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TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES
OF INSTRUCTION IN COLLABORATIVE AND
RESOURCE ROOM SETTINGS

by
Dawn M. Ewing

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the
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of
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at
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Approved by

Professor

Date Approved 5/6/99

ABSTRACT

Dawn M. Ewing

Teachers' Perceptions of the Benefits and Challenges of Instruction In Collaborative and Resource Center Settings

1999

Dr. S. Jay Kuder

Master of Arts in Special Education

This study sought to pinpoint problems special education teachers face in resource centers and collaborative classes. With this information, teachers will be able to instruct their students with a higher degree of success. In this study of special education teachers who instruct in both a collaborative team-teaching class and a resource center, educators were asked to list and explain the challenges they face in each setting, and how they compared with one another. Special education teachers completed open-ended surveys, as did regular education teachers who teach collaborative classes. Teachers reported that their biggest challenges in both settings were time constraints for lesson planning and housekeeping tasks, such as report writing. Another area of concern in the resource center, which differed from the positive results reported in the collaborative class, was student motivation. In the other areas addressed, which included content, grades, behavior management, and judging student perceptions, teachers reported mostly positive aspects. In general, special

education teachers were supportive of both settings and they viewed collaborative classes and resource centers as effective, but not perfect, with room for improvement in both settings.

MINI – ABSTRACT

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Dr. S. Jay Kuder

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Special education teachers face a variety of challenges in both the collaborative setting and the resource center. When surveyed, teachers reported that their biggest challenges in both settings were time constraints for lesson planning and housekeeping tasks, such as report writing. Another area of concern in the resource center was student motivation. In the other areas addressed, which included content, grades, behavior management, among others, teachers reported mostly positive aspects.

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Who have always encouraged me to further my education
And taught me never to quit.

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Who inspired me to become a special education teacher.

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Chapter One

Research Proposal and Hypotheses

In recent years, school districts across the country have seen an increase in students with learning disabilities. As the law states that children eligible for special education services must be placed in the least restrictive environment, there has also been an increase in the amount of collaborative teaching classes and resource centers. The two settings usually manage the more mild of the learning disabilities, while the other more severe handicaps are served in other settings. As the number of collaborative rooms and resource centers increase, however, a variety of problems arise for the special education teacher in both settings.

In the ever changing world of education, in particular the field of special education services, it is important for educators to know their roles and responsibilities, and above all, how best to meet the needs of their students. As collaborative classrooms and resource centers increase, special education teachers must know what challenges they will face in the collaborative and resource room settings, and how they compare with one another. Teacher feedback on their experiences in both classes can be helpful when shared with others in the same teaching roles and for those responsible for schedule planning. With information on these topics, educators will be able to find out which style is more effective, and will have the greatest impact on the success of their students. As more special education teachers are asked to teach in both settings in the course of a day, they will need to know what challenges lie ahead, to better enable them to do their jobs.

Statement of Research Problem / Hypotheses

Research Question : What are the challenges faced by special education teachers in a collaborative team-teaching setting, and how do they compare with the ones they face in the resource center? What are their attitudes toward each setting, and which do they feel is more effective?

Hypotheses: Special Education teachers face a variety of challenges in both the collaborative settings and the resource center. In the collaborative setting, problems include the lack of instructional planning time, motivation, classroom management, and a variety of student-learning levels. In a resource center, some of the problems teachers' face are similar to ones faced in a collaborative class, however, some are different. Regardless of the challenges, teacher attitudes show support for both team-teaching and resource centers, adding that effectiveness will vary with individual student needs.

As the number of resource centers and collaborative classrooms increase, special education teachers will be asked to assume teaching roles in both types of classrooms. Knowing the challenges that lie ahead will help with job performance and student success. This information will also be helpful for those responsible for student and teacher class scheduling. Therefore, the information that this study will generate will benefit administrators/supervisors of special education services, as well as teachers and students. Those who are currently teaching in both the collaborative and resource room settings will gather data on the topic through teacher surveys. Regular education teachers who serve as collaborative partners will also be surveyed, as well as special education teachers. Other background information will be gathered from previous

studies and compared to the recent findings. At the completion of this study, hopefully the information found could be utilized by special education teachers who are new to these settings. Hopefully, suggestions will also be offered to remedy the challenges, which are faced to aid those who currently teach in both settings, and for those who must plan class schedules for teachers and students.

Chapter Two Research Review

The research review section of this paper will examine previous studies in the areas of collaborative teaching and resource center settings. In the beginnings of each section, there will be some brief background information on each of the settings to inform those not familiar with one or both of the settings. The information presented in each of the studies will focus on the challenges and attitudes that teachers face in the collaborative and resource center settings.

