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Inclusive co-teaching in the secondary schools: a study in sustainable change

Marnee Sirolli

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INCLUSIVE CO-TEACHING IN THE SECONDARY SCHOOLS:

A STUDY IN SUSTAINABLE CHANGE

by

Marnee Morris Sirolli

A Dissertation

Submitted to the
Department of Educational Leadership
College of Education
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For the degree of
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at

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Dissertation Chair: S. Jay Kuder, Ed.D

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DEDICATION

This is dedicated to Ron and Marc for giving up countless hours of their own time, in order to help me pursue my dream. I am eternally grateful for your sacrifice and enduring support over the past three years. Melanie, Melissa, Meredith who continue to strive for excellence in all they do, it has been your tenacity and constant quest for more that led me to this point. I am blessed to be a part of such an inspirational family of women who have never known any boundary impenetrable. My mother, Dr. MaryRose Barranco-Morris, whose countless hours of affirmation and support kept the midnight oils burning, and my father, Brian, who continues to teach me that language, both spoken and written, is an art form that helps to express emotion and guide ones journey, I thank you for your love and support. Ron, Peg, Michael, and Monica who have always been willing to fill in as surrogate parents, I am indebted to you for your kindness, support and countless hours of babysitting. My friends, you are too many to name, who remained my quintessential cheerleaders throughout this process, your support has never waived; when I fell down, you picked me up, I am forever grateful.

My career path has always been guided by the internal need to help others. Henry, you have touched my heart for so very long and it is because of you, your family, and your talent that I have continued to fight for opportunity and inclusion of those with similar hearts into the populations that others deem “normal”. Not to know the love and sincerity that your heart offers is to lead an unfulfilled life. To be inspired by you everyday, is a blessing.

Finally, this dissertation is dedicated to the memory of Rick Clendaniel whose commitment and passion to education remains a legacy in our community and our hearts forever. Jennifer, thank you for your strength and sincerity.

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ABSTRACT

Marnee Morris Sirolli
INCLUSIVE CO-TEACHING IN THE SECONDARY SCHOOLS: A STUDY OF
SUSTAINABLE CHANGE

2011

S. Jay Kuder, Ed.D
Ed.D. in Educational Leadership

The purpose of this action research project was to change the current implementation of inclusion and co-teaching in the secondary grades at one school in southern New Jersey. Through professional development, establishing core communication strategies, and the development of a common lesson plan template for each teaching partner, teachers were provided with the opportunity to use survey data and participatory action research to develop a new model for inclusive co-teaching that integrated best practices and established cohesion and clarity among co-teaching partners.

The data were collected through surveys, interviews, observations, discussions, and reflective journals. The first conclusion was that teacher's negative perceptions of co-teaching did not deter them from wanting to try to work collaboratively in co-teaching partnership. The second conclusion was that teachers needed to learn about best practices models through in-service training in order to be able to implement them effectively. The third conclusion was that establishing a protocol for effective communication is a necessary step in establishing effective co-teaching partnerships. The fourth conclusion was that the researcher's leadership style had a positive effect on the core study group's ability to affect change of the inclusive co-teaching model in a secondary school.

Overall, this study uncovered inaccurate teacher perceptions of co-teaching partners, the need for administrative support and professional development for co-teaching partner to become and remain effective pairs, and a strong need to develop and maintain effective communication

within the co-teaching partnerships. Included in the implications of this study was a need for co-teaching partners in secondary schools to generalize lesson planning procedures in order to utilize common planning time more effectively and efficiently.

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Chapter 1

Contextual Framework

Introduction. Developing consistent and practical techniques within a core team of teachers is essential in the development of best teaching practices within the inclusion setting. For more than a decade, co-teaching has become standard practice in the realm of inclusion and mainstreaming. Combining the strengths of both core content and special educators can be highly beneficial to students and educators alike (Ploessl, Rock, Schoenfeld & Blanks, 2010). Co-teaching enhances student achievement in academic and emotional needs while rejuvenating teachers and building passion and commitment within the professional setting (Villa, Thousand, & Nevin, 2008).

Purpose. The purpose of this action research study was to improve the current teaching practices in inclusion and co-teaching classrooms in the middle school population in order to enhance current teaching relationships, improve effectiveness of planning time, and positively impact all student achievement. Successful inclusion of students with disabilities with the general population requires fundamental change in the organization of schools, administrative assumptions, and teacher practices (Burstein et al., 2004). It is the intention that this study identifies more effective and valuable opportunities for teachers involved in a co-teaching setting, define the roles of the individuals within the co-teaching environment, build stronger collaborative relationships and establish which best practices theories work best with the middle school model. High school models, although a closer relationship than the elementary inclusion model, utilize content specific inclusion teachers rather than one inclusion teacher for all five academic areas. Adopting the high school model for middle school is not an option due to the

varying needs of the middle school population.

Problem. Bauwens, Hourcade, and Friend define co-teaching as “an educational approach in which general and special educators work in a coactive coordinated fashion to jointly teach academically and behaviorally heterogeneous groups of students in educationally integrated settings (1989, p. 18). Co teacher relationships help develop more diverse instruction (Wagaman, 2006). Any classroom where responsibility is shared by more than one pedagogue is a cooperative setting. Cooperative teaching includes both co-teaching and inclusion models. In order for these partnerships to be successful, each teacher should be honest about limitations and be willing to work toward a common goal. In the middle grades, this model is blurred. Each inclusion teacher is responsible for working with five different academic contents. With five different content teachers, the inclusion versus co-teaching argument often clouds the change process. It is most important to define responsibility for the two roles in order to move forward in the process.

Collaboration is a “shared responsibility” of two professionals to examine, develop, and facilitate instruction (Bucalos & Lingo, 2005). Without sufficient time to plan, prepare, and develop each relationship, this model becomes ineffective and inefficient. Ideally, both academic and inclusion teachers should be active participants in the presentation of information, but current models do not allow for such success. Collaboration helps to develop a shared responsibility and adds needed support in order for collective goals to be set, and ultimately achieved. Collaboration in inclusive settings is most important when referring to student achievement. It is the primary responsibility of all educators to provide opportunities for success for each student in class.

Carol Ann Tomlinson, the leading expert in differentiation strategies and practice,

describes this idea as “beginning where students are rather than where beginning with the curriculum guide” (1999). Through differentiation, all students should be able to meet expectations and be successful. Inclusion is an integral component of the special education process for many reasons. Inclusion encourages and promotes differentiation of everyday lessons while supporting the needs of the special learner, fostering communication between students and developing acceptance of diversity. The current push for differentiation is finally acknowledging that individuals learn in different ways and through different experiences. Differentiation provides a model to enhance instruction for all students. Inclusion is also a way to ensure that the needs of all students are being met, regardless of the classification. It is important to utilize the co-teaching model to ensure that the process of differentiation is reaching its population as effectively as possible. Having two, or more, teachers in a classroom will help these lessons develop more evenly and address the variety of needs in each classroom.

According to recent survey results, the teachers and assistants in inclusion classes are confused about the roles and responsibilities of each professional in the class. It is important to define these roles, and establish a solid protocol for inclusion settings. More importantly, building these relationships between co teachers will develop more collegial working partnerships that will ultimately have profound effects on the student population we are attempting to reach.

At Rainbow Middle School there are 18 inclusion teachers, 8 team teachers, 10 resource room teachers, two self-contained teachers, and 45 co teachers. Although the difference between the roles of each of these groups has not been defined, these are all professionals who work in collaborative teaching teams. Of the 128 professionals in the building, approximately 78 are working in collaborative teaching classrooms. The last collaborative teaching training or

workshop in Rainbow Township was held in February 2005. Since 2005, only twenty percent of that staff remains. Eighty percent of the staff has never been trained on this district's model, or ideology. There is a glaring need for change in the current system. There has been a slow development of frustration and a culture of blame that is occurring within the school building. In order to change or reframe this model, change is forthcoming. This study will attempt to develop defined roles and stronger inclusion practices.

Classified students in all districts require the development and execution of an Individual Education Plan (IEP) that establishes goals for each student. The special education teacher (inclusion teacher) is responsible for maintaining all IEP required modifications while ensuring the goals are being met. In order to effectively manage Individual Education Plan (IEP) modifications and goals, while attempting to maintain five co-teaching relationships is making inclusion even more difficult. In a recent survey educators at Rainbow Middle School report that they have not seen improvement of classroom functioning within the inclusion classes. Relationships that were once developing into functional working partnerships have shifted to become volatile and dishonest. Content teachers carry frustration with the inclusion process, while inclusion teachers struggle to maintain all the responsibilities that go along with the position.

Methodology. The research being conducted included two groups. One group will involve an established team of eighth grade teachers. The second group will be a focus group of six other educators within the district. The purpose of this focus group is to help generalize the findings of this research. My hopes, as both researcher and participant, are that the focus group helps to identify roadblocks in current practice through honest and meaningful conversation. I hope to find ways to communicate more effectively and collegially using critique and praise

(warm and cool feedback). I intend to develop and implement best practices within this focus group to help produce working strategies that incorporate Friend and Cook's Five Models of Successful Inclusion (1995), critical friends group (Dunne, 1998), and a professional learning community dedicated to the development of inclusive practices throughout the school and the district.

This research study was designed to answer the following questions:

- After completing a six-week workshop on Friend and Cook's models for effective inclusive co-teaching, will teachers implement these models into daily lessons?
- After completing a six-week workshop on Friend and Cook's models for effective inclusive co-teaching, will teacher perception of classroom roles change?
- How have attitudes and communication of inclusive co teachers changed since the implementation of Friend and Cook's models?
- How will my leadership affect this change process for each inclusive co-teaching partnership?

Through this study, I hope to enhance the current inclusion model within the Rainbow Township educational system. By performing this study, I hope to become more versed in the needs of all learners within the educational system, while developing an inclusion model for middle school that is efficient, effective, and cultivates better collegial relationships among co-teaching partners. As I speak with colleagues from many New Jersey districts, I hear the frustration of middle school professionals who struggle with inclusion models. Due to the academic specificity of secondary school, inclusion has become a struggling program. Now that I have become part of this struggle, I can see where change is needed and hope to identify the pieces that will benefit from change and better serve the community at Rainbow Middle School

(RMS).

Lewin identifies action research as a reflective process of progressive problem solving led by individuals working with others in teams or as part of a community of practice” to improve the way they address issues and solve problems (1946). The action research cycles were conducted as a study of the *yellow team* at RMS, which included five academic teachers, two inclusion teachers, and one administrator. I also compiled a focus group of six other educators from the same district. I had a preliminary conference with the yellow team to share goals, establish ground rules for effective critical discussion, and create a shared vision for implementation. All members of the yellow team group kept journals throughout this process that helped to inform the study and inform treatments, through true and meaningful reflection. Each cycle of action research implemented a current, research-based, best practice model for inclusive instruction. Finally, we discussed and implemented changes in assessment and evaluation as they appeared in a common lesson plan template. After the implementation of each of Friend and Cook’s best practices model was attempted in all academic areas, the group reconvened to critically evaluate the methods in the classroom and determine which method was most successful with the secondary school model.

My role in this process was participant-observer, an active participant in each cycle while continuously striving to support change. In order to collect data, I used a mixed methodology technique. I gathered information through online surveys, Internet discussion groups, interviews, informal talk, group meetings, observation, and reflective journals. Confidentiality was maintained throughout this study and all ethical considerations were upheld throughout the duration.

Limitations. This study was limited to five teachers in one suburban New Jersey school

district. The surveys were distributed to staff from the same school. This study was limited to one grade level in one academy at Rainbow Middle School. This study would need to be repeated in other schools, with different demographics in order to be generalized.

Chapter two will focus on a critical review of the extant literature in the field of inclusive co-teaching, building communication between co-teaching partners, and leadership initiatives that focus on affecting and sustaining change.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Introduction. As early as kindergarten we realize that learning is a social task that involves a variety of modalities and intelligences. As suggested by Howard Gardner, learning happens different ways with different centered brains. The fundamental principle of inclusive education is “the valuing of diversity within the human community” (Kunc, 1992). “Through inclusive education children with disabilities remain on the path that leads to an adult life as a participating member of society”(Tomko, 1996). With the extreme heterogeneous grouping that takes place within the inclusive classroom, students are more likely to encounter diversity, improve teamwork, and recognize abilities in all people.

Inclusion. Under the *Individuals with Disabilities Act* (IDEA), students with disabilities are legally guaranteed education within the “*least restrictive environment*” (LRE) to the greatest extent possible. The two programs, similarly presented, are mainstreaming and inclusion. By definition, “mainstreaming is the placement of students with disabilities into the general education setting” (Mastropierri and Scruggs, 2004, p.6). Inclusion is “the placement of students with disabilities into the general education setting with adequate support, which includes paraprofessionals, classroom aides, and/or Special Education Teachers” (Mastropierri and Scruggs, 2004, p.6). The purpose of inclusion is to foster authentic learning experiences in environments that provide the best possible placement for all students to develop and improve human potential in a global society (Rhode, 2008). Building Inclusion settings that work will not only foster true life-long learning, but will help develop and maintain diverse perspectives in all learning environments is essential. Inclusion is a movement for educational change, which

would require a great cooperation and collaboration of all professionals involved in the process (Fox, 1997).

Many argue against inclusion in secondary settings. Such integration would require teachers to shift from teacher centered to student centered instruction while changing expectations for classroom performance to be less than average (Fox, 1997). The advocates argue that inclusion is “inherently right” (Hines, 2001). In reality, inclusion has proven to engage cooperation, promote differentiation, and enhance the emotional well being of all students (McDowell, 2007).

Whether the theory of Inclusion is “right” or “wrong”, the reality is that it is happening, and will continue to grow under both No Child Left Behind, and the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act reform (Part B).

This review focuses on the extant literature that identify teacher perceptions of inclusive co-teaching, the most effective strategies for co-teaching, valuable communication between co-teaching partners, and the barriers that affect the inclusive classroom in secondary schools. The research presented here identifies, supports, and explains the current trends as well as highlights the deficits in many inclusive school systems. I studied a team of eighth grade teachers and their established co-teaching partnerships over a fourteen month period in order to find patterns consistent with recent research and develop a working model for co-teaching partnerships in inclusive secondary schools through a focus on debunking perceptions by establishing communication techniques, standardizing lesson planning, and the use of researched based best practice models of co-teaching.

While many researchers identify the same, or extremely similar, approaches to co-teaching, this project, referred to the Friend and Cook Model for effective co-teaching as

outlined in Friend and Bursuck (2009). These models are: team teaching, station teaching, parallel teaching, alternative teaching, and one-teach, one-support. While co-teaching is not the only option for meeting the needs of included students, it is the model discussed in this project (Friend & Cook, 2004).

Co-teaching. Inclusion is not co-teaching; co-teaching is not inclusion. Co-teaching is “two or more professionals delivering substantive instruction to a diverse, or blended group of students in a single space” (Cook & Friend, 1995, p.2). For the purposes of this research, I refer to classrooms that have inclusive co-teaching partnerships. These are defined as one content teacher paired with one special education teacher. Inclusive co-teaching classrooms are a “single classroom where students with disabilities are taught alongside their peers” (Friend & Cook, 2007, p. 94).

Inclusive education is commonplace (Friend, 2008). A recent trend in many school systems has been a development of collaborative teaching environments where heterogeneous groups of students work and learn cooperatively (Duchardt, Marlow, Inman, Christensen, and Reeves, 1999). “Co-teaching has been found to contribute significantly to raising the achievement scores of students with disabilities on high-stakes achievement tests” (Samuels, 2007). Effective strategies for cooperative partnerships focus on five key methodologies in order to engage learners while maintaining a diverse learning experience for all students.

Interactive or team teaching where teachers share responsibility throughout the lesson

Station teaching where smaller groups move throughout workstations while both teachers monitor the process

Parallel teaching where the class is divided into a skill or ability and both teachers lead separate but similar lessons

Alternative teaching where one teacher leads a larger group while the other leads a smaller group to provide additional support

One teach, One support where one provides instruction as the other monitors for needs, confusion, and or behavior concerns

(Friend and Cook, 2004)

Before being able to implement these models, or any other model, it is imperative for teacher perceptions to be studied and synthesized by all participants in the process. Judgments, misconceptions, and attitude toward change can be the impetus for lasting change, or the catalyst for the failure of developing effective co-teaching classrooms.

Gately and Gately (2001) identify eight components of co-teaching that are necessary for teams to be able to work together effectively and cohesively over time. They discuss the idea that there are “invisible” walls in many classrooms that impair the ability of these teams to present true and honest co-teaching lessons that will benefit their students. Gately and Gately also refer to the stages of relationships for each co-teaching pair. They identify these stages as necessary barriers for each team to overcome before true parity and equity is established. The beginning stage is where partners are shielded and cautious. Without previously establishing a relationship, this stage is necessary in the hierarchy of building a solid, trustworthy relationship. The compromising stage is when partners make adjustments for each other’s ideas and begin to develop a shared commitment to the process. The final stage of collaboration is where the true equity and parity begin to take shape. In this stage co-teaching partners feel secure in their abilities to work together and conformable enough to share ideas, even if ideologies are conflicting (Gately &Gately, 2001).

