A QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY EXAMINING COLLABORATIVE TEACHING IN

INCLUSION CLASSROOMS POST-PANDEMIC

by

Danielle Grunert

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy in Education

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APPROVED BY:

Dr. Meredith Park, EdD, Committee Chair

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Abstract

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to discover educators' perceptions of the challenges and benefits of collaborative teaching post-pandemic in inclusion classrooms throughout various New York public schools. The study focused on the central research question, what are the main advantages and disadvantages of collaborative teaching in inclusion classrooms post-pandemic? The theoretical framework guiding this study was the theory of self-efficacy, which examines educators' perceptions, beliefs, and confidence in their abilities to succeed co-teaching within inclusive classrooms. The design is an instrumental case study methodology, enabling a comprehensive analysis of the phenomenon under investigation. This study utilized a range of data collection methods, including interviews, surveys, and a focus group and triangulation was employed to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the research topic. Participants were selected based on a set of criteria and the study took place virtually. Triangulation was employed, utilizing data gathered from multiple methods to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the research topic. The collected data was analyzed through thematic analysis to identify commonalities and patterns within the data. The study resulted in three emerging themes including (1) challenges instructing students post-pandemic, (2) benefits of co-teaching in inclusive education, and (3) support from administration.

Keywords: inclusion, collaborative teaching, special education, Every Student Succeeds Act, Individuals with Disabilities Act.

Dedication

I lovingly dedicate this dissertation to my family, who has been my source of support and inspiration throughout this academic journey. To my remarkable siblings, I cannot imagine my life without each of you. Your love, encouragement, and belief in me have propelled me forward. To my extraordinary mother, your unwavering support and sacrifices have been a constant source of strength. You tirelessly devoted countless hours to caring for my children, enabling me to pursue my education. Your belief in me never wavered, and your words of encouragement pushed me to overcome any obstacles. I am forever grateful for your selflessness and love.

To my sons, this dissertation is a testament to the love and passion I have for education. You are my greatest joy and inspiration. May you always know how deeply I love you. As you grow and forge your own paths, I hope my dedication to learning instills in you a lifelong thirst for knowledge. Your unique spirit and limitless potential fill my heart with pride. You have been my driving force during countless hours spent researching and writing this dissertation. I believe in you wholeheartedly, and I am excited to witness the incredible accomplishments you will achieve. My love for you is boundless, extending to the moon and back, today, and always. Lastly, I would not have been able to accomplish this without my faith in God. To that, I am forever grateful.

Acknowledgments

I am deeply grateful to Dr. Meredith Park, my dedicated and exceptional committee chair, for her invaluable guidance and support throughout this dissertation process. Her expertise, commitment, and tireless dedication to our cohort have been instrumental in shaping the outcome of this research. Dr. Park's passion for education has been a constant source of inspiration, and I am truly fortunate to have had her as my committee chair.

I would also like to express my heartfelt appreciation to Dr. Rachel Hernandez, my esteemed committee member and former professor. Your impactful class at Liberty University left a lasting impression on me, and your commitment to student success has been truly commendable. Your exceptional teaching, mentorship, and willingness to go above and beyond have played a significant role in shaping my academic and professional journey.

I would also like to extend my gratitude to the faculty at Liberty University, whose dedication to fostering a supportive academic environment has been instrumental in my growth and development as a researcher. Your commitment to excellence and passion for education have inspired me throughout this journey. Each and every individual mentioned above has played a significant role in the completion of this dissertation, and for that, I offer my deepest gratitude.

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List of Abbreviations

Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)

Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD)

English Language Learner (ELL)

English as a New Language (ENL)

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

Independent Educational Evaluation (IEE)

Individualized Education Plan (IEP)

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS)

No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)

Responsive to Intervention (RTI)

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)

The Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

Inclusion classrooms are at the forefront of educational innovation, striving to provide an equitable and empowering learning environment for all students in the least restrictive environment. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to discover educators' perceptions of the challenges and benefits of collaborative teaching post-pandemic in inclusion classrooms throughout various New York public schools. At this stage of the research, collaborative teaching is generally defined as two or more teachers working together to plan and implement instruction for general education students, students with disabilities, and English language learners in the least restrictive classroom environment. Collaborative teaching, as mandated by federal law, aims to provide a supportive and inclusive educational environment for students with disabilities (Gokbulut et al., 2020). However, despite its importance, co-teaching is often implemented ineffectively, necessitating ongoing professional development for general education and specialized teachers. Chapter one of this dissertation provides an overview of the historical, social, and theoretical context of educating students in inclusion classrooms. It explores the underlying issues and problems associated with inclusion classrooms, highlighting the need for effective collaborative teaching practices. The study aims to address the gaps in existing research and contribute to the understanding of how to enhance instruction in inclusive settings. Additionally, the chapter emphasizes the significance of the study in the current educational landscape. With inclusion classrooms gaining prominence as a preferred instructional approach, it becomes crucial to examine the factors contributing to their success. By investigating the challenges and potential solutions related to collaborative teaching, this research seeks to provide valuable insights for educators, administrators, and policymakers

involved in inclusive education (McCabe et al., 2020). Through a qualitative case study approach, incorporating interviews, surveys, and a focus group, this research aims to uncover the experiences and perspectives of general and special education teachers in New York public schools. The study will delve into the co-teaching practices employed by these educators, explicitly focusing on the theory of self-efficacy as a guiding framework (Wehmeyer et al., 2021).

Background

Examining the historical context of educating students in inclusion classrooms provides researchers with evidence of past practices that influence modern-day education (Argyres et al., 2020). Furthermore, the social context of inclusive education explores how students perceive new environments to enhance academic and social skills (Williamson et al., 2020). Moreover, the theoretical context explores reasons why issues arise from collaborative teaching in inclusion classrooms (Bolourian et al., 2020). Exploring the historical context allows for the identification of successful strategies that can be implemented in post-pandemic era inclusion classrooms (Argyres et al., 2020).

Historical Context

Collaborative teaching in inclusion classrooms has a long history in education and throughout school districts in New York public schools (Crispel & Kasperski, 2021). Origins of collaboration can be traced back to 1954 when Brown v. Board of Education was decided, which enacted laws in which minorities were authorized to receive instruction in mainstream public classrooms (Brown v. Board of Education, 1954; Yell, 2022). Moreover, in the 1970s, the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) was enacted (Ansari Ricci et al., 2021). IDEA mandates that students with disabilities receive free public education in the least restrictive educational

environment possible (S. A. Gray et al., 2019). IDEA opened the door to integrating special education students into mainstream classrooms. Because of the integration, collaborative teaching became a necessary element to ensure student success (Gokbulut et al., 2020). As a result, collaborative teaching in inclusion classrooms emerged as an effective instructional method to meet all students' needs within mainstream classrooms (Gokbulut et al., 2020). The collaborative educational environments include special education and English language learner (ELL) classified students (Coady et al., 2020). Collaborative teaching is still used throughout most New York public schools.

Brown vs. Board of Education

Brown v. Board of Education revolutionized African American students' ability to receive equality in education (Conway & Toyosaki, 2008; Milner, 2020). Furthermore, Brown v. Board of Education significantly affected students classified with disabilities (Yell, 2022). Although Brown v. Board of Education focused on ensuring minority students received instruction in mainstream public schools, research shows Brown's ruling relates to students with disabilities because, before the ruling, students with disabilities often had limited or nonexistent access to public education (Peters, 2019; Yell, 2022). Using Brown's ruling as a foundation for equitable education, attorneys representing families of students with disabilities collaborated with advocacy groups to fight for equal rights for students classified as having disabilities who were excluded from equitable public education (Yell, 2022).

The case in which Brown v. Board of Education laid the foundation for equitable education is PARC v. the Commonwealth of Virginia and Mills v. Board of Education of the District of Columbia (Yell, 2022). Lawyers construct arguments on the premise that because the Supreme Court ruled in Brown v. Board of Education, African American students are legally

entitled to equal educational opportunities alongside Caucasian students in public

schools. Therefore, the practice of segregating students based on their gender, age, or

disability by the states should be deemed unconstitutional. Accordingly, the separate but

equal doctrine ruling was ordered, which stated that students with disabilities must

receive free public education from the state equitably to free public education provided to

general education students (Stern, 2021). The separate but equal doctrine ruling

continued the pathway to acceptability in inclusive education (Yell, 2022). Furthermore,

this case's separate but equal rulings set a precedent for future litigated cases regarding

students with disabilities to provide free inclusive public education to meet individual

needs, based on the Brown v. Board of Education case (Yell, 2022).

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 was the first federal legislation signed into law

that mandated equal rights for individuals classified as having disabilities (Act, 1973;

Oertle et al., 2021). The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 incorporated the inclusive mandates

by removing employment, transportation, and architectural barriers from agencies

receiving federal funding (Act, 1973; Oertle et al., 2021). Moreover, affirmative action

programs were created to ensure equal rights for individuals with disabilities (Tarconish

et al., 2021). Moreover, The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 set federal laws by removing

societal barriers (Act, 1973; Oertle et al., 2021). Societal barriers included institutions for

individuals with disabilities that were no longer separated from mainstream society

(Morgan et al., 2019). Furthermore, individuals with physical disabilities face societal

barriers such as restricted building access or no access at all and discriminatory practices

in employment and educational establishments (K. L. Murphy, 2020).

Section 504

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973, specifically Section 504, establishes federal regulations to eliminate obstacles for K-12 students with disabilities (Act, 1973; K. L. Murphy, 2020). Furthermore, section 504 sets regulations against discrimination in K-12 school systems for students with disabilities (K. L. Murphy, 2020). Safeguards are mandated for students with mental or physical impairments that substantially limit their ability to learn in general educational settings (Gratton-Fisher & Zirkel, 2021). Moreover, mandates are included stating that educational institutions must provide evaluations for students who may have physical or mental disabilities (Zirkel, 2020). Additionally, if assessments establish that students are qualified to receive special education benefits, it is required that students are given the assistance and resources specified in their 504 plan (Zirkel, 2020).

Although federal legislation set laws into place ensuring students with disabilities are provided with services under section 504 of the rehabilitation act, parents and legal guardians are not permitted to request independent educational evaluations (IEE) to have their child qualify for services mandated (Goodman-Scott & Boulden, 2019; M. West et al., 1993). Moreover, minimally restrictive rules on individuals are placed on teams to determine if students qualify for services (Goodman-Scott & Boulden, 2019). Specified individuals can include, but are not limited to, parents, legal guardians, general education teachers, special education teachers, support educators, and school administrators (Goodman-Scott & Boulden, 2019).

Education for All Handicapped Children

Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA) was signed into federal law in 1975 (Law, 1975; Y. Lincoln & E. Guba, 1990; Rozalski et al., 2021). The federal law requires all public schools to provide students from ages three to twenty-one, who have disabilities, with the services necessary to ensure equal and adequate education (Rozalski et al., 2021). With the enactment of EAHCA, President Reagan provided parents of children with disabilities more significant input into their child's personalized education plan (Zettel & Ballard, 1979). Furthermore, parents of students with disabilities have the right to challenge proposed services and accommodations implemented by educators and school officials for their children (Shurr et al., 2021; Zettel & Ballard, 1979).

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was created in 1990 and updated the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (Lavelle, 1990; J. E. West et al., 2022). Before IDEA, students with documented disabilities were often placed into classrooms or schools separate from their general education peers. Implementing the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) transformed the provision of education for students with disabilities (Lewis et al., 2021). According to the act, students must receive various educational services that cover academic, social, emotional, and athletic aspects, focusing on providing these services in the least restrictive environment possible (Kanaya, 2019; Russo, 2019). Prior to IDEA, only students between the ages of three and twenty-one were eligible to receive special education services (J. E. West et al., 2022). However, IDEA expanded the age range, making early intervention services available for children from birth.

No Child Left Behind Act

In 2001 the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) was signed into federal law and served as an updated version of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (Rioux, 1965). NCLB aimed to improve the quality of education throughout United States K-12 schools by setting rigorous academic achievement standards and increasing student and educator accountability (Nichols et al., 2021). Under NCLB, K-12 schools were required to administer standardized tests at all grade levels, which measured students' progress in specific content areas (Allbright & Marsh, 2022). Moreover, the results from these standardized tests must be reported publicly (Allbright & Marsh, 2022). NCLB became controversial among educators, administrators, parents, and guardians (Nichols et al., 2021). Many argued that NCLB placed too much demand on standardized testing and that negative impacts were too severe for schools not to achieve their adequate yearly progress targets (Dougherty & Weiner, 2019). Although many oppose NCLB, studies report that the impact on education was significant by incorporating rigorous standards and methods to close the achievement gaps (Hodges & Lamb, 2019; Nichols et al., 2021).

Every Student Succeeds Act

In December 2015, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) was signed into law by President Barack Obama (Yang et al., 2021). ESSA replaced the 2001 No Child Left Behind Act (Carlson, 2019; Close et al., 2020; *United States Congress*, 2001). Every Student Succeeds Act decreased federal control over education, and states were granted greater authority over curriculum and instructional guidelines for students, including students with disabilities (Yang et al., 2021). Furthermore, under ESSA, testing was no longer considered a high-caliber

measurement of academic achievement (Ayscue et al., 2022). Educators and administrators now had control over determining the instructional needs of students to establish best practices utilized within classrooms to meet the requirements of individual students and maintain control over classrooms (Ayscue et al., 2022; Wang, 2020).

The education system throughout the United States has undergone significant changes (Lavery et al., 2020). These changes include various acts and monumental course cases shaping the landscape of inclusive education for all students. For example, the Brown v. Board of Education ruling, the Rehabilitation Act, and Section 504 established the groundwork for equitable and inclusive educational opportunities for students with disabilities (Garfield & Hogan, 2022). Moreover, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, followed by the Individuals with Disabilities Act, ensured that students with disabilities were provided with mandated services and resources necessary to flourish in school through academic, social, and emotional learning outlets (De Bruin, 2019). Furthermore, the No Child Left Behind Act and Every Student Succeeds Act set educational standards for achievement and accountability (Lavery et al., 2020). These various educational acts and court cases transformed the United States educational system, providing students with opportunities to receive education in the least restrictive environment possible and supporting inclusive educational models (Florian, 2019; Slavin, 2020).

Social Context

Modern-day teachers are introduced to new methods of educational implementation through collaborative teaching in inclusion classrooms (Ansari Ricci et al., 2021). Collaborative teaching provides students with well-rounded educational

experiences by combining general education teachers and special education teachers working together to meet the needs of all students in inclusion classrooms (Ansari Ricci et al., 2021). Educators throughout all grade levels report significant classroom impacts because of shifts to inclusive education (Akcamete & Dagli Gokbulut, 2018). The changes include positive and negative implications for educators and students (Semon et al., 2020). Impacts on collaborative instruction in inclusion classrooms include co-teaching issues between partner educators, the effect on students, co-teaching concerns during and after the pandemic, and educators' perspectives. Although educators report positive and negative impacts of inclusive education through collaborative instruction, positive societal results are reported throughout school districts through parental perspectives. (Coussens et al., 2020). These positive results include increased academic achievement, social and emotional learning capabilities, self-awareness, and improved perspectives toward diversity and inclusion among general and special education students (C. T. Clark et al., 2022; Maeda et al., 2021).

Issues with Collaboration

Collaborative teaching has been shown to offer multiple advantages for both students and educators (Weiss & Rodgers, 2020). However, despite its potential advantages, this teaching approach is also associated with various challenges (Strogilos et al., 2020; Weiss & Rodgers, 2020). One of the main challenges is the different teaching styles between collaborating teachers (Chatzigeorgiadou & Barouta, 2022). Furthermore, cooperating teachers often have different teaching philosophies that affect classroom practices and methods (Chatzigeorgiadou & Barouta, 2022). As a result, special education teachers often feel less like collaborative partners with general education teachers and more like assistants (Strogilos et al., 2020). The unequal partnership roles in collaborative teaching classrooms can reduce students' perception of teachers

as equals in the learning environment (Tiernan et al., 2020). Effective collaborative teaching in inclusive education begins with successful co-planning between general and special education teachers (Alsarawi, 2019). Through collaborative teaching, general and special education teachers share pedagogical and social-emotional knowledge to meet the needs of all students (Rodriguez, 2021). However, general education teachers and special education teachers report a need for more time to co-plan with one another to deliver effective collaborative instruction in inclusion classrooms (Rodriguez, 2021).

For a multitude of reasons, educators require significant support in successfully implementing co-teaching practices during the pandemic, highlighting a pronounced necessity for assistance (McColley, 2021). Co-teaching provides specialized instruction to students to meet their needs outlined in their individualized education plan (Phan & Paul, 2021). Additionally, the pandemic caused a sudden and unexpected world shutdown without any preparation for teachers or collaborative teaching (McColley, 2021; Phan & Paul, 2021). In addition to educators needing to prepare for the shutdown, students were unprepared (McColley, 2021). Moreover, the academic success of many students is contingent upon their access to crucial educational resources, including computers, the internet, and other materials, to meet their academic goals (Phan & Paul, 2021). Educators require further training in technology programs and applications to effectively engage with their students and facilitate collaboration with colleagues (Valicenti-McDermott et al., 2022). Additionally, educators must possess comprehensive knowledge of the regulations governing students' participation in virtual online education (Alajmi, 2022).

Effect on Students

When general and special education teachers discover issues collaborating in inclusion classrooms, it affects teachers and students (Guise et al., 2023). Both general education students and students with disabilities are involved (Guise et al., 2023). Students often feel tense environments when educators need to collaborate more effectively, which is not conducive to learning (McCullagh & Doherty, 2021). Collaborating teachers may compete internally to determine who plays major authoritative roles within classrooms, and students sense this competition (McCullagh & Doherty, 2021).

Students' learning experiences underwent a significant transformation due to the Covid-19 pandemic (Alajmi, 2022). Students transitioned from receiving several hours of in-person instruction daily to having limited opportunities for virtual instruction and collaboration with their teachers and classmates. As a result, students suffered academically, socially, and emotionally (Alajmi, 2022). Students were forced to isolate themselves from their peers, schools, and families. Because of the isolation, educators report that students became unmotivated and often unresponsive, with no consequences for missing work (Gopal et al., 2021). Because the Covid-19 pandemic forced students into complete isolation, reports indicate decreased physical activity, increased anxiety and depression, and reduced opportunities for students to receive nutritious meals (Walters et al., 2022).

Educators Perspectives

King-Sears et al. (2020) study explores general and special education teachers' perspectives on instructing students in collaborative inclusion classrooms. The study examined ninety teachers from ten elementary schools (King-Sears et al., 2020). A mixed methods approach is utilized (King-Sears et al., 2020). This approach incorporates questionnaires and

semi-structured interviews to examine research questions (King-Sears et al., 2020).

Working collaboratively, general and special education teachers provide opportunities for

the school community and classroom-inclusive practices. The study reports that teachers

agree that collaborative teaching is a vital component in inclusion classrooms to meet the

needs of all students. However, extensive challenges exist in delivering effective

instruction (King-Sears et al., 2020). Furthermore, educators express that co-planning and

professional development needs significant improvement (King-Sears et al., 2020;

Lofthouse, 2019).

Additional challenges reported are limited teacher training, little specialized

support, and differentiating views on teacher expectations (King-Sears et al., 2020).

However, benefits reported social and emotional behavior increased positively, as well as

teaching options and educational acceptance (Harrison et al., 2013; King-Sears et al.,

2020). In addition, teachers say collaborative teaching can be improved through

designated co-planning allotted time, monthly planning meetings, structured meetings,

and using allotted preparation hours to discuss students' progress, collaborate, and plan

(King-Sears et al., 2020).

Educators have highlighted the necessity for continuous training and professional

development offered by the district's Information Technology department (Buxton,

2020). Furthermore, educators have recognized during the Covid-19 pandemic that they

lack knowledge on utilizing various technology-based resources available through their

district (Buxton, 2020). The ability to utilize a variety of technology resources in

classrooms, whether in-person instruction or virtual instruction, enables educators to

differentiate instruction to meet the needs of all students (Andic, 2020). Moreover, using

technology effectively in classrooms in person and virtually increases student engagement and supports a collaborative work environment (Appova et al., 2022).

Theoretical Context

Bandura's (1977) self-efficacy theory relates in various ways to collaborative teaching perspectives in inclusion classrooms because of the focus on understanding human behavior and the individual's belief in their ability to succeed in specific situations (Mitchell et al., 2021). Seminal research shows educators' self-efficacy beliefs impact their collaborative abilities in inclusion classrooms (Stefanidis et al., 2019). A study was carried out to examine educators' perceptions of their self-efficacy, encompassing their beliefs regarding inclusion, differentiated instruction, and their perceptions of the social-emotional impacts (Stefanidis et al., 2019). The results indicate that increased levels of co-planning effectiveness and improved quality in the co-teacher relationship positively impact the benefits of co-teaching, as perceived by the co-teachers themselves (Stefanidis et al., 2019). Furthermore, the study reveals that pre-service and new in-service educators exhibited a higher level of responsiveness to co-teaching and perceived it as beneficial for students and staff (Stefanidis et al., 2019). The current research on co-teaching in inclusion classrooms can contribute new information to the existing literature in many ways (Bondie et al., 2019). The study's objectives will involve acquiring a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of co-teaching in the post-pandemic era, investigating the factors that influence collaboration in co-teaching, and examining the significance of administration-provided professional development and its impact on educational practices. The proposed research will extend the existing knowledge around collaborative teaching by examining self-efficacy's role in effective co-teaching, identifying the instructional practices and collaboration strategies necessary, and addressing gaps in research.

Problem Statement

The problem is that the Covid-19 pandemic significantly impacted education at all grade levels, including the practice of co-teaching inclusion classrooms. As educators strive to bridge the gap of time lost during the pandemic, it is essential to investigate educators' perceptions of co-teaching in inclusion classrooms and how the pandemic may have influenced their perceptions. Moreover, educators report a lack of adequate programs and training opportunities for improving their abilities and methods for collaboratively instructing students in inclusion classrooms, both in-person and virtual.

Meeting the needs of all students in inclusion classrooms requires successful collaboration between general and special education teachers (Bennett et al., 2021). However, collaborating teachers face extensive challenges in inclusion classrooms that require more support to provide effective instruction to meet the needs of all students (Bennett et al., 2021). These challenges include time given by the administration for general education teachers and special education teachers to co-plan for collaborative lessons (Goddard et al., 2023). Furthermore, educators adapt to working independently within their classroom settings (Goddard et al., 2023). The shifting platforms of education, including the introduction of virtual instruction, have provided educators with greater flexibility in delivering educational practices that may require them to modify their established teaching methods (Finnerty et al., 2019). Going from single-educator classrooms to co-teaching classrooms creates a situation where educators must work collaboratively instead of independently (Finnerty et al., 2019). This change causes apprehensions for teachers concerned with challenging existing teaching practices (Goddard et al., 2019).

