General and Special Education Teacher Perceptions of Collaboration

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Abstract

The primary purpose of this study was to determine if general and special education teachers perceive that the district supports the team processes, leadership qualities, resources, and professional development that lead to effective collaboration. A second purpose was to determine the perceived benefit of collaboration from general and special education teachers. Third, this study sought to determine if general and special education teachers had a positive attitude toward collaboration.

Quantitative data were collected via online surveys. The surveys were sent to general and special education teachers who teach grades kindergarten through twelve. Survey data were analyzed through cross tabulation, one, and two sample *t* tests. The results of the quantitative data indicate that general education teachers had a positive attitude toward, reaped the benefits, shared in the leadership, and felt that the district provided the team process necessary for effective collaboration. Special education teachers had a positive attitude toward, felt that collaboration was beneficial, and shared in the leadership of the collaborative process.

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my family and friends. A special feeling of gratitude to my wife, Diane, and sons Holden and Liam, who have provided enduring and unconditional love, encouragement, and motivation. I dedicate this dissertation to my grandparents, John and Joyce Vaughn, who ensured that life-long learning and higher education be a focal point in my life. I dedicate this work to my parents Darlene and Charles Atchison for instilling within me the value of having a strong work ethic. Finally, I dedicate this dissertation to my good friend, Jeff King, who has provided many years of spiritual guidance and friendship.

Acknowledgements

I want to thank the members of the committee who were more than generous with their expertise and time. A special thank you to Dr. Harold Frye, my advisor and committee chairperson, for his countless hours of reflecting, reading, encouraging, and patience throughout the entire process. Thank you to Dr. Peg Waterman for your diligence and thoroughness throughout the writing process. Thank you to Dr. Russ Kokoruda and Dr. Kathy Mickelson for your support throughout the writing process and during the defense of the study.

I would like to recognize and demonstrate gratitude to the superintendents and school districts who allowed for this study to be conducted within his or her district. Finally, I would like to give thanks to the general and special education teachers for their dedication to the profession and participation in this study.

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Chapter One

Introduction

Never have the burdens on our educational system been greater or the consequences of failure so severe. Beyond the high-stakes school accountability requirements mandated by state and federal laws, the difference between success and failure in school is life-altering for the futures our students (Buffum, Erkens, Hinman, Huff & Jessie, 2008). To ensure that *all* students achieve, school leaders must create a culture in which general and special education teachers effectively collaborate. When school leaders fail to provide efficient structures for early meetings, collaboration can quickly become confusing and seen as a waste of time for general and special education teachers (Graham & Ferriter, 2008).

Joel Waggoner (personal communication, October 13, 2005), when referring to the special educator's collaborative relationship with his or her general education counterpart stated that, "we will always be second class citizens to them." Such mentality has no place in today's educational environment. Although teachers experience positive feelings as a product of collaboration, that is not its primary focus. In a professional learning community (PLC), collaboration is the systematic process in which teachers work jointly and interdependently, to analyze and impact professional practice, to advance results for their students, team, and school (DuFour, DuFour, & Eaker, 2008). Effective collaboration is the conduit through which professionals can ensure that students receive the most effective educational amenities to which they are entitled (Friend, 2000). The characteristics of effective collaboration include team processes, perceived benefits, shared leadership, positive attitude toward collaboration, essential

resources, and professional development opportunities (Cook & Friend, 1996; Wiggins & Damore, 2006; Cramer, 2006; and Tannock, 2009).

Background

Education before 1975 provided limited access to educational opportunities to students with disabilities. Congressional findings in 1974 indicated that more than 1.75 million students with disabilities did not receive educational services. Of the three million students with disabilities that did attend school, many did not receive an education that was appropriate to meet their needs. The Education of All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 (EAHCA) or Public Law 94-142 and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA) have been essentially successful in providing access to public school programs for all children with exceptionalities (Weishaar, 2007).

The purpose of IDEA is to provide a free appropriate public education (FAPE) to all children who have exceptionalities, which ensures that children with exceptionalities are entitled to a public education that is appropriate to meet his or her individual needs. To ensure that FAPE is achieved, six basic principles were set: zero reject/child find, non-discriminatory assessment, an appropriate education and the individualized education program (IEP), least restrictive environment (LRE), due process, and parent participation (Weishaar, 2007).

One of the hallmarks of Public Law 94-142 was the provision of LRE, which can be defined as the setting in which students with exceptionalities receive special education support and experience the greatest success in the direction of improvement. Depending on the necessities and goals of the student, LRE includes appropriate placements falling

along a gamut from least to most restrictive (e.g. general education classroom, resource room) (Friend, 2005).

In 2001, Congress passed the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), which required that all children, including those with diagnosed exceptionalities, attain proficiency on state achievement standards and assessments. Such legislative and policy efforts increasingly require teachers to make the curriculum accessible, that all students be actively engaged in the core curriculum, and that staff monitors student progress. These developments have contributed to a fundamental shift in a schools' education of students with exceptionalities and their access to general education (Hitchcock, Meyers, Rose, & Jackson, 2002). According to the U.S. Department of *Education's 35th Annual Report to Congress on the Implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2013*, during the 2012 school year, 61.1% of students with exceptionalities (ages 6-21) received instruction in general education settings for 80% of the day (United States Department of Education, 2014).

Merely providing students with exceptionalities access to general education programming does not ensure their complete acceptance within these settings, assure meaningful participation, or comparable outcomes (Artiles, 2003: Wehmeyer, 2006). General educators often feel ill-equipped to address the needs of students with exceptionalities appropriately and prepare them for higher standards and expectations (Schumm & Vaughn, 1995). Thus, twenty-first-century classrooms have become epicenters for collaboration between general and special education teachers.

The six school districts that contributed to this study receive special education support from one special education cooperative. Each of the six districts is located in northeast Kansas and are comprised of the characteristics detailed in Table 1.

Table 1

District Characteristics

Districts	GenEd Teachers	SPED Teachers	Administrators	GenEd Students	SPED Students
A	67	13	5	812	232
B	53	10	4	413	156
C	53	7	3	508	141
D	34	5	2	335	66
E	32	4	2	235	80
F	32	3	2	165	70
Total	271	41	18	2467	745

Note. SPED = Special Education. GenEd = General Education. Adapted from Kansas State Department of Education. (2011, June). *Kansas special education services process handbook*. Topeka, KS: Kansas State Department of Education.

The practice and perception of the school districts are that the inclusion of students with exceptionalities with their peers and in the least restrictive environment is essential for all learners to reach their potential. The development and implementation of collaborative cultures and practices are essential. Only when general and special educators begin to collaborate on how best to help all students learn will educators realize results. Collaboration enables the special education teacher to support special education students and also general education pupils who are having difficulty and might otherwise fall through the cracks (Many & Schmidt, 2013).

Statement of the Problem

The public school system has experienced dramatic changes within the last ten years; movement toward a standards-based system, implementation of statewide assessments, and increased accountability for both students and educators. Present in all reform initiatives has been the emphasis on improving achievement through increased inclusion for all learners in the general education setting, including those students with disabilities learning within the general education setting and being taught the general education curriculum (Malgren, McLaughlin, & Nolet, 2005). The increase in such inclusionary practices has created challenges for both general education and special education teachers, who have historically worked as separate entities and may operate from very different paradigms and belief systems. No longer are special educators able to provide primarily one-on-one instruction in a resource room setting; as an alternative, they are expected to work in the LRE, often within a general education classroom (Robinson & Buly, 2007).

General education teachers are no longer able to assume that the responsibility for the tutelage of students with special needs is burdened by the special education teacher. Evolution in education is occurring, as general and special education teachers discover that they must work together, and they must collaborate to ensure that all students achieve his or her potential. When educators lack shared experiences and perspectives, they can haplessly dismiss the perspective of the other or decide to learn about another's perspective and beliefs. Conversely, a mutual goal of working collaboratively to improve the instruction of all students can be established (Denton, Vaughn, & Fletcher, 2003).

Purpose Statement

The primary purpose of this study was to determine if general and special education teachers perceive that the district supports the team processes, leadership qualities, resources, and professional development that lead to effective collaboration. A second purpose was to gauge the perceived benefit of collaboration from general and special education teachers. Third, this study sought to determine if general and special education teachers had a positive attitude toward collaboration.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study was to provide awareness of the similarities and differences in the perceptions and practices of collaboration among general and special education teachers from six rural Kansas school districts. The outcomes of this research may be utilized to improve the effectiveness of teacher collaboration which will have a positive influence on the learning of general and special education teachers and students.

Delimitations

"Delimitations are self-imposed boundaries established by the researcher on the purpose and scope of the study" (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008, p. 134). The first delimitation with this study is that only pre-kindergarten through twelfth-grade general and special education teachers were surveyed. A second delimitation utilized by the researcher was the utilization of only six rural school districts as participants.

Assumptions

The assumption was made that the responses given on the survey were honest, accurate, and a valid measure of the teachers' perceptions of the collaborative practices currently in place in his or her school building. Second, the survey instrument was

appropriate to obtain participants' self-ratings of their perception of existing collaborative practices. Third, it should be assumed that the general and special education teachers all receive the same district level professional development. Finally, the demographic composition of participants was representative of all the district general and special education teachers.

Research Questions

In order to examine the collaboration perceptions and practices of general and special education teachers from grades kindergarten through twelve of schools located within six school districts, the following research questions were examined:

RQ1. To what extent do general education teachers perceive that the district supports team processes that lead to effective collaboration?

RQ2. To what extent do special education teachers perceive that the district supports team processes that lead to effective collaboration?

RQ3. To what extent are the perceptions that the district supports team processes that lead to effective collaboration different between special education and general education teachers?

RQ4. To what extent do general education teachers perceive collaboration to be beneficial?

RQ5. To what extent do special education teachers perceive collaboration to be beneficial?

RQ6. To what extent are the perceptions that collaboration is beneficial different between special education and general education teachers?

RQ7. To what extent do general education teachers perceive that the district supports leadership qualities that lead to effective collaboration?

RQ8. To what extent do special education teachers perceive that the district supports leadership qualities that lead to effective collaboration?

RQ9. To what extent are the perceptions that the district supports leadership qualities that lead to effective collaboration different from special education and general education teachers?

RQ10. To what extent do general education teachers have a positive perception of participating in collaboration

RQ11. To what extent do special education teachers have a positive perception of participating in collaboration?

RQ12. To what extent are the positive perceptions of participating in collaboration different between special education and general education teachers?

RQ13. To what extent do general education teachers perceive that the district provides the necessary resources to supported effective collaboration?

RQ14. To what extent do special education teachers perceive that the district provides the necessary resources to supported effective collaboration?

RQ15. To what extent are the perceptions that the district provides the necessary resources that lead to effective collaboration different between general and general education teachers?

RQ16. To what extent do general education teachers perceive that the district provides essential professional development that leads to effective collaboration?

RQ17. To what extent do special education teachers perceive that the district provides essential professional development that leads to effective collaboration?

RQ18. To what extent are the perceptions that the district provides essential professional development that leads to effective collaboration different between special education and general education teachers?

Definition of Terms

Certified special education staff. The state of Kansas considers any employee who possesses a professional license or certificate through the appropriate Kansas governing agency and who provides educational or related services to students with disabilities a member of the certified special education staff. These educators include early childhood through high school special education teachers, occupational, physical, and music therapists, speech-language pathologists, school psychologists, and school social workers (KSDE, 2011, p. 113).

Collaboration. A systematic process in which people work together, interdependently, to analyze and impact professional practice to improve individual and collective results. In a PLC, collaboration emphasizes the significant questions of learning: What is it we want each student to learn? How will we distinguish when each student has learned it? How will we respond when a student experiences difficulty in learning? How will we enrich and extend the knowledge for students who are capable? (DuFour et al., 2008).

Cooperative. A voluntary association of school districts that band together to provide special education services using shared administrative structures (Rogers, "The Council for Disability Rights").

Criterion-referenced assessment. Assessment utilized to define if a student(s) has met a rigorous learning outcome (Ainsworth & Viegut, 2006).

Dispersed leadership. Leadership that is widely dispersed throughout a school rather than vested in a person or position. Emphasis is placed on increasing the capacity of people throughout the school to assume leadership roles and to become "leaders of leaders" (DuFour et al., 2008, p. 466).

Essential learning. The critical skills, knowledge, and dispositions each learner must attain as a result of each course, grade level, and the element of instruction (DuFour et al., 2008).

First order change. Innovation that is incremental, representing the next step on an established path, and operating within existing paradigms. The change can be implemented by exhausting the existing knowledge and skills of the staff. The goal of the first-order change is to help us get better at what we are already doing (Marzano, Waters & McNulty, 2005).

Goals. Measurable milestones that can be used to evaluate progress in advancing toward a vision. Goals establish targets and timelines to answer the question, "What results do we seek and how will we know we are making progress?" (DuFour et al., 2008).

Guiding coalition. An alliance of key associates of an organization who are specifically charged to lead a change progression through the coming chaos. Associates of the alliance should have shared objectives and extraordinary levels of conviction (Du DuFour et al., 2008).

High expectations. The confident belief that all pupils can attain mastery of the essential learning and that the staff has the competence to help all students achieve that mastery (DuFour et al., 2008).

