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The impact of an in-class support program on regular and special education teachers

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THE IMPACT OF AN IN-CLASS SUPPORT PROGRAM
ON REGULAR AND SPECIAL
EDUCATION TEACHERS

by
Cheryl A. Marino

A THESIS

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the
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Approved by _____
Professor

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ABSTRACT

Cheryl A. Marino

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1995

Dr. Stanley Urban

Seminar in Learning Disabilities

Graduate Division of Rowan College of New Jersey

The purpose of this study was to determine the impact of an in-class support program on teachers. The subjects of this study were six pairs of teachers consisting of one regular educator and one special educator. To solicit participation, cover letters and a narrative survey instrument were mailed to each of the twelve educators. The responses were analyzed using content analysis. Most responses provided positive feedback on in-class support programs. There are some concerns for future implementation of these programs.

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Chapter I

THE PROBLEM

Introduction

Mainstreaming students with special needs has undergone a great deal of change since Public Law 94-142 was passed in 1975. Historically, special education students have been placed in self-contained classrooms taught by teachers certified in special education. Over the past two decades, students classified learning disabled are increasingly being integrated into regular classrooms with their nonhandicapped peers. As a result of this movement toward integration, recent statistics suggest that as many as 68% of students labeled Handicapped in this country receive educational services in regular education classrooms for most of their school day (U.S. Department of education, 1985). Many regular education teachers are not prepared and/or willing to meet educational needs of truly heterogeneous student populations. They know their curricula, are experts at managing large groups of students, and know the needs of the "average student", yet they may not be able to provide all the necessary services to a highly diverse group of children. In addition, teacher preparation programs and in-service training have not kept pace with the rapidly

changing methods of programing children with special needs. As a result of these weaknesses, alternative programing, referred to as in class support, has been introduced to improve the quality of instruction within an integrated classroom.

In-class support is a special education program option for pupils with educational difficulties enrolled in regular education classes. It was first made available in New Jersey public schools through the Plan to Revise Special Education in New Jersey. It is for students identified as eligible for special education who spend the majority of their instructional day in the regular classroom. There is a shared instructional responsibility between the regular class and the special educational teacher geared to enabling the student to succeed in the regular class program. The regular and special education teachers work collaboratively to plan and implement special strategies, techniques, methods, and materials to address the learning needs of students with educational difficulties. The responsibility for the curriculum and class lesson remains that of the regular class teacher while the special education teacher provides assistance to the pupil.

Most schools have just recently begun the process of implementing in-class support programs. Many regular and special education teachers that are participating are volunteers. Others, however, have been volunteered to

participate regardless of their feelings or reservations about participating. The perceptions of these teachers, whether negative or positive need to be considered. The success or failure of these programs is contingent upon the cooperation and collaboration of the teachers involved.

PURPOSE OF STUDY

The purpose of this study is to determine the impact of an in-class support program on teachers. The experiences of teachers working in the public school, who work together to educate the learning disabled, will be examined.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study will attempt to answer the following research questions:

1. By what means do teachers come to participate in a collaborative program, i.e. volunteer or appointed.
2. What responsibilities do collaborative teachers share?
3. Has participation in an in-class support program changed the teaching strategies/methods of the regular education teacher?
4. What are the variables that hinder implementation of in-class support?
5. What variables help teachers to implement this program?
6. What are the benefits and concerns that teachers see in an in-class support system?

A review of pertinent literature will be included in chapter 2. The design of the study will be presented in chapter 3. Chapter 4 will include the results and findings of this study. The final chapter will summarize the findings of this study.