Teacher perceptions. The perceptions of teachers in relationship to inclusive co-teaching models in secondary settings, continues to create barriers, rather than break them down. For example, “general education teachers might fail to implement particular instructional adaptations that they believe are preferential to students with disabilities and therefore, ‘unfair’ to other students in the class” (Berry, 2006, p. 496). In the research presented, I have found similar arguments from teachers that mimic Berry’s. Many teachers seem to misunderstand learning strategies and their impact on all students. It is perfectly equitable to provide opportunities for success to all students, no matter the learning strategy; all learners deserve the opportunity to succeed. No matter the strategy, students with disabilities are entitled to an education just as all other students. Berry studies the teacher preparation programs and their role in preparing for undergraduate students for their role as teacher in the inclusive setting. She concludes that in order for teachers to be able to shift roles so effortlessly as seen in experienced co-teaching partners, it is necessary for these students to establish pedagogy in their own rite. She also found that understanding that pedagogy is “recursive and intertwined rather than simple and linear” (p. 413) leads future teachers to better understand the shifts in roles of co-teaching partners (Berry, 2006).

Kocchar, West, and Taymans (2000) concluded that there are far more benefits of inclusion for teachers, students, and schools than there are deficits. This team studied inclusive co-teaching for three-years and determined that the benefits for both special education students and general education students were clear. Both groups of students greatly benefited from social interaction. Self-esteem was reported to have changed significantly. Students were able to recognize their own strengths in these inclusive settings. Authors also report that there are three major barriers to this practice that must be addressed when attempting to implement an inclusive

co-teaching model. These barriers are organizational, attitudinal, and knowledge barriers. Kocchar, West, and Taymans also report that while academic performance was enhanced for many members of the community, without addressing the significant barriers, the success of the program may be limited.

Similarly, Hang and Rabren (2008) presented a study that examined efficacy of co-teaching within the inclusive setting. The researchers surveyed and studied 45 teachers, and their classes, in a public school. Teachers and students were presented with “Perspective Surveys” (p. 261) that had each participant rate their attitudes or feelings toward their co-teaching classes. The team of researchers also performed classroom observations to study academic and behavioral performance. The results of this study “demonstrated that students with disabilities who had been co taught for more than one year had significantly higher SAT NCE’s ...than they did before” (p. 267). The reports from both student and teacher were overwhelmingly positive. The conclusion of this study states, “co-teaching appears to be an effective instructional delivery option for meeting the needs of students with disabilities in general education classroom (p. 259). Similar to Kocchar, West and Taymans, Hang and Rabren (2009) note that the positive attitudes of both teachers and students greatly impact the success of implementing such programs. While teachers are willing to work together, the pairs of co-teachers must establish effective communication in order to maintain efficacy.

Murata (2002) conducted a study on a strategic inclusive co-teaching environment. She finds that forming relationships with a co-teaching partner before having to work together made an enormous difference in the establishment of classroom parity and consistency for students. An action research project, the author asked colleagues to choose their own co-teaching partner and attempt to “blend” (p. 68) ideas in order to form effective teams. Murata attempted to

observe, interview, hers and the other teams in order to determine how to effectively establish co-teaching partnerships. She interviewed, audio and video taped teachers, as well as surveyed students in order to track perceptions and experiences of all involved participants. Murata found that wherever teaching partners were able to choose each other, the partners were better able to establish cohesion, parity, and more effective approaches to learning for students (2002).

Taking into account the perception and attitudes of teachers toward co-teaching is a necessary and important piece of this fragile, yet meaningful, puzzle. Although the current study does not examine student perceptions, it is important to note that these perceptions are equally as important as teacher perceptions. Several studies report both positive and negative perceptions of co-teaching in the secondary setting. Co-teachers have reported feelings of improved student interaction, self-confidence, academic acuity, development of social skills, and positive peer relationships (Austin, 2001). Austin focuses on the attitudes and perception of inclusive teams and their feelings toward a number of related factors. The factors that affect co-teaching as a whole as well as the implications that these factors have on the individuals within the co-teaching structure were a part of this study. Furthermore, Austin gathered responses to perception surveys using semi-structured interviews and the “*Perceptions of Co-Teaching Survey*”(Austin, 2001). This study reports that an overwhelming majority of both general education and special education teachers report that there is an uneven distribution of work as it pertains to lesson planning and instruction. These participants report that the general education teacher carried more of the workload in these co-teaching pairs. This survey also perceives the special education teacher to be an important part of the theory, yet a noticeably less important part of the actual practice. This study represents many of the shared concerns of the other articles presented, does not represent the majority of research on co-teaching. Although the

concerns in Austin's study are not dissimilar with those of Murawski, Friend, Cook, Dieker, and other leading industry specialists, the feelings of inequity tend to dissipate as the stages mentioned by Gately and Gately have been overcome. If Austin were to continue to provide support to the teams surveyed, it would be interesting to see if the perceptions changed as relationships grew.

Teachers have also reported many concerns with the development of these co-teaching partnerships. Many fear these partnerships may hinder classroom functioning and ultimately lower the teaching level of heterogeneously grouped classes.

The secondary classroom presents unique challenges within the models of cooperative teaching. Classrooms are content specific, faster paced, and promote more autonomy; individuals with disabilities may become overwhelmed and lost. Teachers involved in these partnerships are rarely given opportunities to develop appropriate skills that will enable them to work with individuals with disabilities. According to Dieker and Murawski, many educators perceive co-teaching as a dreaded interaction. Many secondary educators fear losing control (2003). The researchers compiled data from numerous sources to gather concern of educators in the field of co-teaching. The intent of this study was to clarify the roles of each partner as well as provide opportunities for success in both the establishment of co-teaching partnerships and the maintenance of these relationships as the need for inclusive co-teaching classroom becomes even greater.

Murawski and Dieker (2003) recommend numerous strategies for co-teaching partnerships and school administrators to adopt in order to establish parity and manage inclusive classrooms more closely and effectively. Some of these suggested strategies include: proactive discussions, varied instructional practices, participating in professional development as a team,

and increased communication. One major point addressed here is the pervasive secondary school dilemma of “should special educators plan and teach five or six different content classes?” (p. 8). Murawski and Dieker answer this question simply with an emphatic “no”. The trouble is, many models are set up this way due to lack of funds, resources, understanding of the implications of teaching multiple academics, and a plethora of other issues. Part of the research done in this project will address the constraints of teaching multiple academic areas in secondary schools.

Many secondary educators are resistant to change in “subtle ways and often form unintended negative perceptions” (Hart, Drummond, & McIntyre, 2006, p. 2). Teachers tended to be concerned with how students would perceive a two-teacher classroom (Hang & Rabren, 2008). Rice and Zigmond (2000) report that many teachers were confused with roles and responsibilities of each partner, adding the disquiet of an equitable workload distribution, as a major concern. Teachers asked for a clear distribution of roles and responsibilities to be placed on each partner in order to exactly define who is responsible for what part of the lesson. Overwhelmingly, teachers in Rice and Zigmond’s study placed the accountability of the content preparation on the general education content teacher. They identified this as the most important piece of the co-teaching partnership. They were confused, however, on the roles and responsibilities of the special education teacher who may not have been proficient in a given subject area. A key component listed in these teacher concerns is the support needed from administration in order to continue to use these partnerships as effective teams that cohesively deliver content specific instruction that maintains state standards, and accounts for all information necessary in order to cover the entire curriculum (Dieker & Murawski, 2003).

Along with the concern for administration involvement, teachers report a concern in the evaluation process during these co-taught lessons (Friend & Bursuck, 2009). In secondary classes, the content teacher is prepared to deliver specific instruction that follows a state mandated curriculum often resulting in a state designed standardized exam. In many cases, these exams are required in order for students to receive a state sanctioned High School Diploma. A major concern for content teachers is that a lack of content familiarity [on the part of the special educator] will lead to interference of instruction and possible distribution of misinformation (Hart, Drummond & McIntyre, 2006).

One of the most alarming reports of inequality and concern with inclusive co-taught classes is the disparaging treatment of student with disabilities. Some teachers report that students with mild disabilities were often the targets of frustration on the part of the general education teacher, while students with behavioral disabilities were often ignored and their poor behavior excused by both teachers (Hines, 2001; Cook, 2004; Dieker & Murawski, 2003). When the level of disability of students with special needs has a direct effect on the treatment he receives, the need for professional development and training must be addressed immediately.

Throughout this research, it is important to highlight an overwhelming sense of positive attitudes of teachers involved in co-teaching partnerships. For all the concerns listed above, the positive effects of co-teaching are overpoweringly optimistic. Although the attitudes of general education teachers are quite different than their special education colleagues, they both support learning through experience, exploration, and discovery (Murata, 2002). Teachers are “convinced they have the power to transform learning capacity...and expand opportunities...that encourage and empower” (Hart, et al. 2006, p. 4). Co-teaching partners who support goals and develop a fusion of partners are conducive to a positive learning experience

(Murata, 2002). Mastropierri and Scruggs (2001), remind that inconsistent results should not deter collaboration. The complication of teacher preparation in core content areas should not be the deciding factor in removing a co-teaching partnership. In surveys, teachers believed that general education teachers did more work than their special education colleagues; however, both benefitted from feedback, which helped to build relationships (Austin, 2001).

When teaching pairs were matched with meaningful and sincere consideration, the obstacles to this process were dramatically reduced (Piechura-Couture, Tichenor, Touchton, Macisaac, & Heines, 2006). Although Dieker and Murawski (2001) report that a lack of preparation of both general and special educator can create an unbalanced equation, they also state that administrative support of true collaboration will foster growth among each participant. When teachers feel ill prepared to co-teach, administrative support and meaningful pairing of teams can deter feelings of inadequacy and frustration (Hines, 2001). When the choice of teaching partner was deliberate, co-teaching partners reported success in differentiating instruction, shared sense of consciousness, philosophy, and respect, and an actual desire to continue these relationships outside of the shared planning time. When asked about collaborative effectiveness, one teacher responded “the fact that we talked so much before we ever did anything made a huge difference” (Murata, 2002, p. 70). Another from the same study added that “planning together is more important than [the actual] co-teaching” (Murata, 2002, p. 71).

It would be irresponsible not to report that in the majority of cases researched; teachers felt stress and frustration at some point of the co-teaching journey. With proper supports, these same teachers believed that the implementation of co-teaching was more beneficial once practiced and parity was established (Little & Dieker, 2009). Overall, teachers believe that the benefits

from these co-taught classes, when presented as cohesive units, clearly outweighed any initial concerns (Little & Dieker, 2009; Austin, 2001; Piechura-Couture, et al. 2006; Murata, 2002; Mastropierri & Scruggs, 2001). Overwhelmingly, teachers reported that students improved their academic performance in co taught classes (Austin, 2001; Rea, McLaughlin, Walther-Thomas, 2002; Hang & Rabren, 2009). No matter the article, all researchers and practitioners agree that common planning time is fundamental to building successful co-teaching partnerships in secondary classrooms.

Lesson planning. Common planning time is a key component in developing successful co-teaching partnerships. Teachers involved in these partnerships must be given opportunities to plan lessons and practice strategies for content delivery that will be effective for all learners. An enormous hurdle within these environments is the lack of common planning time where all professionals develop common goals and discuss opportunities for student success (Wagaman, 2008). Since Cook & Friend (2004) report that “most professionals express a concern for time to form relationships and plan for realistic expectations” (p. 27), it is important for administration to provide common planning time to co-teaching partners. When partners are provided with the support of common planning time, the “specific and unique skills of each professional [is more effectively used]” (Tobin, 2005, p. 786). Insufficient planning time often leads to teacher frustration and struggles with parity (Tobin, 2005). When not used productively, discussion and content preparation can be limited (Murawski, 2002). Using various forms of scheduling should be a non obtrusive way to ensure all co-teaching partners are afforded ample common planning time. Furthermore, using standardized lesson plans for co-teaching partners will help create a more fluid approach across the curriculum content areas. Programs, such as the *Co-Teaching Solutions System (CTSS)*, a computer based program used to develop co-taught lessons (2007),

Dr. Wendy Murawski's pre-formed lesson plan for co-teaching partners (2009), or Dr. Lisa Dieker's *Co-Teaching Lesson Plan Book (2006)* are all ways to strategically foster essential communication throughout the lesson planning process while creating an opportunity for these partners to save time on stabilizing the format in order to spend more time on developing the actions and intricacies of each lesson.

Student centered experiences are key components within the inclusive settings. These authentic experiences happen throughout each lesson. When setting goals, it is important to remember that all students learn through different processes. When the learning experiences become authentic, they are more likely to affect the learner and become lasting experiences. The primary method used to ensure that all students learn and achieve is through the differentiation model. As presented by Carol Ann Tomlinson, at its most basic level, differentiation consists of the efforts of teachers to respond to variance among learners in the classroom (1999). Using strategies within the inclusive classroom coupled with the ideas of differentiation will provide experiences to all levels of learners through a variety of processes, contents, and products. All students are encouraged and expected to discover ideas, put these ideas into use, and prepare a product that exhibits an understanding of the task given. Whereas guided reading provides a perfect and seamless opportunity for differentiation in the reading classroom, this process can be much more difficult to implement in other academic areas.

“Because students with mild to moderate disabilities are viewed as lacking the basic skills necessary to be successful in the general education classroom, special education teachers often provide instruction in remedial format” (Dieker, and Murawski, 2003, p. 3). In the secondary schools, this is no longer an effective approach. Teachers need to adapt instruction to meet the needs of the learners, while meeting the demand of the curriculum at a much more

individualized level. In secondary schools, content knowledge became a major issue for teaching partners. Special education teachers are not required to have a content specialty license. Forming partnerships with this in mind is a necessity and needs to be a part of the discussion, planning, and implementation of the Inclusive classroom.

Students with disabilities are receiving instruction within the general education classroom; therefore, the issue of equity remains at the forefront of community and educational discussion (Berry, 2006). As identified in Zigmond (2003), research has found that maintaining a special education curriculum does not achieve desired outcomes for students with disabilities; “what goes on in a place, not the location itself, makes all the difference” (Zigmond, 2003, p. 198). Effective interventions largely include a piece of social inclusion as well as a focus on core curriculum. With all students engaged in active approaches, the needs of all learners should be met without fail. As many researchers have noted, it is when the relationship of the co-teaching partnerships fail, that true inclusion also fails. Classroom partnerships that share ownership, acceptance, and alliances are those most conducive to equity in learning for all students (Cornelius and Herrenkohl, 2004). These ideas are all embedded in one important and inarguable point; it is law. IDEA cannot be debated, it cannot be theorized, and it is simple fact. Law requires us, to provide opportunities for students with disabilities that are presented within the least restrictive environment for the classified disability. In 1975, congress passed the IDEA Act (Individuals with disabilities Act). This law stated that all students with disabilities were entitled to a free, appropriate, public education (IDEA partnership). Although this act has been ever changing, the pervasive truth is that students with special needs are to be included in public education. IDEA increases the responsibilities of educators, administrators, and support staff. Today, more than 60% of students with disabilities receive education in the general education

classroom. This is supported by the “Least Restrictive Environment”(LRE) concept that students must be educated in the setting least removed from the general education classroom. IDEA recognizes 13 categories of disabilities: autism, deafness, deaf-blindness, emotional disturbance, hearing impairments, mental retardation, multiple disabilities, orthopedic impairments, other health impairments, specific learning disabilities, speech or language impairments, traumatic brain injury, visual impairments (US Dept of Education)

The IDEA, and No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) has brought about a new sense of classroom diversity. There are numerous court cases that relate to the issues surrounding students with disabilities that helped to establish the rights to education for all students. The new special education continuum of services is essential in delving into the inclusive methodologies and promoting collaboration amongst pedagogues in order to ensure that student needs are being met, and federal mandates are being reached without question (Knowlton, 2004). The reality of these laws places the responsibility on the classroom teacher to provide opportunities for success to all students with disabilities. It urges that these opportunities be in place for all students, no matter the classification.

Frankly, public schools have an obligation to educate students with a range of abilities. Teachers and support staff meet these challenges daily, without question. Teachers need to be given the appropriate tools in which to meet this challenge with vigor and enthusiasm. Many times, finding ways to differentiate and meet the needs of all students is an arduous process that requires more time than allotted throughout the workday. It is essential for administration to recognize these deficits and aim to assist in minimizing the obstacles that stand between teachers and students. More importantly, teachers need to be supported and educated with new ideas, constant evaluation, and feedback in order to be reflective and ever changing. The

population of students in the 21st century is no longer predictable. These students will meet challenges that we cannot begin to foresee. It is our responsibility as educators to ensure they are equipped to deal with the globally competitive society. Administration is equally responsible for providing the tools to employ in order to bring all of our learners to the next level of learning.

Espoused leadership initiatives. Secondary classrooms present such severe challenges in the implementation of best practices for inclusion education, as they currently exist; therefore, it is important to be a reflective practitioner when attempting to initiate change. Reflective practice promotes better working relationships and helps to maximize time spent on planning as each practitioner bring an honest sense of ways to modify classroom practices. Donald Schon suggests that “the capacity to reflect on action so as to engage in a process of continuous learning was one of the defining characteristics of professional practice” (1983) The ability to reflect on ones teaching and welcome the reflections of others can only make collaboration more effective. Realizing that we learn from failure and through criticism is important in building oneself as a stronger leader and proficient member of any community.

Promoting the concept of reflective practice, as a key component of modeling best practices in collaborative and cooperative teaching is essential in developing teams that work and model expected outcomes. Bolman and Deal offer that “reflection is a spiritual discipline, much like meditation and prayer” (2008, p. 311). Delving into ones own methodology, practice, and ideology can provide endless learning opportunities for all participants on the team. The difficulty arises when honesty becomes too critical and begins to destroy ego. Reflective practice in a group setting is a high-risk process. Many people view flaws as a sign of weakness. It is important to realize that reflection does not set out to criticize ideas or behaviors, rather it

intends to develop significant improvements which will improve teacher partnerships and build student potential in all areas of development (Yorker-Barr, et al. 2006).

