A LOOK AT SECONDARY TEACHERS' UNDERSTANDINGS OF INCLUSION AND HOW THEIR UNDERSTANDINGS SHAPE THEIR CO-TEACHING PRACTICES

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ABSTRACT

Secondary teachers who are co-teaching in inclusion classrooms face a variety of demands and challenges that are exclusive to the high school setting (Keefe & Moore 2004, Smith, 1997, and Mastropieri & Scruggs 2001). Teachers' current teaching practices are built upon their past teaching experiences. The meanings teachers take away from their past experiences and their interactions with people and objects culminate in their expectations of what should happen with their teaching practices in the future.

The results of this study reveal secondary teachers' understanding of inclusion in the areas of co-teaching partnerships, student engagement, and necessities required for co-teaching partnerships to be successful. By reflecting on their past experiences the teacher participants in this study explained the meanings they had developed from their experiences. A symbolic interactionism theoretical framework was used to examine the participants' different meanings of symbols that reflect their inclusion experiences.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

In an attempt to constantly improve educational knowledge and experiences for all students, we must often take inventory of teachers' understandings of students' abilities and what methods the teachers practice to best meet the needs of the students. With the advancement of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act or IDEA, legal steps are in place to ensure that students with disabilities, commonly identified as special needs students, are to receive a free and appropriate education in their least restrictive environment. While legal steps are in place, it is actually the general and special education teachers' understandings of disabilities and practices of co-teaching in inclusion classrooms that can enhance educational opportunities and success for students with disabilities.

A Need for Co-teaching Partnerships

Educational teaching practices have evolved, changed, and even been reinvented over the decades. These practices change to meet the needs of curriculum requirements, align with latest trends, but for the most part, to meet the needs of the students. Co-teaching between general education teachers and special needs teachers in inclusion classrooms is an example of the latter and did not become widely practiced until the mid-1990's (Lewis & Doorlag, 1999).

With the increase of special needs students being placed in the general inclusion classrooms in the 1990's, special needs teachers would be assigned to co-teach with a general education teacher or several general teachers (Lewis & Doorlag, 1999). Co-teaching used as a

strategic teaching strategy became a practical way to attempt to meet the needs of special education students that were being included in the general education classrooms (Demoulin & Kendall, 1993).

Within high school inclusion classrooms where there are co-teaching partnerships, the general education teacher is considered to be a master of the content knowledge, strategic teaching strategies, content assessments, and the relevance of material linkage within the curriculum. The special needs teacher is expected to have a mastery understanding of behavioral and academic accommodation for the students with disabilities students' experience (Dieker & Murawski, 2003). She is also expected to understand the characteristics of the disabilities and how to address them in the immediate classroom environment. With their roles greatly varied; they are expected to work as a team to improve learning for special education students and general education students alike.

Bauwens, Hourcade, and Friend (1989) described a pragmatic merger between general and special educators in which direct educational programming to all students would be provided by having a special educator within a general education setting. They coined the term cooperative teaching to represent this relationship. Cook and Friend reinvented the idea in 1995 by shortening the term cooperative teaching to co-teaching and further clarified the characteristics inherent in a true co-teaching relationship. They defined co-teaching as "two or more professionals delivering substantive instruction to a diverse or blended group of students in a single physical place" (p. 2).

The idea of two teachers working together in harmony to help all students learn and achieve in one classroom sounds utopian. In a successful partnership, the two teachers would work in accord, complementing each other with the introduction of new academic content and

the review of past learned content. They would move and circulate around the room helping all students and not dividing or singling out the students with special needs. They would plan together, teach together, evaluate together and students would not differentiate between the general education teacher and special education teacher (Walther-Thomas, Bryant, & Land, 1996, and Katz, 1981).

There are however, obstacles partnerships may face due to a lack of understanding content, laws, characteristics of disabilities, and their defining roles. In fact, many special educators co-teaching in content area have limited credits in core curricular areas during their university programs. Likewise, general educations teachers are limited to the number of special education classes they take (Van Reusen, Shoho, & Baker, 2001, and Fullan & Hargeaves, 1997).

Statement of the Problem

High school teachers are highly qualified in their content area. While receiving their college teacher preparation training, their exposure to special needs classes is limited unless they are receiving a degree in a special education area. Their exposure to special needs training may be limited to only one or two classes (Keefe & Moore, 2004). General education teachers have communicated feelings of inadequacy toward meeting the needs and requirements of students with disabilities in their inclusion classrooms (Keefe & Moore, 2004, Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2001, and Schumacher & Deshler, 1995). Many secondary special education teachers echo the same concerns that they do not know or understand the subject content which is taught at the high school level (Keefe & Moore, 2004).

Furthermore, at the secondary level, general education teachers and special needs teachers are partnered to co-teach in some inclusion classrooms. Their practices are negotiated through their interactions with each other, the inclusion context, and the students. The co-

teaching partners' interactions whether positive or negative, have a defining influence on their practices within the inclusion classroom. Their interactions are influenced by their understanding of disabilities from their respective perspectives. Therefore, the problem is that co-teachers have different experiences and sometimes contradictory understandings of disabilities and that affects their roles and responsibilities in the inclusion classroom as co-teachers.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to get an understanding of how secondary co-teachers' practices are influenced by their understandings of inclusion and how their understandings shape their co-teaching practices in their inclusion classrooms.

Co-teaching can be a powerful strategic teaching strategy that can benefit both students and teachers. Scruggs, Mastropieri, and McDuffie (2011) reported that students conveyed learning more and receiving more help in productive co-teaching classrooms. Teachers reported that they increased knowledge in their co-teaching partner's content or area of expertise.

Unfortunately at times, co-teachers are not able to come to that ideal 'place' where both teachers are comfortable with each other and productive co-planning and co-teaching is a reality. Inquiring about secondary teachers' understandings of disabilities and co-teaching experiences in inclusion classrooms can assist in informing all practicing teachers and teacher education about experiences they may encounter when working with students with disabilities and how to develop positive and productive co-teaching partnerships and practices. By understanding this, it can improve the quality of education for all students in inclusion classrooms.

This study promises to add to the literature on secondary teachers' understandings and experiences with special needs students and co-teaching practices in inclusion classrooms.

Research Questions

This study is focused around high school teachers in a centrally located county in a Southeastern state. I will call the school Main Street High School. This research is guided by questions which attempt to get a better understanding of how secondary co-teachers' teaching practices are influenced or shaped by their overall understandings of inclusion.

The central question is: "How do secondary co-teachers' understandings of inclusion shape their practices?" Focal sub-questions which will be answered through this research include the following:

1. What are teachers' understandings of disabilities?
2. What are teachers' experiences with disabled students in inclusion classrooms?
3. What are co-teachers' practices in inclusion classrooms that respond directly to students' disabilities?

Background

Official government involvement in the education of disabled students was a somewhat slow endeavor. In 1975, Congress passed Public Law 94-142. This law is also known as Education for All Handicapped Children Act. The law was designed to protect and meet the needs of children with disabilities. This meant that children with disabilities could go to public schools and the school systems would provide specialized classrooms with specialized instruction for the students. Specialized instruction was delivered by special education teachers who could address the variety of disabilities from mild diagnosis to mental retardation to extreme physical handicaps (Ysseldyke, Algozzine, & Thurlow, 2000). Although students were allowed to attend public schools, they were usually segregated from the rest of the students in self-contained classroom and were not allowed to participate in extracurricular activities (Torreno, 2012, and David, 2009). Segregation of disabled students in public schools would continue into

the 1990's. Even with the negatives as mentioned in the last sentence, the ability to attend public schools was a monumental victory for special needs students and their families (Osgood, 2005, and Cramer, 1998).

In 1990, PL 94-142 was amended and became the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Under the IDEA, students were classified with their specific disabilities and Individualized Educational Programs (IEP) were developed for each special needs student. These plans included the individual student's background, diagnosis of the student's disability or disabilities, and a plan or list of strategies to assist the teachers in helping meet the needs of the child so that he or she could be successful in the classroom. For the first time, a heavy emphasis would places on integrating special needs students into the general education classrooms; this is called inclusion (Osgood, 2005, Torreno, 2012, Lewis & Doorlag, 1999, Ysseldyke, Algozzine, & Thurlow, 2000, and Lipsky & Gartner, 1989).

Integrated general classrooms were established as the least restrictive environment or LRE. Under IDEA, the least restrictive environment is defined as "the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities, including children in public or private institutions or other care facilities, are educated with children who are not disabled, and special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the disability of a child is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily" (IDEA 2004, Section 612 (a)(5)(A)).

The US Department of Education reported in 2013 that during the 1995-1996 school year, 45.3% of students with disabilities between the ages of 6 – 21 served by IDEA spent 80% or more of their school day in general education classes. By the 2004 – 2005 school year, 52.1%

of the students with disabilities between the ages of 6- 21 served by IDEA spent 80% or more of their school day in general education classes. The numbers would continue to grow. In 2009, 59.4% of the students with disabilities between the ages of 6-21 served by IDEA spent 80% or more of their day in general education classes and that number would increase to 62% in 2010-2011.

Also during this time span, disabled students who spent 40% of their day or less in special needs classes (including those who were self-contained) decreased from 21.6% in 2004-2005 to 17.5% 2004-2005, to 14% in 2010-2011. Because more and more students were being included in general education classrooms, the need for special needs self-contained or specialized classrooms lessened (Ysseldyke, Algozzine, & Thurlow, 2000). As a result, general education teachers would be equipped with the special needs students' IEP's and asked to treat the special needs students as they would any other student except provide them with accommodations and modifications for learning. In this setting, students with disabilities could participate and be included in true spirit and passage of rights of the American educational setting. However, it proved not to be as simple as was thought to just add special needs students to a general education classroom.

Tomko (2006) asserts that there is more to inclusion than just placing special needs students in a general education classroom. The presence of a special needs student within a classroom does not adhere to the true meaning of inclusive education. Tomko (2006) listed ten key components for successful inclusive education. The first component is that students are attending their home schools and in general education classes with their nondisabled peers. The second component is that there are appropriate supports and services which can include support personnel, communication aids, or environmental accommodations just to name a few. The third

component is on-going planning for success which could consist of team members seeking out information or resources and making decisions that reflect the needs of students with disabilities. The fourth component is active participation by the students. All activities should be designed to be accessible for all students. Fifth, all students should have a sense of belonging and that they are all valued as individuals. Sixth, IEP goals are being achieved. The goals are dependent on the individual and are to be worked on within the general curriculum. Seventh, there are natural proportions of students in the classrooms. Eighth, classes are ready for student meaning the teachers and staff are trained based on students' needs. Ninth, teachers are allowed to collaborate and plan with the support of administration on a frequent basis. Tenth, diversity is valued throughout all environments, activities, and events meaning all students get what they need based on individuals' needs, not labels. All of these key elements involved knowledge and understanding of disabilities and collaboration with others to ensures the most positive and affective way to include and educate all students with special needs. There has been adequate research concerning the elements and characteristics required for successful inclusion. These key elements of successful inclusion have been echoed by noted researchers for many years (Walther-Thomas, Bryant, & Land, 1996; Salend et al., 1997; Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2001; Austin, 2001; Murawski & Dieker, 2004; Scruggs, Mastropieri, & McDuffie, 2011; and Forbes & Billet, 2012)

With the special needs students routed into the general education classrooms, the roles of the special needs teachers would need to change. During this transitional time, special needs teachers would be given student caseloads to monitor. As caseload managers, special needs teachers were responsible for up-dating IEP's, collecting academic, social and personal data of their assigned students, and scheduling meetings with parents and psychometrists. Especially

notable, special needs teachers would be assigned to co-teach with general education teachers in the inclusion classrooms. It was during this transition that special education teachers became more affectionately called collaborative teachers (Friend & Cook, 1995).

Once this transition occurred, it changed the dynamics of the classroom in terms of teacher's roles, responsiveness, and expectations (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2001; Ysseldyke, Algozzine, & Thurlow, 2000; and Lewis & Doorlag, 1999). As with any transition, there can be challenges. Co-teachers in inclusion classrooms would see their fair share of obstacles, especially at the secondary level. Noting the conflicts, Moore and Keefe (2001) conducted a focus group study with elementary and secondary general and special education teachers and found that there were various concerns about adequate planning time, resources, administrative support, professional development, and teacher willingness to corporate with one other at both the elementary and secondary levels. Additionally, Moore and Keefe found that high school teachers implementing inclusive educational classrooms felt additional barriers existed because of larger class sizes, seeing many more students each day, larger school size, and unclear roles of general and collaborative education teachers.

Factors that Affect Teachers' Understandings of Disabilities and Practices in Inclusion Classroom

Individuals go into the field of teaching with a philosophical commitment to meet the instructional needs of the students in their classrooms. In fact, most teachers will tell you 'every child can learn.' This would include disabled and at-risk students (Van Reusen, Shoho, & Baker, 2001, and Katz, 1981). This is my philosophy as well. However, it is the teacher's understandings, experiences, and attitudes that can enrich the learning for all students (Van Reusen, Shoho, & Baker, 2001, Scruggs, Mastropieri, & McDuffie 2007, and Walther-Thomas, Bryant, & Land 1996).

The knowledge teachers have about students with disabilities depends on their training, personal and professional experiences, and their own initiative to research about different disabilities. These factors can also influence their attitudes toward students with disabilities and inclusion classrooms (Keefe & Moore, 2004, and Van Reusen, Shoho, & Baker 2001). Sack (1998), Scruggs and Mastropieri (1996) and Taylor, et al. (1997), all agree that positive teacher attitudes toward students with disabilities and inclusion classrooms depend heavily on their levels of special education training, knowledge, and experience in working with or teaching students with disabilities.

Van Reusen, Shoho, and Baker (2001), in their research on high school teachers' attitudes toward inclusion, found that teachers with more positive attitudes about inclusive education and teaching students with disabilities in their classrooms also reported the highest level of special education training or experiences. However, they also found that unfortunately, over half, 54%, of the teachers who participated in this study expressed negative attitudes toward the inclusion of special education students into their general education classrooms. The most negative attitudes were found among those teachers with the least amount of special education training, knowledge, or experiences in teaching students with disabilities. These teachers reflected attitudes or belief that "the inclusion of students with disabilities would negatively impact the learning environment, their delivery of content instruction, and the overall quality of learning in their classrooms" (p. 13). The study was conducted in a large suburban high school in San Antonio, Texas. 125 teachers voluntarily completed the survey that measured teacher attitudes in four areas: teacher training, academic climate, social adjustment (students), and academic content/teacher effectiveness.

The findings of this study suggest that teachers with special education background of training and those who already have positive attitudes towards students with disabilities may be predisposed to seek out additional inclusive education practices and be more willing to be assigned to general education classrooms in which students with special needs are included (p. 7).

Methodology

Qualitative research is a process which is holistic, interpretive, empirical, and empathic (Creswell, 2013, and Stake, 1995). Qualitative research includes an inquiring investigation approach, collecting data in a natural setting being sensitive to the participants, analyzing both inductive and deductive data, and establishing meanings, patterns and themes which are woven within the participant(s) responses to questions (Merriam, 1998, and Creswell, 2013). "Often, these subjective meanings for individuals are negotiated socially and historically. They are formed through interactions with others and though historical and cultural norms that operate in individuals' lives" (Creswell, p. 25).

Symbolic interactionism provides a theory that seeks to explain how people give meaning to interactions and thus the interactions become symbols of meaning. Individuals learn from others and their own experiences (Blumer, 1969). To understand the way people behave, we must understand the meanings they give to objects, people, situation, and events connected with their behavior. An example is a teacher. A teacher can have different meanings for different people. For a student, the teacher may be a symbol of authority, disciplinarian, coach, scholar, or parental figure. For a parent, the teacher may be a symbol of a respected community member, liaison, or expert in a content field. For the administration, a teacher may be a symbol of an employee, team leader, or colleague. The meanings for the teacher are influenced by both the

different experiences a person has with them and the meaning given to them by others (Stainbeck & Stainbeck, 1988).

The findings of this study will include the voices of the participants, a complex description and interpretation of the findings, and analysis of how the data contributes to the literature and/or calls for a change in the educational field (Creswell, 2013).

Theoretical framework

In addition to building knowledge and experiences teachers also gain an understanding about students with disabilities by interacting with other teachers and learning from them. The understandings secondary teachers have about disabilities are vital to the academic and social success of the disabled students within the classroom (Keefe and Moore, 2004). Likewise, the interactions and practices of co-teachers in inclusion classrooms can be just as significant to the students' learning (Bauwens & Hourcade, (1991), Dieker & Murawski (2003), and Forbes & Billet (2012), Keefe & Moore (2004). Teachers' understandings about disabilities and practices in inclusion classrooms are generated from various sources and situations therefore; symbolic interactionism can be used to describe the symbolic meanings related to teaching students in an inclusion classroom that influence or shape teachers' practices when it comes to teaching disabled students in inclusion classrooms.

Symbolic interactionism "sees meaning as arising in the process of interaction between people…it sees meaning as social products as creations that are formed in and through the defining activities of people as they interact" (Blumer, p.4). As humans engage in social interactions they will acquire meanings for themselves from not only their interactions but their own experiences. "The human mind represents the organism's capacity to respond subjectively to given objective stimuli through conceptualizing, defining, symbolizing, aspiring, valuing, and reflecting" (Singelmann, 1972, p. 419) Meanings people have for their interactions and

experiences are communicated to others using symbols such as spoken communication, actions, practices, emotions, or even objects.

We learn and shape our ideas by these symbols (Carrothers & Benson, 2003, and Blumer, 1968). Specific examples of symbols include written, gestural, and oral communications, documents such as rental agreements, work contracts, and personal wills, objects such as trophies, diplomas, and a finished science project, and ideologies such as work ethics, cultural values, and religious beliefs. Interpretations or meanings of symbols for people vary differently (Blumer, 1969). Take for example trophies given to the boys' varsity basketball team for coming in second at the state playoffs. For one player, the trophy may symbolize accomplishment and the best game of his life, for another, it may mean failure for not winning the state title, and yet for another player it may be considered a symbol of hope that if he and the others work harder, they may win first place the following year. Because we are all unique, our understanding we take away from interactions can contrast greatly (Blumer 1968; Carrothers & Benson, 2003; and Charon, 1998).

Teachers gain understanding from interactions in their pre-teacher training at universities, from fellow teachers and co-workers, and working first hand with students with disabilities just to name a few. With each interaction, people take away new knowledge, experience, attitudes, and understandings (Blumer, 1969). However, this does not mean we take away the same knowledge, experiences, attitudes or understandings (Carrothers & Benson, 2003, and Blumer, 1969). Co-teachers in inclusion classrooms are interacting on a daily basis with each other and their students. How they interact and what they take from the interactions affect the effectiveness of the partnerships and practices (Keefe & Moore, 2004).

Blumer (1969) explains that we can take away meaning from objects we encounter. "As humans learn and use symbols and develop meanings for objects in their environments, they develop a "mind" that is both reflecting and reflexive" (Carrothers & Benson, p.163). Meaning, that as humans interact, we might either reflect on the actions or objects or spontaneously react. The reactions whether reflective or reflexive are based on the individual and how they interpret the meaning of the interaction or object.

There are many objects teachers encounter on a daily basis which causes them to reflect or react to the meaning they have for the objects. An object that will be covered in this study dealing directly with teachers' understanding of disabilities is their understanding of Individualized Educational Programs and how they interpret them and use them to address the student's needs in terms of practices within the inclusion classroom. The IEPs are documents or tools that are specifically designed for each student with a disability. By law, the IEP must include certain information about the child and the educational program designed to meet his or her unique needs. This information covers topics such as current performance, annual goals, special education and related services, accommodations, participation in state and district-wide tests, needed transition services and measured progress (NCLD, 2014). As it is interpreted and implemented by the teachers, the IEP thus becomes a symbol for teachers' practices regarding particular students. A teacher's understanding of a student's IEP can have a direct effect on the student and his or her learning experiences (Tomko, 2006).

Individual Educational Programs will be referenced in this research as a symbolic object in terms of how it is understood and used in practices by secondary teachers in inclusion classrooms. The experiences in teacher training and the collaboration co-teachers engage in to guide their practices in inclusion classrooms will be referenced as symbolic interactions.

Setting

This research takes place a high school in a southeastern state. I will call it Main Street High School. Main Street serves grades 9-12. Main Street is a Title 1 school with over 40% of the student population on free or reduced lunch. The student population consists of 57% black, 36% white, and 7% Hispanic, Asian, and Eastern descent. It has a student population of almost 1400 students and is currently overcrowded.

There are a total of 65 teachers with 6 of those being special needs teachers. During the day, 22 inclusion classes are taught by co-teachers. Additionally, the school is staffed with three administrators and 19 support staff.

Participants

There are a total of eight participants which equates to four co-teaching partnerships. There are seven female participants and one male participant. Two of the participants are African American and the others are Caucasian. Their ages range from 27 to 49, with their total years of teaching experience ranging from 3 – 23 years of experience. More descriptive information about the participants is established in chapter 4.

Access

Prior to beginning the data collection, I obtain IRB approval at the University of Alabama, as well as from the district school system. After securing permission to conduct the study at the university and system level, I contacted the principal for permission to work specifically at his school. The principal was asked to inform the teachers about this study by reading a script to them in a faculty meeting. Participation by the teachers was voluntary and they were be given complete information about the study as well as information informing them that they could withdraw from the study as any point.

Data Collection

Data was collected in two phases. The first phase was to observe all four co-teaching partnerships twice teaching in their inclusion classrooms. My focus for the observation is to see how the co-teachers interact with each other before, during and after the class, what strategic teaching practices the co-teachers use with the students and the responsibilities the teachers take on individually in the classroom. The second phase was individual one-to-one interviews with each participant. I wanted to encourage the participants to be open and forthcoming with the information they share with me (Creswell, 2013). To facilitate this, the interviews took place in a private room located in the school library and the participants identities were protected by using pseudonym. Additionally, the school will also be protected with a pseudonym.

The interviews were semi-structured with open ended questions. The interview questions were designed to gather data that will lead to a clear description of teachers co-teaching practices in response of their understanding of students' disabilities and inclusion in general. Each interview lasted approximately one to two hours.

Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis is the exercise of extracting meaning from the data collected and formulating the data into patterns, categories, or themes in preparation of reporting the findings (Merriam, 1998, Stake, 1995, Creswell, 2013). For this study, I analyzed my data using the frame-work of Harry Wolcott's (1994) traditional strategies. After collecting the interview data, I first transcribed the data recordings. After transcribing the recording word for word, I coded identified patterns as informed by the literature relevant to the study. Once patterns were coded, I was able to cross analyze the patterns and place them into themes (Creswell, 2013). The findings of this study include voices of the participants, a complex description and interpretation

of the findings, and analysis of how the data contributes to the literature and/or calls for a change in the educational field (Creswell, 2013).

Definition of Terms

Co-teaching – "When two or more professionals deliver substantive instruction to a diverse or blended group of students in a single physical space" (Cook & Friend, 1995).

Inclusion - "Refers to the instruction of all students with and without disabilities, in the general education classroom, unless substantial evidence is provided to show that such a placement would not be in the student's best interest" (Learning Disabilities Association (LDA), 1993; U.S. Department of Education 1999).

Accommodations – Supports and services that are provided to help students access the general education curriculum and realistically demonstrate learning. Examples include students having extra time to finish assignments or tests, preferential seating, taking tests in alternative locations, using common or special technology, and having an additional teacher or paraprofessional in the room for extra assistance (GreatSchools, 2015).

Modifications – Individual changes are made to the content being taught and there are different performance expectations of the students. Examples include reducing the amount of work required of the student, changing the content level, accepting different outcomes. In 2004, under IDEA, when referring to districtwide or statewide assessments, the word "modifications" would no longer be used. Instead, the term "alternate assessments" would apply to standardized tests being used by the state and district (GreatSchools, 2015).

Collaborative teacher - A teacher that is highly qualified to serve students with disabilities in the elementary and secondary grades. They are trained to understand disabilities and the different levels of severity for the disabilities. Their formal training places emphasis on collaboration with general education in an inclusive setting. (Auburn University webpage, 2014).

Core academic subjects – "English, reading or language arts, mathematics, science, foreign languages, civics and government, economics, arts, history, and geography" (NICHCY, 2014).

Highly qualified general education teacher – "The teacher has obtained full State certification as a teacher (including certification obtained through alternative routes to certification) or passed the State teacher licensing examination, and holds a license to teach in such State, except that when used with respect to any teacher teaching in a public charter school, the term means that the teacher meets the requirements set forth in the State's public charter school law" (NICHCY, 2014).

Limitations

1. Because only observations and interviews were used for data collection, diversified data may not have been obtained as could have been possible through the addition of focus group interviews.
2. This study was limited to a single school system in a southeastern state. Leadership practices, cultural organizations, and interpersonal exchanges differ from system to system; thus, the results of the study though beneficial, will be limited.
3. The symbolic interaction tradition of qualitative research implies that only the meanings, practices, interpretations, and reports of the secondary general education teacher and special needs teacher were considered in this research.