It is important to examine the literature which has influenced the changes taking place in special education. The following chapter will provide an overview of critical issues and practices associated with the integration of learning disabled students into a regular educational setting. Studies involving the participation of collaborating teachers will be reviewed.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

For more than 20 years, many professionals in special education have accepted the need to educate most students with mild disabilities in typical classroom settings. Though some reviews of the effectiveness of special education class placements have concluded that certain students may benefit from highly structured resource programs (Carlberg and Kavale, 1980); Leinhardt and Pally, 1982; Madden and Slavin, 1983), there seems to be an emerging consensus that most services for students with mild disabilities should be provided in typical classroom settings. As Madden and Slavin stated: there is little evidence that self-contained special education is superior to placement in regular classes in terms of increasing the academic performance of Mildly Academically Handicapped students, and the best evidence is

that, in general, it is the regular class placement with appropriate supports that is better for the achievement of these students. (p. 555)

Public Law 94-142 recognized and supported this need for the education of students with disabilities in regular classroom settings, by creating a "presumption in favor of educating children with handicaps in regular education environments" (Danielson and Bellamy, 1989, P. 448). This law stipulates that each public agency shall ensure that to the maximum extent appropriate, handicapped children, including those in public or private institutions or other care facilities, are educated with children who are not handicapped and that special classes, separate schooling or other removal of handicapped children from the regular environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the handicap is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily. (Section 612(5)B of P.L. 94-142).

"Least restrictive environment" denotes that educational placement is most appropriate to the learning and behavioral features of a student closest in proximity and nature to educational settings for same-age students who are not disabled. The regular classroom setting with other accommodations is minimally restrictive because of the contact with learners who are not disabled. This placement

is typically appropriate for students with mild to moderate learning and behavioral problems. Not all mainstream situations are equally restrictive or nonrestrictive. Mainstream services may include co-teaching approaches in which both special and regular educators collaborate in daily instruction (Idol & West, 1987; West & Idol, 1987).

The relationship among professionals who serve children with learning disabilities continues to be a topic of growing interest. Educators from various disciplines provided assistance to these students even before the field of learning disabilities was established (Wallace, 1976).

Despite the explosion of research over the past 15 years on strategies for effectively teaching low-achieving students (Brophy & Good, 1986), most classroom teachers receive virtually no training in how to effectively work with these students within the constraints of a typical classroom setting (Baker & Gottlieb, 1982). Nor do most teachers adapt their teaching styles and strategies to meet the needs of these students (Ysseldyke et al., 1983).

The literature supports collaboration with general education teachers as a significant function of special education teachers who serve mainstreamed students with disabilities. A number of professionals in the field of special education have sought to develop approaches to facilitate collaborative relationships between general and special education teachers. These efforts have resulted in

the identification of specific roles (Cannon, Idol, & West, 1989). Collaborative teaching is an effective way to put professional collaboration into practice (Bauwens, Hourcade, & Friend, 1989). Bauwens and her colleagues (Bauwens & Hourcade, 1991; Bauwens, et al., 1989) describe collaborative teaching as a process in which general educators and special educators share responsibilities for heterogeneous groups of students assigned to mainstream classrooms. Together these teachers develop plans to meet identified classroom goals and learning objectives. They design appropriate instruction, related practice activities, monitoring procedures, and evaluation criteria. Collaborative teachers use various large and small group formats for instruction and practice. Most collaborating teachers use three basic arrangements as they divide up the classroom responsibilities (Bauwens, et al., 1989). First, many teachers assume equal responsibilities for all aspects of classroom activity. The second arrangement has the regular educator teaching the content, while the special education teacher teaches complementary skills to help students learn more effectively. The last variation of collaborative teaching is support teaching. The regular education teacher provides content instruction while the special education teacher provides a broad array of direct and indirect support services to meet student needs. Most collaborative teaching teams use a combination of all three

arrangements to meet the needs of the students. Collaborative teachers' roles evolve over time as they become more comfortable with each other and confident working together (Walther-Thomas, 1992).

E. Jane Nowacek completed interviews with five collaborating teachers from regular and special education. The collaborating pairs were all from school districts in Albemarle County, Virginia. A review of her findings will follow.

Teachers Susan Guerrant and Carol Waddington were involved in collaboration at Henley Middle School. They reported that, the decision to collaborate was made by themselves. They recall that although the administrators had been supportive, no school or school system administrator told them they had to collaborate to provide special services. Once they had made the decision to collaborate, both special educators and regular education teachers discussed the composition of their classes. Teachers worked together to schedule students into collaborative classrooms. Then, the special educators began to discuss their roles in the regular classrooms and how they would share their expertise. In looking back, the teachers saw their roles as "evolving" and changing class to class and from day to day. At the beginning, the teachers discussed the potential implementation problems. They were initially concerned about the regular education student's parent and how they may

react to such a program. During back to school night, not a single question was asked as the two collaborating teachers explained their program. They were also concerned that the regular education students would react negatively because there were so many special students in their classroom. The teachers did not get any comments or questions from the students. They did not make a big deal about being in the room to only help certain learning disabled students. All the students seemed to have accepted the new program.

