel teaching; alternative teaching; station teaching; and team teaching (Cook & Friend, 1996, pg. 1-3)

Co-teachers can choose from six teaching models to implement instruction according to their students' needs. The six models of co-teaching are one teach, one assist, one teach, one observe, station teaching, parallel teaching, alternative teaching, and team teaching. The one teach, one assist model requires one co-teacher (typically, the general education teacher) who assume a lead teaching role, while the other co-teacher provides individual support as needed (Friend, Cook, Hurley-Chamberlain & Shamberger, 2010) The one teach, one observe model is similar in that there is a lead co-teacher, but the second co-teacher observes the students' reactions and behaviors, which are then shared and discussed later between educators. The station-teaching model designates one group of students per teacher consisting of different content each. After the content is completed, the groups are rotated to a new station. The parallel teaching model separates groups of students per educator, teaching the same content simultaneously. Alternative teaching again divides the educators into a large group and a smaller group of students who require more specialized attention. Lastly, team teaching (or interactive teaching) has each co-teacher share teaching responsibilities equally and are equally involved in leading instructional activities (Friend, Cook, Hurley-Chamberlain & Shamberger, 2010).

Researchers have studied how co-teaching has been implemented in school districts, according to the model that was designed by Friend and Cook (Friend, Cook, Hurley-Chamberlain & Shamberger, 2010). Research has identified that the requirements for successful co-taught classrooms are based on equality between the co-educators and a range of instructional models (Scruggs, Mascropicri & McDuffie, 2007). Researchers Keefe and Moore state, "Co-Teaching benefits students with disabilities" (Keefe & Moore, 2004, pg. 1). It eliminates the stigma of being in special education classrooms, and benefits students without disabilities that include receiving individualized help and modifications through the collaboration between the special and general education teachers. However, special education teachers find that the co-teaching model does not allow them to fully address the needs of

students who require intensive remedial instruction outside of the general education classroom. (Keefe & Moore, 2004)

Many researchers have studied co-teaching and through their studies they have identified issues that co-teachers had pointed out as problems within the co-taught model of instruction. Some of the problems were related to co-planning, compatibility and co-teachers' perception of one another's roles in the co-taught classroom.

**Planning**

Through my literature research I found that co-teachers had identified planning as being their number one issue in co-teaching. Researchers noted, "Co-teachers need a weekly co-planning period to discuss instructional issues, behavior management, teachers' roles and responsibilities, and students' Individualized Education Program (IEP) goals" (Scruggs, Mascropicri & McDuffie, 2007, p. 20). However, Co-teachers reported inadequate co-planning time created issues with the success of their co-teaching. According to several investigations, co-teaching partners received 40-minutes of scheduled planning time per week. However, even this level of planning time seemed insufficient (Scruggs, Mascropicri & McDuffie, 2007). Teachers felt the need to meet on an on going basis and took the opportunity to meet in the morning, at lunchtime, during recess, or at the end of the day (Scruggs, Mascropicri & McDuffie, 2007).

Austin (2001) found the following:

Teachers frequently framed planning time in the context of administrative support; for example, interviewed co-teachers who reported that they were satisfied with their present co-teaching assignment, but not with the level of support received from the school, noting that they needed more planning time. (p.3)

**Compatibility**

To teach effectively, co-teachers need to spend time getting to know each other on a professional level.  They need to share teaching skills, philosophies, and perspectives; and co-plan using instructional strategies (Walther-Thomas & Bryant, 1996). Teachers reported problems with being assigned to inclusive classrooms and not having the choice of who they were assigned to co-teach with (Scruggs, Mascropicri & McDuffie, 2007). Teachers having different philosophies or personalities were found to have a negative affect on their experience and caused a negative attitude towards co-teaching (Scruggs, Mascropicri & McDuffie, 2007).

Many investigations included reference to co-teaching as a marriage, that is, requiring effort, flexibility, and compromise for success. Researchers reported, "In many ways, a co-teaching partnership can be considered a professional marriage ... it entails dealing with a series of complex issues and emotions" (Scruggs, Mascropicri & McDuffie, 2007, p. 33). Similar issues frequently mentioned included mutual trust and respect and appropriate attitudes (Scruggs, Mascropicri & McDuffie, 2007). Teachers described co-teaching as an unusually close partnership or, what one termed, 'a professional marriage,' which, 'like (a normal) marriage, you have to work at'" (Scruggs, Mastropieri, McDuffie 2007, p. 33).

**Collaboration**

Researchers investigated collaborative efforts among co-teachers.

Austin (2001) stated:

 Because a collaborative model is both recommended and used in inclusive classrooms, one might infer that the interaction of co-teachers has been examined extensively and that the criteria for an ideal model have been defined. However, this assumption is unsupported and only a few studies have evaluated current practices. (p. 6)

Austin investigated the important factors that affected collaborative teaching that included effective teaching strategies, teacher preparations, and administration supports (Austin, 2001). He found that teachers in his study stated that co-teachers should meet daily to collaborate and plan lessons, however teachers stated that they did not meet daily and they felt that the times that they had met to collaborate was not useful (Austin, 2001).

A common theme across many investigations was the need for teacher training for co-teaching. General education teachers reported that they felt that training would help them implement co-teaching effectively. However, most general education teachers struggled with collaborating and sharing responsibilities within the classroom and with the special education teacher (Scruggs, Mascropicri & McDuffie, 2007). Special education teachers have more teacher classes in collaborating with teachers than general education teachers. Teachers reported feelings of being unprepared for collaborative teaching (Scruggs, Mastropieri, McDuffie, 2007). In other instances, teachers expressed a need for training to promote learning of more flexible thinking strategies, practical skill development and different co-teaching models. (Walther-Thomas, 1997).

**Perception of co-teaching**

Special education teachers are seen as visitors in the general education classrooms. Special Education teachers are more likely to take care of students' behaviors, modifications and monitoring student progress, whereas the general education teacher is seen as the teacher who is responsible for the content of instruction. Research stated that the co-taught model that is implemented in the classroom is the co-teaching model, one teach, one assist model. Most special education teachers are not teaching the content, but assisting students and monitoring student behaviors (Scruggs, Mastropieri, McDuffie, 2007).