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Historical Prospective Covering the Advancements of IDEA

At the 1902, annual meeting of the National Education Association (NEA), the term "special education" was officially introduced to America's professional educators. It was this milestone that launched establishment and support for a multitude of specialized, segregated classes and programs that assumed responsibility for most students identified with disabilities (Osgood, 2005).

"Segregation for these children was advocated by the vast majority of school professionals and researchers, who relied on two fundamental arguments: that segregation was necessary for efficient classroom and school operation, and that separate programs for disabled children was in their best educational and psychological interests" (Osgood, p. 23). These sediments would be echoed repeatedly over the next few decades. The very next year, in 1903, Mary C. Greene, a former special class teacher from London gave a presentation to the NEA and asserted:

"No argument is required to show that the children embraced in these …groups cannot be required to attend the ordinary schools, in continuous association with normal children, except to the disadvantage of all concerned. The cripple would suffer in body; the epileptic and weak-minded would be unable to keep pace with their school-fellows, or would be a drag upon their progress; the deaf would profit hardly at all; the blind only by the spoken word" (Osgood, p. 28).

During this time, school systems in the United States were becoming firmly established especially in heavy populated urban areas. By 1918, all states had adopted compulsory

education laws (Crockett & Kauffman, 41-42). Students of all ages and abilities were finding their way into the classrooms. Beginning in the mid-1800's, schools began to develop ways to address the presence of disabled students in the classrooms. This reaction was due in part to influences from the child study movement, progressive education, and the rapid diversification of the American population (Osgood, 2005). At this time, the responsiveness came in the form of homogeneous classrooms with low teacher-pupil ratios, trained teachers, individualized instruction, a curriculum that focused on vocational and social goals, and separation from nondisabled peers (Kavale & Forness, 2000).

Between the 1940's and the 1960's there were few legislative accomplishments and disability directives. In 1947, President Truman established the National Employ the Physically Handicapped week. The focus for this initiative was to increase public awareness and job opportunities for individuals with disabilities (Karten, 2008). In 1954, the Brown v. Topeka Board of Education opened the door for disability rights. Almost 20 years later in 1972, two cases, PARC V. Pennsylvania and Mills v. D.C. Board of Education used the precedent of Brown to argue that students with disabilities also deserved protection of equal educational rights (Karten, 2008). In 1962, Executive Order 10994 by President John F. Kennedy removed the words "physically" from the President's Committee's name (Committee on Employment of the Physically Handicapped). This legislative action recognized that there were other disabilities beside physical disabilities. Shortly after in 1965, President Lyndon Johnson signed the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. This law would apply to funding for grades K-12 in the areas of educational resources, teacher professional development, and parent involvement (Karten, 2008, and Ysseldyke, Algozzine, & Thurlow, 2000).

While advocacy groups were making strides for students with disabilities, it was not until later that the government got fully involved. Before 1975, a majority of the almost four million children in the United States with disabilities were denied meaningful participation in the public education systems. Studies conducted by the government found that nearly half of these children were excluded entirely from public schools (H. R. Rep. No. 94-332, at 4, 1975), and the rest were either placed in grossly inadequate, segregated classrooms or in regular classrooms without meaningful support (febp.newamerica.net)

In 1975, Congress passed Public Law 94-142 and President Gerald Ford signed it into law. This law is also known as Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EHAC). The law was designed to protect and meet the needs of children with disabilities. This meant that children with disabilities could go to public schools and the systems would provide specialized classrooms with specialized instruction for the students and special education teachers who could address the variety of disabilities from mild diagnosis to mental retardation to extreme physical handicaps (Lewis & Doorlag, 1999). Major provisions of the law guaranteed all students with disabilities are guaranteed a free, appropriate public education, Individualize Education Programs (IEPs) must be developed for each student with disabilities, parents have the right to participate in planning their child's IEP, students with disabilities are to be educated in their least restrictive environment whenever possible, due process procedures must be followed, and the federal government will provide funding to offset the school systems' cost (Lewis & Doorlag, 1999, and Cramer, 1998). Knowing that children with disabilities were able to attend public schools with free and appropriate accommodations was a monumental victory for special needs students and their families.

Funding was one of the key goals in the EAHC. The notion was for the Federal government to support state and local efforts to educate children with disabilities and to ease budget strains caused by additional special education responsibilities. The Federal government never intended to cover the total cost of a free, appropriate public education for all children with disabilities and this was affirmed by the supreme court in Smith v. Robinson (U. S. 1984) which described IDEA as a "comprehensive scheme set up by Congress to aid the states in complying with their Constitutional obligations to provide public education to children with disabilities" (Smith V. Robinson 1984 ruling).

In 1990, PL 94-142 was reauthorized as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (Osgood, 2005). The reauthorization continued to place heavy emphasis on the need for students with disabilities to be engaged in purposeful adaptation in the regular classrooms. Additionally, it underscored the importance of the least restrictive environment, added traumatic brain injury and autism to the list of disability categories, and expanded educational services for children with disabilities (Cramer, 1998; Osgood, 2005; Lewis & Doorlag 1999; and Ysseldyke, Algozzine, & Thurlow, 2000).

In 1997, IDEA was once again reauthorized. At this time, funding was revamped to assist systems with the financial impact of accommodation cost and it also "accounted more accurately for poverty" (Osgood, p 181). There was also clarification to exactly what was or should be a free and appropriate education provided by the school systems. Pulling from the 1982 Rowley court decision, it was determined that an appropriate education did not require districts to provide the best possible education but it emphasized the assumption that the regular classroom was essentially the default least restrictive environment for all children and that schools were expected to implement this notion (Osgood, 2005).

With the attempt to continually improve education for all children, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act was amended again in 2004. At this time there was minor changes to the definition of a "highly qualified teacher" as well as covering a variety of high-interest topics and brings together the regulatory requirements related to those topics to support constituents in preparing to implement the new regulations. The requirements and regulations would align provisions of IDEA and NCLB.

Today, most students with disabilities can participate and be included in true spirit and passage of rights of the American educational setting however; there is still room for improvement.

Table 1. A Quick Glance at the Advancement of IDEA

1902	The term "special education" was introduced at the National Education Association conference
1918	All school systems in the U.S. adopt compulsory education laws.
1947	President Truman established the National Employ the Physically Handicapped week.
1954	Brown v Board ruling that "separate was not equal" established a foundation for the disabled as well
1962	President Kennedy removed the word "physically" from the Presidents committee name.
1965	President Johnson signed the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.
1972	PARC v Pennsylvania and Mills v D.C. – two court cases that students with disabilities deserved protection of equal education rights.
1975	Congress passes Public Law 94-142. Known as the Education for All Handicapped Children Act.
1990	PL94-142 was reauthorized as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.
1995	IDEA was amended to include changes dealing with highly qualified teachers and new regulations.

Broad Understanding of Disabilities

"I Have a Dream... someday my son, Zion and ALL individuals with disabilities will be seen as HUMAN beings.

I Have a Dream... someday the human & civil rights of individuals with disabilities are honored and they are treated as equals.

I Have a Dream... someday ALL parents who have children with disabilities see their child as a blessing and not a burden.

I Have a Dream... someday there will be more jobs and opportunities for individuals with disabilities.

I Have a Dream... someday there will be UNITY "within" the disabled community.

I HAVE A DREAM!!!"

- Yvonne Pierre, The Day My Soul Cried: A Memoir

According to the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (2012), children ages 3 – 21 who are served under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act had grown significantly from 1975 when IDEA was enacted. The percentage of total public school enrolment that represents children served in federally supported special education programs increased from 8.3 to 13.8 percent from 1976 to 2005. In 2011, 6,434,096 children were being served in special education programs in public schools. This is almost a 58 percent increase from the 3,694,000 children who were being served in 1976. One attributing factor for serving more students is that they are identified much earlier in their developmental ages.

Disabilities are classified as the following as found in the Nineteenth Annual Report to Congress on the Implementation of The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act by the U. S. Department of Education, 1997, Washington, DC: Author.

Table 2. Disabilities, Definitions, and Characteristics

Type of Disability	Definition	Examples or Characteristics
Specific Learning disability	A disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language that may manifest itself in the imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations	Dyslexia, dyscalculia, dysgraphia, attention deficit disorder,
Behavior disorders	A disability in which students are characterized by inappropriate school behavior.	Psychotic behavior, emotionally disturbed, oppositional defiance
Speech or language impairments	Disabilities characterized by deficits in speech, receptive language, and/or expressive language.	Stuttering, inability to articulate consonants and vowel sounds.
Orthopedic impairment	Severe orthopedic impairment that adversely affects a child's educational performance.	Congenital anomaly, impairments caused by disease, and impairments from other causes.
Emotional disturbance	A condition exhibiting one or more of the following: Inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors, inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers or teachers, unhappiness or depression, inappropriate types of behaviors or feelings under normal circumstances.	May include schizophrenia.
Hearing impairments	A disability characterized by a decrease in the ability to hear and adversely affects a child's educational performance but not included under the definition of "deafness."	Hearing devices may be used to amplify sounds for understanding and communication.
Multiple disabilities	Concomitant impairments – the combination of which causes such severe educational needs that they cannot be accommodated in a special education program solely for one of the impairments.	A combination of two or more disabilities. Does not include deaf-blindness.
Other Health impairments	Having limited strength, vitality, or alertness, including a heightened alertness to environmental stimuli that results in limited alertness with respect to the educational environment	Asthma, attention deficit disorder, diabetes, heart conditions, leukemia, sickle cell anemia, Tourette syndrome, epilepsy,

	that is due to chronic or acute health problems.	hemophilia, lead poisoning, etc.
Visual impairments	A limitation in the ability to see even with correction.	Includes both partial sight and blindness.
Deafness	A hearing impairment that is so severe that the child is impaired in processing linguistic information through hearing, with or without amplification.	
Deaf-blindness	Concomitant hearing and visual impairments, the combination of which caused such severe communication and other developmental and educational needs that they cannot be accommodated in special education programs solely for children with deafness or children with blindness.	
Autism	A developmental disability characterized by extreme withdrawal and/or poorly developed communication/language skills.	Engaging in repetitive activities, resistance to environmental change or changes in daily routines, and unusual responses to sensory experiences. Autism is generally detected before age three.
Traumatic brain injury	A disability caused by injury or accident by physical force resulting in total or partial damage to the brain.	Open or closed head injuries resulting in impairments in one or more areas, such as cognition, language, memory, attention, reasoning, abstract thinking, judgment, problem solving sensory, perceptual and motor abilities, psychosocial behavior, physical functions, information processing , and speech.
Intellectual disability	Significantly sub average general intellectual functioning, existing concurrently with deficits in adaptive behavior and manifested during the developmental period.	Formally known as mental retardation, characteristics can include impairment in adaptive behavior and rather low IQ.

Specific learning disabilities, speech or language impairments, other health impairments, intellectual disability, and autism represent the largest number of disabilities being served in 2011 (USDE, 2012).

Visible v. Invisible Disabilities

"It is a lonely existence to be a child with a disability which no-one can see or understand, you exasperate your teachers, you disappoint your parents, and worst of all you know that you are not just stupid."

-- *Susan Hampshire*

Visible disabilities are obviously noticeable to an observer. Visible disabilities that can be quickly noticed are limps, sitting in a wheelchair, portable oxygen tank for assisted breathing, a walking cane for the blind and a person missing a limb are just a few. Immediately, on lookers realize the disability and understand that special accommodations are made or allowed to assist them. An example of an accommodation is handicapped parking. People would not question a person parking in a handicapped parking space, getting out of the car and getting into a wheelchair. However, the situation might be different if on lookers saw a person park in a handicapped parking space, get out of the car and walk to their destination. In fact, this might infuriate some who believe this seemingly normal person took a space from a disabled person. But what if that person had an invisible disability such as a cardiac condition or a chronic illness such as lupus? Would the on looker feel differently?

In Waldman, Cannelle, and Perlman's article *Invisible and Unseen Disabilities* (2009), they report 96 percent of people with chronic medical conditions live with an illness that is invisible. Some invisible disabilities include: 1) Neurological disabilities such as multiple sclerosis, Lyme disease, Asperger Syndrome, lead poisoning, fetal alcohol syndrome, and fibromyalgia. 2) Chronic Pain disabilities such as back pain, joint disorders, and sciatic nerve

pain. 3) Dietary disabilities such as diabetes, inflammatory bowel disease, and food allergies. 4) Autoimmune disabilities such as rheumatoid arthritis, Crohn's disease, Sjogren's syndrome, and lupus. 5) Disputed disabilities such as psychosomatic disorders (p. 60). This is not a complete list. Many more invisible disabilities could be included. These disabilities not only affect adults but children as well which intern affects their academic and social performance in school.

N. Ann Davis (2005) reinforces the disillusionment of invisible disabilities when she stated "Though not as easily stigmatized in obvious or familiar ways, persons with invisible disabilities are subject to forms of rejection, humiliation, and social disapproval that are importantly similar. When individuals are not "seen" as disabled, it can be more difficult for them to secure the assistance or accommodation they need to function effectively "(p. 154). In addition to not securing assistance or accommodations, there are other consequences individuals with invisible disabilities face. For children, it may be more difficult for them to compete with other children with visible disabilities. It can be more difficult for people with unseen disabilities to hold a job. However one of the most damaging consequences of disabilities is labeling. "People with invisible disabilities may be more apt to "hide" for fear of being labeled as hypochondriacs, crazy, or just plain lazy because they just don't appear out of the ordinary (Waldman, Cannelle, and Perlman, p. 61).

Labeling

Unfortunately for many with disabilities whether the disability is visible or invisible, they find themselves labeled. Labeling can come from various sources such as psychometrists, teachers, co-workers, school mates, friends, and family.

The collective beliefs of normalcy have resulted in the practices of human labels. These labels can be used to marginalize those who are different from the norm. Davis (2009) stated that "Under normalcy the fact is that no one is or can be normal, as no one is or can be equal.

Everyone has to work hard to make it seem that they conform, and so the person with disabilities is singled out as a dramatic case of not belonging. This identification makes it easier for the rest to think they fit the paradigm" (p. 363).

Labeling can adversely affect students socially, academically and personally by lowering their self-esteem (Davis, 2009, and Fitch, 2002). Students may choose not to reveal their disability to their classmates and even disassociate themselves with other special needs students. According to Demoulin and Kendall (1993), "Teachers felt unprepared due to their educational training to teach students with disabilities… Labeling shapes teachers expectation and perpetuates the notion that students with mild disabilities are qualitatively different from other children" (p. 7). These notions can lead to teachers lowering the levels of instruction and expectations for students with disabilities.

I would be remiss for failing to add that labeling can in cases be beneficial. The labeling of students as a result of norm testing can secure accommodations to level the playing field in terms of academics (Davis, 2009). Some accommodations students with disabilities may receive can include expended time on assignments and tests, test being read aloud, large print text, audio devices, preferential seating, peer tutoring, a change in scheduling classes, and unrestricted passes to the nurse and restroom, just to name a few.

Secondary Content Teachers Face Obstacles

Mastropieri and Scruggs (2001) suggest that secondary teachers face greater obstacles than elementary teachers when teaching disabled students in inclusion classrooms. In most settings, elementary teachers teach the same students all day. Class sizes may differ from single to double digits however; the elementary teachers have the advantage of seeing their students daily, for an extensive amount of the day, every day of the school year. This time allows for the teacher and students to build relationships, the teacher can assess the learning of the students and

address the students' needs on a one on one basis (Mastropieri and Scruggs, 2001). For secondary teachers, aside from a lack of disabilities training, they give varying explanations about how they interpret diversity and disability. These explanations assist us in understanding why secondary content teachers have little understandings of disabilities. Obstacles can definitely hinder a teacher from learning about disabilities and how to address them in the inclusion classroom. The obstacles they face can be logistical in the high school setting and/or they can also be particular to the teachers' personal attitudes and beliefs (Keefe & Moore, 2004).

Obstacles which are associated with the high school setting include an emphasis on content area knowledge and teaching only the standards, faster pacing of instruction to meet curriculum requirements, high stakes testing, short class periods, large class sizes, teaching several classes per day, inadequate planning time, little administrative support, and limited resources (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2001).

Obstacles that are personal and within may include lack of knowledge about disabilities and what strategies are most affective with different characteristics, less positive attitude of the teacher, less willing to make accommodations to meet the needs of the disabled students, and unclear understanding of co-teaching roles (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2001; Moore & Keefe 2001; Ellett, 1993; and Katz, 1982). According to Van Reusen, Shoho, and Baker (2000), "The degree to which high schools provide effective and equitable inclusive education may depend to a large extent on the attitudes and beliefs teachers hold regarding their abilities to teach students with disabilities and their willingness to assume responsibility for the achievement of all students assigned to their classrooms" (p. 8). Simply stated, a teacher's attitude and beliefs can be an advantage or an impediment in terms of teaching disabled students in inclusion classrooms. If teachers' attitudes are negative and this in compounded by all the pulling factors within the

secondary education setting, teachers may not be willing and take initiative to learn more about disabilities or how to accommodate students with disabilities in their inclusion classrooms.

Pre-teacher Training on Disabilities

High school teachers are highly qualified in their content area such as math, English, science, foreign language, physical education, business careers, fine arts, and social studies. While receiving their college teacher preparation training, their exposure to special needs classes is limited unless they are receiving a degree in a special education area. Their exposure to special needs training may be limited to only one or two classes. General education teachers have communicated feelings of inadequacy toward meeting the needs and requirements of students with disabilities in their inclusion classrooms because of their lack of training in college pre teaching programs (Keefe & Moore, 2004, and Schumaker & Deshler, 1995).

Chart 3 displays the best teaching programs in the United States, listed by the Teacher Prep Review which was recently published by the National Council on Teacher Quality in partnership with U.S. News & World Report (2013). The colleges received ratings on effective pedagogy, critical reflection and practice teaching, celebration of diversity and the number of programs offered. After reviewing the top 15 colleges listed, it was quickly noted that these top rated teaching programs only require one or two (at most) special education classes for students receiving a BS in secondary general education fields. For reporting purposes, I looked at each teaching program's secondary math program of study.

The chart displays the ranking given by the Teacher Prep Review, name of college, number of special education courses required for a student receiving a BS in secondary mathematics and the name of the courses required.

Table 3. Special Education Courses Required for Secondary Content General Education Teachers at Top Rated Universities

Ranking	Name of College	Number of special education courses required for B.S. in Secondary Mathematics	Name of special education course(s)
15	University of Memphis, Tennessee	1	SPED 7000 Intro to Exceptional Learners
14	University of Maryland – College Park	1	Inclusion, Diversity, and Professionalism in secondary Education
13	University of Kentucky	1	EDP 203 Teaching Exceptional Learners in regular classrooms or EDS375 Introduction to Education of Exceptional Children
12	University of Georgia	1	SPED2000 Survey of Special Education or SPED 4030 Inclusion of students with special needs 6-12
11	University of Central Florida	1	EEX 4242 Teaching Exceptional Students in Secondary Settings
10	Radford University, Virginia	None listed on website	
9	Purdue University – Calumet, Indiana	1	EDSP 26500 The Inclusive classroom
8	Longwood University, Virginia	1	SPED 489 Survey of Exceptional Children
7	Dallas Baptist University, Texas	1	EDUC 4312 Teaching Special Needs Populations
6	City University of New York – Lehman College	1	ESC 463 Special Needs Students
5	City University of New York – Hunter College	1	SPED 708 Teaching Students with Special needs in inclusive settings * Only for those matriculated on or after fall 2011.
4	Vanderbilt University, Tennessee - Peabody College	1	SPED 1010 Introduction to Exceptionality
3	Ohio State University	1	Inclusion: Philosophical, Social, and Practice Issus: Secondary

			Education
2	Lipscomb University, Tennessee	None listed on website	
1	Furman University, South Carolina	2	EDU 221 Education of Students with Exceptionalities and EDU 222 Nature of Learning Disabilities

College courses can lend a variety of instruction addressing different types and characteristics of disabilities, defining inclusion classrooms and role playing scenarios of co-teaching experiences, just to name a few. However, it is difficult to refute that actually experiences in inclusion classrooms are most beneficial to pre-service teachers (Lewis & Doorlag, 1999, and Kamens, 2007). This can be addressed in a pre-service teacher's internship. In Michele Kamens's case study, Learning about co-teaching, she concluded that her findings indicated that the co-taught student teaching experience has potential value for preparing pre-service teachers for inclusive practice. Like other studies, her participants described several dominant factors, which impacted their experiences such as personalities and structure of classroom interactions (Kamens, 2007).

Teachers' understandings of disabilities and perceptions about inclusion classrooms and the strategy of co-teaching varies person from to person. Their perceptions are developed from experiences and preconceived notions whether they come from pre teaching programs, actually teaching, or from outside sources. These are particular to factors of situation which include time, work setting, and social situations (Robbins, 2007).

How Inclusion was a response to the Need to Educate Students with Disabilities in the Least Restrictive Environment

"Inclusion is part of a much larger picture than just placement in the regular class within school. It is being included in life and participating using one's abilities in day to day activities

as a member of the community. Inclusion is being a part of what everyone else is, being welcomed and embraced as a member who belongs. Inclusion can occur in schools, churches, playgrounds, work, and recreation."

-Kids Together, Inc., 2013

In 1924, psychologist and special education pioneer, J. W. Wallace Wallin wrote an influential text on the education of the handicapped. He gave clear reasons why children with disabilities should be segregated into special and ungraded classes (Osgood, 2005). He claimed that segregated classrooms would benefit regular students, disabled students, and teachers alike. In Wallin's defense for the normal students and teachers, he maintained that mentally disabled students "represent… and inassimilable accumulation of human clickers, ballast driftwood, or derelicts which seriously retards the rate of progress of the entire class and which often constitutes a positive irritant to the teacher and other pupils" (Osgood, 27) He also argued that segregated classrooms would benefit disabled students by stating: "In the special classes deficient children are relieved of the …disheartening, cruel, and unjust competition with their superior fellows… They also escape from the taunts, jeers, jokes, and gibes sometimes suffered at the hands of their normal playfellows…. In the special class…they will encounter an atmosphere of mutual understanding, and a relief from 'a maladjusted curriculum which they cannot master" (Osgood, 28).

Many researchers and I would adamantly disagree with Wallin and his idea of segregating students with disabilities; asserting that the focus should not be on disabilities but human rights. Low (1992) stated "Children should not be devalued or discriminated against by being excluded or sent away because of their disabilities. Children belong together – with advantages and benefits for everyone. All children need an education that will help them

develop relationships and prepare them for life in the mainstream. Segregation teaches children to be fearful, ignorant, and breeds prejudice. Only inclusion has the potential to reduce fear and to build friendship, respect and understanding." Respect and understanding are the quintessential characteristics that underline the foundation of human rights. "All human beings are born free and quail in dignity and rights" (Human Rights Declaration, Article I).

A specific benefit of inclusion is that it teaches disabled children to grow up as members of a non-disabled society and function with the rest of their peers the way they normally would. Secondly, it fosters an appreciation of disabilities for the non-disabled students. They will learn that disabilities are a wholly normal incident of natural and totally human variations instead of something unknown which could cause uneasiness or worst, rejection (Low, 1992).

As special needs students were increasingly routed into the general education classrooms, the need for special education self-contained classrooms diminished. School systems started incorporating cooperative teaching. Cooperative teaching or co-teaching involved the general educators and the special needs educators working collaboratively to teach students with and without disabilities in the general classroom setting (Bauwens & Hourcade, 1995). It is important to note that not all inclusion classrooms have co-teaching partnerships. The school system, school administrator or teachers themselves make determinations on which inclusion classes will be co-taught (Osgood, 2005).

The special needs teachers otherwise known as collaborative teachers found themselves with a different role as well as with different responsibilities. During this transitional time, special needs teachers would be given student caseloads to monitor as well as teach in inclusion classrooms and/or self-contained classrooms. As caseload managers, special needs teachers were responsible for a group of assigned students. The number of students can vary from school to

school depending on the special education population and the number of special education teachers at the school. Some of their responsibilities as caseload managers include up-dating students' IEPs, charting their students' progress, meeting with teachers to discuss students' accommodations, collecting data, and scheduling meetings with parents and psychometrics (IDEA, 2004).

This type of change at the secondary level was not welcomed by many, often leading to conflicts and additional problems. Noting the conflicts and problems, Moore and Keefe (2001) conducted a focus group study with elementary and secondary general and special education teachers and found that there were various concerns about adequate planning time, resources, administrative support, professional development, and teacher willingness to corporate with one other at both the elementary and secondary levels. Additionally, they found that high school teachers implementing inclusion educational classrooms felt additional barriers existed because of larger class sizes, seeing many more students each day, larger school size, and unclear roles of general and special education teachers (Moore & Keefe, 2001).