Mission. The first resolve of an organization. Mission retorts the question, "Why do we exist?" (DuFour et al., 2008).

Moral purpose. Acting with the intention of making a positive difference in the lives of employees, customers, and society as a whole (Fullan, 2001).

Professional development. A constant, collaborative learning progression that nourishes the growth of individuals, teams, and the school through a daily job-embedded, learner-centered, focused approach (Hirsh, 2009).

Professional Learning Community. Educators committed to working collaboratively with the ongoing processes of collective inquiry and action research to attain better outcomes for the students he or she serves. Professional learning communities function under the supposition that the key to enriched learning for students is continuous, job-embedded knowledge acquisition for educators (DuFour et al., 2008).

School culture. The assumptions, beliefs, values, and habits that constitute the norm for the school and guide the work of the educators within it (DuFour et al., 2008).

Second-order change. Innovation that signifies a dramatic exodus from the expected plan. It is perceived as a change from the past, is inconsistent with prevailing standards, may seem to be in conflict with prevailing practices and norms and will require the attainment of new information and new skills (Marzano et al., 2005).

Special education. Special education is specially designed instruction to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability (U.S. Department of Education, 2004).

Systematic intervention. A school-wide disposition that guarantees each student in every course or grade level will receive extra time and support for intervention as soon as he or she exhibits trouble in acquiring knowledge and skills. The intervention occurs during the school day, and students are mandatory rather than invited to dedicate the extra time and secure the additional support for knowledge development (DuFour et al., 2008).

Values. The specific attitudes, actions, and commitments that must be established to advance the organization's vision. Articulated values answer the question, "How must we behave to make our shared vision a reality?" (DuFour et al., 2008).

Vision. A viable, real, fascinating future for an organization. Vision answers the question, "What do we hope to become at some point in the future?" (DuFour et al., 2008).

Overview of the Methodology

This quantitative study was designed to investigate teacher perceptions regarding factors relating to collaboration between general education and special education teachers. The research tool selected was utilized to determine the perceptions that teachers have regarding existing collaboration practices in their respective learning environments. The quantitative data were collected for this study through an online survey. The results of the anonymous survey were gathered through Google Forms.

Organization of the Study

This research study is presented in five chapters. Chapter one includes the background, statement of the problem, the purpose of the work, the significance of the study, delimitations, assumptions, research questions, the definition of terms, and

overview of the research methods. Significant review of the literature regarding the problem in this study is presented in chapter two. Chapter three contains the presentation of methodology and procedures used for data collection and analysis. The analysis of the data is described in chapter four. Summaries and findings are discussed along with the recommendations for practice, conclusions, and suggestions for future research in chapter five.

Chapter Two

Review of Literature

The review of literature for this study presents the rationale for conducting research regarding general and special education teacher perceptions of collaboration. This review contains the history of special education, including the role of the special education teacher, education law, isolation, and the inclusion of students with diagnosed exceptionalities. The review also defines models of collaborations, barriers to collaboration, and elements of effective collaboration.

The Evolving Role of the Special Education Teacher

As special educators assume positions in schools, they commonly face ambiguous, contradictory, and fragmented expectations from their colleagues, administrators, and the families of children that they serve. Numerous educators hold traditional views of special education, understanding that the role of the special educator is to teach a reduced number of children using specialized instructional tactics (CEC, 2000). The arena of special education, however, is changing. The 1997 and 2004 addendums to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) mandate placement opportunities for students with exceptionalities in general education classrooms and accentuate participation and progress in the general education curriculum. The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 provides further support for the involvement of students with disabilities in the general education curriculum by requiring their participation in accountability structures (NCLB, 2002). Confusion and opposition to the aims of more inclusive educational opportunities for students with disabilities have created challenges for teachers (Conderman & Stephens, 2000). Inclusion requires

special educators to collaborate with their general education colleagues, yet they are also expected to provide intensive, individualized instruction.

Special Education Law

Law has always affected the instruction of children with disabilities. At one time, the law excluded children deemed either unable to learn or merely considered disturbing to others. Special education programs existed in many areas, but as late as the 1970s, Congress found that 1.75 million children were excluded from school entirely, and 2.5 million were in programs that did not meet their needs. Legal reform has improved conditions immensely. However, many legal controversies remain, and there are practical lessons learned from legal developments (Weber, 2009).

In 1975, Congress passed Public Law 94-142, The Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA) established that every state accepting federal special education funding must provide an enforceable right to a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) to all kids with disabilities (Weber, 2009). According to Sharon Cramer (2006), there are at least three features of EAHCA that require collaboration between general and special education teachers that had not previously existed. These specifications included FAPE, the Individual Education Program (IEP), and Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). Renamed IDEA in 2004, this law continues to be the backbone of special education law.

Isolation

No person is an island, and this is particularly true for educators. For decades, teachers have worked in relative isolation due to lack of time, scheduling problems, and tradition (DuFour & Burnette, 2002). According to Jacqueline Shipley (2006, p. 16) as a

rule, a teacher is confined to his or her classroom following a tightly scheduled timetable. Rarely does an individual teacher get an opportunity to work with his or her peers to advance his or her skill set. With the focus on student achievement and a directive to achieve high test scores, the individual teacher is rarely provided the chance to view other classrooms and teachers, or attend professional development, except on his or her own time. This sense of separation leads teachers to focus simply on their classrooms instead of the moral purpose. This segregation also leads to a lack of essential learning regarding current and best practices, a lack of opportunity to share accomplishments and disappointments with colleagues, and a tendency of general and special education teachers to view collaboration as a threat to their autonomy. Teachers are often so accustomed to working in isolation, that a collaborative atmosphere becomes a threat. Rick DuFour's *Taking on Loneliness* (1999), stated that teacher isolation is an anathema of a Professional Learning Community (PLC). Since the basic principle of a PLC is a collective inquiry, reflective conversation, dispersed leadership, and collaboration, teacher isolation becomes nonexistent in a school where a true PLC exists. Therefore, creating this collaborative atmosphere has often been described as "the single most important factor" for a successful school plan (p.61).

Evolving Models of Collaboration

Traditionally, teachers collaborate minimally; they research their personal resources and enjoy absolute autonomy in their pedagogical implementation (Briscoe & Peters, 1997; Schlager & Fusco, 2004; Tyack & Cuban, 1995). This common practice of isolation has come under pressure throughout the past decade. Initiating cultural change in any organization is a multifaceted and challenging undertaking. Phil Schlechty (2005)

refers to the challenge of culturing as "disruptive change" because it "calls for the organization and those stakeholders who work in it to do things he or she have never done" (p. 3). It has also been referred to as second-order change. Care must be taken to not haphazardly group staff in an attempt to build a collaborative culture. No one individual is ever able to cultivate the right vision, communicate it to large masses of people, eradicate all obstacles, generate short-term wins, lead and manage numerous change projects, and anchor new approaches deep in an organization's culture. A strong guiding coalition is always needed. Building such a team is always a vital part of the initial stages of any effort to restructure a set of values (Kotter, 1996). Teams can be structured differently, such as grouping grade level teachers, teachers teaching the same course, vertical teams, interdisciplinary teams, or teams with similar responsibilities. Special educators can fit easily into any team structure.

Contemporary learning theories recognize collaboration among students and teachers as a primary enabler of high expectations and better educational outcomes (McGilly, 1994; Shachar & Shmuelevitz, 1997). DuFour, DuFour, and Eaker (2008) defined collaboration as a systematic process in which people work together, interdependently, to examine and impact professional practice by advancing individual and collective results. Collaboration focuses on the following critical questions of learning: What is it we want each pupil to acquire? How will we distinguish when each student has learned it? How will we respond when a student experiences difficulty in learning? How will we enrich and extend the knowledge of students who are proficient?

As aptly described by Lawson (2004), collaboration involves new relationships between two or more entities. The way in which teachers collaborate can be seen through

the lens that focuses on how individuals relate and intermingle with one another as well as how they provide intervention for those they serve. In education, the manner in which people collaboratively relate to one another is commonly called collaboration and is comprised of the multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary, and transdisciplinary approaches (Hernandez, 2013, p. 484).

The multidisciplinary teaming approach is regarded as the application of services by a variety of different disciplines acting independently (Carpenter, King-Sears, & Keys 1998: Stepans, Thompson, & Buchman, 2002). Even with the occurrence of multiple disciplines, the level of active involvement in each discipline was discovered to be limited within the confines of the multidiscipline approach. The overall approach of this collaborative model presumes that only those proficient in the specific field are skilled at assessing and serving the child in need of their expertise, which results in much of the assessment and intervention process taking place in isolation from the other service disciplines and providers (Kritikos, LeDosquet, & Melton, 2012)

The interdisciplinary approach attempts to create an atmosphere of collaboration, primarily through heightened coordination and cooperative engagements amongst disciplines during activity planning (Carpenter et al., 1998). The collaborative approach may still result in the disciplines evaluating students independently from one another. Professionals using an interdisciplinary approach can engage one another during the assessment, program development, and intervention process (Kritikos et al., 2012). While this approach enhances the exchange of information, boundaries were noted to exist between team members that constrict the flow of information, dialogue, and effective implantation (Carpenter et al., 1998; Stepans et al., 2002).

The transdisciplinary (TD) approach has been touted as an example of outstanding collaborative practice, since its development in the 1960s (York, Rainforth, & Giangreco, 1990). In comparison with the multi and inter-disciplinary approaches, the TD approach has been promoted to be more successful in many ways, most notably in the creation of an integrated team structure and service delivery, deliberate and regular cross-discipline communications, knowledge transmission across disciplines and its strong student focus (Downing & Baily, 1990; Carpenter et al., 1998; Stepans et al., 2002; York et al., 1990).

Another version of collaboration is the co-teaching or collaborative teaching approach. This model can be considered a more recent development in the evolution of the collaborative model (Rainforth & England, 1997; Welch 1998b). Friend (2011, p.113) identified an example of a more highly collaborative type of co-teaching, explicitly the team-teaching model where two teachers "fluidly share the instructional responsibilities of the entire student group", and share the instructional workload by teaching all students.

As the research illustrates, when one talks about collaboration, one needs to be mindful of the multiple variations that exist and the variables they create. Also, one must acknowledge that collaboration is a process that is separated from activities in which it is used (Snell & Janney, 2005). Collaboration is not just a set of activities but "a way of being" (Pugach & Johnson, 2002). The collaborative progression "reframes" (Dettmer, Knackendoffel, & Thurston, 2005, p. 14) how teachers engage one another in educational realms. The multitude of stakeholders involved in the process must be recognized in an

analysis of the critical characteristics required for the successful implementation of collaboration (Friend & Cook, 2003).

Dysfunctional Teams

In *The FIVE Dysfunctions of a TEAM* (2002), Lencioni mentions that true collaboration in most establishments remains out of reach. Additionally, organizations fail to achieve teamwork because they unknowingly fall prey to five inherent pitfalls, which he details as the five dysfunctions of a team. These dysfunctions can be mistakenly interpreted as five distinct issues that can be addressed in isolation from the others. Conversely, the team characteristics form a cohesive model, making susceptibility to even one of them potentially lethal for the success of a team.

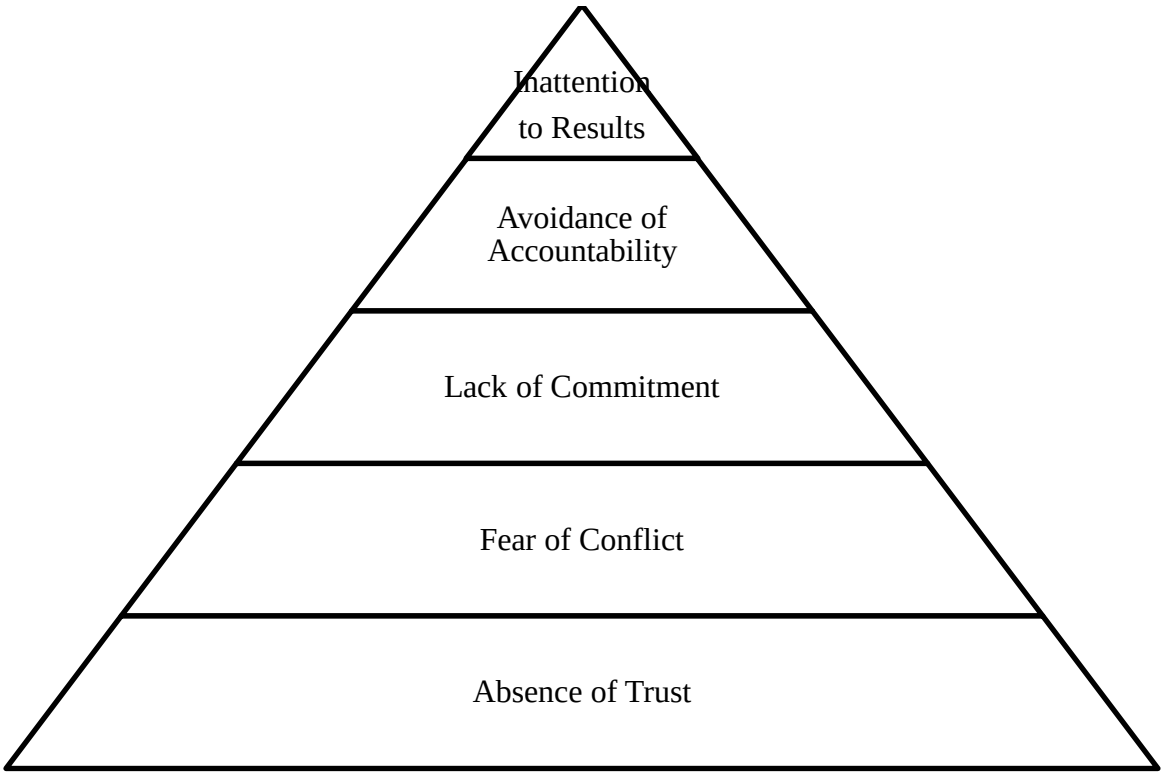

Figure 1. Five Dysfunctions of a Team. Adapted from *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team,*by Patrick Lencioni, Josey-Bass Publishers, 2002, p. 174.