According to Scruggs, Mastropieri and McDuffie, "In a statewide survey of general and special education co-teachers, each group saw itself as having more responsibilities than the other for

instructional and behavioral management" (Scruggs, Mastropieri, McDuffie, 2007, p. 19). Researchers also found a profound confusion about roles and responsibilities, was further compounded when special education co-teachers did not assume roles equal to their general education teacher counterparts (Scruggs, Mastropieri, McDuffie, 2007).

Austin investigated the important factors that affected collaborative teaching that included effective teaching strategies, teacher preparations, and administration supports (Austin, 2001).

Austin's (2001) study found that:

A collaborative model is both recommended and used in inclusive classrooms, it would be assumed that the interaction of co-teachers has been examined extensively and that the criteria for an ideal model had been defined, however, this assumption is unsupported and only a few studies have evaluated current practices.(p.3)

Teachers involved in co-teaching recognize the importance and need for establishing appropriate roles and clarifying responsibilities (Scruggs, Mastropieri, McDuffie, 2007). The consequence of roles not being clearly defined is the co-teaching approach is not appropriately implemented and the general education teacher takes ownership of the content, and the special education teacher becomes an assistant that monitors behaviors or assists with students who are struggling with the classroom materials (Scruggs, Mastropieri, McDuffie, 2007).

Often, the researchers found the term "Turf" was used to describe how the general education teacher viewed their classroom. The general education teacher in one study referred to issues as with the Special Education Teacher as being "Turf Issues" (Scruggs, Mastropieri, McDuffie, 2007, p.17).

Scruggs, Mastropieri and McDuffie (2007) shared the perspective from a middle school special education co-teacher:

We're entering their environment and we have to be the ones to go one step above and beyond. Anytime you walk into another teacher's classroom there's going to be some type of negotiation

that needs to occur for both of you in terms of just territory and what's asked of you. And that's a

tough thing to negotiate.(p. 11)

Based on the research it has been stated that the practice of co-teaching has been reported as

being positive, however the research has been limited and according to Scruggs, Mastropieri, and

McDuffie inconclusive. They concluded that the research has not been clear on how co-teaching has

been implemented, what problems are encountered within the co-teaching model, what the benefits of

co-teaching are, the perceptions of co-teaching from teachers and the factors that are required to ensure

a successful co-teaching experience (Scruggs, Mastropierie, McDuffie, 2007).

## Methodology

The purpose of my study was to identify my special education co-teacher role pushing into an

elementary classroom during the English Language Arts teaching block. I created my research questions

centered on my teaching role and how I implemented my role as a special education co-teacher pushing

into a third grade classroom. I wanted to specifically target how instructional responsibilities were

shared between my co-teacher and me along with the implementation of teaching roles with in a co-

teaching classroom. My research questions were designed to identify specific shared responsibilities

collaborating with my co-teacher during co-planning and co-assessing to provide students with

differentiated instruction.

## Methods

I designed my data collection to focus on co-planning, co-instructing, and co-assessing.  I

developed three specific research questions that focused on my role as a special education teacher

pushing into a co-taught classroom. I researched how I co-planned, co-assessed and effectively

collaborated with my co-teacher to effectively teach all students. I recorded data from the classroom,

technology, and daily interaction with my co-teacher.

My self-study provided me with an opportunity to look at my teaching role with a researcher's lens. Daily, I recorded field notes while I was pushing into the classroom using a double entry journal. I recorded what I observed myself doing during co-planning, co-instructing, and co-assessing. I later reflected on my daily observations. My data provided me with an opportunity to identify my teaching methodology that included differentiating instruction, modifying class assignments, advocating for students' needs, students' supports and daily interactions with my colleagues.

**District**

I conducted my research at Stone Wood Elementary School District (all names in this study are pseudonyms). Stone Wood Elementary School District, located in Redwood, New York has one elementary school and a combined Junior High and High School in the district. The School District is located on one campus with a shared swimming pool, track, field, as well as many grassy areas that allow for school and community activities to be done outside during any season.  The students, who make up the population of the school district, come from five surrounding rural towns.  The school district has a strong relationship with the businesses and people that can be observed throughout the community. The district has a strong multigenerational population, which supports the school district. Generations of families support the district at events such as: school fundraisers, school supported events and sporting events.

**School**

The school in which I conducted my study is Stone Wood Elementary School, which is located, in a rural neighborhood. The Stone Wood mission statement incorporates teaching to the whole child through engaging, kinesthetic, and academic rigor. The academic curriculum at Stone Wood teaches students using the New York State Common Core State Standards as a guideline for success. The school educates students in grades preschool through sixth grade.

**Classroom/Students**

My study focuses on me pushing into an inclusive third grade classroom. The classroom is a shared co-taught classroom with a general education teacher, teaching assistant, and me. The classrooms consist of seventeen students. There are nine girls and eight boys.  Out of the seventeen students, four students currently have Individual Educational Plans and two students have a 504 plan.

**Participant/Positionality**

I am a Caucasian female and I am working toward finishing my Master's degree in Literacy Education at a local college. My past teaching experiences have provided opportunities for me to collaborate and work beside colleagues, along with support staff.  However, sharing the planning responsibility with another teacher, along with the responsibilities of students' achievement within the same classroom environment is new.

Along with learning my new position, I am also learning the culture of the school district. This is my first year teaching at Stone Wood and I am facing the challenges of learning colleagues' names along with families of the district and students

In regard to my role as a researcher, I have conducted a self-study, observing my role as special education co-teacher for the current 2015-2016 school year. This year is my third year teaching special education; however this is my first experience as a co-teacher. My self-study provided me an opportunity to assess myself as a co-teacher. I had the opportunity to look at how I was actively teaching during the ELA block, co-planning with my co-teacher during our scheduled planning period and my personal participation and engagement communicating with my co-teacher.

**Data Collection**

I conducted a qualitative study (Clark & Creswell, 2015) and collected data through field observations, emails, co-planning, and collaborative interactions with my co-teacher. My research began with a close observation of myself pushing into the classroom, during the English Language Arts block.