Understandings of Co-teaching

Since 1975, when Public Law 94-142 mandated that students with disabilities be educated in their least restrictive environment, decisions have been made to determine where a disabled student will spend most of his time and how particular services will be provided while attending a school in his own community and being educated with peers his age when possible. The general education classroom is considered to be a student's least restrictive environment. Subsequent legislation has continued to encourage inclusive practice, with increasing numbers of children with disabilities spending all or part of their school day in general education classrooms (U. S. Department of Education, 2002). Because more special needs students were being educated in the general education classrooms, special education teachers were being asked to

collaborate and co-teach with the general education teachers (Friend, Reising, & Cook, 1993; Cook & Friend, 1995; Dieker and Barnett, 1996; Spencer, 2005).

Co-teaching as defined by Cook & Friend (1995) is "two or more professionals jointly deliver substantive instruction to a diverse, or blended , group of students in a single physical space" (p.1). The instruction the teachers deliver to the students can differ from classroom to classroom depending of a variety of factors which will be discussed. Some of the practices are effective for students' academic achievement while some are not. The practices that the co-teachers use in in inclusion classrooms can also be shaped to accommodate certain challenges which are unique to the secondary level.

Different models of co-teaching

The authors of various articles agree that the co-teaching partnership can take on a variety of different forms. Friend, Reising, and Cook (1993) identified five models or strategies which are hierarchical that teachers might implement in a co-teaching classroom. These models include lead and support, station teaching, parallel teaching, alternative teaching and team teaching. The lead and support model constitutes one teacher leading the instruction and the other offering assistance and support to individual students or small groups. In this model, one teacher is in charge of planning for content and instruction while the other plans for student's individual learning or behavioral needs. Station teaching is a model in which students are divided into groups and each group works at a station with a teacher. At an appropriate time, the groups will switch and get instruction from the other teacher. Both teachers are responsible for planning their own lessons. In the parallel teaching model, the teachers divide the students up into groups and teach the same content at the same time. Planning is required because the teachers must ensure they are delivering the content in the same way. The alternative teaching model consists of one teacher working with a small group of students to pre-teach, re-teach, supplement, or

enrich instruction, while the other teacher instructs the large group. Team teaching requires shared planning and delivery of instruction.

It is important to understand that co-teachers can progress through these models as their partnership develops. They point out that the models listed above are listed in hierarchical form and that there are three dominant variables. First, as you move from the first model to the last model, teachers should realize that more and more planning is required for the models to be successful. Second, as you move from the first model to the last model, the teachers need equal levels of content knowledge to ensure the model is effective. Third, as you move down the continuum of models, the teachers need to share the same philosophy of inclusion and have a mutual level of respect and trust for each other. These variables are often harder to establish at the high school level because general education teachers are highly qualified in their specific content areas where as the special needs teachers have been trained to address behaviors and accommodations and modifications. Additionally, to establish a relationship which is built on mutual trust and respect, takes quite some time. At the high school level, teachers may change co-teaching partnerships each year depending on the master schedule. Because special needs teachers often work with different general education teachers each year, it is difficult to build a close rapport which develops trust and respect (Cook, Reising, and Friend, 1993).

Scruggs, Mastropieri, and McDuffie (2007) established five models of co-teaching. "One teaches, one assists" is their first model. In this model, the general education teacher is responsible for leading all of the instruction while the special education teacher moves around the room assisting students. The second model is the station model. Using the station model, the teachers set up centers around the classroom and then act as facilitator to the students. The third model is parallel teaching. Parallel teaching is when the co-teachers divide the class in half and

each teacher takes a group and teaches the same content but in different areas. The fourth teaching model is the alternative model. In this model, one of the teachers takes a small group of students and teaches them the lesson and is able to give them extra help. The fifth model is the team teaching model. In the team teaching model, both teachers are simultaneously responsible for the classroom instruction.

Lesson delivery and teaching strategies are equally important when discussing a successful co-teaching partnership. Table 1, developed by Murawski and Dicker (2004) is a prime example of actions that can be carried out by the co-teachers while co-teaching.

Table 4. Teachers' Actions or Practices During Co-teaching in an Inclusion Classroom

If one of you is doing this ...	The other can be doing this ...
Lecturing	Modeling, note taking, on the board/overhead; insuring brain breaks to help students process information
Taking Roll	Collecting and reviewing last night's homework; introducing a social or study school
Passing out papers	Reviewing directions; modeling first problem on an assignment
Giving instructions orally	Writing down instructions on the board; repeating or clarifying any difficult concepts
Checking for understanding with large heterogonous group of students	Checking for understanding with small heterogeneous groups of students
Circulating, providing one on one support as needed	Providing direct instruction to whole class.
Prepping half of the class for one side of a debate	Prepping the other half of the class for the opposing side of the debate
Facilitating a silent activity	Circulating, checking for comprehension
Providing large group instruction	Circulation, using proximity control for behavior management
Running last minute copies or errands	Reviewing homework; providing a study or test taking strategies
Re-teaching or pre-teaching with a small group	Monitoring large group as they work on practice materials
Facilitating silent reading	Reading aloud quietly with a small group; previewing upcoming information
Reading a test aloud to a group of students	Proctoring a test silently with a group of students

Creating basic lesson plans for standards, objectives, and content curriculum	Providing suggestions for modifications, accommodation, and activities for diverse learners
Facilitating stations or groups	Also facilitating stations or groups
Explaining new concepts	Conducting role-play or modeling concept; asking clarifying questions
Considering modification techniques	Considering enrichment opportunities

The goal for co-teaching should be that both teachers are playing an active role in the teaching process. The role each teacher carries out should be pre-arranged in the planning session. One of the most beneficial task listed in the table is that one teacher is creating basic lesson plans for standards, objectives and content curriculum while the other teacher is providing suggestions for modifications, accommodations, and activities for diverse learners (Friend& Cook, 1996). As the lesson is taught both teachers are aware of all the elements required for a successful lesson and are able to convey the proper instruction to the students in the classroom.

While most of the strategies are clearly a representation of co-teaching as defined by Friend and Cook (1996), there is one strategy listed by Murawski and Dicker (2004) that does not quite align with the appreciation of the co-teaching concept. One teacher running last minute copies or errands and the other reviewing homework or providing a study or test taking strategies indicates two separate activities performed by the teachers and not necessarily a co-teaching concept.

Effective practices

Effective co-teachers in an inclusion classroom work together as equal partners in a dynamic and interactive relationship. Additionally, both partners participate directly in planning, teaching and evaluating student performances (Friend & Cook, 1992a, 1992b; Pugach & Johnson, 1995; Walther-Thomas, Bryant, & Land, 1996; Lipsky & Gartner, 1997; and Reinhiller, 1996). Time, communication, and organization are key factors that can make or break effective

co-teaching partnerships. Effective co-teaching partners take the time that is necessary to communicate ideas and organize their lessons to meet the needs of their students. It is important for the participants to discuss topics with honesty, have respect for each other's opinions, and be open minded to new ideas (Walther-Thomas, et al., 1996). If teachers have the time or at least allocate time to devote directly to the essential elements of co-teaching and they are able to communicate, compromise, and organize their plans of action; then they and their students should reap the benefits of the co-teaching partnership.

Co-teaching is also effective when students are impacted in a positive or beneficial way. Walther-Thomas (1996) reported after conducting a three year study on co-teaching that teachers and administrators alike conveyed many student benefits. They stated that students with disabilities developed better attitudes about themselves and their peers. They became less critical, more determined, and learned to recognize their own academic and social strengths. They also showed academic improvement and very few were removed from the inclusion classroom because they could not keep up with the academic rigor or social demands. Participants of the study attributed this success to more teacher time and attention to individual students. Individual students would receive better progress monitoring, individual assistance, re-teaching opportunities, and enrichment opportunities.

Co-teaching obstacles at the secondary level

A number of obstacles exist in implementing a productive co-teaching partnership particularly at the high school level. General education teachers are highly qualified in their content area with very little knowledge or training of addressing students with special needs, while collaborative teachers lack adequate content knowledge, especially content covered at the upper levels (Keefe & Moore, 2004, Fullan & Hargreaves, 1997). More specifically, Mastropieri and Scruggs (2001) suggested that high school settings presented greater obstacles for co-

teachers because of the emphasis on content area knowledge, need for independent study skills, the faster pacing of instruction, high stakes testing, high school competency exams, less positive attitudes of teachers, and the inconsistent success of strategies found effective at the elementary level.

High school teachers have flexible schedules and autonomy which seems to be a desired job characteristic for many of these teachers (Deschler, 1988). Most teachers are very territorial over their classroom. The classroom is their home away from home. Within the classroom's four walls, the teachers have a routine they follow, they decorate in their personal style, their students become their own, they give rewards, and they enforce discipline. They watch the "light bulbs" go off when they help students make meaningful discoveries and purposeful connections. The classroom is an individualized micro culture that comes alive behind closed doors.

At the secondary level, this type of autonomous environment is conducive to the closed–door syndrome in which teachers find comfort in their own classrooms and rarely invite others teachers in for collaboration or informal evaluation or feedback concerning their teaching strategies used in the classroom. Friend and Cook (2000) emphasize that the closed-door syndrome in many schools today makes collaboration a difficult proposition. Secondary teachers find that they only know the faculty in their own department, and may realize that they do not even know those colleagues well. Additionally, the structure for special educators in most secondary schools is one of exclusion, rather than that of inclusion. Special education teachers previously geared their efforts toward small self-contained classes or working with individual students. Secondary educators need to break free of autonomous teaching environments if they are truly to learn to collaborate and co-teach with one another (Dieker & Murawski, 2003).

When an additional teacher is added to the classroom mix, the dynamics in this comfort zone can change dramatically. Webster (2012) stated, "Collaboration in a full inclusion co-teaching classroom is hard work, and really requires the right kind of people. The worst thing a principal can do is to force people into co-teaching situations. Even teachers who have a history of sharing information and collaborating with teaching peers may find their comfort with another person in "their" space is very low, that sharing responsibility for a classroom with another adult is incredibly uncomfortable".

Traditionally, when teachers collaborated, they would plan together and possibly design a unit on different disciplines. For example, if an English teacher is having her students read the *Great Gatsby,* the history teacher could cover the 1920's at the same time so that there is linkage in the content. In this type collaboration, the teachers enjoy the comfort zone of their own classroom and enjoy sharing information and planning together. However, in a full inclusion co-teaching classroom, the general education and the special education teachers must plan and coordinate their responsibilities and share one space. The general education teacher must realize that the collaborative teacher needs her own space within the classroom and proclaim a sense of ownership or otherwise she will feel like a guest and not an equal partner. The general education teacher should be willing to share materials and the classroom with the collaborative teacher. To ensure parity, it is important not to allow students to think that one teacher owns the resources and the room because the other always has to ask permission to use the items or borrow the key for the door. They can demonstrate parity by sharing materials and common spaces, putting both names on the door, board, report card and any communications sent home to parents or guardians (Murawski & Dieker, 2008).

Symbolic Interactionism Regarding Teachers' Meanings of Educational Practices

In van den Berg's 2002 research, Teachers' Meanings Regarding Educational Practices, he stated that the educational arena is an ever changing entity. The policies and practices change often usually causing a strong conflicting effect. Many times teachers believe that these changes "do not usually correspond to the opinions or conceptions of what constitutes good teaching" (P. 577).

Van den Berg (2002) used symbolic interactionism as a point of anchor in that the study examined the teachers' different or same prospective of professional growth, concerns, and feelings of uncertainty when faced with new innovations within the school environment.

Van den Berg's study is derived from two scenarios from actual practice from a case study (Aarts, 2000). The study began in September of 1998 at Maycollege High School. The faculty undertook the implementation of a large-scale innovation project. The innovation was "aimed at teaching and learning better adapted to the large differences between students" (p. 578). In other words, the teachers would use a variety of teaching strategies to meet the needs of the different types of learners and teach the students to take on active learning. The two participants in the study are Maurice, an English teacher and Martin, a physical science teacher. The expectations of the innovative project was the same for both teachers however, the manner in which the two teachers experienced the new expectations with regard to their functioning and understanding of their own individual development can be seen to be very different.

Maurice sees his primary task as delivering the content knowledge to the students and supervising their learning process. His style is characteristic of presenting or lecturing to the students for the entire lesson. Under the new expected innovations, he is expected to teach students the skills needed to acquire and develop knowledge of his subject. Additionally, during the process, he is to provide as much individual guidance to students as possible to instill self-

responsibility, there by encouraging the students to take responsibility for their own learning and exploration. Maurice makes a true effort to meet the expectations given to him concerning the new innovative practices but has extreme difficulties. He believes the students are not learning what they are supposed to learn and as a result, "he views himself as functioning less well," which leads to frustration and dissatisfaction. The frustration and dissatisfaction continue to the point that Maurice is giving up his job and accepting another position outside the field of education (van den Berg, 2002).

Martin's teaching style is different from Maurice's teaching style. Martin believes that "students need to develop their own learning capacities to maximum and instilling the independence necessary to succeed in society" (p. 578). He knows this new innovation will mesh nicely with his teaching style because of his past experiences. He already gives the students ½ of the class period to research, experiment, and learn on their own. The new innovation is not threating or problematic to him as this strategy a lines with his current practices. This type of teaching fits his opinion of the roles and responsibilities of a teacher. The idea of quitting his job over this innovation implementation would never occur to him.

The results of this study show that teacher's professional identity "can be conceptualized as the result of an interaction between the personal experiences of teachers and the social, cultural, and instructional environment in which they function on a daily basis" (p. 579). Symbolic interactionism can explain that teachers received different meanings from past experiences which result in their current practices and their different response of new innovational practices.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Review of the Problem

Secondary general education teachers and special needs teachers have communicated feelings of inadequacy toward meeting the needs and requirements of special needs students in their inclusion classrooms (Friend & Cook, 2004). Whether these feelings stem from a lack of understandings about disabilities, lack of content knowledge, or lack of knowledge about best teaching practices to address the needs of each individual student, all can affect the learning outcomes for the students within the inclusion classrooms (Keefe & Moore, 2004, Schumacher & Deshler, 1995, and Friend & Cook, 1995).

While there are numerous studies supporting co-teaching and examining co-teaching practices, their benefits and challenges, there is a scarcity of studies that look directly at secondary teachers' practices in inclusion classrooms and how those practices are shaped by the teachers' understandings of inclusion.

Research Questions

Recapping, the central question is: "How do secondary co-teachers' understandings of inclusion shape their teaching practices?" Focal sub-questions which will be answered through this research include the following:

1. What are teachers' understandings of disabilities?
2. What are teachers' experiences with disabled students in inclusion classrooms?
3. What are teachers' co-teaching practices in inclusion classrooms and how do those practices address individual students' disabilities?

Symbolic Interactionism

This study is designed to better understand the complexity of teachers' co-teaching experiences and practices in their inclusion classrooms as it relates to their understandings of disabilities. Co-teaching partners are forced to communicate, allocate resources, function in their environment, manage students and bring knowledge, and nurture to the students. The interactions between the co-teachers and their understandings of disabilities are largely significant in their resulting practices. As interactions are key to this research, symbolic interactionism provides the methodological lens for this study.

The two main theorists of symbolic interactionism are George Herbert Mead (1934), who laid the foundation for this theory, and his intern, Robert Blumer (1969), who later expanded on the theory. Blumer focused the extension of symbolic interactionist theory on aspects of daily life and experiences rather than social forces and laws with broader effects as stressed by Mead (Blumer, 1969). Blumer elaborated on the vital importance of the micro side of the theory which fits perfectly with the co-teaching experience because the classroom is considered a micro social structure of the educational arena. At the micro level, the classroom is the front line of cultivating students' knowledge and experiences. This responsibility is to be carried out by the teacher or co-teachers in the classrooms. At this level, the co-teachers in inclusion classrooms are vital to the mission of the educational system. Their interactions can be a benefit or detriment to the learning environment. The partnership can most certainly affect the outcome of the goals and mission established by the school system or State Department of Education for the individual students.

First and foremost, symbolic interactionism stresses the interactions between people throughout their daily lives (Mead, 1934; Blumer, 1969; Carrothers & Benson, 2003; and Charon, 1998). Symbolic interactionism sees meanings as social products which are developed

and formed from individuals' defining activities and interactions with others. Mead explained that interactions are between human groups or societies, human actions, interconnections of the lines of actions, and interactions with objects. Mead referred to objects as physical items such as textbook, social objects such as war, and abstract objects such as personal values. The nature of any object consists of the meaning it holds for the people who encounter and interact with it. Objects can have different meaning for different people (Blumer, 1969). A history textbook can be viewed as an object filled with rich knowledge about the past for a teacher, a propaganda tool for a politician, a reference book for one student, and a paper weight for another student.

In a co-teaching partnership, interactions between partners and objects occur on a daily basis. The co-teachers must interact and explore a variety of actions and objects that may have different meaning for the both of them. In the inclusion classroom, a student's IEP is considered an object. The meaning of a particular IEP may have different meaning for each teacher. One teacher may see the document as unbreakable and believe the accommodations and modification stated in it are to be followed exactly without deviations. The other teacher may see the document as a general guideline to follow but believes the document allows for additional support or alternative accommodations as deemed necessary. The IEP is a physical document written with information and directions. The meanings of the IEP for the teachers have derived from their personal understanding of the document, their past interactions with other teachers when referencing IEPs, the interactions with the individual student, and actions and reactions from the co-teaching partner. In other words, the IEP, or the object, consists of the meaning that it has for the person for whom it is an object. From this object example, you can see that co-teachers may have different meanings for the students' IEPs and other objects they encounter on a daily basis that can and do affect their practices in the classroom.

Objects, defined by Mead can also be abstract. This means objects can be philosophical doctrines, ideas, opinions, moral principles, values, or even emotions (Blumer, 2004 and Carrothers & Benson, 2003). These elements are communicated by both partners in the co-teaching inclusion classroom and can include but are not limited to their teaching philosophies, beliefs about disabilities, and educational ideologies. Communication is the way individuals relay their thoughts and feelings about abstract objects and it is often a complex and perplexing action. Communication can be verbal, gestural, written, positive, negative, argumentative, or even marginalized. The meanings the co-teachers take away from their communication interactions are powerful in that they will affect future interactions and thought processes.

The micro level communication is one of the most powerful elements of symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 2004). Communication is personal between co-teaching partners and it takes on meaning for future actions. It is important to note that the individuals involved in the communication exchange do not necessarily take away the same meanings, values, or attitudes. For instance, if one of the teachers is addressing the students and she makes a point or a gesture in class, the other teacher may deduce the context, hypothesize the necessity and significance in the saying and doing, and anticipate possible responses from students. After processing this, the co-teacher doing the listening may re-act or respond in a manner which may or may not complement the first teacher's intentions. The students internalize the response to this interaction and they will themselves construct ideas or patterns for the co-teachers behaviors and intentions. This example of constant construction or interactions by individuals "results in a view of society as fluid, tenuous, shifting, and largely unpredictable" (Carrothers & Benson, p. 164).

Because symbolic interactionism focuses on the interactions, meanings and behaviors that we use to relate with others, using a qualitative approach will enable me to give thick and

rich detailed descriptions of secondary teachers' voices and how they understand disabilities in context of inclusion classrooms, and their understandings shape their co-teaching practices.

Methodology

Studies use qualitative research because there is an issue or problem that needs to be explored (Creswell, 2004). Many times these issues or problems cannot be easily measured; thus, qualitative research takes a complex look at the issues and details understanding of the issues. This type of detail is established by talking directly with people who face, experience, or have perspective on the issues. Qualitative research gives the participants empowerment and a voice in which they can express their experience and opinions (Creswell, 2013). Relating to education, qualitative research also supports the idea of knowledge construction and includes the voices of teachers in research (Olmedo, 2003; Cochran-Smith, 1995). Furthermore, "qualitative research is based on the view that reality is constructed by individuals interacting with their social world. Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is, how they make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world" (Merriam, p.6). Teachers gain experience and understanding from a wide variety of sources from college teacher training courses, to collaborating with other teachers, to reading educational documents just to name a few.

Using qualitative research, I was able to collect data through observations and interviews. I observed each co-teaching partnership twice while they taught in their inclusion classrooms. I took field notes during the observation paying close attention to the co-teachers interactions with each other, the strategies they used with their students, and the responsibilities they took on as individuals within the classroom. After each observation, I wrote reflective notes and questions I wanted to ask each individual teacher about what I had observed. The interviews were conducted after the observations were complete. The interviews were one-to-one and took place

in a private room in the library. The length of the interviews ranged from 1 to 2 hours. The interviews allowed the teachers a voice to explain how their understanding of disabilities influence or shape their practices in terms of selecting teaching strategies, assuming certain roles and responsibilities, and arranging for accommodations.

The data is presented in a descriptive format and will reflect the character and nature of the participants and how they feel about their knowledge, understanding, practices and experiences regarding students with disabilities and co-teaching in inclusion classrooms.

Setting

This study took place at Main Street High School, grades 9 – 12 with approximately 1,400 students. It is centrally located in a southeastern state. While its' location reflects the wealth of its immediate surroundings, the attendance zone covers a wide and varied socio-economic area of the municipality. It is a Title I school with a student population of 57% black, 36% white, and 7% Hispanic, Asian, and Eastern descent. The wide economic diversity creates a more pronounced social dynamic than its racial diversity. Student academic achievement also reflects the high level of wealth, and the high level of poverty. Minority students have performed poorly in basic reading and mathematics assessments while another segment of the school population has shown outstanding academic achievement. More than 10% of the 2013 senior class scored 30 or higher on the ACT however, none of these students were in the poverty category. This class averaged about 4.2 million dollars in scholarships. In the spring of 2014, all of the 11th graders took the ACT and 19 students scored 30 or higher. Additionally, 175 students passed their Advanced Placement tests with a 3, 4, or 5.

There are 65 teachers at Main Street High School and of those, 6 are special needs teachers. The total number of inclusion classes at Main Street could not be known by looking at the master schedule simply because the classes are listed by generic names such as English 9, not

Inclusion English 9. To get an accurate number of inclusion classes, you would need to examine each class roster to see if one or more special needs students were on the role. That information was not available to me. However, the administrator did state that 22 of the inclusion classes did have co-teaching partnerships.

Participants

The principal at Main Street High School introduced the purpose of my study to the faculty at a faculty meeting and asked the teachers for volunteers. The first four special needs teachers and general co-teaching partners to volunteer were selected for the study, which gave a sample size of four co-teaching partnerships, or eight total participants. The study required each participant to have at least two years of co-teaching experience in inclusion classrooms. This requirement was established so that the participating teachers could draw from past experiences.

Amanda Charles and Jessica

Amanda Charles is a 33 year old black female who teaches four 9th grade regular English classes and two honors English classes. The regular classes require that the students past the previous subject class. In this case, English 8. The honors classes have prerequisites which include a certain score or higher on the EXPLORE standardized assessment, an 85 or higher average in the previous subject class, and/or the subject teacher's or counselor's recommendation to move up to an honors class from a regular class. In English 9 for example, a student must have an EXPLORE score of 13 or higher and an 85 average in English 8. Like Amanda Charles, most of the teachers at Main Street teach multilevel of their subject matter. Amanda Charles has 11 years of teaching experience which includes three years of co-teaching experience with four different teaching partners. Currently she has one co-teaching partner in one of her 9th grade regular English classes. She does have three inclusion classes which means she does not have a co-teaching partner in the other two inclusion classes.

Jessica is a 43 year old white female special education teacher who co-teaches with Amanda Charles and four other teachers during the school day. The subjects in which she collaborates are algebra 1A, biology, English, and world history. Jessica is the 9th grade academy special education collaborative teachers. Aside from having 5 different classes and co-teaching partners during the day, she also teaches a math tutoring class which consist of special needs students who need extra assistance with their math skills. Jessica has been teaching for 16 years and has had 10 or more collaborative partnerships during her tenure.

Barbara and Mary

Barbara is a 35 year old black female who teaches six 10th, 11th, and 12th grade mathematics classes. Her subject is Algebra II so students in grades 10 – 12 can take the class depending on their previous math class and what type of diploma they are going to get when they graduate. Currently Barbara has three inclusion classes which means she does not have a co-teaching partner for two of her classes. Barbara has a total of 11 years teaching experience which includes three years of co-teaching experience. She is currently working with one co-teacher and has worked with two others in the past.

Mary is a 46 year old white female special education teacher who co-teaches with Barbara and one other math teacher during the school day. She also teaches two math tutoring classes and one transitional services class. The transitional classes are determined by IEP team decisions for individual special needs students. The purpose of this class is to prepare students who are in need of career readiness skills. Mary has been teaching for 14 years and has worked with twenty or more co-teachers during her tenure.