The first dysfunction is a nonappearance of trust among team members. This stems from their reluctance to be vulnerable amongst the team. Cohort associates who are not genuinely open with one another about their mistakes make it challenging to construct a foundation for trust. This failure to establish trust is disparaging because it sets the tone for the next dysfunction: fear of conflict. Teams that possess insufficient trust are incapable of engaging in the unfiltered and passionate debate of values. Consequently, they resort to veiled discussions and guarded comments (Lencioni, 2002).

Significant consequences play out in the day-to-day social exchanges within a school community. Recent research illustrates that relational trust among teachers, parents, and school leaders improves much of the routine work of schools and is a crucial resource for change. Bryk and Snyder (2003) contend that mutual trust is grounded in the shared respect that is derived from the kinds of social discourse that take place across the school community. Respectful exchanges are noticeable by genuinely listening to what each person has to say and by taking these perspectives into account in subsequent actions. Collective decision making with broad teacher buy-in occurs more readily in schools with strong relational trust. In contrast, the absence of trust provokes sustained controversy around relatively simple problems.

Lencioni (2002) continues by establishing that a lack of healthy conflict is problematic because it guarantees the third dysfunction of a group: lack of commitment. Without having aired their opinions in the course of the passionate and open debate, team members rarely have sufficient buy-in to decisions, though they may demonstrate insincere agreement during meetings. Without true commitment and buy-in, team members develop an avoidance of accountability and failure to commit to a clear plan of

action. Even the most focused and motivated people often hesitate to question their peers on behaviors that seem counterproductive to the team. This failure to hold one another accountable creates an environment where the fifth dysfunction can thrive.

Inattention to results occurs when team members place their individual needs above the collective goals of the team. PLCs judge their effectiveness on the foundation of outcomes. When teachers share their own results with their colleagues, they quickly learn when a teammate has been particularly effective. When the focus is on results, team members consciously look for successful practice in an attempt to replicate in their own practice. This emphasis on continual improvement requires educators to change traditional practices and revise common assumptions. Educators who focus on results must stop working in isolation by hoarding their ideas, materials, and strategies and commence working together to meet the needs of all students (Dufour, 2004).

Effective Teams

Teams improve their likelihood of performing at high levels when they illuminate their expectations of one another regarding procedures, responsibilities, and relationships. Teams benefit not only from clarity concerning the purpose of their collaboration but also from clarity regarding how they will work together and what is expected of each member. Simply putting people in groups does not ensure a productive, positive experience for participants (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, & Many, 2010).

All groups establish norms – "ground rules or habits that govern the group" (Goleman, Boyatzis, McKee, 2002, p.73) – regardless of whether or not they take the time to reflect upon and articulate the norms they prefer for their team. However, when individuals engage in developing recognized standards and then commit to honoring

those norms, they increase the probability they will begin to function as a collective unit, rather than as a loose collection of individuals working together (Dufour et. al, 2006). Team norms are not intended to serve as rules, but rather as collective commitments: mutual agreements shared among the members (Kegan & Lahey, 2001).

Druskat & Wolf (2001) discovered that members consistently demonstrated high emotional intelligence as evidenced by the following characteristics:

- Perspective taking. Members are eager to consider matters from the other person's point of view.
- Interpersonal understanding. Members demonstrate an accurate understanding of the spoken and unspoken feelings, interests, and concerns of other group members.
- Willingness to confront. Members speak up when an individual violates commitments, but they confront in a caring way aimed at creating consensus and shared interpretations of pledges.
- Caring orientation. Members communicate genuine admiration, appreciation, and reverence. A close personal relationship is not a criterion of an efficient team, but mutual respect and validation are critical.
- Team self-evaluation. The team is willing and able to evaluate its effectiveness.
- Feedback solicitation. The team petitions feedback and pursue evidence of its effectiveness from external sources as part of a process of continuous improvement.

- Positive environment. The team focuses on staying positive: positive affect, positive behavior, and the pursuit of constructive outcomes. Members cultivate positive descriptions of the group's past, present, and future.
- Proactive problem solving. Members actively take the initiative to resolve issues that stand in the way of achieving team objectives.
- Organizational awareness. Members comprehend their association and contribution to the larger organization.
- Building external relationships. The team establishes relationships with others who can support their efforts to achieve their goals. (p. 140)

Teacher Preparation

Skills for effective collaboration, especially among general and special education teachers, are most readily learned through modeling (Hoffman & Jenkins, 2002). The most powerful and meaningful opportunity for teacher modeling transpires throughout initial teacher preparation programs (Villa, Thousand, Nevin, & Malgeri, 1996). Teacher candidates need to learn how to work in partnership prior to entering the profession because collaboration does not readily happen when in the field (Villa, Thousand, Myers & Nevin, 1996).

Due to the lack of supporting research, little is recognized about pre-service teachers' beginning understandings of collaboration and the methods in which collaboration skills can be developed. In *Preparing Future Teachers to Collaborate* (2012), Santagata and Guarino concluded the following:

- Pre-service teachers' initial concept of collaboration does not necessarily align with the kind of collaboration expected of him or her in professional development settings, such as lesson study or professional learning communities.
- With support, pre-service educators can gain the knowledge, skills, and talent to collaborate effectively. Guided analysis of artifacts of teaching, such as video of classroom lessons, student work, or transcripts of teacher-student interactions can assist pre-service teachers in learning to analyze and interpret student thinking and learning and to consider instructional improvements.
- Collaboration in fieldwork locales can further develop collaboration skills. Pre-service teachers can begin to test out instructional improvements in his or her teaching, first by revising lessons, then by incorporating improvements in the midst of education. In addition, pre-service teachers can begin to use evidence of student thinking and learning, to reason about teaching in a cause-effect manner. (p. 67)

Collaborative Culture

Seymore Sarason (1996) observes the following: If you want to change and improve the climate and outcomes of schooling – both for students and for teachers, there are features of the school culture that have to be changed, and if they are not changed, your well-intentioned efforts will be defeated. (p. 340)

A critical element in creating a collaborative school culture is the principal's leadership. Effective principals are visibly committed to empowering staff, delegating authority, and increasing the collaborative decision-making processes, but none is unwilling to challenge a staff member who violates the fundamental concepts of the

school's culture. Leadership is widely distributed in each schoolhouse, with clearly delineated guiding coalitions overseeing the improvement process. When a team determines that one of its cohorts possesses a specialized expertise in a particular content area, in teaching a concept, in developing operational assessments, or in addressing the unique needs of an exclusive type of learner, that member naturally assumes temporary leadership, based on that specialized expertise, when the team focuses on that issue. The principal delegates authority and serves as a leader of leaders, rather than the central problem solver (Dufour, 2004).

Disagreements and tension are to be anticipated. The question schools must confront is not how can they eliminate all potential for conflict, rather, it should be how will they react when they are immersed in the conflict that accompanies significant change? In *Crucial Conversations* (Patterson, Grenny, McMillan, & Switzler, 2012) contrast how teams respond when confronted with conflict. Unproductive teams ignore the problem, letting it fester until resentment and frustration lead to an explosion of accusations and retaliation. Good teams will take the concern to the leader and request that he or she address the problem and assign a reasonable solution. High achieving teams will handle the issue themselves, engaging in open discourse and applying positive peer pressure to bring about the desired change.

Culture has been well-defined as "the way we do things around here." Leaders shape the norms of behavior (and thus the culture) of his or her organizations in a number of ways. When principals give educators clear parameters to guide their collaborative work, but considerable autonomy in implementation, they increase the likelihood that staff members will embrace the concept. When principals are unwilling to tolerate

actions that violate the underlying values of the collaborative culture, they use an influential strategy for shaping the norms of behavior within the school (Dufour, 2004).

Elements of Effective Collaboration

Of the existing models of effective collaboration proclaimed by Friend & Cook (1996), Wiggins & Damore (2006), Tannock (2009), and Hernandez (2013), there are common characteristics that are apparent (see Figure 2). The review of literature illuminated the six common attributes of effective collaboration as having a positive attitude concerning collaboration, understanding the benefits of collaboration, following a team process, resources in place to facilitate collaboration, shared leadership, and professional development.

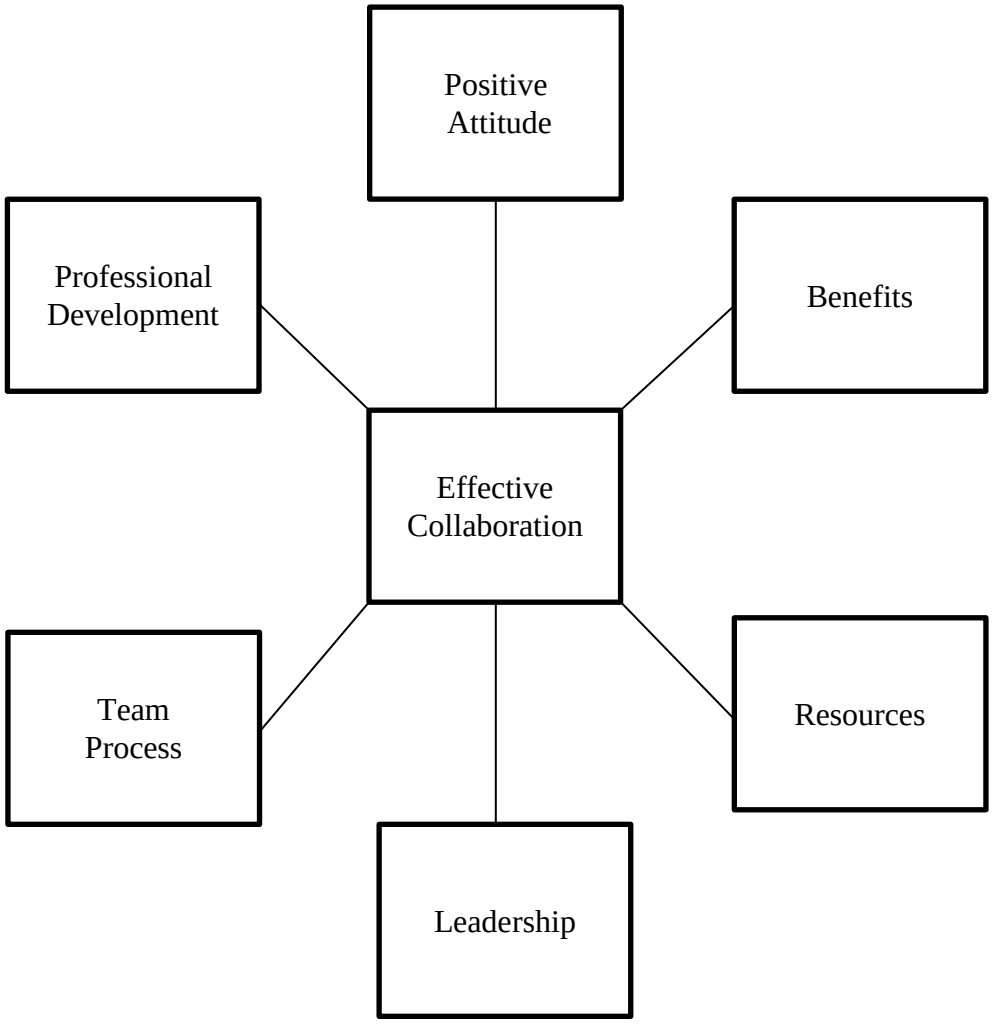

Figure 2. Elements of Effective Collaboration. Adapted from "Survivors or friends"? A framework for assessing effective collaboration., by Kathryn Wiggins and Sharon Damore, *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 2006, p. 50.

Positive Attitude

Individuals enter the teaching profession with an idealistic and enduring set of beliefs and attitudes about instruction and learning that greatly influence how they approach any cooperative teaching effort (Hantzidimantis, 2011). In contrast, while the modern day teacher has probably experienced the use of social media as a vehicle for

engaging with others, it is unlikely that he or she have used his or her interaction skills to work collaboratively on behalf of a student with special needs (Dettmer et al., 2005). Rainforth and England (1997) noted that prior to collaboration being effectively executed, the process required team members to share their history and level of expertise. Teachers are frequently expected to enter the educational arena with the skill set to be effective practitioners (Tren & Boles, 2011). The majority of educators have not received training in the area of collaboration and are learning to work as a team while simultaneously operating as a team (Snell & Janney, 2005).