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to discover educators' perceptions of the challenges and benefits of collaborative teaching post-pandemic in inclusion classrooms throughout various New York schools. At this stage of the research, collaborative teaching is be generally defined as two or more teachers working together to plan and implement instruction for general education students, students with disabilities, and English language learners in the least restrictive classroom environment. The research provides significant insights into how to provide the best possible education to meet the needs of all students. By utilizing a qualitative approach, this case study gained an in-depth understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of collaborative teaching post-pandemic. At this research stage, challenges and benefits associated with collaborative teaching throughout inclusion classrooms generally are defined as positive and negative aspects of collaborative instruction to meet the needs of all students as required by law.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in its exploration of how collaborative teaching can enhance educational practices within inclusion classrooms, particularly in the context of post-pandemic education. By investigating the challenges and benefits faced by general and special education teachers in these classrooms, the study aims to provide valuable insights into effective instructional strategies that can meet the diverse needs of all students, whether in-person or through virtual instruction. Understanding teachers' perceptions of the challenges and benefits in collaborative teaching environments, both in-person and virtual, is crucial for informed decision-making and improving inclusive educational practices. By identifying the obstacles and advantages experienced by both general education and special needs students in collaborative

settings, this study contributes to the ongoing efforts to create inclusive classrooms prioritizing high-quality education for all students. Furthermore, this study aligns with federal and state laws that mandate the provision of free public education for all students, including those with special needs, in the least restrictive environment possible.

Inclusive classrooms represent contemporary educational settings where students with special needs work alongside their general education peers, benefiting from co-teaching environments designed to provide them with a comprehensive and equitable education (Rozalski et al., 2021). Ultimately, the findings of this study have the potential to inform educational policies, instructional practices, and professional development initiatives that support effective collaborative teaching in inclusion classrooms. By shedding light on the challenges and benefits associated with collaborative teaching post-pandemic, this research seeks to contribute to enhancing inclusive educational environments that foster students' academic, social, and emotional growth.

Theoretical Significance

This study's theoretical significance lies in examining Bandura's theory of self-efficacy to understand the benefits and challenges of collaborative teaching in inclusion classrooms. By focusing on educators' instructional efficacy and their beliefs about their own abilities, this study aims to shed light on the factors that influence collaborative teaching practices and their impact on meeting the needs of all students, both in-person and in virtual settings. Bandura's self-efficacy theory proposes four sources contributing to individuals' beliefs about their capabilities: psychological and affective states, mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, and verbal persuasion. These sources influence how educators interpret information and form self-efficacy beliefs (Wyatt & Dikilitaş, 2021).

By integrating data from each source during the cognitive processing stage, Bandura's theory helps to understand how educators perceive their abilities and how these beliefs influence their instructional practices.

In this study, the theory of self-efficacy was used to examine the perspectives of general and special education teachers in collaborative co-teaching classrooms. By exploring their experiences and perceptions, the study aimed to identify effective methods, skills, and strategies to support and enhance educators' beliefs about achieving success in inclusive classrooms (Bandura, 1977). Surveys and questionnaires were utilized to uncover educators' perceptions of self-efficacy in collaborative teaching within inclusion classrooms. By gathering data from these sources, the study aimed to gain insights into how educators' self-efficacy beliefs influence their instructional practices and their ability to meet the diverse needs of students in collaborative settings. Incorporating Bandura's theory of self-efficacy into the study provided a valuable theoretical framework for understanding the psychological processes underlying educators' perceptions, beliefs, and instructional practices in collaborative teaching. This theoretical lens helped to uncover the factors contributing to effective collaborative teaching. Moreover, the theoretical lens informed strategies for supporting educators' self-efficacy beliefs, ultimately enhancing the quality of instruction provided in inclusion classrooms.

Empirical Significance

The empirical significance of this qualitative case study lies in its contribution to the existing body of research on collaborative teaching in inclusive classrooms. By building upon prior studies and incorporating in-person and virtual instruction, this research aimed to expand our knowledge of effective techniques and evidence-based strategies that can be implemented to support all students, particularly in the aftermath of the pandemic. In relation to Lindacher's

(2020) case study, which explores the perceptions of general education and special education teachers' roles and responsibilities in inclusion classrooms, this research can further support the investigation of educators' perspectives within co-teaching environments. By examining teachers' perceptions, this qualitative case study provides valuable insights into the challenges faced by educators when striving to meet the diverse needs of students in inclusion classrooms, both in-person and through virtual instruction.

Crispel and Kasperski (2021) study has the potential to inform educators about methods and strategies that can enhance their abilities to deliver effective instructional practices and support differentiation among diverse learners. By enhancing educators' skills and competencies, both academically and socio-emotionally, this research improves students' educational and social-emotional outcomes (Crispel & Kasperski, 2021). Overall, this qualitative case study aimed to advance our understanding of collaborative teaching practices in inclusive classrooms, incorporating in-person and virtual instruction. By analyzing educators' perspectives and examining their challenges and successes, this research provided practical insights and evidence-based strategies to enhance instructional practices and support the diverse needs of students in inclusive settings.

Practical Significance

The practical significance of this qualitative case study extends to educators working in collaborative inclusion classrooms and the students instructed in this educational method. The study aimed to identify necessary modifications required in collaborative co-teaching inclusive classrooms to effectively meet the needs of all students in a post-pandemic educational landscape. The COVID-19 pandemic has

brought about lasting changes in the traditional education environment, including a shift towards virtual instruction and hybrid education models not only in K-12 settings but also in higher institutions. Now that schools around the United States and the world have fully reopened for in-person instruction, it becomes crucial to analyze and understand the modifications necessary for successful co-teaching in inclusion classrooms. Many students may have experienced learning setbacks due to the disruption caused by the pandemic, underscoring the importance of addressing their diverse needs through equitable and differentiated instruction (Bondie et al., 2019).

Educators can enhance their instructional practices by identifying the necessary modifications in collaborative co-teaching and ensuring that all students receive an equitable education. This qualitative case study offers valuable insights into the specific changes required to create inclusive environments that support all students' academic and socio-emotional growth. The findings of this study provide evidence-based practices for both general and special education teachers, equipping educators with effective techniques and methods to support student achievement. Educators can foster positive interactions and enhance student achievement by incorporating the research findings on effective collaborative teaching environments. This case study contributed to the existing body of research by offering valuable insights into the necessary modifications to meet the needs of all students in post-pandemic inclusion classrooms, guided by both general education and special education teachers. Overall, this qualitative case study held practical significance by informing educators of the essential modifications in collaborative co-teaching that effectively meet the diverse needs of students. By embracing evidence-based practices and techniques, educators create inclusive learning environments that promote positive interactions and maximize student achievement.

Research Questions

This qualitative case study aimed to explore the advantages and challenges experienced by general and special education teachers in New York public schools when implementing collaborative teaching practices post-pandemic. The study utilized qualitative research methods to collect data from experienced educators to analyze the research questions. The participants in the study included special education and general education teachers currently working or previously taught in co-teaching inclusion classrooms. The study explored educators' perceptions of the challenges and benefits of co-teaching inclusion classrooms through their responses to the three data collection methods. New insight is provided to support current and future research by investigating educators' perceptions of co-teaching post-pandemic. The study seeks to answer the following research question as its central focus:

Central Research Question

What are the main challenges and benefits of collaborative teaching in inclusion classrooms post-pandemic?

Sub-Question One

How does collaborative teaching in inclusion classrooms post-pandemic contribute to improved academic and personal outcomes for students with diverse learning needs?

Sub-Question Two

What strategies and practices can educators employ to sustain self-efficacy in delivering effective collaborative instruction and meeting the needs of all students in inclusive classrooms?

Sub-Question Three

What resources and support strategies are implemented by school administration to facilitate collaboration among teachers in inclusive classrooms?

Definitions

1. *Inclusive Education* – A model of education where special education students spend most of the instructional day with mainstream students (Messiou, 2017).

2. *Collaborative Teaching* – Involves educators working together to lead and instruct a group of students across all instructional levels (Rabin, 2020).

3. *Teaching Practices* – beliefs and ethics about the teaching and learning process (Bassi et al., 2020).

4. *Special Education* – Practice of educating students to provide federally required accommodations to address individual needs (Bettini et al., 2017).

Summary

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to discover educators' perceptions of the challenges and benefits of collaborative teaching post-pandemic in inclusion classrooms throughout various New York public schools. Federal law mandates that all students are required to receive free public education. Furthermore, federal law mandates that special education students receive instruction in the least restrictive environment possible (Egalite et al., 2017). Therefore, general and special education teachers must establish successful collaboration to meet the needs of all students in inclusion classrooms. The problem is that the COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted education at all grade levels, including the practice of co-teaching inclusion classrooms. As educators strive to bridge the gap of time lost during the pandemic, it is

essential to investigate educators' perceptions of co-teaching in inclusion classrooms and how the pandemic may have influenced their perceptions. Meeting the needs of all students in inclusion classrooms comes with significant challenges for educators. For example, many general education teachers must be certified in special education. Therefore, they must collaborate with special education teachers to enhance the skills and strategies necessary to instruct students with disabilities effectively. This qualitative case study examines the challenges and benefits of collaborative teaching for general education and special education teachers in various schools in New York.

Educators in collaborative teaching inclusion classrooms must collaborate to deliver instruction in a co-teaching method. Combining these two teaching styles has many benefits for students but challenges educators. The administration must provide the time necessary to co-plan for collaborative lessons. Moreover, professional development is required for effective collaborative teaching in inclusion classrooms.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

This literature review explores the overarching issue of successful collaborative teaching in inclusion classrooms post-pandemic. Providing effective instruction in inclusion classrooms is vital for the success of students with disabilities and general education students. Federal laws through the Every Student Succeed Act (ESSA) mandate that students with disabilities receive academic instruction in the least restrictive environment possible (Wilson et al., 2020). In recent years, the least restrictive environment has transitioned from self-contained classrooms to providing academic instruction in inclusion classrooms (Wilson et al., 2020). Integrating students with disabilities into general education classrooms enables all students to collaborate to achieve academic, social, and emotional success (Bolourian et al., 2020). This literature review investigates the challenges and strategies linked to successful collaborative teaching in inclusion classrooms by applying Bandura's self-efficacy theory to examine post-pandemic perspectives. The ultimate goal is to enhance educational practices by contributing valuable insights into collaborative instruction in inclusion classrooms.

Bandura's (1977) self-efficacy theory addresses components of effective collaborative teaching in inclusion classrooms to motivate students to use their abilities to achieve success (Obeng et al., 2022). Self-efficacy theory refers to an individual's belief in their ability to succeed in specific situations (Stewart & Krivan, 2021). Through Bandura's social learning theory, the collaboration of teachers in an inclusion classroom is examined. Social learning theory supports that human beings learn best through collaboration and social interaction (Obeng et al., 2022). Connecting social learning theory to this qualitative case study supports the concept that educators that effectively collaborate, share knowledge, and create productive, inclusive

classroom environments are more likely to have success in their careers and success from their students (Obeng et al., 2022). Collaborative co-teaching in inclusion classrooms provides countless opportunities for general education and special education teachers to share responsibilities, co-plan lessons, and create an equitable learning environment to meet the needs of all students (Stewart & Krivan, 2021).

Theoretical Framework

The purpose of the theoretical framework in a qualitative case study is multifaceted. The theoretical framework supports the study's rationale and connects the researcher to existing knowledge (Bunmi, 2022). By incorporating a theoretical framework and analyzing perspectives, the study aimed to build upon existing knowledge and contribute to understanding co-teaching in inclusion classrooms post-pandemic (Heale & Noble, 2019). The theoretical framework served as a foundation for the research, guiding the analysis of educators' perspectives, experiences, and the broader implications for educational practices, standards, and policy (Heale & Noble, 2019). The theoretical framework offered conceptual guidance by providing theories that framed the research topic. Moreover, it allowed the researcher to establish a theoretical lens to view and interpret the data (Heale & Noble, 2019). The theoretical framework helped to justify and explain the research questions and the research problem addressed in the study. The theoretical framework enabled the researcher to connect the findings from the study to existing research and theories in the field (Bunmi, 2022).

Theory of Self Efficacy

Bandura's self-efficacy theory (1977) delves into individuals' beliefs in their capacity to succeed in specific situations. Self-efficacy strongly influences learning,

motivation, achievement, and self-regulation (Mark & Wells, 2019). The self-efficacy theory

emphasizes that individuals gain insight into their task performance abilities by observing

colleagues' success in similar contexts, boosting their self-efficacy and motivation (Mitchell et

al., 2021). Additionally, self-efficacy is influenced by an individual's physical and emotional

states, ability to handle stress, and fear of their capabilities (Mitchell et al., 2021). The interaction

between personal values and self-efficacy is crucial for a successful education, as individuals

may possess high self-efficacy standards but may fail in specific educational contexts due to

conflicting behaviors (Mark & Wells, 2019).

Bandura's self-efficacy theory is crucial to assessing competency across diverse groups,

irrespective of socioeconomic status, race, religion, or sex (Keshavarz, 2020). Educators utilize

self-efficacy to adapt to new environments and achieve success based on their personal

competencies (Hershmann et al., 2023). In this context, competency, driven by self-efficacy,

encompasses two dimensions: knowledge and skill. Knowledge refers to educators'

understanding of previously acquired information and content, which serves as a foundation for

developing practical skills (Khorakian & Sharifirad, 2019). These skills are consciously and

unconsciously applied in operational contexts, allowing educators to effectively apply their

expertise (Ortlieb & Schatz, 2020). Furthermore, the abilities and skills educators demonstrate in

the classroom directly influence their performance in specific tasks (Shaw et al., 2021).

The role of self-efficacy in influencing the accomplishments and behaviors of educators

is substantial (Bayani & Baghery, 2020). Moreover, self-efficacy profoundly impacts individual

interests, motivations, and overall levels of success (Shaw et al., 2021). Classroom success

heavily relies on an individual's self-efficacy and beliefs regarding their ability to achieve

positive outcomes. By applying self-efficacy theory, educators form judgments about their own

skills, influencing interactions with colleagues, classroom behaviors, and environmental factors that ultimately impact their achievements (Gearhart, 2023).

Bandura's theory of self-efficacy involves the process of self-regulatory and motivational beliefs, encompassing effort, perseverance, flexibility, anxiety management, and handling complex tasks (Abbasi et al., 2021). Notably, Bandura distinguishes between high self-efficacy leading to successful outcomes and high self-efficacy resulting in adverse effects (Jenßen et al., 2021). In the former case, educators with high self-efficacy thrive in challenging tasks while maintaining composure and achieving goals. Conversely, increased self-efficacy with adverse outcomes relates to educators who possess the potential for success but are hindered by social concerns. Bandura's theory further differentiates between output expectations and an individual's self-efficacy, as well as work ethics and self-efficacy (Poluektova et al., 2023). By acknowledging these distinctions, educators demonstrate enhanced cognitive and metacognitive strategies utilization. Bandura's research underscores that educators with high self-efficacy exhibit higher student success rates, facilitated by their commitment, motivation, ability to overcome complex tasks, and successful collaboration with colleagues (Zhen et al., 2020).

In the context of successful collaborative teaching in inclusion classrooms, post-pandemic, Bandura's theory of self-efficacy provides valuable insights into the factors that contribute to motivating students to utilize their abilities and achieve success based on educators' beliefs in their abilities to successfully carry out their teaching responsibilities (Bumann & Younkin, 2022). Bandura's theory emphasizes the belief in one's own capabilities to accomplish tasks and overcome challenges. In the inclusive

classroom setting, fostering self-efficacy through educators' perceptions of their abilities enables teachers to provide engaging and academically rigorous inclusion educational environments (A. Duran et al., 2022). Educators with high self-efficacy beliefs are more likely to approach their teaching duties with enthusiasm and perseverance (Olivier et al., 2019). This belief in their abilities influences their instructional practices, classroom management strategies, and their ability to foster a supportive and inclusive learning environment (Macakova & Wood, 2022). Educators with a strong sense of self-efficacy are more likely to embrace the challenges that arise from co-teaching in inclusive classrooms.

Related Literature

The problem is that the Covid-19 pandemic significantly impacted education at all grade levels, including the practice of co-teaching inclusion classrooms. As educators strive to bridge the gap of time lost during the pandemic, it is essential to investigate educators' perceptions of co-teaching in inclusion classrooms and how the pandemic may have influenced their perceptions. Successful collaboration between general and special education teachers in inclusion classrooms is vital to ensure comprehensive support for all students (Mason et al., 2022). However, collaborative teachers face notable challenges in these classrooms, warranting increased support for effective instruction that meets the diverse needs of students (Yoo et al., 2019). This qualitative case study aimed to explore the challenges and benefits of collaborative post-pandemic teaching in inclusion classrooms across different New York public schools. By analyzing the experiences of general and special education teachers, the study shed light on the advantages and difficulties of collaborative teaching within these inclusive settings (Kibler et al., 2022).

Employing a qualitative approach, the research intended to offer valuable insights into providing quality education for all students, particularly in the post-pandemic context. Through a comprehensive understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of collaborative teaching, the study contributed to identifying the challenges and benefits associated with this instructional approach, aligning with legal obligations to address the needs of all students effectively (Drescher & Chang, 2022). Additionally, the qualitative approach allowed for an extensive exploration of the experiences and perspectives of educators involved in co-teaching in inclusion classrooms. By analyzing the perspectives of special education and general education teachers, the study aimed to provide a nuanced understanding of the similarities and differences in co-teaching perspectives post-pandemic (Weinberg et al., 2020). This understanding is crucial for informing policy and practice decisions that promote inclusive education and support the diverse needs of both special education and general education students (Chatzigeorgiadou & Barouta, 2022).

Every Student Succeeds Act

In December 2015, President Barack Obama enacted the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), replacing the previous No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) signed by President Bush in 2001 (Yang et al., 2021). ESSA places a strong emphasis on the preparation of students for college and career readiness, as emphasized by educational researchers (Close et al., 2020). A significant shift brought about by ESSA is the transfer of federal control over student achievement to individual states, ensuring that school districts are responsible for delivering sufficient and appropriate instruction (Close et al., 2020). While states are still required to administer assessments in mathematics and English to students in grades three through eight, ESSA grants state the flexibility to

choose the specific tests to be used (Brown et al., 2019). However, states must adhere to federal

guidelines when developing an educational plan encompassing academic standards, annual

testing, individual school accountability, and establishing measurable goals to promote academic

achievement (Wang, 2020). Additionally, these plans must include support provisions for school

districts that encounter challenges in achieving proficiency (Chu, 2019).

Following the implementation of ESSA, states have gained the power to provide the

necessary support to students who face challenges in their academic progress (Knight, 2019).

ESSA emphasizes the provision of academic instruction for students with disabilities in the least

restrictive environment feasible (Ayscue et al., 2022). Additionally, ESSA allows parents and

families to contribute their input as educational administrators and state officials make decisions

regarding instructional approaches employed within school districts (Brown et al., 2019).

Responsive to Intervention

Response to Intervention (RTI) is an educational framework that aims to identify and

address students' academic and behavioral difficulties at an early stage (Gomez-Najarro, 2023).

General education teachers play a vital role in monitoring students' progress and using collected

data and assessments to determine where interventions are needed (Al Otaiba et al., 2019). Based

on these findings, RTI educators can recommend individualized accommodations, intervention

services, and behavioral support to meet students' specific needs (Zhou et al., 2019). By

implementing RTI, teachers can intervene early, reducing the need for special education referrals

and providing timely support to enhance students' academic, social, and emotional development

(Walter et al., 2021). Early intervention through RTI ensures that students receive the necessary

assistance to improve their performance in various domains (Zhang et al., 2019). Additionally,

RTI systems prioritize immediately addressing students' needs, preventing further academic,

social, and emotional decline that may occur if intervention is delayed (Kressler &
Cavendish, 2020).

Response to Intervention (RTI) support teams extend beyond classroom teachers
and typically involve a collaborative approach with various professionals, including
administrators, guidance counselors, social workers, psychologists, therapists, school
nurses, and parents or guardians (Hendricks & Fuchs, 2020; Kressler & Cavendish,
2020). These teams work together to make informed decisions and provide the necessary
resources for students in need (Roos et al., 2023). Despite the significant benefits of RTI,
educators encounter challenges when implementing its practices (Bose et al., 2019).
Identifying students who require additional support often falls on the shoulders of general
education teachers, who may require assistance in delivering effective whole-group
instruction across different subjects (Al Otaiba & Petscher, 2020; Bose et al., 2019).
Ensuring ongoing and consistent monitoring of individual students' progress poses
another challenge that necessitates collaborative efforts among RTI team members to
address the needs of diverse and struggling students (Silva et al., 2021). However,
obstacles such as lack of support, heavy caseloads, limited administrative support, and
educator self-efficacy can hinder continuous collaboration with support staff (Hall-Mills,
2019).

Multi-Tiered System of Support

Educators frequently encounter a significant proportion of students who face
challenges in their academic journey, which can impede their ability to acquire
knowledge (King, 2022). In response, school districts nationwide have implemented
measures to support these struggling students, with the Multi-Tiered System of Support

(MTSS) serving as a commonly employed framework (Briesch et al., 2020; Pendergast et al., 2018). Unlike the previous approach, which only intervened when students were already failing or facing severe difficulties, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) prompted a shift towards providing early interventions to address students' needs as soon as they exhibit signs of requiring support (Steed et al., 2023). By identifying areas needing improvement and offering timely interventions, educators can help students regain their academic momentum (Coyne et al., 2022). Furthermore, recognizing the need for intervention services allows educators to determine if individual students require additional support, such as services outlined in individualized education plans (Cook, 2022).

A multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) encompasses several key components that effectively address students' needs (Spearman, 2019). These components include implementing universal screening programs, offering tiered intervention services tailored to individual requirements, conducting ongoing data collection and assessments, setting clear expectations, ensuring support from school officials and staff, and promoting parent involvement (Steed et al., 2023). The data collected within the MTSS framework informs the allocation of tiers for each student. Tier one, which includes the majority of students, focuses on establishing effective classroom management strategies, implementing primary interventions, and fostering positive relationships to create a supportive learning environment (Arora et al., 2019). Tier two involves providing small group instruction to enhance learning and academic achievement, allowing educators to deliver differentiated instruction that addresses students' specific needs (Roberts et al., 2021). With increased teacher-student interaction, this targeted instruction builds confidence and encourages active participation (Chaparro et al., 2021). Tier three is reserved for students who do not respond adequately to tier one and tier two interventions and require additional

individualized support. During this stage, students receive personalized assistance from teachers and other intervention instructors (Hendricker et al., 2023).