I collected daily field notes of my daily interactions with students, my delivery of instruction, and the supports that I provided to students. I used a double entry journal to record my daily field notes and my personal reflections on my day pushing into the classroom. I identified the lessons that were taught and I recorded what I specifically did during the lessons. During my office hours, I reflected on the daily lesson and I recorded how I personally felt during the classroom experience in regard to my how I observed my role within the co-taught classroom (Shagoury & Power, 2012).

My co-teacher and I co-planned once a week for forty minutes. While I recorded our planned lessons I wrote field notes in regard to lesson plans that were differentiated for students along with lessons that were developed for groups of students who needed specialized designed instruction. After our planning session, I wrote field notes in regard to our conversations about the lessons and students' needs. Later, I used a second double entry journal to record my field notes along with our conversations. I wrote reflections on how I observed myself contributing to the planning of each lesson and how I observed myself supporting student learning (Shagoury & Power, 2012).

I collected weekly emails from the correspondence to and from my co-teacher. I identified emails that specifically were centered around our classroom instruction, schedule changes, or student needs. I separated the emails that I had sent from those that were sent to me from my co-teacher. I also reflected on our daily communication. I used a daily journal and recorded the day and what my co-teacher and I communicated in regard to the classroom, schedule, or students. The data provided me with information in regard to how I was performing as a co-teacher and how I was developing a professional relationship to effectively co-teach.

I collected data from my time spent in the co-taught classroom co-teaching, co-planning and co-assessing. I wrote field notes on my daily observations of what I was doing and feeling while I was co-teaching. I would later record my daily field notes and personal reflections using a double entry journal.

I used my plan book and field notes during co-planning to assess my co-planning and collaboration. I later, recorded my field notes, lessons from my plan book and reflections using a double entry journal.

I collected data from weekly emails and I recorded conversations I had with my co-teacher in regard to our instruction or students' needs. I printed out the emails and I recorded our conversations into a black and white marble composition book.

**Analysis**

**Data Analysis Strategies**

I used a coding process for interpreting and analyzing my data (Shagoury & Power, 2012). First, I went through my field notes and highlighted my instructional roles in the classroom. I identified three instructional roles based on the models of co-teaching: supportive role (one teach, one assist), small group instruction teaching with the same materials (parallel teaching), and small group instruction teaching different instruction (alternative teaching). I used three different colored highlighters to code the data. My supportive role was highlighted using a green highlighter, parallel teaching was highlighted using a yellow highlighter and alternative teaching was highlighted using an orange highlighter.

Next, I coded my plan book. I identified lessons that were differentiated for students by implementing explicit instruction, specialized designed instruction, and differentiated lessons. I coded my plan book using colored highlighters based on the differentiation of the lessons. I coded the lessons that were differentiated for some students using a green highlighter, lessons that were differentiated for students with IEPs or students who were identified as needing extra learning support with a yellow highlighter and specialized designed instruction was coded with an orange highlighter.

Finally, I coded my emails and my field notes from our co-planning meetings. I highlighted the conversations that were centered on students' needs and instruction. I coded our conversations that were centered on students using a pink highlighter and conversations that were centered on instruction using a

blue highlighter. Through my plan book and my field notes, I formulated two occurring themes: teacher trust and supporting students' needs. I identified that my classroom field notes were parallel with my plan book and the instruction that was implemented.

My research involved a triangulation of data. I collected data from my plan book, my double entry journal from the classroom (observation and reflection of the observation), my double entry journal from my planning sessions with my co-teacher (reflections from our conversations during planning, observations of co-planning), emails, and my daily communication journal reflecting various communications (prior to school, after school, or text messages). My various modes of data collection allowed for trustworthiness in responding to my research question.

## Coding

### Week One

For the first week of my data collection I analyzed my plan book. I found that the lessons for the week included little differentiation and that the general education teacher provided all of the instruction. Our co-planning conversations focused on the objectives of each lesson and what tasks needed to be completed by the students in order for them to achieve success on the end assessment.

For the first week of the ELA block, my role began as a support role in the classroom, which made up 40% of my time. The model of co-teaching that was being implemented was the one teach, one assist model. My observation from my double entry journal from the first day pushing into the classroom read, *I transitioned students into the classroom to join the rest of their peers who were sitting on the carpet, in front of the smart board. The teacher quickly identified each of them by name and directed them back out into the hallway. My general education co-teacher introduced the expectations for entering the classroom after they were transitioned from guided reading. Students reentered the classroom quietly and sat on the rug. The teacher began a read aloud of the new module text and I*

*stood on the perimeter of the rug watching. I observed two of the students' expressions on their faces and another student having difficulty tracking the sentences. I sat between the two students, whose expressions were showing confusion and provided a piece of paper that I took from a bin to the other students to assist in tracking the sentences. I whispered the meaning of vocabulary words and I would assist my students with an understanding of the text, by simplifying the sentences. I grabbed a white board and marker and created a concept map to explain the events in the story, providing a visual for the three of my students.* My reflection from the first day read, *I was not able to prepare students for the classroom expectations and I felt sad. I regret not taking the initiative to discuss how the classroom teacher was going to approach the students to acclimate them back into the routine of ELA that she had implemented. My stomach was in knots and I could feel the tension in my back. I was worried about my students and my own role within this new environment. Prior to the integration, my co-teacher voiced to me that she would be in charge of the behavior management of the classroom and I agreed to this, but I should have clarified the expectations of the overall routine of the classroom. The rules and expectations were not made clear in regard to transition from desk to carpet, gathering materials, or functionality of the classroom. I am filled with questions myself and I am supposed to be a teacher within the learning environment, but at this time I feel like an unwelcomed visitor.*

My first day in the classroom was a challenge, however I am a special educator who prides herself in overcoming obstacles and challenges. Through my reflections, I concentrated on what I observed were going to be challenges for my students. The first challenge I identified was the delivery of instruction. The instruction was delivered quickly and the challenge to the students was not having the opportunity to process the information. The second challenge was the lack of time provided to complete written responses. The students were required to provide text based, detailed written responses, however they were not reading at grade level and the responses required them to read, comprehend, and pull out text based details to answer each of the questions.

My co-teacher asked me to allow the students to work independently, however without providing them with reading support they were not going to be able to answer the questions. When I returned to my office, I began to brainstorm and create supportive materials to support students in the classroom.