There is a developmental continuum to the method of establishing professional relationships leading to effective collaboration where the roles of the contributors are clear and individuals have a chance to reinforce relationships over time. Positive attitudes are perceived by participants who appear to have a prevalence of optimistic feelings and opinions toward collaboration and who are consistently engaging in activities beyond defined roles and expectations (Wiggins & Damore, 2006).

Collaborators need to (a) possess a shared philosophy and goals and (b) be willing to be responsible for their performance and student progress in learning. In the educational setting, it is common for colleagues to seek the wisdom, advice, and support of their cohorts. Teachers need to have "proactive attitudes" about beginning communication with their collaborative associates (Vargo, 1998, p. 54). Partners who learn to trust and respect one another are less likely to be diverted by personal concerns and more likely to attend to the work of a shared mission (Friend & Cook, 2000).

In a 2008 case study, Patterson, Grenny, Maxfield, McMillan, & Switzler discovered that certain characteristics conveyed a percieved positive attitude from one

employee toward the task, colleague, or individual served. The research determined five vital behaviors which were common in portraying a positive attitude or approach to his or her work: 1) smiling, 2) making eye contact, 3) identifying oneself, 4) explaining what and why you are doing what you do, and 5) ending every interaction with the question, "Is there anything else you need?" This case study is a classic example of a learning organization at work (Dufour et al., 2008 p. 397).

Benefits of Collaboration

Students with exceptionalities who are served in the general education setting are exposed to an expanded curriculum, increased educational opportunities, an enhanced learning environment, and classroom instruction that is significantly more engaging (Austin, 2001; Hunt et al., 2003). When engaged in effective collaboration educators improve their areas of expertise and learn from colleagues about how to implement pedagogical adjustments. Barth (1999) maintains the notion that teachers stay in the profession longer when they experience success and feel supported, and Watkins (2005) contends that all teachers share the necessity of support and belonging. Creating a learning community that values the ideas and experiences of all its members will sustain teachers throughout his or her tenure (Wiggins & Damore, 2006).

Educators must acknowledge that the research has been clear and consistent. Isolation is the enemy of school improvement. In fact, it is challenging to find either supporting research for the position that educators best serve their children, themselves, or the profession through working in isolation. Teachers understand this guiding principle, yet staff appears reluctant to do anything to correct the situation. For 35 years, educators have been advised that this tradition of teacher isolation is one of the most

formidable barriers to building the capacity to meet the needs of students. Unless educators confront this challenge directly, the critique of public education (or what is left of it) in 2050 will begin with the lament that educators work in isolation (DuFour et al., 2008, p. 177).

Resources

Different educational communities have unique needs, but also require common resources that are basic to any collaborative effort (Fennick & Liddy, 2001; McLeskey & Waldron, 2002). Time is at the essence of collaborative efforts. Staff need ample time to prepare and interact, as well as time to reflect and evaluate. Schools must have adequate financial provision for collaboration, whether this support comes from the school budget, grant programs, or external partnerships. Also, ongoing attention should be given to discussing and planning ways to improve resources. Whenever possible, teachers deserve additional compensation for successful collaborative efforts since it is part of their professional work (Leonard, 2002).

Reciprocal accountability demands that leaders who ask educators to work in collaborative teams provide those educators with the time to meet during their contractual day. It is disingenuous of school leaders to stress the significance of collaboration and then fail to provide time for it. One of the ways in which organizations demonstrate their priorities is an allocation of resources. The following strategies illustrate steps districts can take to create time for collaboration: 1) Common preparation, 2) parallel scheduling, 3) adjusted start and end time, 4) shared classes, 5) group activities, events, and testing, 6) banked time, and 7) in-service and faculty meeting time (Dufour et al. 2010, p. 127).

Leadership

Leaders at the district or school level, department chairs, area coordinators, or individual teachers can all initiate or provide leadership for collaborative partnerships. Leaders need to show a strong presence, one that is resourceful and proactive. The scheduling of common planning time for staff, acting on methods for utilizing support staff (Hunt, Soto, Maier, & Doering, 2003), and being involved in student placement sends a clear message of expectations to teachers attempting to collaborate. Effective leadership results in increased participant self-concept, support for the work environment, and encouragement to other members to enter into collaborative partnerships.

School leaders need to give teachers the opportunity to be perceived as high-performing professionals. Volunteering or being selected for leadership roles can be the impetus for skill development and intrinsic rewards (Friend & Cook, 2000). The school administrator, or other chosen leaders, must support a school culture that celebrates collaboration and recognizes those who lead and contribute to the collaborative practice. Ultimately, teachers should become leaders, not because of public recognition but because of the intrinsic benefits of a job well done and the educational gains made by students (Wiggins & Damore, 2006).

Transformational leadership refers to those leaders who engage with their teaching staff in ways that inspire them to new heights of energy, commitment, and moral purpose such that they work collaboratively to overcome challenges and reach ambitious goals. It is school leaders who encourage challenging goals and then establish safe environments for teachers to critique, question, and back other staff to obtain these goals together that have the most effect on student outcomes (Connell, 1996). In Chin's (2007)

meta-analysis, she defined transformational leadership as including shaping and elevating goals and abilities to achieve significant improvements. The effects on teacher job satisfaction are very high (r = 0.71) and the effects on student achievement is also high (r = 0.48) Clearly, teachers prefer transformational leadership, which is not surprising given its purpose is to encourage teacher growth and participation through common interests and actions (Hattie, 2009)

Team Process

The success of partnerships hinges on the processes that allies use to communicate and engage. The collaborative progression, pliable enough to accommodate individual needs, can transpire through formal and informal activities and should incorporate ongoing organizational routines that fit the qualities and demands of the environment and the individuals involved (Hunt, Doering, Hirose-Hatae, Maier, & Goetz, 2001; Kennedy, Higgins, & Pierce, 2002; Wolfe & Hall, 2003). Actions should be goal driven, and interactions seem to be most productive when teams focus on a collective agenda. Processes should be straightforward and allow participants to feel valued and engaged equally in decision making (Snell & Janney, 2005). Although the process more or less regulates how things are done, teams need to allow sufficient flexibility for adjustments without causing major collisions in the organization (Wiggins & Damore, 2006).

Professional Development

Both general and special educators need continuing professional growth, particularly those who are challenged with the demands of effectively working in an atmosphere of inclusion. Whether it is through workshops, in-services, journals, online

discussion, study groups, deliberations, participation in research ventures, or graduate learning, all educators profit from continuous specialized training. Having the chance to observe other skilled professionals, schools, and classrooms can deliver an invaluable experience for teachers to improve their teaching repertoire. Participants must perceive the professional growth as treasured for the collaborative effort and as connected to classroom practice. Specialized training frequently delivers the expert from the outside model, one that is imposed by administrators. This format seldom fosters interaction among the teachers or capitalizes on teachers' professional expertise. By providing teachers the opportunity to be teacher-leaders and co-planners of in-service events, districts acknowledge a teachers' voice and allow for the crafting of a collaborative culture (Leonard, 2002; Zemelman, Daniels, & Hyde, 1993).

Teachers learning and working harmoniously to achieve common goals is considered to be a fundamental element of major school reform for those aimed at improving the inclusion of students with exceptionalities in the general education environment (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Johnson & Bauer, 1992; Pugach & Johnson, 2002). The assumption is that when educators work together to attain a shared vision, they will be able to change their instructional practices in significant ways. "In collaborative working environments, teachers have potential to generate the collective capacity for initiating and sustaining continuous refinement in his or her professional practice so each student he or she serves can receive the utmost quality of education conceivable" (Pugach & Johnson, 2002, p.6). Significant in this call for collaboration is that the act of planning and working together, by itself, is a powerful professional development tool.

Professional development is more likely to change teacher learning (d = .0.90), but these learnings have less effect on teachers' actual behavior (d = 0.60) and teachers reactions to professional development (d = 0.42) (Wade, 1985). Harrison (1980) also found that professional development was an effective way to improve job satisfaction and performance. The effects were highest for increasing the teacher's knowledge (d = 1.11), satisfaction (d = 0.85), and student outcomes (d = 0.47).

Barriers to Collaboration

Three obstacles to student involvement in the general education environment are evident. The first barrier is the location of the special education program in proximity to general education classrooms and students, the second barrier is the attitude that general education teachers held for students with disabilities, and the third barrier is general education teachers' expectations of students with disabilities (Otis-Wilborn, Winn, Griffin, & Kilgore, 2005).

While location posed one type of barrier, there is another, subtle but more powerful barrier that limits students' involvement. Regardless of where classrooms and learners are positioned, teachers across educational settings comment specifically on their feeling that general education teachers' negative attitudes toward students with disabilities serve as a formidable barrier to student participation in the general education setting. Negative comments by teachers serve as evidence for beginning teachers that many general educators do not believe students with disabilities belong in the general education classroom (Otis-Wilborn et al., 2005).

General educators' expectations of students with disabilities, in particular, expectations regarding the learners' behavior and/or ability to learn, create barriers to

participation and involvement. Whether because of proximity to school programs or attitudes of teachers, the result is limited opportunities for students with disabilities in classroom-based as well as school-based activities associated with general education. A general education teachers' discomfort is not only with students with disabilities themselves; many beginning special education teachers suspected that teachers also are uncomfortable with the kinds of collaborative models that might be required (e.g., team teaching, joint planning) (Otis-Wilborn et al., 2005).

Lack of clarification or definition of general and special education teachers' roles and responsibilities with regards to students with disabilities also contributes to curriculum access and participation concerns. General education teachers' actions indicate that they do not always view themselves as the teacher of the students with disabilities and as being responsible for the schoolchildren. In some instances, there is little evidence of a teacher/student relationship or work to build a relationship by getting to know students academically or personally. Role definition confusion is discovered across settings. Confusion about roles and responsibilities are not particular to general education teachers. Both with general and special education teachers (particularly new ones), there is evidence of a clear need for structure and process to establish and clarify roles and responsibilities throughout the school for students with disabilities (Otis-Wilborn et al., 2005).

Summary

The review of the literature provided an overview of the historical perspective of educator participation in the collaborative process. While the research illustrates that there is a strong need for collaboration between special education and general education

teachers, there is not one specific model for effective collaboration. Nonetheless, based on the review of the literature, six common elements are essential for effective collaboration between special and general education teachers. The factors are 1) established team process, 2) positive attitude toward collaboration, 3) administrator support and shared leadership, 4) perceived benefits of collaboration, 5) necessary resources, and 6) adequate professional development. Research illuminates that each of the six factors of effective collaboration increase teacher and student learning.

Chapter three presents the current study's research design, population, sample, and sampling procedure, including the instrumentation and measurement tools. In addition, chapter three articulates the study's data collection procedures, as well as the study's data analysis, hypothesis testing, and limitations.

Chapter Three

Methods

The focus of this work was to investigate special and general education teachers' perspectives and practices of collaboration. Specifically, this chapter contains information on the quantitative research design of this study of the collaboration perceptions and practices of general and special education teachers. Information regarding the sample and procedures of sample selection is contained within this chapter. Instruments and their validity and reliability along with how they measure the variables are also included in the chapter. Data collection procedures and the analysis, along with the limitations of the study complete the chapter.

Research Design

This study was a quantitative research project that involved the collection of data from a 2016 survey concerning collaboration perceptions between general and special education teachers who teach grades kindergarten through twelve in six school districts. The survey questions were developed for this study based on the *"Survivors or Friends" A Framework for Assessing Effective Collaboration* by Wiggins & Damore (2006). The results of the survey allowed the researcher to determine the extent to general and special education teachers perceived in their district provided the attributes of a positive attitude concerning collaboration, understanding the benefits of collaboration, having resources in place to facilitate collaboration, having leadership support of collaboration, and the providing of professional development lead to effective collaboration.

Population and Sample

The population for this study was general and special education teachers who serve grades kindergarten through twelve. A purposive sample was used based on groups selected by the researcher in districts of interest and volunteers who elected to participate. A total of 271 general education teachers and 41 special education teachers volunteered to participate in this study.

Sampling Procedures

In the current study, the purposive sample provided the means to investigate a specialized population of teachers within a common geographical area. All general education and special education teachers within the six rural Kansas school districts were invited through email correspondence to take an online survey. A copy of each survey can be found in Appendix C and D. The teachers were provided the link to the online survey by each district's superintendent. The researcher provided the text for the email, and the superintendent forwarded the email to his or her district general and special education teachers. A copy of the email can be found in Appendix E. When the district superintendents volunteered to participate in the study, they consented to provide the online survey link to the general and special education teachers in their district. General and special education teachers volunteered to participate in this study by completing the appropriate online survey.

Instrumentation

The online survey was developed by Landever (2010), based on research surrounding effective elements of collaboration, determined from the review of the literature and specifically adapted from Wiggins & Damore's (2006) Elements of

Collaboration Checklist. The survey consisted of twenty-five total questions, with the first five questions monitoring the education-related demographics of each participant, followed by twenty Likert-scale questions regarding teacher perceptions of having a positive attitude concerning collaboration, understanding the benefits of collaboration, resources in place to facilitate collaboration, administrative support of collaboration, and professional development in his or her school district. Questions 6-26 required a response of Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Undecided, Agree, or Strongly Agree. The document requesting and granting permission for a partial replication of Landever's study is located in Appendix F.