Adding reflective practice to a current model is, in essence, attempting to change an organization. Reframing any organization for the good of the population it serves is important, no matter the initial discontent or anxiety that change may cause. Bolman and Deal reinforce the idea for a deep and lasting change in situations that are dysfunctional (2008).

In order to effectively lead a team such as this, it is vital to adopt a change strategy. The intention of this study is to change the inclusion protocol; it is clear that changing perceptions and culture is the first step in solidifying this mission as component for change. Bolman and Deal present the organization as having four frames in which each leader must focus on to initiate and maintain lasting change. These frames, structural, human resource, political, and symbolic (2008) are noticeable within the Rainbow district and therefore central to this process. There are inherent risks in reframing, but there is great power, too (2008). Using these frames will help to draw out all players in roles each is comfortable “playing”. By incorporating the ideology of these four frames, the leader can “generate alternative approaches to challenging circumstances” (Bolman & Deal, 2008, p. 340). Combining Kotter’s eight-step change model (2008) with the four frames from Bolman and Deal will become the core reference for change within this project. Kotter’s eight-step model includes the following steps:

1. Create a sense of urgency
2. Gather a strong team
3. Create a vision
4. Empower action
5. Short-term wins will add credibility

6. Build and use momentum

7. Anchor the change

(Kotter, 1996)

Changing the inclusive co-teaching model at RMS is a necessary mission and is guided by moral purpose. In many schools, assumptions, beliefs, and values are what drive the community. Breaking away from the current and embedded norms can be detrimental to the overall school culture if not approached with caution. Howard Prince, III points out that moral standards are conditional and do not hold a universal truth. Instead he offers the idea that the ability to change or deeply influence the moral judgment of another is “relatively little” (Wren, 1995, p. 484). While Prince agrees that moral choices are important for a leader to hold when attempting to change or develop new ideas, addressing something as a moral choice will not influence change. Robert Greenleaf developed the theory of servant leadership. Greenleaf’s idea, coupled the idea of moral purpose, drives my intent to lead by example and with conviction. A servant leader participates in all activities and takes on challenges that may be perceived as menial (Wren, 1995). Servant leaders actively listen to colleagues as well as the lessons of history in order to make decisions that help accomplish the moral purpose. Servant leaders maintain the intention that their role is to serve the community in which the organization resides while supporting change initiatives and maintaining a steadfast journey towards the morally guided goal. It is the servant leader who will choose to model expectations by rolling up his sleeves and getting dirty first. The servant leader respects his followers so much that he puts their needs before his own (Wren, 1995). Leading this way promotes the courageous follower role, while maintaining communication and shared vision throughout the change process.

In order to shape the culture of this organization by adopting the servant-leader roles, I find it imperative to also adopt ideology put forth by Deal and Peterson as a way to manage culture, engage participation, improve communication, and rally support from colleagues.

- Treat people with respect
- See everyone as a potential source of valuable insights and expertise
- Initiate change to improve performance
- Be willing to take on responsibilities
- Encourage those who suggest new ideas
- Be conscious of costs
- Speak with pride about the school and your colleagues
- Allocate time (Murata, 2002)
- Don't criticize the school in front of students or community
- Enjoy and be enthusiastic in your work
- Be helpful and supportive of others
- Share information to make the organization better
- Do what will serve the needs of the students rather what will serve personal needs

(Deal & Peterson, 1999, p. 28).

Coupling these ideals with the servant leader theory, and commitment to change helped to guide the group towards our shared goal, without forcing opinions and procedure. Using these theories, as a guide for leading this initiative helped to maintain shared vision, while keeping all voices as equal partners in this change.

Conclusion. The research overwhelmingly regards inclusive co-teaching as a positive piece in the special education continuum. Teachers tend to be concerned with the process and

confused about the logistics of forming a solid team relationship with each other; however, most teachers surveyed agrees that once the difficulties of pairing and logistics are worked out, inclusive co-teaching allows teachers to reach all learners in the classroom in different and more beneficial ways throughout the learning process. Furthermore, keeping students included broadens the learning community's ability to adapt to diversity in more authentic ways. Using this research combined with generating a strong leadership initiative will help to bring the RMS 8th grade team to a level where each teacher is comfortable with honest communication, and willing to plan cooperatively in order to support the development of a now inclusive co-teaching model.

In order to initiate, manage, and develop this change, I implemented many new processes and procedures for this team to embrace, reflect on, and practice. My role as participant observer was essential in order to model expected outcomes and be able to change the processes to better fit the needs of the students as well as the needs of the teachers, and ultimately the district.

Chapter three will discuss the methodology used to gather and analyze data, develop a protocol, and combine planning initiatives.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Introduction. The foundation for this study is based on the practice of action research. As participant-researcher, I used a mixed methodology-quantitative to gather survey data, and qualitative through the use of observations, reflections, interviews, discussions, and participation. The practice of action research is embedded in problem solving and reflection, therefore, choosing this method helped develop, build, and create a new team dynamic among the participants through various cycles in order to change the current practice of inclusive co-teaching, develop new protocols for communication, and integrate reflective practice among co-teaching teams both during and after the lesson plan change process (Hinchey, 2008).

In addition to focusing on the inclusive co-teaching experience, initiating and implementing this project allowed me to build upon my own leadership theories while developing a core leadership idea that will help to engage and inspire this team. Using reflective practice in my personal leadership development was an integral piece in the exploration of leadership theory and the implementation of theory into practice.

By using action research as well as implementing Kotter's theory of change (Kotter, 1996), I was able to develop a context by which change would occur that paralleled the extant literature and best practice theories supported by industry experts.

The systems model of action-research process developed by Kurt Lewin (1946) is the foundation for this study while incorporating Freire's theory of Participatory Action Research (PAR) in order to help develop the community of teachers while implementing a significant change initiative (Freire, 1990). Action research is "deliberate, solution-oriented investigation that is group or personally owned and conducted" (Johnson, 1993). Participant action research,

or PAR, is in tuned with educating those who have little voice in their learning process, but are part of the primary focus of a certain study. Although Freire's intent is primarily based on focus in the poor and under represented, in this situation, individuals with special needs are under represented, and subsequently have become the most oppressed in this community at RMS. I saw this theory, and its modified alternatives, as a way to engage and embrace change through action and discussion while sharing a vision that was deeply embedded in the desired needs of the teachers while also helping to represent and build upon the learning experiences of the underrepresented population at RMS.

The goal of this research study was to lead a change initiative that developed team communication, initiated and maintained reflective practice, and helped to change the teacher perception of inclusive education within the secondary classroom at RMS.

I used the practice of participatory action research (Freire, 1990) as the core method for this study. Using action research and PAR combined with a mixed methodology study was a clear partnership when the focus was on reflection, communication, and development of change initiatives. Through investigation, discussion, reflection, honest relationship building, and the development of new perceptions, these qualitative methods helped to provide a basis for continuing to build the inclusive co-teaching program. Using online surveys helped to quantify the need for change and the perceptions as they change along the way.

Through the completion of four core cycles, the researcher was able to see how the process was being molded and where the changes needed to be focused in order to maintain teach buy-in and continue building honest and reflective relationships without harboring conflict and ill feelings within the core team.

Cycle I was used to identify teacher's perceptions of their co-teaching partners. Cycle II

initiated a treatment for implementing the co-teaching technique of Parallel Teaching (Friend & Cook, 2007). The treatment in Cycle II led to a similar treatment for Cycle III, which was the addition of another Friend and Cook co-teaching technique, Alternative Teaching (2007). After gathering data through quantitative surveys as well as gathering information from observations, interviews, discussion, and journals, it was clear that the direction for Cycle IV would change to include a treatment that created a standard lesson plan template for co-teaching partners to use in order to make their common planning time more efficient and effective.

This study became a primary concern of mine when I left the urban New York City public school system and entered a small suburban system in southern New Jersey. This *typical city involved in a typical daydream* was seemingly a place where all were represented, all learning styles were embraced, and the special education population had access to all of the same benefits as those without classified special needs. The *daydream* slowly began to unravel when I noticed that grades were being manipulated, content teachers were refusing to modify any content, and there was a clear divide among inclusion teachers (ICS), and their content partners. Much to my dismay, these teachers rarely planned any interactions let alone lessons together. They were constantly at odds and tensions loomed like a thick cloud of smog during team meeting times. It was clear that student performance was not a top priority for these classified learners nor was the process in which the inclusive classes functioned. I administered a three-question survey to see if these teachers even understood the special education system and what an inclusive program is supposed to be. I was shocked by the results, which will be displayed later as a clear identifier of imperative and essential need for change. Since action research focuses on the process rather than the product, it was evident that this framework was the best way to begin to uncover the underlying assumptions, change the system as a collective unit, and

begin to develop clear and innovative ways to maintain teams and build pedagogy within these teams.

The cycles were necessary in order to determine the treatment for each issue and to inform and develop the plan for the next step in the change process. As stated earlier I began this study with a simple three-question survey (A.1). This survey determined that teachers in this study did not know the difference between inclusion, mainstreaming, and differentiation. As presented in the Cycle 1 section, this data was disaggregated and determined to be the necessary starting point for developing the first treatment. Developing each treatment was the first step to becoming a leader in this process. The servant leader gives priority to the necessary change and embeds herself into the process in order to guide and continue the mission among the other participants (Wren, 1995). Being so involved in this study presented internal struggles and challenges with personal and professional ideologies.

Cycles II through IV integrated the needs that emerged in the previous cycles with treatments for change among the teachers and their communication, perceptions, and lesson planning. Each cycle included quantifying surveys both before they began and at their conclusion. These surveys helped maintain anonymity thus promoting honesty and genuine discussion. Furthermore, each cycle included at least one meeting every six days. Cycle 1 began in September 2009 with a core team of secondary teachers and their respective in class support teachers (this name has since been changed to inclusive co-teachers). This cycle consisted of surveys, interviews with administration, reflection of colleagues, and an initiation of communication strategies together with the team.

Cycle II began with a six-week professional development on Friend and Cook's strategies for effective co-teaching (2007). As a group we chose one strategy to focus on for our first trial.

Since we already use the one-teach, one-support method everyday, we chose to begin with the parallel teaching strategy. Parallel teaching, although explained in more detail later, is when two instructors present similar ideas in different ways to two different groups within the same classroom. After utilizing this strategy at least three times per content area, the group reconvened to discuss and debrief. This cycle was fairly uncomplicated to complete because planning was able to occur separately rather than together.

Cycle III initiated the addition of alternative teaching into our repertoire. In alternative teaching there is a whole group instruction piece and a small group instruction piece. This cycle proved more difficult because planning needed to happen together, and from my perspective, there didn't seem to be enough time in the schedule to successfully plan a lesson from beginning to end. Initially, I thought this would be the end of my study. As we continued to meet and reflect, I could see that although collegiality was much more developed, personal conflicts were more manageable; the co-teaching strategies did little to enhance what we were already doing.

Cycle IV was dedicated to the improvement of lesson planning techniques, procedures, and developing a more standardize approach to writing lessons (see A.3). Leading this process was not only arduous, but also tedious and terribly disconcerting. It was my fear that I would have taken so much time from my colleagues and would not be able to offer clear and valuable solutions to our problems with the co-teaching models. We began to work more collaboratively than before to develop a common platform for lesson planning. Cycle IV had to be completed without me. Since I left the school in our final cycle, I had to run most of the discussions through online threaded discussion. I was still able to observe and conduct interviews and surveys like before. The fact that I was unable to be an active participant became a sincere struggle. Cycle IV lasted from April through November of 2010.

Ethical Implications. During this study, I kept ethical considerations at the forefront of all data collected, interviews taken, surveys collected, and reflections shared. It was important to maintain confidentiality throughout this process due to the candor and critical discussion this study demanded. I attempted to detach my relationships from my colleagues when having critical and honest discussions. It was important to detach myself at times in order to allow for authentic data to surface. Using suggestions from Glesne (2006), I used triangulation to gather data from multiple sources in order to ensure validity and reliability. These methods included interviews, surveys, reflective journals, observations, and conversations via team meetings.

Included in the ethical considerations previously mentioned was the attainment of proper permissions from school officials, internal review board,--IRB approval, and obtaining informed consent from all participants. I kept open communication regarding the study with all participants at all times, and shared any conclusive survey results with the school principal at his request.

The following section will provide in-depth discussions of all parts of this study with an attempt to guide the reader through the process.

Context of Study. Rainbow Township, New Jersey is located approximately 12 miles outside of Philadelphia, PA. According to the United States Census (2005), the average household is comprised of 3.19 persons. Over 10 thousand are classified as “white” with over 9 thousand classified as black with a little over 1 thousand other races. Rainbow Middle School (RMS) employs seventy-one teachers, and has a total enrollment of one thousand ninety-two students spread out over three academies. Although the surveys were sent out to all teachers, the specific study was conducted in the yellow academy with a team of 8th grade content teachers, two special education teachers, and one school aide.

The team studied was comprised of one administrator, one science teacher, one social studies teacher, two language arts teachers, two math teachers, two special education teachers, and one classroom aide.

The research questions that guided this study were as follows:

1. After completing a six-week workshop on Friend and Cook's models for effective inclusive co-teaching, will teacher perception of classroom roles change?
2. After completing a six-week workshop on Friend and Cook's models for effective inclusive co-teaching, will teachers implement these models into daily lessons?
3. How have attitudes and communication of inclusive co teachers changed since the implementation of Friend and Cook's models?
4. How will my leadership affect this change process for each inclusive co-teaching partnership?

Cycle I- Teacher Perceptions of Current Inclusive Models

Cycle I began in September 2009. In order to begin studying change initiatives, it was important to understand what teacher's perceptions were of the current inclusion model. I interviewed the yellow hall team informally and was able to ascertain that there was no official model for inclusion set forth at RMS. I inquired with the principal, director of special services, and director of personnel to find a specific job description for the "in-class support" teacher which identified the expectations for the inclusion program, and was unable to locate one. From this informal questioning, I decided to start these discussions with a quantifiable survey presented the entire school. I sent a survey to 71 teachers, 8 school aides, and 4 administrators that asked three questions (see A.1). The survey asked each respondent to distinguish the difference between inclusion, mainstreaming, and differentiation. The results indicated that most

respondents could not distinguish between the types of inclusion practices. Most respondents were interested in learning more about the various types. This cycle was dedicated to holding short informational professional development sessions in order to bring the yellow team to a point where each participant felt comfortable with the terms from the survey, and beginning to develop a new, solid, model that has hopes of changing a failing system. Based on the research in the extant literature, I understood that it was important to gain a shared vision for this change process if I wanted to embed the process into the everyday functioning of our team.

Included in this cycle was an interview session with the school principal, and the academy principal who agreed to be involved in the study. The interviews revealed that these administrators were also looking for change to occur, but were being stifled by upper administrations lack of support for any changes at the building level. They were eager for this research to begin in order for them to have concrete data to help secure a change for RMS, and for Rainbow Township Schools as a whole. Before initiating the Friend and Cooks models (2007), it was important to gain an understanding of the teacher's perceptions as well as expectations for this yearlong study. In order to do this, I felt it important to initiate core communication strategies into our team meetings. These communication strategies would be necessary for us to be able to communicate effectively and critically throughout this process.

Sample population. The surveys were used to inform the larger study within the small group practice. All research was conducted at Rainbow Middle School (RMS). The 8th grade team studied consisted of 7 female and 2 male participants. I distributed the surveys to 71 teachers, 8 school aides, and 4 administrators each cycle. Of the first 82 surveys sent, 64 were returned. Four school aides opted out, along with two administrators. Altogether, the highest percentage of return on this survey was from the yellow academy. This instance of return was

not surprising since I have developed closer personal and professional relationships within this academy.

Implementation and instrumentation. Using the guidelines set forth in Hindle, Checkland, & Mumford, (1995), the questions I developed remained in alignment with the development of effective survey questions. The primary survey (A.1) consisted of three questions aimed at getting a sense of instruction and ideology as well as background knowledge. Also included in this questionnaire was a survey of status within the building in order to categorize respondent replies. Included in the first cycle was the development and implementation of interviews (Creswell, 2003) in order to gain a context for initiating a study that addressed a sincere need for change.

Data collection and analysis. After speaking with the building principal, Mr. White, I sent out a copy of the informed consent to the entire population of classroom professionals at RMS. Upon receipt of electronic consent from 69 total staff members, I immediately began sending out the initial surveys that I created using www.surveymonkey.com (Fowler, 1995). All surveys were sent electronically using the intranet system set up by the district with permission granted by administration. The email survey was supported with a “thank-you” plate of treats placed in all academy teacher rooms to remind all who agreed to participate to make sure they completed their first survey. I did not include a deadline on the first survey, which was a mistake. I had to send many reminders to the participants to complete the surveys; however, due to the anonymity and confidentiality, I was unable to decipher who had returned the surveys and who had not. I was sure to include deadlines on all subsequent surveys.

All interviews and observations were recorded using the podcast software for *Garage band* on the *Mac book*. These interviews and observations were recorded with the knowledge and

permission of all participants. It was important to record the observations and interviews in order to maintain ethical commitments to representing information truthfully and as accurately as possible. Using this software enabled me to shed preconceived notions and represent all information factually and without bias.

Team meetings were not recorded at the request of the participants, but notes were kept during the sessions and all reflective journals were shared. Since data was collected using a mixed method approach, it was necessary to determine common themes within the data (Glesne, 2006). When analyzing the survey data, I used the tools on www.surveymonkey.com to disaggregate the quantifiable responses, while I found common themes within the open-ended responses.