Analysis of data collected during the first week showed the model of co-teaching that was implemented was the "one teach, one assist" model. My field notes were consistent with my lesson plans for the first week. My general education co-teacher provided whole group instruction and lessons were not differentiated, but when students were transitioned back to their desks for independent work, they received support from the classroom aide and me.

**Second Week**

The analysis of my plan book during the second week began to look different from the first week. I began to observe lessons that were highlighted green (differentiated lessons). Through my reflections from my field notes, I was able to identify conversations in regard to students' learning. My field notes stated, *I spoke with my co-teacher about the possibility of two of the students listening to the text on the iPad while they followed along with the text. This would provide them an opportunity to stop and re-listen if they were confused and provide them a resource to listen to the story more than once providing them a chance to be independent from adult support.*

Through analysis of my field notes from the classroom, I began to pull a small group of students who were struggling with vocabulary and writing tasks. My reflection from my field notes stated, *I am not instructing students, but I am able to observe my students' needs. I need to provide many of them with tools in order for them to be successful in this learning environment. I have noticed my co-teacher observing me as I am working with students. I am afraid I am stepping on toes, but I also feel that I need to support my students. Today, I provided my students with a graphic organizer to assist them with their writing. I pulled a small group to the back table and we completed the graphic organizer together*

*and I provided them all with a starter sentence to the writing prompt. I have been told not to provide so much support and that they need to learn to complete these tasks independently, however I do not agree. I feel their frustrations as they sit at their desks looking at their papers with a blank stare on their faces. One of the students puts her head down and piles her hair in her face blocking the paper from her view. Today, I was not going to stand and watch them become frustrated and hide behind their hair, so I did what I know best and I supported their learning and they completed the task. As I left the class, my stomach was in knots and I am prepared for my co-teacher to ask me not to provide the instruction that I did. I am not sure how I am going to handle the upcoming conversation?*

My co-teacher and I did not have a conversation in regard to the support I was providing that week. I continued to pull a group of students and I provided them with support during all of the writing tasks. My co-teacher began to implement the use of the iPad for writing tasks, which allowed the students to type their responses. The students enjoyed having access to an electronic device, as opposed to pencil and paper only.

The data analysis showed that the second week of instruction was the same as the first week. My co-teacher began to provide the use of an iPad to complete a lengthy writing task. I inquired about the possibility of dividing students into small groups to receive support on tasks based on students' needs. My co-teacher stated that she would consider grouping students. I continued to pull students in a small group setting and the classroom aide supported individual students along with the co-teacher. The co-teaching model of instruction used for some lessons was parallel teaching model. My co-teacher and I used the same materials and supported students learning, however the class was divided into smaller groups.  During the second week, I began to implement supportive materials to students during specific tasks that included learning new vocabulary and writing tasks.

**Triangulation of Data**

Through the triangulation of data from my classroom field notes, plan book, and planning field notes, I was able to identify my instructional role in the classroom. Based on the data, I found that the most commonly used model of co-teaching I was participating in while pushing into the classroom was the one teach, one drift model.

During the balanced literacy block, I pulled students for guided reading. I instructed students in an alternative model of co-teaching 45% of my day. When I pushed into the classroom during the ELA/Writers Workshop block, I supported students implementing the one teach, one assist for 40% of my day and I instructed students implementing the parallel model of co-teaching for 15% of my day.
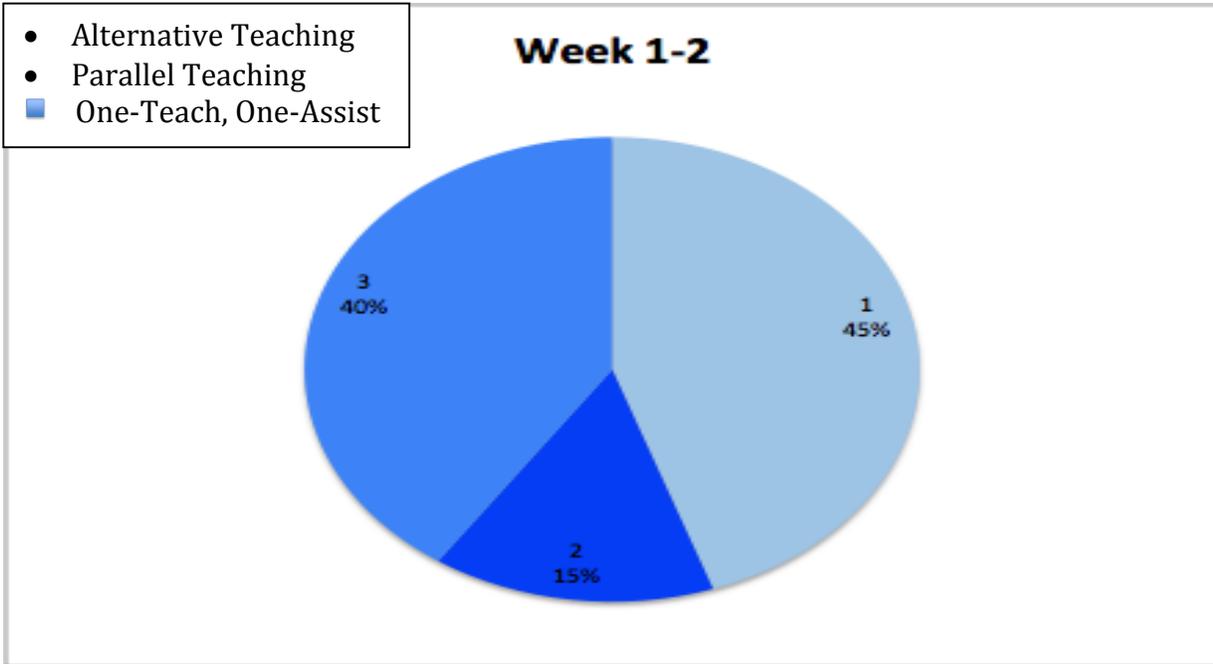
- Alternative Teaching
- Parallel Teaching
- One-Teach, One-Assist

**Week 1-2**

3
40%

1
45%

2
15%

Figure 2. *The Model of Co-teaching I implemented while pushing into the classroom in weeks 1-2.*
My teaching role, co-teaching in the 3rd grade classroom during the first two weeks of instruction. I implemented the co-teaching models: alternative teaching 45%, parallel teaching 40% and one teach, one assist 15%.