Measurement

All items of the survey, which are situated in Appendices C and D, utilized a multiple-choice response format. The first four questions of both surveys sought to gain demographic information, including how many years each teacher has taught, years taught in the current location, the number of students with disabilities in the teacher's current class, and the number of students on an IEP in class.

Appendix G contains a Data Collection Matrix, which illustrates the alignment between research questions and survey questions. Subscale scores about team processes, perceived benefits, administrator support and shared leadership, resources provided and professional development were calculated in the following manner:

- Team Processes: An average score was calculated for questions 8, 9, 11, and 12 from each completed survey.
- Benefits: An average score was calculated for questions 22, 24, and 25 from each completed survey.

- Leadership: An average score was calculated for questions 17, 18, 20, and 21 from each completed survey.
- Attitude: An average score was calculated for questions 6, 7, 10, and 19 from each completed survey.
- Resources: An average score was calculated for questions 23 and 26 from each completed survey.
- Professional Development: An average score was calculated for questions 13, 14, 15, and 16 from each completed survey.

Validity and reliability

A group of people educated about collaboration between general and special education teachers reviewed the questionnaire. The group of highly qualified experts included:

- Expert Panel Member #1: A school psychologist with an Educational Specialist Degree in School Psychology with eight years of experience working with general education students and staff.
- Expert Panel Member #2: An elementary principal/curriculum director with a Master's Degree in Educational Leadership who has worked directly with leading staff in collaborative practices.
- Expert Panel Member #3: A speech pathologist who has a Master's Degree in Speech Pathology with 18 years collaborating with general and special education teachers.
- Expert Panel Member #4: An elementary teacher who has a Bachelor's Degree in Elementary Education and a Master's Degree in Special Education

who worked as a general education and special education teacher for eight years.

Advice provided by the panel granted the researcher an opportunity to check for content validity by ensuring that the variables of interest were able to be measured, considering additional variables, and clarifying key vocabulary throughout the survey. After the suggested alterations had been made to provide clarity in survey questions, the questions were deemed to be valid.

Data Collection Procedures

Before conducting the research, the researcher was granted permission to carry out the research study in the six school districts by obtaining written email documentation from the superintendent of the district. Documentation is provided in Appendix E. Although the six school districts did not have a precise form that needed to be completed, the superintendent provided a letter with his signature documenting the approval for the researcher to proceed with the study.

The course of action to gain permission from Baker University to perform the research study was initiated. An Institutional Review Board (IRB) request was sent to Baker University on February 19, 2016. The Baker University IRB committee approved the research study on March 1, 2016.

The dependent variables analyzed for this study were gathered from a survey that was created using Google Forms, a tool to help send a survey that can be connected to two Google spreadsheets (Vaughn, 2016a, 2016b) and could be accessed via a survey web link. The web link to the inquiry on Google Forms was sent to each district superintendent, who forwarded the link in an email to all teachers participating in the

study, along with a request that encouraged recipients to complete the survey. Also, within the email, the researcher included a brief explanation of the purpose of the research, a guarantee that all responses would be anonymous, stored data would be kept confidential, and the risks and benefits had been considered. The data that were collected through Google Forms were downloaded into Microsoft Excel and then pasted into IBM®SPSS® Statistics Faculty Pack 23 for Windows. To analyze the data obtained through the survey numerical values were assigned to each response option. Average scores were calculated for each of the attributes of effective collaboration: team processes, perceived benefits, shared leadership, positive attitude, resources provided, and professional development.

Data Analysis and Hypothesis Testing

The data analyzed in this study were derived from responses to the survey emailed to general and special education teachers in six school districts. For each of the research questions, there is an explanation of the analysis of the scores calculated from the responses to questions on the participant survey. As was described in the measurement section, scores were calculated for each of the attributes of effective collaboration: team processes, perceived benefits, shared leadership, positive attitude, resources provided, and professional development.

RQ1. To what extent do general education teachers perceive that the district supports team processes that lead to effective collaboration?

H1: General education teachers perceive that the district supports team processes that lead to effective collaboration.

A one-sample *t* test was used to test *H1*. The average response for the team processes attribute was tested against a null value of 3. The level of significance was set at .05.

RQ2. To what extent do special education teachers perceive that the district supports team processes that lead to effective collaboration?

H2: Special education teachers perceive that the district supports team processes that result in effective collaboration.

A one-sample *t* test was used to test *H2*. The average response for the team processes attribute was tested against a null value of 3. The level of significance was set at .05.

RQ3. To what extent are the perceptions that the district supports team processes that lead to effective collaboration different between special education and general education teachers?

H3: The perceptions that the district supports team processes that lead to effective collaboration are different between special education and general education teachers.

A two-sample *t* test was conducted to test *H3*. The two-sample means were compared. The level of significance was set at .05.

RQ4. To what extent do general education teachers perceive collaboration to be beneficial?

H4: General education teachers perceive that collaboration is beneficial.

A one-sample *t* test was used to test *H4*. The average response for the perceived benefits attribute was tested against a null value of 3. The level of significance was set at .05.

RQ5. To what extent do special education teachers perceive collaboration to be beneficial?

H5: Special education teachers perceive that collaboration is beneficial.

A one-sample *t* test was used to test *H5*. The average response for the perceived benefits attribute was tested against a null value of 3. The level of significance was set at .05.

RQ6. To what extent are the perceptions that collaboration is beneficial different between special education and general education teachers?

H6: The perceptions that collaboration is beneficial are different between special education and general education teachers.

A two-sample *t* test was conducted to test *H3*. The two-sample means were compared. The level of significance was set at .05.

RQ7. To what extent do general education teachers perceive that the district supports leadership qualities that lead to effective collaboration?

H7: General education teachers perceive that the district supports leadership qualities that lead to effective collaboration.

A one-sample *t* test was used to test *H7*. The average response for the shared leadership attribute was tested against a null value of 3. The level of significance was set at .05.

RQ8. To what extent do special education teachers perceive that the district supports leadership qualities that lead to effective collaboration?

H8: Special education teachers perceive that the district supports leadership qualities that lead to effective collaboration.

A one-sample *t* test was used to test *H8*. The average response for the shared leadership attribute was tested against a null value of 3. The level of significance was set at .05.

RQ9. To what extent are the perceptions that the district supports leadership qualities that lead to effective collaboration different between special education and general education teachers?

H9: The perceptions that the district supports leadership qualities that lead to effective collaboration are different between special education and general education teachers.

A two-sample *t* test was conducted to test *H3*. The two-sample means were compared. The level of significance was set at .05.

RQ10. To what extent do general education teachers perceive participating in effective collaboration as being a positive experience?

H10: General education teachers perceive participating in effective collaboration as being a positive experience.

A one-sample *t* test was used to test *H10*. The average response for the positive attitude attribute was tested against a null value of 3. The level of significance was set at .05.

RQ11. To what extent do special education teachers perceive participating in effective collaboration as being a positive experience?

H11: Special education teachers perceive participating in effective collaboration as being a positive experience.

A one-sample *t* test was used to test *H11*. The average response for the positive attitude attribute was tested against a null value of 3. The level of significance was set at .05.

RQ12. To what extent are the positive perceptions of participating in collaboration different between special education and general education teachers?

H12: The perceptions that effective collaboration is positive experience are different between special education and general education teachers.

A two-sample *t* test was conducted to test *H3*. The two-sample means were compared. The level of significance was set at .05.

RQ13. To what extent do general education teachers perceive that the district provides the necessary resources to supported effective collaboration?

H13: General education teachers perceive that the district does not provide the necessary resources that led to effective collaboration.

A one-sample *t* test was used to test *H13*. The average response for the resources provided attribute was tested against a null value of 3. The level of significance was set at .05.

RQ14. To what extent do special education teachers perceive that the district provides the necessary resources to supported effective collaboration?

H14: Special education teachers perceive that the district does not provide the necessary resources that led to effective collaboration.

A one-sample *t* test was used to test *H14*. The average response for the resources provided attribute was tested against a null value of 3. The level of significance was set at .05.

RQ15. To what extent are the perceptions that the district provides the necessary resources that lead to effective collaboration different between general and general education teachers?

H15: The perceptions that the district provides the necessary resources that lead to effective collaboration differ between special education and general education teachers.

A two-sample *t* test was conducted to test *H3*. The two-sample means were compared. The level of significance was set at .05.

RQ16. To what extent do general education teachers perceive that the district provides essential professional development that leads to effective collaboration?

H16: General education teachers perceive that the district does not provide essential professional development that leads to effective collaboration.

A one-sample *t* test was used to test *H16*. The average response for professional development attribute was tested against a null value of 3. The level of significance was set at .05.

RQ17. To what extent do special education teachers perceive that the district provides essential professional development that leads to effective collaboration?

H17: Special education teachers perceive that the district does not provide essential professional development that leads to effective collaboration.

A one-sample *t* test was used to test *H17*. The average response for professional development attribute was tested against a null value of 3. The level of significance was set at .05.

RQ18. To what extent are the perceptions that the district provides essential professional development that leads to effective collaboration different between special education and general education teachers?

H18: The perceptions that the district provides essential professional development that leads to effective collaboration are different between special education and general education teachers.

A two-sample *t* test was conducted to test *H3*. The two-sample means were compared. The level of significance was set at .05.

Limitations

According to Lunenburg and Irby (2008, p. 133), "limitations are factors that may have an effect on the interpretation of the findings or on the generalizability of the results." While the researcher cannot control limitations, Lunenburg and Irby (2008) emphasized the importance of providing the reader with information on limitations to avoid misinterpretation of the research findings. The sample utilized was limited by the willingness of teachers to participate in this study. The fact that the research occurred in school buildings may have played a role in teachers feeling as if they needed to respond in a certain way that could have influenced the authenticity of his or her response. Since the researcher worked in one of the districts as a special education teacher, there may have been biases present during data collection based on prior relationships between the researcher and staff completing the survey.

Summary

This study was designed to be quantitative to collect data on effective collaboration. A survey was utilized for the function of data collection. The purpose of

the research was to amass data regarding the perceptions and practices that support effective collaboration between general and special education teachers.

Chapter Four

Results

The primary purpose of this study was to determine if general and special education teachers perceive that the district supports the team processes, leadership qualities, resources, and professional development that lead to effective collaboration. A second purpose was to determine the perceived benefit of collaboration from general and special education teachers. Third, this study sought to determine if general and special education teachers had a positive attitude toward collaboration.

The researcher examined survey data gathered from 127 general education teachers and 34 special education teachers. This chapter presents the demographic information obtained from survey participants including years of teaching experience, years taught in the current location, students per teacher with an identified disability, students per teacher with an IEP, and frequency of teacher collaboration. Chapter four also contains eighteen research questions, the hypothesis tested to address each research question, the statistical analysis conducted to address each hypothesis, and the hypothesis testing results.

Descriptive Statistics

For Survey Question 1, general and special education teachers were asked how many years they had been teaching. The response choices were 1-3 years, 4-7 years, 8-11 years, 12-15 years, and 15+ years. Table 2 represents the years of teaching experience for both general education and special education teachers who responded to the survey. The category with the fewest observations was 1-3 years of teaching experience, whereas the category with the most observations was 15+ years of teaching experience.

Table 2

Observed Frequency and Percentage for Total Years Teaching Experience

Years	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
1-3	11	6.875	6.875
4-7	23	14.375	21.250
8-11	25	15.625	36.875
12-15	22	13.750	50.625
15+	79	49.375	100.000
Total	160	100.000	

For Survey Question 2, general and special education teachers were asked how many years they had been teaching in their current location or building. The response choices were 1-3 years, 4-7 years, 8-11 years, 12-15 years, and 15+ years. Table 3 presents the years of teaching experience in their current location for both general education and special education teachers who responded to the survey. The category with the fewest observations was 12-15 years of teaching experience in their current location, whereas the category with the most observations was 4-7 years of teaching experience in their current location.

Table 3

Observed Frequency and Percentage for Total Years Taught in Current Building

Years	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
1-3	39	24.224	24.224
4-7	40	24.845	49.069
8-11	28	17.391	66.460
12-15	18	11.180	77.640
15+	36	22.360	100.000

Total	161	100.000

For Survey Question 3, general and special education teachers were asked how many students they had in their class with an identified disability. The response choices were None, 1-2, 3-4, 5-6, and 7 or more. Table 4 presents the number of students with an identified disability for both general education and special education teachers who responded to the survey. The category with the fewest observations was in the category labeled None, whereas the category with the most observations was in the category labeled 7 or more.

Table 4

Observed Frequency and Percentage for Number of Identified Students per Teacher

Students	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
None	18	11.180	11.180
1-2	36	22.360	33.540
3-4	35	21.739	55.279
5-6	20	12.422	67.701
7 or more	52	32.299	100.000
Total	161	100.000	

For Survey Question 4, general and special education teachers were asked how many students with an IEP they had taught in their classroom. The response choices were None, 1-2, 3-4, 5-6, and 7 or more. Table 5 presents the number of students on an IEP for both general education and special education teachers who responded to the survey. The category with the fewest observations was in the category labeled None, whereas the category with the most observations was in the category labeled 7 or more.