Both teachers worked together to plan the curriculum for the collaborating classroom. They worked together to develop the lessons, each compromising and modifying the instructional approach they had previously used. Once they began teaching together, they kept in close communication. They did not share a common planning time, so they got together before and after school and during lunch. They discussed how the lessons were going and how they could make them better.

Co-teaching was implemented at Brownsville Elementary School, Albemarle County, Virginia. The two teachers involved have been teaching together for 10 years. They refer to their collaboration as "co-teaching". Kendall Young, a special educator, believed she could better serve the students on her caseload if she worked in their classrooms. Kendall approached Susan Wilson, a regular education teacher, about co-teaching. Kendall introduced her

to a multichannel program (Green & Enfield, 1987) that had been developed to help students write, and they used that program as a vehicle for language instruction. Susan described the evolution of this professional relationship: "Initially, I had some reservations. It was the idea of, "would she (Kendall) think I was doing it right?"-that kind of thing..... But the co-teaching has become a real plus. The last couple of years we have worked together more closely... I seem to understand the program more, and now reinforce in the classroom what Kendall has done." In the regular education classroom, Kendall usually introduces the concepts using the multichannel approach, and then Susan and she work together with the groups.

This pair of teachers also began planning in units. Once the co-teachers had outlined units, they usually met once or twice a week after school to plan specific activities. Kendall described this daily planning as occurring in snatches: during class, during lunches, and car pooling to and from school.

Elaine Shaw has been collaborating for two years at Albemarle High School Program. She described her situation like this; "We were in a unique situation because the associate principal at that time had a special education background and was really pushing us to try collaboration. So that was where the impetus for this to happen came from...He actually went out and courted mainstream teachers

to participate in the program. Before that he came to special ed. and said, "Would you like to go see a program where this is working?" So we visited a middle school (in another city) along with two volunteer mainstream teachers and talked to a really neat teacher. Also, at the high school we had our frustrations...We were trying to get away from teaching every subject self-contained. Before collaboration, we had totally self-contained program... It had almost gotten to the point that we couldn't provide all the self-contained classes in all content areas...After we visited the middle school, we talked to several teachers and got several of them to volunteer...Having administrative support really helped."

The high school teachers played many roles when implementing collaborative teaching. The special educators realized that in doing collaboration they had to be willing to play the aide role as well. They agreed that you have to see what the needs are and fit yourself into those needs. Both teachers planned lessons, even those they didn't teach. They were able to arrange common planning times. One problem that one high school teacher had to deal with was that students viewed her as the disciplinarian while they saw the regular classroom teacher as the instructor. This problem was rectified by both teachers sharing the responsibility of discipline in the classroom.

Also included in the interviews completed by E. Jane Nowacek was the future collaboration plans for the participating teachers. The teachers have decided to put some things down in more structured terms-to look at what has gone well and what hasn't and at what can be improved. They are looking into developing a tool for looking at the collaborative model each year. Each team of teachers can use this model before they begin collaborating as a way of deciding what they are going to do.

The teachers involved in this study reported that the in-class support program benefited students. Some of the advantages that were observed are as follows. First, collaborative teaching provides an additional level of service to children with special needs. Also, it provides more services to those students who need it. Third, it allows some students to be mainstreamed who would not be able to be successful in regular classes unless a special education teacher was with them. It also helps students who are not eligible for special services but need additional help. The teachers also felt that the students seemed to like the arrangement and felt that it was helpful for them. One teacher felt that, because there were two teachers in the room, that behavioral problems were a minimal.

Some problems with this collaborative experience were examined. All the teachers involved voiced the need for additional planning time. Most of them did not share a common planning time, and felt that this was necessary for implementing this program. Some of the teachers commented about the importance of having the "right person" with whom to collaborate. The middle school teachers had concerns involving scheduling. It was difficult to schedule students individually into collaborative classes. The experiences of these teachers suggest that collaboration is contextual-dependant upon educational philosophy and teaching style of each teacher and the expectations of their individual schools and educational levels.