**Week 1-2**

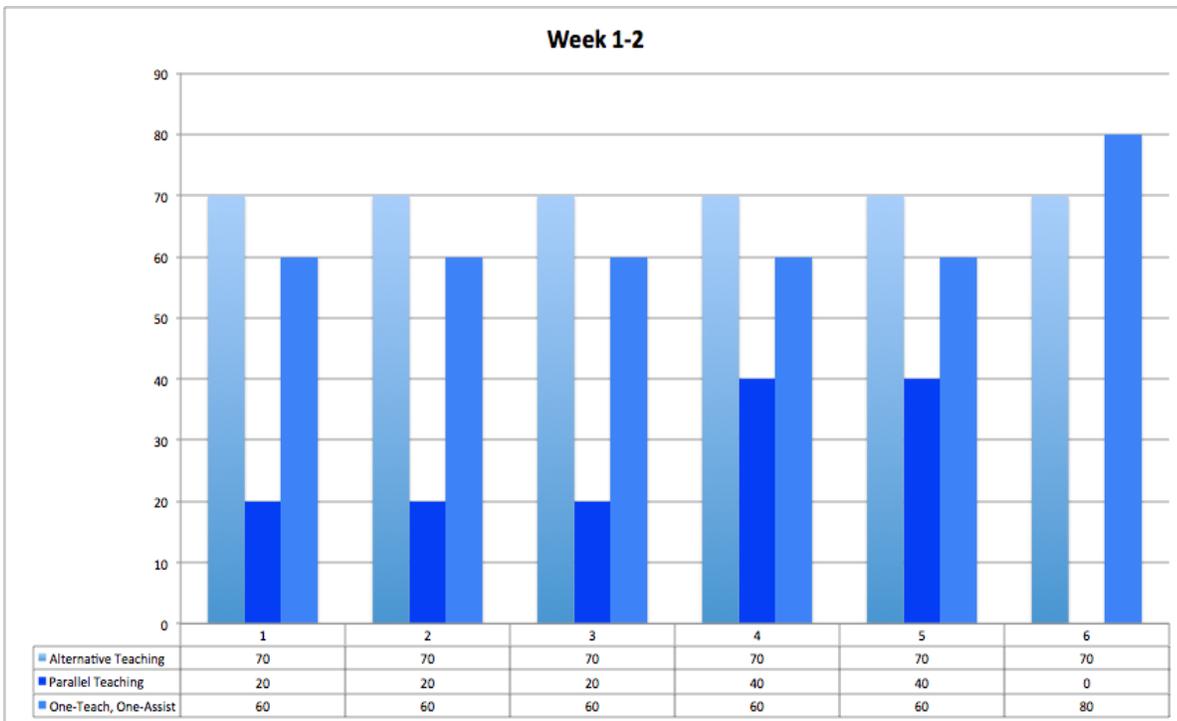| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Alternative Teaching | 70 | 70 | 70 | 70 | 70 | 70 |
| Parallel Teaching | 20 | 20 | 20 | 40 | 40 | 0 |
| One-Teach, One-Assist | 60 | 60 | 60 | 60 | 60 | 80 |

Figure 3. *The Model of Co-teaching I implemented while pushing into the classroom in weeks 1-2.*
 The bottom of the graph identifies the minutes per day I spent instructing students using the models of co-teaching.

**Week Three**

As I analyzed data from the third week, I began to see a change of instruction. I had an increased number of lessons that were coded yellow and orange, but a decrease in lessons that were coded in only green. Through my planning field notes, I was able to observe that my conversations with my co-teacher began with the lesson of the specific day, but centered on how to differentiate the instruction for specific learners. We grouped students and planned the lessons for the individual student or students. I identified through my planning field note observations that our conversations during our planning time began to change and focus more on student need in comparison to the lessons. We planned our lessons through our conversations of students who needed visuals and adult support reading the grade level texts.

My co-teacher and I then began looking at all students' progress and we planned each lesson based on what each student needed. We divided students based on their levels of learning and we each planned based on the group we were instructing. The materials we used were the same, but how we taught the lesson were differentiated specifically for our groups' needs. I began planning explicit instruction to teach my group and provided more visuals during the tasks.

Later, I shared my lesson and what I had planned for my group with my co-teacher. I felt it was imperative to know what and how each of us were going to teach the lessons and how the instruction was being implemented. My group needed a lot of support reading and comprehending the text.

The third week of analysis exemplified a shift in instruction. I observed lessons that were highlighted green, yellow and orange. Through my reflections from my field notes, I saw that I began instructing more lessons, and lessons were being differentiated based on students' needs. My planning field note reflection stated, *I am feeling challenged, I will be instructing students four days out of the six days using the module materials, however I have to follow the classroom time frame and the students will need to have the tasks completed on that day. The length of the tasks I feel may be a challenge even if I model how to complete the first question or writing task. I am going to have to talk with my co-*

*teacher about modifying the materials and choosing one or two writing tasks to provide the students'*

*time to complete the tasks.*

Analysis of data collected during the third week showed two different models of co-teaching that were implemented based on the lessons that were instructed. The primary model implemented was the co-teaching model parallel teaching. We began to implement this model 33% of the time. The second model implemented was the one teach, one assist model. This model of instruction was used 20% of the time. My general education co-teacher and I began to instruct small groups of students simultaneously using the same module materials. Instruction was differentiated based on the students' learning needs.

**Week Four**

The fourth week of my analysis continued to identify planning that was focused on students' needs. Our planning and our lessons reflected students' needs based on the differentiation of instruction. Coding of the fourth week data was, to my surprise, similar to the third week. Our planning began with the lessons and then how our groups were going to be instructed for each lesson. Our conversations on students' needs were the basis of our planning. I was able to observe from my plan book that our planning of our lessons for each day were coded in green and then below the four days out of the six days were coded in yellow and two out of the six days were coded in orange.