Successful implementation of multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) relies on clear guidelines provided by the administration (Adamson et al., 2019). MTSS encompasses multiple components, including various tiers of instruction, academic and behavioral interventions, and supportive services (Roberts et al., 2021). Collaborative efforts among educators are crucial for identifying students who require MTSS and determining their appropriate tier placement (Gonzalez et al., 2022). Educators rely on summative and formative data collection to assess students' progress and inform future instructional approaches within the MTSS framework (Lesh et al., 2021). Effective communication and cultivating positive relationships among educators are essential for seamless collaboration (Steed et al., 2023). Moreover, the administration plays a pivotal role in providing educators with professional development opportunities to enhance their skills and strategies related to MTSS implementation (Chaparro et al., 2021).

Inclusive Education

In accordance with federal law, it is mandated that students with disabilities receive education in the least restrictive environment possible (Nilholm, 2021). To meet the needs of general education students and students with disabilities, school districts have increasingly transformed these environments into inclusion classrooms (Drewes et al., 2021). To provide inclusive teaching, which involves meeting the needs of all students, school districts often utilize co-teaching methods due to the lack of certification among general education teachers to teach special education (Kefallinou et al., 2020). Co-teaching involves collaboration between a general education teacher and a special

education teacher in the same classroom setting. This collaborative approach enables special education students to work together with their general education peers, enhancing academic, social, and emotional learning (Weinberg et al., 2020).

Inclusion classrooms offer various instructional methods, such as push-in or pull-out services, to cater to the individual needs of students with disabilities (Korsgaard et al., 2020). Differentiated instruction, tailored to the diverse learners in inclusion classrooms, provides substantial benefits for students with disabilities and general education students (Stollman et al., 2019). Teachers in inclusion classrooms capitalize on the diversity of their students to deliver practical instruction using a range of effective methods (Goldan & Schwab, 2020). Inclusive education aims to provide quality education for diverse learners. However, implementing necessary practices to provide equitable and quality education is challenging as many general education educators report not having the certifications or skills required to successfully provide quality education to diverse learners (Woodcock et al., 2022). To address this overarching issue, school districts often utilize collaborative teaching models throughout K-12 classrooms to support the needs of diverse students and provide equitable education. Inclusion classrooms provide various instructional methods to provide an equitable education to special and general education students (Florian, 2019). Additionally, educators in inclusion classrooms employ differentiated instructional methods to address the needs of diverse learners. This tailored approach benefits special and general education students in inclusion classrooms. By utilizing various instructional methods and strategies, educators create inclusive learning environments that foster academic growth, social and emotional well-being, and positive peer interactions (Goldan & Schwab, 2020).

General Education Teacher Preparation

Inclusion classrooms require general education teachers to possess special education skills and techniques to effectively instruct all students (Crispel & Kasperski, 2021). While these classrooms are recognized as beneficial for students, they present significant challenges due to the need for formal instruction (Romijn et al., 2021). Educators face the task of differentiating instruction to meet the diverse needs of both special education and mainstream students while also adhering to achievement standards set by educational authorities (Guise et al., 2023). The success of inclusion classrooms ultimately depends on educators' responses to various situations and their knowledge of best practices to implement in the classroom (Soslau et al., 2019). Despite positive attitudes among general education teachers towards inclusion, students are unlikely to succeed academically if educators lack the necessary knowledge of special education practices and methodologies (Rabin, 2020).

General education teachers stress the significance of the administration's involvement in addressing the continuous requirement for professional development to enhance instructional support in inclusive classrooms (Dubek & Doyle-Jones, 2021). Educators report that the administration should provide more efficient opportunities for professional development to enable general education teachers to effectively incorporate inclusive strategies (Kickbusch et al., 2020). Furthermore, additional professional development and preparation must be provided to learn strategies to manage student behavior within inclusion classrooms (Grey et al., 2020).

Pre-Service Teachers

Instruction in inclusion classrooms presents significant challenges, particularly for early-career educators (Lancaster & Bain, 2020). This challenge is attributed to the lack of teacher preparation in special education practices and methodologies during pre-service teacher education college programs (Chitiyo & Brinda, 2018; Goldhaber, 2019). Research emphasizes the importance of incorporating successful pedagogy into inclusion classrooms to meet the needs of all students (Athanases et al., 2020). Therefore, educators must possess the knowledge and skills to effectively instruct students using appropriate pedagogical approaches to ensure academic success (Johnson et al., 2021). However, pre-service teacher preparation programs currently do not offer sufficient coursework on effective instruction in inclusion classrooms (Solano-Campos et al., 2020).

Student-centered learning classroom environments are beneficial for general education and special education students (Hawkman et al., 2019). However, pre-service teacher programs predominantly focus on teacher-led instruction, failing to adequately prepare teachers for instructing in inclusive settings. Research reveals a significant gap in the preparation of general education teachers for effectively educating students in inclusion classrooms (Lancaster & Bain, 2020). The findings are further supported by reports that many pre-service teacher education programs do not provide comprehensive knowledge of best practices and methodologies to support individualized instruction (Moody & Kuo, 2022).

Preparation For Behavior Management

Educators face a lack of preparation in managing challenging student behavior (Walsh et al., 2021). Pre-service education programs typically focus on incorporating universal behavior management strategies, which provide a foundational understanding (Solano-Campos et al.,

2020). However, to ensure effective behavior management in inclusive classrooms, it is vital to have access to supplementary resources and a deeper understanding of the subject matter. Educators need specific skills and strategies tailored to working with this unique student population (Kwok, 2021). Practical behavior management skills are crucial for creating highly effective teachers and fostering positive classroom environments (Al-Bahrani, 2022). Despite the importance of such preparation, educators report that their teacher education programs could have better equipped them (Garrote et al., 2020). As inclusion classrooms become more prevalent, behavior issues arise within these environments, impacting mainstream and special education students (Scarparolo & Subban, 2021). Failure to effectively manage student behavior leads to decreased academic and personal achievement and contributes to high teacher turnover rates (Sobeck & Reister, 2020).

Furthermore, unprepared educators frequently find themselves in need of more effective behavior management strategies (Meindl et al., 2020). The use of ineffective strategies not only fails to address behavior concerns adequately but also consumes valuable instructional time. The loss of this valuable time leads to reduced student engagement and insufficient instruction of essential content necessary for academic success (Lehane & Senior, 2020). Therefore, it is crucial for educators to receive comprehensive training and support in implementing effective behavior management strategies that minimize disruptions and maximize instructional time (Simpson et al., 2020).

Co-Teaching in Inclusion Classrooms

Co-teaching, a collaborative instructional approach within inclusive education, brings together general and special education teachers to provide instruction for students with and without disabilities (Drewes et al., 2021; Soslau et al., 2019). The success of co-teaching partnerships relies on several critical factors, including mutual respect, well-defined roles and responsibilities, and a recognition of each teacher's individual strengths and weaknesses (Weiss & Rodgers, 2020). Moreover, effective co-teachers exhibit strong communication and problem-solving skills, demonstrate organizational competence, show unwavering commitment to their partnership and students, and possess the ability to adapt to evolving circumstances (Weinberg et al., 2020). By embodying these qualities, co-teachers can create an inclusive learning environment that maximizes student engagement and promotes all learners' academic and social development.

As research indicates, educators who engage in collaborative co-teaching partnerships within inclusion classrooms face various challenges arising from disparities in teaching styles and perspectives (Iacono et al., 2021). These differences often hinder the establishment of successful co-teaching partnerships, and educators commonly express concerns regarding the equitable distribution of roles, particularly in elementary school settings (Berry, 2021). To address these challenges, educators must strive to cultivate mutual respect, understanding, and a willingness to adapt to their co-teaching partners' unique teaching styles and philosophies (Paulsrud & Nilholm, 2020). By doing so, co-teachers can collaboratively create an inclusive learning environment that fosters the academic and social development of all students.

Collaborative Team Co-Teaching

Collaborative team co-teaching is an instructional approach wherein both general education and special education teachers work together with equal responsibilities to deliver effective instruction that meets the needs of all students (Drewes et al., 2021). To ensure successful collaborative co-teaching, partner teachers must engage in proactive collaboration to establish shared lesson plans, objectives, goals, assessments, and instructional materials that cater to the diverse needs of the students (Rodriguez, 2021). Within collaborative co-teaching settings, students actively collaborate with their peers to enhance their academic, social, and emotional skills (Tiernan et al., 2020). Partner teachers equally share the responsibility for the outcomes of the lessons, including student performance on both formative and summative assessments, as well as their social and emotional growth (Stefanidis et al., 2019). Successful collaborative team co-teaching allows for the utilization of various teaching styles to cater to students' individual learning preferences (Connor & Cavendish, 2020). Additionally, partner teachers support one another by aiding and backing up their colleagues when additional support is needed (Sebald et al., 2023).

Parallel Co-Teaching

Successful parallel co-teaching in inclusion classrooms requires careful planning by partner teachers to divide the class into two groups, focusing on providing additional support and differentiated instruction to students in smaller groups (Zimmerman et al., 2023). Pre-planning of lessons is essential to ensure that the same content is delivered to both groups of students (Hedin et al., 2020). However, partner teachers face challenges with noise levels and potential distractions for students in opposite groups (Willard,

2019). Competence in the specific content being taught and maintaining a consistent pace of instruction are crucial for effective parallel co-teaching (Tiernan et al., 2020). In parallel co-teaching, students are often divided into similar cohorts based on their needs (Semon et al., 2020). To support students with disabilities or struggling students, co-teaching partners employ alternative teaching methods to differentiate instruction, where one teacher instructs a more extensive group. At the same time, the other focuses on a smaller group of struggling students (Raley et al., 2021). Students for smaller groups are selected based on data collected from previous assessments and field notes (Sebald et al., 2023).

One Teach and One Assist Co-Teaching

The co-teaching model of one-teach and one-assist involves one teacher delivering whole-group instruction while partner co-teachers provide support to struggling students (Gallo-Fox & Stegeman, 2020). This approach includes academic support and addresses behavioral concerns that may disrupt the learning environment (Vogl et al., 2019). Educators can efficiently oversee the classroom by promptly attending to behavioral problems and optimizing instructional time (Guise et al., 2022). However, challenges arise when one partner teacher is perceived as having less authority or taking on a subordinate role in the classroom (Bondie et al., 2019). Another variation of this model is when one teacher instructs while others observe, allowing for data collection on students' strengths and weaknesses (Alnasser, 2021). This collected data informs the monitoring of students with individualized education plans, identifies students needing additional support, enhances differentiated instruction, and guides future lesson planning and co-teaching models (Hackett et al., 2021). The challenge with this co-teaching method lies in the responsibility placed on one teacher to effectively meet the needs of all students in an inclusive classroom (Guise et al., 2022).

One Teach One Observe Co-Teaching

The one-teach, one-observe co-teaching model involves one teacher delivering whole group instruction while partner teachers observe the students (Guise et al., 2021). This approach allows the observing teachers to collect valuable data on specific students' performance, academic goals, and social-emotional development (Sigurdardottir & Mork, 2022). The data collected during observations serve various purposes, including supporting individualized education plans, facilitating discussions with parents and administrators regarding students' progress, and informing behavior management plans (Weiss & Rodgers, 2020). By utilizing data from observations, teachers can tailor instruction and interventions to meet the specific needs of students, promoting their academic and socio-emotional growth within inclusive classrooms.

Academic intervention services are crucial in students' individualized intervention plans, addressing their specific academic needs (Hackett et al., 2021). Additionally, social and emotional factors significantly impact students' success in the classroom (Jurkowski et al., 2023). Students often engage in collaborative activities with their peers to enhance academic and social-emotional learning, allowing them to deepen their understanding and develop essential skills and strategies (Härkki et al., 2021). Educators collect essential data on individual students through the one-teach, one-observe co-teaching approach, enabling them to determine effective intervention methods for promoting academic, social, and emotional achievement (Laletas et al., 2022). By incorporating targeted interventions and fostering collaborative learning experiences, educators can support students' holistic development and facilitate their overall success in inclusive classrooms.

Station Co-Teaching

The station co-teaching model is implemented to provide targeted support to students through small-group instruction (Drewes et al., 2021). Students are divided into multiple small homogenous groups based on their levels, determined by analyzing various data sources, such as formative and summative assessments, daily assignments, homework, and observations (Friedman et al., 2022). In this model, both co-teachers actively engage with the small groups, delivering differentiated academic instruction tailored to the specific needs of individual students (Lyon et al., 2021). Simultaneously, other students in the classroom are engaged in independent work, peer interactions, and differentiated peer-to-peer instruction at different centers, fostering comprehension development and providing additional support (Cannaday et al., 2021). By utilizing the station co-teaching model, educators can effectively address students' diverse needs and promote individualized instruction and peer collaboration within inclusive classrooms.

In the station co-teaching model, homogenous grouping is applied to accommodate variations in content areas taught (Wexler, 2021). However, within each center, students work on the same content during specific lessons, ensuring consistency in instruction (Jurkowski et al., 2023). Students collaborate and engage with the material at each center for a designated period. At the same time, teachers provide differentiated instruction based on the academic needs of the homogenous groups when students rotate between centers (M. R. Murphy & Christle, 2022). Both co-teachers share the responsibility of lesson planning for each center, ensuring a cohesive and coordinated approach to instruction (Semon et al., 2020). Through the implementation of station co-teaching, educators can effectively target students' specific needs, promote collaboration, and provide differentiated instruction within inclusive classrooms.

Furthermore, planning co-teaching lesson plans in the station teaching model presents various challenges related to factors such as the availability of sufficient planning time, managing classroom noise levels during peer interactions at centers, and students' ability to work independently (Alnasser, 2021). Despite these challenges, educators highlight numerous benefits associated with successfully implementing station teaching (King-Sears & Jenkins, 2020). These benefits include teachers maintaining active and equal roles in instruction, providing targeted support to address students' individual needs at specific proficiency levels, and fostering increased peer engagement through student-to-student interactions at the different centers (Zimmerman et al., 2023). Station teaching offers promising opportunities to enhance collaboration, differentiate instruction, and promote meaningful student engagement in inclusive classrooms.

Alternative Co-Teaching

The alternative co-teaching method involves one teacher delivering whole group instruction to most students. In contrast, the partner teachers work with small groups to provide individualized support based on students' needs (Lindacher, 2020). Partner teachers use various data, including formative and summative assessments, observations, and classwork, to form small homogenous groups with similar academic intervention needs (D. Duran et al., 2021). While one teacher provides whole-group instruction, partner teachers focus on the same content to deliver differentiated instruction tailored to the specific needs of the small groups (Finkelstein et al., 2021). Teachers consistently highlight the significant benefits of alternative co-teaching (Kiel et al., 2020). These advantages extend to general education students and students requiring intervention services (Laletas et al., 2022). Alternative co-teaching is a practical approach to

addressing diverse student needs and promoting differentiated instruction in inclusive classrooms.

Teachers employ small group instruction to cater to individual student needs, ensuring personalized intervention and support (Johnson et al., 2022). Additionally, teachers recognize the importance of providing enrichment opportunities for advanced or gifted students alongside intervention methods (Joyce et al., 2020). While extensive benefits are reported, teachers acknowledge challenges in implementing alternative co-teaching methods (Connor & Cavendish, 2020). These challenges encompass the need for sufficient time to collect comprehensive student data to identify strengths and weaknesses (Dixon et al., 2019). Furthermore, teachers must develop differentiated instruction for students at various levels, including those who struggle, are mainstream, or are advanced (Lehane & Senior, 2020). It is crucial for teachers to ensure that all students receive instruction tailored to their needs while covering the same content (Mutch-Jones et al., 2021). Despite these challenges, teachers report success in supporting students through individualized and whole-group approaches within alternative co-teaching models (Joyce et al., 2020).

Differentiated Instruction

Inclusive education emphasizes implementing differentiated instruction in classrooms, utilizing sociocultural theories, learning styles, and multiple intelligences to scaffold all students, including those with disabilities, in meeting their individual needs (Ziernwald et al., 2022). Differentiation encompasses various aspects of the classroom, including academics, social interactions, emotional support, environmental considerations, and curriculum adaptations (Johler & Krumsvik, 2022). The goal of differentiated instruction is for each student to achieve mastery of assigned tasks and meet the established objectives (Gheyssens et al., 2020). To

effectively differentiate instruction, teachers rely on data from formative and summative assessments and classroom observations to identify students' strengths and areas for improvement (Bondie et al., 2019). In inclusive classrooms, where students with individualized education plans or 504 plans receive instruction, small group instruction led by one of the classroom teachers is employed to provide academic, social, and emotional support (Sharp et al., 2020). Collaboration between general and special education teachers is crucial in meeting the diverse needs of all students and ensuring the implementation of differentiated instruction within inclusive classrooms (D'Intino & Wang, 2021).

Collaborative teaching in inclusive classrooms provides ample opportunities for implementing differentiated instruction, effectively addressing the diverse needs of both general and special education students (Idrus et al., 2021). Through differentiated instruction, teachers can employ various strategies and methods to deliver targeted support to struggling students in specific subject areas, drawing insights from data analysis and classroom observations (Sharp et al., 2020). Furthermore, differentiated instruction allows educators to meet the unique requirements of both general education students and gifted students by offering enrichment activities and challenging tasks that foster the further development of advanced skills (Gheyssens et al., 2020). By embracing differentiated instruction, teachers ensure that all students, irrespective of their general or special education status, have equal opportunities to maximize their potential, leveraging their individual capabilities to achieve academic success (Smets et al., 2020).

Teachers are aware of the significance of offering differentiated instruction to cater to the diverse needs of all students (Letzel et al., 2020). However, educators

frequently face challenges in effectively implementing methods and strategies to support students at varying proficiency levels (Heng & Song, 2020). Teachers perceived self-efficacy plays a crucial role in successfully implementing differentiated instruction within inclusive classrooms (Pozas et al., 2022). Teachers' beliefs in their abilities to effectively support students at various levels directly influence the methods, skills, and strategies they employ to deliver differentiated instruction (Milinga et al., 2023).

Administrative Support

Administrative support plays a crucial role in facilitating successful collaboration between general education and special education teachers in inclusive classrooms (Kulophas & Hallinger, 2020). Administrators are responsible for ensuring that educators receive adequate training, access to resources, and necessary staff support to effectively address the diverse needs of all students in inclusive educational settings (C. M. Adams, 2020). In addition, administrators must prioritize providing educators with essential tools such as technology, electronic equipment, hands-on materials, and other resources to promote equitable education, particularly in the current post-pandemic era (Alsaleh, 2022). By actively supporting and equipping educators, administrators contribute to creating inclusive learning environments that benefit all students.

Professional Development

General education teachers often lack adequate knowledge and training to effectively provide inclusive classroom education, notably to support general education students and those with disabilities (Crispel & Kasperski, 2021). It is crucial for educators to be equipped with the necessary tools and resources to differentiate instruction and enhance academic achievement in line with mandated requirements (Avidov-Ungar, 2023). The success of students in the

classroom heavily relies on the instruction and the ability of teachers to meet individual needs (Charteris et al., 2021). To address these challenges, ongoing support and training are essential for special and general education teachers to gain the knowledge, strategies, and skills required to effectively incorporate inclusive practices within the classroom (McCabe et al., 2020; Van Mieghem et al., 2020). Furthermore, effective collaboration between co-teachers has positively impacted student performance and enhanced classroom management strategies (Makopoulou et al., 2022). By fostering continuous professional development and encouraging collaborative efforts, educators can enhance their ability to meet the diverse needs of students in inclusive classrooms (Beasley & Bernadowski, 2019).

Virtual Instruction

The Covid-19 pandemic has presented unprecedented challenges for educators (Chizhik & Brandon, 2020). Teachers across all grade levels have reported significant difficulties transitioning from in-person to virtual instruction (Minkos & Gelbar, 2020). This abrupt shift has particularly impacted the provision of effective instruction in inclusion classrooms, where meeting the diverse needs of general education students and students with disabilities has become an ongoing and demanding task (Akojie et al., 2022). The pandemic has magnified educators' complexities and hurdles in maintaining inclusive practices and ensuring equitable access to education for all students, necessitating innovative approaches and ongoing support to navigate these new challenges.

Educator's Perspectives

Educators have faced immense challenges implementing virtual co-teaching in inclusion classrooms (Chizhik & Brandon, 2020). The sudden shift from in-person to virtual instruction mandated by the federal government posed unprecedented difficulties. Collaborating with partner teachers and meeting the diverse needs of students emerged as significant obstacles (Kundu & Bej, 2021). Particularly concerning was the lack of technology access for students, hindering their ability to receive academic instruction remotely (Dorji, 2021). The insufficient professional development provided to K-12 educators on virtual teaching platforms before the pandemic exacerbated the situation (Sweeney & McComas, 2022). Furthermore, educators had to adapt overnight to teaching virtually from their homes, often navigating the challenges of balancing professional responsibilities with family obligations (Kim & Asbury, 2020). The pandemic's extraordinary circumstances have highlighted the urgent need for comprehensive support, training, and equitable access to technology to ensure effective virtual co-teaching in inclusive educational settings.

The Covid-19 pandemic presents significant challenges to students' education at all grade levels (Chamberlain et al., 2020). Notably, the provision of federally mandated services for students with classified disabilities and English language learners (ELL) is at risk. The transition to virtual instruction presents challenges in effectively delivering these vital services (Weinstein & James, 2021). Nationwide, students rely on these services to support their academic progress and linguistic development, making it imperative to find alternative solutions to ensure their educational needs are met during these unprecedented times (Moses et al., 2020).

Parents Perspectives

Inclusive education fosters collaboration between general and special education students, addressing their academic, social, and emotional needs (Zagona et al., 2021). It also equips students with the necessary tools to appreciate and embrace diversity among individuals. The impact of inclusive education extends beyond the classroom and influences families as well (Puig & Evenson, 2023). Students bring home the skills and strategies they acquire in inclusive classrooms, allowing parents and caregivers to actively participate in their child's education and gain valuable insights into successful educational practices. This involvement enhances their understanding of diversity and strengthens their ability to support their child's learning (Cologon, 2022). However, despite many parents expressing positive perspectives on their child's education in inclusion classrooms, some hesitancy and reservations remain. Parents often lack a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics within inclusion classrooms, leading to concerns and uncertainty (Dell'Anna et al., 2021). Additionally, both general and special education parents' express concerns about educators' abilities to meet the diverse needs of all students within inclusive settings (Bannink et al., 2020).