Collaborative Teaching

The following definitions and models of collaborative team-teaching are to be used as background information for the reader who is not familiar with collaborative settings and their most widely used methods.

Definitions

In-Class support is a program of instruction where regular and special education teachers are collaboratively involved in planning and implementing special strategies, techniques, methods and materials to address learning problems of pupils with educational disabilities engaged in the regular education classroom lesson. The responsibility for the curriculum and class lesson remains that of the regular class teacher while the special education teacher provides assistance to the pupils.

Collaborative teaching, or team teaching, is a joint teaching model in which the general education teacher(s) and the specialists (therapists, special education or

remedial teacher) share planning, teaching and evaluation within the mainstream setting. It is also called co – teaching. (DiMeo, 1993)

Some Models of Collaborative Teaching

Grazing is a collaborative model in which one teacher is in the front of the classroom giving instruction or an explanation, while the other teacher moves from student to student checking to see if they are on task, or have questions. Another model is called tag-team teaching. In this model, one teacher gives instruction in the front of class, while the other teacher is involved in another separate activity, or standing in back of classroom. When the first teacher has completed a lesson, the second teacher will assume the teaching responsibilities, while the first moves to a separate activity, in the back of room, etc. (Vaughn, 1997) A third model, which has no specific name, involves both teachers in the same lesson at the same time. In this model, both the regular and special education teachers are teaching the lesson simultaneously, taking turns presenting the information, or either adding to or restating what the other has previously said. It is at this point, many times where the special education teacher will try to simplify the information or concept being presented in a way which is beneficial to all students, without singling out any particular student.

Collaborative Review

Collaborative teaching, instruction in a classroom in which a general education and special education teacher teach together, in a general education setting, is becoming more and more popular today. (Bauwens, 1997) Also called cooperative or co-teaching, collaborative teaching is a way to mainstream students with disabilities into the regular

population without singling out students. Teachers work together, as a team, to plan and implement lessons for the benefit of all students.

Obviously, before instruction can even begin, teachers need to be paired together. It is important that both are open to this style of teaching, because they will have to change their traditional style of teaching on their own. Because it is a somewhat new method, and many of today's teachers have not worked in this type of setting before, those paired should be comfortable with each other, and prior to teaching, take time to set rules and plan instruction. (Hines, 1994)

Planning

When planning instruction for the collaborative classroom, both teachers must keep in mind that they will have a variety of learning levels in one class. Two forms of planning are individualized planning, and group-oriented planning, also called co-planning. In individualized planning, teachers make-up lesson plans, then share with their partner. In co-planning, both professionals work together to formulate objectives for their lessons. (Bryant, 1998)

In a three-year study of elementary and middle schools, which use collaborative teaching, planning was a persistent problem. Teachers reported that finding the scheduled time to sit down and plan during school hours became more difficult as the year went on. This was partly due to the fact that special educators were now collaborating with two to three regular teachers as a result of interest in the new program. Middle school teachers did not have the problems shared by their elementary counterparts. Planning periods were scheduled during times when students attended

other classes, such as art or gym. Regardless of the timing complications, educators did report that planning with the same partner got easier over time. Most teachers attributed this to the fact that the co-teachers developed a routine, the special educators became familiar with the regular curriculum, and over time, most felt comfortable with one another. (Thomas, 1997)

Student Scheduling

The same study, done in 1997, by Christine S. Walther – Thomas, reported that student scheduling was also a problem, particularly for the staff members responsible for scheduling decisions. In order to maintain a heterogeneous group, the process involved a lot more “hand-scheduling”, rather than the use of a computer. This was much more time-consuming; therefore it met with resistance. This study also added that the principal’s role was crucial in some cases, because he or she had the power to override computer schedules. Scheduling became very difficult when teachers did not have the principal’s support. Some classes did not have a good balance of special education students versus regular students. On the whole, middle schools reported fewer scheduling problems than elementary schools. (Thomas, 1997)

Other Concerns Regarding Collaboration

The above study also noted problems in caseload concerns for the special education teacher. Some schools reported needing more personnel to reduce the loads of the special educators. Other problems noted were administrative support, without

which the programs were difficult to implement, and staff-development. Teachers reported that due to cut backs, co-teaching was basically self-taught. (Thomas, 1997)

Benefits of Collaborative Teaching

Although the Thomas study showed there were problems with collaborative teaching, it also has its benefits for both students and teachers, alike. The report found that students benefited in academic performance, teacher time and attention, strategies and study skills instruction, and social skill development. Teachers reported that low-achieving students did better in co-taught classrooms. The addition of an extra teacher afforded students more individual attention and their on-task time increased. Co-teaching also gave special educators a unique opportunity to share expertise on effective cognitive strategies. Teachers reported that student performance improved with incorporated study strategies. Communication and social skills improved for all students in the inclusive classroom. Teachers and administrators reported a “community-like” atmosphere, which everyone benefited from. Finally, both regular and special education teachers benefited from co-teaching, as well. Reported benefits included professional satisfaction, professional growth, personal support, and increased collaboration among faculty members. (Thomas, 1997)