For two years, Candy Passaglia and Judy Alford have co-taught at Maplewood Elementary School in Cary, Illinois. Candy, the special education teacher, goes to Judy's classroom four mornings a week for language arts and twice a week for social studies. Six students with learning disabilities are mainstreamed into the co-teaching program. Both teachers commented on their early experiences with co-teaching. Candy had difficulty in the beginning because she was accustomed to working in her own protected room, not in someone else's territory. Judy found it intimidating to have someone in her classroom watching her. At the beginning of the program, no common planning time was built in for these teachers. During their second year, a grant enabled them to

hire a floating substitute so they could have formal planning time together. Both teachers discussed the most challenging aspects of co-teaching. Judy felt that it is still a big time commitment. Another problem area is that the program is set up for two adults. When one of the co-teachers is absent, new problems arise. Another frustration for Judy is the grading. She feels that it would be easier to decide on a grade for a child by herself instead of worrying about whether the co-teacher will agree with her. Candy felt that the co-teaching experience takes a great deal of time, but this frustration is balanced by the excitement of working with teachers who are excited about teaching.

At Addington Middle School, a collaborative teaching project was established to increase overall student achievement and attitude levels while providing teachers with broad professional skills in the delivery of instructional programs to groups of children with a wide variety of instructional and personal needs (Johnston, 1994). Program objectives were built into the program in the areas of student outcomes, staff outcomes and staff training. Two special education teachers and six regular education teachers participated in the collaborative approach. A series of meetings were held to ascertain the teachers' concerns. Their biggest concerns centered around meeting the needs of all the students in the classroom all

day. Intensive training was provided the week before school opened in the fall. Ongoing staff training concentrated on needs as perceived by the staff members. By the end of the first year, an evaluation was completed. Student outcome objectives were the main focus of the evaluation. Learning disabled students in collaborative classrooms outscored those in noncollaborative rooms on all sections of the Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) and the Virginia Literacy Passport Test. In addition, the number of LD students sent to the office for discipline dropped by 58.5 percent in one year.

Teachers completed a series of pre and post-program questionnaires. Responses to these questionnaires indicated increased concern for effective communication between regular and special education teachers and strong feelings of shared regular-special education responsibility and ownership of the problems experienced by all students. Surveys also indicated collaborative teachers believed more in academic and social capabilities of their learning disabled students than did their non-collaborative peers.

There are collaborative classes in all grades at Addington Middle School now, and in three elementary and two high schools.

Collaborative teaching can be an effective vehicle for enhancing the education of the special education student. By pooling their teaching expertise and experience,

collaborative teachers can create positive mainstream environments where all students can achieve.

CHAPTER 3
DESIGN OF THE STUDY

METHOD OF SAMPLE SELECTION:

Ten pairs of teachers were included in the sample for this study. Each pair consisted of one regular education teacher and one special education teacher. The twenty professionals were selected by the researcher because they are currently participating in a collaborative teaching program. All twenty participants held credentials appropriate for their teaching positions in the state of New Jersey. The sample consisted of 2 males and 18 females from a total of 6 school districts. Each school district is located in southern New Jersey. Respondents have 5 to 25 years experience in the field of education. They have participated as collaborative pairs from 1 to 6 years.

INSTRUMENTATION

To solicit participation of the ten pairs, cover letters and a survey instrument were mailed to the home of each of the twenty educators (Refer to Appendix A). The survey instrument consisted of five questions requiring narrative

responses. Questions were based on a review of recent literature pertaining to collaborative teaching in the public school system.

COLLECTION OF DATA

Participants received addressed, stamped envelopes to return their responses to the researcher. These responses will be analyzed by using content analysis. This is a qualitative method of design where the researcher looks for themes or concepts written in natural language. The data is collected unobtrusively but records are made under obtrusive conditions.

SUMMARY

It is the purpose of this study to determine the impact of an in-class support program on teachers. The data will be collected through the survey instrument consisting of five narrative questions. The data will be reported and interpreted in the following section.