Kathryn and James

Kathryn is a 49 year old white female who teaches three 10th grade physical sciences classes and three 12th grade physics classes. Two of the 10th grade physical science classes are

inclusion classes and her co-teaching partner James, is with her both classes. Kathryn has a total of 23 years teaching experience. She has worked with 10 or more collaborative teachers during her tenure.

James is a 27 year old white male special education teacher. In addition to co-teaching with Kathryn, James co-teaches with another science teacher three times during in the day in environmental science. He also teaches a math tutoring class daily and coaches softball. While this is only his third year of teaching, he has had seven co-teaching partnerships in the areas of science and math.

Leigh and Louise

Leigh is a 35 year old white female who teaches four 11th grade regular English classes and two 11th grade honors English classes. Two of her four 11th grade regular English classes are inclusion classes and her co-teaching partner Louis is with her for both classes. Leigh has a total of three years of teaching experience and two years of co-teaching experience. During her short tenure, she has worked with three collaborative teachers.

Louise is a 47 year old white female special education teacher. In addition to co-teaching with Leigh twice a day, she also co-teaches with another 11th grade English teacher once a day and she teaches two math tutoring classes a day. She has been teaching for 17 years and has had 10 co-teaching partners during her tenure.

Access

Prior to beginning the data collection, an IRB approval was obtained at the University of Alabama, as well as from the local school system. After securing permission to conduct the research at the university and school system level, I sought permission from the building principal to work with his faculty members and conduct observations and interviews at the

school site. Face to face interviews were conducted at the school site in a private room located in the school's library.

Data Collection

Co-teachers practices in inclusion classrooms are shaped by their social interactions, their experiences, their expectations, and their understanding of students' disabilities. I used observations and interviews for my data collection. I observed each partnership twice. The observations allowed me to witness the participants in their teaching environment interacting with their students and each other. Observations help to reinforce understands of relationships and roles which are established in specific environments (Merriam, 1998). The interviews allowed for the voices of secondary general education and special education teachers to be heard (Merriam, 1998). The interviews were one-to-one. This format allowed the participants freedom to expand on the open ended questions and hopefully gave the teachers a feeling of comfort. The participants were asked 12 identical open-ended questions in the same order. After the uniform questions were asked, each teacher was asked three to six questions as a follow-up to their observations. These questions were used for clarification so that I could get a better understanding of what I observed while conducting the observations in the classroom (Hatch, 2002). All questions generated responses which led back to the central question. I digitally recorded the interviews and transcribe them word for word. This technique allowed me to reflect on the interviews which helped with coding and it helped to ensure I quoted the participants correctly.

Before the observations began for each partnership, I had the opportunity to talk with each of them. I reminded the participants that their participation was voluntary. They could withdraw from the study at any point during the study and that their identities would be protected by a pseudonym. The participants were given two consent forms. I asked the participants to

sign one consent form and return it to me for my records and keep the other consent form for their records. Additionally, I asked the participants to fill out a short information sheet which contained questions about their teaching experience in terms of number of years teaching, subject taught and the number of co-teaching partnerships they have had in their career. The participants were allowed to choose their factious names and write it on the information sheet. This is how I identified the participants for the remainder of the study. The participant information sheet can be seen in Appendix A.

The interviews were only conducted after the last observation. Examples of interview questions include the following:

1. What is inclusion?
2. What does an inclusion classroom look like?
3. Where did you learn about inclusion?
4. Describe how your school handles inclusion scheduling.
5. Tell me about your school's philosophy on inclusion.
6. What kinds of training does your school or system provide to address inclusion or co-teaching practices?
7. Tell me about your experiences with co-teaching.
8. What is an Individualized Education Program?
9. How to IEPs shape or influence your co-teaching practices in your inclusion classrooms?
10. Tell me how you and your co-teaching partner(s) negotiate your roles and responsibilities.
11. Do your co-teaching practices change when you change co-teaching partners? Please tell me about it.
12. Tell me what you have learned from your co-teaching experiences. Individual follow-up questions for clarification.

All interview questions were developed to get a better understanding of the central question which was: How do secondary teachers' of inclusion shape their co-teaching practices in their inclusion classrooms?

Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis is conducted after the data has been collected. Qualitative data analysis extracts meaning from the data by identifying and construing patterns which will develop into emerging themes (Merriam, 1998). Data analysis includes organizing the data, conducting read-throughs or reviewing the data, coding and organizing patterns into themes which are representative of the data, and forming interpretation of the themes (Creswell, 2013, Merriam, 1998, Stake, 1995, and Miles & Huberman, 1994). Although there are many variations of the data analysis process, I analyzed the data for this research using the frame-work of Harry Wolcott's (1994) traditional strategies. These strategies include interviewing the participants of the study, recording the interviews, noting gestures that cannot be digitally recorded, transcribing the recordings, coding identified patterns, and clustering the patterns into identified themes (Creswell, 2013). I will conduct this research in an ethical manner. It is my aim to be clear, precise, and forthcoming regarding the methodology and manner in which data is collected, analyzed, and documented.

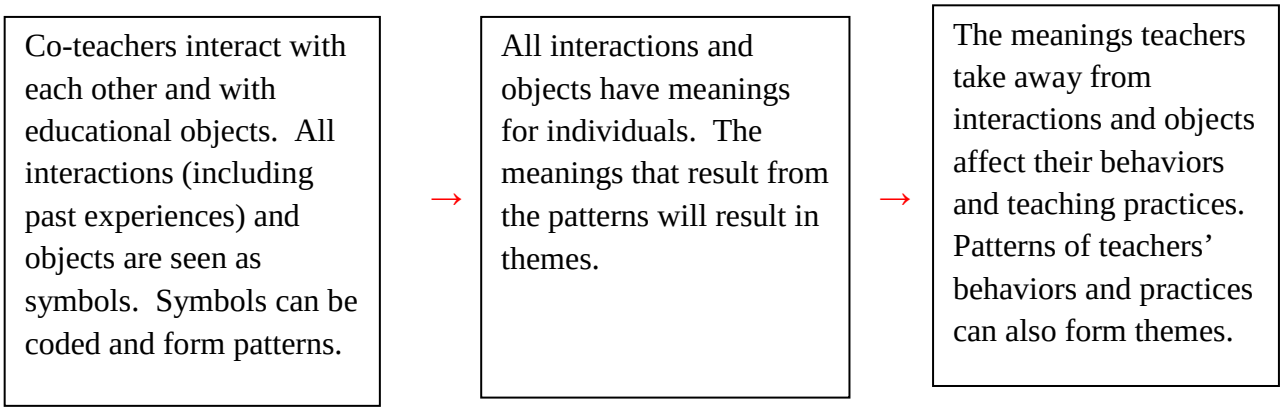
As I conducted the individual interviews, I digitally recorded the interviews for verbal accuracy and made notes to capture certain emotions or gestures displayed by the co-teachers that could not be captured on a digital recorder. Digitally recording the interviews allowed me to review the data as needed to assist in the accuracy of coding the patterns.

As I began the transcription process, I coded patterns as they developed. I expected the patterns to reflect back to the central question in terms of the teachers' understandings of student disabilities in the context of inclusion and how that understanding shapes their practices. As the

patterns emerge, I used different color highlighters to denote the different patterns. The coding contained a key to identify pieces of the transcripts which were sorted. The coding helped me categorize which patterns the pieces of transcription would fall under as it related to the conceptual framework of symbolic interactionism (Merriam, 1998, and Creswell, 2013).

Symbols I expected to see emerge repeatedly and form patterns included meanings of disabilities, special needs, partnership, responsibilities, inclusion, collaboration, Individualized Educational Plans, accommodations, and teaching strategies to name a few. Four themes would develop from the different patterns. "Themes in qualitative research are broad units of information that consist of several codes or patterns aggregated to form a common idea" (Creswell, 2013). The themes for this study were reflective of the teachers' meaning of symbols and their practices as it relates to the theory of symbolic interactionism.

Figure 1. Flow of Data Analysis Relating to Symbolic Interactionism



Using the data within the themes of symbolic interactionism, I was able to conclude with descriptive passages that discuss the essence of the understandings, practices, and experiences of the individual co-teacher participants (Creswell, 2002).

Research Positionality

When I began teaching, I had very little knowledge of different disabilities or how to accommodate students with disabilities in my classroom. The year was 1992 and I vaguely remember a special needs teacher showing me an IEP of a student labeled SLD, for specific learning disability. I wasn't given any additional information or enlightened about strategies that could be helpful for students with disabilities. The only trait that stood out about this student was, for the most part, he appeared to be a slow reader. My thoughts were, 'no big deal', I will give him more time. In those beginning years, my accommodations for students with disabilities were very few and far between. I was focused more on my content and general business of the school day. I admit this with embarrassment and sorrow. Over the years, I have seen bright eyed teachers enter their classrooms for the first time and I am reminded of myself and all the things I didn't know especially when it came to students with disabilities and how to accommodate them.

In my 22 years of educational experience as a teacher and administrator, I have witnessed few co-teaching partnership I would consider as a true success in terms of student achievement and teacher fulfillment as described by Murawski and Hughes (2009). In one successful example, the general education science teacher was 24 years old and in her second year of teaching. The collaborative teacher was 64 and had 23 years of teaching experience and a great depth of knowledge about disabilities. The two teachers had similar personalities and educational ethics. The general education teacher was willing to learn from the collaborative teacher and not only open to suggestions but willing to try them. She was in the stage of developing her teaching and managing styles.

The general education teacher was willing to sacrifice space (in this case was a corner of the room for the collaborative teacher to have a desk), planning and personal time to understand

the special needs students' disabilities and accommodations, and power in terms of allowing another authoritative figure in the room and regarding her as an equal. The special education teacher was willing to sacrifice planning and personal time to learn the academic content and communicate and plan with the general education teacher on a daily basis. The collaborative teacher had vast experiences dealing with management strategies and dealing with discipline in which she was able to share with the general education teacher. Throughout their classroom lessons, the teachers would alternate responsibilities. For example, the collaborative teacher might start the class off with a few warm up questions to help students review the previous day's content. During this time, the general education teacher is circulating around the room to check attendance, student's answers, and answer questions. If the classroom activity then included a lab, both teachers would share in giving the directions and circulating around the room to different groups assisting them. The collaborative teacher had reviewed the content material and lab so she was able to answer the students' questions just as the general education teacher. The students called on each teacher equally to answer questions or give understand to unclear concepts. This partnership displayed qualities of commitment, flexibility, and determination to help all students learn. It is important to note that these teachers were co-teaching the entire day together and had the same planning time so that they could collaborate and plan their lessons.

On the other hand, it is too often that I see co-teaching partnerships struggle and in some instances, fail. Some elements that can cause co-teachers to struggles are personality conflicts, lack of understanding roles and responsibilities, little or no planning together, lack of communication, lack of understanding and teaching students with disabilities, and lack of effort, just to name a few.

During observations and casual conversations over the last 10 years, I have noticed that co-teaching seems to be more difficult than the idea of it. Getting more knowledge of teachers' understanding of inclusion and how their understanding shape their practices in their inclusion classrooms can extend my research in multiple areas.

It is important to document that I was once an administrator in the school system in which I conducted my research; however I was not an administrator at the participating high school. Of the 8 participants, I did know one participant from past encounters. The other seven participants I met for the first time when I started conducting this research. They all had knowledge of my past position because they were told by their principal when he introduced the research to the faculty. Some participates were curious about my experiences as an administrator in their system and ask me some questions. Throughout my time at Main Street High School, all the participants were friendly and welcomed the opportunity to share their experiences with me.

I hope that the impetus of this study will encourage teachers to take time to become aware and understand the disabilities their students are faced with, work with them without prejudice, and work with their co-partner in their inclusion classroom to ensure they are using the best strategies to meet the needs of the students.

CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS

This chapter presents the findings for teacher observations and interviews about how high school teachers' understandings of inclusion shape their co-teaching practices in their inclusion classrooms. The findings are based on four secondary co-teaching partnerships in a southeastern state. To assure anonymity, the names of the participants and school have not been reported.

The findings are organized around the central question: How do secondary co-teachers' understandings of inclusion shape their co-teaching practices?

Teachers' observations and interview responses were analyzed according to the methodology outlined in chapter three. The participants allowed me to conduct two one hour observations of them co-teaching with their partners in their inclusion classrooms. During the observations, I took field notes focusing particularly on the interactions of the co-teachers before, during and after the class, the learning strategies they used with the students, and their independent roles and responsibilities within the classroom. After each observation, I wrote reflective notes and follow up questions to help me get a clearer understanding of specific strategies or actions that I observed (Wolcott, 1994).

Once the observations were complete, I conducted a one-to-one semi-structured interview with each participant. The interviews took place on the school campus in a private room in the library. The interview lasted between one and two hours.

The interviews consisted of twelve uniform questions in which all the participants answered and follow-up questions from each observation that were particularly tailored to each individual participant. The one-to-one interviews were a deliberate methodological choice. By

interviewing the co-teaching partners separately, I wanted to give them a safe environment where they could freely discuss all aspects of their co-teaching partnership experiences and their understandings of inclusion without feeling compelled to reply a certain way because their partner was in the room with them. During the interviews, the participants were asked not only to reflect on their current co-teaching experiences but their past co-teaching experiences as well. Transcriptions were created from the recorded interview and analysis began immediately after the first interview (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, and Merriam, 1998).

Using the observation field notes and transcribed interviews, I began a coding process which identified reoccurring patterns of social actions such as teachers planning together or symbols such as behavior plans. The observation data was used to support statements given by the participants in their interviews. The codes were then examined and categorized into like meanings (Merriam, 1998 and Creswell, 2013). Particular attention was given to the meaning of each code as it pertained to each participant. For example, when a participant discussed responsibility, I was looking at their meanings in terms of specific duties while in the inclusion classroom, planning and preparations outside the classroom, difficulty of task, and the value the participants placed on the specific responsibilities he or she listed. An example of this is when Kathryn discussed the planning of a computer activity. Kathryn explained in detail how she was responsible for researching the lesson, developing a worksheet for the students, reserving the library computer lab, explaining the lesson and activity to the students, and grading the papers.

Once the codes were established, I was able to integrate the codes into categories. After reflecting on the categories, I put the categories into themes which made the most logical conclusion for me using a symbolic interactionist theoretical framework.

Using Symbolic Interactionism as a Theoretical Framework

Symbolic interactionism was used to understand and interpret the participants' meanings of words and expressions as they discussed their past teaching experiences and knowledge of inclusion. The roles and responsibilities they discussed were symbols that held meanings for each participant. At first, I was interpreting roles and responsibilities as identical terms. However, as I reevaluated the coding I realized I had to differentiate between the participants' actual meanings of roles and responsibilities. The participants were describing roles as titles with multiple responsibilities while responsibilities were described as separate tasks.

Roles

Roles were described by the participants in their own words as faculty member, content specialist, disciplinarian, accommodations specialist, assistant, motivator and partner. These roles are not specifically defined in the research literature. The roles listed here by the participants, were constructed in their practices. Each participant described himself/herself and their co-teaching partner as having two or more roles. Each role was characterized as follows:

Faculty member. A faculty member is a highly qualified teacher who teaches at Main Street High School. An example is when Louise stated of Leigh, "She is an English teacher here at the school."

Content specialist. A content specialist is a person who is trained and has a college degree in a content subject area such as math, English, science, or social studies. The content specialist is responsible for ensuring the students receive the required curriculum in that particular subject. For example, James stated of Kathryn, "She is the content specialist. I let her teach the class…She has her doctorate degree."

Disciplinarian. A disciplinarian is a person who keeps the students on task and reprimands students' misbehavior. The disciplinarian makes sure there is order in the class to

allow all students the opportunity to learn. For example, Jessica stated "I have to keep control of my students so they didn't disrupt the class."

Accommodations specialist. An accommodations specialist is a person who is trained and has a college degree in special education. The accommodations specialist knows how to incorporate the accommodations which are necessary for special needs students to learn and be successful in the general education classrooms. They are experts in writing special needs students' Individualized Education Programs and helping general education teachers integrate accommodations and modifications into their lessons. Louise stated in her interview that she had a degree in MR (mental retardation) and OHI (Other Health Impairments). She also stated that she helps teachers make accommodation and modifications for their students.

Assistant. An assistant is a person who is in the classroom to assist the general education teacher with various tasks. The tasks included for example, handing out or taking up students' papers, helping individual students, making copies, reading with students, and monitoring students. Leigh stated that she did the planning and Louise was more of an assistant in terms of helping her out in the classroom.

Motivator. A motivator is a person who encourages the students to continue with their work in class. A motivator gives praise to students and acts as a cheerleader to encourage and sustain students' academic progress. Mary stated that she and her co-teaching partner are both positive and that they often "have to motivate and encourage the students to complete their work."

Partner. A partner is a person who shares responsibilities in the inclusion classroom and feels they are equal to their partners in terms of roles and the amount of responsibility they take

on in the inclusion classroom. Amanda Charles stated for example that when Jessica first came to the class she wanted them to work as a team and "feel equal."

Participant's Roles

The participants are listed below. You will once again see their ages, educational areas, and classes they teach. Additionally, you will find how they described themselves in terms of roles and how they described their co-teaching partners in terms of roles. At least one role for each participant is described using direct quotes.

Amanda Charles is a 33 year old black female general education teacher who teaches four 9th grade regular English classes and two honors English classes. Amanda Charles, in her interview described herself as a faculty member, content specialist, motivator, partner, and disciplinarian. Pertaining to a content specialist, Amanda Charles stated, "I do almost all of the teaching. Sometimes my partner will piggyback off something I've said, but I'm responsible for the lesson." Jessica co-teaches with Amanda Charles in one of the regular 9th grade English classes. Amanda Charles described Jessica as a faculty member, accommodations specialist and a partner. Pertaining to a Jessica as a partner, Amanda Charles stated, "When Jessica first came in, I told her this was our classroom. I encouraged her to get involved and I want her just as involved as I am. Even though time is short, I make time to talk with her about how to do projects and other classroom activities."

Jessica is a 43 year old white female special education teacher who co-teaches with Amanda Charles and four other teachers during the school day. Jessica described herself as a faculty member, accommodations specialist, motivator, disciplinarian, and partner. As an accommodations specialist, Jessica stated, "Often I have to scaffold the instruction. I will work with the lower students and break down the instruction so they can get a better understanding of the content." Jessica describes Amanda Charles as a faculty member, content specialist and

partner. Relating to Amanda Charles as a partner, Jessica stated, "We (Amanda Charles and I) spend a lot of time looking at and students' IEPs and discussing if we need to go back and reassess what we have done and if we need to change our strategies."

Barbara is a 35 year old black female who teaches six Algebra II mathematics classes. Barbara sees herself as a faculty member, content specialists, partner, and disciplinarian. As a partner and disciplinarian Barbara stated, "We both do discipline. We handle it together. Usually whoever is closest to the disruptive student is the one who takes action." Mary is Barbara's co-teaching partner. Barbara describes Mary as a faculty member, accommodations specialist, disciplinarian, and partner. Barbara described Mary as a partner when she stated, "I think we (Mary and I) both get respect from the students. We are both teachers and lead the class. We stand in the hall together and greet the kids and discuss the agenda fort the day."

Mary is a 46 year old white female special education teacher. Mary co-teaches with Barbara and two other teachers. She describes herself as a faculty member, accommodations specialist, and partner. As a partner, Mary stated, "I feel like we are a tag team. We know what works and we talk about how we will divide the lesson. Mary sees Barbara as a faculty member, content specialist, and partner. Mary stated of Barbara in terms of a content specialist, "In Algebra II, Mary explains the content initially and I listen with the students."

Kathryn is a 49 year old white female who teaches three 10^{th} grade physical sciences classes and three 12th grade physics classes. She describes herself as a faculty member, content specialists, disciplinarian, and motivator. When discussing her responsibilities as a content teacher she stated, "I do everything. I do all the planning. I teach the lessons. I do all the activities, I do all the grading, and I put all the grades in the computer." James is her co-teaching partner. She sees him as a faculty member and an accommodations specialist. Kathryn stated of

James, “Unfortunately, our partnership is suffering due to his lack of presence in the classroom. He is often out of the classroom dealing with students on his caseload that are having emergencies.”

James is a 27 year old white male special education teacher. He describes himself as a faculty member, accommodations specialists, motivator, and disciplinarian. Referring to his role of accommodating students, he stated, “If a student is having trouble coping notes of the board, we will supply the student with a copy of the notes so that they can copy them at their own pace and won’t feel left behind and I might modify tests for students who require fewer questions. I generally like to sit with my students to make sure they understand the instructions.” James refers to Katheryn as a faculty member and content specialist. He stated, “I let Kathryn cover the material and I will go back and reteach the stuff she is doing (with my kids) at a different pace.

Leigh is a 35 year old white female who teaches four 11th grade regular English classes and two 11th grade honors English classes. She described herself as a faculty member, content specialist, disciplinarian, and motivator. In terms of a content specialist, she stated, “I get carried away and forget to turn it (lesson) over a lot of times to let her participate….I plan all the lessons and teach the lessons to the students. I do tell Louise my plans so that she can see if there are any accommodations we need to discuss.” Leigh describes Louise as a faculty member, content specialist, and assistant. In terms of an assistant, Leigh stated of Louise, “In truth, she feels more like an assistant if I’m being brutally honest. That is because that is the way I’ve set things up. I do all the planning and then tell her about it after the fact. She mainly monitors the students.”

Louise is a 47 year old white female special education teacher who co-teaches with Leigh and two other teachers. She describes herself as a faculty member, content specialist, and assistant. In terms of an assistant and content specialist, she stated, “Before class we (Leigh and

I) talk for a few minutes and I offer to help in certain ways. I am not a dominate person so I blend in most of the time and she (Leigh) takes charge…I might cut down the assignments or show her (Leigh) how to modify work." When discussing Leigh's knowledge of the content, Louise stated, "She knows the content and she wants to teach."

Louise was the only special education co-teacher that saw herself as an assistant. Louise was very accepting of this role and did view it as subordinate in the inclusion classroom. She viewed Leigh as a faculty member, content specialists and the teacher in charge.

Responsibilities

The participants described their responsibilities as specific tasks they conducted in preparation for their inclusion classes or while conducting their inclusion classes. Examples of responsibilities included student related tasks (planning lessons, creating student activities, lecturing, working with individual students, walking around the room monitoring students, reading to students, making sure students follow along with the reading) maintaining order (quieting students down from talking to loud, stopping students from horse play, and taking students in the hall to talk about inappropriate behavior), and managerial tasks (grading papers, giving out student papers, taking up student papers, taking attendance, calling parents, giving directions, modifying tests and assignments, scheduling the computer lab, and making copies.)

The responsibilities the participants' mentioned were numerous and varied greatly in the amount of time it took to perform the tasks to the efforts that were put into each task. Each task can be looked at as a symbol by the participants because all of these tasks have meanings for the teachers. Those meaning are evaluated and "stored" for the next encounter. For example, if a teacher plans a group activity for her students and after the activity, the teacher concludes the activity did not yield the results she desired; then, her expectations of the activity were not met. The teacher may try the activity as is with the next class of students, alter the activity for the next

class of students, or disregard the activity completely. The teacher's tasks were to design and execute a group activity with her students. The group activity had meaning and purpose. Because the teachers' expectations were not met, she will negotiate her decision to use the group activity with the next class.

The categories of roles and responsibilities developed into Theme I: responsive expectations and response to implementation of practices. In theme I, the participants discussed their current co-teaching partnerships. They discussed their roles and responsibilities and how their partner's roles and responsibilities influenced their attitudes toward their partners and their co-teaching practices.

Four Emerging Themes

Four themes emerged from the data analysis. The themes which emerged were 1) Responsive expectations and response to implementation of practices, 2) Contingent teaching practices, 3) Teachers' unmet needs, and 4) Teachers' professional growth through co-teaching experiences.

The first theme, responsive expectations and response to implementation of teaching practice, is centered on the current co-teaching partnerships and how their expectations of roles and responsibilities for themselves and their partners influence their practices and ideas of effective co-teaching.

The second theme, contingent teaching practices, is centered on the participants' explanations of how the students affect their teaching practices in the inclusion classrooms.

The third theme, teachers unmet needs, developed as a result of the teacher participants expressing needs specifically pertaining to inclusion that they feel would assist them doing a better job in their teaching practices.

The fourth theme, teachers' professional growth through co-teaching experiences, is centered on the participants' voices using direct quotes to explain their experiences with co-teaching and what they have learned from their co-teaching experiences.

Theme I: Responsive Expectations and Response to Implementation of Practices

Theme I, responsive expectations and response to implementation of practices, is centered on the expectations of the co-teaching partners as it relates to their roles and responsibilities which influence their teaching practices. While each participant felt he/she had specific roles and responsibilities in their inclusion classrooms, two of the partnerships agreed that their roles and responsibilities and the roles and responsibilities of their partner met their expectations and their practices were easily negotiated. The other two co-teaching partnerships could not find a balance in their actual roles and responsibilities thus their expectations were not shared causing a disconnected in their relationship and/or difficulties in their practices.