Social and Emotional Learning Implementation

Implementing effective social and emotional learning (SEL) programs in inclusion classrooms have yielded positive outcomes, particularly in managing student behavior (Wilson et al., 2020). SEL programs facilitate the development of crucial skills such as self-control, persistence, and effective communication. However, the initial introduction of SEL programs has often faced resistance (Whitney et al., 2022). Educators must approach the incorporation of SEL into the curriculum with caution,

considering its impact on evaluations of student-teacher relationships and changes in daily practices (Hayashi et al., 2022). In addition to being evaluated based on student achievement in content areas, educators would now be assessed on in-class peer interactions and the quality of relationships fostered within the classroom (Michalec & Wilson, 2022).

Parents have expressed concerns about implementing social and emotional learning (SEL) programs, particularly regarding the potential shift in focus away from content-area classes that are crucial for college and career readiness (Rivera & McKeithan, 2021). Additionally, parents have raised concerns about the values promoted in SEL programs, including conflicts with their values, the inclusion of specific secular or religious viewpoints, and the perceived lack of alignment between the programs and the individual needs of their children (P. Wood, 2022). To address these concerns, advocates of SEL can help alleviate apprehensions by embracing flexibility in program implementation and creating avenues for open communication where parents and educators can voice their personal concerns and perspectives (Vera et al., 2022). By fostering an inclusive and collaborative approach, the implementation of SEL programs can better meet the needs and address the concerns of all stakeholders involved (Rivera & McKeithan, 2021).

Sanches-Ferreira et al. (2021) study emphasizes the positive impact of effective social and emotional learning (SEL) incorporation on student participation and achievement in inclusion classrooms. SEL has particularly benefited disadvantaged students, including those with behavioral issues and disabilities, as it enhances their engagement and supports their learning (Laurens et al., 2022). Inclusion classrooms are designed to cater to the diverse needs of all students, and effective educators view these differences as opportunities for enriched learning rather than as challenges within the classroom. By integrating SEL as a core component,

inclusion classrooms provide enhanced educational and social support for diverse learners (McColley, 2021). Incorporating SEL promotes essential skills such as self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making, ultimately fostering the holistic development of students (Sanches-Ferreira et al., 2021). SEL can be integrated into instruction through student-centered learning approaches and delivered through formal and informal methods.

A case study by Stark and Ragunathan (2022) focuses on students with emotional and behavioral disorders (EBD) who are placed in inclusion classrooms. EBD students often exhibit challenging behaviors such as aggression, task refusal, anxiety, depression, and social isolation, leading to their classification as needing additional support in integrating into inclusion classrooms (Oliveira et al., 2021). It has been recognized that addressing the social, emotional, and educational needs of EBD students is crucial for their academic success during their primary educational years (Stark & Ragunathan, 2022). Effective integration of developmentally and socio-culturally appropriate SEL programs into the curriculum has shown positive outcomes for all students, including those with EBD (Flushman et al., 2021). SEL programs can be implemented at various levels, encompassing whole-school approaches, classroom-based programs to foster peer collaboration and individualized components (Sanches-Ferreira et al., 2021). By effectively implementing SEL programs, negative behaviors among EBD students can be reduced, and they are more likely to engage in positive peer interactions while experiencing decreased levels of anxiety and depression (Mahoney et al., 2021).

In 1994, the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) was established to develop evidence based SEL programs for students from

Pre-K to high school (Frye et al., 2022). Additionally, in 1997, educators working on CASEL programs developed guidelines to promote social and emotional learning within classrooms and school communities (Elias, 1997; Gimbert et al., 2023). These guidelines also emphasize the importance of extending SEL growth and learning to students' homes and the broader community outside of school environments, fostering a comprehensive approach to SEL implementation (Anthony et al., 2022; K. R. Clark & Vealé, 2018).

Future Implications

Future implications of research on co-teaching post-pandemic hold significant promise for enhancing inclusive educational practices. As the education landscape continues to adapt and recover from the disruptions caused by the pandemic, understanding the effectiveness and impact of co-teaching becomes paramount (Phan & Paul, 2021). Research around collaborative teaching post-pandemic can provide valuable insight into the innovative strategies, technologies, and pedagogical approaches that have emerged during remote and hybrid learning experiences (Tsui et al., 2020). Furthermore, examining how the long-term effects of co-teaching in post-pandemic inclusion classrooms can shed light on how collaboration between general education and special education teachers can meet the needs of diverse students (Li & Sun, 2023). This research can inform the development of evidence-based guidelines, frameworks, and professional development programs to equip educators with the knowledge and skills to effectively implement co-teaching models (Yau et al., 2022). Ultimately, by exploring the future implications of co-teaching research post-pandemic, this study will contribute to the ongoing efforts to create inclusive classrooms that foster academic success and overall well-being for all students (Barron et al., 2022).

Moreover, future research in the domain of collaborative instruction in inclusion classrooms post-pandemic should prioritize investigating the integration of social and emotional learning (SEL) programs into the curriculum (Alnahdi et al., 2022). Existing studies have consistently highlighted the positive outcomes associated with incorporating SEL into the curriculum, particularly in addressing behavioral challenges and enhancing academic instruction (Nilholm, 2021). Educators across various grade levels frequently encounter disruptive behavioral issues that impede effective academic instruction (Korsgaard et al., 2020). Educators can effectively address behavioral concerns and foster positive peer relationships by integrating SEL programs into inclusion classrooms, thereby cultivating a nurturing and supportive classroom community (Guo et al., 2023). When students feel valued and included within the classroom community, they are more inclined to exhibit appropriate behavior, resulting in improved academic performance (Goldan & Schwab, 2020). Additionally, implementing robust SEL programs facilitates the development of students' self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making (Al-Jbouri et al., 2023). Further exploration in the field of integrating SEL into collaborative inclusion classrooms would contribute to a better understanding of the advantages and effective strategies for integrating SEL into inclusion classrooms, ultimately promoting the holistic social, emotional, and academic growth of all students (Garrote et al., 2020).

Summary

Efforts to provide effective instruction through collaborative teaching in inclusion classrooms, catering to the diverse needs of all students, continue to be a priority for educators (Lahiri-Roy & Whitburn, 2023). This is particularly evident when educators face the challenge

of adapting to collaborative teaching in virtual instruction settings. The COVID-19 pandemic further highlighted the need for educators to ensure that students' academic needs were met, especially when faced with disruptions in in-person educational instruction. In inclusion classrooms, partner teachers play a crucial role in working together to meet the needs of both special education and general education students (Rowe et al., 2021). Effective collaboration between partner teachers involves efficient communication, thoughtful lesson planning, analysis of student data, and strategic selection of future methods and strategies to support student learning (Ghedin & Aquario, 2020). Additionally, partner teachers must carefully consider which co-teaching method to employ for specific lessons, considering the unique requirements of their students and the learning objectives to be achieved (Alabdallat et al., 2021). Continuous improvement in these areas is essential for fostering inclusive and effective learning environments within inclusive classrooms.

Moreover, the roles and responsibilities of partner teachers in collaborative instruction must be clearly defined and agreed upon (Macias et al., 2022). The provision of comprehensive professional development by school administrators is crucial for enhancing academic instruction in inclusion classrooms and ensuring the success of collaborative teaching. Being readily available to co-plan lessons with partner teachers is essential for the effective delivery of instruction (Suh & Hinton, 2021). In addressing students' academic and behavioral challenges, incorporating an effective social and emotional learning program into the existing curriculum has proven to be a successful approach to supporting all students (Eastridge & Benson, 2020). This case study focused on narrowing the gaps by exploring educators' perceptions of providing collaborative instruction, specifically in the context of in-person instruction. Additionally, given the shift to virtual education during the COVID-19 pandemic, the study examined educators'

perspectives to identify effective professional development methods that enhance educators' skills and strategies in both in-person and virtual instructional settings (Huang & He, 2023). The findings of this case study can inform the modification of pre-service teacher education programs and ongoing professional development provided to in-service teachers to incorporate elements of virtual and in-person collaborative instruction within inclusion classrooms (K. Adams et al., 2021). By leveraging these insights, teacher education programs can better prepare educators for the challenges and opportunities associated with collaborative teaching in inclusive settings.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

This qualitative case study aimed to discover educators perceptions of the challenges and benefits of collaborative teaching post-pandemic for general and special education teachers in inclusion classrooms throughout New York public schools. Chapter three explores qualitative instrumental case study research design. Furthermore, procedures are explored, including the reasoning behind choosing specific locations, participants, and researchers' positionality in deciding to examine the challenges and benefits educators face when co-teaching in inclusion classrooms. Moreover, the interpretative framework, philosophical assumptions, and researcher's role were explored to gain knowledge on data collected and incorporated into the qualitative case study.

Research Design

The research design for this case study used a qualitative approach. Qualitative research is appropriate because the design explored educators' and students' experiences, interactions, and behaviors within inclusion classrooms (Aspers & Corte, 2019; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Langtree et al., 2019). Moreover, the researcher discovered human behavior through participants' perspectives (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Vindrola-Padros & Johnson, 2020). The qualitative research analyzed objectives and measurements through interviews, surveys, and a focus group (Creswell & Poth, 2018). To collect data needed for this qualitative research study, real-life experience within inclusion classrooms is vital, as well as collecting data using the resources listed above.

The research design utilized for this qualitative methodology is a case study. A case study is an appropriate method to apply because it explored a variety of lenses through various data

sources to understand phenomena (Pasha et al., 2020). The case study methodology is a highly utilized strategy employed when researchers desire to comprehend complex phenomena (Yin, 2018). Case study methodology allows researchers to obtain authentic and meaningful data to profoundly understand complex and multifaceted phenomena (Yin, 2018). Furthermore, the case study methodology was used to explore a multi-faceted analysis approach in inclusion classrooms (Pasha et al., 2020).

The type of case study utilized for this qualitative research study was instrumental. An instrumental case study studies a group exploring and discovering insight into a particular issue or topic (Farquhar et al., 2020). For example, this qualitative case study examined challenges and benefits of collaborative teaching in inclusion classrooms. Furthermore, the purpose was to discover teachers' perceptions of the challenges and benefits of collaborative teaching for general education students and students with disabilities within inclusion classrooms. Incorporating the case study method, which examines a specific group of educators within inclusion classrooms, proves to be the most effective approach for research purposes (Lindacher, 2020). This case study is bounded through time, place, and participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The researcher determined a certain amount of time for the study to collect data through interviews, surveys, and a focus group. By setting a specific timeframe for the study, the researcher concentrated their data analysis on a specific period, allowing for accurate data analysis (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Fox et al., 2022). Specific participants were analyzed for the case study; New York state-licensed teachers working now or have worked in the past in collaborative inclusion classrooms. By selecting a specific group of educators, the researcher utilized participants relevant to the research question (Creswell & Poth, 2018;

Tarnoki & Puentes, 2019). Lastly, using data collection methods through the setting of virtual formats allowed the researcher to focus the data collection on a specific group of educators and analysis information to determine the phenomena (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Poth & Shannon-Baker, 2022).

Research Questions

The primary goal of the qualitative research case study was to examine the challenges and benefits educators face in co-teaching in inclusion classrooms. The following central research question and sub-questions seek to gain valuable feedback and understanding from educators about the case study's goal.

Central Research Question

What are the main challenges and benefits of collaborative teaching in inclusion classrooms post-pandemic?

Sub-Question One

How does collaborative teaching in inclusion classrooms post-pandemic contribute to improved academic and personal outcomes for students with diverse learning needs?

Sub-Question Two

What strategies and practices can educators employ to sustain self-efficacy in delivering effective collaborative instruction and meeting the needs of all students in inclusive classrooms?

Sub-Question Three

What resources and support strategies are implemented by school administration to facilitate collaboration among teachers in inclusive classrooms?

Setting and Participants

The setting and participants in qualitative research are the sole focus of the case study

(Haven & Van Grootel, 2019; Ryan et al., 2022). Therefore, analyzing participants in comfortable environments where they maintain anonymity is essential to retain the research's highest quality and authenticity (V. B. Gray et al., 2020). Furthermore, data collection for the qualitative case study was achieved through participants willing to be analyzed by participating in interviews, surveys, and a focus group (V. B. Gray et al., 2020).

Setting

The setting of this qualitative research case study took place virtually using New York state certified public-school educators. The school districts the educators work in consist of students, of which over 50% qualify for free or reduced lunch programs. Furthermore, student demographics are predominately minority students including majority Hispanic, African American, Asian, and less than 15% Caucasian. The administration in New York public schools includes a superintendent, assistant superintendents at various content levels, a school principal, and two assistant principals. This setting was chosen for the qualitative case study because the researcher is an educator within the New York public school system. Furthermore, New York schools provide differentiated instruction to students in inclusion classrooms at various grade levels to meet the needs of populations of students with disabilities, students with accommodations listed in individualized educational plans, and students classified as English language learners (ELL).

Participants

Purposive sampling in qualitative case studies allows researchers to select participants based on their ability to provide important information regarding the topic

researched (Younas et al., 2022). Furthermore, purposive sampling ensures that participants are highly qualified in specific areas of study, ensuring quality and efficient results for the qualitative case study (Ames et al., 2019). This case study's participants included general and special education teachers providing collaborative instruction in inclusion classrooms. Teacher participants included general education, special education, and English language learner teachers with more than one year of experience as licensed educators. The qualitative case study involved 13 female teachers. The age range of the participating educators varied from 25 to 60 years old.

Researcher Positionality

I was motivated to conduct this qualitative research case study because I have several New York state teaching licenses to teach pre-kindergarten through 12th grade. The licenses include childhood education grades one to six, early childhood education birth to second grade, English grades seven to 12th, and English language learners' grades kindergarten through 12th. Unfortunately, none of my teaching licenses have enabled me to become certified in special education. In addition, I had never provided educational instruction in a collaborative inclusion classroom, until this current school year. Co-teaching in a collaborative inclusion classroom was the fundamental driving force behind my research topic. Weinberg et al. (2020) explicitly state that collaborative teachers in inclusion classrooms work together to lesson plan, provide whole group and individualized instruction, evaluate progress, and manage all dynamics of classroom communities. Furthermore, this collaborative approach in inclusion classrooms allows educators to meet the needs of diverse students and hold individuals accountable to required educational standards (Sorkos & Hajisoteriou, 2021). Therefore, the driving force behind selecting this area of study was that I would like to learn more on this topic to acquire knowledge and build skills and strategies to meet the needs of all students.

Interpretive Framework

This instrumental case study was explored through the researcher's interpretive framework. Social constructivism is an interpretive framework in which individuals acquire knowledge and develop comprehension through experiences (Rana, 2022). Moreover, peer interactions contribute to comprehension (Rana, 2022). Social constructivism relates to implementing education in inclusion classrooms because students construct meaning by interacting with peers in the least restrictive environment possible to meet the needs of all students (McLeod & O'Connor, 2020).

To become a social constructivist educator, one can focus on an educational environment that fosters student collaboration through a student-centered learning classroom. Furthermore, educators create collaborative teaching environments with their partner teachers by facilitating interactions to support co-teaching lessons that provide an equitable education, sharing knowledge and resources, and working together to implement strategies in the classroom to support differentiation. Moreover, educators can work collaboratively to support diversity in the classroom by acknowledging and valuing different cultures, perspectives, and traditions. Combining general education students with special needs students enhances academic, social, and emotional experiences. The foundation of inclusion classrooms allows all students to collaborate with peers to enhance learning (McLeod & O'Connor, 2020).

Philosophical Assumptions

Philosophical assumptions are theoretical frameworks researchers use to collect, analyze, and interpret data (Coates, 2021). Philosophical assumptions provide insight into why researchers make specific assumptions regarding research, leading to confident

choices throughout case studies (Liu, 2022). An overview of choices made about philosophical assumptions includes purpose, design, methodology, data analysis, interpretation, setting, and participants (Urcia, 2021). I outline the ontological, epistemological, and axiological assumptions to provide a foundation for the research. The assumptions align with my research goals and objectives.

Ontological Assumption

Ontological assumption relates to the world being investigated and the nature of existence (McCrudden & Marchand, 2020). The primary focus of ontological assumptions is to uncover reality (McCrudden & Marchand, 2020). I utilize ontological assumptions to explore a variety of forms of evidence from individuals' experiences or perceptions to determine if single or multiple realities exist (Høffding et al., 2022; Maarouf, 2019). Conducting qualitative research case studies with biblical perspectives ensures only one universal reality. Ontological assumptions explore one defined reality, observed, and measured (Høffding et al., 2022). Therefore, my ontological assumptions shape how I approach teaching and learning and my role in promoting specific values and beliefs. As an educator who may one day teach in a collaborative educational environment, it is essential for me to acknowledge how vital knowledge, values, and reality are.

How I view knowledge, values, and reality plays a significant impact in my approach to teaching. Knowledge is an ever-evolving concept; I believe everyone, even teachers, can learn something new daily. I encourage students to create a classroom community environment by sharing their perspectives and experiences with their peers, just as I can share valuable knowledge. I promote values within my students by supporting diversity and equity. My student-centered classrooms incorporate my student's traditions and cultures to create a warm and inviting classroom that supports students' and educators' values.

Furthermore, as an educator, I must show my students that reality exists outside the four walls. Therefore, I can incorporate educational content and passages related to students' cultures and traditions. My students need to see the reality outside the cultures and traditions in their homes. By doing so, my students gain respect and empathy for their peers and accept diversity.

Epistemological Assumption

The epistemological assumption is conducted through qualitative research by determining the relevance of specific knowledge and relationships between how knowledge is acquired, and which knowledge already exists (Hong & Cross Francis, 2020). Furthermore, the epistemological assumption is based on relationships between researched content and researchers (Guba & Lincoln, 1982; Hong & Cross Francis, 2020). The epistemological assumption is relevant to this qualitative case study because I explore the experiences of educators within inclusion classrooms. These experiences are subjective to those experiencing them and are not determined by experts (McCrudden & Marchand, 2020). The relationship between this case study research and myself is relevant because I am a New York public school teacher who has never been provided professional development regarding collaborative co-teaching in inclusion classrooms. Furthermore, I have never been offered instructional practice or education on collaborative education during pre-service teacher education programs.

Axiological Assumption

Axiological assumption relates to the researcher's values, morals, religion, and beliefs (Martin & Kang, 2020). Furthermore, axiological assumption relates to the focus of qualitative research (McCrudden & Marchand, 2020). Although my beliefs and values

should not factor into qualitative research, my specific morals determine research topics and methodology choices (Martin & Kang, 2020). Although my beliefs and values as the researcher in this qualitative study should not influence or bias research or data collected, I must acknowledge that my role as an educator influences the research direction. I am a general education and English as a New Language (ENL) teacher with no experience working in a collaborative inclusion classroom. However, my role shifts when I teach in a collaborative classroom and become certified in special education.

Researcher's Role

The roles of researchers in qualitative research are multifaceted (Lustick, 2021; Tong & Dew, 2016). Researchers serve as the primary instruments in qualitative research (Collins & Stockton, 2022). Additionally, qualitative research employs diverse data collection methods, including the interpretation of data by the researcher and individuals involved (Collins & Stockton, 2022). Researchers in qualitative research actively engage in data analysis, interpretation, and generating meaningful insights to uncover rich and nuanced understandings of the research phenomenon (Lustick, 2021; Tong & Dew, 2016).

For this qualitative research case study, my role as the human instrument was to collect quality and unbiased data from participants to examine collaborative teaching in inclusion classrooms and explore its effects on students' academic achievement and social and emotional learning. I interviewed general and special education teachers to gain participants' perspectives. Therefore, eliminating bias is highly unlikely. An example of bias that occurred in this case study was selection bias, as participants were specifically chosen and not selected at random. However, to eliminate as much bias in the qualitative research case study as possible, I had no authority in my research setting. I then provided participants with two surveys via Google Forms to

complete. Lastly, I invited all participants to participate in a virtual focus group to have a group discussion regarding their perceptions of collaborative teaching in inclusion classrooms.

The research design I utilized for this qualitative methodology was an instrumental case study. The instrumental case study methodology explored a multi-faceted analysis approach in a natural setting of inclusion classrooms (Zapata-Barrero & Yalaz, 2020). First, I interviewed educators in a virtual setting to maintain anonymonity. Because I interviewed educators in a comfortable setting, I received more authentic data collection (Zapata-Barrero & Yalaz, 2020). Furthermore, as a researcher, I conducted interviews, provided surveys, and conducted a virtual focus group to collect data to analyze and explore (Costa et al., 2020).

Procedures

In this qualitative research case study, the first procedural method was to submit the dissertation proposal review to the committee chair. Once the proposal review is approved, an appointment was scheduled with the committee to provide the dissertation proposal defense. The application to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) was submitted as soon as the dissertation proposal defense is approved. Once IRB notified the approval (see Appendix A), participants were selected by sending direct emails to New York state certified teachers. When the participants expressed interest, they were sent a recruitment email with the information about the qualitative case study (see Appendix B). If participants were interested in participating, they completed the Google form with recruitment questions (see Appendix D). Once the researcher received the completed Google form with the recruitment questions, the participants were sent the informed

consent form (see Appendix B). Once the consent forms were received from the participant, the data collection began. Triangulation was achieved by collecting data from various sources, including interviews, surveys, and a virtual focus group session (Natow, 2020).

Table 1

Recruitment Form/Screening Questions:

1. What is your name?

2. What is your email address?

3. What is your phone number? (Optional)

4. Are you a New York State Licensed Teacher?

5. What New York state teaching licenses do you currently hold?

6. Do you currently teach in a co-teaching inclusion classroom?

7. If no to the above question, have you taught in the past in a co-teaching inclusion classroom?

8. Are you willing to participate in a case study for a dissertation?

Permissions

This qualitative instrumental research case study took place after the approval of the Institutional Review Boards (see Appendix A). Recruitment emails were sent to participants with information regarding the case study (see Appendix C). Permissions were sent to the participants to obtain official use of research through virtual means via email (see Appendix C). Lastly, participating educators were provided with informed consent forms. The consent forms must be returned before analysis can begin (see Appendix B).

Recruitment Plan

I began recruitment process after IRB and site approvals. Purposive sampling was

utilized for this qualitative research case study. Purposive sampling was utilized because researchers use personal judgment when determining participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Fadlillah et al., 2020). This judgment relied on the notion that teachers collaboratively educating students at specific grade levels in inclusion classrooms were most effective for this qualitative case study. Therefore, the sample size of the qualitative case study was 13 teachers throughout public school classrooms. In addition, each participant was provided with informed consent detailing the key elements of the research and foundational aspects (see Appendix B). I chose participants by first emailing the educators directly to complete a Google form regarding their interest and educational experience (see Appendix D). In New York, each school district has a website containing the teacher's name and email address so I was able to locate the educator's email through that system. After they indicated they were interested, the potential participant educators for the case study completed a questionnaire so I was able to ensure they have taught in a co-teaching inclusion classroom and could participate in the study. Then I sent the qualifying participants an informed consent form (see Appendix B). The consent form included the case study's title, the study's purpose, participant information, data collection methods, confidentiality, anonymity, voluntary participation, informed consent, contact information, IRB approval, incentives, and signature.