CHAPTER 4
ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to determine the impact of an in-class support program on teachers. Twenty survey instruments were sent to ten pairs of collaborative teachers. A response was received from seven pairs with one additional survey received without the partners response.

The study attempted to answer the following research questions:

1. By what means do teachers come to participate in a collaborative program, i.e. volunteer or appointed.
2. What responsibilities do collaborative teachers share?
3. Has participation in an in-class support program changed the teaching strategies/methods of the regular education teacher?
4. What are the variables that hinder implementation of in-class support?
5. What variables help teachers to implement this program?
6. What are the benefits and concerns that teachers see in an in-class support program?

REPORT OF FINDINGS

The questionnaires received were grouped into

collaborative pairs. This section will be devoted to reporting the information gathered from these questionnaires. Each question will be presented separately.

RESEARCH QUESTION 1

In response to the question: How did you come to participate in a collaborative program, six pairs of teachers responded that they were assigned to work as a collaborative pair. Participants were asked to comment on how they felt about their participation in a collaborative classroom. One regular education teacher responded that she seized the opportunity to have another instructor in her classroom. Her partner, a special educator, felt that they had similar instructional attitudes and would be able to work well together. One regular education teacher was concerned that she would not know how to initiate sharing, what would be too much or too little to ask of her support teacher. Another regular education teacher had concerns regarding grading policies, and "good cop, bad cop" problems. He was anxious and eager to see how the program would work. His special education partner was apprehensive. She didn't want to give up control and teaching. A regular education teacher who provides a pull out program for Language Arts looked forward to the program. Her partner was unsure of the parameters of the positions within her classroom. One special educator looked at the new program as a challenge.

One team had volunteered to try this project in order to give students at their school another special education option. They approached the administration about beginning a collaborative program in their school. The special educator was concerned about teaching a large number of students, something she was not used to. She also feared that the two teaching styles may conflict. The regular education teacher wanted to make sure that the planning and lessons were shared by both teachers.

RESEARCH QUESTION 2

The next question that the participants responded to was: How do you and your partner collaborate? They were asked to include whether they plan jointly and what responsibilities they each have. Four pairs reported that they are able to plan jointly. One pair plans jointly during a thirty minute weekly meeting before school. The regular educator has been teaching for eighteen years. She uses set lessons from years past. The special educator interjects creative games, activities and ideas. She periodically will run an activity or class. The regular education teacher assigns all grades and the regular fifth grade English tests are used.

Another pair that is able to plan jointly also meets in the mornings. They are usually able to meet daily. The

regular education teacher plans the lessons while the special educator modifies the tests and quizzes for the special education students. Occasionally homework assignments are also modified. In the classroom, the special educator makes sure that the students are on task and she takes notes for them. On test day, the special education students return to their classroom with the special education teacher to have the test read to them.

The third pair that plans jointly meets for one hour a week. Each teacher contributes ideas. Both teachers take the leadership role in the classroom; basically they team teach. The special educator modifies tests and grades them for the special education students. In most cases, the tests are modified by giving the students limited choices for the same questions. She also makes work sheets and study guides for all the students in the class.

The fourth pair is able to plan together for the upcoming week. The special educator gives input for the activities done in class. During class, she makes sure the students are on the correct page, following along and taking notes. She checks on regular education students as well. Special education students take their tests with the special education teacher, no modifications are made. The regular educator teaches all lessons, trying to meet the overall class needs and IEP goals.

The last pair that is able to plan jointly meet once a week to plan the following week's lessons. Each morning before school, they talk about any changes that need to be made for the planned lesson. Each of these teachers takes a unit of the text and is the primary teacher for that unit.

Two pairs do not have joint planning time. One pair is able to consult briefly but they do no planning together. The regular education teacher takes the initiative for most lessons but they attempt to share classroom responsibilities. The regular educator grades most papers, but not exclusively. The special educator does most of the improvising and supplementing during the lessons.

Another pair has fallen into a routine that took some time to establish. The regular educator plans the lessons and the special educator gives input when she can. They decide on responsibilities together. The special educator rewrites tests and quizzes and reads them to the classified students.