Shared expectations: Amanda, Charles and Jessica, and Barbara and Mary

Amanda Charles and Jessica, and Barbara and Mary viewed and expressed that they felt equal in their co-teaching partnerships. Their roles and responsibility differed however, the partners shared expectations of how a co-teaching partnership should work and the expectations they had of their partners in terms of roles and responsibilities were being met. Thus, their practices were easily negotiated and their partnership seemed functional and positive.

Amanda Charles and Jessica

Amanda Charles and Jessica co- teach in a 9th grade regular English class. There are 27 students in the classroom. As the content specialist, Amanda Charles expressed that she was responsible for taking a leading role in the operations of the class. She felt it was her responsibility to establish a routine for the students, teach the content, plan the activities, and decide how students would be assessed.

In my observation records, I noted:

Amanda Charles's actions were purposeful as she gave specific directions to the students for each transition time. Amanda Charles stated, "Students, get out your questions from yesterday's lesson so that we can go over them." After Amanda Charles finished going over the answers to the questions, she stated; "We are going to read aloud in our groups today. Turn to page 1100 in your literature book and begin reading." The students complied without discussion and it seemed that they were following a routine that had been previously established. I could tell that Amanda Charles had not only planned for the content but the students activities as well.

As the accommodations specialist, Jessica stated that she was responsible for ensuring students stayed on track and focused on the lesson, helping individual students, re-teaching material to the students who needed additional help, interjecting in teaching the lesson when appropriate, disciplining students who were disruptive in class, and making sure that students with IEPs were allowed the accommodations or modifications listed in their plans. Jessica stated, "Amanda Charles does the initial teaching and I walk around the room and help students and re-teach the content to individual students when necessary." In the observations, Jessica did not take an active role in the teaching. She attended to individual students, redirected students' attention back to the content teacher, and reprimanded students with words or sounds such as "Shhhhhh" for talking at inappropriate times or "Sit down now," for students who were wondering around the room. Additionally, I observed Jessica dividing her time between two groups. While with each group she would ask them questions to reinforce their content understanding and help the students with reading their passages.

Amanda Charles's and Jessica's partnership emulated several of the practices that can be carried out by co-teachers in inclusion classrooms as listed by Murawski and Dicker (2004). While Amanda Charles was lecturing, Jessica was helping students process the information. When Amanda Charles gave oral directions, Jessica repeated them and added clarification. When the students were reading in their groups, both teachers monitored and helped facilitate in the learning of the students.

Barbara and Mary

Barbara and Mary co-teach in an Algebra II math class. This class consists of 30 students in grades 10 – 12. As the content specialist, Barbara felt that it was her responsibility to take the leading role in the inclusion classroom. She would determine the content that would be taught for the week, plan different ways to deliver the lessons, choose which activities she would use with the students and decide how the students would be evaluated. After she made her lesson plans and the decisions that accompanied all the specific tasks involved, she would share them with Mary. Barbara stated, for example, "I will tell Mary we are having a test this Friday and what we are going to do to prepare the students for the test. If the plans alter, I will let her know. When I'm done with the planning, I will let her know what's going on so we can discuss it."

Mary takes on a very active role in the class. She showed no hesitations when she walked in the room before Barbara and got the students started on their daily activity. She did not gravitate toward any specific student or students. She circulated around the room helping all students equally. Mary stated, "I feel like we are a tag team. At this point we don't have to talk about it (the routine of the class or the teachers' individual responsibilities), it just kind of happens."

In one of Barbara's and Mary's observations, it was noted:

The tardy bell rings. The students are in their seats working on a daily starter which is written on the white board. Mary walks in and encourages the students to begin their work. She reads the first question out loud to help the students reflect and remember the content they worked on the day before. Barbara walks in the room and begins walking around the classroom monitoring the students and collecting their homework. Once she has accomplished this task, she takes over and leads the review and then begins the daily lesson. She gives a lecture while simultaneously showing a PowerPoint with examples. Mary walks around the room to help all students. As the students respond to Barbara's questions, both teachers give praise. Barbara continues with examples and states, "Thumbs up if you have this." Mary immediately walks to a student who does not have his thumb up and starts to help him. After the lecture, both teachers assist individual students as they work on their assignments.

In this observation, the special education teacher Mary, took the initiative and started the class without reservation. After Barbara finished her task, she took over the content instruction. At that point Mary immediately started walking around the class helping individual students. She did not sit down during the lesson. She would walk up and down each isles looking at each student's work. If she noticed that a student was off track, she would stop, squat down beside the student and explain the mathematical steps the general education teacher was teaching. When the student assured her that he understood the problem, she would continue to walk around the room monitoring each student.

Barbara and Mary demonstrate effective co-teaching practices. They are both playing an active role in the teaching process (Friend & Cook, 1992). While they understand, respect, and accept each other's' roles, it was evident that their practices are negotiated on a daily basis

depending on the circumstances of the day. They are flexible and their co-teaching partnership is positive.

For these two partnerships, it appears that the general education teachers, Amanda Charles and Barbara take on a majority of the work load in their inclusion classrooms in terms of planning, content delivery, and student evaluation while the special education teachers Jessica and Mary maintain the responsibility of assisting individual students during the lesson delivery and student activities. These four teacher participants realize that their workloads in terms of responsibility in their inclusion classrooms differ, however; their expectations are being met for their specific roles.

All four of these participants have over 10 years of teaching experiences. Their experiences seem to reflect a positive attitude toward working with a co-teacher in an inclusion classroom (Keefe & Moore, 2004). Amanda stated, "When Jessica first came to the classroom, I told her that this is our classroom. I encouraged her to get involved. I wanted her to be just as involved as I am. I also told her it's a team effort. I will work with the students who have IEPs and she will work with the general education students. It's a team effort. We stay positive and the students notice that." Barbara stated; "With co-teaching, we (Mary and I) go into the classroom and give the kids the idea that we are both teachers. I am not the head and my co-teacher is not just here to assist. We go in as both teachers and lead the classroom and that get respect (from the students) for both teachers when we are working together to help the students out." Van Reusen, Shoho, and Baker (2001) affirmed in their research that high school teachers' positive attitudes toward inclusion are directly linked to their experiences in the classroom and with special needs students.

The two co-teaching partnerships above have shared expectations which directly benefit their students. This finding affirms established research. It has been documented that time, communication, organization, honesty, respect, and clear roles reap benefits for the co-teachers and students alike. With effective co-teachers, students show academic improvement which is attributed to more teacher time and attention to individual students, better progress monitoring, and enriched opportunities (Friend & Cook, 1992, Pugach & Johnson, 1995, Walter-Thomas, Bryant, & Land 1996).

Unshared expectations: Kathryn and James, and Leigh and Louise

For Kathryn and James, and Leigh and Louise, their partnerships differ from the two previous partnerships mentioned. Their partnerships are fragmented by the roles and responsibilities they assumed as opposed to what their partner believes should be their roles and responsibilities. In other words, each teacher's expectations of their partner are not being met in terms of responsibilities.

Kathryn and James

Kathryn and James co-teach together in two physical science classes. The two observations for this partnership took place on different days but of the same class. There are 14 students in this class. As the content teachers Kathryn has been told she is responsible for all planning and class activities. Kathryn stated, "The message I have gotten from the principal is that they are my classes and I am responsible for 100% of the work in there. I am not sure how that is supposed to work if I'm supposed to have a collaborative teacher. I would rather not be told it's a collaborative class. Because if there is not going to be a division of labor, then that changes the dynamics in there. My partner should do more than just walk around the room and help individual students." Kathryn acknowledges James as a colleague but does not feel their responsibilities are divided equally. Kathryn stated, "James is a faculty member however we do

not share equal responsibilities and this becomes problematic." In the class observations, I noted on one occasion:

The bell rings. Both teachers are already in the classroom. As the students walk into the room, the general education teacher tells them, "Find your seat." The students soon settle down and they are all in their seats. The general education teacher tells the students they are going to watch a 5-6 minute refresher video on atoms. The students are only required to watch the video. During the video, the special needs teacher is sitting at the back row with two male students. He is trying to keep them focused on the video. After the video, the general education teacher asked the students follow up and clarification questions. She asked the students many times if they understood the video and the content they were discussing. When she was satisfied that students comprehended the information, she gave them a work sheet to complete individually. The special needs teacher continued to work with the two males on the back row.

When I asked Kathryn the question, "How do you and your co-teaching partner negotiate your roles and responsibilities? She replied, "That is something I've been asking all along. I've tried to talk with my co-teacher about this 30 – 40 times last semester with no avail. So I finally talked to the special education department chair and she said I needed to tell my co-teaching partner what to do. That has not worked. For example, I asked him to call the parents only of the special needs students and I would call the regular education students' parents and he just didn't do it. I asked him to put the grades in the computer for the four AOD kids and he did not do it. So, that model of me telling him what I need him to do does not work out. Nor has it worked out for me to hope that he would offer to help me in any way. He has not offered to make copies, grade, call parents, staple or any of the other duties that go with teaching which I have found highly problematic. I had to bring it to the attention of the principal and the directory

of special education. She has sort of negotiated those things with him and is guiding him to understand that he needs to do more than just walk around the room and help individual students."

Kathryn went into great detail about her current partnership and reasons why she felt this partnership was fragmented in terms of shared expectations. Kathryn listed four reasons she felt her partnership with James was not working in terms of shared expectations of their roles and responsibilities. Kathryn listed lack of presence, lack of shared standards, lack of communication, and division of labor as the major contributors to the failure of the partnership.

Kathryn stated, "First, there is a real lack of presence (for James) in the classroom. My partner is only in the class half the time. 99% of the time he is not in the class with me, I have no idea of he is going to be there or not. This leads to a lot of problems. For one, it's just the lack of continuity with the students. Every day the students don't do well with change. They are asking where he is and I have no idea. The students ask "Is he going to be here to help me?" And I have to tell them I don't know. Even if I am told, that leads to problems if we had already made plans to split the kids up to work with them in groups or split the lesson. If he doesn't show up, I'm left to figure our something on my own which is really problematic."

Secondly, Kathryn stated, "We have a lack of shared standards. If you look at what collaboration means anyway, it is a sharing of goals. If you really don't share your purpose or ideas about being there, or ideas like grading, or academic integrity, this can lead to a lot of conflict because you are looking at your purpose for being there."

"Third, we have a lack of communication. This is a big issue we must address."

Lastly, Kathryn stated, "Forth, we have a division of labor issue. Out of the 100 days we have been in school, he and I have only planned together twice. The message I have gotten from

the principal is that these are my classes and I am 100% responsible for them. Because there is no division of labor, it changes our dynamics."

Kathryn realizes the dynamics of a co-teaching partnership is important for effective co-teaching practices. Additionally she stressed that students are not blind to the relationships of the co-teachers in the inclusion classroom. Kathryn stated, "A good co-teaching partnership can be really easy and productive for the students and teachers however, a bad partnership can be really terrible. It (problematic partnerships) can be difficult and stressful and more problems that it actually helps. This comes across to students. If two people are not very well matched and you don't share goals and visions for the course and kids, then it leads to and undertone of tensions and that is not good for the students or anybody involved." Kathryn is obviously greatly disappointed in the dynamics of her current co-teaching partnership.

James also recognizes that the partnership is fragmented in terms of unmet expectations. James stated "I let Kathryn cover the material and I will go back and re-teach the stuff she is doing to my students at a different pace. My primary job is to make sure the special needs students understand what's going on. I'm also there for the general education students too, but my main focus is on the special needs students and making sure all their accommodations are being met and that their IEPs are being followed and to help control the class for the content teacher."

James also mentioned that he and his partner did not always agree and the special education director was called in to talk with both he and Kathryn. James stated, "The special education director tried to bounce off ideas about effective co-teaching. The director also showed us the PowerPoint she showed this summer during a workshop about different ways we

can co-teach." Both James and Kathryn mentioned the special education director was called in to assist them with their co-teaching practices which indicated their partnership was in distress.

Kathryn's frustrations for the most part are directed toward her partner because she feels she does all the work and she and James do not share expectations or vision for the class. James's frustrations are attributed to being pulling out of class unexpectedly and his lack of planning time. As James believes his special needs students are this "primary job," he does not worry about being out of the inclusion classes if he is helping one of students on this caseload. James stated. "The problem is that I can get pulled out at any time for a meeting and my co-teachers get frustrated. Sometimes I can't be there (in the inclusion classroom) and they feel they (my co-teaching partners) can't address the students I general deal with. That makes it difficult. Not knowing when I am going to be pulled our makes it frustrating for both of us but I am being pulled out for good reasons." As an anecdotal note, one of the administrators mentioned that James had a case load that consisted of 9th and 10th graders. The administrator also mentioned that the students on his case load seemed to have more difficulties and behavioral problems than the students on the other teachers' caseloads.

James also stated that he does not have a planning time. "I teach softball during my planning period." Looking at the master schedule, James has his planning time 7th period which is the last class of the day. His planning period coincides with the 7th period softball class. The head softball coach is assigned to the softball class. James is an assistant coach and is not assigned to the softball class. James chooses to assist with the softball class 7th period rather than use that time for planning.

Referring to communication with co-teaching partners, James stated, “If teachers need to communicate with me, they can e-mail me. Or maybe I can meet with them in the mornings or right before class.”

James acknowledges, “Sometimes our (my co-teaching partner and I) ideas conflict and if we can’t work it out, we try to act professional and move on.” James has strong philosophy that his primary focus is on his special needs students. He describes himself as an accommodations specialist and the majority of his responsibilities are attached to the needs of his students. An example of one of his responsibilities is to sit with his students and make sure they behave.

Kathryn’s expectations of James’s involvement in the co-teaching partnership are not being met. She would like him to be more active in the planning, class activities, and increase interactions with all students. While Kathryn expresses frustration with the co-teaching practices and would like to see James take a greater role in the classroom, James express neutrality and contentment with the way things are.

Leigh and Louise

Leigh and Louise realize that their responsibilities are unequal in their inclusion classroom and this leads to unshared expectation, especially for Leigh. Louise seems to be comfortable with her roles and responsibilities but for Leigh, co-teaching is not what she was taught or what she expected. She blames herself for the inequity of their relationship.

Leigh stated in her interview, “In truth, Louise feels more like an assistant if I’m being brutally honest. That is because that is the way I’ve set things up. I’ve done my planning and then I let her know what my plans are after I’ve done it. We do talk about the accommodations after the fact but I make the lesson plans. When I think of partnership, I think of two people (co-

partners) making plans from beginning to end together. The way I have set it up is I do the plans and show them to her and we discuss accommodations. In that sense, she is more assisting me."

In one of Leigh's and Louise's observations, it was noted:

The tardy bell rings and all of the students are in their seats. The general education teacher gives the students instructions for the warm up activity which is on the board. The special needs teacher stands to the side of the classroom and observes. The general education teacher takes role on the computer and then begins to walk around the room to help individual students. The general education teacher walks to the front of the class and leads the class discussion. She read a poem and then talks to the class about the meaning of the poem. The special needs teacher walks to the front of the class and watches the class. The general education teacher then divides the class into eight groups for a group activity. Each group is assigned to work at a station. The students will rotate to the next station when the general education teacher tells them to "rotate." The general education teacher then walks around to each group stopping to see if they need assistance. If they need assistance, she stops and helps them. The special education teacher walks to a group which has an English Language Learner. The special education teacher helps the student look up vocabulary words on the student's cell phone. The general education teacher directs the rotation of the groups and explains what she would like each group to do in terms of presenting the materials at their station.

When I asked Louise about her roles and responsibilities as a co-teaching partner, she stated, "I am more of an assistant. My role is to help the autistic student. I'm not the dominant person so I blend in most of the time." Louise is fairly content with having the role of assistant.

There are also unmet expectations in Leigh's and Louise's co-teaching partnership. While Leigh accepts her roles and responsibilities as well as Louise's roles and responsibilities,

Leigh expectations that she and her partner would plan together, teach together, and assess students together are not being met. Leigh stated that she had high expectation of how co-teaching would work from what she had heard in her college class, but what she expected is not reality. She puts blame on herself for taking control and not including Louise.

Louise also accepts the roles and responsibilities of the partnership. Louise is responsible for walking around the class and monitoring students or helping an individual student while Leigh plans and executes the lessons. This meets Louise's expectations. Louise stated that she has learned from her experiences. Her experiences maybe limited to an assistant role and that is the role that was negotiated and accepted by Leigh. Both of these partners have positive attitudes. Leigh and Louise accept each other's roles and responsibilities however Leigh's expectations of co-teaching practices in her inclusion class are not being met.

Summary

The two general education teachers, Kathryn and Leigh, see themselves as doing a majority, if not all, of the work for their inclusion classes and having a greater amount of responsibility than their assigned partner. Kathryn and Leigh both feel their partnership is fragmented and they have uneven feelings of equality in terms of the partnership responsibilities. Kathryn and Leigh feel their expectations of the partnerships have not been met.

Unshared expectations for these two co-teaching partnerships were based on the partners' unequal responsibilities, different work ethics, and different educational ideologies. Dieker and Murawski (2003) noted special education teachers previously geared their efforts toward small self-contained classes or working with individual students. In theme III, you will read that Louise did not have inclusion training in college. Her training focused only on self-contained classes. She has had to learn about inclusion and co-teaching from her own work experiences. Not being properly trained to work with a co-teacher could explain why Louise feels fairly

satisfied being an assistant and not seeking to take on a greater leadership role in her inclusion classes. She prefers to work with smaller groups or individual students rather than large classes.

Katheryn's and James's partnership reflects the findings in Scruggs, Mastropieri, and McDuffie (2011), Research to Practice study. Mastropieri and McDuffie concluded that there must be compatibility of teachers. "Teachers spoke frequently of the importance of personal compatibility between co-teachers as well as similar philosophies toward teaching and students. Compatibility requires more than simply two teachers who are willing to be partnered as co-teachers. They have to share a motivation to make the partnership work and an agreement about how the class will be structured and each person's role in teaching and planning, and behavior management" (p. 3). Additionally, for teachers who have a negative classroom atmosphere or an attitude of intolerance toward their co-teaching partner can undermine inclusion efforts (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2001).

The type of partnership Kathryn and James have is not unique at the high school level. Partnerships like theirs are actually quite common. Kathryn wishes that James would take on more responsibilities in the planning and delivery of the lessons. She has become frustrated because she has exhausted all possibilities to get James involved. She has tried to ask him to do tasks, allowed him opportunities to volunteer for tasks, and appealed to the principal and special education director for assistance to increase his involvement. Because of the inequality Kathryn sees in their responsibilities; she would rather not be called a collaborative teacher. James did not indicate that Kathryn takes on a majority of the work in their partnership. He stated, "I let her teach the content." He sees them as having two separate roles in the inclusion class and he is fulfilling his responsibilities. James did acknowledge in his interview, "We (Kathryn and I do have conflicts and disagreements."

Theme II: Contingent Teaching Practices

While teachers take on roles and responsibilities in the inclusion classrooms, it is actually the students in the inclusion classroom that can drive co-teachers' practices. Practices are affected by the number of students in the inclusion classroom and the accommodation and modifications which are listed in the IEPs of the special needs students in the inclusion classrooms.

Inclusion classrooms

Inclusion, "Refers to the instruction of all students with and without disabilities, in the general education classroom, unless substantial evidence is provided to show that such a placement would not be in the student's best interest" (Learning Disabilities Association (LDA), 1993; U.S. Department of Education 1999).

The teacher participants at Main Street High School give similar responses when asked to define inclusion. Leigh stated, "I think inclusion is all different types of learners with different abilities in one classroom. It is the least restrictive environment to allow them (special needs students) the opportunity to interact with their peers." Barbara stated, "I feel inclusion is a classroom setting where the special education population is included within the general population. They are learning together in the same classroom. They are blended and we don't section off or isolate the special needs students in the class."

In the 1990's, inclusion became the standard practice for ensuring special needs students received an education in the least restrictive environment which equated to scheduling special needs students in general education classrooms to receive their education. Unless there is evidence that a special needs student should not be placed in a general education classroom (because placing a student in a general education classroom is not in his/her best interest), special needs students are required by law to receive their education in the least restrictive school

environment which in most cases is a general education classroom (Osgood, 2005, Torreno, 2012, Lewis & Doorlag, 1999, and Lipsky & Gartner, 1989)

The teacher participants were in agreement when discussing the fact that the students themselves influence their co-teaching practices in their inclusion classrooms. Student factors cited by the participants which they deemed as influential to their teaching practices were 1) number of students scheduled in an inclusion classes (special needs and general education students and 2) the different accommodations and modifications required for each special needs student in the inclusion classroom.

Number of students scheduled in the inclusion classrooms

The master class schedule for Main Street High School was made by the administrators. Students were advised by their teachers about which classes to take and then they signed up for the classes on their registration cards. Administrators review registration cards of future 9th graders to ensure the students were are placed in the correct classes. Jessica states, "The administrators look at the IEPs and 8th grade schedules of the middle school students who are coming up to the high school and use those to help make sure students are placed in the right classes."

The number of students who registered for a class determines how many classes will 'make' in a particular subject. While the ideal high school academic content class size is twenty-five students, class sizes can range from eleven to thirty-seven students at Main Street High School (Main Street master schedule). For the most part, special education students and general education students are scheduled for classes at the same time. The administrators look at each registration card and input the class codes into a computer program which will generate the classes. There is no set percentage of special education students to general education students in an inclusion classroom.

Smaller inclusion classes allow the co-teachers to give the students more individual attention. Furthermore, the co-teachers should be able to assess the students' mastery of the content more often. Larger class sizes do not allow for the same amount of individual student attention that the students in the smaller inclusion classes enjoy. Ellett (1993) suggested that high school teachers might be less willing to make accommodations for students with learning disabilities because of large class sizes. Keefe and Moore (2004) agreed that large high school classes make it difficult to meet the needs of the students. The teachers realize the content is not to be altered however the delivery of the material can take on different forms depending on the amount of students in the inclusion classroom.

Students determine co-teachers' schedules

At this school, the scheduling of the special education co-teachers is for the most part determined by the special education students' schedules. As stated by Mary, "The special needs co-teaches are, for the most part assigned to an academic department such as math, English, science, or social studies except one who co-teaches with different 9th grade teachers in the 9th grade academy. We are assigned to a department and then we also teach tutoring classes as well. We co-teach with teachers in our departments but sometimes we co-teach in other content areas too." Once the master schedule has been made and classes have their roster of students, the administrator and special education department chair discuss the inclusion classes with the greatest need of co-teaching partnerships. Scheduling factors for the placement of special needs teachers depend on "the number of special needs students assigned to a class, the degree of disabilities within a classroom, and the general makeup of the class as far as the personalities of the students and how they interact with their peers," stated Mary.

Individualized education programs

Once the students are scheduled in classes and the co-teaching partnerships have been assigned, the teachers must review the Individualized Education Programs for special needs students in their inclusion classrooms. Jessica stated "we (the special education teachers) give each teacher (general education) a copy of the IEPs of the special needs students they have on their roster. We will talk to the teachers and go over the accommodations. During the semester we (the special education teacher and the general education teacher) review the IEPs and if a student is struggling, we will have to reassess what we have done (strategies used) and what we may need to change for the student to be successful."

All of the teacher participants have an understanding of the purpose of an Individualized Educational Program. Amanda Charles stated, "An IEP is a plan designed specifically for a student and how to accommodate the student's needs specifically in the classroom. It has background information about the student and what accommodations can be used in the classroom to help the student be successful." Barbara stated, "An IEP is basically a plan that is set up to aid or cater to the specific needs of the special education student. Sometimes it includes behavior and a plan we can do in order to prevent bad behavior in the classroom. We do utilize the IEP a lot for accommodations. The accommodations are the things that will help them succeed."

Defined by the United States Department of Education, an IEP is used to address each child's unique learning issues and include specific educational goals. The IEP is a legally binding document. Each IEP must contain 1) a statement of the student's present level of performance, 2) the student's annual educational goals, 3) special education supports and services that the school will provide to help the student reach goals, 4) modifications and accommodations the school will provide to help the student make progress, 5) how and when

the school will measure the student's progress toward the annual goals, and 6) transition planning that prepares the student for life after high school (IDEA, 2013).

Because the IEPs are individualized to the specific needs of each special needs student, there can be a wide variety of accommodations or modifications that must be made by the teachers in the inclusion classroom. Barbara stated, "In one class we have visual learners, hands on learners, and audio learners so we have to hit on everything. Our lessons have to accommodate all kinds of learners." Amanda Charles stated, "For the most part, I have learned to incorporate all kinds of accommodations in my classroom so all students can benefit. For example, I will always give oral directions but then I will write the directions down on the white board for the visual learners but this accommodation really benefits all of the students." Jessica stated that she spends a lot of time cutting down the amount of work for an assignment or test for the special needs students who had this particular modification listed in their IEPs. She stated, "For the modification of cutting down the amount of work, instead of thirty questions on a worksheet, I will cut that number down to fifteen. I will do the same on a test. A student might have to do three questions to show mastery instead of 5. Some students need me to read the test to them or I will have to take them to a quiet place that doesn't have distractions." Jessica also explains, "The students might need more accommodations in one classroom than in another. It really depends on the students. Some students have behavior based problems and not necessarily academic problems. Sometimes I have to sit with a student and redirect them to stop them from a bad behavior like cursing."