The initial survey from Cycle I was used to inform the beginnings of the study. It was this survey that ultimately led to the initial professional development for the team. Each Cycle was developed using a treatment that emerged from the cycle previously.

Cycle I yielded a great need to begin to implement the Friends and Cook's models uniformly. Cycle II will initiate the implementation of "Parallel Teaching" within the core content areas.

Cycle II – Co-teaching Initiatives: Parallel Teaching

Instrumentation and implementation. Parallel Teaching is defined as a "co-teaching option in which students are divided into two small groups and each receives the same instruction from one of the two teachers in the room" (Friend & Bursuck, 2009, pg. 530). It was expected that all content teachers and inclusion teachers plan at least 3 lessons together that used the parallel teaching method. Cycle II was conducted from November 2009 through January 2010. Along with the typical lessons, it was expected that each teaching partnership implement

at least 3 rounds of parallel teaching within the core content areas. Although planning for the first round seemed to be a seamless endeavor, the actual implementation of the technique was unsuccessful in both Math and Science classes. At first, the content teachers in these subjects were unable to agree on lessons that would be adaptable to this teaching technique. Finally we came to an agreement and attempted to initiate this technique. The Science teacher was unable to function the same way in the classroom. It was too “chaotic and unorganized” for her to be able to feel successful. She was willing to try again, but was unable to find another opportunity during that cycle to implement the technique again. The math teacher was much more accepting of the technique, but began to feel pressure from upper administration to implement a new unit of study into the curriculum before NJASK testing in March. Both ICS Teachers and math content teachers were unable to truly implement this technique with any measurable success. Applying this technique in Language Arts and Social Studies was completed for both teaching partners. The parallel teaching technique was successful all three occurrences for both curriculum areas. The social studies and language arts teachers were open and excited to try something new in the classrooms and were willing to use this technique more than the recommended three trials throughout this cycle. Although it was disappointing for all team members that this technique was not successfully implemented within the Science and Math classes before the end of cycle II, we understood that this experience would help inform our next treatment in the study and were anxious and excited to find a method that worked for all members.

When I met with the house principal to ask for guidance with this problem, he responded with minimal action. He reminded me that these areas were the primary areas with difficulty before we began this study and that change would not simply happen without building a

stronger trust relationship between/ among teaching partners. He also reminded me that these curriculum areas are more content based and that many times, content teachers do not have as much trust in their partners who are not content trained. He suggested more conversation and using more time to plan lessons after school.

Sample population. In this cycle, the participating population consists of 2 special education teachers (ICS), 2 language arts teachers (LA 1 & LA 2), 1 social studies teacher (SS), 2 math teachers (M1 & M2), one Science teacher (Sci), one school aide (SA), and one administrator (Admin). For example, LA 1 and M 1 only co-teach with ICS 1. Similarly, LA 2 and M 2 only work with ICS 2. The science, social studies, school aide, and administrator work with both in class support teachers (ICS 1 & 2).

I chose these teachers because I have been working closely with them for two years prior to the implementation of this study. We worked as a team prior to this study and all have expressed a strong desire to change the ICS model to one that would enhance our work, rather than hinder it. These participants typically argue and interrupt each other during meetings and two have a very volatile relationship with each other. Implementing effective communication strategies coupled with new methods for co-teaching will surely enhance the relationships and make them more cohesive as time goes on. Each member had been working at RMS for more than 5 years except for myself. I had been there for 3 yrs. The LA 2 was new to the team.

Although none of the teachers had a strong background in co-teaching models, differentiation, inclusion, and mainstreaming, they were all open to learning about the process as well as identifying new ways to help students learn.

Data collection and analysis. During this cycle, I collected many documents. I collected lesson plans, reflections, observations, discussions, and surveys. I attempted to detach my

personal feelings from my professional dealings with the people in this study. In order to do that, I kept open dialogue with all participants throughout the cycle. I kept a very detailed journal that was critical and detailed. It was imperative for me to maintain a strong professional connection, but clearly detach my emotional involvement to include only the facts and interpretations of the team.

For the majority of this process I was a participant-observer (Andersen, 1998). I understood that my participation needed to be directly connected to my intention to change the process and integrate the other co-teaching models into the current practice. I also understood that conducting observations and interviews as a participant can cause data to become biased. I was aware of this possibility and attempted to use this connection to the process and embed it into my leadership style. As mentioned previously, it was my clear intention to lead this change by becoming servant-leader (Greenleaf, 2006). I intended to become fully engaged in the process in order to lead this change initiative with commitment and moral purpose. The servant-leader is a good listener, patient, persistent, and passionate (Senge, 2005). As servant-leader, I hoped to make the change process feel more secure and safe since I was taking the risks along with the other participants.

Through our weekly meetings, I was able to initiate discussion that opened up communication to become more honest and critical. We agreed to detach our emotional connections as best we could in order to objectively decide the best actions for our team. We met once every six days to discuss and reflect on the process and share ideas that would help to enhance the experience. At first, conversation seemed strained, but as meetings become more comfortable, we were able to discuss treatments, accept and reject opinions with confidence, and detach our emotional connections without losing a sense of collegiality and shared vision

for change (NMSA, 2009).

Cycle II resulted in an agreement that we should attempt to initiate another of Friend and Cook's co-teaching strategies in order to attempt to incorporate these techniques into math and science. We decided as a group to focus on the "Alternative Teaching" technique for our next cycle (Friend and Cook, 2007).

It was important to attempt to ensure validity in the data I was gathering. Since much of the data collected was not quantifiable, I used triangulation. In order to ensure validity, when I analyzed the data; I used triangulation to attempt to decipher information from more than one point of view (Creswell, 2008). I collected data for this cycle primarily through interviews, observations, and reflective journals. The triangulation approach helped to ensure a more accurate collection of pertinent data that will help to inform future discussions and implementation of new strategies.

As stated previously, all observations and interviews were recorded using computer software to ensure accuracy. By coding all collected data, I was able to find common themes and focus on those themes for future treatments for integrating effective co-teaching strategies.

As participant-observer, I encountered difficulty in developing a difference in my leadership practice during cycle II. I found myself embedded in the process but unable to distinguish strategic leadership from tactical leadership. Tactical leadership requires analysis of detail and action where strategic leadership builds upon the art form of leading with purpose and principle (Sergiovanni, 1986). I was forced to look at my leadership here and determine what my overarching goal truly was. I decided to adopt a change process that would help to support my endeavors while help us reach our ultimate goal in changing the co-teaching model at Rainbow Middle School.

The change process as discussed in the literature review was engaged to determine the benefits of this research and the best outcomes for the program as a whole (Deal & Peterson, 1999). As far as participants, I was looking to help change their misconceptions and frustrations, but it was never my goal to change their personal views as much as it was my goal to change the program to become more effective and engaging for the secondary classroom.

Cycle III – Co-teaching Initiatives: Alternative Teaching

Implementation and instrumentation. Cycle three lasted from Mid-January through March. This cycle introduced the alternative teaching technique (Friend & Cook, 2007) as a co-teaching strategy and was to be implemented at least six times over the course of the cycle. Alternative teaching is where one teacher works with a large group, and one works with a smaller group to provide instruction on the same topic or idea in a different way (Friend & Bursuck, 2009). This technique was to be used with both remediation of skills, and enrichment of skills for all students in the inclusion classes, not solely groups of classified students.

Alternative teaching method was the most successful technique we tried. We were all able to use these techniques effectively and cohesively within the time frame, and the benefits seemed to begin to create a greater sense of understanding of the need for inclusion and the benefits of having two teachers in one classroom. Teachers in the group wrote “alternative teaching finally made me realize what the fuss was all about” another expressed “this technique was so beneficial for our students, it helped all the different levels feel successful and allowed us [the teachers] to actually address true content without having to water anything down!” In our meetings, the team agreed that this was a technique they would like to use most often; however, finding the time to plan lessons like this one was present the biggest challenge in the secondary classroom. One of the greatest realizations came when one teacher said, “I don’t know how you

two [ICS 1&2] remember all these subjects and can be versed enough to actually teach them [all content areas]”. In fact, this is where the discrepancy has been the greatest.

Continuing our once per six day meeting cycle, we decided to attempt this technique while completing an interdisciplinary unit primarily focused on Service Learning Initiatives and the “pay it forward” principle. Developing the service-learning unit together brought out even more challenges among our group. While the Alternate Teaching technique was a great success, the planning of this unit was the most difficult encounter thus far.

At this point, there was a clear need to change the structure of the study. I was planning on implementing another 6-week cycle using a third Friend and Cook technique. I was torn within this cycle to continue studying what I wanted to vs. study what I needed to study (Sergiovanni, 1990). After questioning and discussing my ideas about modifying the study for the next cycle, the group came to a consensus that they would follow my lead. It was clear to me, and all the participants, that it was necessary for us to study the lesson planning process in order to be able to establish this cohesive unit that we all aimed to have. The treatment for the next cycle will be to implement a more standardized way of lesson planning in order to be able to effectively and efficiently use our common planning time, and be able to incorporate the sharing of two ICS teachers among all curriculum areas. We, ICS 1 & 2, were so excited and eager to begin this change. This was where the group needed to go in order to establish parity and cohesion.

Sample Population. In this cycle, the participating population consists of 2 special education teachers (ICS), 2 language arts teachers (LA 1 & LA 2), 1 social studies teacher (SS), 2 math teachers (M1 & M2), one Science teacher (Sci), one school aide (SA), and one administrator (Admin). For example, LA 1 and M 1 only co-teach with ICS 1. Similarly, LA 2 and M 2 only work with ICS 2. The science, social studies, school aide, and administrator work

with both in class support teachers (ICS 1 & 2).

I chose these teachers because I have been working closely with them for two years prior to the implementation of this study. We worked as a team prior to this study and all have expressed a strong desire to change the ICS model to one that would enhance our work, rather than hinder it. These participants typically argue and interrupt each other during meetings and two have a very volatile relationship with each other. Implementing effective communication strategies coupled with new methods for co-teaching will surely enhance the relationships and make them more cohesive as time goes on. Each member had been working at RMS for more than 5 years except for myself. I had been there for 3 yrs. The LA 2 was new to the team.

Although none of the teachers had a strong background in co-teaching models, differentiation, inclusion, and mainstreaming, they were all open to learning about the process as well as identifying new ways to help students learn.

Data collection and analysis. I used similar collection and analysis of data in this cycle as in Cycle II. During this cycle, I collected many documents. I collected lesson plans, reflections, observations, discussions, and surveys. I attempted to detach my personal feelings from my professional dealings with the people in this study. In order to do that, I kept open dialogue with all participants throughout the cycle. I kept a very detailed journal that was critical and thorough. It was imperative for me to maintain a strong professional connection, but clearly detach my emotional involvement to include only the facts and interpretations of the team.

For the majority of this process I was participant-observer (Andersen, 1998). I understand that my participation needed to be directly connected to my intention to change the process and integrate the other co-teaching models into the current practice. I also understanding that conducting observations and interviews as a participant can cause data to become biased. I was

aware of this possibility and attempted to use this connection to the process and embed it into my leadership style. As mentioned previously, it is my clear intention to lead this change by becoming servant-leader (Greenleaf, 2006). I intended to become fully engaged in the process in order to lead this change initiative with commitment and moral purpose (Sergiovanni & Corbally, 1986). The servant-leader is a good listener, patient, persistent, and passionate (Senge, 2005). As servant-leader, I hoped to make the change process feel more secure and safe since I was taking the risks along with the other participants.

Through our weekly meetings, I was able to initiate discussion that broadened communication to more honest and critical heights. We agreed to detach our emotional connections as best we could in order to objectively decide the best actions for our team. We met once every six days to discuss and reflect on the process and share ideas that would help to enhance the experience. At this point, conversation seemed less strained and more critical and reflective. We were ready to attack our concerns and initiate our changes with rigor and tenacity, unlike the previous two cycles.

Cycle III resulted in an agreement to fore-go the initiation of the other Friend and Cooks models for a larger purpose. It was our collective decision to that we should attempt to change our lesson planning methods to be more uniform in order to encourage more interdisciplinary studies as well as to help the ICS teachers be able to have a more standard from of reference during common planning time. It was our intention that this development of a common lesson plan will help to build professional relationships and develop more effective lessons which will, in turn, allow us to utilize the co-teaching techniques more frequently in our classrooms.

It was important to attempt to ensure validity in the data I was gathering. Since much of the data collected was not quantifiable, I used triangulation In order to ensure validity, when I

analyzed the data; I used triangulation to attempt to decipher information from more than one point of view (Creswell, 2008). I collected data for this cycle primarily through interviews, observations, and reflective journals. The triangulation approach helped to ensure a more accurate collection of pertinent data that will help to inform future discussions and implementation of new strategies.

As stated previously, all observations and interviews were recorded using computer software to ensure accuracy. By coding all collected data, I was able to find common themes and focus on those themes for future treatments for integrating effective co-teaching strategies.

Although I was a participant-observer, I encountered less difficulty in developing a difference in my leadership practice during cycle III. I was able to determine that strategic leadership was necessary to change this study. In order to get true results that helped to change the inclusion model at RMS (Sergiovanni, 1986). Purpose and principle was a key idea here, but it was the need for action on my part to change the course of this study. My team was following courageously, but they were not ready to challenge my leadership. I could see that I had to step into a strong leadership role in order to make this shift in our study plan happen.

In this cycle I decided to take a leap from servant-leader to transformational leader. I knew I had to give up my initial interests in order to truly affect change (Miner, 2005). The change process as discussed in the literature review was engaged to determine the benefits of this research and the best outcomes for the program as a whole (Deal & Peterson, 1999). As far as participants, I was looking to help change their misconceptions and frustrations, but it was never my goal to change their personal views as much as it was my goal to change the program to become more effective and engaging for the secondary classroom.

In Cycle IV a common lesson plan template was implemented with the intention of helping

the core content teachers understand the demands and restrictions of their ICS counterparts. It is vital to develop parity, a true value of all perspectives and opinions and contributions, within the partnership (Friend & Bursuck, 2009).

Cycle IV- Lesson Planning for Parity

Implementation and instrumentation. The final cycle in this project seemed to be the most significant and influential yet. This cycle would integrate a lesson-plan template into the common planning time for all participants. Using this template helped to engage the ICS teachers and enabled the content teachers to recognize the value that ICS held. This cycle was the longest of the four. As a group, we continued to meet to discuss the importance of each section of the lesson plan. Since there was no standard lesson plan for the Rainbow School District, we had to construct a template that would incorporate all key components without infringing on individual style too much. The challenges of the secondary classroom structure were beginning to make all of our successes feel inadequate and trivial. After four meetings, we seemed to have compromised on the components we thought essential to a lesson plan. I modified the 2006 version of Dr. Lisa Dieker's Co-teaching lesson plan book. Using Dieker as a baseline, I added ideas from Wiggins and McTighe Understanding by Design (2004), and Marzano's ideas on planned assessment (2000). Due to the time it took to develop and finalize this document, it was necessary to expand this cycle into the new school year. This cycle would last from April through November 2010. In June of 2010 I received a "Reduction In Force" notice and began looking for new employment. This would put many challenges on my team, but they were in agreement to continue the process, and following my lead via technology and sporadic visits whenever possible. We continued our discussion through the use of the online threaded discussion boards I set up using "Google groups."

Sample population. In this cycle, the participating population consisted of 2 special education teachers (ICS), 1-language arts teachers (LA 2), 1 social studies teacher (SS), 1-math teachers (M2), one Science teacher (Sci), one school aide (SA), and one administrator (Admin). The remaining members of the team were 2 special education teachers (ICS 1 & 2), 1 language arts teacher (LA 2), 1 social studies teacher (SS), 1 math teacher (M2), 1 Science teacher (Sci), 1 School Aide (SA) and 1 Administrator (Admin). As ICS 1, I was unable to work with my former partners directly, so I resorted to working with them electronically. I continued my discussions with the team members via email, chat, and *SKYPE* technologies. ICS 2, however still worked with the same teachers as the prior school year. For example, LA 2 and M 2 only work with ICS 2.

I chose these teachers because I have been working closely with them for two years prior to the implementation of this study. We worked as a team prior to this study and all have expressed a strong desire to change the ICS model to one that would enhance our work, rather than hinder it. These participants formerly argued and interrupted each other during meetings and two have had a very volatile relationship with each other. Implementing effective communication strategies coupled with new methods for co-teaching has enhanced the relationships and made them more cohesive as time went on.

Each member had been working at RMS for more than 5 years except for myself. I had been there for 3 yrs. The LA 2 was new to the team.

Although the yellow team teachers did not have terribly strong backgrounds in co-teaching models, differentiation, inclusion, and mainstreaming, they were all open to learning about the process as well as identifying new ways to help students learn. They were all eager to begin a new form of lesson planning as well.

The new lesson plan format (see A.4 & A.5)) was developed from April through June (with a six-week break for NJASK prep and testing and Transition meeting for individuals with IEP's) and planned to be implemented beginning in September 2010.

Data collection and analysis. Cycle IV began like cycles I, II, and III. At the end of the cycle, I had to alter my methodologies due to new employment. I was now working in a different state and had to ensure that the study was continuing as we had agreed it would. The new plan was to be implemented from September through the first week of November. I sent weekly reflections via e-mail and gathered data through online discussion, electronic collaboration, and in-person observations and discussion. The school agreed to keep me connected via their intranet in order to complete this study. The director of curriculum asked me to share my results at the conclusion as well.

During this cycle, I collected many documents. I collected lesson plans, reflections, observations, discussions, and surveys. I attempted to detach my personal feelings from my professional dealings with the people in this study. In order to do that, I kept open dialogue with all participants throughout the cycle. I kept a very detailed journal that was critical and thorough. It was imperative for me to maintain a strong professional connection, but clearly detach my emotional involvement to include only the facts and interpretations of the team.