In another study, done in 1997, by Spencer J. Salend and others, a cooperative teaching team made up of a regular and special education teacher was collaborating in a kindergarten class. In the class of twenty-four, seven of the students were classified with special needs. Both teachers kept open-ended journals of their experiences. The writings included their concerns, which included initial difficulties adjusting to the

setting. Concerns also existed about teaching roles, styles, and differences in philosophies. The teachers also noted a newfound respect for each other's skills, perspectives, experiences, and areas of expertise.

Both the special education and regular teachers in this study by Spencer J. Salend, and others, enjoyed the risk taking involved in the new teaching method, they also said it renewed their enjoyment and excitement about teaching. It also created a sense of community in the classroom. Both teachers reported that as they showed they were both committed to the team, they saw a noted difference in the behavior of their students. Pupils became much more sensitive to the needs of their peers. Teachers added that they had the support of the principal, and they met with him periodically to discuss problems and solutions. The one problem the educators faced in the beginning, adjusting to each other's differences, they turned into a positive aspect. As the two talked about their differences and individual perspectives, they reported that this newfound understanding added to their own teaching. (Salend, 1997)

High school students and teachers also saw benefits from a collaborative program. In 1987, a study took place in a secondary setting with similar results to the ones previously mentioned. Special education teachers acted as consultants to the regular education teachers and co-taught on certain days of the week, different from the other studies in which co-teaching was done everyday. Even with the special education teacher in the regular class part of the time, grades still showed that classified students obtained higher grades than the previous year, when they had no co-teaching. Also, regular teachers reported overwhelmingly, that they enjoyed working with the special education teachers and they felt comfortable with them in their classrooms. They also

added that the presence of the special education teacher had a positive affect on student behavior. (Harris, 1987)

Using Paraprofessionals

In 1995, a study on collaborative teaching was conducted which was somewhat different, in that trained paraprofessionals were used to give instruction, in addition to the regular and special education teachers. From time to time, the paraprofessionals would drill or review with small groups of students in the back of the room, while the teachers worked with the rest of the class. Those that took part in the study reported that by about 75%, they were in support of this pull-in program. (Pull-in meaning to bring the specialist and supports into the classroom, rather than pull out the students to another classroom.) Those in the CAPPs site (Consultation and Paraprofessional Pull-In System) who did teach collaboratively, did prefer co-teaching, where as those in the control site, who did not co-teach, were less optimistic about trying the new model. Even though those who participated were positive about the pull-in program, they did not feel that it would completely replace the need for a resource room, even with the help of the paraprofessionals.

Student outcomes were also measured in this study. Scores showed that students in the CAPPs model performed approximately as well as those in the control site, who received help in the resource center. The most noted finding was the fact that the referral rate for special services went down. Another important finding was in regard to planning. Unlike other studies where planning was a problem, it was not so in this case. It seems the use of paraprofessionals gave the teachers the time to speak and

consult with one another. Finally, the study concluded that having a second teacher, a resource/consulting teacher, as researchers called them, was a positive aspect. (Welch, 1995)

Unstudied Issues

Many other valid points have been made on the subject of co-teaching which have not been formally studied yet. Some advantages, mentioned from articles, include the fact that more options are available for class activities with two teachers, children have immediate feedback, and all students in the class benefit, not just those with special needs. (Brockett, 1995) Other issues that have to be answered for successful co-teaching are the management of the class discipline and grades. (Vaughn, 1997) As with the other problems discussed earlier, teachers must come up with a comfortable plan to handle these issues if collaborative teaching is going to be successful.

The continuation of this review chapter will focus on the resource center setting and the particular challenges and teacher perceptions in these classrooms. This study will look to compare the similarities and differences between the two settings.

Resource Programs

In special education today, there are five types of resource programs, which are used most frequently. The first type is the categorical resource program, which is set up to serve those students who are labeled handicapped, i.e. learning disabled, emotionally disturbed, mentally retarded, etc. The individual room will house only those with the same particular handicap. Another resource program which is very similar is the cross-categorical program, which also serves handicapped students, except in this program, the teacher serves students in two or more disability areas. This is the most popular program, because students are placed according to ability, rather than classification.