Depending on the written accommodations and modifications in the individual students' IEPs, the teachers can take on a greater demand or work load to meet the needs of specific

students. While both co-teachers are responsible for these accommodations, the bulk of the work tends to be placed on or assumed by the special needs teachers.

In an observation of Kathryn and James, it was noted:

Kathryn and James have the students in the computer lab. Kathryn is giving the instructions to a computer activity to the students orally and visually using a PowerPoint presentation. James stands to the side of the lab and listens as Kathryn gives the directions. Once the students are told to start on their assignment, James walks to the back of the computer lab and sits down with three male students. He settles them down and then he and the three students begin working on the assignment, one step at a time. James will tell them what to do, the students will do as they are told, and then James will give them directions about the next step. James spends more than half of this time with these three students and once they have completed the activity, James circulates around the room to help other students……. During this time, Kathryn is doing managerial tasks such as taking attendance and taking up homework while circulating around the room monitoring the other students as they work.

The special needs teachers in this study all expressed that the special needs students in the inclusion classroom are their first priority. Jessica stated "I like to have all the special needs students in the back with me so I am keeping them on track and talking to them and try not to disrupt any students on the other side of the room." In an observation of Amanda Charles and Jessica, it was noted:

Amanda Charles divided the students into seven small groups, 3 to 4 students at each table. Jessica divided her time between two groups and later stated that those two groups were her special needs students. Jessica would sit down with each group, listen to them read, assist them with words they didn't know, read aloud to them, or answer questions they had about the

assignment. A couple of times she sat beside a male student and would point her finger to the words in his book so he could follow along as someone else in the group read aloud. Several times she would have to redirect the group she was not sitting with, asking them to quiet down, stop talking, or sit down. Amanda Charles spent her time divided between the other five groups. She would walk around and listen to each group as they read or discussed the content. Her role was more to monitor the students as they worked in their groups. Amanda Charles' assumed a passive role while Jessica was very active with her two groups.

Like Jessica, Mary, James, and Louise expressed that their first responsibility was ensuring the success of the special needs students in the inclusion classroom. Mary stated in her interview, "First I make sure the students I am in there for – their needs are met. I will also help all the other kids too." James stated, "My primary job is to make sure the special need students understand what's going on. I'm also there for the general education students too, but my main focus is on the special needs students and making sure all their accommodations are being met. I have to make sure the IEPs are being followed and I help control the class for the content teacher." Additionally, James commented on the attention needed for students who had behavior plans. He stated, "Some special needs students have behavior plans attached to their IEP which require the teachers to follow certain procedures to help the student remain on track as well as remain in the classroom. Sometimes it takes a lot of time to calm a student down." Behavior plans can add extra behavior accommodations for the teacher to prepare and follow which can be additional work.

Louise also spends a majority of her time in the classroom assisting the special needs students. She stated, "My main role in the math inclusion class is to help the autistic student."

All of the teacher participants have discussed feeling responsible for their students. This is especially true of special needs teachers. The special education teacher participants all express the view that special needs students in the inclusion classrooms are their priority. The special education teachers are the experts when it comes to making sure IEPs are being following and the special needs students' requirements are being met so that they can be successful in their classes.

Theme III: Teachers' Unmet Needs

Teachers' past teaching experiences greatly affect their current teaching practices. Two of the challenges or unmet needs the secondary co-teacher participants vocalized during their interviews were 1) the facts that they realize there is not adequate training provided for them about inclusion and 2) they feel like their autonomy is limited in terms of making decisions and with more freedom, they could greatly improve their inclusion practices.

Training

The teacher participants discussed the importance of training in their interviews as it pertained to inclusion. The first aspect of training they discussed was their exposure of lack of exposure to the topic of inclusion in their college classes. The second was their experience or lack of experiences with professional development provided by the school or school system.

College training

The teacher participants who graduated from college fewer than 15 years ago, (Amanda Charles, Barbara, James, and Leigh) all stated they learned about inclusion in college. Barbara stated, "I first learned about inclusion in college when I was taking education classes. I don't remember the name of the class but we learned about the different types of inclusion…full blown inclusion and included and pull out." While these teachers stated that they had learned about

inclusion or discussed inclusion in their college classes, they admit that they did not role play or practice any of the techniques that co-teachers use in inclusion classrooms.

Jessica, Mary, Kathryn, and Louise, the teachers which attended college more than 15 years ago did not receive inclusion information or training in college. Jessica stated, "My understandings of inclusion basically came from experience. When I started 16 years ago, we only had self-contained." Mary explained, "When I was in school we did not have inclusion. We were all self-contained. So later they changed to inclusion so I had to learn about it through my own experiences on the job." Kathryn stated, "Well, back when the dinosaurs roamed, they may have mentioned it in college. I don't remember. But really, I've learned about inclusion through my experiences for 23 years. It has evolved. We have gone away from self-contained classrooms to including all students together for a variety of reasons. I'm learning about inclusion every day through my experiences." Louise also learned from her own experiences. When she started teaching, her areas were mental retardation, and other health impairments. Students with these disabilities were self-contained. She stated that she didn't learn about inclusion until much later in her career.

Looking at the years of experience for the teacher participants, you can tell which ones attended college before the 1990's, before IEDA, and which ones attend college after. Time is the common factor when it comes to college training or information given to students about inclusion.

Professional Development

Scruggs, Mastropieri, and McDuffie (2011) reported in their research, teachers conveyed receiving very little training or professional development to prepare them for co-teaching. Many teachers would have like training in collaboration, co-teaching models, communication skills,

and inclusive practices to help them work together and in each other's areas of expertise. The teacher participants in this study expressed the same sentiments.

Amanda Charles, Barbara, Mary and James stated that they had received inclusion professional development from the school system. Amanda Charles stated, "I went to a one-day training from 8:00am – 3:00pm. The speaker talked to us and told us different strategies we could use not only to benefit the special needs students but all the students. That was 11 years ago. I have not had any training since then. But, I would like to think that first year teachers have some type of training or professional development before they get a collaborative teacher."

Barbara's experience is much like Amanda Charles', "I remember when I first started teaching, I went to a workshop that addressed inclusion and since I've been working, I have not been to anymore. They still may be doing it for new teachers. I just don't know."

Mary stated, "This summer we had a whole day of professional development to review it (inclusion). All the special education teachers were asked to attend and some regular education teachers were asked to attend too. It was hard to do that (training) this summer because the master class schedule was not finished. The regular education teachers did not know if they were going to have a co-teacher with them or if they were going to have an inclusion classroom."

James also discussed the summer professional development session. "We got trained this summer on how co-teaching should be done and learned about several models that they expected to see when they come to the classroom. They gave us a big packet and we saw a PowerPoint and got a check list of who was responsible for what in the classroom; basically, how to work with your co-teacher. The teacher I collaborated with last year attended but the two teachers I am with this year did not attend. The schedule was not made then."

The general education and special education teachers all agree that they would greatly appreciate and benefit from more training. Leigh stated, "I need more professional development on accommodation and modifications. I need to know what works best with different students' needs like low reading level students. I want to be able to help all my students." Kathryn stated, "Certainly as a general education teacher of 23 years, I've gotten zero (professional development training for inclusion). I would love to have some training. I need more tips on how to work well with a co-teacher."

The feelings were mutual among the special needs teacher participants when it came to content subject matter. Mary stated, "I could use more training in math. It's important for me to know the content. I can't teach or reteach the material to the kids if I don't know it myself." Louise stated, "You would be miserable if you didn't know the content. I can be a much more effective co-teacher if I know the content. I have not had any official training in any content area. I only know what I learn in the classroom. Some additional training (in the content area) would be a huge plus."

The participants would like a variety of professional development opportunities that are not necessarily limited to the art of co-teaching in the inclusion classroom. Because teachers have extensive training in their content or specialty area, they realize the importance of having training in additional areas in which they may feel weak (Scruggs, Mastropieri, and McDuffie, 2011). Additional training in areas of weakness will help them in their jobs and thus benefit the students. The general education teachers are comfortable with their content and realize the need to be trained not only about accommodation and modification but how to work with a co-teacher in an inclusion classroom. The special needs teachers are confident in their understandings of different disabilities and how to accommodate students' needs however, they lack the content

knowledge. The participants understand the advantages of being trained in the area of inclusion and other specific areas to make them better teachers and co-teachers.

Autonomy

As stated in chapter two, the nature of the high school setting may present challenges for co-teaching partnerships. Some of the challenges the high school co-teachers face are large emphasis on content, students need for independent student skills, a faster pace of instruction, high stakes testing, less positive attitudes of the teachers, class size, the large amount of students a teacher sees in a day, unclear roles of the general and special education teachers, and the teachers' need for autonomy in their own classroom (Mastropieri & Scruggs 2001, Smith, 1997, and Moore & Keefe, 2001).

Secondary teachers' enjoy a great amount of autonomy within their classroom. The curriculum establishes the foundation of the content which is to be taught. The teacher has the freedom to decide how to teach the content, what student activities will use, if any, and which assessments will be used to measure students' mastery. However, when it comes to inclusion classrooms and working with a co-teacher, this freedom can be circumscribed. The general education and special education teacher participants expressed their desire to have more decision making authority concerning the master schedule and who they would have as their co-teaching partners.

Autonomy of Scheduling

Although the master schedule is made by the administrators, the special and general education teachers would like their voices heard when it comes to scheduling students in inclusion classes and adding co-teaching planning times to the master schedule.

Scheduling students. Some of the participants felt special needs students could be scheduled into classes with more thought or consideration given to their individual needs.

Additionally, the participants felt the classes were overcrowded which affected their teaching effectiveness.

Mary stated, “Next year I want to do scheduling differently. I want to schedule all of our students (special education students) first and then go back in and schedule the general education students. This way the special needs students will be spread more equitably. I will work with the counselors and administrators to try to make this happen.”

Kathryn expressed that the scheduling of students in inclusion classes was a “matter of great stress” to her. She stated, “Whoever is in charge of scheduling chooses to put a lot of students who need extra help, such as the students in my science classes. Two of my three classes are inclusion classes. It’s not just special needs students in the class; it’s also repeating students, discipline students, and students that are maybe coming back from drug rehab. It makes it really tough to have all those kids in class together but my guess is from the administrative stand point, if there are two teachers in the classroom, then we can put a lot of students in there that need a lot of attention.” Kathryn would like the extra attention of the co-teacher going to the special needs students and she stated that if the majority of the teachers’ energy is spent on managing behavior problems, then the special education students are not getting what they need. She would like the administrators to pay more attention to the students they are scheduling in the inclusion classrooms.

As mentioned earlier, Main Street High School is overcrowded with students thus causing overcrowding in the classrooms. Three of the four classes I observed had over 25 students in the classrooms. Mary would like to see a better division of the special needs students in the inclusion classrooms. Kathryn expressed a desire to have fewer students in the inclusion classrooms and expressing her discontent that “most of the time, the inclusion

classrooms with co-teachers seems to be a 'catch all' for students who are repeaters or behavior problems."

Scheduling a planning time. One of the greatest needs expressed by both general and special needs co-teachers alike was to have common planning time with their partners.

When it comes to adding a co-teaching planning time to the master schedule, Amanda Charles stated, "I would like to schedule a common planning time just for me and my co-teacher to sit down and plan so I don't feel like I'm the only one doing the planning. A co-teacher planning period would be nice." Mary's statement also affirmed, "It would help if we had a common planning time with our teachers but that doesn't always happen. If we could do the planning together, I would know more quickly what we are doing instead of finding out at the last minute."

Jessica stated. "I would like a time to just meet and talk with the teachers. I have five co-teaching partners so if I could meet with them and get their lesson plans before we start the unit I could prepare myself better." Additionally Jessica stated, "Currently one of my co-teachers has her planning time during my math tutoring class. Sometimes she will come to my class and will bring me stuff (assignments) my students need to make up. While she is there, we will plan and discuss any changes that we need to make in our inclusion class. She will get my input and it makes me feel like a part of a team." These comments by Jessica express the strong need for a designated co-teacher planning time. Jessica noted she planned with another teacher during one of her own tutoring classes. By planning with a co-teacher during her math tutoring class, she is taking away time which could be spend helping individual students. However, this is how Jessica negotiates her time because she feels planning with a co-teacher is important as well. By being a part of the planning process, Jessica feels like she is part of a team.

The statements listed above echo the literature, (Scruggs, Mastropieri, and McDuffie (2011), and Dieker & Murawski (2003, 2004), and Keefe & Moore (2004) which indicates teachers consistently report the lack of enough planning time for them and their co-teaching partner in their inclusion classrooms. Most co-teachers plan in-between classes, during lunch, in the morning before school starts or at the end of the day after the final bell. These times are not properly allocated planning times for teachers. Planning is a crucial element for the success secondary co-teaching partnerships (Friend & Cook, 1997).

Autonomy of choosing co-teaching partners

The teacher participants recognized that everyone is different, everyone has their own teaching style, and everyone has their own way of dealing with students and the different situations that happen on a daily basis in the school setting. Sometimes these differences can affect co-teachers' practices and their relationships in a negative way. Scruggs, Mastropieri, and McDuffie (2011) stated that one of the requirements of successful co-teaching was to allow the teachers voluntary participation in co-teaching and a choice of co-teaching partner. These researchers stated that if a teacher is forced into co-teaching or paired with someone he or she has no desire to work with, the results can be disastrous. On the other hand, two co-teachers may share educational ideologies, teaching styles, and goals and have a perfect partnership like peanut butter and jelly. These positive partnerships benefit students and teachers alike (Friend & Cook, 1992).

Mary, Kathryn and James expressed the desire to choose their co-teaching partners. Mary stated, "I think it would help to get to choose our collaborative partners. Through my experiences, I can work well with some partners and it's easy. We are going in the same direction. With other partners, it's not so easy." Kathryn stated, "I think the administrators

should try to match teachers better based on their personalities, and academic and behavior ideologies. I would like to be asked who I would like to partner with and I would also like input about how many inclusion classes I teach." James would also like to choose his partners but puts it in prospective as he stated, "Regardless if you get along or not (with your co-teaching partner), you still have to be professional and be there for the kids."

Theme IV – Teachers' Professional Growth Through Co-teaching Experiences

"Life is the art of drawing without an eraser" (John Gardner).

Once we interact or have experiences with people or things, we develop meanings for those encounters or symbols as coined by Mead and Blumer. We carry those meanings with us until our next encounter when our meaning may change or remain the same (Blumer, 1969). The teacher participants were all eager to tell me about their past co-teaching experiences and what they had learned from them. Several participants also delighted in telling me how they have changed because of the experiences and knowledge.

Below, the data is presented by individual participant. I asked the participants to first tell me about their experiences with co-teaching and secondly, I asked them what they had learned from their co-teaching experiences. Some participants explained what they had learned in terms of tasks which can make their jobs better in terms of working with future co-teaching partners while others focused their learning around students and student engagement.

Amanda Charles – general education teacher

Amanda Charles shared her experiences and what she had learned, "I've had good experiences. I've had four different co-teachers in my 11 years here. We were all on the same page with the same goals which is the success of the students. It requires a lot of collaboration, communication, and planning. We don't have a lot of planning time so I try to get my lesson plans done over the weekend and then try to communicate what the lesson plan is for the week to

my co-teacher……. I've learned that when they (special education co-teachers) first come in, I tell them that this is our classroom and I encourage them to get involved. I want them to be just as involved as I am. Even though time is short, I make time to talk with her about how to do projects and other classroom activities. I've also learned how to work with someone else and how to share my classroom and my students with other teachers. I don't want them to feel I'm just there for my students."

Jessica – special education teacher

Jessica explained, "At my previous school some teachers were more open to co-teaching where I would teach right alongside the general education teacher and in another teacher's class, we worked together and she or I would deliver the content and the other would walk around the room and assist individual students and we will both reteach the content. A lot that I experience here is just walking around the room and helping students and backing up the teacher or re-teaching the material…….. I have learned that kids will be kids and I think it (co-teaching) is highly effective for some of our students because we have a lot of students who struggle. For the lower students, it's really hard for them unless there is a very good relationship between the general and special education teachers. The teachers have to understand that you sometimes have to change strategies and instruction and not content. Changing the types of instructions you use is important. You cannot do all lecture and notes and worksheets. You have to change the way you teach students using group work, auditory, visual, games, hands on… all different things to make all of them successful."

Barbara – general education teacher

Barbara stated, "My experience with co-teaching is that we must go into the classroom and give the kids the idea that we are both teachers. I am not the head and my co-teacher is not

just here to assist. We go in as both teachers leading the classroom. I think that gets respect for both teachers when both are working together and helping them (students) out. As with working with the co-teacher, we will stand in the hall waiting for the kids to come in and we will discuss the agenda for the day and more than likely, I will have the agenda on the wall the first day of the week for the entire week so my partner will know what's going on and I try to communicate a lot what the plan is for the day and when tests are coming up so she can be prepared…….I have learned to be open with my classroom and work with someone else who takes a lead in my classroom instead of the class just depending on me. I've learned how to communicate and stay on top of everything. That's the main thing. We want to set the tone for the beginning of the class and end in the same way. We should both have important roles in the students' learning process."

Mary – special education teacher

Mary stated that her experiences have been positive for the most part. She stated, "All of the teachers are different. I just want to do what's best for the students. When I'm in Algebra 2, I feel Barbara explains the content initially and then after I listen to it, I can help the students. Sometimes I have content questions and I ask the questions to Barbara in from of the class because the students probably have the same questions and many times they are too afraid to raise their hands and ask questions……. I've learned to be very laid back and go with the flow and not let things get to me. I've also learned that I need to talk to my co-teacher(s) if I have an issue. Being able to communicate and negotiate new arrangements is very important. However, some teachers are not good with sharing their classrooms."

Kathryn – general education teacher

Kathryn explains her experiences in terms of past and present. "I've had several different co-teaching experiences over the years. I would say I've had 10-15 over the years. Most of my experiences have been really good. Most of them (co-teachers) came in everyday wanting to work together, asking me what they can do today. What's the lesson? What can I do to help you? Can I make copies or pull a group out for review? They see all the tasks I'm trying to juggle and they offer to help me. Their (co-teaching partner) attitude and motivation are everything and that's probably the greatest factor to a good partnership.

My situation is different this year. Some of the problems we have faced is number one, a real lack of presence in the classroom. The person working with me is there approximately half the time. However, 99% of the time, I have no idea if he is going to be there or not. This leads to a lot of problems. For one, it's just the lack of continuity with asking (students asking) where is the other teacher? Where is this person? All I can tell them (the students) is I have no idea. They ask me if he is going to be here to help me today and I have to tell them I don't know. Even if I am told (he is not coming to the class), that leads to problems if we had already made plans to split the kids up to work with them in groups or split a lesson. If my partner doesn't show up, I'm left to figure out something on my own. That has been really problematic.

The second problem I've experienced is the lack of co-teachers' shared standards. If you look at what collaboration means, it is a sharing of goals. If you really don't share your purpose or ideas about being a co-teacher in an inclusion classroom or ideas about grading, or even academic integrity, this can lead to a lot of conflict. Another concern is the division of labor between co-teacher in inclusion classrooms. "The message I have gotten from the administrators is that they are my classes and I am responsible for 100% of the work in there. I am not sure

how that is supposed to work if I'm supposed to have a collaborative teacher. I would rather not be told it's a collaborative class. If there is not going to be a division of labor then that changes the dynamics in there.…… I've learned a lot. Number one, it can be really easy and productive for the students and the teachers or it can be really terrible. When co-teachers are not in sync, it can become very stressful and problematic than it actually helps. It comes across to the students as well. If two people are not very well matched and you don't share goals and visions for the course and the kids then it leads to an undertone of tensions and it is not good for anybody involved."

James – special education teacher

James stated that he has had many co-teaching experiences and some were good and some were difficult experiences. "The good experiences was when I know the subject really well and we (me and my co-teaching partner) don't have to collaborate that much. I can just jump in at any time and help explain the lesson. The problem is that I can get pulled out at any time for meetings and the general education teachers get frustrated. Sometimes I can't be there and they (general education teachers) feel like they can't address the students I generally deal with. That makes it difficult. Not knowing when I am going to be pulled out makes it frustrating for all of us. Sometimes our ideas conflict and if we can't work it out, we try to act professional and move on….. I've learned a lot about people skills. I've learned how to work with different people because every teacher has different expectations. They have different expectations for their students and their co-teaching partner. I've learned how to work with co-teachers in the work environment in a professional way and I've learned how to resolve conflicts."

Leigh – general education teacher

Leigh was very surprised at what she thought co-teaching would be like and what it was actually like. "I think my experience is not what I thought it would be. It was not how it was portrayed in my college classes. I imagined more of a back and forth exchange between the two co-teachers. I think it might be my fault. I get carried away and forget to turn it over to my partner a lot of the time. What my co-teaching is like right now is that I share my lesson plans with my co-teachers and that way they can do any accommodations they need to or we can discuss accommodations that we need to do. But as far as what I had in my head when I came out of college, I imagined we would be splitting the time. She would take part of the lesson and I would take part of the lesson. From my co-teaching experiences, it is not what I thought it would be. I imagined all of this co-teaching going on and all this flowing together and us high fiving each other during the lessons, but it's just none of that. Things get so hectic and crazy, I practically forget my co-teacher is in the room. That is terrible of me……. I am still learning what accommodations work best for the students and I feel I am getting better at it. I also thought there would be more professional development and it would be a requirement if you were going to have a co-teacher. But you're just kind of thrown in and you have to figure it out as you go. I was kinds surprised by that. So I've learned from my own experiences. Sometimes I have to slow down and include them more."

Louise – special education teacher

Louise stated, "I'm not the dominate person so I blend in most of the time and the English teacher or other teachers take charge. I get paired with new teachers and they want to teach. I might cut down assignments for some students or I show them (general education teachers) how to make accommodations and what works and what doesn't work…….. I've

learned flexibility. There is a lot of different subject matter that I've been exposed to. I've seen good discipline and horrible discipline. After watching these years, I've learned how to be a better disciplinarian."

In theme IV, the participants shared some of their past and current co-teaching experiences and what they have learned from their experiences. The general education teachers tended to focus on their relationship with their co-teaching partners when discussing their experiences with inclusion. The special education teachers focused on their necessity to be flexible. The dominant symbol of inclusion concerning the general education teachers' was centered on co-teaching relationships. The dominate symbol of inclusion as described by the special education teachers was centered on flexibility. All participants expressed a since of professional growth when they discussed what they had learned from their experiences.

Summary

This is a qualitative study which explored secondary co-teachers' understanding of inclusion and how their understanding shaped their co-teaching practices in their inclusion classrooms. The participants discussed the following factors in the context of inclusion which contributed to shaping their current co-teaching practices: roles and responsibilities, student scheduling, teacher autonomy, lack of training, lack of planning time, and past experiences. The co-teaching participant's teaching practices are constantly negotiated. Some of the co-teachers' negotiations resulted in shared visions and expectations while others did not result in shared visions nor shared expectations.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

Secondary co-teachers face many challenges in their inclusion classrooms. Some of these challenges are exclusive to the high school environment. With the demands of the secondary environment and the lack of time to devote to the co-teaching partnership, high school teachers find themselves engaged in their day to day operations carrying out separate roles and responsibilities without enjoying the satisfaction a seamless co-teaching partnership can offer.

The high school co-teachers in this study discuss how their experiences and expectations shape their current co-teaching practices. Each participant in unique in the meanings he/she takes away from his/her experiences which is reflected in their co-teaching relationships and practices.

I began this investigation because of my concern for special needs students in the inclusion classes and the desire to help high school teachers forge better relationships with effective co-teaching practices.

In this chapter, the four themes which developed from the data analysis will be looked at through a symbolic interactionism lens. The purpose of the symbolic interactionism lens in this research is to show the different meanings co-teachers place on the symbols of their experiences. The different meanings they have developed directly impact their current teaching practices and their expectations of future teaching practices.

The central and sub questions are answered using the information that developed in the themes and referenced by information found in chapter two, the literature review.

Following the research questions, implications for practice and implications for administrators are expressed in terms of areas which need attention from what I have gathered from the research.

This chapter concludes with a discussion and directions for future research.

Research Questions

One central question and three sub questions guided the review of the literature and assisted the compilation of the observations and interview questions.

The central question is; How do secondary co-teachers' understandings of inclusion shape their practices?

Sub questions that were answered included:

1) What are teachers understanding of disabilities?