RESEARCH QUESTION 3

Participants were asked to comment on the changes, if any, that they may have experienced due to collaborative teaching. They were asked if they made any changes in their classrooms. One regular education teacher responded that she has made alterations in her testing procedures. She has limited her use of the blackboard for note taking and has

incorporated more flexible, cooperative groupings to enhance learning opportunities. Her partner feels that she has learned more about the subject matter in the mainstreamed fifth grade classroom.

A sixth grade regular educator says she uses alternative assessments. She reviews more completely, lists all assignments on the board and requires all students to keep a science notebook with a daily log of entries. Her special education partner reteaches some of the mainstream curriculum in her class as well as completing certain supplemental activities.

A fifth grade regular education teacher explains that she changed very little. She had always used cooperative groups and continues to see success with the special needs population. Her partner feels that her own methods have changed. She lectures more in her own classroom.

A third grade teacher notes that her greatest change was relinquishing her teaching duties for a period of time to another teacher. She had to learn to take the secondary role, at times. Her partner had to adapt to a classroom full of students, rather than the four to six students she usually taught.

An eighth grade social studies teacher believes that his teaching style has changed. He feels more sensitive to the

needs of all of his students and feels better equipped to address their needs. He feels that working with a trained special educator has made him a better teacher. His partner has gained tremendous knowledge of the subject matter and brings that knowledge back to her own classroom.

A sixth grade teacher reports that she now uses more cooperative groupings and activities in her classroom. She has added more visual aides and less lecture as well. Her partner is amazed at the pace kept in the regular classroom and the amount of material covered in such a short time.

Teachers were asked if they had to develop significant new knowledge or skills to affectingly work as part of a collaborative team. Several of the special education teachers felt that they had to gain new curriculum knowledge. One seventh grade special education teacher responded that she always has to read ahead to keep up with the new science knowledge. One special educator had to develop the skills to become the resource person for other partner teachers. Another special educator feels that she has learned new teaching strategies to use in her classroom. A seventh grade teacher would like to know more about effective approaches and adaptations that should be made for special needs students. One regular educator now has a better understanding of learning disabilities and learning styles. A fifth grade teacher has learned how learning

disabled children process information. A different fifth grade teacher has difficulty dealing with a mainstreamed downs syndrome child due to difficulties with speech and communication. A sixth grade teacher has learned how to assess the progress of the students and evaluate the effectiveness of the collaborative program.

RESEARCH QUESTION 4

Participants were asked to comment on the three most important factors that hindered their efforts to implement collaborative teaching in their classrooms. Their responses are listed below in order of their importance.

1. Not having enough joint planning time
2. Having a reluctant partner
3. Their fears about the program hindered their efforts
4. Teaching new subject matter makes collaborative teaching difficult.

Other concerns mentioned were as follows.

1. Individual attention is limited in a large classroom.
2. Teachers were unsure of the role of their partner.
3. The Board of Education resisted the program.
4. The curriculum was too academic rather than hands on.
5. Expectations were not clearly defined.
6. Some professionals had a poor attitude about the program.
7. The administration failed to provide support.

RESEARCH QUESTION 5

Participants were also asked to list three factors that helped them to implement this program. Their responses are listed below in order of importance.

1. The support, enthusiasm and compatibility of the collaborative partner
2. The administration's support
3. Acceptance of students involved in the program
3. Teacher support throughout the school district
4. Parental support
5. Having a working knowledge of the curriculum

Some other suggestions were having time to plan jointly, enjoying the program, Child Study Team support, previous inservice programs on collaborative teaching, and having the ability to choose your own partner.

RESEARCH QUESTION 6

Participants were also asked what they saw as the two most important benefits of an in-class support program. One fifth grade regular education teacher thought that there was an increased level of learned retention for the special education student. She also felt that all students benefit from this program. Six other teachers also felt that this area was a great benefit for all students. Most of their responses were similar. An eighth grade regular educator says that the students benefit from more one to one instruction. She added that all students benefit a great

deal from the extra attention and variety of learning experiences.