Data Collection Plan

The data collection component of qualitative research was vital in securing authentic data (Lobe et al., 2020). Therefore, qualitative data collection was observed and recorded for data analysis (Y. Lincoln & E. Guba, 1990). The data collection methods

utilized for this research were virtual interviews, online surveys, and a virtual focus group session.

Individual Interviews

Individual interviews for qualitative research are the data collection method that provides necessary information on participants' perspectives and experiences (Smith et al., 2022). Furthermore, individual interviews with participants allowed the researcher to explore beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors that influenced the research (Smith et al., 2022). For this qualitative research case study, I conducted interviews with participants via virtual interview by asking open-ended questions. Furthermore, conducting individual interviews facilitated a more profound understanding of participants beliefs and viewpoints (Thelwall & Nevill, 2021). While conducting the interviews, I conducted memoing of the particpants answers to analyze at a later date.

Table 2

Individual Interview Questions

1. What is your educational background? CRQ

2. Describe your current and past career throughout your teaching roles. CRQ

3. What is your role in your current position? CRQ

4. What kind of instruction and training did you receive regarding collaboratively teaching students in inclusion classrooms during your pre-service teacher preparation program? CRQ

5. Describe challenging practices utilized for students in inclusion classrooms. SQ1

6. Describe challenges with collaborative classroom management practices. SQ1

7. Describe challenges with time allotted for lesson preparation with your partner teacher. SQ1

8. What challenges do you face when determining which co-teaching method to utilize for specific lessons? SQ1

9. What recurring challenges are faced by co-teaching in inclusion classrooms? SQ1

10. How are the reoccurring challenges addressed with your partner teacher? With administration? SQ1

11. How would you describe the implementation of co-teaching during the pandemic while using virtual instruction? SQ1

12. What new challenges have emerged in co-teaching after the pandemic, and how would you describe them? SQ1

13. How do you access deficiency areas students are facing? SQ1

14. How do you handle behavior challenges within the classroom? SQ1

15. What challenges do you face getting parents or guardians to participate in their child's education? SQ1

16. What challenges do you face collaborating with support teachers, such as social workers, ELL teachers, speech, and occupational therapists, IEP teachers, and other support staff? SQ1

17. What support was provided during virtual instruction to collaborate with support teachers? SQ1

18. Describe successful methods utilized for whole group instruction. SQ2

19. Describe successful methods utilized for small group instruction. SQ2

20. Describe the benefits of co-teaching methods throughout specific lessons. SQ2

21. What qualities do educators require to be effective teachers collaboratively teaching in inclusion classrooms? SQ2

22. How do you access the progress students are making? SQ2

23. How do you reward positive behavior in the classroom? SQ2

24. What effective methods do you utilize to communicate with parents? SQ2

25. During the pandemic, how did you effectively communicate with parents? SQ2

26. What resources are parents provided to help their child with virtual instruction? SQ2

27. What are the benefits of collaborating with support teachers outside the classroom, such as social workers, speech, IEP, and other support staff? SQ2

28. How does the administration provide professional development for teachers working in inclusion classrooms? SQ3

29. Provide examples of skills and strategies introduced for effective co-teaching practices during professional development. SQ3

30. How does your administration provide support for teachers when needed? SQ3

31. How did the administration provide support during virtual instruction through the pandemic? SQ3

32. What courses or training were available during your pre-service teacher education programs to help you develop the skills and strategies required to provide academic instruction in inclusion classrooms? SQ3

In qualitative case studies, the interview questions included play a crucial role in aligning with the purpose statement, problem statement, and the theoretical framework of the study. The interview questions are carefully designed to discover relevant data that directly relates to the research objectives and the phenomenon. Furthermore, the research questions are tailored to

address key research areas and themes identified in the problem statement and theoretical framework, ensuring that the data collected through interviews contributes to the understanding of the research objective. Questions one through four discover background knowledge on the educators' qualifications for being selected as a participant for the study. Questions five through fifteen discover challenges reported by educators on collaborative teaching and resources provided by administration post-pandemic. Questions sixteen through twenty discover benefits of collaborative teaching and positive strategies used within inclusion classrooms. Questions twenty-one through twenty-seven discover educators' perceptions on support and resources provided by administration to implement skills, strategies, and resources within inclusion classrooms post-pandemic. Questions twenty-eight throough thirty-two discover educators perceptions on support provided by administration. By structuring the interview questions in this manner, the qualitative case study effectively gathered perspectives from educators' that contributed to the comprehensive understanding of collaborative teaching in inclusion classrooms post-pandemic.

Interview Data Analysis Plan

During interviews, researchers take extensive field notes and transcribe them at a later date (De Voto & Thomas, 2020). The interview data analysis plan utilizes Saldana's coding and Nvivo qualitative data analysis software to analyze the collected data systemically. The coding process analyzed the interview transcripts and identified themes, patterns, and categories within the data. The primary source for specific documents was participants and the information provided during interviews (Creswell & Poth, 2018; De Voto & Thomas, 2020). Additionally, coding enabled the researcher to identify patterns and comprehend content. Identifying patterns allowed the researcher to explore relationships between content and data collected (Rumary et

al., 2022). I incorporated a combination of deductive and inductive coding. I had a predefined set of codes based on previous research on co-teaching in inclusion classrooms, and as I analyzed the data, I included additional codes (Giesen & Roeser, 2020). I conducted deductive and inductive coding and then categorized the codes. I then utilized NVivo coding to analyze the participants' language and terminology (Giesen & Roeser, 2020). I employed structural coding to analyze the participants' responses to the provided questions. Each question was assigned a different code, enabling a focused examination of the data. This structural coding approach allowed for a systematic organization and analysis of participants' responses, facilitating a comprehensive understanding of participants' perspectives.

Surveys

Two surveys were provided to educators participating in this qualitative case study via Google Forms. The link was sent to participants for them to complete and results were sent to the researcher once the participant submitted the form. The purpose of surveys in the qualitative research case study is to collect data on participants' perceptions, beliefs, and behaviors (Eftenaru, 2023). The first survey was a Likert-scale survey. The survey consisted of closed-ended questions to gain valuable feedback from each participant on perspectives about components of educating students within inclusion classrooms (Summers et al., 2019). Likert-scale survey questions are unidimensional and intended to measure participants' perceptions of collaborative teaching in inclusive education (Rumary et al., 2022). Educators responded to questions using five measurements (Thelwall & Nevill, 2021). The five measurements included strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree (Rumary et al., 2022).

Table 3

Survey One: Likert-Scale Questions

1. You feel confident in your ability to co-teach in inclusion classrooms. SQ2

2. You feel there is adequate time to co-plan with your partner teacher. SQ3

3. You were partnered with an appropriate collaborative teacher. SQ3

4. You have strategies to communicate concerns with your partner teacher. CRQ

5. You have strategies to determine which co-teaching method to implement for specific

    lessons. SQ2

6. You work collaboratively to meet the needs of all students. CRQ

7. You and your partner teacher work collaboratively to determine classroom management

    methods. CRQ

8. You and your partner teacher discussed expectations with students. CRQ

9. You and your partner teacher determined methods to handle disruptive behavior in the

    classroom. CRQ

10. You and your partner teacher discussed methods of communication with

    parents/guardians. CRQ

11. You and your partner teacher determined methods of progress monitoring. CRQ

12. You and your partner teacher support and maintain a culturally responsive classroom.

    CRQ

13. Students with disabilities in your classroom receive small group instruction. SQ1

14. You and your partner teacher can meet the needs of all students, including students with

    disabilities, mainstream students, and gifted students. SQ1

15. You and your partner teacher determined methods to provide differentiated instruction to meet the needs of all students. SQ1

16. You are provided adequate manipulatives to utilize in the classroom. SQ3

17. You are provided with appropriate technology for educators. SQ3

18. You are provided with appropriate technology for students. SQ3

19. Adequate resources are provided for students needing additional support. SQ3

20. You can utilize online platforms in case of another school shutdown. SQ3

21. Support staff, such as speech, OT, social workers, and parent coordinators, are responsive to your request for additional support. SQ3

22. During your pre-service educator program, you were provided training and courses on instructing students in inclusive classrooms. SQ2

23. You receive professional development on skills and strategies to support instruction in inclusion classrooms through your current position. SQ3

24. You prefer co-teaching in inclusion classrooms instead of single-educator classroom instruction. SQ2

25. You believe in your self-efficacy to provide differentiated instruction in co-teaching inclusion classrooms to meet the needs of diverse learners. SQ2

Survey Two: Co-Teaching Methods

Educators were provided with a second survey asking for them to answer one question; to mark off which co-teaching model they feel works best in inclusion classrooms to meet the needs of all students. The participants were required to answer the question and explain why in detail. The survey was sent to participants via Google Forms, through a link in their email. Once participants completed the survey, the researcher had access to the results immediately. The

survey incorporating co-teaching methods included one-teach one-observe co-teaching, station co-teaching, parallel co-teaching, alternative co-teaching, team co-teaching, and one-teach one-assist co-teaching. Data collected from the one-question survey created a table of educators' perspectives on the most effective co-teaching methods within inclusion classrooms.

Table 4

Survey Two: Co- Teaching Methods

Which co-teaching model do you feel works best in inclusion classrooms to meet the needs of all students? Please list a co-teaching model and explain why in detail.

Survey Data Analysis Plan

At the onset of the qualitative case study, teachers were administered surveys to obtain valuable feedback before a virtual focus group session. The analysis of survey data enabled the researcher to identify patterns in teachers' perceptions of collaborative teaching in inclusion classrooms. The aim of the survey questions was to gather insights into the preferred co-teaching methods that educators believe are most effective in meeting the diverse needs of all students within inclusion classrooms. Consequently, it was vital to include a combination of open-ended and closed-ended questions to guarantee the collection of valuable and genuine feedback from the participants. Furthermore, the written responses of educators, consisting of one paragraph regarding their preferred co-teaching method in the survey was analyzed. I conducted the survey data analysis plan by having a clear analysis plan to guide the analysis process. I began by preparing the survey data by collecting responses and ensuring the data was properly organized and stored. I reviewed the data to gain an understanding of the participants' responses and identify patterns or themes. I developed a coding framework based on the research questions and

themes. I then applied coding techniques to analyze the survey responses systematically. I organized the codes into categories based on similarities to themes. I then analyzed and interpreted the data. I achieved triangulation by comparing the survey data with other sources to ensure validity and reliability. Lastly, I interpreted and wrote the findings considering the implications and significance of the findings.

Focus Groups

Focus groups were vital components of data collection for this qualitative research case study. Focus groups provided an opportunity for the researcher to gather diverse data by bringing together multiple participants from the study who shared their perspectives on collaborative teaching in inclusion classrooms (Wall et al., 2021). The focus group discussions stimulated interactions and discussions with the participants to generate insight into the research topic and objectives (Wall et al., 2021). With multiple participants interacting in discussions, educators can build upon each other's ideas and offer contrasting viewpoints, as well as share similar experiences (Wall et al., 2021). The focus groups fostered an interactive environment where participants engaged in discussions, ask clarifying questions, and provided feedback to fellow educators (Wall et al., 2021). This interactive environment lead to the creation of new ideas, common experiences, and exposure to contrasting viewpoints that may not have been achieved through individual interviews. Following the first two data collection methods, interviews and surveys, I conducted a focus group session to collect multiple perspectives from participants. The open-ended questions asked to participants were based on themes that emerged during the interviews and surveys. The researcher asked the participants open-ended questions to facilitate discourse among the participants themselves. The same participants that participated in the interviews and surveys were invited to participate in the focus group session, which took place

virtually through Zoom. Teachers were invited via email and asked to fill out a Google Form to select between two days and times that worked best for them for the virtual focus group discussion. The virtual focus group discussion took place during the day and time that most participants selected. To maintain anonymity, participants were made aware they may turn their cameras off during the focus group discussion and only use they were able to use a fictitious name. The researcher, however, knew who each participant was. When the participant confirmed their ability to participate in a virtual focus group, they were sent a follow up link to group the virtual meeting the morning of the session.

Table 5

Virtual Focus Group Session

After the researcher gained feedback from the interviews and surveys, the researcher was able to generate open-ended discussion questions for the virtual focus group, based on the participants responses in the first and second data collection methods; interview and surveys.

Virtual Focus Group Questions

Question 1: What was the most challenging part of teaching during the pandemic?

Question 2: What is the most challenging part of teaching post-pandemic?

Question 3: What resources and support should be provided by administration to facilitate collaboration among teachers in inclusion classrooms?

Question 4: How do you think students might benefit post-pandemic from receiving instruction in an inclusion classroom, including general education students, ELL students, and students with an IEP?

Question 5: What steps should you take, as an educator, to ensure you are delivering effective instruction in classrooms post-pandemic?

Question 6: Do you think students have fallen behind academically and socially because of the pandemic?

Focus Groups Data Analysis Plan

Focus groups on qualitative research are analyzed by synthesizing and interpreting data throughout a systematic approach (Eftenaru, 2023). I analyzed the collected data by transcribing the audio content from the focus group discussion (Thelwall & Nevill, 2021). I familiarized myself with the data to gain an understanding of the context and participants' perspectives. The data collected was coded to determine categories that reflect themes, concepts, or phenomena (Thelwall & Nevill, 2021). I applied an initial open coding method to analyze the observed data. I then organized the coded data to analyze patterns or themes. I conducted a comparative analysis of the focus group data to identify participants differences and similarities. Next step, I analyzed the data to find instances in which it relates to existing theories or generates new theoretical frameworks. I ensured triangulation was achieved by comparing the focus group data with the other data collection methods to ensure validity and reliability. Lastly, interpreted and wrote the findings based on the research questions and theoretical perspectives.

Data Analysis

In this qualitative research instrumental case study, data was collected through interviews, surveys, and a focus group session. I took extensive notes during the interviews, uploaded the surveys into Excel spreadsheets, and transcribed the focus group session. Moreover, I familiarized myself with the content by reading, re-reading, and analyzing. I started the process by open coding to capture key concepts, themes, and patterns. Then I assigned codes to these units to categorize the data. I created a codebook to outline the definitions and descriptions of the codes identified in the open coding phase to serve as a reference guide

throughout the analysis process to ensure consistency. I focused on axial coding to examine relationships between the codes and organize them into broader categories and themes, looking for connections, patterns, and relationships within the data. Memoing was utilized to assist the researcher in developing ideas when analyzing the data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I used memoing to write reflective notes to capture thoughts, ideas, and interpretations. Utilizing memoing, I organized my thinking and documented themes and patterns. I created visual displays, such as diagrams, to organize and summarize the data. The visual displays ensured I can visualize the relationship between codes, patterns, and themes. I then identified and developed overarching themes that emerged from the data and explored similarities and differences to identify commonalities.

I continuously assessed data saturation, which is reached when new data no longer provides additional insights or leads to new themes or categories. Once I reached the data saturation point, I knew I had collected sufficient data to address the research questions. Triangulation occured through data collected from multiple methods to explore and comprehend phenomena (Vogl et al., 2019). The qualitative data analysis software NVivo was utilized to improve the validity and accountability of the data collected. NVivo data analysis software organized and analyzed interviews, surveys, and focus group sessions (Mora Pablo & Castillo-Nava, 2022). Additionally, the data analysis software enabled the generation of relationship coding spreadsheets that aided in identifying patterns in the collected data (Woods et al., 2016).

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness in qualitative research refers to the quality, authenticity, validity, and reliability of data collection, analysis, and findings (Hayre, 2021). Guba and Lincoln (1982) constructed a set of four criteria to determine the trustworthiness of qualitative research. Trustworthiness includes credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. For example, for this qualitative case study to be accepted into educational databases, trustworthiness in content must be confirmed for the case study to be accepted. Furthermore, components of trustworthiness must be addressed to establish validity in research (Hayre, 2021; Pratt et al., 2020).

Credibility

Credibility in qualitative research refers to the researcher's confidence in the validity of research findings (L. M. Wood et al., 2020). To determine if the findings of the qualitative case study are credible, researchers use triangulation to explore comprehension of the case studies phenomena (O'Sullivan & Jefferson, 2020). In addition, this qualitative case study establishes credibility through data collection and support from prior research (Morris & Paris, 2022). Furthermore, credibility is established through member checking (O'Sullivan & Jefferson, 2020). Finally, after individual data collection, results are returned to participating educators to review the accuracy of experiences and perspectives through respondent validation (Morris & Paris, 2022).

Transferability

Transferability refers to the degrees to which qualitative research case study findings relate to other contexts (Buckley et al., 2022). Researchers accomplish transferability by proving that research relates to comparable situations or phenomena (Maxwell, 2021). This qualitative

case study provides transferability in research because current and future educators can utilize the content for their collaborative, inclusive education studies. Furthermore, current and future educators use research to enhance classroom skills and strategies to enhance student success and strengthen their self-efficacy in collaborative instruction. Additionally, the case study accomplishes transferability by supporting administrators to provide professional development for educators on current skills and strategies to incorporate into classrooms (De Leeuw et al., 2022). Moreover, the case study may be used as an effective tool to determine pathways to adapting pre-service teacher education programs to begin providing educational courses on effective instructional methods in co-teaching inclusion classrooms.

Dependability

Dependability in qualitative research is accomplished in various ways (Morris & Paris, 2022). However, the primary method is an inquiry audit (De Leeuw et al., 2022). The audit consists of utilizing outside researchers to conduct audits of the qualitative research case study (Morris & Paris, 2022). To accomplish this, my dissertation qualitative research case study is submitted to the dissertation committee.

Confirmability

Confirmability in qualitative research determines the ability of researchers to verify research processes and interpretations of data (Ruis & Lee, 2021). Furthermore, confirmability ensures neutrality in the case study (Ruis & Lee, 2021). Ensuring neutrality is important because it ensures that findings are based on participants' interviews, surveys, and focus group session and that no bias exists in data collection or interpretation (O'Kane et al., 2021). To establish confirmability, multiple data sources are

utilized to discover an understanding of the phenomena investigated (O'Kane et al., 2021).

Moreover, audit trails of data are used to determine confirmability by keeping accurate records

of notes during field studies (O'Kane et al., 2021). Furthermore, reflexivity is utilized to

determine confirmability by researchers acknowledging roles in research for this specific case

study (Lemon & Hayes, 2020). As the researcher, I acknowledge that my personal beliefs as an

educator and prior experiences play vital roles in the research process.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are important aspects of qualitative research from the beginning to

the end of the study. These ethical considerations include anonymity, confidentiality, and

informed consent (Lemon & Hayes, 2020). Through informed consent, participants were notified

of participation in research and the ability to withdraw at any time. Furthermore, participants

were notified of the purpose of the study and informed that any data collected is kept in secured

settings. This included locked computer files and a locked cabinet for printed data. Any data

collected is destroyed three years after approval and publication of the dissertation. All

participants partaking in research were kept confidential and fictitious pseudonyms were used in

reports. Foreseeable risks included the administration being aware of positive and negative

teachers' perceptions of instructing in inclusion classrooms. All names of teachers remained

anonymous solve this. The benefits of participation in the case study included learning

innovative approaches and practices to instruct all students in inclusion classrooms and

positively changing perceptions of instruction.

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Summary

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This qualitative research utilized an instrumental case study design, incorporating data

collection methods such as interviews, surveys, and a focus group. The significance of this case

study existed in its exploration of educators' perceptions and behaviors within inclusion classrooms in the post-pandemic context, contributing to the field of educational research. By capturing participants' perspectives, this study aimed to gain a deeper understanding of human behavior in these settings. The use of authentic and valid findings was ensured through interviewing participants, administering surveys, and collecting data from the focus group session. To minimize bias, this case study drew on a diverse range of New York public educators over which the researcher has no authority. Thematic analysis was employed to interpret patterns and similarities in the collected data. In contrast, the inclusion of multiple data collection methods facilitated triangulation and enhanced the exploration and understanding of the phenomena under investigation.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to discover educators' perceptions of the challenges and benefits of collaborative teaching post-pandemic in inclusion classrooms throughout various New York schools. I used a qualitative research design for this instrumental case study. Qualitative research is appropriate because the design explores educators' experiences, interactions, and perceptions about co-teaching classrooms (Hayre, 2021). The qualitative data was collected through interviews, surveys, and a focus group session. Chapter four includes the descriptions of the 13 selected participants, collected data, outlier data, and the research question responses.

Participants

The 13 participants for the study were selected through purposive sampling. Purposive sampling in qualitative case studies allows the researcher to select participants based on their ability to provide important information about the topic researched (Younas et al., 2022). Furthermore, purposive sampling ensures that participants are highly qualified in specific areas of study, ensuring quality and efficient results for the qualitative case study (Ames et al., 2019). This case study's participants included general and special education teachers who currently teach, or have taught in the past, in a co-teaching inclusion classroom in New York state. The teacher participants encompassed general education teachers who have accumulated over one year of experience as a licensed educator. In addition, the participants consisted of special education teachers and English language learner teachers who possess more than one year of certified teaching experience. I began the participant selection process by sending direct emails to educators, furnishing them with study details. In New York, each school district hosts a

website featuring teachers' names and email addresses, enabling me to obtain the educators' emails through this approach. Once the educator expressed their interest, the potential participant for the case study was requested to fill out a screening questionnaire using Google Forms. This step was taken to confirm their experience in co-teaching inclusion classrooms and eligibility for study participation, as well as to confirm their ability to participate in the study. After the screening questionnaire was completed, I forwarded a consent form to those who met the qualifying criteria. The consent form included the case study's title, purpose, participant information, data collection methods, confidentiality, anonymity, voluntary participation, informed consent, contact information, IRB approval, and incentives. I utilized pseudonyms to protect the confidentiality of every participant involved in this case study.

Erin

Erin is a female elementary school teacher with four years of teaching experience. She is a New York state licensed teacher with a license in childhood education grades 1-6. Erin now teaches in an elementary school in New York. She has taught in both co-teaching and non-co-teaching classrooms. Erin revealed during her interview that while enrolled in her pre-service education program, she took courses on co-teaching in inclusion classrooms. When asked what she believes is the most effective co-teaching method, she responded, "Team teaching…it is important for teachers partner together to help each other and assist students. Students can spend more time with the teacher and get more individual attention."

Marie

Marie is a female elementary school teacher with 15 years teaching experience. She is a New York state licensed teacher with a license in childhood education grades 1-6 and TESOL grades K-12. TESOL educators are licensed to teach English language learner students. She

currently teaches in an elementary school in New York. She has taught in both co-teaching and non-co-teaching classrooms. During her interview, she revealed that during her pre-service educator program, she never took a course on instructing students in co-teaching inclusion classrooms. When asked what she believes is the most effective co-teaching method, she responded, "Parallel teaching, circuit teaching, or stations; any model that provides opportunity for small group instruction."