Table 5

Observed Frequency and Percentage for Number of Students with an IEP per Teacher

Students	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
None	6	3.727	3.727
1-2	21	13.043	16.770
3-4	40	24.845	41.615
5-6	34	21.118	62.733
7 or more	60	37.267	100.000
Total	161	100.000	

For Survey Question 5, general and special education teachers were asked how frequently they participated in collaboration. The response choices were Never, Quarterly, Monthly, Weekly, and Not Sure. Table 6 presents the frequency of collaboration for both general education and special education teachers who responded to the survey. The category with the fewest observations was teachers Never participate in collaboration, whereas the category with the most observations was teachers participate in Weekly collaboration.

Table 6

Observed Frequency and Percentage for Teacher Collaboration

Collaboration	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Never	13	8.075	8.075
Weekly	72	44.720	52.795
Monthly	31	19.255	72.050
Quarterly	31	19.255	91.305
Not Sure	14	8.695	100.000

Total	161	100.000

Table 7 presents a cross-tabulation for the number of years of teaching experience for general and special education teachers surveyed. The category with the fewest responses was 1-3 years of teaching experience for general education and special education teachers. The category with the most responses was 15+ years of teaching experience for general education and special education teachers.

Table 7

Cross-tabulation for Years of Teaching Experience

	Teacher Status		
Years Teaching	General Education	Special Education	Total
1-3	9	2	11
4-7	18	5	23
8-11	19	6	25
12-15	18	4	22
15+	63	16	79
Total	127	33	160

Table 8 presents a cross-tabulation for the number of years of teaching experience in their current location for general and special education teachers surveyed. The category with the fewest responses was 12-15 years of teaching experience in their current location for general education and special education teachers. The category with the most responses was 4-7 years of teaching experience in their current location for general education and special education teachers.

Table 8

Cross-tabulation for Years of Teaching in Current Location

	Teacher Status		
Years Teaching	General Education	Special Education	Total
1-3	28	11	39
4-7	31	9	40
8-11	24	4	28
12-15	13	5	18
15+	31	5	36
Total	127	34	161

Table 9 presents a cross-tabulation for the number of students identified with a disability per general and special education teachers surveyed. The category with the fewest responses was labeled None. The category with the most responses was labeled 7 or more.

Table 9

Cross-tabulation for Number of Identified Students per Teacher

	Teacher Status		
Students	General Education	Special Education	Total
None	17	1	18
1-2	34	2	36
3-4	32	3	35
5-6	20	0	20
7 or more	24	28	52
Total	127	34	161

Table 10 presents a cross-tabulation for the number students served with an identified disability and who were on an IEP for general and special education teachers surveyed. The category with the fewest responses labeled None. The category with the most responses was labeled 7 or more.

Table 10

Cross-tabulation for Number of Students on an IEP per Teacher

	Teacher Status		
Students	General Education	Special Education	Total
1-2	19	2	21
3-4	38	2	40
5-6	33	1	34
7 or more	31	29	60
None	6	0	6
Total	127	34	161

Table 11 reflects a cross-tabulation for the frequency of collaboration for general and special education teachers surveyed. The category with the fewest responses was labeled Never. The category with the most responses was labeled Weekly.

Table 11

Cross-tabulation for Frequency of Collaboration

	Teacher Status		
Collaboration	General Education	Special Education	Total
Never	12	1	13
Weekly	52	20	72
Monthly	27	4	31
Quarterly	28	3	31
Not Sure	8	6	14
Total	127	34	161

Hypothesis Testing

In this section, the testing results are reported along with the descriptive statistics associated with each test.

RQ1. To what extent do general education teachers perceive that the district supports team processes that lead to effective collaboration?

H1: General education teachers perceive that the district supports team processes that lead to effective collaboration.

A one-sample *t* test was used to test *H1*. The average response for the team processes attribute was tested against a null value of 3. The level of significance was set at .05. The results of the one-sample *t* test indicated a statistically significant difference between the two values, $t = 2.54$, $df = 126$, $p = .012$. The sample mean ($M = 3.22$, $SD = .96$) was higher than the null value (3). On average general education teachers perceived

that the district supported team processes that lead to effective collaboration. These findings support H1.

RQ2. To what extent do special education teachers perceive that the district supports team processes that lead to effective collaboration?

H2: Special education teachers perceive that the district supports team processes that result in effective collaboration.

A one-sample *t* test was used to test *H2*. The average response for the team processes attribute was tested against a null value of 3. The level of significance was set at .05. The results of the one-sample *t* test indicated there was not a statistically significant difference between the two values, $t = .88$, $df = 33$, $p = .39$. The sample mean ($M = 3.12$, $SD = .78$) was not different from the null value (3). On average, special education teachers did not perceive that the district supported team processes that resulted in effective collaboration. These findings do not support H2.

RQ3. To what extent are the perceptions that the district supports team processes that lead to effective collaboration different between special education and general education teachers?

H3: The perceptions that the district supports team processes that lead to effective collaboration are different between special education and general education teachers.

A two-sample *t* test was conducted to test *H3*. The two sample means were compared. The level of significance was set at .05. The results of the two-sample t test indicated there was not a statistically significant difference between the two values, $t = -.56$, $df = 159$, $p = .58$. The sample mean, standard deviation, and sample size are included in Table 12. The sample mean for general education teachers ($M = 3.22$, $SD =$

.96) was not different from the sample mean for special education teachers (M = 3.12, SD = .78). The perceptions that the district supported team processes that lead to effective collaboration are not different between special education and general education teachers. This finding does not support H3.

Table 12

Mean and Standard Deviation for Teachers' Perception of Team Processes

Teacher Status	*N*	*M*	*SD*
General Education	127	3.22	.96
Special Education	34	3.12	.78

RQ4. To what extent do general education teachers perceive collaboration to be beneficial?

H4: General education teachers perceive that collaboration is beneficial.

A one-sample *t* test was used to test *H4*. The average response for the perceived benefits attribute was tested against a null value of 3. The level of significance was set at .05. The results of the one-sample *t* test indicated a statistically significant difference between the two values, t = 9.6, df = 126, p = .00. The sample mean (M = 3.67, SD = .78) was higher than the null value (3). On average general education teachers perceived that collaboration was beneficial. These findings support H4.

RQ5. To what extent do special education teachers perceive collaboration to be beneficial?

H5: Special education teachers perceive that collaboration is beneficial.

A one-sample *t* test was used to test *H5*. The average response for the perceived benefits attribute was tested against a null value of 3. The level of significance was set at

.05. The results of the one-sample *t* test indicated a statistically significant difference between the two values, $t = 8.49$, $df = 33$, $p = .00$. The sample mean ($M = 3.86$, $SD = .59$) was higher than the null value (3). On average special education teachers perceived that collaboration was beneficial. These findings support H5.

RQ6. To what extent are the perceptions that collaboration is beneficial different between special education and general education teachers?

H6: The perceptions that collaboration is beneficial are different between special education and general education teachers.

A two-sample *t* test was conducted to test *H6*. The two sample means were compared. The level of significance was set at .05. The results of the two-sample *t* test indicated there was not a statistically significant difference between the two values, $t = 1.38$, $df = 159$, $p = .17$. The sample mean, standard deviation, and sample size are included in Table 13. The sample mean for general education teachers ($M = 3.66$, $SD = .78$) was not different from the sample mean for special education teachers ($M = 3.86$, $SD = .59$). The perceptions of the benefits of collaboration are not different between general and special education teachers. These findings do not support H6.

Table 13

Mean and Standard Deviation for Teachers' Perception of the Benefits of Collaboration

Teacher Status	*N*	*M*	*SD*
General Education	127	3.66	.78
Special Education	34	3.86	.59

RQ7. To what extent do general education teachers perceive that the district supports leadership qualities that lead to effective collaboration?

H7: General education teachers perceive that the district supports leadership qualities that lead to effective collaboration.

A one-sample *t* test was used to test *H7*. The average response for the shared leadership attribute was tested against a null value of 3. The level of significance was set at .05. The results of the one-sample *t* test indicated a statistically significant difference between the two values, $t = 4.63$, $df = 126$, $p = .00$. The sample mean ($M = 3.34$, $SD = .82$) was higher than the null value (3). On average general education teachers perceived that the district supported leadership qualities that led to effective collaboration. These findings support H7.

RQ8. To what extent do special education teachers perceive that the district supports leadership qualities that lead to effective collaboration?

H8: Special education teachers perceive that the district supports leadership qualities that lead to effective collaboration.

A one-sample *t* test was used to test *H8*. The average response for the shared leadership attribute was tested against a null value of 3. The level of significance was set at .05. The results of the one-sample *t* test indicated a statistically significant difference between the two values, $t = 7.72$, $df = 33$, $p = .00$. The sample mean ($M = 3.80$, $SD = .61$) was higher than the null value (3). On average special education teachers perceived that the district supported leadership qualities that led to effective collaboration. These findings support H8.

RQ9. To what extent are the perceptions that the district supports leadership qualities that lead to effective collaboration different between special education and general education teachers?

H9: The perceptions that the district supports leadership qualities that lead to effective collaboration are different between special education and general education teachers.

A two-sample *t* test was conducted to test *H9*. The two sample means were compared. The level of significance was set at .05. The results of the two-sample *t* test indicated there was a statistically significant difference between the two values, $t = 3.07$, $df = 159$, $p = .00$. The sample mean, standard deviation, and sample size are included in Table 14. The sample mean for general education teachers ($M = 3.34$, $SD = .82$) was lower than the sample mean for special education teachers ($M = 3.80$, $SD = .61$). The perceptions that the district supported leadership qualities that led to effective collaboration are different between special education and general education teachers. These findings do support H9.

Table 14

Mean and Standard Deviation for Teachers' Perception of Leadership

Teacher Status	*N*	*M*	*SD*
General Education	127	3.34	.82
Special Education	34	3.80	.61

RQ10. To what extent do general education teachers perceive participating in effective collaboration as being a positive experience?

H10: General education teachers perceive participating in effective collaboration as being a positive experience.

A one-sample *t* test was used to test *H10*. The average response for the positive attitude attribute was tested against a null value of 3. The level of significance was set at

.05. The results of the one-sample *t* test indicated a statistically significant difference between the two values, $t = 13.41$, $df = 126$, $p = .000$. The sample mean ($M = 4.02$, $SD = .85$) was higher than the null value (3). On average general education teachers perceived participating in effective collaboration as being a positive experience. These results support H10.

RQ11. To what extent do special education teachers perceive participating in effective collaboration as being a positive experience?

H11: Special education teachers perceive participating in effective collaboration as being a positive experience.

A one-sample *t* test was used to test *H11*. The average response for the positive attitude attribute was tested against a null value of 3. The level of significance was set at .05. The results of the one-sample t test indicated a statistically significant difference between the two values, $t = 8.08$, $df = 33$, $p = .00$. The sample mean ($M = 3.98$, $SD = .71$) was higher than the null value (3). On average special education teachers perceived participating in effective collaboration as being a positive experience. These results support H11.

RQ12. To what extent are the perceptions that effective collaboration is a positive experience different between special education and general education teachers?

H12: The perceptions that effective collaboration is a positive experience are different between special education and general education teachers.

A two-sample *t* test was conducted to test *H12*. The two sample means were compared. The level of significance was set at .05. The results of the two-sample *t* test indicated there was not a statistically significant difference between the two values, $t = -$

.25, *df* = 159, *p* = .81. The sample mean, standard deviation, and sample size are included in Table 15. The sample mean for general education teachers (*M* = 4.02, *SD* = .95) was not different from the sample mean for special education teachers (*M* = 3.98, *SD* = .71). The perceptions that effective collaboration is a positive experience are not different between special education and general education teachers. These findings do not support H12.

Table 15

Mean and Standard Deviation for Teachers' Attitude toward Collaboration

Teacher Status	*N*	*M*	*SD*
General Education	127	4.02	.95
Special Education	34	3.98	.71

RQ13. To what extent do general education teachers perceive that the district provides the necessary resources to supported effective collaboration?

H13: General education teachers perceive that the district does not provide the necessary resources that led to effective collaboration.

A one-sample *t* test was used to test *H13*. The average response for the resources provided attribute was tested against a null value of 3. The level of significance was set at .05. The results of the one-sample *t* test indicated there was not a statistically significant difference between the two values, *t* = .81, *df* = 126, *p* = .42. The sample mean (*M* = 3.08, *SD* = 1.14) was not different from the null value (3). On average general education teachers did not perceive that the district provided the necessary resources that led to effective collaboration. These findings support H13.

RQ14. To what extent do special education teachers perceive that the district provides the necessary resources to supported effective collaboration?

H14: Special education teachers perceive that the district does not provide the necessary resources that led to effective collaboration.

A one-sample *t* test was used to test *H14*. The average response for the resources provided attribute was tested against a null value of 3. The level of significance was set at .05. The results of the one-sample *t* test indicated there was not a statistically significant difference between the two values, $t = 1.93$, $df = 33$, $p = .06$. The sample mean ($M = 3.32$, $SD = .98$) was not different from the null value (3). On average, special education teachers perceive that the district does not provide the necessary resources that lead to effective collaboration. These findings support H14.