A non-categorical program serves students with mild disabilities, and they do not have to be classified. Eligibility for the program is based strictly on students' needs. Specific skills programs are another type of resource program, which usually address problems in reading, math or speech. Students in these programs are almost never classified as handicapped. Finally, the itinerant resource program, which can use any of the first four models, is for those schools, which do not have the resources for a full time resource program. Teachers usually move their program from school to school, as needed, a resource center on wheels, so to speak. (Wiederholt, 1989)

Resource Center Review

Today, many handicapped students receive special education services in a resource program. For this reason, it is important to look at studies completed on resource programs to better assist those who are currently involved in the teaching or supervision of these programs, and for those who will do so in the future.

Perceptions of Resource Rooms

In a 1987 study of both regular and special education students in a small New England city, students were asked on an individual basis what they thought about special education. They were asked a few questions relating to the resource programs in their schools, and on the topic of special education in general, i.e. "What is special education?" Results indicated that students' knowledge of special education directly related to their placement in school, meaning the older the student was, the more they knew about the topic. Those that attended special programs did not give more accurate answers than their non-disabled peers did, surprisingly, even though they attended the programs. The results also showed that given an open-ended question about the resource center, students did not associate it with slower, less bright students. The most surprising finding in the study, for those involved, was in regard to where special students like to go, when given the opportunity. Most learning disabled intermediate students, non-learning disabled primary students, and non-learning disabled intermediate students chose the resource center as their first or second choice, as a place to go during free time. However, only 30% of learning disabled primary students wanted to go to the resource center. The remainder chose to go to either the nurse or counselor. (Vaughn , 1987)

Another study from 1997, which also polled students on their perspectives, asked high school students to give their perceptions of the resource center and mainstreamed classes. Special education students in both settings were surveyed. The results showed that students who received one 45-minute class period in the resource room felt significantly alienated from the rest of the school population, whereas those

special students who were mainstreamed all day, had lower levels of isolationism. The totally mainstreamed students felt greater control over their education, and saw themselves as equal to other non-disabled peers, and more connected with their regular class. (Shoko, 1997)

Just as it is important to seek a student's opinion of special education, it is equally as important to get the perspectives of the teachers. Special education teachers were polled for a study in 1979. They were asked how they viewed resource programs. They responded that problems did exist with the program, and they made the following recommendations: (1) resource rooms should not become a subsequently separate classroom, (2) there should be constant communication between the special education teacher, regular teachers, and specialists, (3) special education teachers should serve their students directly, and also help the regular teacher with learning disabled students in regular classrooms, and (4) more staff was needed to meet pupil needs. The overall consensus of the study was that more observation and evaluations needed to be done on resource programs. (Di Sipio, 1979)

Another study completed in 1983 also polled special education teachers on their perspectives on the resource room. This research, however, focussed on the skills necessary to be an effective resource center teacher. The results concluded that teachers agreed they must possess a variety of competencies which included, "knowledge and skill in employing a variety of methods for teaching reading," the ability to deal with frustration on both personal and professional levels, to communicate well with parents, and finally, to manage the behaviors of students using a variety of techniques. (Davis, 1983) A perspective article written after the above study agreed that the

responsibilities of the special education teacher are many. It also added that the role of the special education teacher is becoming more varied with the use of minimum competency testing, career education competencies, and individualized education plans, which call for a least restrictive environment. (Haight, 1985)

Resource Room Communications

As more and more students are moving into the mainstream, the need for communication between the regular education teacher and the special education teacher grows. A 1980 study polled teachers on the perceptions and attitudes on mainstreaming, levels of communication and supports available for mainstreaming. As it turns out, the results of this study were invalid, because no definitive conclusions could be reached. This happened due to the fact that it was assumed that regular and special education teachers would communicate on a frequent basis, and this was not the case, making the study questions impossible to answer. Researchers drew the conclusion that educators need to be trained in their roles and duties associated with the integrated classroom. (Speece, 1980)

A similar study, conducted ten years later, showed that communication between the regular education teachers and special education teachers was still a problem, mostly due to time constraints. Research also showed that the regular teachers polled were not in support of having special education teachers work collaboratively in their classrooms. They felt that planning and the reporting of pupils' progress were the areas that most needed to be discussed between the two groups of teachers. (Voltz, 1990)

Student Behavior

In a 1990 study, teachers rated the behaviors of learning disabled, low average and average students before and after they were placed in a resource center. Results showed that behaviors of the learning disabled students did not change after placement in a resource program. It was also reported that after placement, the learning disabled students were off task more in the regular classroom, and they also interacted more with the regular teacher, than the other students did. Finally, the regular teachers concluded that the behaviors of learning disabled students, in regards to problematic tendencies such as calling out, did not decrease, but stayed the same, even after placement in the resource room. (White, 1990)