Lynn

Lynn is a female elementary school teacher with 36 years of teaching experience. She is a New York state licensed teacher with licenses in elementary education and special education. She has taught in both co-teaching and non-co-teaching classrooms. During her interview, she revealed that while enrolled in her pre-service educator program, she was never given a course on instructing students in a co-teaching inclusion classroom. When asked what she believes is the most effective co-teaching method, she reported that as the special education teacher, she supported the classroom teacher by pushing into classrooms or pulling students out for small instruction. In this situation, the general education took the lead on instruction while she offered support.

Maryam

Maryam is a female middle school teacher with seven years of teaching experience. She is a New York state licensed educator with licenses social studies grades 7-12 and students with disabilities grades 7-12. Maryam has taught in both co-teaching and non-co-teaching classrooms. During her interview, she revealed that while enrolled in her pre-service educator program, she never took a course on instructing students in co-teaching inclusion classrooms. When asked what she believes is the most effective co-teaching method, she said, "Team teaching…it is

developed through a positive teacher relationship…demonstrates confidence and equity amongst co-teaching pairs and models group work to students…station teaching…it is helpful in conducting small group instruction…through differentiated means."

Christine

Christine is a female middle school teacher with 17 years teaching experience. She is a New York state licensed educator with licenses in TESOL education and Library Media Specialist. TESOL educators instruct English Language learner students in grades 7-12. She has taught in both co-teaching and non-co-teaching classrooms. During her interview, she reported that while enrolled in her pre-service educator program, she was never given a course on instructing students in co-teaching inclusion classrooms, but she has taken professional development courses on the topic. When asked what she believes is the most effective method of co-teaching, she stated, "It depends on the needs of the group, but alternative teaching works well." She explained that alternative teaching works well because one teacher can provide whole group instruction while the other teacher delivers the same lesson to a smaller group of students that need additional support.

Riley

Riley is a female middle school teacher with 15 years teaching experience. She is a New York state licensed educator with licenses in special education grades 1-12 and mathematics grades 7-12. She has taught in both co-teaching and non-co-teaching classrooms. During her interview, she reported that while enrolled in her pre-service educator program, she was never given any courses on instructing students in co-teaching inclusion classrooms. When asked what she believes is the most effective method of co-teaching, she stated,

I think the team-teaching approach is able to meet the needs of all students because they are able to experience the different teaching styles of two teachers. There is equal involvement of both teachers, the students see how the teachers work collaboratively, and it makes for more interaction between teachers and students.

Vienna

Vienna is a female middle school teacher with 16 years of teaching experience. She is a New York state licensed educator with licenses in childhood education, English grades 7-12, and TESOL education grades K-12. TESOL educators in New York state instruct English language learner students. Vienna has taught in both co-teaching and non-co-teaching classrooms. During her interview, she reported that while enrolled in her pre-service educator program, she did take courses on instructing students in co-teaching inclusion classrooms. When asked what she believes is the most effective method of co-teaching, she responded, "Team teaching…it gives an opportunity for both teachers to a teach…different teaching styles during the school day."

Lena

Lena is a female elementary and middle school teacher. She is a New York state teacher with licenses in childhood education grades 1-6, students with disabilities grades 1-6, students with disabilities grades 7-12, mathematics grades 5-6, and mathematics grades 7-12. She has taught in both co-teaching and non-co-teaching classrooms. During her interview, she reported that while enrolled in her pre-service education program, she did not take any courses that focused solely on educating students in co-teaching inclusion classrooms. When asked what she believes is the most effective method of co-teaching, she stated,

Alternative teaching or team teaching because students can focus better, and I can monitor their behavior concerns better. Parallel teaching does not currently work in our

classrooms because there is only one interactive board, and the classroom is too small to make this model of co-teaching be effective.

Logan

Logan is a female middle school teacher with 11 years teaching experience. She is a New York state licensed teacher with licenses in adolescent education grades 7-12, social studies grades 7-12, and literacy education grades 5-12. Logan has taught in both co-teaching and non-co-teaching classrooms. During her interview, she reported that while enrolled in her pre-service education program, she did take a course that focused on co-teaching in inclusion classrooms. When asked what she believes is the most effective method of co-teaching, she reported, "I do not have a specific model since it depends on the dynamics of your students…needs…behaviors…and the subject topic. Flexibility is what a teacher needs and is important for their student success."

Kristy

Kristy is a female elementary school year with 25 years of teaching experience. She is a New York state licensed teacher with licenses in elementary education, reading specialist, and special education. She has taught in a co-teaching and non-co-teaching classroom. During her interview, she reported that while enrolled in her pre-service education program, she did not take any courses focused on co-teaching in inclusion classrooms, but she did take courses focused on co-teaching in inclusion classrooms while enrolled in her graduate program for her master's degree. When asked what she believes is the most effective method of co-teaching, she reported,

> I prefer station teaching in my classrooms, both inclusion classroom and regular
> classroom. It allows for students to gain the opportunity to have smaller group instruction

as well as moving around the room. They have the chance to interact with all educators in the room and get more one on one engagement.

Amanda

Amanda is a female high school teacher with eight years teaching experience. She is a New York state licensed teacher with licenses in secondary education mathematics grades 7-12. She has taught in co-teaching and non-co-teaching classrooms. During her interview, she reported that while enrolled in her pre-service educator program, she never took a course that focused solely on co-teaching in inclusion classrooms, but there were class discussions about the role of co-teaching in mainstream classrooms. When asked what she believes is the most effective method of co-teaching, she reported,

> differentiated instruction…I did my thesis on this topic and found that group work combined with discovery learning was the most effective for the students to take ownership of the lesson and truly understand the nature of how and why the process works in math…unfortunately, due to time restrictions based on over-packed curriculums…I feel that teachers are not able to truly embrace the process of discovery. I want my students to feel empowerment…while they gain knowledge for the real world and problem solving.

Amy

Amy is a female elementary school teacher with 12 years of teaching experience. She is a New York state licensed teacher with licenses in childhood education grades 1-6 and students with disabilities grades 1-6. She has taught in a co-teaching and non-co-teaching classroom. During her interview, Amy reported that during her pre-service education program, she did take courses focused solely on co-teaching in inclusion classrooms. When asked what she believes is

the most effective method of co-teaching, she states, "Level group rotations are the most effective method because it allows students the opportunity to receive specific instruction and reinforcement in their area of need. It also allows for immediate feedback and hands-on experiences."

Lisa

Lisa is a female middle school teacher with 26 years of teaching experience. She is a New York state licensed teacher with licenses in students with disabilities grades K-6 and 7-12, English grades 7-12, and Science grades 7-12. She has taught in a co-teaching inclusion classroom in the past and currently teaches in a co-teaching English classroom for one period a day during this current school year. During her interview, she reported that she did not take any courses on instructing students in a co-teaching inclusion classroom. When asked what she believes is the most effective method of co-teaching, she stated, "differentiated instruction with leveled small group rotations. Smaller groups with leveled instruction allow specific modifications to meet the student's needs."

Table 6

Teacher Participants

Teacher Participant	Years Taught	Highest Degree Earned	Content Area	Grade Level
Erin	4	Masters	Childhood Education	1st-6th
Marie	15	Masters	Childhood Education,	1st-6th
			TESOL Education	K-12
Lynn	36	Masters	Elementary Education,	K-5
			Special Education	K-6

Name					
Maryam	7	Masters	Students with Disabilities,	7-12	
			Social Studies	7-12	
Christine	17	Masters	TESOL, Library Media	K-12	
			Specialist	K-12	
Riley	15	Masters	Special Education,	1-12	
			Mathematics	7-12	
Vienna	16	Masters	Childhood Education,	1-6, 7-12,	
			English, TESOL	K-12	
Lena	10	Masters	Childhood Education, Students with Disabilities, Mathematics	1-6, 7-12, 5-12	
Logan	11	Masters	Adolescent Education, Social Studies, Literacy	7-12, 7-12, 5-12	
Kristy	25	Masters	Elementary Education, Reading Specialist, Special Education	K-5, K-6, K-6	
Amanda	8	Masters	Secondary Education Mathematics	7-12	
Amy	12	Masters	Childhood Education, Students with Disabilities	1-6, 1-6	
Lisa	26	Masters	Students with Disabilities, English, Science	7-12, K-6, 7-12, 7-12	

Results

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to discover educators' perceptions of the challenges and benefits of collaborative teaching in inclusion classrooms post-pandemic throughout various New York public schools. The enactment of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) in 2015, under the leadership of President Obama, served as a pivotal legislative measure aimed at ensuring that every student would receive academic instruction in the least restrictive educational environment possible. As a direct result of ESSA, New York's public school system embarked on an endeavor to provide educational instruction in co-teaching inclusion classrooms to address the diverse educational needs of its student population. This diverse student population includes general education, special education, and English language learner (ELL) students. This particular investigation utilized a case study methodology, with the focus framed by a singular overarching research question, followed by three secondary research questions. Data for the study was systematically collected through virtual interviews, online surveys, and a virtual focus group session, involving the participation of thirteen educators across all phases of data acquisition. The practice of memoing was utilized during data collection, serving as a mechanism to chronicle pertinent notes for analysis. The transcriptions of interviews and focus group sessions underwent extensive analysis, involving multiple readings to identify emergent themes and sub-themes. Furthermore, the survey data was downloaded onto Excel spreadsheets, and uploaded into NVivo for comprehensive coding. Following a thorough examination, re-examination, and comprehensive data analysis, the study detected three primary overarching themes and further revealed four sub-themes in the dataset.

Table 7

Themes & Sub-Themes

Theme	Sub-Themes
1. Challenges instructing students post-pandemic (CRQ, SQ3)	1a. Academic and Social Deficits
2. Benefits of Co-Teaching Inclusive Education (CRQ, SQ1, SQ2)	2a. Skills and strategies 2b. Co-teaching models
3. Support from administration (CRQ, SQ3)	3a. Professional development and training

Challenges Instructing Students Post-Pandemic

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to discover educators' perceptions of the challenges and benefits of co-teaching in inclusion classrooms post-pandemic. A prevailing theme emerged wherein all thirteen teacher participants coincided on the significant challenges that have occured while instructing students in the current era, following the COVID-19

pandemic. These challenges encompass academic difficulties, social-emotional issues, and an extreme lack of student engagement. Furthermore, the challenges include technological difficulties, lack of parent involvement, and difficulty co-planning with a partner teacher. During the individual interviews, Amanda stated, "Post-pandemic, some students continue to face challenges stemming from remote learning. Many students are behind in their reading levels and skills, which is causing issues in all other content areas."

The results of the Likert-scale survey revealed unanimous agreement among all thirteen participants regarding the adverse impact of the pandemic on students, both academically and socially-emotionally. Participants were asked, "Do you think the pandemic has caused significant challenges for students both academically and socially?" Educators unanimously responded with "strongly agree." In the subsequent focus group session, Lynn articulated the difficulties faced by educators stating, "I find it challenging to address the learning gaps that have emerged due to the pandemic; a significant number of students are lagging behind academically."

The thematic analysis conducted across the three data collection methods highlighted the reoccurring mention of "challenges," which appeared a total of 159 times. Collectively, the participants underscored the formidable task of delivering quality education in inclusion classrooms while simultaneously addressing the distinctive needs of diverse students, primarily owing to the disruptions to traditional education settings precipitated by the pandemic.

Academic and Social Deficits

The initial sub-theme in the overarching theme of "challenges in instructing students post-pandemic" revolves around the issue of "academic and social deficits." All thirteen participants unanimously confirmed that students have regressed in their reading abilities due to

the pandemic and this decline has subsequently led to lagging performance in other content areas such as mathematics, science, and social studies. Each of these content areas necessitates students to operate at grade level Lexile levels, but as a direct consequence of the pandemic, a substantial proportion of students find themselves two or more reading levels below the expected grade level.

During the focus group session, when asked whether students have encountered academic and social setbacks directly related to the pandemic, Erin expressed,

Almost every student has fallen behind in one area or another…fallen behind in their reading levels because they were not reading anything at home during the pandemic…fell behind socially because school was a place for them to get their social interaction…many students were home alone all day just watching TV, on their phones, or playing video games. They lost that daily connection with other people that they needed.

The coded term "pandemic deficits" emerged as a recurrent sub-theme, appearing 72 times across the three data collection methods.

Benefits of Co-Teaching Inclusive Education

Although the thirteen participant educators unanimously agreed there are many challenges when it comes to educating students in the post-pandemic era, the participants also unanimously agreed that co-teaching in inclusion classrooms provides benefits for all students including general education, English language learners, and special education students. When asked about the benefits of students receiving instruction in inclusion classrooms during the interview, Marie responded, "Co-teaching in inclusion classrooms provides students with a broader spectrum of expertise, which facilitates more precise and individualized student support. The result is more inclusive, interactive, and an enriched learning environment that yields

benefits for all students." The Likert-scale survey posed the question, "You and your partner teacher can meet the needs of all students in inclusion classrooms, including students with disabilities, mainstream students, and gifted students." Seven participants responded, "strongly agree," and six participants responded, "agree." During the focus group session, when asked, "How do you think students will benefit post-pandemic from receiving instruction in inclusion classrooms?" Maryam responded, "Inclusion classrooms promote diversity, equity, and empathy, which can benefit all students by fostering a more inclusive classroom community." The code "benefits" was found 115 times through the three data collection methods.

Skills and Strategies

The consensus among the thirteen participants was that the proficient application of effective skills and strategies in co-teaching inclusion classrooms holds the potential to bridge the academic and social disparities stemming from the Covid-19 pandemic. When asked about the essential qualities required from educators to excel as effective co-teachers in inclusion classrooms, Logan provided valuable insight stating

> To be effective co-teachers in inclusion classrooms, educators must possess strong communication skills, adaptability, empathy, and the ability to collaborate effectively as a team. Educators should also be committed to the ongoing exploration of effective strategies to incorporate into inclusion classrooms to meet the needs of diverse students.

The coded term "skills and strategies" was repeatedly identified in the data analysis, appearing a total of 113 times across all three data collection methods.

Co-Teaching Models

The thirteen participants expressed they felt comfortable utilizing a variety of co-teaching models in inclusion classrooms. According to the Likert-scale survey, when asked, "You utilize

strategies to determine which co-teaching method to implement for specific lessons," 11 teachers responded, "strongly agree" and two teachers responded, "agree." The code "co-teaching models" was found 68 times throughout the three data collection methods.

Support From Administration

The thirteen participants had mixed responses when discussing support from administration throughout the three data collection methods. Each of the participants felt their administrators would be pro-active if they needed support handling students, parents, colleagues, or any other daily concerns throughout the school operations. However, all thirteen participants stated their administration had not provided them with professional development on co-teaching in inclusion classrooms. Furthermore, all thirteen educators reported that when they were teaching in a co-teaching inclusion classroom, their administrators did not create their schedule with a planning period for the two partner teachers to plan together.

During the interview, when asked, "How does the administration provide professional development for teachers working in inclusion classrooms?" Christine responded, "Our administration does not provide professional development for teachers working in inclusion classrooms. But we can take in-person or virtual courses likes this that counts towards hours for our mandated hours for professional certification in New York." In the Likert-scale survey, the thirteen participants were asked, "You feel there is adequate time to co-plan with a partner teacher." Nine participants responded, "disagree" and four participants responded, "strongly disagree." During the virtual focus group session, participants were asked, "What resources and support should be provided by administration to facilitate collaboration among teachers in inclusion classrooms?" Riley responded, "Having a co-planning time built into our schedule with

our co-teacher would be extremely beneficial." The code "support from administration" was discovered 112 times across the three data collection methods.

Professional Development and Training

During the interviews and virtual focus group session, the thirteen participants said it would be beneficial if specific professional development sessions were provided for teachers working in co-teaching inclusion classrooms. Eleven of the thirteen participants stated it should be mandated for co-teaching educators to take these levels of courses to learn skills, strategies, and methods of successful co-teaching in inclusion classrooms to meet the needs of diverse students. Ten out of thirteen participants stated they were not offered any courses on co-teaching in inclusion classrooms during their pre-service teacher education programs. During the interviews, participants were asked, "What kind of instruction and training did you receive regarding collaboratively teaching students in inclusion classrooms during your pre-service teacher education programs?" Christine responded, "During my pre-service teacher education program, there were no discussions on co-teaching in inclusion classrooms. The majority of training on this topic happened while teaching in a co-teaching classroom." All thirteen participants stated that future educators should be required to take courses on co-teaching in inclusion classrooms during their pre-service teacher education program. The code professional development was found 111 times across the three data collection methods.

Outlier Data and Findings

During the analysis of the case study, an unexpected outlier emerged among one participant. During the interview, this participant articulated a distinctive perspective, asserting the view that general education teachers should not be obligated to co-teach in inclusion classrooms. The participant substantiated their position with the statement, "I am not a certified

special education teacher, nor am I licensed to instruct English language learner students; therefore, I should not be tasked with formulating lesson plans and providing instruction to students for which I lack specialized training."

Furthermore, the participant expounded on their contention, emphasizing that their licensure pertained solely to general education studies. Drawing from past co-teaching experiences, the participant conveyed the opinion based on their experience that the role of the special education teacher in an inclusive classroom primarily consisted of serving as a push-in co-teacher, while they assumed the majority of the instructional responsibilities. Notably, the participant expressed a perception of being accountable for creating differentiated lesson plans that incorporate strategies for students with disabilities (SWD) and English language learner (ELL) students, in addition to their responsibilities to the general education students. Moreover, the participant emphasized never having received any formal training or guidance as to the pedagogical needs associated with instructing SWD and ELLs. This outlier's perspective introduces a valuable dimension to the case study's findings, showing the complex and diverse range of participants' viewpoints about the roles and responsibilities for co-teaching in inclusion classrooms post-pandemic. This perspective underscores the need for the examination of the factors that affective educators' perspectives toward co-teaching in inclusion classrooms post-pandemic.

Research Question Responses

This qualitative case study focused on one central research question and three sub-questions. The central research question was created to discover educators' perceptions of the challenges and benefits of collaborative teaching in inclusion classrooms post-pandemic throughout various New York school districts. Sub-question one was created to discover ways in

which collaborative teaching contributes to students' improved academic and social outcomes post-pandemic. Sub-question two was created to discover skills and strategies educators can incorporate into the co-teaching inclusion classroom to meet the needs of all students. Sub-question three was created to discover what resources and support are provided by the administration to support teachers instructing in inclusion classrooms.

Central Research Question

What are the main challenges and benefits of collaborative teaching in inclusion classrooms post-pandemic? Theme one, "challenges instructing students post-pandemic," theme two, "benefits of co-teaching in inclusive education," and theme three, "support from administration," address the central research question. These three themes emerged during the analysis of the interviews, surveys, and virtual focus group session. Furthermore, sub-theme (1a) "academic and social deficits," sub-theme (2a) "skills and strateiges," sub-theme (2b) "co-teaching models," and sub-theme (3a) "professional development and training" directly address the central research question.

Participants in this case study articulated that a multitude of challenges exist in the practice of co-teaching in inclusion classrooms post-pandemic. These challenges include the absence of administrative support, insufficient professional development opportunities, restricted collaborative planning time with co-teaching partners, and minimal training opportunities as to the skills and strategies essential for effective navigation of the co-teaching environment in inclusion settings. Furthermore, the particpants reported challenges instructing students related to both academic and social-emotional aspects of student engagement. Theme one "challenges instructing students

post-pandemic" and sub-theme (1a) "academic and social deficits" address the central research question, in relation to the challenges of collaborative teaching post-pandemic.

The particpants uniamously expressed that students reading comprehension and Lexile levels are far below the appropriate grade level as a direct result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Scoring below grade level in literacy components leads to a direct suffering in other content areas, such as science, social studies, and math. Educators have not been provided with training to support students who have academically suffered as a result of the pandemic. Moreover, students are suffering social and emotionally due to the COVID-19 pandemic and challenges arise for educators to provide support to students to bridge this gap.

During the interview, Amanda's response assisted in answering the central research question. She reported that co-teaching in inclusive classrooms is challenging because there are diverse students that need intensive support and it can be challenging to meet all of their needs. The students in inclusive classrooms typically have IEP's or 504's, which are New York state legal documents and educators are legally required to provide students the servives indicated on their IEP or 504. Co-planning in an essential element to successful co-teaching, however, Amanda discussed during the focus group that she was never afforded time to co-plan with her partner teacher. Amanda stated, "Inclusive classrooms present challenges due to the diverse range of student's needs. Also, it is very difficult to find time to co-plan with my partner teacher, as our schedules do not align with prep periods."

Although participants reported many challenges co-teaching in inclusion classrooms, it was also reported that there are many benefits associated with educating students in inclusion classrooms. The second theme "benefits of co-teaching in inclusive education" and the sub-theme (2b) "co-teaching models," address the central research question, in relation to the benefits

of collaborative teaching in inclusion classrooms post pandemic. Benefits include academic and social-emotional advantages for students. The co-teaching inclusion classroom provides students with two quality and highly educated educators working together in the classroom to meet the needs of a diverse student learning population. This extra support in the classroom allows for amply opportunities to provide individualzed support to small groups of students, or individual students, to enhance learning. Moreover, a diverse student population in one classroom allows for students to learn about cultures and customs outside of their own traditions. A diverse classroom community provides more opportunities for students to learn diversity, empathy, and acceptance. Kristy's response assisted in answering the central research question. She stated, "Co-teaching brings a broader range of expertise into the classroom, allowing for more individualized support for students. It creates a more inclusive and interactive learning environment, benefitting all students."

Sub-Question One

How does collaborative teaching in inclusion classrooms post-pandemic contribute to improved academic and personal outcomes for students with diverse learning needs? The first sub-question was created to understand how co-teaching in inclusion classrooms post-pandemic improves academic and social-emotional aspects for students with diverse learning needs, including general education, special education, and English language learner students. The second theme "benefits of co-teaching in inclusive education" addressed sub-question one. Participants in the study conveyed that students from diverse educational backgrounds, including those with special education needs, general education students, and English language learners, all exhibited positive academic outcomes when exposed to instruction in inclusion classrooms.

Furthermore, it was noted that these students experienced improvements in their social-emotional well-being as a direct result of their participation in their inclusive education setting. Throughout the three data collection methods, the particpants reported the benefits of receiving instruction in a co-teaching inclusion classroom. Receiving instruction in inclusive classrooms enables students to be exposed to diversity and empathy. Moreover, students that have IEP's or 504 plans feel more included in a traditional educational environment and general education students learn empathy for their peers. Logan reported,

> Inclusion classrooms provide students with diverse learning needs' access to an enriched educational environment. Inclusion classrooms offer students a diverse and inclusive social environment which increases self-esteem, enhances their social skills, and reduces stigmas associated with academic and social disabilities.