RQ15. To what extent are the perceptions that the district provides the necessary resources that lead to effective collaboration different between general and general education teachers?

H15: The perceptions that the district provides the necessary resources that lead to effective collaboration differ between special education and general education teachers.

A two-sample *t* test was conducted to test *H15*. The two sample means were compared. The level of significance was set at .05. The results of the two-sample *t* test indicated there was not a statistically significant difference between the two values, $t = -1.12$, $df = 159$, $p = .26$. The sample mean, standard deviation, and sample size are included in Table 16. The sample mean for general education teachers ($M = 3.08$, $SD = 1.14$) was not different from the sample mean for special education teachers ($M = 3.32$,

SD = .98). The perceptions that the district provided the necessary resources that led to effective collaboration are not different between special education and general education teachers. These findings do not support H15.

Table 16

Mean and Standard Deviation for Teachers' Perception of District Provided Resources

Teacher Status	*N*	*M*	*SD*
General Education	127	3.08	1.14
Special Education	34	3.32	.98

RQ16. To what extent do general education teachers perceive that the district provides essential professional development that leads to effective collaboration?

H16: General education teachers perceive that the district does not provide essential professional development that leads to effective collaboration.

A one-sample *t* test was used to test *H16*. The average response for professional development attribute was tested against a null value of 3. The level of significance was set at .05. The average response for the professional development attribute was tested against a null value of 3. The level of significance was set at .05. The results of the one-sample *t* test indicated there was not a statistically significant difference between the two values, $t = .19$, $df = 126$, $p = .85$. The sample mean ($M = 3.02$, $SD = .92$) was not different from the null value (3). On average general education teachers perceived that the district did not provide essential professional development that led to effective collaboration. These findings support H16.

Table 17

Mean and Standard Deviation for Teachers' Perception of District Provided Professional Development

Teacher Status	*N*	*M*	*SD*
General Education	127	3.02	.92
Special Education	34	3.06	.78

RQ17. To what extent do special education teachers perceive that the district provides essential professional development that leads to effective collaboration?

H17: Special education teachers perceive that the district does not provide essential professional development that leads to effective collaboration.

A one-sample *t* test was used to test *H17*. The average response for professional development attribute was tested against a null value of 3. The level of significance was set at .05. The average response for the professional development attribute was tested against a null value of 3. The level of significance was set at .05. The results of the one-sample *t* test indicated there was not a statistically significant difference between the two values, $t = .44$, $df = 33$, $p = .66$. The sample mean ($M = 3.06$, $SD = .78$) was not different from the null value (3). On average special education teachers perceived that the district did not provide essential professional development that led to effective collaboration. These results support H17.

RQ18. To what extent are the perceptions that the district provides essential professional development that leads to effective collaboration different between special education and general education teachers?

H18: The perceptions that the district provides essential professional development that leads to effective collaboration are different between special education and general education teachers.

A two-sample *t* test was conducted to test *H18*. The two sample means were compared. The level of significance was set at .05. The results of the two-sample *t* test indicated there was not a statistically significant difference between the two values, $t = -.25$, $df = 159$, $p = .80$. The sample mean, standard deviation, and sample size are included in Table 17. The sample mean for general education teachers ($M = 3.02$, $SD = .92$) was not different from the sample mean for special education teachers ($M = 3.06$, $SD = .78$). The perceptions that the district provided essential professional development that led to effective collaboration are not different between special education and general education teachers. This does not support H18.

Summary

Quantitative data results organized by specific questions on perceptions of existing factors of effective collaboration were described and analyzed. Chapter five presents interpretations of the findings and the recommendations for future research. Chapter five also discusses the study summary including the overview of the problem, the purpose statement and research questions, the review of methodology, and major findings. A discussion of the findings related to the literature follows the study summary. The chapter concludes with implications for action, recommendations for future research, and concluding remarks.

Chapter Five

Interpretation and Recommendations

The previous chapter presented the results of the data analysis for this study. This chapter contains a study summary, which includes the overview of the problem, the purpose statement and research questions, the methodology, and the major findings of this research. Next, findings related to the literature are discussed. Finally, this chapter concludes with the implications for action, the recommendations for future research and concluding remarks.

Study Summary

The following section provides a summary of the current study, which includes an overview of the problem concerning general and special education teacher perceptions of collaboration. The purpose statement and research questions follow. Finally, a review of methodology and the findings of the study are provided.

Overview of the problem. The public school system has experienced dramatic changes within the last ten years, including movement toward a standards-based system, implementation of statewide assessments, and increased accountability for both students and educators. Present in all reform initiatives has been the emphasis on improving achievement through increased inclusion for all learners in the general education setting, including those students with disabilities learning within the general education setting and being taught the general education curriculum (Malgren et al., 2005). The increase in such inclusionary practices has created challenges for both general education and special education teachers, who have historically worked as separate entities and operated from very different paradigms and belief systems. No longer are special educators able to

provide primarily one-on-one instruction in a resource room setting; as an alternative, they are expected to work in the LRE, often within a general education classroom (Robinson & Buly, 2007).

General education teachers are no longer able to assume that the responsibility for the tutelage of students with special needs is borne by someone else. A shift from the norm is taking place, as general and special education teachers are discovering that they must collaborate to ensure that all students achieve their potential. When educators lack shared experiences and perspectives, they can haplessly dismiss the viewpoint of the other, or they can decide to learn about another's perspective and beliefs. A mutual goal of working collaboratively to improve the instruction of all students can be established (Denton et al., 2003).

Purpose statement and research questions. Eighteen research questions were developed to address the purpose of this study. The first purpose of this study was to contribute to and extend an existing body of research by concentrating on general and special education teacher perceptions of collaboration within six rural school districts. The current study expanded upon a previous study which was focused within one urban elementary school. Additionally, The the purpose of this study was to determine if general and special education teachers perceive that the district supports the team processes, leadership qualities, resources, and professional development that lead to effective collaboration. Furthermore, the purpose was to determine the perceived benefit of collaboration from general and special education teachers. Finally, this study sought to determine if general and special education teachers had a positive attitude toward collaboration.

Review of the methodology. This quantitative study was designed to investigate and examine teacher perceptions regarding factors relating to collaboration between general education and special education teachers. The research tool selected was utilized to determine the perceptions that teachers have regarding existing collaboration practices in their respective learning environments. The quantitative data were collected for this study through an online survey. The results of the anonymous survey were gathered through Google Forms. Cross-tabulation analysis was utilized to summarize teacher demographic data, one-sample *t* tests were conducted to compute separate general and special education teacher findings, and two-sample *t* tests were performed to reveal comparative and combined general and special education teacher statistics. A mean score was determined for each of the six essential areas relating to effective collaboration.

Major findings. The results of the surveys reveal several significant findings. The findings are organized by the essential elements of effective collaboration.

General and special education teacher characteristics. The majority of general and special education teachers surveyed had been teaching for 15+ years overall with 4-7 of those years having been spent in their current locations. At the time the survey was administered most general and special education teachers served seven or more students who had a diagnosed disability and who had an IEP. Although some general and special education teachers never participated in collaboration, most general and special education staff participated in weekly collaboration.

Team process. The survey results indicated that general education teachers perceived that the district supported team processes that led to effective collaboration. On average special education teachers perceived that the district did not support team

processes that resulted in effective collaboration. The perceptions that the district supported team processes that led to effective collaboration differ between general and special education teachers.

Benefits. The survey results indicated that general education teachers perceived that collaboration was beneficial. Special education teachers also perceived that collaboration was beneficial. The perceptions of the benefits of collaboration were not different between general and special education teachers.

Leadership. The survey results indicated that general education teachers perceived that the district supported leadership qualities that led to effective collaboration. Special education teachers also perceived that the district supported leadership qualities that led to effective collaboration. The perceptions that the district supported leadership qualities that led to effective collaboration are not different between special education and general education teachers.

Positive perception. The survey results indicated that general education teachers perceived participating in effective collaboration as being a positive experience. Special education teachers also perceived participating in effective collaboration as being a positive experience. The perceptions that effective collaboration is a positive experience are not different between general and special education teachers.

Resources. The survey results indicated that general education teachers perceived that the district did not provide the necessary resources that led to effective collaboration. Special education teachers also perceived that the district did not provide the necessary resources that led to effective collaboration. The perceptions that the district provided the

necessary resources that led to effective collaboration are not different between general and special education teachers.

Professional development. The survey results indicated that general education teachers perceived that the district did not provide essential professional development that led to effective collaboration. Special education teachers also perceived that the district did not provide essential professional development that led to effective collaboration. The perceptions that the district provided essential professional development that leads to effective collaboration were not different between special and general education teachers.

Findings Related to the Literature

Several findings can be related back to the literature. The findings are organized by the six essential factors of effective collaboration: team process, benefits, shared leadership, positive attitude, and professional development.

Team process. Team processes should be straightforward and allow participants to feel valued and engaged equally in decision making (Snell & Janney, 2005). Druskat & Wolf (2001) discovered that members of effective teams consistently demonstrated high frequency of the following collective commitments:

- Perspective taking.
- Interpersonal understanding.
- Willingness to confront.
- Caring orientation.
- Team self-evaluation.
- Feedback solicitation.

- Positive environment.
- Proactive problem solving.
- Organizational awareness.
- Building external relationships. (p. 140)

Benefits of collaboration. Educators must acknowledge that the research has been clear and consistent. Isolation is the enemy of school improvement. In fact, it is challenging to find supporting research for the position that educators best serve their children, themselves, or the profession through working in isolation. Teachers understand this guiding principle, yet staff appears reluctant to do anything to correct the situation. For 35 years, educators have been advised that this tradition of teacher isolation is one of the most formidable barriers to building the capacity to meet the needs of students. Unless educators confront this challenge directly, the critique of public education (or what is left of it) in 2050 will begin with the lament that educators work in isolation (DuFour et al., 2008, p. 177).

Leadership. Teachers prefer transformational leadership, which is not surprising since its impact on teacher job satisfaction is very high ($r = 0.71$) and the effect on student achievement is also high ($r = 0.48$) (Hattie, 2009). Effective leadership results in increased participant self-concept, support for the work environment, and encouragement to other members to enter into collaborative partnerships. School leaders need to give teachers the opportunity to be perceived as high-performing professionals. Volunteering or being selected for leadership roles can be the impetus for skill development and intrinsic rewards (Friend & Cook, 2000).

Positive attitude. Positive attitudes are perceived by participants who appear to have a prevalence of optimistic feelings and opinions toward collaboration and who are consistently engaging in activities beyond defined roles and expectations (Wiggins & Damore, 2006). Teachers need to have "proactive attitudes" about beginning communication with their collaborative associates (Vargo, 1998, p. 54). The research determined five vital behaviors which were common in portraying a positive attitude or approach to his or her work: 1) smiling, 2) making eye contact, 3) identifying oneself, 4) explaining what and why you are doing what you do, and 5) ending every interaction with the question, "Is there anything else you need?" (Patterson, Grenny, Maxfield, McMillan, & Switzler, 2008).

Resources. Time is at the essence of collaborative efforts. Staff members need ample time to prepare and interact, as well as time to reflect and evaluate. Schools must have adequate financial provision for collaboration, whether this support comes from the school budget, grant programs, or external partnerships (Leonard, 2002). The following strategies illustrate steps districts can take to create time for collaboration: 1) Common preparation, 2) parallel scheduling, 3) adjusted start and end time, 4) shared classes, 5) group activities, events, and testing, 6) banked time, and 7) in-service and faculty meeting time (Dufour et al. 2010, p. 127).

Professional development. Both general and special educators need continuing professional growth, particularly those who are challenged with the demands of effectively working in an atmosphere of inclusion. Whether it is through workshops, in-services, journals, online discussion, study groups, deliberations, participation in research ventures, or graduate learning, educators profit from continuous specialized training.

Having the chance to observe other skilled professionals, schools, and classrooms can deliver an invaluable experience for teachers to improve his or her teaching repertoire (Leonard, 2002; Zemelman et al., 1993). Harrison (1980) found that professional development was an effective way to improve job satisfaction and performance.

Conclusions. This section contains implications to help educators and school districts to make sound decisions regarding the understanding and implementation of the essential elements that lead to effective collaboration. The implications of this study could also be used to design and implement effective collaborative practices between general and special education teachers. Furthermore, as a result of the findings from the current study, recommendations for future research are presented. Last, concluding remarks close the chapter.

Implications for action. The findings of this study have implications for schools. When determining more effective means by which to improve teacher and student learning, it is critical to examine the degree to which effective collaboration occurs between general and special education teachers. A formal framework for collaboration between staff should be adopted by schools to ensure that successful collaboration occurs on a regular basis. The framework presented in this study is recommended because it contains the combined factors that contribute to effective collaboration, according to the review of the literature. Regardless of the framework selected by school districts, the administration should facilitate implementation of the framework and evaluate the implementation process with direct input from general and special education teachers. Districts will need to ensure that adequate resources and professional development are

dedicated to collaboration, as the current perceptions of general and special education teachers indicated that these attributes are insufficient.