One special education teacher and a regular fifth grade teacher both felt that students have better self esteem and are more accepted by their peers. Another fifth grade teacher added that special education students need to interact with all types of people and this gives them that exposure. A sixth grade regular educator feels that the regular education population is more sensitive to the needs of the other students. A different sixth grade teacher feels that the special education students have gained confidence and are given a true opportunity to succeed in the regular classroom.

One educator teaching sixth grade feels that special education students try harder to succeed and have a better understanding of the requirements placed on mainstreamed students. A fifth grade special educator feels that the special education students find success and don't feel separated or different. An eighth grade teacher feels that the students are exposed to the expectations of their peers in regular education; organization, socialization, study skills, and responsibility. A sixth grade educator adds that the special education students relate better to their peers and act more appropriately. A seventh grade special educator agrees that students want to blend in and be "normal" and accepted by the mainstream.

One third grade teacher feels that a great benefit is exposing all students to two teaching styles. Students can view two people working in harmony. An eighth grade special educator has learned new teaching styles to use herself. An eighth grade teacher adds that in-class support helps broaden the scope of classes and the additional teacher adds infinitely to the opportunities to learn more in the classroom. A regular educator sees the average grades of students improving, the failure rate is extremely low.

As part of the last research question, participants were asked to answer, "what concerns do you have about this program and how might these concerns be rectified?". Responses varied and will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

A third grade teacher responds that the program is not monitored to view how the partnership responsibilities are shared. There is no observation of how team teaching can work. Her partner has no concerns at this time.

A fifth grade special educator responds that she hopes the program will continue next year. She also hopes that the school district doesn't just throw other teachers into the program. She adds that in-service training and common planning times are a must. Her partner responds that the administration is uninterested, the staff apathetic and that there is a lack of training for alternative teaching methods. She feels that training and research are vital.

One sixth grade special educator is concerned that there is too much stimuli in the mainstream for students with attending difficulties. She feels that some of the subject matter needs to be filtered down in the mainstreamed classes. Her partner's biggest concern is that she will be required to work with someone who does not share her positive feelings for this program. She adds that administrators need to be tuned in to these programs to make sure that they know what is going on and who can "deliver the goods". An elementary teacher agrees that matching teacher personalities is important to make in-class support work. Her partner has no concerns at this time. A sixth grade teacher is also concerned about feeling comfortable with the person coming into her classroom. She feels that training is very important and that no one should be forced into an in-class support program. Her partner agrees. She sees the need for inservice training on how to modify the curriculum within a regular education program. A seventh grade special educator also has this concern. She responds that teachers need to feel good about what they are doing and that training in collaborative teaching will help to accomplish that goal.

An eighth grade special educator explains her concerns this way; "I am concerned that all of our children are being put into this class-despite the fact that they will not be able to truly benefit. Scheduling prohibits us from

exempting our lower performing or lower motivated kids from in-class support. They are not doing as well as I would like. I would like us to have a full-time resource center for such students. I also feel our kids should have 3-5 periods a week of supplemental instruction to keep them abreast and help ensure success in regular education". Her partner feels that the balance of student's abilities is very delicate. Too many high students and the special education students become invisible, too few high students and the class stagnates and becomes boring. He is concerned that the motivation of students is as hard or harder to accomplish than some academic goals. An eighth grade regular education teacher expresses her concerns this way; "My only concern is one that I have with any heterogeneously grouped class-am I able to meet the needs of everyone with such a broad range of ability? Are we, in America, sacrificing the brightest students and the slowest learners to political correctness? Some of my special ed. students could function well within a high-middle group, so they aren't really the problem here. But are we benefitting those who just don't come up to standard by keeping them in these classes? Will this lower, rather than raise self esteem? I have no solution, only time will answer".

CHAPTER 5
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

SUMMARY

The purpose of this study was to determine the impact of an in-class support program on teachers. The subjects of this study were six pairs of teachers consisting of one regular educator and one special educator. To solicit participation, cover letters and a narrative survey instrument were mailed to each of twenty educators. The responses were analyzed by using content analysis. Most of the responses provided positive feedback on an in-class support program. There are some concerns for the future implementation of this program.

CONCLUSIONS

The first research question asked teachers how they came to participate in a collaborative program. Most pairs responded that they were assigned to work as collaborative pairs. Most responses were positive with few major concerns about being pushed into this program. Based on this information, some school districts seem to assign teachers to in-class support programs rather than have them volunteer.