Sub-Question Two

What strategies and practices can educators employ to sustain self-efficacy in delivering effective collaborative instruction and meeting the needs of all students in inclusive classrooms? The second theme "benefits of co-teaching in inclusive education," sub-theme (2a) "skills and strategies," and sub-theme (2b) "co-teaching models" addressed sub-question two. Participants in the study emphasized the significance of receiving structured professional development in the acquisition and application of effective skills and strategies pertinent to co-teaching within inclusion classrooms, with the objective of addressing the diverse needs of all students effectively. Utilizing effective skills and strateiges in inclusion classrooms provides students with individualized support they need to meet their needs and abide by the accommodations required in their IEP or 504 plan. Moreover, learning effective skills and strategies enables partner co-teachers to determine the appropriate co-teaching model to use for a specific lesson.

Erin stated,

> I feel it is important for administrators to provide professional development for teachers
> working in inclusion classrooms to be able to learn effective skills and strategies to
> promote student success and create equitable learning environments. Professional
> development on skills and strategies would improve outcomes for students and educators.

Sub-Question Three

What resources and support strategies are implemented by school administration to facilitate collaboration among teachers in inclusive classrooms? The first theme "challenges instructing students post-pandemic," theme two "benefits of co-teaching in inclusive education," and theme three "support from administration" directly relate to sub-question three. In addition, sub-theme (2a) "skills and strategies" and sub-theme (3a) "professional development and training" relate to sub-question three. Participants in this study have conveyed a prevailing sense of self-confidence in the effectiveness of their administrative support structure, affirming their comfort in articulating concerns to their administrators. Participants reported they have yet to receive any formal training or opportunities for professional development in the practice of co-teaching in inclusive classroom settings. Specifically, the administration has not facilitated or funded instructional courses designed to equip co-teachers with the skills and strategies for successful instruction in inclusion classrooms. Furthermore, participants reported a notable absence of common planning prep periods to co-plan with their partner teacher. During the focus group session, Vienna reported,

> Administration should provide regular professional development on inclusive teaching
> strategies, as well as a common planning time with my partner teacher. I have been co-
> teaching for many years now and have never received professional development on co-

teaching in inclusion classrooms that was provided by my administration.

Summary

Chapter Four provides an in-depth analysis of the outcomes collected from the qualitative case study. The primary focus of this investigation was to discover educators' perspectives on co-teaching in inclusion classrooms post-pandemic throughout various New York schools. This chapter examines the three emergent themes and four sub-themes derived during the data analysis. The themes and sub-themes align with the central research question and the three sub-questions. The themes discovered through the process of data analysis include (1) challenges instructing students post-pandemic, (2) benefits of co-teaching inclusive education, and (3) support from administration. To substantiate these thematic constructs, relevant In vivo quotes collected from the interviews, surveys, and virtual focus group sessions, were systemically integrated into the case study. The combination of insights derived from interviews, surveys, and virtual focus group sessions served as a comprehensive exploration of educators' perceptions of co-teaching in inclusion classrooms post-pandemic. The insights include educators' perceptions on the challenges and benefits of co-teaching, the lack of common planning time, lack of professional development, and academic and social benefits for students.

The findings of the study were primarily established through the responses from the 13 particpants during interviews, surveys, and the virtual focus group session. The data collection methods discovered educators' interest in receiving ongoing professional development on topics related to co-teaching in inclusion classrooms to support and enhance skills and strategies needed for effective education instruction to meet the needs of all students. Moreover, during data analysis, a significant outlier was detected during the interview component of data collection, which consisted of one participant reporting their reservations about being assigned to a co-

teaching inclusion classroom as the general education teacher. This reluctance stemmed from a

reported lack of formal education as to effective pedagogy for students with disabilities and

English language learner students.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

The purpose of this qualitative case study is to discover educators' perceptions of the challenges and benefits of collaborative teaching post-pandemic in inclusion classrooms throughout various New York schools. Chapter Five delves into the interpretation of the research findings and examines the significance in-depth. The research findings are explored to discover how the implications for policy development and practical applications apply in educational contexts. Furthermore, the theoretical and methodological components are examined based on the study's findings. Chapter Five continues with analyzing the limitations and delimitations throughout the research design that may have influenced the outcome of the study. Recommendations are presented for future research surrounding the topic of co-teaching in inclusion classrooms. Lastly, Chapter Five concludes with a concise summary capturing the conclusions drawn from the research and consolidating the implications and insights that were discovered throughout the study.

Discussion

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to discover educators' perceptions of the challenges and benefits of collaborative teaching post-pandemic in inclusion classrooms throughout various New York public schools. Three data collection methods were utilized to support the findings. The data collection methods included interviews, surveys, and virtual focus group sessions. Thirteen participants participated in the study. Each participant is a current New York state licensed teacher with more than one-year of teaching experience and has taught in a co-teaching inclusion classroom during their in-service teaching career. While analyzing the three data collection methods from the 13 participants, three themes emerged. The three themes

included (1) challenges instructing students post-pandemic, (2) benefits of co-teaching in inclusive education, and (3) support from administration. Furthermore, additional sub-themes emerged during data analysis. The four sub-themes include (1a) academic and social deficits, (2a) skills and strategies, (2b) co-teaching models, and (3a) professional development and training. This section discusses the findings of the qualitative case study in relation to the themes and sub-themes. Furthermore, this section discusses the interpretations of the findings with supported empirical and theoretical sources paired with evidence from the thirteen participants. Moreover, this section includes major subsections, including interpretation of the findings, implications for policy, theoretical and empirical implications, limitations and delimitations, and recommendations for future research.

Summary of Thematic Findings

This qualitative case study aimed to discover educators' perspectives of the benefits and challenges of co-teaching post-pandemic. The analysis of the data collected from 13 participants throughout three data collection methods revealed three thematic findings including (1) challenges instructing students post-pandemic, (2) benefits of co-teaching in inclusive education, and (3) support from administration. The challenges encompassed academic difficulties, social-emotional concerns, diminished student engagement, technology issues, and difficulties co-planning with a partner teacher. Sub-theme (1a) emerged during the data analysis regarding "academic and social deficits," highlighting agreement among the 13 participants regarding students' regression in literacy skills as a direct result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, participants agreed that the regression in literacy skills led to students underperforming in all content areas.

Despite these challenges, the 13 participants recognized the benefits of co-teaching in

inclusion classrooms to meet the needs of diverse students. The benefits include individualized student support, inclusive peer interactions, and an enriched learning environment. Two additional sub-themes emerged to support theme two during the data analysis. These two sub-themes include (2a) "skills and strategies" and (2b) "co-teaching models." The participants acknowledged the importance of possessing effective skills and strategies for successful co-teaching. Furthermore, the participants expressed their ability to utilize a variety of co-teaching models in inclusion classrooms to meet the needs of diverse students. Lastly, the participants noted varying levels of support from their administration but reported they were not offered training or professional development on topics related to co-teaching in inclusion classrooms. During data analysis, an additional sub-theme emerged, (3a) "professional development and training." The participants expressed the need for the administration to provide them with common planning times with their partner teacher and professional development opportunities throughout the school year. Moreover, the participants stated it should be mandatory that pre-service teacher education programs should provide courses on topics related to co-teaching in inclusion classrooms.

Interpretation of Findings

This section discusses the researchers' interpretations of the findings from the qualitative case study. In examining the findings derived from the study on educators' perspectives of the challenges and benefits of co-teaching post-pandemic, several interpretations emerged shedding light on the dynamics of the now mandated educational practice. The study revealed a profound impact on students and educators as a direct result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings emphasize the urgency to address the consequences of the disrupted in-person learning environment. Furthermore, the findings of the case study emphasize the importance of

administrators providing educators with the necessary tools to provide education in inclusion classrooms. These tools for educators includes professional development and on-going training on the topic of co-teaching in inclusion classrooms.

Educational Challenges Post-Pandemic

Educators face numerous in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly those engaged in co-teaching in inclusion classrooms. The abrupt shift to virtual instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted traditional classroom settings, leaving students and educators unprepared for this dramatic transition. Students struggle with significant setbacks in literary skills as a direct result of the pandemic, which, in turn, hindered their progress in other academic content areas. Moreover, the pandemic-induced lack of in-person interactions negatively affected students' social-emotional development. This predicament, intricately linked to Bandura's theory of self-efficacy, heightened educators' concern about their own self-efficacy in their ability to deliver effective virtual instruction, given their limited formal training in utilizing specific technology platforms. Furthermore, educators suffer from self-efficacy issues related to addressing the needs of their students who declined in their academic and social-emotional needs due to the pandemic.

Despite the fact that the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 mandates quality education in the least restrictive environment, educators felt the federal law was not capable of occuring during the virtual instruction phase of the pandemic. The lack of required supports for students with disabilities and English language learner students was primarily due to the sudden transition to online platforms, as both students and educators were not prepared for such an extreme educational transition. Furthermore, educators continue to encounter students requiring virtual instruction, due to medical leaves, such as testing positive for COVID-19 or other health-related

concerns. Because of the continued need for virtual instruction, and possible future virtual instructional necessities, in-service and pre-service educators should receive professional development and training to utilize these online platforms for educational instructional purposes. Moreover, in-service and pre-service educators should receive training and professional development on how to bridge the gap between the academic and social-emotional deficits for students that were caused by the pandemic.

Benefits of Co-Teaching Post-Pandemic

Despite the extensive challenges triggered by the post-pandemic educational landscape, educators emphasize the substantial advantages afforded to students in this inclusive environment. These advantages incorporate the provision of individualized student support and the cultivation of an enriched learning environment supported by inclusivity. Furthermore, the practice of educating students within inclusion classrooms fosters diversity, equity, and empathy. Exposing students to a wider range of diverse peers initiates benefits that extend beyond academic achievement and incorporate social-emotional growth. Educators self-efficacy in their ability to deliver effective instruction and utilize a diverse set of skills, strategies, and co-teaching methods is paramount in achieving successful outcomes for all students in inclusion classrooms. These positive results are reported as improved academic performance, enhanced social-emotional learning competencies, heightened self-awareness, and more inclusive perspectives toward diversity and inclusion. Theses positive results benefit general education, special education, and English language learner students.

Drawing upon Bandura's self-efficacy theory, it is evident that the participants in this qualitative case study demonstrate a strong sense of self-efficacy when discussing their ability to utilize skills and strategies to meet the needs of diverse students in co-teaching inclusion

classrooms. Additionally, educators exhibit a strong sense of self-efficacy pertaining to the incorporation of differentiated co-teaching methods within inclusion classrooms. This proficient utilization of skills, strategies, and co-teaching methods translates into substantial advantages for students, addressing both their academic requirements and social-emotional learning needs.

Administration Support

The 13 participants conveyed their belief that administrators would be supportive in addressing various concerns related to students, parents, and other aspects of the daily responsibilities within the school environment. However, the participants unanimoulsy reported lack of professional development opportunities provided by their administration, specifically in the context of co-teaching within inclusion classrooms. The participants continued to address concerns that despite the requirement for many of the educators to instruct in a co-teaching classroom at some point in their in-service teaching careers, they are still not provided with training opportunities for co-teaching. Furthermore, educators reported the absence of dedicated common planning time with their co-teaching partners. Co-planning with a partner teacher is a critical component for successful collaborative teaching to be able to create differentiated lessons to meet the needs of diverse students in inclusion classrooms.

The study's findings report that the majority of educators did not receive essential training during their pre-service teacher education programs on the topic of instructing students in inclusion classrooms. Moreover, pre-service teachers are notably lacking in courses pertaining to co-teaching, utilizing effective skills and strategies in inclusion classrooms, or preparation for collaborative partnerships with co-teachers. While analyzing the data and findings, it became evident that on-going professional development and training are essential if educators are going to deliver effective educational instruction in co-teaching inclusion classrooms. Additionally,

pre-service educational programs must adapt their curriculum to incorporate coursework related to co-teaching in inclusion classrooms.

Implications for Policy and Practice

This section discusses the implications for policy and the implications for practice, addressing the importance for action at multiple levels of the educational landscape. This section advances to offer recommendations for policy makers at the state, federal, and school district levels, as well as guidance for administrators and teachers engaged in co-teaching inclusion classrooms. Furthermore, it highlights the necessity of aligning policies with the evolving needs of educators and students in the post-pandemic era, emphasizing the importance of fostering an inclusive and equitable educational environment.

Implications for Policy

This qualitative case study research yields significant policy implications at multiple administrative levels, including federal, state, and school districts. The study's findings underscore the imperative for federal policies that substantively bolster the practice of co-teaching within inclusion classrooms. To this end, federal guidelines should be comprehensive, delineating optimal practices, financial allocations, and mechanisms of accountability to ensure the effective integration of co-teaching models at the federal level.

Moreover, the research findings advocate for the formulation of state policies that mandate unambiguous definitions of co-teaching, stipulate rigorous training prerequisites for educators, and allocate substantial resources to support the practical implementation of co-teaching. Within this framework, state education departments should undertake the development of certification programs and specialized professional development courses centered on co-teaching strategies. These credentials and educational initiatives must be obligatory for educators

engaged in co-teaching inclusion classrooms and endowed with commensurate financial backing.

Federal and state agencies must endeavor to harmonize their policies, undertaking revisions of the individualized education plan (IEP) to harmonize with mandated co-teaching practices. This alignment is crucial for ensuring the seamless integration of co-teaching methodologies into the overarching structure of IEPs designed to cater to students with disabilities. Additionally, federal and state agencies should actively address issues of equity by ensuring that the implementation of co-teaching avoids conferring disproportionate benefits to particular student populations. Strategies may encompass targeted support for schools in marginalized communities and the provisioning of requisite technology and resources for students with disabilities.

Furthermore, the study's findings underscore the necessity of policies related to teacher recruitment and retention. Federal policymakers are encouraged to explore incentives aimed at retaining qualified educators with vested interest in co-teaching within inclusion classrooms. Such incentives should encompass initiatives like student loan forgiveness programs, salary differentials, or comprehensive professional development opportunities tailored to educators committed to instructing within co-teaching inclusion classrooms.

In addition, the research findings advocate for a reconfiguration of school district policies, entailing a revision of funding allocation strategies to ensure that educational institutions housing co-teaching inclusion classrooms receive equitable financial resources support effectively their implementation. Districts should also institute policies aimed at enhancing parent/guardian and community involvement in the co-teaching process, including the creating of advisory committees, the facilitation of informative sessions, and the systematic collection of feedback from parents, guardians, and community stakeholders.

Conclusively, educational agencies at the federal, state, and district levels should institute rigorous evaluation and accountability measures to gauge educator effectiveness within co-teaching inclusion classrooms. These assessments should encompass diverse metrics, including student achievement and growth, comprehensive surveys, parental and guardian feedback, and evaluation of educator collaboration, thus fostering a holistic evaluation framework.

Implications for Practice

The findings of this qualitative case study offer practical implications for both educators involved in co-teaching in inclusion classrooms and administrators responsible for assigning such teaching positions to qualified educators. The study highlights the significant challenges educators face in educating students in the post-pandemic era, including a lack of professional development opportunities during both in-service training and pre-service teacher education programs. These challenges extend beyond academics to encompass social-emotional aspects and difficulties in coordinating with partner teachers and utilizing technology resources. However, despite these hurdles, educators recognize substantial benefits for students in inclusion classrooms, such as improved social-emotional development, individualized support, and the creation of diverse classroom communities.

For educators, a practical implication would be to proactively advocate for themselves to receive professionals specifically focused on co-teaching in inclusion classrooms. When assigned to co-teach, educators should request professional development sessions provided by the district to acquire effective skills and strategies for supporting the diverse learning needs of students. Furthermore, educators should advocate for the establishment of common planning periods with their partner teachers, facilitating the creation of differentiated lesson plans that cater to all students being educated in the co-teaching inclusion classroom.

An implication for practice for administrators is to advocate on behalf of their staff. Administrators should request that the school district provide mandatory professional development training sessions for educators assigned to instruct students in co-teaching inclusion classrooms. Additionally, administrators should schedule educators in a way that ensures regular common planning periods for partner teachers. This scheduling approach will enable educators to collaboratively design differentiated lesson plans that address the varying needs of students in co-teaching inclusion classrooms. Administrators should also provide on-going training courses on utilizing technology programs both in the classroom and to teach students outside of the classroom virtually. Students today are continuing to receive instruction virtually for a variety of reasons, including medical, and educators must be able to provide them with effective virtual education to meet their individual needs. Furthermore, administrators should advocate at higher levels, such as state and federal agencies, to implement mandates requiring pre-service education programs to offer courses on co-teaching in inclusion classrooms. This proactive approach will better prepare new teachers to meet the demands of inclusive education and enhance the overall quality of education for diverse student populations.

Empirical and Theoretical Implications

This qualitative case study aimed to discover educators' perceptions of the challenges and benefits of collaborative teaching post-pandemic in inclusion classrooms throughout various New York schools. This section addresses the theoretical and empirical implications of the study by comparing and contrasting the found themes with the theory and literature in Chapter Two, to contribute to our understanding of how collaborative teaching practices align with existing educational theories and research. The research findings provide valuable insights into the practical implications of co-teaching in the context of the pandemic's impact on inclusive

education. By providing a nuanced examination of how these findings interconnect with pre-existing knowledge, the study provides valuable insights into the practical implications of co-teaching within the unique context of the pandemic's influence on inclusive education.

Empirical Implications

The empirical implications of this qualitative case study align closely with the literature review, particularly in the comparison and contrast of the related literature in chapter two. The study's findings discovered several key aspects that resonate with the existing literature. The study revealed that educators who had higher self-efficacy in using effective skills and strategies were better equipped to navigate the challenges posed by the pandemic. The study continues with related literature regarding educator's self-efficacy through related literature (Mark & Wells, 2019; Mitchell et al., 2021; Stefanidis et al., 2019). The related literature continues with the topic of achieving success, developing practical skills, and effectively applying educators' expertise (Hershmann et al., 2023; Khorakian & Sharifirad, 2019; Ortlieb & Schatz, 2020). During the three data collection methods, participants revealed they felt they had high self-efficacy when it comes to determining effective skills and strategies to utilize for students with diverse learning needs, as well as high self-efficacy in relation to deciding the most effective co-teaching models sub-theme "skills and strategies" emerged from the participants' responses during the analysis of the data collection methods, in response to questions regarding educators self-efficacy on providing quality instruction in inclusion classrooms.

The research aligns with the literature by highlighting the significance of collaboration and social interaction in the co-teaching inclusive classroom (Weiss & Rodgers, 2020). The study emphasizes that effective collaboration among teachers in inclusion classrooms is crucial for creating productive and inclusive learning environments (Drewes et al., 2021; Soslau et al.,

2019). These results mirror the literature review's emphasis on the benefits of collaborative co-teaching, including shared responsibility, common co-planning time, and equitable learning opportunities for all students (Weinberg et al., 2020). The sub-theme "co-teaching models" during this analysis as participants reported their ability to determine which co-teaching models to use for specific lessons based on their own discovery and not derived from training or professional development courses.

Building upon Lindacher's 2020 case study, which explores the perceptions of general education and special education teachers' roles and responsibilities in inclusion classrooms, this research further delves into educators' perspectives, shedding light on their experiences in co-teaching classrooms. The study's findings discovered that participants felt as though they were not prepared for their roles and responsibilities in the co-teaching inclusion classroom. This lack of preparedness began during their pre-service teacher education program, which failed to provide the majority of participants with formal training and courses on instructing students in co-teaching inclusion classrooms (Soslau et al., 2019). Furthermore, the participants reported that their administration does not provide them with training or professional development on the topic of co-teaching in inclusion classrooms (Romijn et al., 2021). Participants are not afforded opportunities for common planning periods with their partner teacher to create differentiated lesson plans to meet the needs of all students within the co-teaching inclusion classroom (Weinberg et al., 2020). The theme "support from administration" emerged during data analysis as the participants reported during all three data collection methods the lack of training and professional development during their in-service career, despite being scheduled to co-teaching in an inclusion classroom. Furthermore, the sub-theme "professional development and training"

emerged as participants reported that during their pre-service education program, they were not afforded opportunities to take courses on the topic of co-teaching.

Despite the challenges reported, participants' perspectives on the benefits of co-teaching in inclusion classrooms far outweigh the negative perceptions (Iacono et al., 2021). Moreover, although not offered pre-service or in-service training, educators on their own discover effective skills and strategies to incorporate into the co-teaching inclusion classroom (Paulsrud & Nilholm, 2020). The study's findings support the previous literature outlined in chapter two and relate to the findings that educators' perspectives on co-teaching in inclusion classrooms must be considered when determining training courses provided, scheduling for co-teaching partners, and for administrators advocating on behalf of their staff to the school district itself. The theme "benefits of co-teaching in inclusive education" emerged as educators reported significant benefits for students that receive instruction in co-teaching inclusion classrooms.

The study aligned with Crispel and Kasperski's 2021 study, which emphasizes the potential of educational methods and strategies to enhance educators' abilities in delivering effective instruction and support diverse learners. Moreover, Crispel and Kasperski's 2021 study states that general education teachers often lack adequate knowledge and training to effectively provide inclusive classroom education, notably to support general education students and those with disabilities (Crispel & Kasperski, 2021). The study's findings discovered that educators do not receive specialized courses of training during their pre-service education programs on the topic of co-teaching in inclusive classrooms (Chitiyo & Brinda, 2018; Goldhaber, 2019). Moreover, the study discovered that administrations throughout New York school districts do not provide educators with specific training or professional development on co-teaching in inclusion classrooms, even with they assign an educator to work in a co-teaching classroom (Paulsrud &

Nilholm, 2020). The study's findings support previous literature to provide in-service and pre-service educators with on-going training and professional development to be able to provide effective instruction in co-teaching inclusion classroom to meet the needs of diverse learners (Berry, 2021). The theme "support from administration" and sub-theme "professional development and training" emerged as participants responded to questions related to the lack of training and professional development provided by administration and the pre-service education programs.

In conclusion, this qualitative case study's empirical implications are firmly grounded in the literature review found in chapter two of this qualitative case study. By delving into educators perspectives on the challenges and benefits of co-teaching in inclusion classrooms, this research offers practical insights and evidence based strategies to enhance instructional practices and support the diverse needs of students in inclusive settings. The empirical implications highlight the extensive challenges posed by the pandemic while simultaneously emphasizing the benefits of co-teaching.