I used reflective journals (Schon, 1983) more often since they were submitted electronically. I was able to conduct two more observations as well as "exit interviews" with each of the remaining staff members.

For the majority of this process I was leader, facilitator, and observer. I understand that my participation needed to be directly connected to my intention to change the process and integrate the other co-teaching models into the current practice. I also understand that conducting

observations and interviews without being embedded in the process could create a bias that was not as likely as when I was Participant-Observer (Andersen, 1998).

I was aware of this possibility and attempted to use this connection to the process and embed it into my leadership style and the facilitation of electronic collaboration. Electronic collaboration can “enhance collaborative efforts and provide opportunities to learn from other professionals” (Friend & Bursuck, 2009, p. 87). As mentioned previously, it was my clear intention to lead this change by becoming servant-leader (Greenleaf, 2006). Being disconnected from the location added significant challenges to this style. I became more transactional in approach in order to maintain continuity and not lost the momentum we had gained since September 2009. I intended to become fully engaged in the process in order to lead this change initiative with commitment and moral purpose (Sergiovanni & Corbally, 1986). Although the servant-leader is a good listener, patient, persistent, and passionate (Senge, 2005), it is difficult to exude these emotions electronically. As servant-leader, I hoped to make the change process feel more secure and safe since I was taking the risks along with the other participants. As transactional leader, I knew that a protocol had to be followed in order to finalize all this process and still affect change from afar (Wren, 1995). In transactional leadership, “the leader clarifies expectations and establishes the rewards for meeting these expectations. In general, management by exception is the degree to which the leader takes corrective action on the basis of results” (Judge & Piccolo, 2004, pg. 755).

Through our weekly electronic discussion, I was able to initiate discussion that broadened communication to more honest and critical heights. We agreed to detach our emotional connections as best we could in order to objectively decide the best actions for our team. We met once every six days to discuss and reflect on the process and share ideas that would help to

enhance the experience. Due to the change from in-person to online discussion, there was no longer complete attendance in all of our meetings. At this point, conversation seemed to become more honest than before. It is likely that the electronic collaboration made others more relaxed and open to critical discussion.

Cycle IV resulted in an agreement to utilize the new lesson plan template I had developed and introduced in June 2010. It was our collective decision that we would use this template until the last week of October, and give our critical feedback at our first November meeting.

It was important to attempt to ensure validity in the data I was gathering. Since much of the data collected was not quantifiable, I used triangulation. In order to ensure validity, when I analyzed the data; I used triangulation to attempt to decipher information from more than one point of view (Creswell, 2008). I collected data for this cycle primarily through interviews, observations, and reflective journals. The triangulation approach helped to ensure a more accurate collection of pertinent data that will help to inform future discussions and implementation of new strategies.

As stated previously, all observations and interviews were recorded using computer software to ensure accuracy. By coding all collected data, I was able to find common themes and focus on those themes for future treatments for integrating effective co-teaching strategies. Furthermore, the analysis of data became easier since all of the discussions were threaded and I was able to use exact information instead of relying on notes and memory. The electronic piece was integral to the completion of this study.

In order to ensure validity, when I analyzed the data, I used a triangulation approach through multiple data collection methods including observations, interviews, and document collection (Glesne, 2006). Using a triangulation approach increased the confidence and

trustworthiness of the study.

The most difficult piece of analysis in this final cycle was the lack of participation of many members. LA 1 retired, M1 was moved to a new position, and the team communication began to become strained as it had been in September 2009.

All observations and interviews were coded in order to find common themes, and reflective journal responses were used to find common themes, manage perceptions, and inform future endeavors or possible studies.

Chapter 4

Findings and Discussion

Introduction. The primary objective of Cycle I was to gain an understanding as to teacher's perceptions of inclusion the way it currently worked at Rainbow Middle School (RMS). Since being hired as a full time special education in class support teacher (ICS), there had never been any training or discussion of expectations. There had been very little discussion about working with other content area teachers as well. In fact, there was no support provided to me other than the support I sought out for myself. It was my assumption that I received no support because I had been a teacher for over 8 years prior to arriving at RMS. After the interviews, I realized that my assumption was entirely incorrect. There had been no support offered, because there was no support in place for any special education teacher within the district.

In beginning Cycle I, it was important to understand staff perceptions of the inclusion model in place at RMS. In essence, I wanted to find out what people thought of inclusion as a whole and about the role of the ICS teacher in the core content areas. My second purpose was to find out if these perceptions were hindering communication and the development of collegiality among other partners at RMS

Sample profile. The first section of the survey asked particular questions relating to professional experience and responsibility within the building. Subjects were asked to respond to questions regarding their total years of experience in education specifically within the Rainbow Township education system, and their position/role within the building. Along with these questions, there were three core ideology questions that asked respondents to be able to distinguish the difference between inclusion, mainstreaming, and differentiation. The results

showed that 81% of respondents were unable to distinguish the difference between all three. Furthermore, 94% of respondents were interested in learning more about the differences between the three as well as defining a clear role for the In class support program at RMS.

These responses gave me the opportunity to establish a background of experience as it related to the role within the building as well as provided me with a foundation for the first professional development treatment. Of the 66 responses collected, four were school aides, two were administrators, and 60 were teachers. Of the 60 teachers who responded, 16 were ICS professionals. Of the 16 ICS respondents, 1 had worked in RMS for more than 10 years, 6 had worked in the RMS schools for more than 5 years, and 9 had been in RMS less than 3 years. This left 44 core content teachers of whom, 38 have been working in the RMS schools over 10 years, 3 for more than 5 years, and 3 who had been working 3 years or less within the RMS schools. Figure 4.1 provides a detailed representation of the percentage breakdown of years of experience for all respondents.

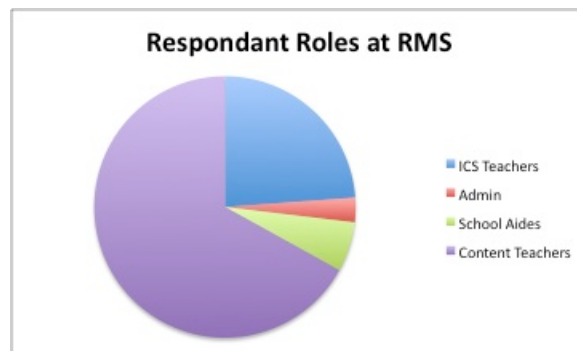


Figure 4.1 Years of Experience of Participants

Subjects also identified their years of experience in the Rainbow Schools. Most importantly were those who had been with RMS schools for less than 3 years. Figures 4.2 and 4.3 show the number of teachers and their years in the RMS system. This was significant when compared to

the amount of trainings the district has provided for ICS staff and their teaching partners (which is zero).

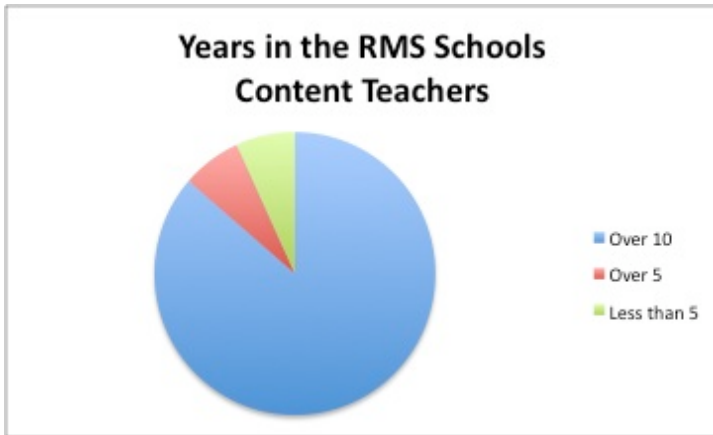


Figure 4.2 Years of General Education Service

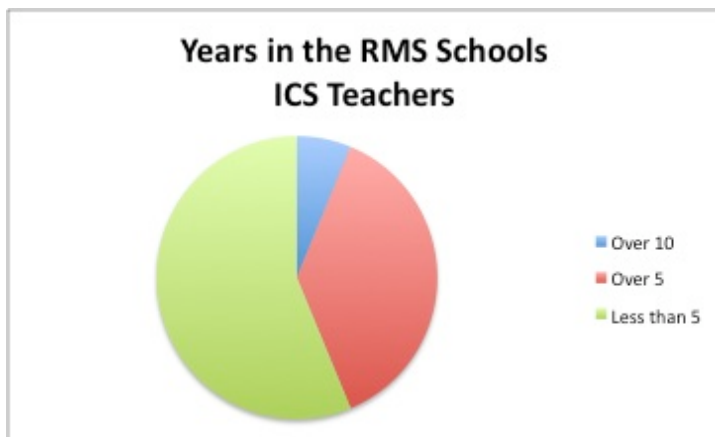


Figure 4.3 Years of Special Education Service

The rest of this survey consisted of three questions. Respondents were to answer each question with their knowledge of the topic and how that topic directly related to RMS current models for inclusion. The findings on these items were as follows: 34.6% of respondents did not know the difference between mainstreaming and inclusion, 83.7% were unable to define the role of the ICS teacher, and 34.7% thought that inclusion, differentiation was the same thing as inclusion.

The second survey sent was aimed at gathering information regarding teacher's perceptions of the current inclusion model. In this survey, respondents were asked to complete a series of

open-ended questions. Each response required an answer but was not limited to a number of characters per response. The respondents were asked to be honest and critical when responding and ensured that confidentiality would be maintained as in all surveys collected.

The survey questions were as follows:

1. What do you think the purpose of Inclusion/ In Class Support is?
2. Is Inclusion/ In Class Support beneficial for your students with disabilities?
3. Does Inclusion/ In Class Support help when trying to differentiate lessons on a daily or weekly basis?
4. If you were able to change the Inclusion/ In Class Support model, how would you change the current practice in order to better meet the needs of all learners within the classroom?
5. In your opinion, how could the current model be better presented?

In this open-ended section, respondents were primarily concerned with the inclusion classrooms as a whole. Sixty respondents felt that there was little to no administrative support in place for this inclusion model. Forty-eight respondents agreed that without leveling or grouping students more appropriately, inclusion was “doomed to fail.” Seven others pointed out that the inclusion classes are often the same classes with English as a Second Language learners and/or students involved in reading and/or math remediation.

Whereas 42% of respondents preferred to work alone, 93% of the same respondents agreed that inclusion was important and beneficial for a variety of learners. There were various suggestions for improving the inclusion system given by the respondents; however, an overwhelming 97% recommended having content-specific ICS teachers would be the most beneficial for creating more collegial partnerships. One general education teacher suggested “Co-teaching with four content area teachers is challenging for many reasons and is in need of

revision”, while an in class support teacher added “Having one or two core areas would better serve our population. This would allow for a greater sense of confidence in the inclusion teacher as they instruct.”

Friend and Cook (2007) have developed co-teaching approaches for the team taught classroom. Friend reminds us that inclusion is not co-teaching and co-teaching is not inclusion (2004). For the purposes of this study, we focused on inclusive co-teaching as our model for change. The models recommended and supported as best practices are: One-teach, One-observe, Station teaching, Parallel teaching, alternative teaching, Team teaching, and One-teach, One-assist. These best practice techniques were implemented in this study in order to help develop more cohesive partnerships within the classroom and during lesson planning.

Discussion. The findings from the study indicated that the respondents share common concerns and reservations when tackling this model. They agree that the model needs to be altered; most agree that the model was beneficial. Most agree that inclusion was difficult, demanding, and exhausting. All are looking for ways to improve the ICS- CCT relationships within the teams.

The responses were practically identical to those found in the literature (Berry, 2006), (Dieker L. M., 2003), (Dieker L. &, 2003), (Friend M. &, 1995), (Friend M. B., 2009) (Gately, 2001), (Hines, 2001), (Kochhar et. al, 2000), (Murata, 2002).

The findings from Cycle I assisted me in formulating a next step for Cycle II. Teachers at RMS were eager to begin a new wave of experimentation in the inclusive classrooms that was set-up to address their concerns and become a recipe for much needed success.

The 8th grade team chosen to participate in the action research completed a mini-workshop that introduced, explained, and identified the Friend and Cook’s models. There were clear

expectations set, shared vision established with all, and ground rules set up for all team meetings. The teachers in this group were beginning to follow the leadership with courage and excitement.

Conclusions and Recommendations – Cycle I

The results of surveys, conversations, interviews, and observations from Cycle I clearly indicated a need to initiate the change process for the inclusive co-teaching classrooms. The reflections exhibited that the 8th grade teachers at RMS were ready to integrate one of the best practices from Friend and Cook (2007) into the core academic areas. As communication improved throughout the team meeting process, the planning began to occur with more ease and less tension between co-teaching partners. The treatments recommended from Cycle I initiatives are to begin implementing a model for co-teaching, continue working on communication strategies to enable open and honest discussion, continue discussing authentic learning experiences through the effective use of common planning time, and to continue to build administrative support through open interaction with the academy principal. At this point, the principal has not attended any of our meetings. The principal did agree to be part of the study, but has not found time to integrate himself into our discussions yet.

The next step was in Cycle II where all members of the research team attempted to integrate the Parallel Teaching” model into at least three core content lessons across a 6-week period. The CCT was expected to meet with the ICS teachers to plan each of these lessons thoroughly. It was expected that all team members would continue to keep reflective journals and maintain the communication strategies from team meeting in their partner meetings as well.

It was my hope that Cycle II would also encourage administrators and other teachers within the research team to observe each other in order to gain perspective and learn from each other as

a part of the reflective practice portion of the study (Schon, 1983).

Cycle II

Overview .The primary objective of Cycle II was to engage co-teaching partners in the use of *Parallel Teaching* within the inclusive classrooms. *Parallel Teaching* is defined as dividing a heterogeneous group of students into separate groups in order to teach the same topic using different methods (Friend & Bursuck, 2009). It is important to remember that the division of groups when using technique remains heterogeneous. This was not an opportunity for remediation or enrichment of skills. It was an opportunity to provide learners with new opportunities to learn the same information (Friend & Bursuck, 2009).

This cycle lasted for six instructional weeks. Co-teaching partners took time to plan lessons and gather resources. We took time to arrange rooms accordingly as well. Some teachers explained that providing them with diagrams of how each technique would look in a classroom was most beneficial. “Taking any stress away from the situation helps me feel more comfortable with trying something new” (M1, 2009).

Sample profile. In this cycle, the participating population consisted of 2 special education teachers (ICS), 2 language arts teachers (LA 1 & LA 2), 1 social studies teacher (SS), 2 math teachers (M1 & M2), one Science teacher (Sci), one school aide (SA), and one administrator (Admin). For example, LA 1 and M 1 only co-teach with ICS 1. Similarly, LA 2 and M 2 only work with ICS 2. The science, social studies, school aide, and administrator work with both in class support teachers (ICS 1 & 2).

I chose these teachers because I have been working closely with them for two years prior to the implementation of this study. We worked as a team prior to this study and all have expressed a strong desire to change the ICS model to one that would enhance our work, rather than hinder

it.

Along with those listed above, I continued to survey staff about co-teaching techniques and their knowledge of best practices within the co-teaching models. Subjects were asked to respond to a series of questions that were formulated to measure how often the techniques were used. Due to an abundance of “unsure” responses on the first initiation of this survey, I treated this opportunity as a chance to develop stronger background knowledge Friend and Cook’s models (2007). I gave out a brief description of each technique to every teacher in the building. I provided each teacher with the same illustrations (appendix A.6) that my team used to arrange their classrooms and then I re-sent the survey. I chose to send this survey to all of the teachers who responded to the initial survey in Cycle I. This survey was specific to teachers; therefore, I left out the 2 administrators and 4 school aides.

Twenty-eight responses were gathered within the time frame set. Subjects were asked to specify how many class periods per day were spent in a co-teaching partnership. Each of the Friend and Cooks techniques were listed in a Likert scale (Patten, 2001) providing a brief description of each for the respondent, the respondents were asked to respond to each Likert item (Patten, 2001). I used a Likert scale so that I could disaggregate the data two ways. It was my intention to measure the use of best practices over all as well as the use of each individual technique throughout the school building. The results of the items are listed in figures 4.4 and 4.5 below.



Figure 4.4 Amount of Time Co-teaching Per Day

Table 4.5 Attempts At Co-teaching Strategies

Teaching Strategy	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Always
One Teach, One Support (one teaches while the other supports learners)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	61.9% (13)	38.1% (8)
Team Teach (both teach equal or close to equal amounts)	0.0% (0)	23.1% (6)	50.0% (13)	26.9% (7)
Parallel Teaching (both teach content in different ways to different groups, concurrently)	27.3% (6)	36.4% (8)	36.4% (8)	0.0% (0)
Station Teaching (each is responsible for content delivery as students travel to different learning/exploration stations)	45.5% (10)	45.5% (10)	9.1% (2)	0.0% (0)
*Tag Team (one teaches while one copies, runs errands, etc) this is not a best practice model	63.6% (14)	27.3% (6)	4.5% (1)	4.5% (1)
Supplemental Instruction (one teaches majority while the other provides an alternate to those who struggle with mastery)	4.2% (1)	58.3% (14)	37.5% (9)	0.0% (0)
One Teach, One Observe (one has the primary role of content while the other observes student performance)	44.0% (11)	20.0% (5)	36.0% (9)	0.0% (0)

The survey results show that most co-teaching partnerships throughout the building were performing the same techniques as the yellow team. Most co-teaching classrooms used the Team Teaching and One teach-One support techniques for the majority of their co-taught lessons. This fell in line with the findings of our small group as well.