Curriculum in Resource Rooms

Special education teachers were polled in a 1991 study by Robert McKenzie, which compared resource room teachers who taught content areas and those that taught basic skills. The research indicated that there were similarities in the way the material was taught and evaluated, in both content and basic classrooms. This showed that methodology was comparable. However, differences were evident among the two in the areas of behavior and acceptance. Content area teachers regarded behavior as being more problematic and they said that their students were more rejected by regular peers in the mainstreamed classes, whereas the basic skills teachers did not share this belief. Content teachers had larger caseloads and more students in their classes, which could attest to the results. (McKenzie, 1991)

A more recent study on curriculum looked at the skill of reading, in particular. The study examined reading instruction taught in the resource room. Reading is the area most learning disabled students have difficulty with, therefore reading and language arts are the subjects most often taught in resource programs. This study found that most special education teachers used a whole language approach to teach reading, usually to large groups, with little to no variety in method or material, despite a three-year range in grade levels. From Stanford Achievement Test scores, students showed little to no growth in reading in relation to their peers. (Vaughn, 1998)

Resource Center vs. Integrated Class

A final study on resource centers looked at cost effectiveness and student achievement in a resource center compared to an integrated classroom. To obtain results, budgets were reviewed for both programs. Findings indicated that it was more cost effective to educate a learning disabled student in the regular classroom. This was done through a collaborative teaching method, in which both the regular education teacher and special education teacher instructed the students collectively in the regular setting. In order to obtain academic performance levels, students took the Woodcock-Johnson Psycho-Educational Battery at both the beginning and end of the year, in both settings. Test scores showed that student performance was comparable in both settings, indicating that academic effectiveness was similar. (Affleck, 1988)

Chapter Three

The Method

Method

In this study on the similarities and differences in resource centers versus collaborative team-teaching classrooms, I polled five special education teachers who are currently teaching in both settings. I also polled five regular content area teachers who are either currently teaching a collaborative class, or have taught one in the past year. See Tables A and B below. Of the special education teachers polled, all had at least four years teaching experience in a resource center, and at least three years experience in a collaborative class. Of the regular education teachers polled, all had at least six years teaching experience in a content area subject, and at least one-year experience in a collaborative setting. All taught in a South Jersey junior/senior high school, which is in a suburban area, with a middle to upper-low class background.

Collaborative Team-teaching Survey

Table A

Teacher #	Yrs. Exp.	Yrs. Collab.	Spec./Reg.	Collab. Subject.
1	30	1	reg.	English
2	12	4	spec.	Science, Social Studies
3	11	5	spec.	English
4	23	4	reg.	English
5	20	3	spec.	Eng., S.Studies, Science
6	6	2	reg.	Science
7	10	3	spec.	English
8	22	3	reg.	Social Studies
9	24	1	reg.	English
10	4	3	spec.	Social Studies

In Table A, listed are the regular and special education teachers who completed the survey. The teacher with the most experience in a collaborative team-teaching setting had five years experience, while two of the teachers only had one year. There were five of each type of teachers, with their total years of experience ranging from thirty to four years. The subject most taught in the collaborative setting was English, while others had also taught Social Studies and Science.

Resource Center Survey

Table B

<u>Teacher #</u>	<u>yrs. experience</u>	<u>yrs. in resource center</u>
1	11	11
2	12	12
3	20	20
4	4	4
5	10	5

In Table B, which is set up similar to Table A, the special education teachers who currently teach in the resource center and in a collaborative team-teaching setting are listed, with their years experience and years in the resource center. The teacher with the most experience has taught for twenty years, all in the resource center, and the teacher with the least has taught for four years, all in the resource center. Again, this study asked the teachers polled to comment on the same areas as they did in the collaborative setting, this time in the resource center.

Definitions

Resource Center - A major subject class taught by a special education teacher in a small group setting, in which the level of instruction and materials used are geared to the classified students being taught.

Collaborative Teaching - A major subject class taught by a regular education and special education teacher in a regular classroom setting. The class contains both regular and classified students who are taught the same material, based on the regular curriculum standards.

Survey

Survey sheets were given to all teachers to fill out as best they could. The survey (see appendix) asked the teacher to list information, such as teaching experience, content area or subjects taught, number of years in a collaborative setting, and classes taught in a collaborative setting for background information. Next, all teachers were asked to complete the first part of the survey, which was based on collaborative teaching. Teachers were asked to comment on each area, which included planning time, behavior management, housekeeping tasks, content materials study skills, student grades, motivation and student perceptions, and also extra space for additional comments. Teachers were also asked to list and elaborate on the positives and negatives of collaborative teaching, their initial thoughts on this form of teaching, and their opinion of collaboration after having taught it for a number of years.