Theoretical Implications

The theoretical framework shaping this qualitative case study was Bandura's (1977) self-efficacy theory, as it offers a vigorous framework for understanding the dynamics of successful collaborative teaching in inclusion classrooms post-pandemic. The study's findings emphasize the importance of Bandura's self-efficacy theory in understanding and improving collaborative teaching in inclusion classrooms. Bandura's theory, which focuses on an individual's belief in their ability to succeed, is indeed relevant in the post-pandemic educational context. Self-efficacy, the belief in one's ability to succeed in specific situations, emerges as a critical factor influencing educators' behaviors, motivations, and the outcomes of their educational efforts

(Mitchell et al., 2021). The study's findings connect the theoretical foundations by revealing that educator's self-efficacy beliefs are intricately linked to their ability to navigate the challenges of co-teaching in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic (Keshavarz, 2020).

This qualitative case study focused on educators' perspectives on the challenges and benefits of co-teaching in inclusion classrooms post-pandemic, which is supported by Bandura's (1977) theory of self-efficacy and related to Poluektova et al., (2023) study. Furthermore, the study focused on the inclusive classroom setting and how fostering self-efficacy through educators' perceptions of their abilities enables teachers to provide engaging and academically rigorous inclusion educational environments (A. Duran et al., 2022). The study's findings report educators' inability to provide engaging and academically rigorous inclusion education environments because of the abrupt shift to virtual instruction (Keshavarz, 2020) . The study discovered the challenges related to instructing students in inclusion classrooms post-pandemic because of the extensive academic and social-emotional deficits, which are a direct result of the pandemic. Students are behind in literacy skills, which is causing negative effects in other content areas. Students continue to suffer post-pandemic in social-emotional areas as a result of not receiving peer to peer interactions during the educational shutdown. Mark and Wells (2019) study emphases the interaction between personal values and how self-efficacy is crucial for a successful education, as individuals may possess high self-efficacy standards but fail in specific educational contexts due to conflicting behaviors. Educators' providing instruction in inclusive classrooms post-pandemic face a multitude of issues, because although they report they maintain high self-efficacy standards, they are not receiving the necessary training and professional development to provide specific educational contexts in the inclusive classroom (Hershmann et al., 2023).

Although the case study analyzed participants perspectives of the challenges associated with co-teaching in inclusion classrooms based on their own-self efficacy beliefs, the study also found many benefits for students in inclusive education. The participants in the study reported students receiving instruction in inclusion classrooms are exposed to diversity, inclusion, and equity. This inclusive environment fosters a more diverse and accepting classroom community (Hershmann et al., 2023). Moreover, educators report students in inclusion classrooms receive more individualized support. In relation to Bandura's (1977) self-efficacy theory, the study discovered educators have a high-self efficacy when determining effective skills and strategies to utilize in inclusion classrooms and when determining the correct co-teaching method to utilize with their partner teacher. However, this is a direct result of the educator's self-efficacy and their belief in themselves as an educator (Khorakian & Sharifirad, 2019). They use their planning time and personal time to create lesson plans that offer differentiated instruction to meet the needs of students in the co-teaching inclusion classroom. Hershmann et al. (2023) states educators utilize self-efficacy to adapt to new environments and achieve success based on their personal competencies.

The study found that although educators are generally satisfied with their administration, they report they do not receive any training or professional development when scheduled to co-teach in an inclusion classroom. This lack of training or professional development causes educators to have a low sense of self-efficacy in their beliefs in utilizing effective skills and strategies in the co-teaching inclusion classrooms. Educators are expected to utilize their planning period or free time to determine effective skills and strategies in an inclusive environment and administrators typically do not provide co-teaching partners with similar planning periods to be able to create lesson plans together. The study discovered the majority of

participants were not provided with courses on the topic of co-teaching during their pre-service

teacher education program. This lack of pre-service training caused educators to have a poor

sense of self-efficacy as a new teacher educating students in inclusive classroom environments.

Khorakian and Sharifirad (2019) state knowledge refers to educators' understanding of

previously acquired information and content, which serves as a foundation for developing

practical skills. The Every Student Succeeds Act (2015) mandates that students must receive

education in the least restrictive environment possible. Because of this, the shift to co-teaching

inclusion classrooms is now taking place in all New York public schools (Nilholm, 2021).

However, there has not been a shift in the mandates for pre-service educational programs to

mandate courses on the topic of co-teaching in inclusion classrooms (Kefallinou et al., 2020).

Moreover, there have not been mandates from the state, federal, or school district level to require

educators teaching in co-teaching inclusion classrooms to take on-going professional

development on co-teaching methods, skills, and strategies (Kulophas & Hallinger, 2020).

Limitations and Delimitations

In the context of a qualitative case study, it is imperative to consider both limitations and

delimitations, which encompass the study's boundaries, constraints, and potential weaknesses

concerning its design, scope, and methodology. Limitations encompass aspects that pose

challenges to the study's generalizability, reliability, or validity. Furthermore, delimitations

represent the deliberate and purposeful decisions made by the researcher to define and refine the

study's scope and objectives, ultimately guiding the investigation.

Limitations

This qualitative case study examining educators' perceptions of co-teaching in inclusion

classrooms post-pandemic in New York public schools, exclusively encompassing New York

State certified teachers who are all over 18 years of age and possess New York state teaching

certifications, carries inherent limitations. The study's findings do not report univerrsal

applicability beyond New York state, as differences in educational policies, practices, and

pandemic impacts across states influence the transferability of the findings. Moreover, the

study's participant groups' similarity, restricted to New York state certified teachers, limits the

diversity of participants. The study does not incorporate the experiences of additional

educational professionals, such as guidance counselors, paraeducators or administrators, whose

insights could offer a more comprehensive analysis of the co-teaching dynamics. The study's

findings may primarily reflect the experiences and perceptions of educators with a background in

co-teaching, potentially disregarding the viewpoints of those with limited or no experience.

Moreover, the qualitative nature of the research introduces the potential for subjectivity and

researcher bias during data collection and analysis, although efforts were taken to minimize these

issues. Furthermore, fundamental limitations as to the data and the adequacy of the samples'

inclusivity, typical in qualitative research, should be acknowledged when interpreting the

findings. Lastly, although both male and female educators were sent requests to participate in the

research, only female educators responded that they would be willing to participate.

Delimitations

This qualitative case study, focusing on educators' perceptions of co-teaching in

inclusion classrooms post-pandemic, entails several delimitations that outline the study's scope

and context. The selection of participants through purposive sampling specifically targeted New

York state licensed educators, including general education teachers, special education teachers,

and those licensed to work with English language learners. The participant selection also

required that educators had past or current experience co-teaching in inclusion classrooms and a

minimum of one year in-service teaching experience. Specific participants were selected to ensure that educators had relevant expertise on the topic of co-teaching. Moreover, the study involved 13 participants in the age range of 25-60 years, providing a diverse selection of educators to offer multifaceted insights. Due to continued restrictions set in place from the pandemic, the study was conducted in a virtual format, limiting the researcher's physical presence in the educators' classrooms. These deliberate delimitations were chosen to concentrate the study on a specific selection of educators in a virtual atmosphere, allowing for a focused exploration of their perceptions about co-teaching in the aftermath of the pandemic.

Recommendations for Future Research

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to discover educators' perceptions of the challenges and benefits of collaborative teaching post-pandemic in inclusion classrooms throughout various New York schools. The 13 participants in the study were chosen through purposive sampling and consisted of general education teachers, special education teachers, and educators licensed to instruct English language learners. All of the participants were New York state licensed teachers and taught in a co-teaching inclusion classroom at some point in their career. This qualitative study utilized a multifaceted research approach to examine a particular phenomenon. Three data collections methods were utilized to analyze the data and determine themes and patterns. These three data collection methods included interviews, online surveys, and a virtual focus group session. The interviews provided an opportunity for particpants to share their personal experiences in a confidential setting. The online surveys enabled the particpants to provide quality feedback and responses, which provided insights into the qualitative findings. The third data collection method, the virtual focus group, provided the researcher with valuable data on participants perspectives while engaging in collaborative discussions. Through the

analysis of the three data collection methods, three themes and four sub-themes emerged.

Reflecting on the findings, limitations, and delimitations of the qualitative case study, several recommendations for future research are included on the topic of co-teaching in inclusion classroom post-pandemic. This study focused on the perspectives of co-teachers in New York state only. Future research can include a comparison between the perspectives of New York state licensed teachers and educators in various other states. This comparative research allows for an analysis of the impact of state specific educational practices in co-teaching inclusion classrooms. Moreover, the analysis of state to state comparsions of co-teaching in inclusion classrooms enables the researcher to analyze how federal and state laws make an impact on collaborative teaching. Additionally, future research should consider broadening the scope of particpants to include other educational professionals perspectives in the study. This can include administrators, guidance counselors, social workers, and paraprofessionals. These certified educational professionals can offer a differentiated view of the challenges and benefits of co-teaching in inclusion classrooms from a perspective outside of the classroom itself. Students receiving instruction in inclusion classrooms often attend services outside of the classroom with support staff, administration, and paraprofessionals. Their insight into the research study would provide a perspective on educating the student as a whole. Furthermore, future research can include targeted professional development courses for in-service educators focused on enhancing co-teaching skills and strategies in inclusion classrooms post-pandemic.

Conclusion

The purpose of this qualitative case study is to discover educators' perceptions of the challenges and benefits of collaborative teaching post-pandemic in inclusion classrooms throughout various New York schools. Guided by Bandura's theory of self-efficacy, the research

provided valuable insights into educators' perceptions, beliefs, and confidence levels as to their ability to effectively educate in co-teaching inclusion classrooms. Employing an instrumental case study methodology, coupled with three data collection methods including interviews, surveys, and a virtual focus group, the study facilitated a comprehensive analysis of the phenomenon under examination. By utilizing triangulation, which involved combining data collected from various sources, a deeper comprehension of the intricate dynamics surrounding co-teaching in the post-pandemic era was explored and analyzed.

The thematic analysis applied to the collected data illuminated themes in educators' perspectives, shedding light on the benefits and challenges of co-teaching in inclusion classrooms post-pandemic. While this research supports contributions to the field of education, it is important to acknowledge its limitations. The findings may not be universally applicable beyond the context of New York state. Moreover, the study's participant selection may not fully encompass the broader scope of educational professionals involved in co-teaching dynamics. Nevertheless, this qualitative case study offers a valuable foundation for further exploration and understanding of co-teaching practices in inclusion classroom in the post-pandemic era, ultimately contributing to the enhancement of inclusive education strategies.

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Appendix A

IRB Approval Letter

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY.
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

September 7, 2023

Danielle Grunert
Meredith Park

Re: IRB Exemption - IRB-FY22-23-1783 A Qualitative Case Study Examining Collaborative Teaching in Inclusion Classrooms Post-Pandemic

Dear Danielle Grunert, Meredith Park,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under the following exemption category, which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:104(d):

Category 2.(iii). Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if at least one of the following criteria is met:
The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects can readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, and an IRB conducts a limited IRB review to make the determination required by §46.111(a)(7).

For a PDF of your exemption letter, click on your study number in the My Studies card on your Cayuse dashboard. Next, click the Submissions bar beside the Study Details bar on the Study details page. Finally, click Initial under Submission Type and choose the Letters tab toward the bottom of the Submission Details page. Your information sheet and final versions of your study documents can also be found on the same page under the Attachments tab.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

If you have any questions about this exemption or need assistance in determining whether possible modifications to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,
G. Michele Baker, PhD, CIP
Administrative Chair
Research Ethics Office

Appendix B

Informed Consent Form

Consent

Title of the Project: A Qualitative Case Study Examining Collaborative Teaching in Inclusion

Classrooms Post-Pandemic

Principal Investigator: Danielle Grunert, Doctoral Candidate, School of Education, Liberty

University

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be 18 years of age or

older, a New York state-licensed teacher, and currently teach or have taught in a co-teaching

classroom. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in

this research.

What is the study about and why is it being done?

The purpose of the study is to discover educators' perceptions of the challenges and benefits of

collaborative teaching post-pandemic in inclusion classrooms throughout various New York

public schools.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following:

1. First task is to participate in an audio-recorded, virtual interview that will take no more

    than 1 hour.

2. Second task is to participate in two surveys provided via Google Forms which will take no more than 1 hour.

3. Last task is to participate in an audio and video-recorded, virtual focus group session which will take no more than 1 hour.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

Benefits to society include new professional development programs can be developed based on the data collected.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

The expected risks from participating in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

How will personal information be protected?

The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

- Participant responses will be kept confidential by replacing names with pseudonyms.

- Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.

- Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in focus group settings. While discouraged, other members of the focus group may share what was discussed with persons outside of the group.

- Data collected from you may be used in future research studies and shared with other researchers. If data collected from you is reused or shared, any information that could identify you, if applicable, will be removed beforehand.

- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer in a locked file cabinet. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted, and all hardcopy records will be shredded.

- Recordings will be stored on a password locked computer for three years and then deleted. The researcher and members of her doctoral committee will have access to these recordings.

How will you be compensated for being part of the study?

Participants will be compensated for participating in all of the procedures for this study. At the conclusion of the focus group session, participants will receive a $25 Amazon gift card. Email addresses will be requested for compensation purposes.

Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you, apart from focus group data, will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study. Focus group data will not be destroyed, but your contributions to the focus group will not be included in the study if you choose to withdraw.

Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The researcher conducting this study is Danielle Grunert. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at ███████████████. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Meredith Park, at ████████████████.

Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the IRB. Our physical address is Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA, 24515; our phone number is ████████████, and our email address is ████████████

Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is tasked with ensuring that human subjects research will be conducted in an ethical manner as defined and required by federal regulations. The topics covered and viewpoints expressed or alluded to by student and faculty researchers are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University.

Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

☐ The researcher has my permission to audio-record and video-record me as part of my participation in this study.

_____

Printed Subject Name

_____

Signature & Date

Appendix C

Recruitment Email

[Date]

[Recipient]

[Address 1]

[Address 2]

Dear [Recipient]:

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Ph.D. degree. The purpose of my research will be to discover educators' perceptions of the challenges and benefits of collaborative teaching in inclusion classrooms throughout various New York schools post-pandemic. In addition, the study will analyze the challenges and benefits of collaborative teaching for both general and special education teachers within these inclusion classrooms in New York, and I am writing to invite eligible participants to join my study.

Participants must be 18 years of age or older, a New York state licensed teacher, and currently teach or have taught in a co-teaching classroom. Participants, if willing, will be asked to take two surveys, a zoom interview, and a virtual focus group session. It should take approximately 3-4 weeks to complete the procedures listed. Participants will be provided with anonymity and pseudonyms will be used.

To participate, please click here https://forms.gle/R1vmuvukPQ5YQCDP8

A consent document is attached to this email. The consent document contains additional information about my research. After you have read the consent form, please click the link to proceed to the survey. Doing so will indicate that you have read the consent information and would like to take part in the survey.

Participants will receive a $25 Amazon gift card at the completion of their full participation.

Sincerely,

Danielle Grunert

Doctoral Candidate

███████████

█████████████

Appendix D

Recruitment Form

Recruitment Form/Screening Questions:

9. What is your name?

10. What is your email address?

11. What is your phone number? (Optional)

12. Are you a New York State Licensed Teacher?

13. What New York state teaching licenses do you currently hold?

14. Do you currently teach in a co-teaching inclusion classroom?

15. If no to the above question, have you taught in the past in a co-teaching inclusion classroom?

16. Are you willing to participate in a case study for a dissertation?

Appendix E

Individual Interview Questions

1. What is your educational background? CRQ

2. Describe your current and past career throughout your teaching roles. CRQ

3. What is your role in your current position? CRQ

4. What kind of instruction and training did you receive regarding collaboratively teaching students in inclusion classrooms during your pre-service teacher preparation program? CRQ

5. Describe challenging practices utilized for students in inclusion classrooms. SQ1

6. Describe challenges with collaborative classroom management practices. SQ1

7. Describe challenges with time allotted for lesson preparation with your partner teacher. SQ1

8. What challenges do you face when determining which co-teaching method to utilize for specific lessons? SQ1

9. What recurring challenges are faced by co-teaching in inclusion classrooms? SQ1

10. How are the reoccurring challenges addressed with your partner teacher? With administration? SQ1

11. How would you describe the implementation of co-teaching during the pandemic while using virtual instruction? SQ1

12. What new challenges have emerged in co-teaching after the pandemic, and how would you describe them? SQ1

13. How do you access deficiency areas students are facing? SQ1

14. How do you handle behavior challenges within the classroom? SQ1

15. What challenges do you face getting parents or guardians to participate in their child's education? SQ1

16. What challenges do you face collaborating with support teachers, such as social workers, ELL teachers, speech, and occupational therapists, IEP teachers, and other support staff? SQ1

17. What support was provided during virtual instruction to collaborate with support teachers? SQ1

18. Describe successful methods utilized for whole group instruction. SQ2

19. Describe successful methods utilized for small group instruction. SQ2

20. Describe the benefits of co-teaching methods throughout specific lessons. SQ2

21. What qualities do educators require to be effective teachers collaboratively teaching in inclusion classrooms? SQ2

22. How do you access the progress students are making? SQ2

23. How do you reward positive behavior in the classroom? SQ2

24. What effective methods do you utilize to communicate with parents? SQ2

25. During the pandemic, how did you effectively communicate with parents? SQ2

26. What resources are parents provided to help their child with virtual instruction? SQ2

27. What are the benefits of collaborating with support teachers outside the classroom, such as social workers, speech, IEP, and other support staff? SQ2

28. How does the administration provide professional development for teachers working in inclusion classrooms? SQ3

29. Provide examples of skills and strategies introduced for effective co-teaching practices during professional development. SQ3

30. How does your administration provide support for teachers when needed? SQ3

31. How did the administration provide support during virtual instruction through the pandemic? SQ3

32. What courses or training were available during your pre-service teacher education programs to help you develop the skills and strategies required to provide academic instruction in inclusion classrooms? SQ3

Appendix F

Likert-Scale Survey

Survey One: Likert-Scale Questions:

Participants will respond to questions with (a) Strongly Agree, (b) Agree, (c) Neutral, (d)

Disagree, or (e) Strongly Disagree:

1. You feel confident in your ability to co-teach in inclusion classrooms. SQ2

2. You feel there is adequate time to co-plan with your partner teacher. SQ3

3. You were partnered with an appropriate collaborative teacher. SQ3

4. You have strategies to communicate concerns with your partner teacher. CRQ

5. You have strategies to determine which co-teaching method to implement for specific

    lessons. SQ2

6. You work collaboratively to meet the needs of all students. CRQ

7. You and your partner teacher work collaboratively to determine classroom management

    methods. CRQ

8. You and your partner teacher discussed expectations with students. CRQ

9. You and your partner teacher determined methods to handle disruptive behavior in the

    classroom. CRQ

10. You and your partner teacher discussed methods of communication with

    parents/guardians. CRQ

11. You and your partner teacher determined methods of progress monitoring. CRQ

12. You and your partner teacher support and maintain a culturally responsive classroom.

    CRQ

13. Students with disabilities in your classroom receive small group instruction. SQ1

14. You and your partner teacher can meet the needs of all students, including students with disabilities, mainstream students, and gifted students. SQ1

15. You and your partner teacher determined methods to provide differentiated instruction to meet the needs of all students. SQ1

16. You are provided adequate manipulatives to utilize in the classroom. SQ3

17. You are provided with appropriate technology for educators. SQ3

18. You are provided with appropriate technology for students. SQ3

19. Adequate resources are provided for students needing additional support. SQ3

20. You can utilize online platforms in case of another school shutdown. SQ3

21. Support staff, such as speech, OT, social workers, and parent coordinators, are responsive to your request for additional support. SQ3

22. During your pre-service educator program, you were provided training and courses on instructing students in inclusive classrooms. SQ2

23. You receive professional development on skills and strategies to support instruction in inclusion classrooms through your current position. SQ3

24. You prefer co-teaching in inclusion classrooms instead of single-educator classroom instruction. SQ2

25. You believe in your self-efficacy to provide differentiated instruction in co-teaching inclusion classrooms to meet the needs of diverse learners. SQ2

Appendix G

Co- Teaching Survey

Survey Two: Co- Teaching Methods

Which co-teaching model do you feel works best in inclusion classrooms to meet the needs of all students? Please list a co-teaching model and explain why in detail.

Appendix H

Virtual Focus Group Questions

Virtual Focus Group Session Review:

      After the researcher has gained feedback from the interviews and surveys, the researcher will generate open-ended discussion questions for the virtual focus group, based on the participants responses in the first and second data collection methods; interview and surveys.

Virtual Focus Group Questions:

Question 1: What was the most challenging part of teaching during the pandemic?

Question 2: What is the most challenging part of teaching post-pandemic?

Question 3: What resources and support should be provided by administration to facilitate collaboration among teachers in inclusion classrooms?

Question 4: How do you think students might benefit post-pandemic from receiving instruction in an inclusion classroom, including general education students, ELL students, and students with an IEP?

Question 5: What steps should you take, as an educator, to ensure you are delivering effective instruction in classrooms post-pandemic?

Question 6: Do you think students have fallen behind academically and socially because of the pandemic?

Appendix I

Table: Themes and Sub-Themes

Table 1

Teacher Participants

Teacher Participant	Years Taught	Highest Degree Earned	Content Area	Grade Level
Erin	4	Masters	Childhood Education	1st-6th
Marie	15	Masters	Childhood Education, TESOL Education	1st-6th K-12
Lynn	36	Masters	Elementary Education, Special Education	K-5 K-6
Maryam	7	Masters	Students with Disabilities, Social Studies	7-12 7-12
Christine	17	Masters	TESOL, Library Media Specialist	K-12 K-12
Riley	15	Masters	Special Education, Mathematics	1-12 7-12
Vienna	16	Masters	Childhood Education, English, TESOL	1-6, 7-12, K-12
Lena	10	Masters	Childhood Education, Students with Disabilities, Mathematics	1-6, 7-12, 5-12

Logan	11	Masters	Adolescent Education, Social Studies, Literacy	7-12, 7-12, 5-12
Kristy	25	Masters	Elementary Education, Reading Specialist, Special Education	K-5, K-6, K-6
Amanda	8	Masters	Secondary Education Mathematics	7-12
Amy	12	Masters	Childhood Education, Students with Disabilities	1-6, 1-6
Lisa	26	Masters	Students with Disabilities, English, Science	7-12. K-6, 7-12, 7-12

Appendix J

Central Research Question and Sub-Questions

Central Research Question

What are the main challenges and benefits of collaborative teaching in inclusion classrooms post-pandemic?

Sub-Question One

How does collaborative teaching in inclusion classrooms post-pandemic contribute to improved academic and personal outcomes for students with diverse learning needs?

Sub-Question Two

What strategies and practices can educators employ to sustain self-efficacy in delivering effective collaborative instruction and meeting the needs of all students in inclusive classrooms?

Sub-Question Three

What resources and support strategies are implemented by school administration to facilitate collaboration among teachers in inclusive classrooms?