Some of the partners experienced what they called “resistance” to the parallel teaching

method. The reflective journals indicated that among the core yellow team, there were two subjects that had difficulty performing the parallel teaching technique. Both ICS teachers report the same issues with the Sci lessons. “Although we attempted the Parallel technique, the logistics of the room made for more confusion than we would have hoped for” (ICS 1). “When we use this strategy it is effective but very distracting” (Sci). ICS 2 reported that the Science classroom acoustics were not conducive to this strategy due to the loud fan, and echo in the classroom.

There was also difficulty initiating this strategy in the Math classroom. During this cycle, the Math supervisor for the district added a new unit to the curriculum to be taught immediately in preparation for the NJASK testing. Due to the introduction of new content, it was difficult to plan at least three opportunities to use the parallel technique without sufficient time for the ICS teacher to become proficient with the new material. It was important to note that the Math supervisor did not provide copies of the new units to either of the ICS teachers. The new units were given solely to the Math CCT.

The LA and SS classes were able to use this strategy effectively and continuously both engaging the technique more than the recommended 3 times in six weeks. During an informal team meeting, participants from the language arts and social studies group commented that, “Anytime kids can get smaller group instruction more opportunities for understanding and authenticity open up” (LA 1). “Unfortunately, the room is so small that the parallel teaching method doesn’t work exactly the way it’s supposed to, but I think we really implemented it well and were able to address the needs of our diverse population much better” (SS). “In our Language Arts class, the technique was used, but the content teacher took a little time to be comfortable with the process. Our open dialogue really helped us explore ways to problem solve for the next two trials” (ICS 2). “I love learning new things, and any opportunity to enhance

instruction for my students is welcomed in my classroom” (LA 2).

Discussion. The findings from this cycle indicated that the respondents shared common concerns and reservations when tackling any new technique. Teachers agree that using new strategies to improve learning are always welcome, but sometimes they need to be used in the classroom that best fits the logistics of the technique. Candid discussions led to agreement that the need for more time to plan such lessons was a necessity. Having to become proficient in all secondary subjects continues to be a struggle for ICS teachers as well as their CCT counterparts. Many of the reflections about communication came from the feeling that ICS teachers needed to be omniscient. The CCT perspective was that by “trying to be all things to all people, the ICS teachers are never truly achieving proficiency in anything” (Sci). Most agreed that the parallel technique was beneficial and necessary when presenting difficult or intense information. Most agreed that inclusion remains difficult, demanding, and exhausting. All continue to look for ways to improve the ICS- CCT relationships within the teams, and maintain the progress we have made thus far.

The findings from Cycle II assisted me in formulating a next step for Cycle III. Teachers at RMS were eager to begin a new wave of experimentation in the inclusive classrooms that was set-up to address their concerns and become a recipe for much needed success. Due to the logistical issues presented with some in the parallel teaching technique, I suggested that the next logical step would be the implementation of *alternative teaching*. All agreed that Alternative teaching would be a perfect compliment to the cycle II findings.

Clear expectations for Cycle III were set, shared vision was established, and ground rules were reviewed for all team meetings. I reminded the team about confidentiality and the importance of keeping discussions within the team for the purpose of maintaining trust and open

communication. The teachers in this group continued to follow the leadership with courage and excitement. They began exhibiting signs of courageous following, assuming responsibility for the outcomes of our trials and suggesting treatments for our next mission, which enabled us to go forth into Cycle III with even fewer reservations and much more excitement (Chaleff, 2009).

Conclusions and Recommendations – Cycle II

The results of surveys, conversations, reflections, and observations from Cycle II clearly indicated a need to continue the change initiatives for the inclusive co-teaching classrooms. The reflections exhibited that the 8th grade teachers at RMS were ready to integrate the next best practices from Friend and Cook (2007) into the core academic areas. As communication continued to be open, critical, and reflective, throughout the team meeting process, the planning was becoming more timely and while maintaining a lower level of tension between co-teaching partners.

This cycle showed clear indication that parallel teaching works in many classrooms. It did make an argument that logistics do not always allow new techniques to flourish. It was clear that the parallel teaching technique works best in classrooms where there are uncontrollable little noise distractions, such as a loud vent. It was also the conclusion of this cycle that administrators do not always take into account the needs of the inclusive classroom when making decisions. As shown by the math curriculum supervisor in this cycle, the institution of a new unit without providing all educators the opportunity to prepare the content was not conducive to modeling any educational best practice. It also exhibited the lack of concern for the ICS teachers and the population to which they are primarily responsible.

The treatment for our next cycle was the initiation of the Alternative teaching technique (Friend & Cook, 2007). This technique was a logical next step in this process as it uses a similar

ideology as Parallel teaching without the need to dramatically change the layout of ones classroom.

Cycle III

Overview. The primary objective of Cycle III was to engage co-teaching partners in the use of *alternative teaching* within the inclusive classrooms. *Alternative teaching* is defined as one teacher works with a large group while the other works with a small group. This technique can be used for enrichment or remediation but should never be used solely for those purposes. Similarly, this technique should never be used as a time to remove IEP students from a large group (Friend & Bursuck, 2009). Like other techniques discussed previously, *alternative teaching* is an opportunity to provide learners with new opportunities to learn the same information as their classmates (Friend & Bursuck, 2009).

This cycle lasted for five instructional weeks during an interdisciplinary unit dedicated to service learning and the “pay it forward” initiative. Co-teaching partners took time to plan lessons and gather resources. We took time to arrange rooms accordingly. “I am excited to try this technique, because I remember learning best when I was able to verbally discuss my understanding with my classmates” (ICS 2).

Sample profile. In this cycle, the participating population consists of 2 special education teachers (ICS), 2 language arts teachers (LA 1 & LA 2), 1 social studies teacher (SS), 2 math teachers (M1 & M2), one Science teacher (Sci), one school aide (SA), and one administrator (Admin). For example, LA 1 and M 1 only co-teach with ICS 1. Similarly, LA 2 and M 2 only work with ICS 2. The science, social studies, school aide, and administrator work with both in class support teachers (ICS 1 & 2).

I chose these teachers because I have been working closely with them for two years prior to

the implementation of this study. We worked as a team prior to this study and all have expressed a strong desire to change the ICS model to one that would enhance our work, rather than hinder it.

Along with those listed above, I continued to survey staff about co-teaching models at RMS. Because one of the goals of this study was to identify a clear job description and explanation of roles and responsibilities for each co-teaching partner, I surveyed the larger group of respondents on their ideas of classroom responsibilities. Subjects were asked to respond to a series of questions that were formulated to identify the current roles and responsibilities of co-teaching partners. Although some of these questions were also used to inform discussion regarding teacher perceptions, the responses also enabled me to begin to create a protocol for ICS teachers that would help clarify expectations and responsibilities. I chose to send this survey to 14 of the ICS teachers who responded to the Cycle I survey. Sixteen initially responded to the Cycle I surveys, but I did not send the survey to ICS 2 or myself.

Subjects were asked to answer questions regarding their perception of the roles and responsibilities of each co-teaching partner. The respondents were sent the following questions:

1. What is the primary responsibility of an inclusion teacher?
2. What is the primary responsibility of the content teacher?
3. As an inclusion teacher I plan all lessons with the academic content teacher
4. As an inclusion teacher I feel...
5. My biggest obstacle as an inclusion teacher is

Of the 14 surveys sent, 11 ICS teachers responded. The findings are listed in Tables 4.1 below.

Figures 4.6 and 4.7 show the answers to questions 1 and 2.

Table 4.1 Role of the ICS Teacher

Maintain IEP Mandates		57.10%
Instruct Daily Lessons	66	14.30%
Support All Students		28.60%

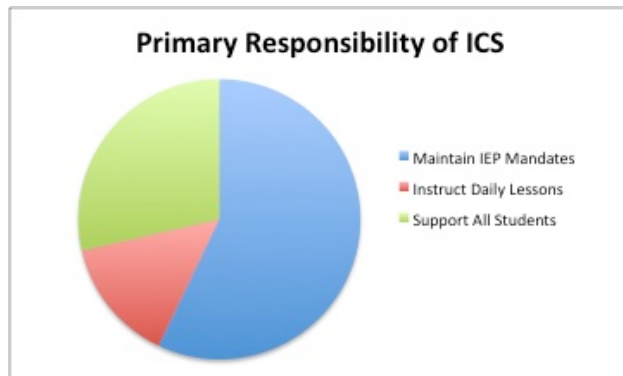


Figure 4.6 Role of ICS Teacher

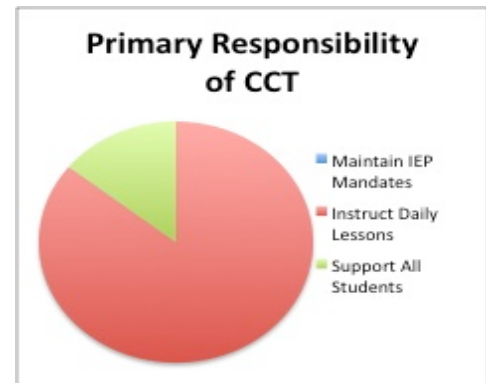


Figure 4.7 Role of Content Teacher

The survey results coincide with the initial feelings of the yellow team. After thoughtful conversation, we decided that the roles of both should be to support all students in any way necessary to engage learning and facilitate achievement. For the rest of the responses in this survey, there was an overwhelming discrepancy presented in what was expected vs. what was actually happening in the classrooms. The discussions with teachers indicate that they are longing for more parity in their co-teaching partnerships. CCT statements such as , “ I wish the [ICS] teacher would become more knowledgeable in my subject area so we can do more in class” and “If the Sped [ICS] teacher would just step up and start teaching, I would be much happier” indicate a clear frustration with the ICS teachers. The ICS teachers reported feelings of similar frustration. One participant reported “I feel that there is not enough time for an inclusion teacher to sit with all 5 subject area teachers in a week to effectively plan the lessons for that week”. Another response reads “ my biggest obstacle is trying to be an equal to my colleague when they don’t perceive me as such.” At this point, I felt it futile to continue the use of the

Friend and Cook's models without addressing a more pressing issue of frustration and looming animosity. The yellow team completed the alternative teaching cycle and reported their reflections before changing direction.

During the last cycle, some of the partners experienced difficulties with the parallel teaching method. In this cycle, all teaching reported great successes incorporating Alternative Teaching in their classrooms. The reflective journals indicated that among the core yellow team, there were positive results across all curriculum areas. "I am so happy that this alternative teaching worked out. I was beginning to think that I was the problem" (Sci). "I was so pleased with our results with this method in Sci and M1. I think we all worked together to create a cohesive environment while reaching the needs of all our students" (ICS 1). Similarly to the parallel teaching technique, The LA and SS classes were able to use alternative teaching effectively and continuously both engaging the technique more than the recommended 3 times in five weeks. "We were able to incorporate this strategy into our mandated guided reading circles which helped us build foundational skills that are severely lacking in many of our students" (LA 1). "Although we were able to use this strategy effectively when needed, I believe that this should be reserved for times of direct instruction, rather than exploratory activities" (SS).

Discussion. The findings from this cycle indicated that the respondents were more likely to try a new technique after the initiation of a guided discussion. Although there were common concerns, the team was excited to begin this cycle. Teachers agree that using new strategies to improve learning are always welcome, and this technique was more successful in those classrooms with previous logistic concerns. Candid discussions led to agreement that the need for more time to plan such lessons was a necessity. Having to become proficient in all secondary subjects continues to be a struggle for ICS teachers as well as their CCT counterparts. Many of

the reflections about communication came from the feeling that ICS teachers needed to be omniscient. It was important to note that both ICS teachers report a paradigm shift in perceptions. The CCT teachers have become so much more supportive throughout this process. They are beginning to express feeling of empathy for the expectations of being proficient in all subjects as well as the many roles we tend to play throughout the day. Communication was much improved and critical discussions were a regular occurrence. Similarly, the ICS teachers are beginning to find a balance to the idea that “trying to be all things to all people, the ICS teachers are never truly achieving proficiency in anything” (Sci). Oddly, it was the one who seemed most resistant to change that has wholeheartedly given 100% of her time to this cause. Seeing this shift has clearly changed perspectives of our team and the dynamic has become cohesive, clear, and consistently positive.

The findings from Cycle III assisted me in formulating a next step for Cycle IV. Teachers at RMS were beginning to share so much frustration by way of confidential survey that a clear action was needed. To continue the Friend and Cook’s models would be to ignore an issue of enormity at RMS. From discussions with the yellow team to the data collected through surveys and observations, it was clearly time to initiate a true change initiative that treated the frustrations that were being expressed as well as began to form tight co-teaching partnerships with clear classroom parity and cohesion

The treatment for Cycle IV would be to institute a new way of lesson planning that clearly identified the roles and responsibilities for each teacher in every lesson. It was imperative for me to begin to standardize the process in order to maintain the strides we have already made, and add a feeling of accomplishment for all partners in this process. I would develop a common lesson plan template for all content and ICS teachers to use that would identify the roles and

responsibilities for each teacher, as well as provide clear expectations for co-teaching models used. I gave the team a 3-week break before beginning Cycle IV to accommodate the NJASK state testing. During this break, I met with the team members during our regular meeting times to gain an understanding s to the most important parts of their own lesson planning process.

From the information I gathered, all agreed that it is necessary to include measurable objectives, main ideas and standards required, and a plan for assessment. ICS teachers suggested that the assessments be varied and both formative as well as summative. ICS teachers also indicated a need for alternate assessment for struggling learners as well as Tier III (gifted) learners. SS teacher suggested the use of Understanding by Design (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005) as a way to formulate the key idea (or Big Idea). She also included the need for backwards planning when tackling larger units. Using all of these ideas, I began to develop a lesson planning technique. I modified the template created by Dr. Linda Dieker (2003). Included in appendix A.4 and A.5 was a finalized copy of the template I presented to my team.

Upon presentation of the new lesson plan template, clear expectations for Cycle IV were set, shared vision was established, and ground rules were reviewed for all team meetings. I reminded the team about confidentiality and the importance of keeping discussions within the team for the purpose of maintaining trust and open communication. The teachers in this group continued to follow the leadership with courage and excitement. They began exhibiting signs of courageous following, assuming responsibility for the outcomes of our trials and suggesting treatments for our next mission, which enabled us to go forth into Cycle IV with minimal reservations and acceptance of accountability for completing lessons using this template (Chaleff, 2009).

I also received clear administrative support and guidance when creating this template and

was happy to see the administrator take an active interest in what we were doing. Up to this point, he has been absent from all but one meeting.

Conclusions and Recommendations – Cycle III

The results of surveys, conversations, and reflections from Cycle III clearly indicated a need to continue the change initiatives for the inclusive co-teaching classrooms. Our changes seemed fine, but weren't really pushing the model in the right direction. The reflections from the larger group survey as well as the reflections exhibited that the 8th grade teachers at RMS indicated that best practices were a good start, but clear change was necessary and these models were not the change that RMS needed right now. Developing a lesson plan template was not an original goal of the study, but changing the way planning occurred was. This treatment will determine whether this group was able to give up their comfort in planning and adopt a new way of designing lessons that incorporated both teachers as equally as possible. As communication continued to be open, critical, and reflective, throughout the team meeting process, the planning was becoming more timely and while maintaining a lower level of tension between co-teaching partners. Adding this piece to the study seemed to make a few participants uneasy. Some were not ready to give up what they had been doing for years, but all agreed to a trial of this process in order to see if the process truly helped establish that parity and lessen frustrations across the board.

Cycle III showed clear indication that Alternative Teaching works in many classrooms. The reflections maintained that administrative support was necessary and professional development was imperative if administrators are looking for change. As of yet, we have seen very little administrative involvement.

Cycle IV would include the development and implementation of a new lesson plan

template in an attempt to standardize the process of writing lesson in order for the ICS teachers to be more comfortable working with five different CCT. Cycle IV was extended in order for these conclusions to be meaningful since the cycle was unable to begin until after NJASK testing in late April. We agreed to extend this cycle until the first week of November of the following school year.

Cycle IV

Overview. The primary objective of Cycle IV was to develop a standardized lesson plan template in order to benefit the ICS teacher and her ability co-plan effectively with all 5 content teachers. The decision to implement such a strategy came out of survey responses of teachers at RMS, including the yellow team, as well as observations, discussions, interviews with administration, and yellow team reflective journal responses. Frustration and ill feelings between co-teaching partners can mean disaster for the inclusive setting. Murata's studies remind us that those co-teaching partners, who were able to choose to work with each other, had an easier transition in the co-teaching classroom (2009). Furthermore, Austin (2001) suggests that perceptions can lead to the destruction of co-teaching partnerships if not confronted and debunked early on in the development of the partnership. Our own discussion revealed many feelings of malcontent in the initiation of the co-teaching programs. There was a clear need for professional development to address frustration, perceptions, communication, and expectations.

Through my leadership I intended to open the pathway to more functional relationships between team members and among co-teaching partners that will expand communication lines and force administration to look at the situations they have created with a more reflective lens. If administration sees frustration and an attempt to manage and cope, then they may be more likely to initiate their own treatment of professional development and group discussion.