The second research question asked pairs how they collaborate with their partner. Four of the six pairs

responded that they do have time to plan jointly. Most of the teachers indicated that joint planning time is very important to the success of an in-class support program and collaborative teaching. Even though the teachers responded that they are able to plan jointly, they felt that they could use more time than they are given. Joint planning time was also the most popular response to the question which asked participants to list the three most important factors that hindered their efforts to implement collaborative teaching. Nine of the twelve teachers agreed. Based on this research, joint planning time is the number one benefit to teachers participating in in-class support programs.

The next research question asked participants to list three factors that have helped implement their program. Based on the responses, most teachers feel that the enthusiasm and compatibility of the collaborative partner is vital.

Next, teachers were asked what changes have been experienced due to collaborative teaching. Most responses were that the teachers have been learning new methods and strategies from their partners. All teachers who have experienced changes explained positive changes to their teaching style, strategies and understanding of classified students. Most special education participants needed to gain new curriculum knowledge in order to participate in an in-class support program.

Participants were asked what they saw as the two most important benefits of this program. The majority of responses were that special education students have an increased level of learned retention.

Despite the many positive responses, some concerns exist among the teachers in this study. Based on the responses, school districts need to listen to teacher concerns and work together to develop an in-class support program beneficial to all students and within the grasp of the teachers involved.

DISCUSSION

Participation of collaborative pairs was limited in this study. To better support the research presented, responses from more collaborative pairs should be gathered. Perhaps cover letters sent to many school districts eliciting participation from all of their collaborative pairs would have increased the amount of participants. It would be interesting to complete a similar study over an extended time period to establish whether or not teacher concerns are rectified and whether administrative support is provided in districts lacking support.

Based on the research presented in this study, most teachers involved in collaborative teaching seem to be finding it successful. With the cooperation of administration and the motivation of teachers involved, in-class support programs can be the answer to many

mainstreaming concerns for the special education population. Teachers will continue to learn from one another and share their expertise in the field of education.

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APPENDIX A
SAMPLE OF COVER LETTER

19 Colosseum Drive
Mantua, N.J. 08051
January , 1995

Dear

I am presently a graduate student attending Rowan College of New Jersey and completing my thesis requirement in the field of learning disabilities. The topic of this thesis is the in-class support program and collaborative teaching between regular and special educators.

Please respond to each question in the privacy of your home. The survey has been coded for confidential recording of information. Please understand that at no time will your name or school district appear in this study. All results will be reported as statistical averages. The information will remain confidential and at no time will your collaborative partner become aware of your responses.

With this in mind, please answer each question as honestly as you can. Use the enclosed envelope to return the questionnaire. Your prompt reply is appreciated. Thank you for your willingness to participate in this study.

If you would like a summary of the results of this study, please complete the address label below.

Sincerely,

Cheryl Marino

NAME:

ADDRESS:

CITY:

STATE:

ZIP CODE:

APPENDIX B
SAMPLE QUESTIONNAIRE

CODE _____

I. BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

YEARS TEACHING:

YEARS PARTICIPATING IN IN-CLASS SUPPORT:

CURRENT GRADE LEVEL/SUBJECT TEACHING:

REGULAR OR SPECIAL EDUCATOR:

II. PLEASE ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

1. How did you come to participate in a collaborative program? Were you appointed or did you volunteer? Please comment on how you felt about your participation and any concerns you had about teaching with a partner.

2a. How do you and your partner collaborate? Please include whether you plan jointly and the responsibilities you each have.

2b. What kinds of things, if any, have hindered your efforts to implement collaborative teaching in your classroom?

2c. What kinds of things, if any, have helped you to implement this program?

3. What changes, if any, have you experienced due to this collaborative experience? Please include: a) If you have made any changes in your classroom, b) Did you need to develop significant new knowledge or skills, if so, what were they. c) Have your teaching strategies or methods changed, if so, how?

4. What do you see as the benefits of an in-class support program? Comment on any affects you may have observed on the students as well.

5. What concerns do you still have about this program? How might these concerns be rectified?