Only special education teachers completed the second part of the survey (see appendix), as it pertained to resource center teaching. Part two of the survey was

similar to part one, in that it asked teachers to comment on the same areas, only now in a resource center. This part included items for comment such as benefits of a resource center, problems/challenges of a resource center. In both parts teachers were also asked to offer suggestions on how to better the settings.

Of the ten surveys sent out, all were returned and complete. Hopefully with the information from the teacher surveys, the results can be utilized by other special education and regular teachers who currently work in these settings and for those new to them. Those who supervise special education, and plan student and teacher schedules may also use it.

Statistical Analysis

All data was reviewed, then categories that were similar to both settings were compared. A narrative was written to show the overall similarities and differences in each setting.

Chapter Four

The Findings

As more and more special education teachers are asked to teach in collaborative team-teaching and resource room settings, they find a number of challenging tasks they must deal with on a day to day basis. Some of these challenges are unique to each setting, but some are similar to both. In an effort to pinpoint these areas for future special education teachers and supervisors, a survey was distributed and completed by both special education and regular education teachers, who currently teach in a team-teaching setting. In the survey, they were asked to comment on a number of aspects of their job in the collaborative setting. Special education teachers also completed a second part of the survey that asked them to comment on the same aspects, but now for the resource room setting. The findings were then cross-referenced to determine if there were any similarities or differences between the collaborative team-teaching setting and the resource center.

Collaborative Survey

Teachers in the Collaborative setting were asked to comment on particular areas of collaborative team-teaching. The first area was planning, of which more than half those surveyed said there was not enough time to plan lessons. Sixty percent of the teachers polled said that the ideal situation is to have common prep periods with their partner, which is almost never the case. The second area was behavior management. In this area, half the teachers said that behavior of pupils improved with two teachers in the classroom. Some mentioned, however, that a

negative of this aspect is that the students may try to play one teacher against the other. Most who said this added that for this reason, it was important to have a set discipline plan. Also, a few stated that another positive was that some students dealt better with one teacher and vice versa, which made it easier to manage students.

Housekeeping tasks was an area, which eighty- percent of the teachers said they shared equal responsibility for, in areas where it was possible. One additional comment was that one special education teacher graded the work of the special education students, and that the same teacher was responsible for getting student make-up work, since most of the work was from classified students. The special education teacher had more responsibility for housekeeping tasks, when dealing with classified students. This created more time constraints for the special education teacher. As far as the content material was concerned in the collaborative classes, the curriculum followed the state or district standards. Fifty percent of the teachers said that the regular education teacher was primarily responsible for the content being taught.

In the area of grading, ninety percent of the teachers said that they shared the responsibility for grading procedures. Some added that they followed the school's common grading scale, but did make some modifications for classified students. Half of the teachers polled said that student motivation was better with two teachers in a room. They found it easier to vary techniques, and activities with the input of two people. Finally in the area of student perception, seventy percent of the teachers said they believed students see both the teachers as being equal in terms of who is in charge. Some additional comments where that some teachers feel that students enjoy the class more with two adults, and that they know extra help is available.

As a last question to all of the collaborative team-teachers, on what their initial thoughts on this style of teaching were, and how they view it now, only one was opposed to it at first, stating, that as a regular teacher, the person thought that he/she had to do all the work. Three of the teachers reported that they were apprehensive, while the others believed it was a good idea from the beginning. After having taught in the collaborative setting, however, all teachers were in agreement that they were in favor of this style of teaching, and wanted it to continue.

Resource Center Survey

Resource Center teachers were then asked to complete the second part of the survey. In the area of planning, three of the five teachers said that they were constantly changing their plans due to absence, suspension, etc. It was also stated that many times, a teachers prep time, which is the same amount of time as a regular teacher', is often used for parent conferences, I.E.P. writing and or meetings, etc. As far as behavior management was concerned, three teachers stated that there has to be a firm, consistent plan in action from the beginning, only one teacher used performance charts as part of self-monitoring. An additional comment was that problems sometimes arise in the resource center because students are misplaced, the example given was an emotionally disturbed student in a resource room, when the setting is not appropriate.

When asked about housekeeping tasks, comments included that there is not enough time for them because of I.E.P.'s and constant student make-up work. Most teachers said that they needed a large variety of content area materials when teaching the resource room, because of having the same students over a number of years. Two

also added that there has been a surge of older students who are functioning at lower levels than usual, and it is hard finding materials that are not insulting to their chronological age. A majority of those polled said that they had much flexibility as far as grading was concerned, and that they try to weigh a variety of areas to compute the final grade. Two teachers stated that motivating the same students over a period of years is difficult, especially when there is little parent involvement. Additional comments also included that some students work hard to get out of the resource center, while others want to stay because they feel it is easier than regular classes. Lastly, when asked to make a judgement about their students' perceptions of the resource center, the answers were mixed. Some said they felt their students were happy in the resource center, because they see it as a basic skills class, that they can get extra help if needed, and that there is a closer relationship with the teacher. Others said that resource center students see themselves as failures.