2) What are teacher's experiences with disabled students in the inclusion classroom?

3) What are co-teachers' practices in inclusion classrooms that respond directly to students' disabilities?

Four Emerging Themes Viewed Through a Symbolic Interactionism Lens

The data analysis resulted in four themes:

1) Responsive expectations and response to implementation of practice,

2) Contingent teaching practices,

3) Teachers' unmet needs, and

4) Teachers' professional growth through co-teaching experiences.

Each theme reflects the meaning of how the participants understood the aspects of inclusion and how those differing aspect directly shaped their practices.

As individuals, the participants attached certain meanings to their past and current teaching practices. A symbolic interactionism theoretical framework was used to explain the different meanings teachers gave to symbols pertaining to inclusion.

Symbols that were discussed in theme one were the participants' meanings and expectations of roles and responsibilities in terms of equality in their co-teaching partnerships. The symbols that were discussed in theme two were student scheduling and IEPs. They symbols that were discussed in theme three were training and autonomy. In theme four the participant voiced the experiences they have had with co-teaching partners and what they have learned. Symbols in theme four are unique to each participant however, the experiences of the general education teachers focus on their co-teaching relationships while the experiences for the special education teachers focus on the ideas of flexibility.

Symbolic interactionism view of Theme I: Responsive expectations and response to implementation of practice

The most important finding of this study was the ways in which co-teaching partners negotiated their roles and responsibilities within the inclusion classrooms. The negotiations were based on reflections of the participants' past experiences and understandings of what has happened and what they believe should happen in their inclusion classroom.

Co-teachers were constantly negotiating their roles and/or responsibilities in their inclusion classrooms. The negotiations either resulted in changes or adaptations to their current practices or they resulted in no change.

An example of change or adaptation to teaching practices was when Mary started the Algebra II class when Barbara was detained in the hallway. They negotiated their responsibilities with ease and in a matter of seconds. Mary noticed Barbara was talking with another teacher in the hall when the tardy bell rang. Mary motioned to Barbara with her hand

and pointed to herself and then pointed in the classroom. Barbara nodded her head as to affirm Mary's decision to start the class. I could tell Mary had experience with taking charge of the class. She took command with her voice as she walked across the front of the room. I could tell the students were comfortable with Mary starting the class. The students did not react differently from my first observation when Barbara started the class.

Mary confirmed in her interview that she occasionally gets the class started when Barbara is busy with other tasks. Mary's past experiences with starting the class have resulted thus far in feeling of confidence, freedom and equality to take on the lead role which is usually Barbara's role.

An example of negotiations resulting in no change was when Kathryn asked James to put the AOD students' grades in the computer. She engaged with him twice about this issue and the negotiations resulted in no change. Kathryn ended up putting all of the students' grades in the computer. Because Kathryn cannot get James engaged in more responsibilities, she is left with feeling of frustration. Kathryn stated she has tried several ways to get James involved but has not been successful. With each of these experiences Kathryn's frustration and discontent with the partnership grows.

Looking at theme I through a symbolic interactionism lens, the participants discussed roles and responsibilities which directly influenced their co-teaching practices. The participants had expectations of what should happen in an inclusion classroom. Participants' expectations were used to measure roles and responsibilities between the co-teaching partners in terms of how that correlated with ideas of equity between the partners in the inclusion classroom.

For two of the partnerships, the participants shared expectations and viewed their co-teaching partnership and the strategies they used in the classroom as successful. For the other

two partnerships, expectations were not met causing one or both of the partners to feel frustrated and therefore, they felt their partnership was not preforming up to its fullest potential.

Partners who viewed their partnership as successful

Amanda Charles and Jessica, and Barbara and Mary shared some of the same responsibilities such as helping individual students, disciplining students, motivating students, and sharing in the content delivery. While the planning responsibility was the primary role of the general education teachers and the students' needs were the primary focus of the special education teachers, there seemed to be enough balance for these partners to see each other as equal in roles and responsibilities. The partners in these two partnerships were very active with the students and each other in their inclusion classrooms. The participants were respectful of each other and they considered their partnership effective and successful. Blumer (1969) would explain this as a consensus among the individual actors about the meanings of their interactions or objects that make up their situation and social coordination succeeds.

Partners who viewed their partnership as unsuccessful

For Kathryn and James, and Leigh and Louise, their actions and understanding of responsibilities equated to a tipped scale. Kathryn felt her co-teaching partner could take on much more responsibility and a more active role with lesson planning, lesson delivery, and students' evaluation but was choosing not to do so. In Leigh's partnership, she also planned all the lessons, delivered the lessons and assessed the students but stated that was the way she structured the class. Whether by choice or not, Kathryn and Leigh explain that they do the majority of the work which equals unbalanced responsibilities for them and their partners in their inclusion classroom.

James and Louise take on a fewer number of responsibilities than their partners in the inclusion classroom however; both of these teachers feel they are fulfilling their roles and responsibilities as required of them in their inclusion classrooms. For James and Louise, their current roles and responsibility are reflective of their past experiences. Neither one of these participants expressed a desire to change their future teaching practices.

The most surprising aspect noted in the observations and interviews, was that it was clear that the general education teachers in the inclusion classrooms handle a majority if not all of the planning, teaching, and evaluation responsibilities. The special needs teachers' responsibilities seem to be focused on the attention of the needs of the special education students first, then assisting the other students, and occasionally interjecting in the lessons. However, in this study, two co-teaching partnerships view each other as equal partners in roles and responsibilities which led to their met expectations and the other two co-teaching partners view themselves equal in roles but not responsibilities which led to unmet expectations.

Teachers regulate their beliefs and behaviors on the meaning they attribute to symbols in their school environment which are generated from their past experiences. By understanding this through a symbolic interactionism framework, we can understand how co-teachers' understanding of roles and responsibilities are negotiated in their practices. Additionally, we can see why the participants' expectations about their co-teaching practice are or are not being met.

Symbolic interactionism views of Theme II: Contingent teaching practices

The participants expressed that their co-teaching practices were contingent on the students in their inclusion classroom. The participants stated the scheduling of the students in the inclusion class and student's individual IEPs were factors that directly affected their practices in their inclusion classrooms.

Student Scheduling

The teacher participants stated, students scheduled in the inclusion classroom and the IEPs of the students in the inclusion classroom directly affected the pace of the delivery of the content and the styles in which the content is delivered. Certain teaching or learning styles may be directly listed as accommodations in a student's IEP and deemed as nonnegotiable for the inclusion teachers.

For some of the participants, the scheduling of special needs students was a symbol which yielded feelings of dissatisfaction and a desire to change the scheduling practice. The discontent was discussed by the participants in terms of either scheduling students with more equity across the classes or scheduling specific students into inclusion classes.

Mary was concerned about spreading special needs students out across the inclusion classes so that there would be more equity in numbers rather than some classes being overloaded with special needs students and some classes only having one or two. Kathryn felt the special needs students could not get the attention they deserved because the inclusion classes were filled with repeating students and students with behavior problems. Jessica, Amanda Charles, Mary, Kathryn, and James articulated that the mix of students in the inclusion classrooms and their different levels of learning or comprehension determined several factors such as pace of instruction and student activities.

Jessica, Mary, Kathryn, and James communicated their desire to have input into the scheduling of students, all of their comments expressed that they wanted the special needs students to have the 'attention' they required to be 'successful' in all of their classes.

Attention

Attention was referred to as measures of time spent with individual students and teaching practices use to accommodate the students. The meaning they gave to 'attention' was teacher quality time with helping individual students, using several teaching strategies to accommodate all students, make sure the students were being appropriately evaluated, and making sure students' IEPs were being followed. Jessica expressed that she would like the students to do more group activities because her students work well with the other students and the other students are good peer helpers. Additionally, she discussed the fact that classes are about 45 minutes long so sometimes it was difficult to arrange quality group activities in such a short time. She would like to see the students engaged in the activities that she believes give them the greatest benefit and attention.

Success

The participants meanings for "success' of the special needs students was described as "keeping up," having a passing grade, doing and finishing work, acting right, and passing the class. All of the participants discussed making accommodations for the special needs students to be successful in the classroom. Most of them attributed success to academics achievement and one or two participates attributed it to acceptable social behavior.

Kathryn, like the others, expressed the desire for all students to be academically successful in their classes. Kathryn discussed making sure students' accommodations and modification were being followed because she did not want a student to fail her class because she has not provided them this the necessary accommodation to be successful. Additionally she mentioned several times that there are several accommodations that all of the students in the class could benefit from that she incorporates into her classes.

Jessica stated that several of her students have behavior plans which address certain behavior problems. She discussed one student who curses in class when he gets frustrated. Jessica is working with him to develop other ways of dealing with his frustration. Pertaining to social success, Jessica stated the student will not be able to hold a job if he curses every time he gets frustrated. Her goal was to teach him strategies to use so that his behavior will be acceptable in and out of the school setting.

Both the general education and special education teacher participants linked accommodations which are found in students' IEPs to the success of the special needs students. The participants had very similar meaning for individual students' IEPs. They all understood the importance of following the accommodations and modifications which were listed in each individual student's IEP. Additionally, several participants commented how the accommodations could help all of the students be successful in the classroom.

Individualized Educational Programs

Through a symbolic lens, these teachers see the IEP document as a tool to help them as they teach special needs students and foster the students' academic and social success.

The accommodations in the IEPs are non-negotiable and several of the teachers incorporate some accommodations to benefit the entire class. The teacher participants described the IEP as "a plan with information," "a guide," "a list of strategies," "a document where you can find personal information to help students," "a tool," "and a map that gives directions." The teachers considered and IEP as a beneficial document that assist them with their job of teaching students.

The teachers did not view the IEP as a work load burden or a document that limited their jobs as teachers. Kathryn reflected on the use of IEPs stating, "I understand more about IEPs,

inclusion, special needs students, and accommodations. For example, if a student (special or general education) fails a test, I will allow them to come back and retake it. I will allow them extra time to finish an assignment if they are putting forth effort. I am more aware that kids are different in their needs and have extra time to get things done. Also, I have my students in groups more often. I make tests shorter because I think you can show mastery with fewer questions. More evaluations and more often are better for the kids."

Mary discussed the fact that the general education teachers do a good job with accommodating the special needs students. She said sometimes she and the other special needs teachers have to talk with the general education teachers about additional accommodations that may help a student, if a student is failing the class.

Symbolic interactionism views of Theme III: Teachers' unmet needs

The teacher participants in the study felt they could do a better job co-teaching in their inclusion classrooms if two primary needs were met. First, the teachers indicated they needed and wanted more training in inclusion, co-teaching strategies and other areas of weakness. Secondly, they needed and wanted more autonomy to make decisions which they felt would allow them to be better teachers.

Training

Training through a symbolic interactionism lens, is based on the participants views of their weaknesses which they felt needed to be addressed.

For Amanda Charles, Barbara, Kathryn, and Leigh, the general education teachers, they felt they needed training in the areas of special needs in terms of understanding student disabilities, accommodations and modifications, and working with co-teaching partners in the inclusion classroom. Leigh discussed the fact that she only had three years of teaching experiences. She was still trying to master the content and that she did not know very much

about student disabilities. Currently, her understanding of disabilities and accommodation are coming from her understanding of the students' IEPs and her discussions with other teachers. She knows training in the area of special needs and accommodation would be extremely helpful in her teaching practices.

The special education teachers, Jessica, Mary, James, and Louise felt they needed more training in the content areas as well as training on how to work with co-teaching partners. James commented that he does not know math so he leaves teaching to the general education teacher. Louise discussed in her interview that she was weak in the English content area but that she is in the same English class three times a day so by the end of the day she knows the content taught by Leigh and is able to interject in the lesson and help the students by answering some of their questions. In other words, Louise's activity in the classroom increases after each class because she is getting a better understanding of the content. As a result, she is able to interact more with the students because she is more confident in discussing the content with them.

Six of the eight teacher participants mentioned they had received some formative inclusion training, either in a college class or one day training put on by the school system. Neither of these situations constituted adequate training for co-teachers in the inclusion classroom as expressed by the participants. The participants' training predominately consisted of trial and error in the classroom learned from their own experiences. Leigh stated, "I have not gone to any professional development on inclusion. There has not been any kind of specialized training in that area. I've gotten my experiences from working in the classroom. When I look at their (special needs students) IEPs, I try to use my own experiences to figure out what I can do for them. I also talk to other teachers to see what they are doing. If I am unsure, I will ask a case load teacher what the child will benefit from. That's my training."

Autonomy

Autonomy is one of the desired job characteristics of high school teachers (Deschler, 1988). The participants felt they could do a better job in their inclusion classrooms if they had more autonomy to make decisions about the influencing factors of inclusion scheduling and had the ability to choose their co-teaching partners.

Autonomy to Influence Inclusion scheduling

The participants identified three reasons why they should have input into the scheduling which would allow for better co-teaching practices. First they wanted a more equitable split of the special needs students in the inclusion classes. Mary discussed the fact that one 11th grade regular English class of 25 could have 3 special needs students included while another 11th grade regular English class of 25 could have 15 special needs students included. In this example, she would like to see nine special needs students in one of the regular English 11 classes and nine special needs students in the other regular English 11 class. Mary stated that having balanced inclusion classes would help the teachers from feeling overwhelmed with large classes that have large amounts of special needs students who may require differing and/or numerous accommodations and modification.

Secondly, the participants wanted to have input about the students who were scheduled in the inclusion classes. Jessica stated, "We know which students don't get along so it would be nice not to have them in class together." Likewise, the same would apply to students who work well together and are dependent on a peer partner.

Kathryn felt the inclusion classes with co-teaching partners were over crowded with students who were repeating the class and students who were causing constant behavior

problems. She felt like those students were taking away the teachers' attention and the special needs students were not receiving the help they needed.

Thirdly, the teachers felt it was necessary to schedule designated planning time with their partners. Of the participants, Kathryn was the only participant who specifically stated she and her partner had sat down to plan a lesson together. She explained that the two times she and James sat down before school to plan a lesson for the next day, "everything went great." Kathryn continued to state that those were the only two times she and James had planned all year. James stated in his interview that planning was difficult for him because he doesn't have a planning period because of his softball coaching responsibilities.

In Jessica's case, she has five co-teaching partners. Jessica stated that she is not able to plan with every teacher but that she would at least like lesson plans from her co-teaching partners the week before the lessons are taught. She stated "If I get them (lesson plans) on Friday, I can look over them before Monday to know what we are doing." For Jessica, getting the lesson plans and knowing what is going to happen in the inclusion classrooms is a big accomplishment. Currently, asking to review lesson plan ahead of time is Jessica's extent of planning with her co-teaching partners.

Autonomy of Choosing Co-teaching Partners

Kathryn, Mary and James expressed the desire to choose their partners. Kathryn discussed the need to have partners that shared the same ideas about student learning, student evaluation, work ethic, and mission and visions for the students in the classroom. Mary also expressed the desire to get to choose her collaborative partners stating, "I get along with everybody but I work better with some partners than others."

According to Blumer's (1969) social interactionist theory, interactions between individuals are based on autonomous action, which in turn is based on the subjective meanings actors attribute to social objects and/or symbols (1969). Because secondary teachers attribute much of their teaching success to autonomy they would naturally like as much input into their co-teaching situations as possible. The participants stated being able to choose a co-teaching partner would allow them to be much better teachers simply because they would choose partners who would complement them in the areas of teaching styles and educational philosophy. Having the ability to choose partners allows the teachers to take ownership in their co-teaching partnership. As a result, the participants stated choosing their partners would make them more effective with their co-teaching practices.

At Main Street High School, co-teaching partnerships are assigned. When co-teaching is forced on teachers without adequate training or the support they need to be successful, they may harbor resentful attitudes (Kohler-Evans, 2006). This appears to be the case between Kathryn and James. Kathryn and James negotiate their practices on a daily basis, sometimes to no avail which leads to discord in the partnership.

Symbolic interactionism views of Theme IV: Teachers' professional growth through co-teaching experiences

Theme IV highlights participants' answers to two telling questions. First, what are your co-teaching experiences? Second, what have you learned from your co-teaching experiences? The teachers describe their experiences from their past co-teaching partnership as well as with their current co-teaching partnerships. When discussing what they had learned, they expressed their experiences as lessons that they are trying to apply to their current co-teaching partnerships.

Blumer (1969) believed that societies are created by people engaging in social interactions. This would then indicate that social reality only exists in the context of human

experiences. Individual learn from each experience and will apply what they know to new interactions. This is a continuous fluid cycle and individuals are constantly negotiating actions and meanings based on their experiences.

Because each person is unique and their experiences are different, each person comes away with different understandings of their experiences. Although their experiences differ, and their descriptions of their experiences may differ, the meanings individuals have for comparable experiences may be similar. Reflecting on the teachers' experiences in this study, co-teaching relationships and flexibility emerged as understanding of the dynamics of co-teaching in inclusion classrooms.

Looking at the teacher participants in this research as they reflected on their experiences, the general education teachers generally focused on the relationships of their co-teaching partnerships. The general education teachers in this study stated that they have learned to share with their co-teacher, communicate with their co-teacher, and negotiate with their co-teacher. These are characteristics of building a successful co-teaching partnership in terms of building relationships. The special education teachers reported their learning was focused on the ideas of being flexible in the co-teaching partnership. They expressed that out of the partnership, they were the ones who had to be flexible about their roles and responsibilities in the inclusion classroom.

What the teachers take away from these experiences influence their attitudes, willingness to participate, and sense of responsibility. These attributes will not only affect the co-teacher's relationship and teaching practices, it will also affect the students in how they see their co-teaching partners (Kohler-Evans, 2006, Bryant & Land, 1998, and Friend & Cook 1992a).

Without a doubt many factors influence teachers' practices. James, Jessica, and Mary gave differing factors which influenced their co-teaching practices. They drew upon their past experiences to describe their current involvements in their inclusion classrooms. James for example stated, "My involvement in the teaching really depends on the subject. In math, I let the general education teacher teach me math and I will go back and re-teach it the way I learned it and with my tricks. In the science classes, we sometimes change roles but because I am not a content teacher, I will hang back and re-teach what was being covered. I will sit with my students and re-teach them in the classroom."

For Jessica, she stated that her teaching practices inside the inclusion classrooms were influenced by the general education teachers. "My co-teaching part really depends on the general education teacher. In two of my current classes I feel like I am an equal. The general teachers really involve me in the classes and I help with the decision making. The students see me just as a teacher and they will ask me questions just like the general education teachers. I will also help with the lessons. In my other experiences, I am the person who passes out the papers and makes the copies. I am not being utilized the way I should be. I can do so much more."

Mary stated that in her past experience she always tries to be positive, highly motivated, and take the initiative to lead the class whenever possible. From her experiences, she states, "With all of my co-teachers, I feel like we are a tag team. At this (in the school year) we don't have to talk about it (our responsibilities), it just happens. We know what works and obviously we have to talk when we divide teaching the lesson. The lessons are driven by the curriculum so we will talk about it and decide what will work best with the students that are in that particular class. We are very flexible because our plans can change the minute the students walk into the room and what type of mood they are in when we begin the class."

In these examples, the special needs teachers tell how their past experiences influence their current co-teaching practices. For James, he stated his involvement in teaching the lesson depends largely on the subject being taught. For Jessica, her amount of involvement was influenced by the needs or wants of the general education teachers. Then for Mary, her involvement is dependent on her own initiative. Although these are not sole factors which influence these co-teachers' practices, they are examples of how teachers experiences influence their current teaching practices.

After discussing how past experiences influenced their co-teaching practices, the teachers went on to explain how their experience had help them grow as a co-teachers. As their experiences were unique, their statements concerning growth were unique as well. The statements about what they had learned reflected meaning or implications for their future practices.

The interview question was: What have you learned from your co-teaching experiences? The teachers stated, "I have learned how to make my co-teachers feel welcome." "I've learned how to share my class." "I've learned to include my partners." I've learned kids will be kids and we have to help them the best we can." "I've learned I need to talk to my co-teaching partners." "I've learned to let someone else take the lead." "I've learned how to communicate." I've learned that we (me and my co-teaching partner) should both have important roles in the students' learning process." "I've learned that it can be very hard if you and your partner are not on the same page." I've learned I have to include my partner more often." "I've learned conflict resolution." It may have been put best by one participant who stated, "I'm learning every day."

All of these statements indicate professional growth for the teacher participants. Some of the statements are directed toward the growth of future co-teaching partnerships, some

statements were directed toward increasing student achievement, while other statements were more isolated to express individual growth. Regardless, each statement made by these participants was made in the spirit of making things better for them, their co-teacher partners, and students in their future inclusion classrooms.

Research Questions Revisited

The four themes emerged from the participants' answers to the interview questions which were designed to get an answer to the central question: How do secondary co-teachers' understanding of inclusion shape their co-teaching practices?

Inclusion is including special needs students with disabilities into the general education classrooms. To assist special needs students, teachers need to know about student disabilities and how to help students with disabilities. Three sub questions were designed to get a better understanding of the participants' knowledge of and experiences with student disabilities. The answers to the questions can be found in a compilation of the four themes as communicated by the participants in this study.

> *Central Question: How do secondary co-teachers' understandings of inclusion shape their co-teaching practices?*

Secondary teachers gather their understanding of inclusion from various sources. They take their understanding from past experiences and apply them to their current practices. For the participants in this study, there seems to be an overall consensus or understanding that the co-teachers in the inclusion classrooms take on separate roles and responsibilities and act moderately independently rather than working as a team.

The general educations teachers are in charge of the content planning, lesson delivery, and assessment of the students. They are the content specialists and carry out all the responsibilities that connect the curriculum to the students. The special education teachers are

seen as the accommodation specialists making sure all of the special education students' needs are being met in the inclusion classroom.

From the data analysis, there is a difference in the textbook idealized characterizations of co-teaching practices and the co-teaching practices which occur on a daily basis at Main Street High School. Ideal co-teaching practice can be described as two co-teachers working in harmony and sharing the responsibilities of planning, teaching and assessing the students as a team (Friend & Cook, 1996a, Pugach & Johnson, 1995, Scruggs, Mastropieri, and McDuffie, 2011, Walther-Thomas, et al., 1996, and Bryant & Land, 1998).

The reality of what took place in the co-teaching inclusion classrooms was quite different. The participants at Main Street High School had little or no co-teaching planning time together. The general education teachers were responsible for the planning, teaching and assessing the students' mastery, while the special education teachers worked mainly with the special needs students in the inclusion classroom.

These findings affirm the research of Scruggs, Mastropieri, and McDuffie (2011). In their research the ideal co-teaching model is a general educator and a special educator team teaching as true collaborative partners and they share equally in planning, in the presentation of the content, in the behavior management and in the responsibility for all students. In reality, co-teaching does not currently resemble this ideal. By far, the most common co-teaching model in practice is "one teach, one assist." In the one teach, one assist model, one teacher takes the lead and is responsible for conducting whole class activities and presenting to impart content knowledge. The other teacher plays a subordinate role and drifts around the class helping students, addressing behavior issues, and supporting the instruction (pp. 3-4).

The “one teach, one assist” model was observed in all four partnerships at Main Street High School. The general education teacher was the dominate teacher who planned the lesson, delivered the lesson and evaluated the students. In the observation notes below, it is clear that Amanda Charles is the “one teach” and Jessica is the “one assist.”

Amanda Charles stops the round robin reading activity. She briefly asked the students review questions which reflected back on their reading activity. After the questioning session, the general education teacher transitions the class for a quiz by telling the students to “come get your computer for your quiz. You have four questions to answer.” All of the students except the students who were sitting in the group with Jessica get up to get a computer and return to their seats to take the quiz. The group of students which were monitored and taught by Jessica remained in their seats. After the rest of the class started on their quizzes, Amanda Charles went to the group which remained seated, sat down beside them and began to ask them questions about what they had read and discussed with Jessica. Amanda Charles was accommodating the group of students by giving them an oral quiz rather than requiring them to use the computer and read the questions for themselves. In this example, the genera education taking on the responsibility of evaluating and accommodating the special needs students in the class.

In Barbara’s and Mary’s observations, I noted that their actions which can be defined as “one teach, one assist.” Those actions included: one teacher lecturing while one teacher circulates providing one on one support, one teacher reviewing homework while one teacher helps an individual student with a home work question, one teacher explaining a new concept while one teacher asked questions for clarification, one teacher taking up homework while one teacher reviewed content from the previous day, and one teacher giving instructions orally while

one teacher repeated or clarified the difficult concepts. Though both of these teachers were very active in the classroom, the overall nuances of their roles were separated.

During the observation of Kathryn's and James's class participating in the computer activity on atoms, the 'one teach, one assist' was also the primary co-teaching practice implemented. Kathryn delivered the lesson, explained the directions, and modeled the first problem for the students. James sat in the back of the computer lab with two male students and worked with them the majority of the time. Occasionally, James would move about the room and assist other students.