My reflection from my planning field notes stated, *My co-teacher surprised me during planning today. We spoke about her concerns for particular students, which included students that I had not serviced and she asked me for my thoughts and opinions from my observations and from working with them in the classroom. Through our discussions, it was decided that for four out of the six days, I would be pulling a group of students and I would instruct them while my co-teacher will instruct a second group. I can pace my instruction and provide the students with visuals, or tools to access the materials. I was floored and shocked, but I am happy to be able to instruct a group and teach!!* Through my analysis of my classroom field notes, I identified a decrease in my supportive role and an increase in my

instructional role. For four out of the six days of instruction, my co-teacher and I parallel taught students. My reflection from my classroom field notes stated, *Today, I spoke to two little girls who were not doing their work and I again noticed my co-teacher observing me. I quickly walked over to her and began to explain to her why I had spoken to the girls. I continued to tell her that I know that we agreed that she would handle all the classroom behaviors and she interrupted me. She thanked me for supporting her in the classroom. She told me that she was fine with me speaking to students because I was addressing the classroom rules and backing her up. I thanked her and walked away feeling calm. I am becoming to be seen as a teacher in the room and not a helper. I am not sure how this has developed, but a change has occurred and I am finally able to walk into the classroom excited to be begin my day.*

My analysis of data from the fourth week of instruction continued to show the models of co-teaching that my co-teacher and I were implementing. We were sharing the responsibility of instructing students; however we both were differentiating the instruction based on our students' learning needs. I began to implement specialized instruction with my small group, which allowed me to also implement their individualized IEP learning goals while instructing them using grade level materials. The fourth week of the ELA block, I spent 33% of my time teaching students in the classroom and only 20% of my time supporting students.

**Week Five**

The fifth week of my plan book was similar to the fourth week. Our planning began with the lessons and then how our groups were going to be instructed for each lesson. Our conversation on students' needs continued to the basis of our planning. I was able to observe from my plan book that the planning of our lessons for each day was coded in green and then below it, four days out of the six days were coded in yellow and two out of the six days were coded in orange. My reflection from my plan book read, *The writing tasks are difficult for the students I am instructing in my small groups. I spoke to*

*my co-teacher about the possibility of providing students with laptops, as opposed to pencil and paper. The laptops would provide the students with an opportunity to access spell check and it would also provide the students an enlarged font that two of the students need. She loved the idea and I cannot wait to introduce the students to having the ability to use the technology.*

The fifth week of analysis continued to identify planning that was focused on students' needs. Our planning and lessons reflected students' needs based on the differentiation of instruction. Through my field notes, I identified a decrease in my supportive role and an increase in an instructional role. For four out of the six days of instruction, my co-teacher and I parallel taught students. My reflection from my classroom field notes stated, *Today, was an awesome day in third grade. We are beginning a new writing unit and the students are excited. My co-teacher is instructing the unit, however I was given opportunities to share my thoughts or add details that I thought she had missed. It felt like we shared the responsibility of the instruction, even though we had planned that she was going to introduce the unit.  As I walked around the classroom, I observed the work the students were creating and I was proud of all of them. I pulled a small group that was having difficulty making connections and my co-teacher pulled a group. I observed the room and some students were working at their desks, but two small groups were receiving support from teachers and the classroom aide was assisting an individual student. The morning goes so quick and I find I am sad to have to leave.*

Analysis of my lesson plans, along with my field notes from my double entry journal, identified the model of co-teaching that my co-teacher and I were implementing in weeks three through five. I was able to identify a shift of instruction that began in the third week and continued to the fifth week.  In weeks three through five, I spent 47% of my time instructing students using the alternative model of teaching, 30% of my time instructing students using the model of parallel teaching, and 20% of my time was spent using the one teach, one assist instruction model.
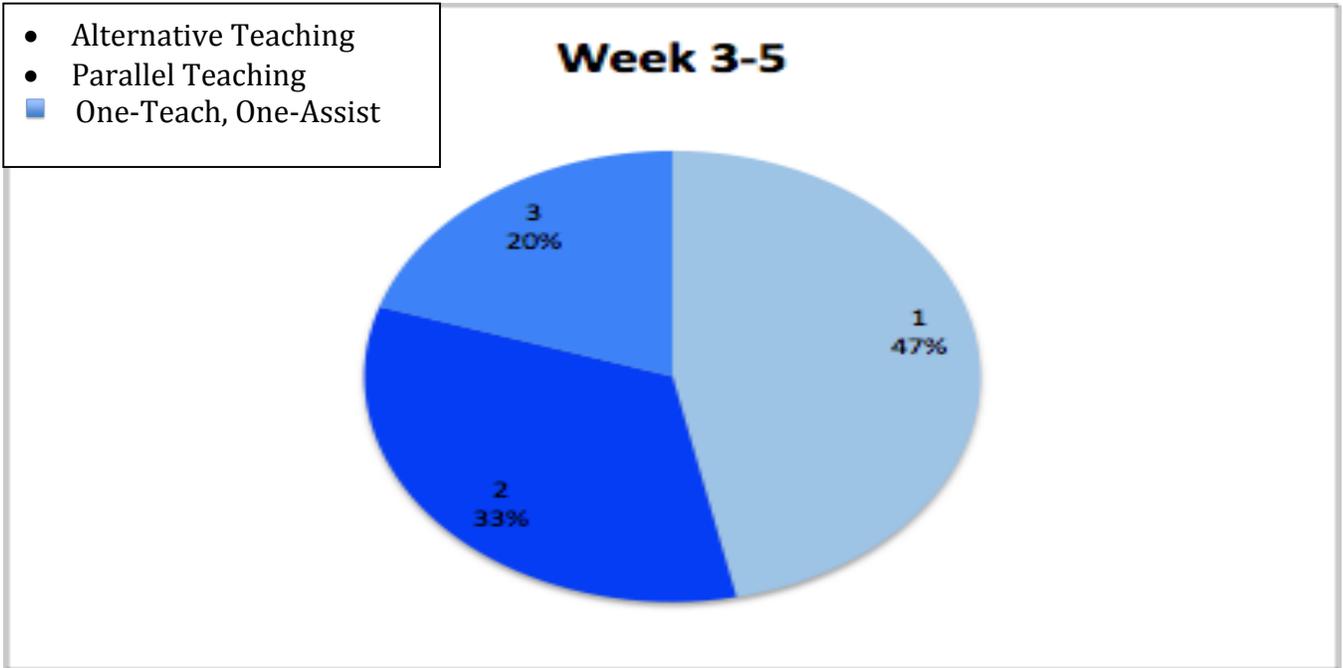
- Alternative Teaching
- Parallel Teaching
- One-Teach, One-Assist