In the final part of the survey, which was different from the collaborative survey, resource center teachers were asked to list what they thought were the benefits and challenges of a resource center. Their answers are recorded in Table C:

Table C	
Benefits	Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -more structure -less structure -small groups -much freedom with materials -instruction geared to student -more attention for student -immediate feedback -opportunities for private discussion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -students consider it a safety net -don't strive for highest potential -hard to monitor students in mainstream -behavior issues with misplaced students -lack of parental concern -student absence, suspension. - many unrealistic state mandates -much class and prep time spent on I.E.P.'s and conferences.

Comparison

Finally, teacher data from both surveys was compared. Teachers reported that in both settings they were not allotted enough time to plan lessons. In the area of behavior management, educators found that students behaved better in the collaborative and resource settings, compared to the traditional one-teacher classroom. Housekeeping tasks were said to be fairly manageable in the collaborative class, but more time was needed in the resource center, especially for report writing. In the collaborative room, the curriculum followed the district/state mandates, where as in the resource center the teacher had much flexibility in choosing materials. Motivation was on complete opposite ends, with a high ranking in collaborative and low in resource room. In the last area, student perceptions, teachers said that their pupils were mostly positive in the collaborative classroom, and resource center teachers recorded mixed results.

Chapter Five

The Discussion

In the ever changing world of special education, more and more teachers in this field find themselves in two of the more widely used settings, collaborative team-teaching classrooms and resource centers. Many newcomers to this situation must often wonder, “What are the challenges faced by special education teachers in the collaborative setting, and how do they compare with the ones they face in the resource center?” One probably realizes as soon as they start to student teach that there are going to be a variety of challenges in both settings, some which are similar, some different. Regardless of these challenges, teachers who have been placed in both settings find them both effective, dependent upon the individual.

After conducting a survey of both regular education teachers in the collaborative team-teaching setting, and special education teachers who taught in collaborative and resource center settings, the findings indicated that there are a variety of challenges in both settings. The one area of need for both settings, voiced by the majority of teachers was planning time; there is not enough time to plan in either setting. A similar study of collaborative team-teachers by Christine S. Walther Thomas in 1997 found the same problem. For the special education teachers in the resource center, this time problem also spilled over into their housekeeping tasks. Teachers stated that with I.E.P. writing, conferences and student make-up work, they were constantly forced to change plans. It seems that teachers are often forced out of their classes, being replaced by substitutes, or have to take much work home, or plan during their lunch, before or after school. A number of teachers even suggested a solution to the problem of collaborative planning,

which was to have common prep times for partners. The same Thomas study also concluded that special education teachers were overloaded due to the additional responsibilities of collaboration, I.E.P. writing and conferences. Another study by William E. Davis in 1983, concluded that the special education teacher must be competent in many areas also backs up this study's findings.

Teachers reported that behavior management is usually better than the traditional model, one teacher with twenty-five to thirty students, in both settings. This seemed to hinge on the smaller student-teacher ratio. Also, at least in the collaborative setting, it appears, with two teachers, there is probably more instruction, and less downtime for the students to be off-task. A 1987 study by Kathleen C. Harris and others also concluded that student behavior improved with two teachers in the classroom, as did a similar study by Spencer J. Salend in 1997. In contrast, a 1990 study of resource center behavior, by David Voltz and others, stated that learning disabled students with poor behavior before they were placed in the resource center continued to have this problem even after they were placed in the resource center. In the later part of the survey, some special education teachers noted that their main management problems were with students who they considered to be "misplaced", for example an emotionally disturbed student classified as learning disabled and placed in the resource center. This indicates that this type of student couldn't handle either type of setting, which creates a problem for the resource center teacher, and clearly does not help the child.

Teachers in both settings also perceived that their students were happy in both settings overall, adding that two collaborative teachers even felt that their students

enjoyed the class more with two teachers, however there were some reservations in the resource center. Some teachers said that a few resource students see themselves as failures, but that it does not hurt their working relationship with the teacher. Many times resource students are dependent on the teacher for help with mainstreamed classes and emotional support. A 1997 study by Alan R. Shoho and others that polled resource center students showed that resource center students do feel isolated from their peers. Another study in 1987 found that only thirty percent of special education students would spend free time in the resource center, even though they generally liked the teacher. These studies show support for the teachers who perceived their students had negative perceptions of the resource center.