I developed a lesson plan template that will be given to all CCT and ICS co-teaching partners. Each CCT teacher will provide the ICS teacher with 3-5 days worth of lessons on Friday of each week. The ICS teacher will then complete her planning sheet before their common planning meeting time. The CCT teacher was responsible for identifying the *Big Idea* (Wiggins and McTighe, 2005), developing the *essential questions* (Wiggins and McTighe, 2005) or instructional objectives. The CCT will also plan out the lesson activities or performance tasks, and one form of assessment. The ICS teacher was responsible for taking this plan and providing necessary modifications, differentiated activities, and alternate assessments. Alternate assessments are ways to determine concept attainment other than traditional methods (Mastropierri & Scruggs, 2001). The ICS teacher will also make a recommendation as to the Co-teaching structure (Friend & Cook, 2007) that may work best with the specific lesson. Furthermore, it was the responsibility of the ICS teacher to identify any concerns that are pertinent for this lesson including behavioral concern, academic concerns, physical restrictions, etc.

Once the two partners had developed their plans separately, they used their common planning time to discuss ideas and plan out the specific details of each lesson. It was the intention that these processes enable partners to use their time more efficiently and effectively in creating meaningful and more authentic experiences that integrate each teacher's strength into one lesson plan. The teachers completed this process for every week of planning from September 7, through October 29, 2010.

The first part of this cycle began in April with the development of this template. After a three and a half week development process, the plan was finalized. NJASK testing was underway so the application of this task was put on hold. In the meantime, the yellow team worked on

studying the idea of differentiation (Tomlinson, 1999). We worked on grasping the concepts and brainstorming new way to differentiate content, process, and product as outlined in Tomlinson's work. We also continued to study Friend & Cook's models for effective co-teaching in order to continue our own professional growth throughout this break in practice due to NJASK testing and administrative requirements for our classrooms. We continued to meet while maintaining communication protocols for all meetings and kept reflective journal entries as pairs and individuals when necessary.

The most significant piece of this study happened during Cycle IV. The *Director of Curriculum and Instruction* for Rainbow Township contacted me to spearhead a co-teaching initiative to be held in the summer along with my LA co-teaching partner. We were to develop the protocol using the research I conducted and begin to change the co-teaching model at RMS and for the rest of the district.

Once NJASK testing was complete, it was our intention to continue the study with the implementation of the new lesson plan template. It was at this point that I received a "reduction in force" letter from the district. I had not yet achieved tenure, as this was my third year with the district, and I was forced to begin searching for employment elsewhere. Also during this time, LA 1 was contemplating an early retirement due to the political unrest and the uncertainty of future retirement packages since the election of a new governor. Although the team agreed to extend the study into the following school year due to these unforeseen events, I had to look at my leadership style and figure out how I would change myself in order to continue to lead a team I was no longer a part of.

Thankfully, all of the work on communication and reflection made us a strong unit and the team agreed to continue to participate without me as participant-observer. I chose to turn to a

form of electronic collaboration to sustain communication as well as adopt a more transactional leadership style in order to collect the end data and see clear results. It was important for me to modify my leadership style in order to be able to see this project through (Kotter, 1996). I ultimately found employment in New York City, NY. Leading this change initiative from another state was going to be tricky and much more difficult.

This was the longest cycle of the study. In all, this cycle lasted for more than 17 weeks. The first six weeks were spent providing opportunities for professional development and rich communication opportunities. The last 10 weeks were dedicated to completing the agenda for the new lesson plan component.

Once the reduction in force (RIF) notices went out, a restructuring began to happen and M1 was moved to a different grade, I was leaving, LA 1 was choosing to retire early, and the rest of the team felt overwhelmed and saddened by the loss of our unit.

The journals remained reflective and many of the entries were much more emotional than before. “How will our team be able to move forward after losing three key members?” (ICS 2). “It is a sincere shame that this is happening to us when we have done so much good and grown so close” (LA 2). “I can’t believe they are splitting us up after all this hard work. Don’t they understand the strides we have made for this community?” (M1). Needless to say, we were all reeling from the upheaval.

Sample profile. In this cycle, the participating population changed mid-way through. From April through June, the team consisted of 2 special education teachers (ICS 1&2), 2 language arts teachers (LA 1 & LA 2), 1 social studies teacher (SS), 2 math teachers (M1 & M2), 1 Science teacher (Sci), one school aide (SA), and one administrator (Admin). For example, LA 1 and M 1 only co-teach with ICS 1. Similarly, LA 2 and M 2 only work with ICS 2. The science,

social studies, school aide, and administrator work with both in class support teachers (ICS 1 & 2). In September, the dynamic changed drastically. The remaining members of the team were 2 special education teachers (ICS 1 & 2), 1 language arts teacher (LA 2), 1 social studies teacher (SS), 1 math teacher (M2), 1 Science teacher (Sci), 1 School Aide (SA) and 1 Administrator (Admin). As ICS 1, I was unable to work with my former partners directly, so I resorted to working with them electronically. I continued my discussions with the team members via email, chat, and *SKYPE* technologies. ICS 2, however still worked with the same teachers as the prior school year. For example, LA 2 and M 2 only work with ICS 2.

I chose these teachers because I have been working closely with them for two years prior to the implementation of this study. We worked as a team prior to this study and all have expressed a strong desire to change the ICS model to one that would enhance our work, rather than hinder it.

Along with those listed above, I continued to survey RMS staff about co-teaching and inclusion at RMS. The school was quite gracious in allowing me continued access to my RMS intranet access in order to continue to communicate with my respondents and the remainder of the yellow team. In this final cycle, subjects were asked to respond to a survey that tested the change from when we started this project, up until November 1, 2010. Although some of these questions were also used to inform previous discussion, treatments, and findings, the responses enabled me to make a judgment as to where the change has been lasting, and where my leadership may have *fallen short*.

I sent the final round of surveys to all of the respondents from the initial Cycle I responses. All of these people had agreed via informed consent, and I thought it necessary to allow them to sum up the district happenings when I was at RMS and when I left.

Subjects were asked to compare progress we made in the 2009-2010 school year with the continuity and commitment of administration to continue to provide opportunities for growth with co-teaching relationships. The respondent comments are unedited and presented below.

- “we plan together about what we are going to teach, but there is rarely talk about how we can both lead the class discussion....its just assumed I will lead and she will support.”
- “communication has become strained again. We have kept the model that was instituted last year which makes team communication easier, but we need you back!”
- “the progress we made last year has not continued”
- “nothing new has happened and we need help”
- “the model would be better with support, and a continued interest from administration, instead we get drive-by pd and are expected to change the world”
- “professional development opportunities should exist within the district that are specific to content at each grade level, to allow inclusion teachers to brush up on material they have not dealt with in a long time. This would allow for a greater sense of confidence in the inclusion teacher as they instruct.”

The responses to the questions were both surprising and disheartening.

The survey results coincide with the current feelings of the yellow team. In speaking with the team throughout the last leg of the process, I could feel the apathy and defeat through their words and journals. “We are fighting a losing battle” (ICS 2). “You would be amazed at the tone of building, it seems to be every man for himself” (Sci). “Great, thanks for that lesson plan development. I’ll be sure to pass it on to more co-teaching partners and let you know how it goes” (Admin). It seemed as if the administration didn’t have a clear understanding as to the level of frustration happening at the school.

It was refreshing to report that making the change to a more transactional leadership style was a great choice. I was able to set clear requirements and the team followed through with all that we had started. They appreciated the deadlines and the change in leadership since I was so far away. Most were “happy that I took a more managerial position in the end”, because “without my presence, [leading through participation, they were concerned that] they wouldn’t finish what we had worked so hard to change” (M2)

Discussion. The findings from this cycle indicated that the respondents were more likely to try a new technique after the initiation of a guided discussion. Although there were some concerns and a number of *bumps in the road*, the team was excited to begin this cycle and be the group to change this co-teaching model for the better. Teachers agree that using new strategies to improve learning are always helpful and they would continue to integrate the models presented. Teachers were also eager to try to standardize the lesson-planning template in order to help them be more productive in instruction. Candid discussions led to agreement that the need for more time to plan such lessons was a necessity. Planning time was currently out of our control; it seemed logical to approach the use of planning time in a different way. The development of the lesson plan template was an attempt to do just that. Having to become proficient in all secondary subjects continues to be a struggle for ICS teachers. Because many of the previous reflections about communication came from the descriptive writings in the survey data of ICS teachers and their feelings as if they were required or expected to be omniscient, we agreed it was time to help move each other past that feeling and into a more supportive atmosphere where the content would be the primary responsibility of the CTT and the differentiation and modifications would be the role of the ICS teacher. In speaking with administration it was clear that any observation made where these two roles were clearly distinguishable as identified above (and in each lesson

plan) would be a satisfactory lesson plan. We were unable to attain the same agreement from upper administration, as they did not return my requests for assistance in gaining information on observations. It was important to note that both ICS teachers continued to report a paradigm shift in perceptions up until November 2010. The CCT teachers remained supportive throughout this process. They continued to express feelings of empathy for the expectations of being proficient in all subjects as well as the many roles we [ICS] tend to play throughout the day.

Communication was continually improved and critical discussions remained a typical occurrence (once every 6 day cycle).

Conclusion and Recommendations- Cycle IV

The findings from Cycle IV were somewhat bittersweet. On the one hand, the treatments and shared vision we created as a team was successful and beneficial to the inclusive co-teaching model. On the other hand, having to leave a situation where change was happening because of the initiative of ones own team right at the height of its success was anticlimactic and does not provide solid opportunities for sustainability. It was clear from the final survey that teachers at RMS continue to be frustrated with the co-teaching model. One teacher told me, *“we’ve all gone rogue! There is nothing here to help us succeed; there is no one here to guide this process. They say that co-teaching is a primary concern, yet they have not offered us anything to prove those words true.”*

According to remnants of the yellow team, what we created was not sustainable due to the lack of participation from administration and the clear lack of support for the co-teaching models and all of our initiatives over a full year of research and application. It was clear to all committed to this study, the entire yellow team and an overwhelming majority of survey respondents, that the underlying assumptions (Schein, 1992) of the RMS schools do not truly support the idea that

co-teaching was an important initiative that needs to be developed in order to turn good, into great.

Chapter 5

Overall Discussion and Leadership Initiatives

Introduction. In this dissertation I studied the perceptions of co-teaching partners, implemented the Friend and Cook's model for effective inclusive co-teaching partnerships, and designed and implemented a standardized lesson-planning template for co-teaching partners to

follow. The basis of this change initiative emerged from becoming a co-teaching partner in a secondary school and feeling like a failure at the end of every day. It emerged from related literature that supported the co-teaching partnership as a way to engage learners as build social development of students with disabilities in a way that was unlikely to occur in the self-contained class (Hines, 2001). It emerged from an intrinsic desire to change a broken system and develop a strong educational community that was ready to be cultivated, but unsure of how to break the cycle of failure. The basis of this study has been nestled in my core since I was a child in awe of the way my cousin Henry, with mental retardation, was integrated into a strong community as was taught to excel in every way he possibly could. The idea of inclusion was inherently good. It is necessary and it is truly what is morally right. The impetus for this study was to prove to everyone else around me that what I knew in my core to be right was truly the best option for all members of our educational community.

I used an action research approach that progressed into four cycles. Throughout these cycles I used a mixed methodologies approach to study and gather data. The quantitative method of survey research had a direct impact on the treatments and focus for each cycles, whereas the qualitative processes of observation, interviews, reflective journaling (Schon, 1983), and discussions helped to further inform the study. In each cycle, I embedded at least one of Kotter's 8-step model for change into this study in order to monitor the change process and maintain buy-in throughout the study (2009). Although it was my intention to focus on school culture and community expectations, I found that teacher perceptions were the primary factor that held any change from becoming lasting. I turned my focus to teacher perception of their co-teaching partners as suggested in most of the extant literature (Murata, 2009) (Austin, 2001), (Kocchar, West & Taymans, 2000) (Wagaman, 2008).

I felt that the best way to initiate this study was to help my subjects understand that we are a system of connected entities. When one part of the system fails, it is still the responsibility of the system to figure out why that failure occurred (Senge, 2005). More importantly, there would be no outside force, no Jedi Knight, who would come and mind trick us all into successful co-teaching partnerships. Senge reminds us that the only true and sustainable solution to a problem comes from within that very system. Outside forces will have no lasting effect. Through candid discussion and interviews with each participant, I began an open-discussion that led everyone to the same conclusion. We all understood that without action, no one was invested enough to change this system or inclusive co-teaching. We talked about the circle of RMS administration vs. the circle of RMS staff and concluded that without the staff intervention and initiative, administration would remain uninterested and unwilling to attempt a change.

When I began this research at Rainbow Middle School, I was supported by administration and led to believe that this study would be the foundation they needed to change a dysfunctional model. I believed that the impact of the work we were about to embark on would be arduous and tedious, but meaningful and necessary. There were many factors that led to the improvement of this system throughout the 12-month study. There were times when we felt derailed, and times where we rejoiced in unadulterated success. According to an upper administrator, this implementation of this study helped to jumpstart the administration into discussions regarding co-teaching models for the first time in over eight years. These discussions of the upper administration led to unintended consequences as well. The upper administration wanted to begin to control the change and take the successes out of the hands of those who worked so hard to achieve them.

This primary goal of this chapter is to focus on the discoveries that were made throughout

the four cycles of action research. These discoveries will be directly related to the literature review, and the core ideas that are shared by the industry professional involved in best practices and effective co-teaching strategies. Included in this discoveries section will be the connection to Kotter's change theory and how that theory directly related to each of the cycles and their treatments (2009). These discoveries covered here will relate to the study of co-teaching models, whereas chapter 5 will focus on leadership initiatives and my journey through theory and practice.

The research questions addressed in this project were:

1. After completing a six-week workshop on Friend and Cook's models for effective inclusive co-teaching, will teacher perception of classroom roles change?
2. After completing a six-week workshop on Friend and Cook's models for effective inclusive co-teaching, will teachers implement these models into daily lessons?
3. How have attitudes and communication of inclusive co teachers changed since the implementation of Friend and Cook's models?

Teacher Perception of Current Inclusive Co-teaching Model

Throughout this study I collected data that directly related to teachers perceptions of inclusion and co-teaching at RMS. The majority of the staff completed the online surveys and was willing to openly discuss their feelings. The data was collected through online surveys, in person interviews, electronic communication, observations, and team meeting discussions, and informal discussions. The richness of this study came from the nine other participants who agreed to become my study subjects over the next 12 months who truly informed this research and enabled change to take hold. This core group of educators was cautious, yet eager to affect a much-needed change that would attempt to enhance our community and forever change the way

we interacted.

Cycle I was groundbreaking for us. We confronted our communication issues head on with care and concern for all, while being critical and honest in the process. Before we began to study the models, it was important for us to set ground rules. Since the first step of Kotter's change theory—create a sense of urgency—was clearly engaged, it was important for us to set ground rules for communication that would enable everyone to feel safe, comfortable, and protected by the group. The links to the literature began to swarm around me. It was clear that these teachers were feeling exactly what Austin stated in his research. He points out that negative perceptions can cause the destruction of co-teaching partnerships if not confronted and debunked early on in the development of the partnership (2001).

In analyzing the survey data, I found that although 42% of RMS respondents preferred to work alone, 93% of the same respondents agreed that inclusion was important and beneficial for a variety of learners. Aligning with the findings presented by Kocchar, West, and Taymans (2000), teachers tend to do what is best for students, regardless of their personal perceptions.

In the open-ended responses of that same survey, respondents wrote that although they see the benefits to inclusive co-teaching partnerships, it was ineffective to have one ICS teacher for all subject areas in the secondary schools. Content was too specific to be able to be a proficient and effective educator in all academic areas. This directly correlated with Murawski and Dieker's conclusions that co-teaching partners need "adequate time to discuss content within the framework of the special education student's needs" (2003). Teachers at RMS agree wholeheartedly that the Special education teacher needs time to become comfortable with the content they are expected to teach, but finding that comfort was not possible across five core academic areas without adequate time to prepare as well as plan.

Cycle I focused on changing perceptions through collegial interaction and open discussion as suggested by Murawski and Dieker (2003), while simultaneously studying Friend and Cook's Models for effective co-teaching (2007). Our communication strategies were to:

1. Have proactive discussions
2. Vary instructional practices (like those used in cycles II and III)
3. Expect progress in small steps
4. Increase honest and critical communication
5. Work as a team to achieve goals
6. Support flexibility with the process
7. Critically assess and reflect often on our own progress

(Murawski & Dieker, 2003)

During an interview with the principal at RMS, I got the sense that he was very interested in changing our current model and that he was willing to begin an open discussion and create a shared-vision with his staff to begin that process. To my knowledge, those initiatives have not happened yet. His idea was that at RMS it was unknown as to what the roles and responsibilities were for each ICS co-teacher. He was open with his discussion and eager to find a way to change the model incorporating "grass roots" ideas into a change initiative (Hoffman, 2009).

The connections between the data collected at RMS regarding teacher perceptions were directly linked to the literature. Rainbow Middle School was willing to receive in-service on how to make these relationship more cohesive, they were eager to help facilitate discussions, and willing to put forth more time and effort into building these relationships in order to enrich instruction and help raise student achievement. They were waiting for some leadership to help point them in the right direction.

In an interview with another school administrator, I learned that it was typical for school level change initiatives to be thwarted and commandeered by upper administration in an assumed attempt to maintain tight control over the school and its functions. It was my impression from this interview that this control from upper administration actually impeded any changes that administration initiated. This administrator stated he was “excited that a teacher was taking the initiative to affect change with this [co-teaching model] since teacher leaders were not considered a threat by upper administration.

According to Murawski and Dieker (2003), “expecting general and special educators to possess the same amount of knowledge was ludicrous; instead, teachers need to be taught how to recognize one another’s areas of expertise and to collaboratively build upon those strengths” (p. 3). If teachers were to understand that the expectation was not on both to deliver all content-based instruction, then perceptions of each other’s inadequacies would be irrelevant.