**Week 3-5**



Figure 4. *The Model of Co-teaching I implemented while pushing into the classroom in weeks 3-5.*
My teaching role, co-teaching in the 3rd grade classroom, during the first two weeks of instruction. I implemented the co-teaching models: alternative teaching 47%, parallel teaching 33% and one teach, one assist 20%.
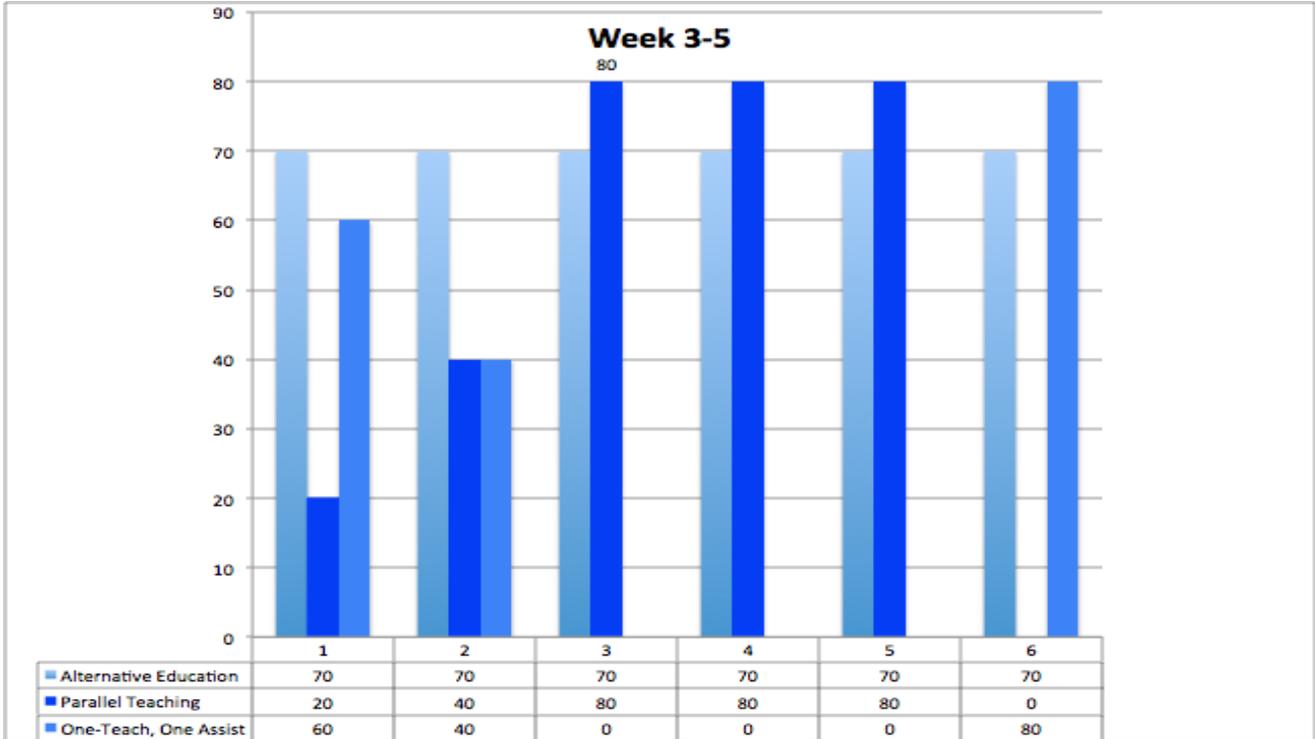


**Week 3-5**

|  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Alternative Education | 70 | 70 | 70 | 70 | 70 | 70 |
| Parallel Teaching | 20 | 40 | 80 | 80 | 80 | 0 |
| One-Teach, One Assist | 60 | 40 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 80 |

Figure 5. My teaching role, co-teaching in the 3rd grade classroom. The bottom of the graph identifies the minutes per day I spent instructing students using the models of co-teaching.

**Discussion**

**Summary of findings**

My analysis showed the development of a co-teaching relationship that centered on student achievement. However, the first two weeks of my study were characterized by a teaching model that was similar, if not the same, to what my research had found to be the most common model of co-teaching; which was the one teach, one assist model of instruction (Scruggs, Mastropieri, & McDuffie, 2007).

The general education teacher led instruction and 40% of my role was supporting individual students' needs. I did not manage behavior; however, I prompted students to stay on task and provided them with tools like fidgets, or weighted blankets. The research conducted on co-teaching supported my initial finding from the first two weeks of my study. The dominant co-teaching role used in co-teaching classrooms was the one teach, one assist instruction model, even though this method is not highly recommended in the literature. The special education teacher was often observed playing a subordinate role (Scruggs, Mastropieri, & McDuffie, 2007, p.1). Austin, Westberg, and Hazlett conducted research of co-teaching pairs from elementary schools. The researchers found that the most common model of co-teaching that was being implemented was the one teach, one assist model (Scruggs, Mastropieri, & McDuffie, 2007).

In week three of my study, I no longer participated in the one teach, one assist model, but I instructed small groups of students using the parallel teaching model. I think trust impacted the instructional change. During the first two weeks of being part of the classroom, I believe I showed my co-teacher that I could be trusted to instruct students. I provided support to individual students and I utilized this time to provide students with tools for them to maintain focus and attention during lessons. I pulled small groups of students who I saw were having difficulties on tasks and provided them with explicit instruction utilizing white boards and creating graphic organizers. I consistently

asked my co-teacher questions to better understand the objectives of her lessons and provided support to the teacher during the lessons. I brought worksheets I created to supplement students' learning based on the lesson of the day. I worked with the teacher and listened to what she had planned and offered helpful suggestions, walking the fine line of not telling her what I thought should be implemented, but instead I showed her what support I could provide. I feel showing her, rather than telling her, allowed her to see my teaching capabilities, which led her to be comfortable sharing the teaching responsibility.

My analysis showed a shift in our instructional model during the third week of co-planning. This change occurred based on the classroom instruction that was implemented during the second week of classroom instruction. According to researchers Keefe, Moore and Duff, "Before teachers can plan for the effective engagement of students in their own learning, they need to know each other's preference and style" (2004, p. 38). The first two weeks of instruction allowed my co-teacher and me to observe each other's teaching style along with conversations we had about individual students' learning needs. Through our conversations and the time we spent working together in the classroom, our relationship changed. We began to trust one-another's professional opinion, which began to impact our instructional model.

Conversations about students' needs and progress influenced my co-teacher and me to identify specific students who needed instruction to be differentiated, based on their individual learning needs. Austin interviewed 12 New Jersey co-teachers in grades K-12 and he found that overall, general education teachers found that co-teaching contributed positively to their professional development. He stated in his research, "Special education co-teachers cited an increase in content knowledge, and general education co-teachers noted the benefits to their skill in classroom management and curriculum adaption" (Austin, 2001, p. 7).

The analysis of weeks four through five confirmed a definite shift in the instructional model. My co-teacher reached out to me and asked me specific questions based on students who were displaying

difficulties in the classroom that she observed. I was entrusted to teach not only the students I once instructed during my pull out-group, but I also taught students whom I had not had much interaction with instructionally. We shared groups and mixed students based on their needs and abilities. The model of co-teaching that we implemented was the parallel instruction model.

Conversations about students' needs and progress influenced my co-teacher and me to identify specific students who needed instruction to be differentiated, based on their individual learning needs. Austin found the majority of the co-teachers reported that co-teaching positively influenced the academic development of all their students (Austin, 2001).

## Conclusions

Through my research, I was able to accurately answer my research question, "What is my role in the third grade co-taught classroom?" Through the triangulation of data, I found that my role in the classroom was dependent on the lessons that were instructed and the students' learning needs.

My supportive role in the beginning of my study allowed me an opportunity to observe the classroom routine and students' needs. I utilized that time to implement specialized designed instruction. In the beginning, I provided students with tools to use in the classroom and my co-teacher was able to observe the changes in student behavior after I implemented the tools. I observed individual students working on tasks independently or in pairs and I noted what reading or writing tasks were difficult for specific students. Later, I was able to create worksheets and identify lessons that needed to be differentiated for specific learners. I initiated conversations with my co-teacher regarding students' progress. I would ask to look at the work that all students completed at the end of the lesson and later discuss the assessments with my co-teacher.

My communication with my co-teacher was always centered on student progress, needs, or the daily lessons. At times, I felt that my co-teacher became overwhelmed with sharing student work and always having to communicate with me about students' needs, but I was able to observe a shift in our

communication. Our communication in regard to the instruction and student learning was continuously being evaluated. I would ask my co-teacher her opinion on certain ideas and I respected her input and professional viewpoint. I no longer had the feeling that I had to prove myself. I trusted and valued her opinion and through our trust in one another, our students benefited. We were teaching together, planning together, and our conversations were centered on our students. During a day of co-planning, I felt confident that she trusted me. We grouped students for a particular writing lesson and she asked me to place two particular students into my group. She shared her observations with me and we had a conversation of what we thought they might need to be successful. Our communication was again centered on our students.

## Implications

### Implications for my Teaching

Co-teaching requires teachers to work collaboratively. I found that I had to reach out of my comfort zone and communicate with my co-teacher on days that I felt she did not want me in her classroom. I consistently had to share my ideas for instruction and speak with her in regard to lesson changes. Open, honest communication was imperative during our co-planning periods. I found that our relationship changed during my study. Through consistent collaboration, which focused on each individual student, our conversations were centered on instruction to meet the learning needs of all the students We became more comfortable talking with one another and became more of a team. This team approach became represented in the classroom and I became more comfortable in the classroom.

### Implications for Student Learning

The development of mutual respect and our team approach to teaching allowed students to be instructed in smaller groups. The smaller group settings provided instruction development for the specific group of learners. Students who were able to work independently and completed their tasks

were provided with opportunities to be challenged instructionally. Students who required extra time were provided the instructional time to be supported and learn according to their learning needs.

## Limitations

My study only focused on me and did not include my co-teacher or students. My data collection was thorough and I was able to identify how I observed my role, but I wonder if the perspective would have been different had I included my co-teacher and her perspective of my role. Both of our perspectives together would have provided a better picture of the personal growth a teacher needs to go through to be in a successful co-teaching partnership.

### Recommendations for further research

Further research needs to be conducted on the special educator's role in the co-taught classroom. More specifically, how is the educator changing the instruction to meet learners' needs, especially students with special needs? If instruction is not being differentiated or specialized, what is the point of a co-taught classroom? Secondly, research needs to be conducted on how to change the mindset of teachers who are assigned a co-teaching classroom and provide professional development to teach teachers how to share the classroom responsibilities and identify the roles of each teacher. Co-teachers need to have professional development that focuses on how to co-plan and collaborate as a team. Co-teaching is sharing the teaching responsibilities, as opposed to a traditional general education classroom.

## Closing

I discovered through my self-study that how I am viewed in the classroom is not as important to me as how I am instructing students in the classroom. I began my study concerned that I may not be given a chance to lead whole group instruction, or be seen and respected as a teacher. I ultimately found

that what mattered most to me during my research was that students received instruction based on their learning needs.

My purpose in the classroom was to provide tools and differentiation strategies. I am not viewed the same as the general education teacher, but I am a specialized instructor who is able to implement differentiating instruction to meet the learning needs of all students. I embraced my position and I did my job to the best of my ability. I respected my co-teacher's classroom rules and classroom routines and allowed our teaching relationship to grow.

My self-study identified the importance of collaboration and consistent communication when working with another professional. My co-teacher and I discussed problems with and found solutions to students' needs and achievements on a daily basis. Through communication, we developed a trust in one another's professional teaching viewpoint along with teaching abilities. At the end of my study, I found that my relationship with my co-teacher significantly changed. We worked together as a team teaching kids!

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