Leigh and Louise also demonstrated the one teach, one assist model. In one of their observations, Leigh delivered content information about ACT writing prompts. She explained to the students how to take a stance on writing prompt. Additionally, Leigh wrote three examples on the board and discussed pros and cons. The students were engaged by taking notes. Louise walked around the classroom and made sure all students were participating in the writing activity. After Louise walked around the room once, she sat down beside a student and started working with that student on her writing.

While the "one teach, one assist" co-teaching approach can be effective for the teachers and students alike, the lack of parity in the two teachers' roles can cause problems between the teachers themselves as well as cast doubts on the authority of the subordinate teacher in the classroom (Scruggs, Mastropieri, and McDuffie, 2011).

Sub Question 1: What are teachers' understandings of disabilities?

In their interviews, the teacher participants explained their understanding of disabilities by discussing their educational or professional development training, their knowledge of IEPs, and their personal experiences.

The general education teachers in this study felt they were weak in their knowledge of student disabilities and wanted more training on how to accommodate students with disabilities. This correlates with the finding of Keefe and Moore (2004), and Schumaker and Keshler (1995). In their research, secondary general education teachers felt feeling of inadequacy toward meeting the needs and requirements of the students with disabilities in their inclusion classrooms because of their lack of special education training in college and pre teacher programs.

The special education teachers were competent in their understanding of student disabilities, how to accommodate students with disabilities and how to explain the accommodation s and modifications to the general education teachers. The special education teachers were willing to help their partners with making sure the accommodation and the modification for each individual special needs student was being met.

All of the teachers expressed a need for more training in the total concept of inclusion which included strategies for co-teaching partnerships. Louise and Mary receive college training which focused on self-contained student classrooms. Even though their degrees are in special education, they did not receive training on inclusion or co-teaching in college.

Concerning IEPs, all teachers vocalized the fact that the IEPs were tools that contained valuable information about student's needs and how to meet those needs (accommodation or modification) to help the student be successful in the general education classroom. The general education teachers were confident in their understanding of IEPs and stated if they had questions or concerns, they all would discuss the matter with their partner or with the student's caseload worker.

Sub Question 2: What are teachers' experiences with disabled students in inclusion classrooms?

The participants were asked what an inclusion classroom looked like. Their answers contained similar descriptions which could be generalized as a classroom that looks like any other classroom which has a mix of students with different learning abilities.

For some participants, their experiences with disabled students in their inclusion classrooms were reflective of their current practices. The general education teacher is in charge of the planning, lesson delivery, and student assessment while the special education teacher gives the majority of their attention to the special needs students making sure the students 'keep up' with the other students in the matters of learning the content and doing the assignments.

For other participants, they explained that their past experiences with students with disabilities have helped their teaching practices evolve. They felt they were better teachers for all of the students not just the special needs students in the inclusion classroom. They described their evolutions as learning about specific special needs accommodations which were written in previous student's IEP and implementing or adapting those accommodations for the benefit of all the students in the class.

Teacher participants also discussed the difficulty of addressing special education student's needs in inclusion classes with a large number of students. The large number of students in high school inclusion classes is one of the greatest obstacles teachers face when trying to ensure all students learn. (Keefe & Moore, 2004, Fullan & Hargreaves, 1997, and Mastropieri and Scruggs (2001).

Finally, three participants discussed that their experiences with special education students involved behavioral issues. They stated that they had experienced students who were constantly disruptive which hindered learning for all students. Jessica stated that "sometimes one student

can get the entire class rowdy and out of control." In the Van Reusen, Shoho, and Baker (2001) study of high school teachers' attitudes toward inclusion, they found 54% of the teachers who participated in their study expressed negative attitudes toward the inclusion of special education teacher into the general education classrooms. The teachers in the Van Reusen, Shoho, and Baker (2001) study communicated that "the inclusion of students with disabilities would negatively impact the learning environment, their delivery of content instruction, and the overall quality of the learning in their classroom" (p.13).

The three participants who discussed experiences with students with behavior issues in this study did not state that they had negative feeling toward inclusion nor toward students with disabilities. One participant did however vocalize the desire to be able to choose if she teaches inclusion classes.

Sub Question 3: What are teachers' co-teaching practices in inclusion classrooms and how do those practices address individual students' disabilities?

Co-teaching in inclusion classes can be extremely beneficial for the students. Specific student benefits of effective co-teaching practices include, more teacher to student individualize instructions, increased student academic and social achievement, and students being less critical of diversity. (Friend & Cook, 1996, Scruggs, Mastropieri, and McDuffie, 2011, and Walther-Thomas, et al., 1996).

The teaching practices mainly observed and discussed by the teachers in this study were characteristic of the one teach, one assist model. The general education teachers were chiefly in charge of all planning, lesson delivery, and student assessment while the special education co-teaching partners were in charge of the requirements of the special needs students in the inclusion classroom and helping individual students in general. The general education teachers were extremely knowledgeable in their content areas and students were engaged in learning in

each class. The special education teachers were giving students individual attention and assisting with the management or activities of the students.

The participants used a wide variety of teaching practices to address the different learning styles of the students as well as ensure that students with disabilities were afforded different ways to master the content being taught. Types of student activities I observed during the observations were:

Amanda Charles's and Jessica's class included individual students reading silently, students in groups taking turn reading aloud, computer quiz assessment, oral quiz assessment, group discussion, students taking notes, turn and talk with a partner, and individual writing assignments.

Barbara's and Mary's class included students individual working at their desk, students at the board working problems, students working with a partner, students taking note and students engaged in class discussion.

Kathryn's and James's class included students working on computers, students watching a video, students doing individual work at their desk, taking notes, working on assignments in pairs and participate in class discussion.

Leigh's and Louise's class included students in groups working at stations, students engaged in class discussion, taking notes, working on individual assignments, and working with a partner to complete an assignment.

I felt I observed an assortment of different teaching practices from all of the co-teaching partnerships that were specifically planned to meet the needs of students with different learning styles. Two participants specifically mentioned in their interview that they included a variety of

student activities for the different types of learners. One of those participants, Barbara stated, "We want to make sure we 'hit' on all learning styles such as visual, audio, and tactile."

Implications for Practice

The purpose of this research was to get a better understanding of secondary teachers' understandings of inclusion and how those understanding shaped their practices. The teachers communicated that their understanding of inclusion had developed from many different experiences.

The results of this study and the themes that emerged from the data analysis of the interviews responses were consistent with earlier research. The literature suggest that secondary co-teachers face numerous challenges such as large classes, lack of training, no co-teaching planning time, unclear roles, fast pace curriculum, student assessment goals, and little guidance from administrators (Keefe & Moore,2004, and Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2001, Schumaker & Deshler, 1995). These challenges can impede the development of the partnership restricting the ideal co-teaching concept of two individual planning, teaching, and evaluating students together as a team (Friend & Cook, 1995, Fiend, Reising, and Cook, 1994, Spencer, 2005).

The literature also indicated that there are many teaching models or teaching practices that are used by co-teachers in their inclusion classroom (Scruggs, Mastropieri, and McDuffie, 2011, and Murawski and Dicker, 2004). The participants in this study engaged mostly in the one teach, one assist model. In the one teach, one assist model, the general education teacher takes the lead role and plans the lesson, delivers the lesson, and evaluates the students while the special education teachers assisted with individual students and assist with activities (Scruggs, Mastropieri, and McDuffie, 2011). Although the one teach, one assist model was chiefly observed in the observations and discussed in the interviews by the participants; this model did not meet the expectations of Kathryn and Leigh. Kathryn and Leigh expressed expectations of a

50/50 team teaching concept in which the co-teaching partners planned together, taught together, and evaluated students together. This idea of team teaching is obtainable with adequate planning time, support from administrators, clear roles and responsibilities, complementing co-teaching partners, and shared vision for the class (Friend & Cook, 1995, Fiend, Reising, and Cook, 1994, Spencer, 2005).

Additionally, the literature suggests that symbolic interactionism can assist us in understanding that interactions between people throughout their daily lives are assigned meanings (Blumer, 1969, Carrothers & Benson, 2003, and Charon, 1998). Interactions are fluid, shifting, and largely unpredictable (Carrothers and Benson, 2003). Because the interactions hold meanings for individuals, those meanings will influence future actions. Furthermore, the meanings that are attached to interactions can have different meanings for different individuals.

Looking at secondary co-teachers' assigned meanings to symbols can help the teachers with their teaching practices. For co-teaching partners to understand each other using a symbolic interactionism lens, they must be willing to communicate the meaning they have for different symbols. Without communication and discussion, their teaching practices may not be easily negotiated due to unclear understanding and expectations of the partnership.

In van den Berg's (2002) symbolic interactionism study, Maurice attached such strong meanings and understandings to his past teaching experiences, he could not adapt to the new teaching initiatives which went against his teaching ideologies. Ultimately, Maurice left the teaching profession. The autonomy that secondary teachers enjoy may contribute to teachers adopting certain practices which they will be resistant to change.

The teacher participants expressed areas of concern with their co-teaching partnerships and suggestions for ways to improve their co-teaching practices. I will offer implications for practice and implications for administrators.

Implications for co-teaching practices

1. High school co-teaching partnerships face numerous obstacles. Although some of the obstacles may not be easily solved such as getting a co-teaching planning time, co-teachers can take measures to start the partnership off on the right foot. Co-teaching partners should communicate their expectations for the partnership before the first class. The partners should discuss the roles and responsibilities each partner will assume. For the maximum amount of benefit, both of these tasks should take place before the first day of school. Additionally, the partners should communicate daily about their teaching practices or the progress of the students. Lack of communication will definitely cause a disconnect between the partners.

2. Both of the co-teachers are responsible for all the students in the inclusion classroom. Students should not be divided as 'my kids' and 'your kids.' Noticeable teacher division of the students will not promote acceptance of diversity. Division of the students is not the goal of inclusion. The co-teachers should feel comfortable moving seamlessly from student to student offering assistance.

Implications for administrators

1. High School teachers enjoy the amount of autonomy they have come to expect at the secondary level. A great amount of autonomy without guidance however, can be problematic. At the high school level, teachers pride themselves as professionals to make the decisions which will impact students' learning in their classrooms. This type of professional autonomy requires knowledge, skills, and boundaries which define the perimeter of their freedom. It may be in the best interest of the co-teachers if school wide guidelines describing

what is expected of co-teachers in inclusion classrooms were established. Some of these guidelines could include attendance consistency policies such as the special education teacher will be in the inclusion classroom Monday – Thursday. The special educations teachers will use Fridays for their parent/student meetings or paperwork required for their case load management. Another guideline could be that co-teachers are required to plan twice a week during a designated planning time.

The administrators may want to collaborate with teachers to establish the guidelines. Allowing the teachers a voice in establishing the guidelines will give them ownership in the decisions that are made. The teachers will then be more likely to follow the guidelines with the least amount of resistance. The administrators should not only monitor the established guidelines but protect the arrangements in terms of making sure planning times are not interrupted for example.

2. All teachers would benefit from required annual training in the area of inclusion. Professional development in inclusion can encourage teachers to reflect on their practices, learn new information, and try new teaching strategies.

During inclusion professional development sessions, teachers could discuss scenarios which could happen in the inclusion classroom and how they would handle the situations. For example, teachers could discuss how they will assist a visually impaired student with a document based activity. In their discussion, they might brainstorm ideas such as pair the visually impaired student with a peer, pre-arrange to have the documents read or described on headphones so the student can get an understanding of the documents with audio aid, or maybe the teachers may feel for an activity that requires visual interpretation, the student would better be served by one of the teachers (one-to-one) who can give background explanations of the documents. They

could also discuss scenarios which included behavior issues, peer conflict issues, or procedural logistics such as one of the co-teachers being unexpectedly absent from school.

A professional development session could focus on the characteristics of disabilities. General education teachers will appreciate a greater understanding of different disabilities. This knowledge will help them when incorporating accommodations into their lessons to address the students' needs. They will also have a greater understanding of student disabilities when talking to other teachers about students' IEPs, modifications, or teaching strategies.

A third example of professional development training could be role playing teaching strategies. Teachers could practice interacting with each other in simple activities such as going over the daily warm up activity or role play teacher directions for transitions from one student activity to another.

3. Administrator may want to evaluate the culture of their school and develop a culture of supervision and instruction that focuses more on co-teachers rather than individual teachers. The most vibrant teaching experiences are generally products of successful collaboration between teachers for or with students. Administrators can build a culture of collaboration and celebrating shared experiences. At the high school level this is important because of the closed door syndrome (Friend and Cook, 2000). Secondary teachers should be encouraged to collaborate and share on a daily basis. The administrators can set the example by including the teachers in more collaborative projects whether instructional, managerial or environmental.

Recommendations for Future Research and Conclusion

To gain insight about teachers' understanding and the practices they use in their inclusion classrooms, I established the central question: "How do secondary co-teachers' understandings, in the context of inclusion, shape their teaching practices?"

Each teacher is unique in his/her understandings, experiences and practices when it comes to inclusion classrooms. They are unique for the reason that their understandings are constantly changing, experiences are constantly happening, and co-teaching practices are continually negotiated (Blumer, 1969 and Carrothers & Benson, 2003). These factors play a large role in the climate in the inclusion classroom and education of the students in the inclusion classrooms.

Based on the results of this study the following recommendations are presented for future research:

1. Consider extending the ideas of equity in terms of co-teaching partnerships and how existing attitudes attribute to the ideas of equality.
2. Consider the differences in co-teachers teaching together in an inclusion classroom verses a single general education teacher teaching solo in an inclusion class. Do their practices differentiated (Friend & Cook, 1994, Keefe & Moore, 2004, and Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2001, Schumaker & Deshler, 1995)?
3. Using a symbolic interactionist lens, examine the symbols secondary teachers attach to a very specific document such as an IEP or behavior plan and describe how they interpret the symbols to develop plans to meet the needs of students (Blumer, 1969, and Carrothers and Benson, 2003).

This research forced me to reflect on my personal expectations of high school co-teaching partnerships and the practices they use in their inclusion classrooms. My visions and expectations of all high school co-teaching partners to be both highly effective and happy may be too lofty considering the types of challenges the high school co-teachers face. However, I will

continue to strive for this goal because obstacles are meant to be overcome and students are the ones who can benefit greatly from positive, effective co-teaching partnerships.

I believe secondary co-teaching partners can take measures before the class starts for the year to avoid some of the pitfalls co-teachers face such as lack of communication and feelings of inequity between the partners. Measures can include discussing roles and expectations for the partnership, talking about how to handle certain scenarios which could arise in the class and how they would handle the situations, role play transitions between student activities and have a mental picture of what the students should do, and both teachers should make a commitment to be active in the learning of all the students in the room.

The teacher participants all articulated their understandings of inclusion and the purpose of IEPs with a fair amount of similarity which complemented the definitions given in IDEA. They either had the knowledge or the ability to find knowledge concerning the areas of inclusion. All the participants discussed the need and desire for additional training in inclusion. If administrators would devote some of the faculty meeting or professional development time to an area or areas of inclusion, I know it would be beneficial to the entire faculty.

For me, one of the most important finding of this research was the fact that even though the co-teachers had separate roles and responsibilities for the most part, two of the participating co-teaching partnerships were extremely satisfied with their teaching practices and felt like they were equal in the partnership. From the observations, those two partnerships engaged in the most students activity as a team. These teachers had the most years of experience and a solid foundation for which the partnerships were based. These two partnerships appeared to be the most effective partnership in terms of student teacher interaction and teacher activity.

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APPENDIX A: DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Name (Fictitious) _____
2. What is your age? _____ Race? _____
3. How many special education classes did you take for your undergraduate degree? _____
4. Where do you teach? _____
5. What do you teach? _____
6. What grade level do you teach? _____
7. How many years have you been teaching? _____
8. Do you currently co-teach in an inclusive classroom? _____
9. How many co-teaching partners do you currently have? _____
10. How many inclusion classes have you taught with a co-teacher? _____
11. How many different co-teaching partners have you had in your teaching career? _____

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What is inclusion?
2. What does an inclusion classroom look like?
3. Where did you learn about inclusion?
4. Describe how your school handles inclusion scheduling.
5. Tell me about your school's philosophy on inclusion.
6. What kinds of training does your school or system provide to address inclusion or co-teaching practices?
7. Tell me about your experiences with co-teaching.
8. What is an Individualized Education Program?
9. How to IEPs shape or influence your co-teaching practices in your inclusion classrooms?
10. Tell me how you and your co-teaching partner(s) negotiate your roles and responsibilities.
11. Do your co-teaching practices change when you change co-teaching partners? Please tell me about it.
12. Tell me what you have learned from your co-teaching experiences.

    Individual follow-up questions for clarification.

APPENDIX C: SAMPLE SUPERINTENDENT LETTER

Superintendent's Name
School system
Address

Date

Dear Superintendent:

My name is Kelley Green, and I have completed all requirements for doctoral course work in Educational Administration at The University of Alabama. I am in the dissertation stage and seeking assistance from Alabama public high schools to complete my research.

The focus of my research is on secondary teachers; their understanding of disabilities, and their experience and practices of co-teaching in inclusion classrooms. This study involves observations and interview sessions involving eight teachers at School A.

The focus of my research is to get a better understanding of secondary teacher's understandings of disabilities as they pertain to students in their inclusion classrooms. I also want to take a look at how teachers define co-teaching in inclusion classrooms and what are their actual experience and practices with co-teachers in inclusion classrooms.

I respectfully request permission to contact the principal at School A about observing and interviewing eight faculty members for this research effort. The principal may accept or decline the opportunity for teachers at his school to participate. The principal will be asked to share this research proposal with the faculty and then ask for volunteers. The teachers have the ability to opt out of the study at any time. I hope that you will grant me permission to contact the principal at School A in your district about participating in this study.

If there is anything about this study that is unclear or that you do not understand, or if you have questions or wish to report a research related problem, you may contact Kelley Green at 205-394-5020 or kagreen1@crimson.ua.edu. If your have questions,

concerns, suggestions or wish to file a complaint, you may call Ms. Tanta Miles, the Research Compliance Officer of the University at 205-348-8461 or toll-free at 1-877-820-3066. You may also ask questions, make suggestions, or file complaints and concerns through the IRB Outreach Website at participantoutreach@bama.ua.edu.

I am extremely appreciative of your assistance and look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,
Kelley A. Green
Doctoral Candidate
Educational Leadership, Policy, and Technology Studies
Kagreen1@crimson.ua.edu
The University of Alabama

Enclosures:
Sample of Questions to be used at teacher interviews

APPENDIX D: SAMPLE PRINCIPAL LETTER

Principal's Name
School
Address
Date

Dear Principal:
My name is Kelley Green, and I have completed all requirements for doctoral course work in Educational Administration at The University of Alabama. I am in the dissertation stage and seeking assistance from Alabama public high schools to complete my research.

The focus of my research is on secondary teachers; their understanding of disabilities, and their experience and practices of co-teaching in inclusion classrooms. This study involves observations and interview sessions involving eight teachers at your school.

The focus of my research is to get a better understanding of secondary teacher's understandings of disabilities as they pertain to students in their inclusion classrooms. I also want to take a look at how teachers define co-teaching in inclusion classrooms and what are their actual experience and practices with co-teachers in inclusion classrooms.

If you choose to allow your teachers to participate, I ask that you introduce my study to your faculty by reading the following attachment and asking for volunteers. For this study, I am requesting the assistance of four general education teachers and four special education teachers. At any time during the study, the participants may withdraw from the study. The participants would participate in two face to face interviews and one email interview. The teachers who participate in the will be given fictitious names to insure confidentiality. Your school will be given a fictitious name to insure confidentiality as well.

Your school superintendent has given me permission to contact you about the possibility of your school participating in this study. I am respectfully requesting your assistance in helping me complete this research. Your faculty input is vital to the success of this research project.

If there is anything about this study that is unclear or that you do not understand, or if you have questions or wish to report a research related problem, you may contact Kelley Green at 205-394-5020 or kagreen1@crimson.ua.edu. If your have questions, concerns, suggestions or wish to file a complaint, you may call Ms. Tanta Miles, the Research Compliance Officer of the University at 205-348-8461 or toll-free at 1-877-820-3066. You may also ask questions, make suggestions, or file complaints and concerns through the IRB Outreach Website at participantoutreach@bama.ua.edu.

I am extremely appreciative of your assistance and look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,
Kelley A. Green
Doctoral Candidate
Educational Leadership, Policy, and Technology Studies
Kagreen1@crimson.ua.edu
The University of Alabama

APPENDIX E: INFORMED CONSENT

Letter of Informed Consent

Dear Participant:

My name is Kelley Green and I am a doctoral student in the Department of Educational Leadership, Policy, and Technology Studies in the College of Education at The University of Alabama. I am in the dissertation stage and seeking assistance from Alabama public high school teachers to complete my research. Dr. Becky Atkinson is my faculty advisor and she will be supervising me during this process.

You are being asked to participate in a research project which explores secondary teachers' co-teaching practices and how their understanding of inclusion influences those practices in the inclusion classroom. To participate in this research, participants must have two or more years of co-teaching experience in inclusion classrooms. This study involves two one hour observations of you and your co-teaching partner teaching in an inclusion class and a one one-on-one interview that is expected to last an hour to an hour and a half which will take place after the observations. Both of the observations will take place within a one week time period. During the observations, I will observe you and your co-teacher interacting with each other and the instructional practices you are using with your students. I will take field notes for documentation. The field notes are only a record of what I observe. The interview questions are specifically related to the topic of inclusion and some questions will reflect what I observed during my observations. The questions will be open ended so that you may elaborate on your answers.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. If at any time during this study you wish to stop participating, you may do so. Refusal to participate or stopping during the study will involve no penalty. During the interview, you may refuse to answer any question. Your responses will remain confidential. A fictitious name will be used in this study. The identity of the school in which you teach will also remain confidential.

There are no foreseeable known risks involved. The benefits could include possible personal reflection and growth in your teaching environment. Additionally, the information gained from this research will add to the educational literature. You will receive a $20 gift card to McAlister's as a token of appreciation for your time involved in

this research. This gift card will be given to you at the end of your interview. If you decide to stop participating after the observations, you will receive a $10.00 gift card for your time. You will receive the gift card 1-2 weeks after opting out via U.S postal service. I truly appreciate your participation in this study. If you have any questions or comments, I want you to feel free to talk to me at any time.

If you have questions about my research, please feel free to call me at (205) 394-5020 or by email at kagreen1@crimson.ua.edu or you may contact my faculty advisory, Dr. Becky Atkinson at (205) 348-0357 or by email at atkin014@bamaed.ua.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a person taking part in a research study, make suggestions or file complaints and concerns, you may call Ms. Tanta Myles, the Research Compliance Officer of the University of Alabama at (205) 348-8461 or toll-free at 1-877-820-3066. You may also ask question, make suggestions or file complaints and concerns through the IRB Outreach Website at http://osp.ua.edu/site/PRCO_Welcome.html . You may also email the Research Compliance office at paricipantoutreach@bama.ua.edu.

After you participate, you are encouraged to complete the survey for research participants that is online at the outreach website or you may ask the investigator for a copy of it and mail it to the University Office for Research Compliance, Box 870127, 358 Rose Administration Building, Tuscaloosa, AL 35487-0127.

Sincerely,
Kelley Green
Doctoral Candidate
Educational Leadership, Policy, and Technology Studies
Kagreen1@crimson.ua.edu
The University of Alabama

Please sign below indicating that you have read this consent form, that you have had a chance to ask questions, and you agree to take part in the study. (You will receive a copy of this consent form to keep.)

I give consent to be audiotaped during this study:
please initial: __Yes __No

Participant's Name _____ Date_____

Researcher's Name _____ Date_____

APPENDIX F: IRB APPROVAL LETTER

Office for Research

Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects

THE UNIVERSITY OF
ALABAMA
RESEARCH

December 19, 2014

Kelley Green
ELPTS
College of Education
Box 870302

Re: IRB # 14-OR-437, "A Look at secondary co-teachers' practices and how their understandings of inclusion influence those practices in their inclusion classrooms"

Dear Ms. Green:

The University of Alabama Institutional Review Board has granted approval for your proposed research.

Your application has been given expedited approval according to 45 CFR part 46. Approval has been given under expedited review category 7 as outlined below:

(7) Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

Your application will expire on December 18, 2015. If your research will continue beyond this date, please complete the relevant portions of the IRB Renewal Application. If you wish to modify the application, please complete the Modification of an Approved Protocol Form. Changes in this study cannot be initiated without IRB approval, except when necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to participants. When the study closes, please complete the Request for Study Closure Form.

Please use reproductions of the IRB approved stamped consent forms to obtain consent from your participants.

Should you need to submit any further correspondence regarding this proposal, please include the above application number.

Good luck with your research.

Sincerely,

Carpharato T. Myles, MSM, CIM, CIP
Director & Research Compliance Officer
Office for Research Compliance
The University of Alabama

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