It was clear that the results of the surveys, interviews, observations, and discussions of Cycle I indicated a need to begin implementing the Friend and Cooks strategies in order for co-teaching partners to begin to see the benefits of each other, the inclusion model, inclusive co-teaching. Parallel Teaching seemed to be the best choice to lead these already delicate relationships into a small step towards parity.

Co-teaching Initiatives: Parallel Teaching and Alternative Teaching

Cycles II and III worked on implementing parallel teaching and alternative teaching across the core curriculum areas with both ICS teachers and their respective partners. Throughout these almost 15 weeks, meetings continued, surveys continued, and communication changed. We became a strong unit, despite our initial conflicts. Our professional relationships became more open and we were able to share critical discussion and reflect on ourselves more than I initially

thought possible. Through the trails of the co-teaching strategies, we had successes and failures, but each remained a positive learning experience and step toward building our community and creating strong educational experiences for our learners.

Survey data from these cycles concluded that most teachers at RMS welcomed the co-teaching initiative. While this study was only conducted in one academy, Yellow Team, the ideas and experiences were being shared throughout the building. Many ICS teachers were asking me to start this study in their academies as well.

In our yellow team meetings, we discussed the implementation of these methods at length, and while we all agreed that implementing them was beneficial, there was still an underlying disconnect that was occurring between CCT and their ICS counterparts. Looking at reflections and listening to discussions made me realize that there was something more to this change that needed to happen in order for it to anchor. I decided to take the group off course and divert to the ideas of lesson planning. I was still hearing that ICS teachers were frustrated with the inability to master all five content areas. I was still hearing that CCT teachers were frustrated with the ICS lack of participation in content during daily lessons. Regardless of the literature and research I presented, administration repeatedly shut down the idea that ICS teachers would be better utilized in as content ICS. The administration stood firm that ICS teachers would remain in five content areas throughout the day. A change in lesson planning seemed to be the next logical step.

Cycle IV was dedicated to developing a lesson plan template that integrated the ideas of the yellow team member's individual lesson plans, and the need for more ICS input on daily lessons. I modified Lisa Dieker's model for co-teacher lesson planning (2003) by infusing Marzano's focus on transforming grading (2000) and Wiggins and McTighe's understanding by design (2005) in order to create a lesson plan template that would address the requirements of the

content teachers as well as the needs of the ICS teachers. Cycle IV was dedicated to the implementation of this strategy and the effects this template has on common planning time efficiency, and lesson efficacy.

Although there were some reservations in using the model, the yellow team agreed to continue our search for a new model of co-teaching that best fit the needs of our collegial community and our community of learners.

Change in Communication

As previously stated, using Murawksi and Dieker's strategies for effective communication was key to maintaining an open and honest atmosphere where teachers felt safe to share concerns and ask for critical feedback. Reflective practice (Schon, 1983) was the best method for beginning this process. In the beginning, teachers wrote their feelings, but did not share them wholeheartedly. The more we met, the more sharing occurred. As we took those small steps toward change (Kotter, 1996), we were able to recognize that success belonged to all of us. As a team we created a cohesive unit that was protective of each other, and proud of our shared accomplishments.

One teacher was perceived to be the roadblock. She was expected to be the one who would stifle the process due to her perceived inability to adjust to change. In the end, it was this person who embraced the change the most and became the catalyst for developing other instructional initiatives due to her ability to reflect and collect team feedback. The transformations were concurrent with the literature in that once small success were realized, participants were more likely to continue to try new ideas with less inhibitions and caution for the potential negative effects.

In a survey of the RMS staff, a teacher reported that one of the biggest obstacle to being an

ICS teacher was “finding a way to deal with several different personalities and teaching styles that I have to adapt to on a daily basis.” In our core group, we realized that part of the problem was trying to adapt to each other was stifling our ability to benefits from our inherent differences. Murawski and Dieker (2003) point out that using each other’s strengths was a key component to building these partnerships. Another respondent reports his obstacle as “trying to be an equal to my colleague when they don’t perceive me as such.” In discussing this idea of feeling inadequate, we believed that these feelings were the result of poor or non-existent communication. In following the communication protocol, we were able to build our collegial relationships and lose the feelings self-deprecation that many RMS respondents feel on a daily basis. It was absolutely imperative for all teams to adopt a communication protocol in order to effectively develop rich and cohesive partnerships.

My discoveries in Cycle IV were significant and most meaningful. It was during this cycle that I realized the effect that a team committed to one goal can have. It was during this time when I received my reduction-in-force (RIF) notice and began to look for new employment. I was sure that I would be unable to complete this study due to the political climate and uncertainly throughout the building, and the educational system, in general. The tone of the school quickly changed, but the commitment of the teachers involved in this study remained strong, supportive, and inspirational. The team lost three members due to this restructuring, but the remaining participants agreed to follow through on this commitment in order to benefit the larger community at RMS. I would have to lead from afar through the use of electronic collaboration tools.

Conclusion. Conducting this research was life changing. Becoming a part of a core group of dedicated educators was rewarding beyond my expectations. Having the opportunity to lead

an initiative at Rainbow Middle School was a highlight of my professional career thus far. Gaining administrative support to guide this initiative enabled me to affect change in a way that directly impacted my colleagues, my students, my community, and myself. More importantly, this initiative facilitated a new way of communicating for those who once were unable to do so.

Establishing strong ground rules, developing goals, and building a common sense of purpose provided a solid foundation of mutual respect and shared vision. I Cycle I enabled each subsequent cycle to flourish and develop naturally rather than having to script each step. The commitment to change was supported in theory and executed by the subjects with sincerity and immeasurable passion. It was my hope that future studies involve the same-shared vision and commitment to change as this study.

Implications for teacher training and inclusive co-teaching implementation

In addition to helping the team find more effective ways to communicate with each other, more efficient ways to co-plan lessons, and more innovative strategies to use within the inclusive classroom, this research project changed my thought process altogether. As a classroom teacher, I tend to wait for directive rather than initiate change for fear of displeasing administration. What I learned was that without proactive leadership and teacher initiative, change was less likely to happen. Administration become so inundated with other initiatives and the lack of funding for them, that those opportunities to affect sincere change within the classroom becomes far removed from the administrative action plan. Similarly, without providing teachers, both new and old, with opportunities to develop leadership ideology, and learn new ways to solve problems, teachers will not become innovators. Providing training in methods opens up discussions for teachers to become proactive in the implementation of new theories. Providing training for inclusive co-teachers in core academic topics, allows for more opportunity to

develop parity within a core academic class.

In order to establish generalized findings, this study would need to be duplicated in other areas and with other grades; however, it was clearly aligned with the research that overwhelmingly points to the greatest success in co-teaching partnerships comes when teachers are given the opportunity to choose their own partners. When discussing this finding with my social studies partners, we both agree that choosing each other would open up new ways of presenting information, establish clear parity among partners, and more importantly, help rejuvenate the way we teach on a daily basis. It was important to note that even after the project ended and I was working in a new school, over ninety miles away, the social studies teacher and I still co-planned lessons as though we were still partners. We still discuss initiatives and develop new ways to present information to technological learners as if we still work in the same classroom.

Leadership Theory

Introduction. This research study examined the inclusive co-teaching model in the secondary schools environment and the need for change. The researcher implemented a variety of leadership theories as well as an eight-step change models in order to guide the initiative towards a certain goal. The leadership styles presented in this chapter was used to lead a team of which the researcher was also a participant. This chapter discusses those leadership initiatives and well as the change theory and how they related to the implementation of this research study.

Effects of leadership and the change initiative. “Great leaders motivate their followers to achieve more, do better, and create change.” (Goleman, 2002, p.). The servant leader maintains a moral commitment to the goal or the task through embedding himself into the process alongside his followers (Greenleaf, 1995). In order to build our team dynamic, it was important

to become a part of the process and model expected behavior, exude confidence in the mission, and work alongside my team to help complete our mission. Being servant-leader was natural for me. I have been involved in this process for more than two years, so taking leadership and initiating the vision felt like the next natural step. In order to serve this role, it was my individual goal to make sure all participants felt supported, respected, and heard (Greenleaf, 1995). I was sure to do weekly “check-ins” via e-mail or during lunchtime to maintain open communication and to substantiate my commitment to accomplishing our goal.

Different from the servant-leader, the transactional leader develops more clear cause and effect relationships. Each participant was viewed as necessary and relevant, but there was a clear exchange, a give and take, involved in this theory. Unlike the servant-leader, the transactional leader does not have to become embedded in a project in order to expect outcomes and see achievement. Due to the change of employment as described in the latter part of Cycle IV, it was necessary for me to adopt a more transactional approach in order to gather the necessary data, and complete the study. Leading from afar provided numerous challenges that were unforeseen at the start of this study. Providing a clear give and take for the participants left to continue this study for the last six weeks proved to be the best choice. They expressed feelings of disconnect and lethargy towards the end due to the break up of the original team. It was the establishment of transactional leadership that motivated the group to maintain focus, and finish the study.

Implementing change. Kotter identifies an eight-step model for change that parallels the ideas of servant-leadership. These eight steps enable an organization to set goals and establish clear paths to achieving those goals. Using this model was an integral part of how I led this team. I embedded these ideas into every discussion we had at the beginning and end of each cycle.

Creating a sense of urgency was an easy task. The urgency was there without my initiation. The urgency had been there, but the ability for the teachers to feel empowered enough to act on this feeling was lost. By simply asking for their permission to stuffy them, they were ready to tackle this issue with determination and tenacity.

The second step in this model was to form a powerful coalition. We had been working together for over two years, it was clear that this was the group who could see this mission through. Part of establishing a true coalition for our group was the need to initiate communication strategies. In order to keep the group on track, it was important to practice these core communication strategies relentlessly. Communication breakdown had happened with this group many times before, and this study was too important to let poor communication deter it. I established a protocol for sharing information that introduced using objective conversation and reflective discourse. In order for us to speak honestly and critically, we were to make sure that we were not imposing blame or assuming details.

Kotter's third and fourth step in this model was to create a vision and empower that vision. Together we developed a shared vision that addressed the concerns of the group as whole, and provided individuals with opportunities to empower each other through conversation and the development of more cohesive teams. Mandating that the participants meet once per six days, encouraged and promoted more collegial interactions naturally. May of us began to look forward to that time to share something new, or to make new discoveries about each other.

In order to empower others, the fifth step in Kotter's model, I used the survey data to inform our groups mission. Once the group was able to hear the frustration and downtrodden perceptions of others, they were able to gain more passion toward finding a model that worked for all of RMS.

The short-term wins, step 6, was a planned action. I intended for the implementation of Friend and Cook's models (2007) to be short-term wins. I knew that this team had been dedicated to trying to solve the problems of co-teaching in the secondary schools, but may have needed guidance into seeing that we can achieve our goals, even without the support of administration. I know that these short-term wins, especially as they lead into Cycle IV, were what I needed in order to remain steadfast in the commitment to changing this organization.

Ultimately, the subjects shared with me that many of the initiatives we developed, are still in place. Communication strategies are still a part of the weekly team meetings. Co-teaching models are attempted by many of the staff on a regular basis, as well. I am disappointed that the development of the standard lesson plan template has not been anchored (step 8). Without being at the school to guide the process, I have been unable to see a sustainable change in that core piece of this puzzle. Administration had agreed to share the template with others, but that promise seems to have been forgotten. I believe that this was the core piece of the puzzle that was needed to truly change the current model of inclusive co-teaching at Rainbow Middle School.

Implications for further research. At one point, the possibilities for further research seemed endless. It seemed as though Newton's laws of motion were being played out in educational theory; every action had an equal and opposite reaction. All of the data pointed to a need to understand personalities before assigning partners. One would be able to study the dynamics of choosing co-teaching partners vs. matching partners according to learning style, personality traits, cultural similarities, etc. Another opportunity for further research lies in the ability to study student achievement in co-taught classes vs. traditional classrooms. The most significant study would likely be to discover the effects of having content specific co-teachers vs.

cross curricular co-teachers in the secondary schools. These topics could provide much more data that would be useful in determining service placement for individuals with special needs as well as those performing in the bottom third of the class. This research would also be important when determining placement for students with social deficiencies and behavioral needs. By designing diverse and ideal classrooms, we are providing our students with opportunities for success that are specific to their individual needs.

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A.1 Initial/Primary Survey (administered via surveymonkey.com)

1. What is inclusion?
2. What is mainstreaming?
3. What is differentiation?

Appendix A.2- Informed Consent

I agree to participate in a secondary school inclusion study, which is being conducted by Marnee Morris Sirolli, a doctoral student at Rowan University.

The purpose of this study is to incorporate current best practices models of inclusion in order to increase student achievement within the inclusion classroom. The data collected in this study will be combined with data from previous studies and will be submitted for publication in a research journal.

I understand that I will be required to answer surveys, read articles, and have group discussions. My participation in the study should not exceed two hours.

I understand that my responses will be confidential and that all the data gathered will be confidential. I agree that any information obtained from this study may be used in any way thought best for publication or education provided that I am in no way identified and my name is not used.

I understand that there are no physical or psychological risks involved in this study, and that I am free to withdraw my participation at any time without penalty.

I understand that my participation does not imply employment with the state of New Jersey, Rowan University, the principal investigator, or any other project facilitator.

(Signature of Participant) (Date)

(Signature of Investigator) (Date)

Appendix A.2- Professional Development

Co-Teaching Models Reference Sheet	
<p>One Teaching/One Observing</p> <p>This model allows one teacher to teach the lesson, and the other teacher to conduct careful student observations and systematic documentation of those observations. This allows both teachers to gain a very sophisticated understanding of their students' academic, behavioral, and social functioning, relative to the lesson and the dynamics of the classroom community.</p>	<p>One Lead Teach/One Support Teach</p> <p>This model encourages one teacher to assume the lead role in the teaching while the other teacher supports individual students (or small groups) in the classroom during instruction. Teachers can even trade off this role at different points in the same lesson in order for students (and teachers!) to avoid seeing one of you as the "real" teacher and one of you as the "aide."</p>
<p>Station Teaching</p> <p>This model encourages the teachers to each take responsibility for planning and teaching a portion of the instructional content. Students move from one station to another for work with each teacher. Stations can also include independent work, peer tutoring, or parent-led activities. Each station constitutes its own lesson with unique goals and objectives, even if all of the stations are working together under a Big Idea (an overall learning goal that ties together all of the station lessons).</p>	<p>Parallel Teaching</p> <p>In this model teachers plan and teach the same exact lesson at the same time, but to two different groups of children. This can be helpful in reducing the teacher-student ratio for lessons where you want to strengthen your ability to assess each student's understanding, for example.</p>
<p>Alternative Teaching</p> <p>This model recognizes that at times some children require different instruction than the larger group. Sometimes this may mean that small(er) group instruction is used to "pre-teach" a concept, to "re-teach" a concept, to provide enrichment, or to conduct an authentic assessment. Sometimes this can <i>look</i> like parallel teaching, but is not considered as such since all of the children are not engaged in the same lesson.</p>	<p>Team Teaching</p> <p>This is a more generic term that describes teachers who plan collaboratively and share in the instruction of all students. It can incorporate multiple forms of co-teaching.</p>

Friend, M., & Cook, L., 2007. Interaction: Collaboration skills for school professionals. Allyn & Bacon: Boston

A.4 Special Educator Planning Page

Special Educator Planning Page

Week of:

Class:

Standard(s):

Co-Teaching Structures

O- one teach, one support

S- station teaching

P- parallel teaching

A- alternative teaching

T- team teaching

Day & Structure	Academic Adaptations (all levels)	Material/ Supports/Modifications	Differentiated Activities	Alternate Assessments
M				
T				
W				
Th				
F				

Reflection:

Modified by Marnee Morris from Lisa Dieker, PhD.

Behavioral Concerns:

A.5 Content Teacher Planning Page

Content Teacher Planning Page

Week of:

Class:

Strategies:

Standard(s):

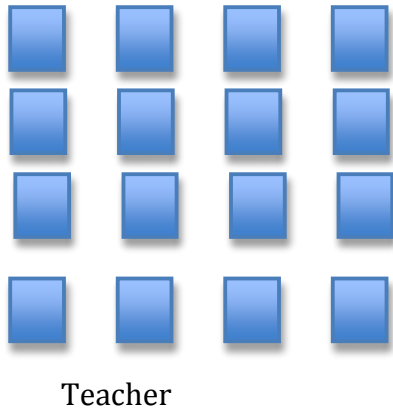
Target Students:

Day	Big Idea	Essential Questions	Lesson Activities/Performance tasks	Assessments
M				
T				
W				
Th				
F				

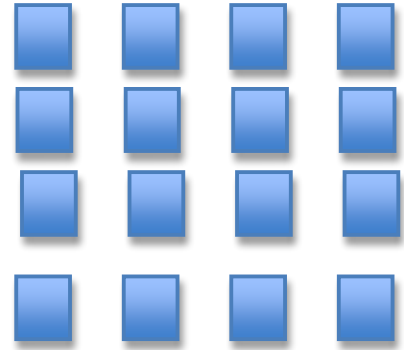
Reflection:

A.6 Co-teaching Classroom Illustrations

Parallel Teaching- Two Separate Groups in One Classroom

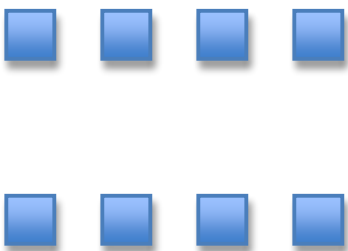


Teacher



Alternative Teaching- One Large Group with a Small "Break-Out" Group

Teacher



Teacher