The differences in the settings came in the areas of content, motivation, and grading. In the collaborative classroom, because it was considered a regular class, with both classified and non-classified students, curriculum was based on the district/state mandate; therefore, there was little flexibility in this area. In the resource center, however, this was entirely different. Because the instruction was geared to the students, this gave the teacher more latitude in selecting materials. One resource center teacher even said that he/she used this to his/her advantage. He/she involved the students in the selection of the materials for motivation, which he/she said was beneficial. Motivation in the resource center was also an area that differed. Where as motivation in the collaborative classroom was said to be better with two teachers present, it was reported that motivation was a problem in the resource center. Teachers reported that they had the same students for a number of years, which made it difficult to vary instruction,

techniques, and materials for lower functioning senior high school students, over a long period of time.

Grading was the third area that differed in the two settings. Teachers in the collaborative classrooms said that some modifications were made for classified students. This seems to indicate that the majority followed the regular school grading policy. Perhaps it was more difficult to modify in a mixed class. In order to be fair to all students, classified, and non-classified, it seemed that modifications were kept to a minimum. Again, however, in the resource center, the teacher had great flexibility with grading. Some teachers noted that they varied the grading areas into a number of categories, which included homework, classwork, journals, tests, performance, etc. This enabled the student to be successful in the class even if they had a weakness in a particular area.

Overall, all collaborative team-teachers surveyed supported this type of instruction, regardless of the challenges involved. The research indicates that the benefits of this style of teaching outweigh the problems. This was also concluded by the 1997 Thomas study and the 1997 Salend study. Even those who were once against or hesitant about collaborative teaching stated that they are now happy with it and are willing to continue it in their classrooms.

Resource center teachers were not directly asked if they supported resource center instruction, but they did formulate a list of the benefits and challenges of the setting, as previously viewed in Table C. The lists indicated that the benefits and challenges faced are about equal on both sides. From this information, one can assume that there are many problems with this setting that must continue to be improved upon.

At the same time, though, one can also conclude that there are many beneficial aspects of the resource room for students.

Limitations and Future Research

The main limitation to this study was the survey size. Had more teachers been surveyed, the results would have been more valid. In hindsight, a student survey on their perspectives of the collaborative classroom and the resource center would have also been helpful. The student survey could also lead to a completely separate study on student attitudes toward each setting, and which they prefer. For future research in this area, however, the main adjustment must be to increase the amount of teachers polled, preferably those with a wide range of experience in both settings.

Implications

From the results of this study, special education teachers and those that supervise special education services can see that there is still much work to be done to improve working conditions for teachers in both the collaborative class and the resource center. In general, both settings are supported by teachers and are viewed as effective placements for students, however, the main areas that need to be improved upon are planning and housekeeping tasks, i.e. report writing, conferences, team meetings, etc. It seems that there is never enough time for either. Special education teachers can hardly be effective in either setting if they are constantly pulled out of classes for meetings, denied preps for the same reason, and not given the opportunity to plan with their collaborative partner. This survey's findings will hopefully be helpful to the special

education teacher who is new to these settings, but especially for those who supervise this area. Appropriate changes need to be made to better working conditions for special education teachers in both settings, keeping in mind that the present situations not only affect the teachers, but their students as well.

Conclusion

In this study of special education teachers who instruct in both a collaborative team-teaching class and a resource center, educators were asked to list and explain the challenges they face in each setting, and how they compared with one another. Teachers reported that their biggest challenges in both settings were time constraints for lesson planning and housekeeping tasks, such as report writing. Another area of concern in the resource center, which differed from the positive results reported in the collaborative class, was student motivation. In the other areas addressed, which included content, grades, behavior management, and judging student perceptions, teachers reported mostly positive aspects. In general, special education teachers were supportive of both settings and they viewed collaborative classes and resource centers as effective, but not perfect, with room for improvement in both settings.

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Appendix

Number of years teaching experience: _____

Content area(s) taught: _____

Number of years in collaborative classes: _____

Classes taught in a collaborative setting: _____

Please comment on each of the following aspect of collaborative team teaching, either positively or negatively. Please make suggestions to rectify the problem if you have any ideas.

Planning Time:

Behavior Management:

Housekeeping Tasks:

Content Material:

Student Grades:

Motivation:

Student Perceptions:

What were your initial thoughts on collaborative team teaching before you started? How do you feel about it now?

Additional Comments:

Number of years teaching experience: _____

Content area(s) taught: _____

Number of years in resource center: _____

Please comment on each of the following aspect of resource center teaching, either positively or negatively. Please make suggestions to rectify the problem if you have any ideas.

Planning Time:

Behavior Management:

Housekeeping Tasks:

Content Material:

Student Grades:

Motivation:

Student Perceptions:

Please list and comment on the benefits of a resource center class over a regular one:

Please list and comment on the challenges or problems that occur with teaching in the resource room:

Additional Comments: