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Effective Co-Teaching Within the Inclusive Classroom.

Lindsay Holliday
St. John Fisher College

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Effective Co-Teaching Within the Inclusive Classroom.

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My literature review was about co-teaching in an inclusive classroom setting. In my review, I discussed about the co-teaching process and how to successfully implement coteaching models into the inclusive classroom. My research consisted of classroom teachers and inclusive classroom students. I constructed surveys to teachers about co-teaching and how they implement co-teaching. I also asked teachers questions about inclusive classrooms and the outcomes that they have seen within those classrooms. I asked the students different questions about how they learn best and what they see their teachers engaging in within the inclusive classroom. I also asked questions about behavior and fairness in the classroom with co-teachers present.

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By

Lindsay Holliday

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Dr. Susan M. Schultz

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St. John Fisher College

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EFFECTIVE CO-TEACHING WITHIN THE INCLUSIVE CLASSROOM

Abstract

My literature review was about co-teaching in an inclusive classroom setting. In my review, I discussed about the co-teaching process and how to successfully implement co-teaching models into the inclusive classroom. My research consisted of classroom teachers and inclusive classroom students. I constructed surveys to teachers about co-teaching and how they implement co-teaching. I also asked teachers questions about inclusive classrooms and the outcomes that they have seen within those classrooms. I asked the students different questions about how they learn best and what they see their teachers engaging in within the inclusive classroom. I also asked questions about behavior and fairness in the classroom with co-teachers present.

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Effective Co-Teaching Within the Inclusive Classroom.

In today's schools, inclusion is becoming a new method of teaching that more and more classrooms are adopting and performing. Throughout my educational career I have found that many classrooms are not successfully implementing full inclusion in the classroom. It is also important that if successful implementation is being done in the classroom, the students are learning better than in an individually taught classroom. The special education teacher and the general education teacher need to work cooperatively to create an environment conducive to learning for all students with or without disabilities.

Co-teaching is becoming an important shift in education in today's society. More classrooms are moving towards the co-teaching model, especially in inclusion classrooms. Co-teaching is when two, or more teachers, share in the roles and responsibilities in teaching students. They share the roles of planning, implementing, classroom management, and assessing to ensure that students have met the goals of their objectives. Recent studies have shown that students who learn in a successful co-teaching environment have higher results in their education.

The research study will focus solely on students who learn in a co-taught classroom, when the teachers are collaborating successfully and working together to ensure success in the classroom. The study will focus on students in a Kindergarten through 6th grade co-taught classroom. I developed a student friendly survey for students in co-taught classrooms and individually taught classrooms to complete. In addition, an anonymous teacher survey for co-taught teachers to participate as well as individual classroom teachers was conducted.

Purpose

The goal of this study is to determine if students who are enrolled in a successful co-taught classroom learn better than in a non-successful co-taught classroom or in an individually

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taught classroom.

As a result of this study I expect to find:

- What teachers think a successful co-taught classroom is and how certain teachers define collaboration. I also hope to find why collaboration works and when it doesn't, why it doesn't work.
- If students who are in a co-taught classroom learn better through successful co-teaching or in an individually taught classroom.
- How general education teachers implement inclusive strategies in their classrooms if they are in an inclusive classroom setting but do not participate in co-taught classrooms.

Review of the Literature

Success is the Common Goal: Collaboration of Special Education Teachers and General Education Teachers in an Inclusive Classroom

The key to having a successful inclusion classroom is to have collaboration between the general education teacher and the special education teacher. To have a thriving learning environment for all students, the two classroom teachers must work together cooperatively to create the successful environment for each of their students. They need to have a relationship with each other in which they collaborate effectively for their students. Eccleston (2010) defines collaboration where “two or more people create an outcome for a student that no one of them could have created alone” (p. 40). As a team, they work together to bring out the strengths that each child in the classroom reveals. If a student is struggling within the classroom environment they work together to help the student to flourish and overcome his or her obstacles. Both classroom teachers should be responsible for the education of their students. They need to work in a partnership to ensure that each student is successful in the classroom. Co-teaching is not seen as an instructional strategy, it is a “method by which educators can work collaboratively to deliver quality instruction” (Murawski and Hughes, 2009, p. 270).

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General educators and special educators need to work collaboratively and determine how to best help the students in their classroom. Julie N. Causton-Theoharis (2009) says that “the best way to learn about a student’s needs is to ask the student” (p. 40). Teachers should also observe students in their classroom environment to figure out what they need and how they learn best. By taking informal observations of students, inclusive classroom teachers are learning about how a student learns best. This is also helpful with implementing and planning lessons in the inclusive classroom. By “asking students how they would like educators to support them communicates respect and value for their choices” (Causton-Theoharis, 2009, p. 40).

The two classroom teachers should assume the roles and responsibilities equally. In order for the classroom to be fully successful, the teachers should work together and for the education of each student. Some might often view the partnership between the special education teacher and the general education teacher a working marriage. Eccleston (2010) shares that “collaboration between the general classroom teachers and the special education specialist teacher has become critically important and is the most common method for planning for the success of students with exceptionalities in inclusive settings” (p. 40). Working together can also show through the success of the students in the classroom. This could mean the student grades improving, and also students obtaining the objectives and outcomes that the teachers have in their combined lesson planning. According to Julie N. Causton-Theoharis (2009) she reveals that “adult help can be seamless and effective and thereby fully support the purposes of inclusion” (p. 37). Inclusion can only be done effectively if the general education teacher, and special education teacher work together to educate each student in their classroom.

Gloria Lodato Wilson (2008) identifies twenty ways to be an active co-teacher in an inclusive classroom. In her article she reveals ways that “the co-teacher who is not leading

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instruction” can know a “variety of activities to employ” in the co-taught classroom (p. 240). The first activity is for the teacher to graze the classroom. When doing this, the co-teacher, who is not presenting the instruction to the class, keeps an eye on things in the classroom and takes mental notes. When grazing, the teacher is “helping with classroom management and overseeing student performance” (Wilson, 2008, p. 240). While observing, the co-teacher can also create an assignment based on the lesson being taught to ensure that students are retaining the information and meeting the objectives from the lesson planned.

Another suggestion for co-teachers is to keep students directed with the lesson and focus on the task. The teacher can do this by giving silent cues to the student so they know when and where to direct their attention while the lesson is being taught. A co-teacher can also look over a student’s shoulder at his or her work and clarify any misunderstandings a student may have or answer any questions (p. 241). The teacher can also stay with the student for one to five minutes to “reteach concepts, clarify examples, or model the procedures” (Wilson, 2008, p. 241). This gives the student an opportunity for fast and thorough instruction. Inclusion also allows for a co-teacher to pair up with a student who is in need of a more guided and individualized lesson that is being taught to the whole class. In comparison to pairing up with a student, a co-teacher can also take a small group of three or four students who are having targeted difficulties with a topic or a lesson.

Gloria Lodato Wilson (2008) also suggests that the opposite teacher create a “graphic organizer” while the co-teacher is leading a lesson (p. 242). Graphic organizers can help students visually see the information being presented and the students can follow along while the co-teacher is creating the graphic organizer. The teacher can “organize the content to an on-board graphic organizer, filling in the information on the organizer as the presenting teacher covers

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material” (Wilson, 2008, p. 242). The students can also refer back to the graphic organizers frequently and while doing their work independently.

Inclusion is more important than ever in our schools today. It is becoming a more utilized teaching technique throughout the world. By definition, “inclusion involves services in the general education classroom with the educational supports provided to ensure student learning and success” (Brice & Miller, 2000, p. 237). Effective teaching is important for students with and without disabilities. Both general and special education teachers need to be prepared for co-teaching and collaboration (Austin, 2001). To follow the trend of the inclusion model, the use of collaborative teaching is being used in inclusive settings (Austin, 2001). Fennick (2001) states that “coteaching, also known as collaborative or cooperative teaching, has been identified as a successful strategy for inclusion” (p. 61). Inclusion is important because students with disabilities get an education with students in a general education setting. This is effective because both the parents and the students want to get the best education possible for the student and it can be done when effective coteaching takes place in an inclusive classroom setting. Classroom supports from the general educator and special educator are important because “students with disabilities are integral members of the classroom” and “educators allow them to be their full selves” (Causton-Theoharis, 2009, p. 37). Because inclusion is a booming method in education today, both teachers need to be aware of their importance and significance to each student.

Planning between co-teachers is imperative in an inclusion setting and it should be a structured process. Collaboration in an inclusion classroom also involves other specialists, paraprofessionals and parents of the students. According to the zero rejection policy, Brice and Miller (2000) state that “no student would be deemed too disabled or disability classification

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deemed too severe not to be included in general classrooms” (p. 237). This lets every student get an education within the inclusion classroom. The collaborative model in classrooms shows that the special educator and general educator share the tasks of lesson planning, assessments of students and implementation (Austin, 2001). It is important that the students know that both teachers can help them when they need assistance and that the general educator and special educator are both of their teachers. Not one specific teacher should be the designated one to go to when students have a question or struggle. The main goal in inclusive classrooms “is to help all students (with or without disabilities) learn to live, work, and play together so that eventually they can successfully live, work, and be together in the community as adults” (Causton-Theoharis, 2009, p. 37).

Teachers need to work together and plan effectively for collaboration to work in the classroom. They need to share their teaching responsibilities and work as a team. Collaboration is a “system of planned cooperative activities where general educators and special educators share roles and responsibilities for student learning” (Wiggins, and Damore, 2006, p. 49). Both teachers should be held accountable for all the students learning within their classroom. It is important that they talk, and collaborate on a daily basis about the positives and negatives within their community known as their own classroom. They need to work with each other to bounce ideas off of one another and to help each other with ideas and suggestions they might have to make the classroom an effective learning community. According to Kathryn C. Wiggins and Sharon J. Damore (2006) they believe that the general educator and special educator should “seek the wisdom, advice, and support of their colleagues” (p. 50). They need to respect each other and they need to trust each other for the success of their students. By doing this, they will focus more on the task at hand and they will have a successful inclusive classroom. Both of the

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classroom teachers should work together to “bring unique areas of emphasis to the partnership” and work equally to help the achievement of all students (Friend, 2007, p. 49).

The two teachers who are involved in the education of the students in their classroom should be working with each other to achieve goals that are common for their students. When both teachers work together and achieve a common goal, they work to “create the collective capacity for initiating and sustaining ongoing improvement in their professional practice so each student they serve can receive the highest quality of education possible” (Brownell, Adams, Sindelar, Waldron, & Vanhover, 2006, p. 169). When teachers work collaboratively with one another, both teachers and students can benefit from the opportunities to learn and work together. General educators and special educators need to understand what each teacher brings to the process of collaboration and how their individual qualities assist them in applying what they have learned in their practice (Brownell et al., 2006).

Friend (2007) also suggests that the general educator should be the one who implements the content and curriculum in the classroom while the special educator, focuses on the student’s learning process, and helping students demonstrate knowledge and skills. The special educator also differentiates and modifies any instruction and activities for students with disabilities. Some students who are not classified for special education might benefit from the modifications and differentiation in the classroom and inclusive settings can help these students achieve maximum success. Co-teaching is one of several options for students with disabilities in an inclusive school setting. Some students who have disabilities may need the “structure and intensity of a small-group setting to raise achievement. Nothing about co-teaching implies that schools should eliminate such approaches” (Friend, 2007, p. 49).

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Collaboration between special educators, general educators, and speech-language pathologists is also an effective strategy in supporting students with disabilities in an inclusion classroom. According to Bauer, Iyer, Boon, and Fore (2010) they reveal that “students who are at risk are more apt to receive appropriate intervention services and more continuity of care when a qualified team is establishing academic and communication objectives”(p. 333). In their article, *20 Ways for Classroom Teachers to Collaborate With Speech-Language Pathologists*, they list several strategies that are helpful for special educators and general educators to work with speech-language pathologists to provide supports in the classroom for students who are receiving speech services. Some of these strategies include setting aside a time to meet together. This is important because they can discuss the concerns and also come up with some solutions while they are collaborating (Bauer, et al., 2010). Speech-language pathologists and the classroom teachers need to communicate to ensure that each teacher is doing their part in helping the child who is receiving services succeed in the classroom. They should set aside a time to meet together and “discuss any reservations” that they might have and “possible solutions regarding collaboration” (Bauer et al., 2010, p. 334).

Another effective strategy for co-teachers and the speech-language pathologist is to “agree on specific intervention goals for the student” (Bauer et al., 2010, p. 334). All three teachers need to be familiar with the students’ educational background as well as that specific student’s family background. They must integrate the needs of the individual student and work together to decide on how those goals should be incorporated into the regular classroom curriculum and activities without changing the curriculum for the other students in the classroom (Bauer et al., 2010). Another strategy that Bauer et al. (2010) finds effective is to “be flexible in implementing an integrated collaborative approach” (p. 334). Both teachers, along with the

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speech-language pathologist, should be willing to work together and find the strategy that would be most effective in helping the student achieve maximum success in the classroom. The article states that “building rapport and a working relationship means being open to other ideas for helping the student perform at an optimal level” (Bauer et al., 2010, p. 334-335).

Students have the opportunity to receive speech-language services to help support their disability outside of the classroom environment. Some other strategies that Bauer et al. (2010) find helpful is that the general education teacher and special education teacher work together with the speech-language pathologist to incorporate push-in services in the classroom. This is important because “it allows the student to apply newly acquired communication skills in the general education classroom” (Bauer et al., 2010, p. 333). The speech-language pathologist can come into the inclusive classroom and help with group work, or they can help with individual student needs during instructional time. This collaboration could serve as curriculum enrichment for students in the whole class but it can also help those students who are considered at risk (Bauer et al., 2010). Special educators and general educators should also allow the speech-language pathologist to come into the classroom to “meet the needs of the individual student in the least restrictive environment” (Bauer et al., 2010, p. 333). This is significant because “the purpose of collaboration is to combine expertise” (Eccleston, 2010, p. 40).

Both classroom teachers should encourage each other to help the student to incorporate the techniques that he or she learned previously with the speech-language pathologist. As stated, “teaching a student to use the techniques taught in therapy across a variety of settings is known as carryover” (Bauer et al., 2010, p. 335). When the three teachers collaborate it ensures a sense of consistency with the student and it makes their learning easier and less stressful.

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The special education teacher and general education teacher need to work collaboratively together and also with paraeducators to help the success of the student. Werts, Harris, Tillery, and Roark (2004) state that “paraeducators are defined as persons who work directly under the supervision of licensed professionals and who often deliver instructional and direct services to students and their parents” (Werts, et al., 2004, p. 232). It is important that the classroom teachers and paraeducators converse about the students in a confidential manner to guarantee success with the student that the paraeducator is working with. To some collaborative teachers, paraeducators “often provide the primary support for students with special needs in inclusive classrooms, some being assigned to work one-on-one with a specific student under teacher direction, while others...are available to all classroom students” (Werts et al., 2004, p. 233). Paraeducators are imperative in an inclusive setting because they often work closely with a student with disabilities. They learn to find the students strengths and weaknesses and they build upon those to ensure that the student is successful in the inclusive classroom. Communicating with the special education teacher as well as the general education teacher is an important duty that the paraeducator hold. Communication is vital between everyone involved with the student and can be an effective tool to help the student in an inclusive setting. According to Bauer et al., (2004) the role of the paraeducator in the classroom is to provide “academic help, keeping the child focused, and assisting with behavior problems” (p. 237).

A paraeducator can be essential in an inclusive setting because they can help assist other students in the classroom as well. They can also work with a small group of students who are struggling with the same idea or concept that the child they are working with is struggling with. This also helps the rapport with the other students within the classroom and lets the paraeducator connect with other students, not just the specific student they are working with. When

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paraeducators are assisting in the classroom, they “should be viewed as equal partners in the educational setting” and they should be “valued as team members” (Bauer et al., 2004, p. 237).

Some argue that paraeducators might hinder the student learning process in an inclusive classroom. According to Julie N. Causton-Theoharis, (2009) she lists several events where students might not gain from the full inclusive environment. The list includes “separation from classmates, unnecessary dependence on adults, interference with peer interactions, interference with teacher engagement, loss of personal control and insular relationships between the paraprofessional and the student” (Causton-Theoharis, 2009, p. 38). Students with disabilities have the opportunity to work with a paraprofessional, but the classroom teachers need to work with the paraprofessional to ensure that the student does not become too dependent on the paraprofessional. If this happens the student can learn to expect help from the adult even though help might not be needed. This is known as “learned helplessness” and the students “learn to wait for cues, direction, or prompting from an adult before engaging with the material” (Causton-Theoharis, 2009, p. 38). Having a student learn that adult help is available if needed can help that child become successful in the classroom but it could give them the wrong idea for when they are in real life situations outside of the classroom. It teaches the student to rely on someone giving support that might not be available in their homes or when they leave school and enter the world as a young adult (Causton-Theoharis, 2009).

Paraeducators and inclusive classroom teachers need to help students with disabilities learn the material. Paraeducators play an important role in both planning and implementing instruction for students with special needs. They need to carefully scaffold problems and each step of the learning process for students and not just do the work for them (Causton-Theoharis, 2009). This can help through collaboration with paraeducators, general educators and special

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educators. All of the team members can work together to figure out the best way to help that student become a successful learner in the inclusive setting.

Effective communication between paraeducators, speech-language pathologists and classroom teachers is highly important. In addition, communication between parents and teachers in an inclusive classroom is highly important as well. John H. Wherry's (2005) article discusses the significance of teachers and parents working together to create a positive classroom environment. Wherry (2005) lists ten ways that teachers can communicate positively with parents to have "strong parental support" in the classroom (para. 12). Throughout his ideas for successful collaborations of classroom teachers and parents he also found that "personal contact," sending home "quick notes," and "letting parents contact you after school" was an important factor in communication between school and home (para. 2, 5 and 11). An important suggestion from Wherry (2005) was to "contact parents immediately when potentially serious problems occur with their child" (para. 3). When problems arise with a student in the classroom a parent or guardian should be informed when that incident takes place. By contacting parents immediately, it will eliminate parents from being "angry if they hear about issues after they've become overwhelming" (Wherry, 2005, para. 3).

Another suggestion that Wherry (2005) discusses in his article is to have positive communication with parents, not just negative. By collaborating with parents about their children in a positive way could lead to positive behaviors and actions in the classroom. Rapport with students, teachers and parents will increase as well. It also helps students and boosts their ego in the classroom (Wherry, 2005). Teachers should also use an "academic skills checklist to build at-home support" for what they are teaching in the classroom (Wherry, 2005, para. 10). This will

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stress the importance of homework to parents and students and parents are “more likely to review assignments with their children” (Wherry, 2005, para. 10).

Parents also should be informed about their child’s education and what they are learning about in school. Parents and families play a big role in a child’s education and in an inclusive classroom setting. Spencer J. Salend and Laurel M. Garrick Duhaney (2002) suggested that teachers send out a survey “to identify their feelings about the inclusion program and their reactions to it” (p. 62). This can help with parent and teacher connections as well as provide feedback to teachers about their teaching techniques within the inclusive classroom. The article also states that it should be written in language that the family can understand and to try to avoid using terms or jargon that they might not fully comprehend (Salend and Duhaney, 2002). If using the terms are necessary, then teachers should try to define these terms so that they are understandable to the family member reading the survey or questionnaire. Salend and Duhaney (2002) reveal that a survey or questionnaire might be easier but if you have the time to interview a parent or family member, they “allow family members to offer in-depth statements, descriptions, recommendations, and examples that can be particularly useful in understanding their experiences and evaluating inclusive educational programs” (p. 63).

These interviews can be useful for both the special educator and general educator when planning and implementing lessons in the inclusive classroom. The teachers can then “use the data to generate and implement solutions to address family concerns and to enhance student performance” (Salend and Duhaney, 2002, p. 64). For example, if a family member reveals that a student is a target of name calling or they have few social interactions, the school can use the data received to help this particular student overcome these struggles. In addition, “educators can collaborate with family members to support budding friendships, develop friendship goals and

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plans, and problem-solve ways to facilitate friendships and participation in after-school activities” (Salend and Duhaney, 2002, p. 65). The information could be imperative to helping a student become successful in the classroom. By using the information provided from the survey or interview, it can address the needs of the students and their families and ensure student success for the school year.

Collaboration is one of the most important pieces to guarantee student achievement in an inclusive classroom setting for special education students and general education students. General educators and special educators must facilitate learning and strive for the individual academic success of all students and promote self-exploration and growth. These goals can be accomplished by creating and implementing meaningful, interesting and engaging instruction based in providing each child with an opportunity for success. Promoting such goals, within a safe, nurturing environment that is conducive to achievement can be derived from various pedagogy and educational strategies. It is found that “students in co-taught classes have been found to improve in academics, behavior, social skills, and self-esteem as compared with those taught solely in the special education classroom” (Murawski and Hughes, 2009, p. 270). In education today, teachers have immense requirements and need to be sure to educate each child within the inclusive classroom setting. Co-teaching and collaboration allows teachers to achieve the goals of students and it allows “teachers and other professionals to interact in structured ways that allow flexibility of instructional options and providing intensive instruction for students at the time they need it” (Murawski and Hughes, 2009, p. 273).

Methodology

I have a passion for co-teaching and inclusion classrooms for teachers. I feel that co-teaching is imperative to special education students and they can thrive in an inclusion classroom. I feel that having two teachers in the classroom is beneficial for both the students and

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the teachers in the classroom. Many methods have been devoted to co-teaching and the partnership that the two classroom teachers have in the classroom should be similar to a marriage. The common goals and ideas that both teachers share are important and vital to all students' education in the classroom.

Being in the field of education for a few years has really allowed me to explore the different types of inclusive classrooms as well as individually taught classrooms. I have seen many classrooms that are inclusive where one teacher is solely responsible for the education of the general education students and the special education teacher is responsible only for the classified students.

I have also encountered several classrooms where the two teachers are consistently working together collaboratively with a common goal for their students. They make time to meet and discuss all of the students in the classroom. They also plan together, and share the roles and responsibilities in the classroom. I feel that co-teaching would be the most successful in the inclusion classroom when using these methods and strategies.

The setting for my surveys took place in an Urban School District in Upstate New York. I delivered the surveys to two different classroom types in the school from grades kindergarten through sixth grade. The school is composed of three teachers from each grade level one being inclusion with two teachers and the other two are general education classrooms. Some of the general education classes have students with disabilities in addition to the inclusion classrooms.

I made a packet of the surveys and distributed them to each teacher personally. I spoke briefly with them about my survey and what I was doing for my final capstone project. As I was talking with the teachers I got some important brief information as well as ideas and suggestions. I also informed the teachers that I would be willing to copy the student surveys for them if they

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needed me to. I reminded them of the due date of March 7th for both of the surveys and let them know where they can drop them off to when they were completed. I also stressed that it was confidential as well as optional.

For my data surveys I had a teacher survey asking teachers about co-teaching and what it means to them. I also asked if they were in an inclusion setting or a co-teaching setting in the classroom. For some of the staff members, some of the teachers have worked in a co-teaching setting in previous years and I asked them to reflect based on those experiences that they had while in a co-teaching environment. I also asked several questions related to co-teaching, planning, and behavior management. In addition, I asked about students with disabilities and the inclusive classroom. The questions were based on a likert scale from 1 strongly agree to 5 strongly disagree. I also left a space at the bottom of the survey for teachers to add any input about co-teaching and/or inclusion ideas that the participant has found to be successful or unsuccessful in the classroom.

In addition to teachers, students were also encouraged to participate in an anonymous survey. The survey was optional and the teachers were not present while I was giving the surveys. The teachers thought that I would get a better outcome from the students if I had asked them to participate in the survey and talked to them about my purpose for the survey and my research. The student survey had two open ended question about the roles of the teachers and eight other questions were yes or no options. The survey was kid friendly for kids in grades kindergarten through grade six.

The beginning question that the students were asked was for them to write down who their teacher was. I left this question vague because I wanted to get the students to describe one name or two names if they had two teachers. I felt that in a successful co-taught classroom the

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students would write down both teachers' names compared to just one teacher in the classroom. I wanted to see if the students liked learning from one teacher or two teachers better if they have been exposed to both types of classrooms throughout their education. The next question was to ask the students what the opposite teacher is doing when the other is implementing the lessons to the students. I wanted to students to be honest with their responses so I encouraged them to write down specific information. Some students in the younger grades might be able to answer this question due to their lack of writing skills or exposure to inclusive classrooms.

I also asked several questions about their learning styles and how each student learns best. Some questions involved if they liked working in small groups or whole class instruction. I asked students if they worked with the same teacher frequently to see if the teacher was also making a melting pot of students in groups and changing them frequently. In addition, I wanted to see if students were active in their education and asking for assistance from their teachers in the classroom. I had also asked students if the teacher(s) were fair with every student and treating them equally. I gave the students several examples such as behavior and consequences as well as positive reinforcement.

Findings and Discussion

I received the majority of my surveys back when I was collecting my data and research. I had found that I had received many student surveys and decided to narrow down my data collection to the classrooms that were just inclusive classrooms. I chose to use the student data from only inclusion classrooms for my research instead of individually taught classrooms and inclusive classrooms (see appendix one). I did not receive 100% participation on my teacher surveys. I distributed 30 surveys to the classroom teachers and I had 15 returned to me. I had a return rate of 50% from the teacher surveys that I had distributed. The survey was based on a

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Likert scale of one through five. On the Likert scale one was strongly agree, two was agree somewhat, three was if the teacher neither agreed nor disagreed, four was disagree somewhat and a five on the scale was strongly agree (see appendix two). I asked teachers questions pertaining to the definition of co-teaching to them, classroom management, planning time, lesson implementing and individualized student instruction. For the student surveys, I had asked the students to complete who their teacher was in the classroom, what grade they were in and how they felt they learned best. I also asked them to complete a sentence on what their teacher is doing while the opposite teacher is teaching. I also asked questions about group work, and classroom management. In addition, I asked how the students felt about teacher support when needed and classroom independent work.

Teacher Surveys

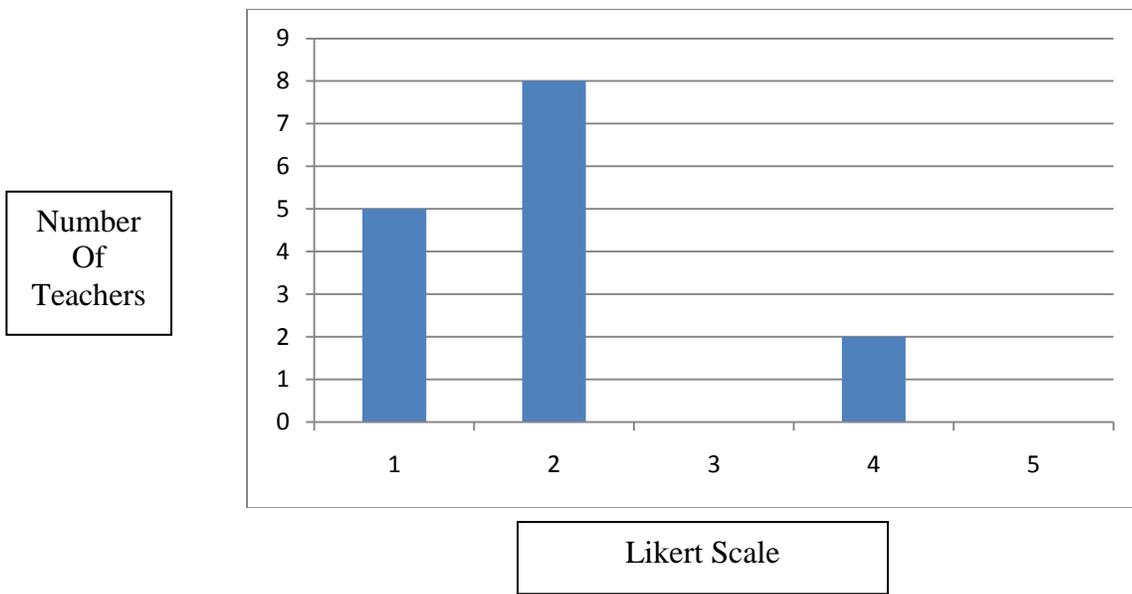
Teachers who had responded to my survey either taught in a co-taught classroom or are currently in an inclusion co-teaching classroom. A few of the respondents have not been in a co-taught classroom but they have observed one and also have had several experiences being in a co-taught inclusion classroom. For those teachers who were not currently in the inclusion classrooms, I asked them to base their answers on knowledge and previous classroom experiences. I felt that the results that I had received were thorough and thought out by each of the respondents. They also shared their knowledge on school based meetings and also any professional developments that they had attended on inclusion classrooms and co-teaching. Their feedback was very helpful and insightful when collecting my research and data.

When I asked my first question “What is co-teaching to you?” I got back several similar responses with teachers using the similar words, “collaborative, support, sharing, planning and implementing lessons, cooperative, and equal partnership.” Thirteen out of the 15 surveys

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received had similar responses using parallel ideas and concepts. One response was not given and another response was unique and different from the rest of the answers. The odd response that was given was the “Regular Educator is to teach the majority of the curriculum and the Special Educator differentiates the lessons based on modifications and what their individual learning styles are for individual students.” This response was very different than all of the other responses received for this question. The teacher that answered this response was a general education teacher. These results were not a surprise to me. I was confident that teachers in the building that I had received surveys from knew how to successfully implement co-teaching in the inclusive classroom setting. There are several inclusion classrooms within the building where I had received my responses from.

Question two had a mixture of responses based on the Likert scale. The majority of teachers responded with a two, agree somewhat. The question that was asked was “I believe that students without disabilities can receive an appropriately challenging education in an inclusive classroom. Out of the 15 surveys received, eight teachers had responded with a two.

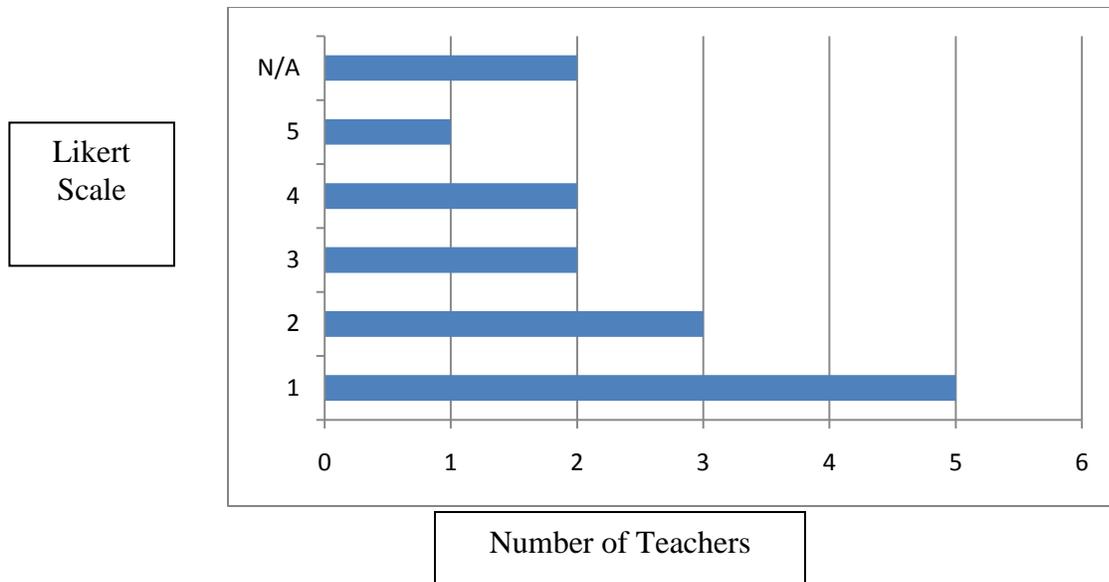


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In this graph, it shows the number of teachers who chose each number on the Likert scale. Based on the graph, eight teachers chose “agree somewhat” for students without disabilities to receive a challenging education in an inclusive educational setting. Only two teachers chose “disagree somewhat” on the Likert scale and five teachers chose “strongly agree.” Based on this information, I can conclude that the teachers I surveyed feel that their students without disabilities are receiving an appropriate education in the inclusive classroom setting. They work hard to help each child succeed within their classroom whether they have a disability or not. They are also able to receive individualized instruction from both teachers and not just one teacher within the inclusive classroom setting.

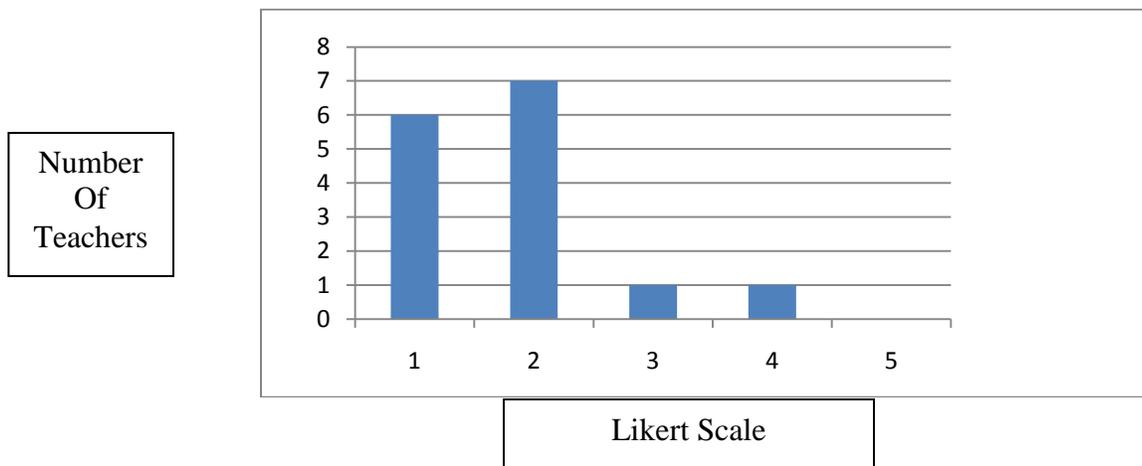
Question number 6 had several different responses on the Likert scale. The question that was asked was “In the inclusion classroom, my co-teacher and I consistently work with all students, including those with disabilities and those without disabilities.” Five teachers responded with “Strongly agree,” three teachers responded with “agree somewhat” and two teachers responded with “neither agree nor disagree.” In addition, four teachers had responded with “disagree somewhat” and one responded with “strongly disagree.” I also had two teachers who did not respond because they were unfamiliar with a co-taught classroom or were not in an inclusive classroom.

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Based on these results, I conclude that many teachers feel that they can work closely with all students in the inclusive classroom. They need to work at both sharing the roles in the classroom of delivering instruction and working together to create an environment conducive to learning for all students with and without disabilities.

Question eight revealed significant responses for a one and a two on the Likert scale. The question was “I have seen evidence of improved academic outcomes for students with disabilities in inclusion classrooms.” It was great to see that teachers who are implementing inclusion classrooms and other teachers within the building see the improvement of students in the inclusive classroom.

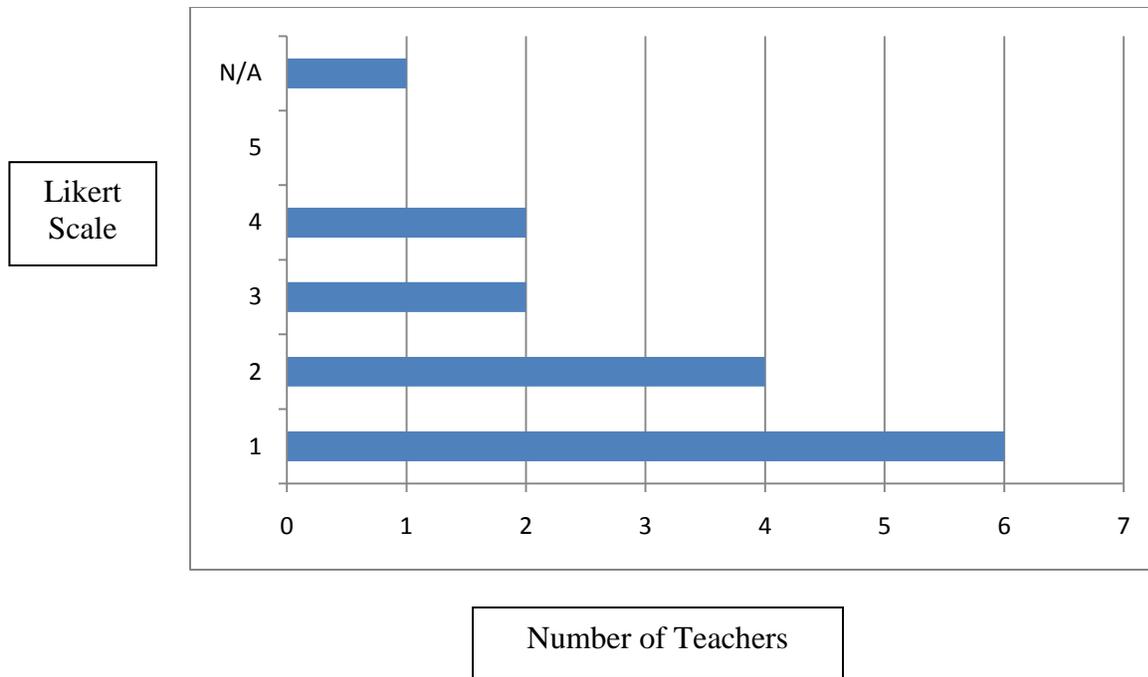


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These results were unanticipated to see that the inclusion classrooms are being implemented thoroughly and that students are achieving success in the classrooms. It helped to answer one of my questions, “Do students who are in a co-taught classroom learn better through successful co-teaching or in an individually taught classroom?” Throughout my research this question had been answered successfully that students can learn better if teachers are implementing co-teaching correctly and collaboratively. These responses can also refer back to question number one about co-teaching and what it means to each teacher. Together, these questions conclude that successful co-teaching is being implemented and students are gaining the education they need in these inclusive classrooms.

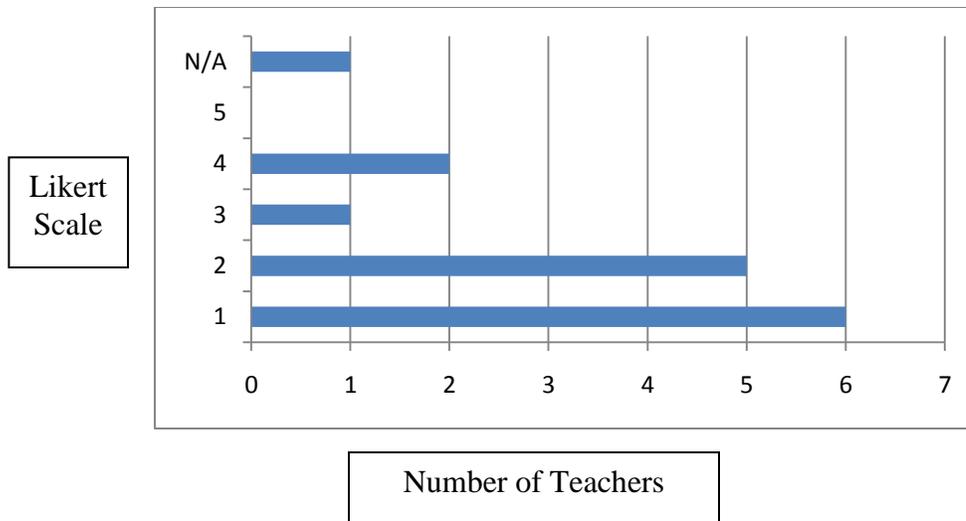
For survey question number 10 the results were surprising to me. I had thought that more teachers thought that they did not share the roles and responsibilities in the classroom and that they were not implementing successful co-teaching models. While reading these surveys and reviewing the responses the teachers are implementing successful teaching models and inclusion strategies in the classroom. The question asked was “Students accept both teachers as equal partners in the learning process.” The answers were across the Likert scale but the majority of the responses were “strongly agree” and close behind was “agree somewhat”

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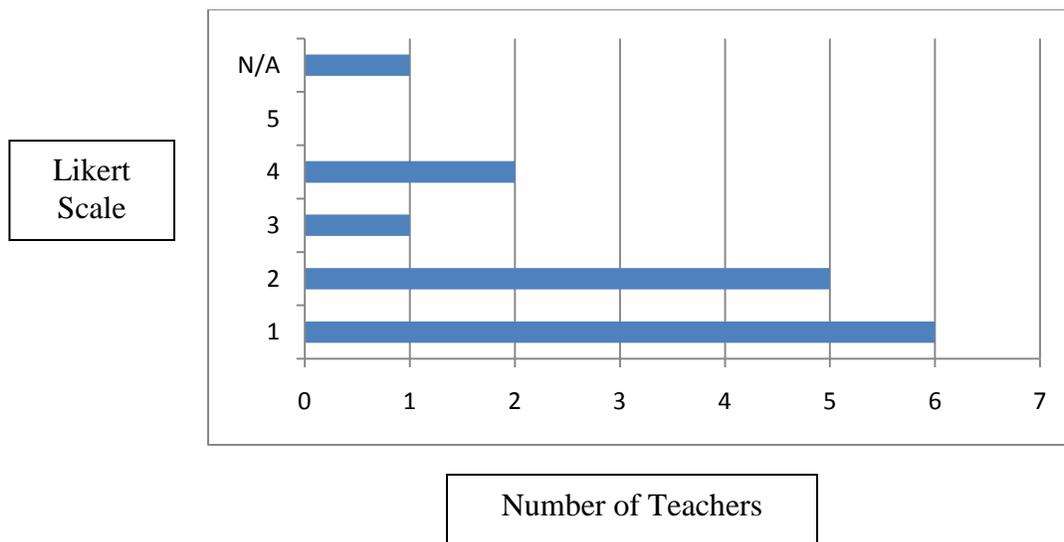
As one can see, teachers feel that students accept both teachers in the classroom and do not see just one teacher as the main teacher in the inclusive classroom. This proves that the teachers feel that they are successfully implementing inclusion strategies and models in the classroom. Also, teachers that are in a regular education classroom have said that based on their experiences inside the inclusive classroom and through observations of the inclusion classroom they feel that teachers are sharing the roles and responsibilities in the classroom. This also connects with question number 9. The question asked was “Behavior management is shared between both teachers in the classroom.” The results were comparable to question number 10 on the teacher survey.

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The results for this question were another surprise to me because through observations I felt that some teachers were doing more disciplining than their co-teaching partner. It was great to see that the behavior management was shared between both teachers and that the students accepted both teachers as the authoritative figure inside the classroom.

Question 9 produced several different results. The majority of teachers felt that the behavior management was being distributed evenly between both teachers inside the classroom.



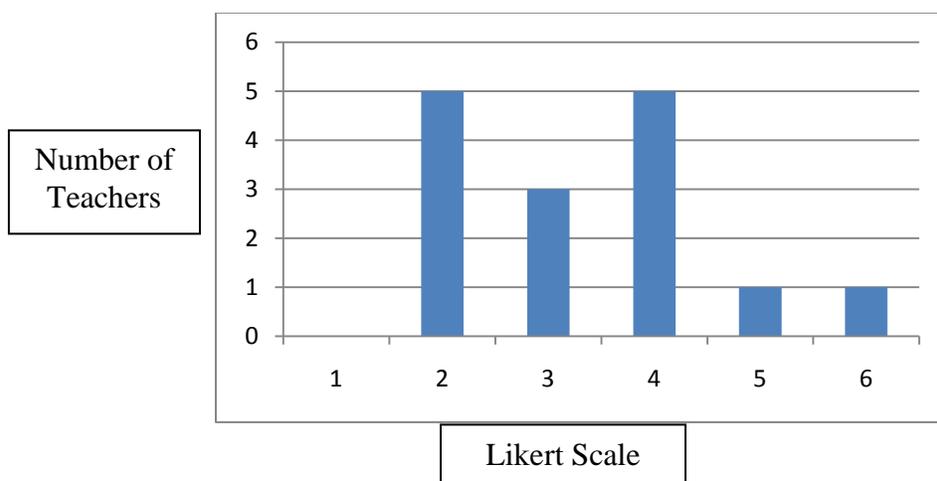
The rest of the teachers mostly responded with “agree somewhat” in comparison to “strongly agree.” Only a few teachers replied with “neither agree nor disagree” or “disagree somewhat.” I noticed that not one respondent replied with “strongly disagree” which shows that these

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participating co-teachers are collaborating on behavior management in the classroom. This is critical for a co-taught inclusion classroom for students so that they know that each teacher is following the same behavior plans and rules within the classroom. It is imperative that both teachers know the consequences and behavior plans that each child specifically has in place being in an inclusive classroom setting.

Question number 3 was “I have the time to individualize instruction for all of my students with disabilities.” I was shocked to see that not one response was “strongly agree.” The majority of responses were “agree somewhat” with five responses. Another shocking response was five responses for “disagree somewhat” which is opposite from the other responses.

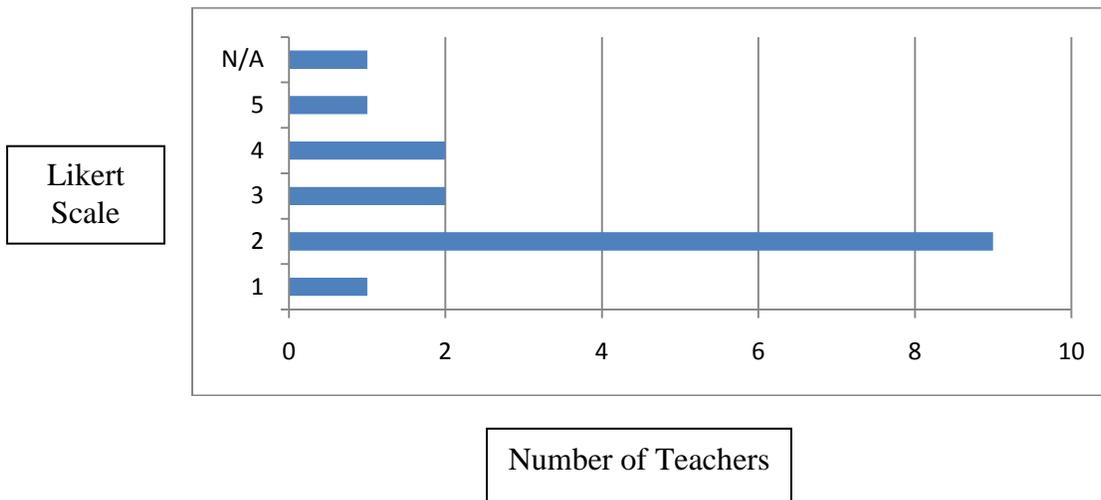
What these responses mean, is that some teachers feel like they are getting the time to individualize instruction for the students with disabilities while others do not feel that they are receiving enough time to individualize the curriculum and instruction for all students with disabilities. It was relieving to see that only one teacher responded with “strongly disagree.” This shows me that the majority of teachers are getting the time to individualize instruction but maybe not as much time as they would like or need for their students with disabilities.



This question also corresponds with question number 4. I had asked the teachers “I have the time to plan with my teaching partner or my grade level team members.” On the Likert scale,

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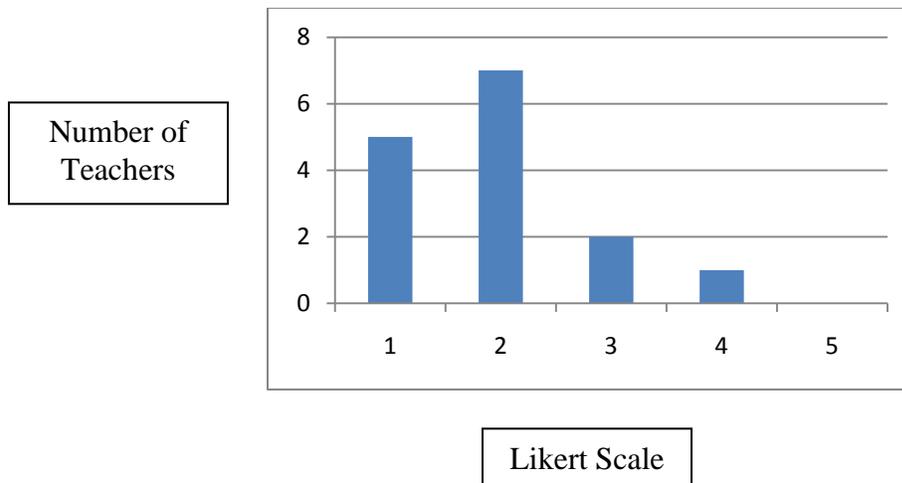
the majority of teachers replied with “agree somewhat.” This revealed the similar conclusion from question number 3. They have the time but it seems to not be enough time to help students with disabilities. If teachers have the time to plan and individualize instruction for their students, both students with and without disabilities can receive more individualized instruction to help them with their target areas of need. It seems as though the respondents felt that they are delivering individualized instruction for students with disabilities inside the inclusion classroom. Also, teachers that are in a co-taught classroom can work together to help individualize their instruction. They have the opportunity to work closely with students because they have the opportunity to have two teachers in the classroom. They receive time to plan together and organize a curriculum and classroom that will benefit all students within the inclusive classroom. It would have been interesting to see how much time teachers got to plan with each other and other members of their grade level. I should have asked the teachers how much time they get a week to plan with their co-teaching partner or grade level members.



I was interested to see if classroom teachers who had students with and without disabilities went beyond their comfort teaching zone and had used new teaching methods and strategies. If teachers are in an inclusive classroom, or have had the opportunity to be in one I

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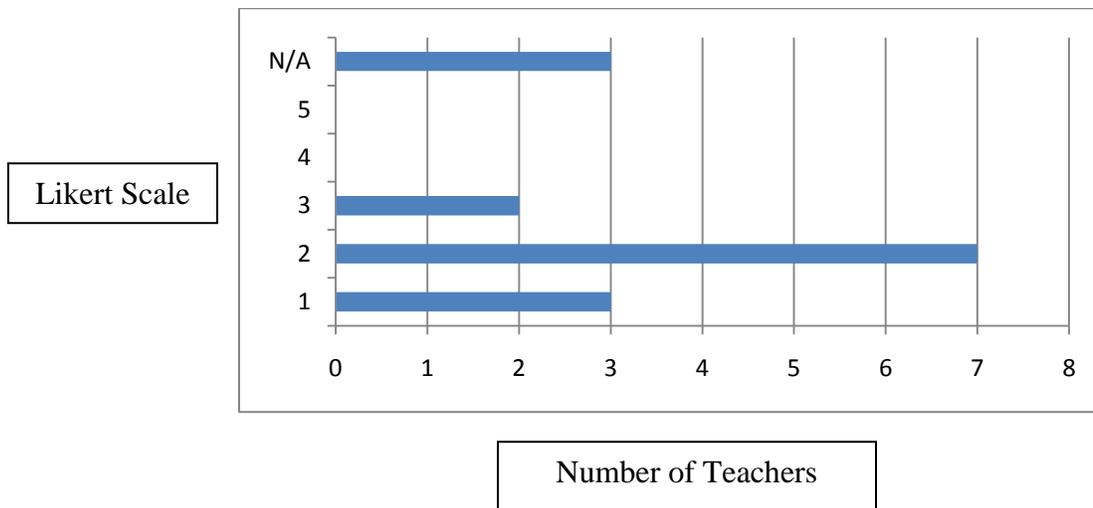
wanted them to rate the statement “I have found that inclusion has encouraged me to experiment with new teaching methodologies in the classroom.” Most of the responses that I received back were on the Likert scale of 2 “agree somewhat.” This shows that teachers are using new methods and strategies inside the classroom slightly. They may keep their same teaching methods but maybe make some changes to the implementation. I would have gotten a better idea of exactly what teachers were doing differently in the classroom if I might have asked them some examples or what they do differently now compared to before. I would have been interested to see what types of changes that teachers were making inside the classroom to help drive instruction and delivery of students with disabilities and without. It is good to see that teachers are taking ideas and strategies from other teachers and using them to their advantage in the classroom.



I was stunned to see the responses for question number 7. The survey statement was “in my inclusion classroom(s), students with disabilities and students without disabilities receive equal access to the same general curriculum.” I had hoped that the majority of the responses would be “strongly agree” but more of the teachers chose a 2 on the Likert scale, “agree somewhat.” This leads me to believe that co-teachers and other teachers want to work towards a successful inclusion classroom but they need the necessary tools and training to help them achieve that. This question also correlates to question numbers 3 and 4. If the teachers do not

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have the adequate time to plan and individualize instruction for all students, then they might not be using co-teaching to their full potential inside the classroom.



Based on all of the findings and data that I had collected from all of the teacher surveys that I had received back, the majority of teachers had felt that they are getting some time to plan and implement co-teaching strategies in the classroom. Those teachers also felt that they needed more time to plan and implement instruction for their students with either their co-teaching partner or their grade level team members. Teachers also showed that they knew what co-teaching was and the majority of teachers agreed on the same definition of what co-teaching means to them. Behavior was being implemented between both teachers in the classroom and they view themselves as equal individuals.

Student Surveys

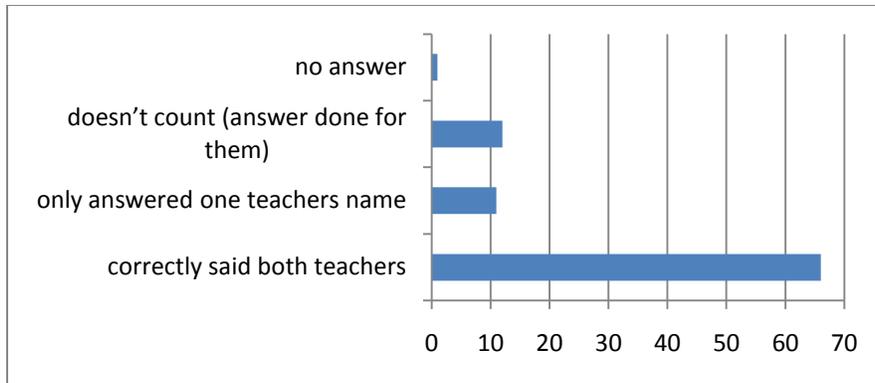
I received 152 total surveys back from students. I decided to only use the student data from the inclusive classrooms for my data collection and research making it a final total of 90 surveys. In the school there are a total of seven inclusion classrooms with two teachers in grades kindergarten through sixth grade. I had collected six of the inclusive classrooms student surveys

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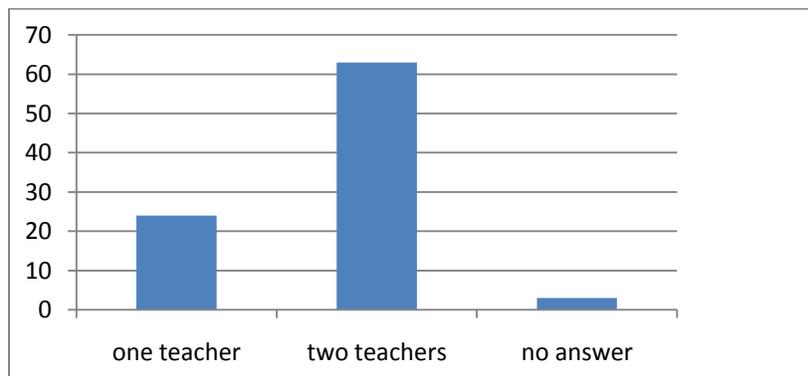
out of the seven with second grade not answering the student surveys. When reviewing all of the student surveys I had discovered that some of the data might not have been accurate because of the way that my survey was setup. I used smiley faces for “yes” responses and sad faces for “no” responses from the students. I had thought that the smiley faces might have been easier for the younger students to answer but since I did not administer all the classroom surveys the students and teachers might have been confused and my data could possibly be skewed. Some of the students might have gotten confused with the question and answering. My data did return some findings and results that I was looking for in my research.

My first question that I asked the students was “Who is your teacher?” The reason I chose this specific question was because I wanted to see how the students responded and if they put down both of their teachers’ names or just the one teacher that they might work closer with. The results were what I had wanted the students to say. For this question, I had 11 students reveal only one of their teacher names for the answer. In addition, sixty six students responded with both of the teachers’ names as opposed to just one teacher. I was intrigued by the results for this question because my objective for asking this question was that the students wrote down both teachers’ names for their answer. My results were not 100% for this question because I had one of the classrooms fill out who their teacher was for the students before they photocopied the survey to distribute. The classroom that did this was the Kindergarten classroom. This made my data skewed along with one answer left blank. The bar graph below shows the results for question #1 on the student survey.

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Question number 2 was similar to the first question that I had asked from the students in inclusive classrooms. I had asked the students if they preferred to work with one teacher or two teachers. The students were then supposed to circle which one that they felt that they learn best with, one teacher or two teachers. The majority of the students revealed that they learned better with two teachers as opposed to one teacher. Sixty six students out of 90 said that they liked two teachers better than one. Twenty-four students said that they learned better with one teacher and three students did not answer the question at all. The bar graph below shoes the results from question #2.

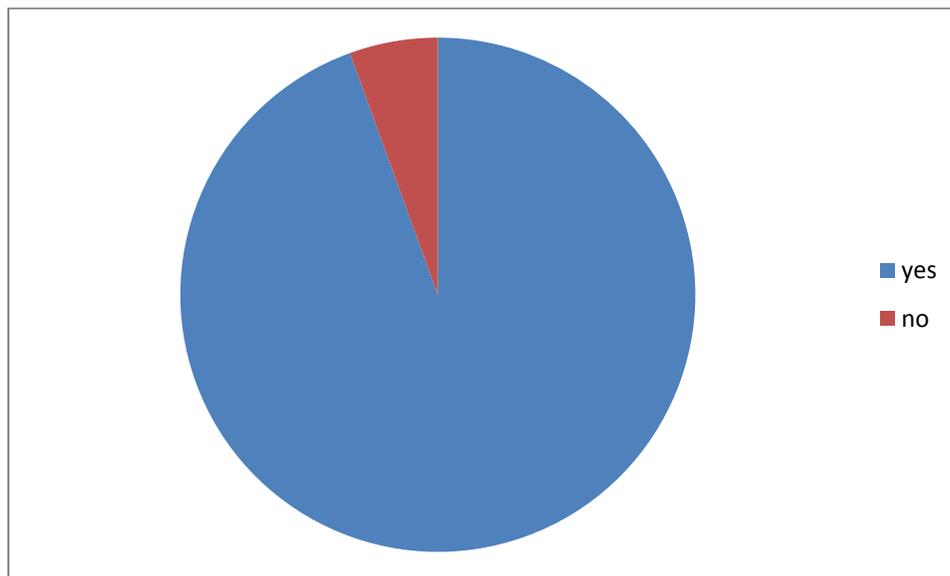


Based on the results I conclude that 73% of students feel that they learn better with two teachers in their classroom as opposed to one teacher in this urban school setting.

A shocking result was for question number 10. The reason I was shocked was because based on observations of the school and the classrooms it seemed that the majority of the

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discipline was being handled by one teacher as opposed to both teachers. I had thought that the students would most likely refer to the general educator for discipline or consequences. It was a relief to see that the students saw both teachers as enforcers in the classroom. The question was “My teacher is fair with every student” and the students needed to answer yes or no based on the smiley faces. I was curious about this question because I wanted everyone to answer yes but I knew that might not have been the answers I received. To my surprise, 94% of the student population said that their teacher or teachers are fair with every student. It was a relief to me to know that they students felt that they are being treated equally in the inclusive classroom.

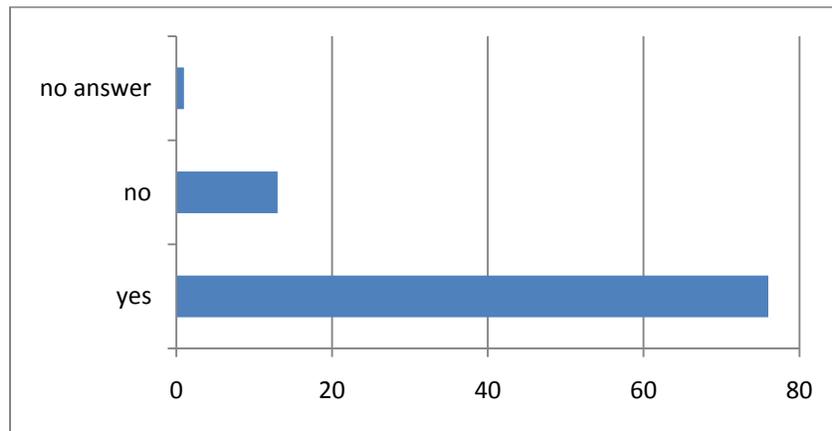


Based on the pie chart, I concluded that the students felt that they were being treated fairly. I had one student write in an answer at the bottom revealing “this answer only applies to Mr. Lewis.” This student felt that Mr. Lewis is her teacher and he is fair to every student but the co-teacher was not fair. This question correlates to question number 1, “Who is your teacher?” The students who might not feel that their teachers are fair might have only put one teacher down or were only thinking about one teacher instead of both. This question also is similar to the teacher survey question number 9, “Behavior management is shared between both teachers in the classroom.”

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The majority of teachers revealed “strongly agree” and it shows that the students feel the same way about behavior management in the inclusive classroom.

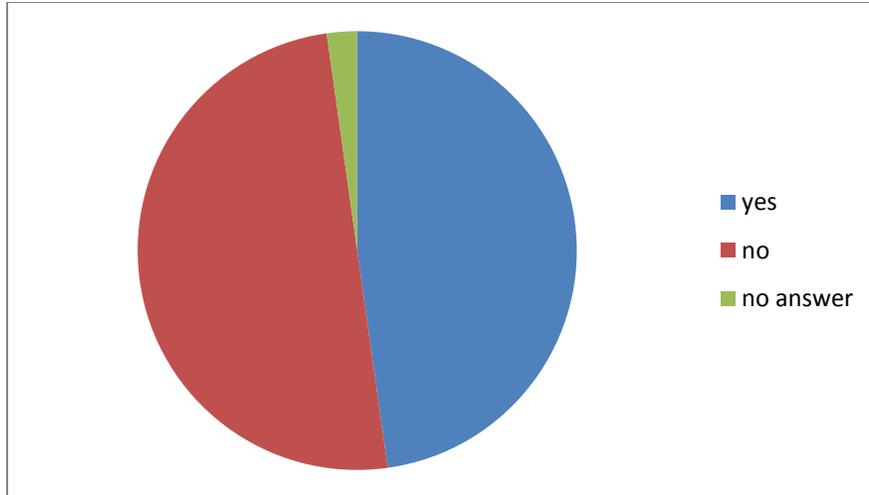
Another question that was similar in responses to question number 10 was question number 8, “I get help from my teachers when I ask for it.” Seventy-six students out of 90 responded with a smiley face meaning yes. Thirteen out of 90 students replied with “no” and only one student left that question unanswered.



When looking back on this question I felt that I should have worded it differently for the students. I wanted to see the responses on if the students only received help from their teacher when they asked for it or if the teacher did frequent check-ins with the students. It is wonderful to know that students are getting the help they need when they ask for it but I wanted to see if they got help without asking for it. Since there are two teachers, they should be checking-in with the students regularly and walking around while the students are working to be certain that the students are gaining the objective and concept of the lesson being taught.

I received similar responses for question number 7. The question asked was “I always work with the same teacher.” The student responses were very similar. Forty-Two out of 90 students answered “yes” and forty-eight students out of 90 said “no.” Two out of the 90 students did not give an answer for this question.

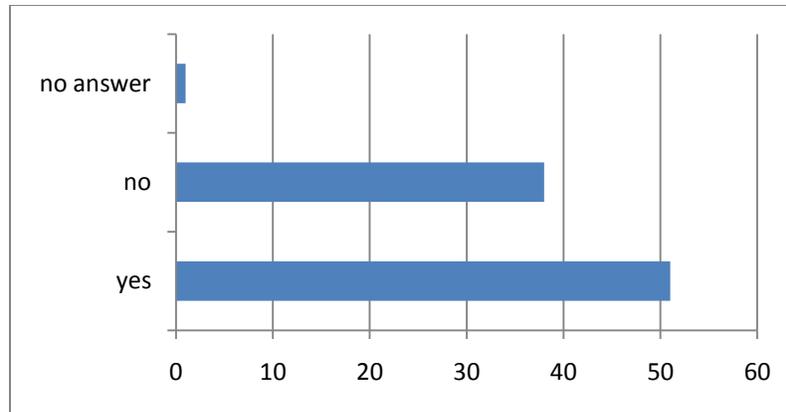
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It was interesting to see how close the results were for these student responses. I was hoping that the majority of the students said “no” and there was a higher number for the “no” answer but not by much, only six students more said “no.” This proves to me that the teachers need to divide up their kids more in the inclusive classrooms. The special education teacher should not be responsible for only the students with disabilities. Each teacher needs to see every student when working in small groups to help ensure that they understand the concepts and main objective outcomes from the lesson. It is also a chance for the teachers to get to know their students’ strengths and weaknesses in their classroom. The students should be seen as a whole class and should not feel divided.

This question can also go hand in hand with question number 7, “I always work with the same students in the same group?” The majority of students said “yes.” Fifty-six percent of the student population responded with this answer. In addition, forty-two percent of the students responded with “no” to the question and only one student did not answer this question. The column bar graph below shows the results for question 7.

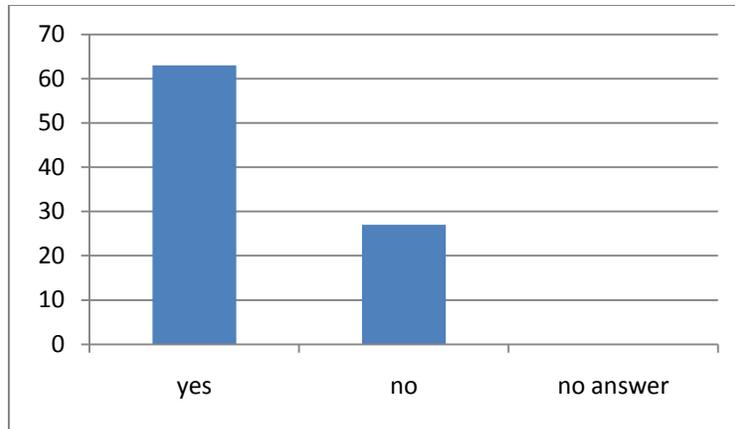
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These two responses were very close to each other. This shows me that the teachers also need to separate groups of students and start changing groups and switching them frequently. The special educator should see the growths and struggles of all students along with the general educator. Both teachers should utilize each other's teaching qualities and work together to work with a variety of students in the classroom. One teacher should not solely be responsible for the education and learning of one student. It should be a team effort of collaboration and teamwork. Both teachers should be using both formal and informal assessment to drive their group instruction frequently.

I had also asked students if they enjoyed working in small groups in the classroom. The reason I chose to ask this question is because students who are in inclusion classrooms learn at different levels and sometimes they might learn at a variety of paces as well. I had hoped to discover if the students liked working in small groups or if they preferred whole group instruction. The column chart below shows the data and the student responses for this question.

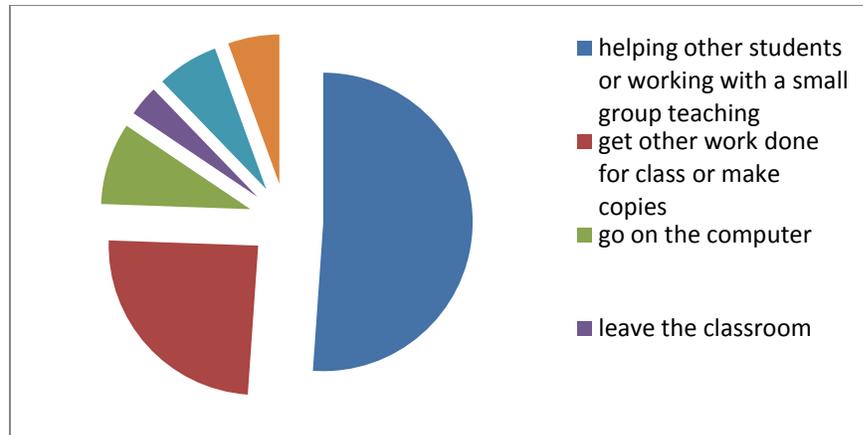
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Sixty-three students out of 90 said that they liked working in small groups and 27 students out of 90 said they did not like working in small groups. For those twenty-seven students that responded that they did not like working in small groups, I did not give an option if they liked to work individually or as a whole class. I could have left a blank line for the students who did not say yes to fill how they would prefer to work. It might have been difficult for the younger grade levels to participate in that question but the students in grades four through six could have been able to do that. This question lets me know that students enjoy working in small groups. It also shows me that students like to work in other ways and this could work as a guideline for inclusive classrooms to teach many different ways in the classroom to try and reach each students comfort level in the learning process.

The last question that I am focusing on is question number 4. I had asked the students “when one teacher is teaching, what is the other teacher doing?” The results were unanticipated when I received them. The pie chart below breaks down the student responses.

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It was comforting to know that the majority of students know that their teacher is helping other students or working in a small group to help the students gain the concept. Fifty-one percent of students said that was what the other teacher did while the other teacher is teaching. I wish that it was higher than 51 %. An appalling response was that 24% of students said the other teacher gets work done for class or leaves the room to make copies. Teachers should be doing that on their planning time or when they get time to leave the room. It is imperative that both teachers remain constant in their instructional delivery and stay in the room. It should not just be one teacher teaching the classroom; it needs to be a collaborative effort. This should not be done during instructional time. Some of the student responses were “giving the teacher a massage.” This response might have been skewed because the students might have completed this survey during the time that the students were giving their teacher a massage. It was also a few of the responses from the same classroom of students.

I was disappointed to see that eight out of the 90 students said the other teacher went on the computer. Teachers need to be sharing the roles and responsibilities inside the classroom and school environment. I had also asked the students what grade level they were in for me to help with who completed the surveys and who did not complete the surveys.

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Conclusion and Next Steps

To further my research, I feel that a case study would be something that would help support my research and findings. I feel that if I went into an inclusion co-taught classroom and an individually taught classroom and took notes on the similarities and differences that the teachers were doing while teaching I would get concrete materials to support my research. It also would be interesting to see how co-teachers interact with each other and their students. I could also use anecdotal notes to help support my observations within these classrooms.

Something that I had considered while interpreting my data and findings was that when students were completing their surveys they might have written their answers in the given point in time. If their teacher was out of the room while they were completing their surveys they might have written that for their answer because that is what the teacher was doing at the time.

I also feel that I should have had students write out their answers for some of the questions. Based on the responses that I had received from question number 4, I feel that the students took their time to answer their question with a short response. They might have given me better feedback and responses if they had the opportunity to respond instead of circling the smiley face or the sad face. Some students did write a little response underneath the question to support their answer.

I am passionate about co-teaching and inclusion classrooms. I feel that students with disabilities can gain the support and education needed with the extra support and teamwork. Based on my data and research I found that students enjoy working with two teachers and consider both teachers equally in the classrooms. It was comforting to see that the students knew that both teachers were named by the students and they enjoy working as a team in the classroom. Inclusion has become an important trend in teaching for students with disabilities and

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I hope that more schools and classrooms see the impact it has on students with and without disabilities.

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Appendixes

Appendix 1

Teacher Survey

Name (optional) _____

I teach _____ grade **Inclusion Classroom:** Yes No **Do you co-teach?** Yes No

Role: _____

(regular education teacher or special education teacher)

1. What is co-teaching to you?

2. I believe that students without disabilities can receive an appropriately challenging education in an inclusive regular education classroom.

Strongly Agree 1	Agree Somewhat 2	Neither Agree/ Disagree 3	Disagree Somewhat 4	Strongly Disagree 5
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3. I have the time to individualize instruction for all of my students with disabilities.

Strongly Agree 1	Agree Somewhat 2	Neither Agree/ Disagree 3	Disagree Somewhat 4	Strongly Disagree 5
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4. I have the time to plan with my teaching partner or grade level team members.

Strongly Agree 1	Agree Somewhat 2	Neither Agree/ Disagree 3	Disagree Somewhat 4	Strongly Disagree 5
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5. I have found that inclusion has encouraged me to experiment with new teaching methodologies in the classroom.

Strongly Agree 1	Agree Somewhat 2	Neither Agree/ Disagree 3	Disagree Somewhat 4	Strongly Disagree 5
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6. In the inclusion classroom, my co-teacher and I **consistently** work with all students, including those *with* disabilities and those *without* disabilities (answer only if this applies to your classroom currently).

Strongly Agree 1	Agree Somewhat 2	Neither Agree/ Disagree 3	Disagree Somewhat 4	Strongly Disagree 5
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Continued on back →

7. In my inclusion classroom(s), students *with* disabilities and students *without* disabilities receive equal access to the same general curriculum (answer only if this applies to your classroom currently).

Strongly Agree 1	Agree Somewhat 2	Neither Agree/ Disagree 3	Disagree Somewhat 4	Strongly Disagree 5
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8. I have seen evidence of improved academic outcomes for students with disabilities in inclusion classrooms.

Strongly Agree 1	Agree Somewhat 2	Neither Agree/ Disagree 3	Disagree Somewhat 4	Strongly Disagree 5
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EFFECTIVE CO-TEACHING WITHIN THE INCLUSIVE CLASSROOM

9. Behavior management is shared between both teachers.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree/Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	2	3 4	5

10. Students accept both teachers as **equal** partners in the learning process.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree/Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	2	3 4	5

This extra space is provided for you to ass any co-teaching/inclusion ideas or input that you have found to be successful or unsuccessful in the classroom.

Appendix 2

Student Survey

1. Who is your teacher? _____
2. I learn better with: 1 teacher 2 teachers (circle one)
3. What grade are you in (circle one)? Kindergarten 1 st 2 nd 3 rd 4 th 5 th 6 th

4. When one teacher is teaching, what does the other teacher do? _____ _____ _____

5. We all work together in my class (circle one): 😊 ☹️
6. I like working in small groups (circle one): 😊 ☹️
7. I always work with the same teacher (circle one): 😊 ☹️
8. I always work with the same kids in the same group (circle one): 😊 ☹️
9. I get help from my teachers when I ask for it (circle one): 😊 ☹️
10. My teacher is fair with every student (circle one): 😊 ☹️