Recommendations for future research. There are some avenues for the future study of collaborative practices between general and special education teachers. First, this study could be expanded to additional schools and districts. The sample size of the study was relatively small, especially for the group of special education teachers. Additional data would be beneficial to make a further generalization regarding the benefits of effective collaboration.

The second direction for future research could be to implement the framework for effective collaboration in a school or district that does not currently implement effective collaboration between general and special education teachers. Data could be collected regarding existing perceptions of factors prior to the implementation and then collect additional data following implementation to decipher if perceptions improved after successful implementation.

A final recommendation for future research could be to replicate this study with some adjustments. Instead of soliciting volunteers to participate in the study, it would be valuable to find ways to randomly sample participants. Random sampling would allow for more diversity in the participants and not limit the study to volunteers who are comfortable with the collaborative process.

Concluding remarks. Researched-based models for effective collaborations between general and special education teachers are limited, even though the review of the literature demonstrates that there are essential elements that lead to effective collaboration. Since general education teachers have a legal obligation to meet the needs

of all students in the least restrictive environment, effective collaboration between general and special education teachers is paramount. The results of the quantitative data indicate that general education teachers had a positive attitude, felt that collaboration was beneficial, and shared in the leadership of the collaborative process. General education staff also perceived that their district provide the team process necessary for effective collaboration. Special education teachers had a positive attitude, felt that collaboration was beneficial, and shared in the leadership of the collaborative process. Districts need to ensure that adequate resources and continued professional development are provided in the area of effective collaboration.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Institutional Review Board (IRB) Proposal

BAKER UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
GRADUATE DEPARTMENT

Date:
IRB PROTOCOL NUMBER _____
(IRB USE ONLY)

IRB REQUEST
Proposal for Research
Submitted to the Baker University Institutional Review Board

I. Research Investigator(s) (Students must list faculty sponsor first)

Department(s) **School of Education Graduate Department**

Name	Signature	
1. Dr. Harold Frye	_____,	Major Advisor
2. Margaret Waterman	_____,	Research Analyst
3. Dr. Russ Kokoruda	_____,	University Committee Member
4. Dr. Kathy Mickelson	_____,	External Committee Member

Principal Investigator: Ryan Vaughn
Phone: (785) 221-4334
Email: rvaughn@three-lakes.org
Mailing address: 26260 S. Urish Rd.
Osage City, KS 66523

Faculty sponsor: Dr. Harold Frye
Phone: (913) 344-1220
Email: Harold.Frye@bakeru.edu

Expected Category of Review: ___Exempt X_ Expedited ___Full

II: Protocol: (Type the title of your study)

General and Special Education Teacher Perceptions of Collaboration

Summary

In a sentence or two, please describe the background and purpose of the research.

The practice and perception of the school districts are that the inclusion of students with exceptionalities with his or her peers and in the least restrictive environment is essential for all learners to reach his or her potential. The development and implementation of collaborative cultures and practices are essential.

The purpose of this research is to examine the perceptions of collaborative practices among general and special education teachers in a rural school setting. Data collected for the study may provide evidence as to whether or not teachers utilize effective collaboration.

Briefly, describe each condition or manipulation to be included within the study.

There are no conditions or manipulations in this study.

What measures or observations will be taken in the study? If any questionnaire or other instruments are used, provide a brief description and attach a copy.
Will the subjects encounter the risk of psychological, social, physical or legal risk? If so, please describe the nature of the risk and any measures designed to mitigate that risk.

The investigator has received permission to conduct a survey and utilize collected data in the Santa Fe Trail, West Franklin, Osage City, Lyndon, Burlingame, and Maris des Cygne school districts. Documentation of permission to survey staff is attached. A copy of the survey is attached.

There are no psychological, social, physical, or legal risks involved in this study.

Will any stress to subjects be involved? If so, please describe.

There will be no stress on subjects involved in this study.

Will the subjects be deceived or misled in any way? If so, include an outline or script of the debriefing.

The participants will not be deceived or misled in this study.

Will there be a request for information which subjects might consider to be personal or sensitive? If so, please include a description.

There will be no requests for personal or sensitive information for this study.

Will the subjects be presented with materials which might be considered to be offensive, threatening, or degrading? If so, please describe.

There will be no materials that might be considered offensive, threatening, or degrading presented to study participants.

Approximately how much time will be demanded of each subject?

Subjects will require approximately ten minutes to complete the survey.

Who will be the subjects of this study? How will they be solicited or contacted? Provide an outline or script of the information which will be provided to subjects prior to their volunteering to participate. Include a copy of any written solicitation as well as an outline of any oral solicitation.

The subjects in this study will be the current certified teaching staff within six local school districts. The staff will be contacted via email correspondence from each district's superintendent. A copy of the written solicitation is included.

What steps will be taken to ensure that each subject's participation is voluntary? What if any inducements will be offered to the subjects for their participation?

Participants will be notified by the email sent by his or her district superintendent that participation is voluntary. No inducements will be offered to the subjects for their involvement and subjects will be advised that they may discontinue participation at any time without consequence for partial completion.

How will you ensure that the subjects give their consent prior to participating? Will a written consent form be used? If so, include the form. If not, explain why not.

Participants will be notified in the solicitation email that by participating in the survey they are giving consent. If subjects decline participation, there will be no negative repercussions.

Will any aspect of the data be made a part of any permanent record that can be identified with the subject? If so, please explain the necessity.

The data that will be collected will not be part of any permanent record.

Will the fact that a subject did or did not participate in a specific experiment or study be made part of any permanent record available to a supervisor, teacher or employer? If so, explain.

There will be no record if the subject did or did not participate in the study and the study will not be part of any permanent record available to a supervisor, teacher, or employer.

What steps will be taken to ensure the confidentiality of the data? Where will it be stored? How long will it be stored? What will be done with it after the study is completed?

To ensure confidentiality of the subjects within the student, individual and school names will not be collected, recorded, or stored. The data that is collected will be stored through the defense of the dissertation and will be removed afterward.

If there are any risks involved in the study, are there any offsetting benefits that might accrue to either the subjects or society?

There are no known risks for participants involved in the study.

Will any data from files or archival data be used? If so, please describe.

There will be no data from files or archival data used for this study.

Appendix B: University Approval for Study

Baker University Institutional Review Board

March 20, 2016

Dear Ryan Vaughn and Dr. Frye,

The Baker University IRB has reviewed your research project application and approved this project under Expedited Status Review. As described, the project complies with all the requirements and policies established by the University for protection of human subjects in research. Unless renewed, approval lapses one year after approval date. Please be aware of the following:

1. Any significant change in the research protocol as described should be reviewed by this Committee prior to altering the project.

2. Notify the IRB about any new investigators not named in original application.

3. When signed consent documents are required, the primary investigator must retain the signed consent documents of the research activity.

4. If this is a funded project, keep a copy of this approval letter with your proposal/grant file.

5. If the results of the research are used to prepare papers for publication or oral presentation at professional conferences, manuscripts or abstracts are requested for IRB as part of the project record.

Please inform this Committee or myself when this project is terminated or completed. As noted above, you must also provide IRB with an annual status report and receive approval for maintaining your status. If you have any questions, please contact me at CTodden@BakerU.edu or 785.594.8440.

Sincerely,
Chris Todden EdD
Chair, Baker University IRB

Baker University IRB Committee
Verneda Edwards EdD
Sara Crump PhD
Erin Morris PhD
Scott Crenshaw

Appendix C: Survey of Special Education Teachers

Collaborative Practices Survey (Special Education)

Please respond to the following questions by picking the choice that best reflects your experiences with collaboration between yourself and general education teachers.

1. How many years have you been teaching?
1-3 years
4-7 years
8-11 years
12-15 years
15+ years

2. How many years have you been teaching in your current building?
1-3 years
4-7 years
8-11 years
12-15 years
15+ years

3. How many students with an identified disability are there in your classroom?
None
1-2
3-4
5-6
7 or more

4. How many students with an IEP are there in your classroom?
None
1-2
3-4
5-6
7 or more

5. About how often do you collaborate with general education teachers?
Never
Quarterly
Monthly
Weekly
Not Sure

6. Please select the choice that best matches your experience.
I have positive feelings and views toward collaboration with general education teachers in my building.

Strongly Disagree

1
2

3
4
5

Strongly Agree

7. Please select the choice that best matches your experience.
I am committed and motivated to collaborate with general education teachers in my building.

Strongly Disagree

1
2
3
4
5

Strongly Agree

8. Please select the choice that best matches your experience.
I am clear in understanding the roles in collaboration between general education and special education teachers in my building.

Strongly Disagree

1
2
3
4
5

Strongly Agree

9. Please select the choice that best matches your experience.
I believe that there are common philosophies and goals in my building regarding special education.

Strongly Disagree

1
2
3
4
5

Strongly Agree

10. Please select the choice that best matches your experience.
I believe that I have positive communication and relationships with the general education teachers in my building.

Strongly Disagree

1
2
3
4
5

Strongly Agree

11. Please select the choice that best matches your experience.
There are set processes, expectations, and routines for collaboration sessions between general and special education teachers in my building.

Strongly Disagree

1
2
3
4
5

Strongly Agree

12. Please select the choice that best matches your experience.
There are defined team roles and responsibilities for collaboration sessions between general and special education teachers in my building.

Strongly Disagree

1
2
3
4
5

Strongly Agree

13. Please select the choice that best matches your experience.
There is a clear focus on professional development for meeting the needs of special education students.

Strongly Disagree

1
2
3
4
5

Strongly Agree

14. Please select the choice that best matches your experience.
I feel special education teachers have a voice in professional development regarding special education instructional strategies.

Strongly Disagree

1
2
3
4
5

Strongly Agree

15. Please select the choice that best matches your experience.

I feel professional development for special education topics have a connection with classroom practice.

Strongly Disagree

1
2
3
4
5

Strongly Agree

16. Please select the choice that best matches your experience.
We use in-house expertise and talent for professional development for special education.

Strongly Disagree

1
2
3
4
5

Strongly Agree

17. Please select the choice that best matches your experience.
General education teachers have input regarding scheduling and delivery options for special education.

Strongly Disagree

1
2
3
4
5

Strongly Agree

18. Please select the choice that best matches your experience.
Special education teachers have input regarding scheduling and delivery options for special education.

Strongly Disagree

1
2
3
4
5

Strongly Agree

19. Please select the choice that best matches your experience.
In my building there is a sense of community between general and special education teachers.

Strongly Disagree

1

2
3
4
5

Strongly Agree

20. Please select the choice that best matches your experience.
I see general education teachers as leaders in my building.

Strongly Disagree

1
2
3
4
5

Strongly Agree

21. Please select the choice that best matches your experience.
Our building principal encourages teacher leadership and decision making regarding issues related to special education.

Strongly Disagree

1
2
3
4
5

Strongly Agree

22. Please select the choice that best matches your experience.
There is accountability for collaboration in my building.

Strongly Disagree

1
2
3
4
5

Strongly Agree

23. Please select the choice that best matches your experience.
We have the necessary resources in my building for general education teachers and special education teachers to collaborate effectively.

Strongly Disagree

1
2
3
4
5

Strongly Agree

24. Please select the choice that best matches your experience.
I believe that it is beneficial to have regular ongoing collaboration between general and special education teachers.

Strongly Disagree

1
2
3
4
5

Strongly Agree

25. Please select the choice that best matches your experience.
The collaboration that currently exists in my building benefits students.

Strongly Disagree

1
2
3
4
5

Strongly Agree

26. Please select the choice that best matches your experience.
The amount of time that I currently collaborate with special education teachers in my building is appropriate to meet the needs of my students.

Strongly Disagree

1
2
3
4
5

Strongly Agree

Appendix D: Survey Instrument for General Education Teachers

Collaborative Practices Survey (General Education)

Please respond to the following questions by picking the choice that best reflects your experiences with collaboration between yourself and special education teachers. Please note there is no consequence for partial completion of the survey.

1. How many years have you been teaching?
1-3 years
4-7 years
8-11 years
12-15 years
15+ years

2. How many years have you been teaching in your current building?
1-3 years
4-7 years
8-11 years
12-15 years
15+ years

3. How many students with an identified disability are there in your classroom?
None
1-2
3-4
5-6
7 or more

4. How many students with an IEP are there in your classroom?
None
1-2
3-4
5-6
7 or more

5. About how often do you collaborate with a special education teacher?
Never
Quarterly
Monthly
Weekly
Not Sure

6. Please select the choice that best matches your experience.
I have positive feelings and views toward collaboration with special education teachers in my building.

Strongly Disagree

1

2
3
4
5

Strongly Agree

7. Please select the choice that best matches your experience.
I am committed and motivated to collaborate with special education teachers in my building.

Strongly Disagree

1
2
3
4
5

Strongly Agree

8. Please select the choice that best matches your experience.
I am clear in understanding the roles in collaboration between general education and special education teachers in my building.

Strongly Disagree

1
2
3
4
5

Strongly Agree

9. Please select the choice that best matches your experience.
I believe that there are common philosophies and goals in my building regarding special education.

Strongly Disagree

1
2
3
4
5

Strongly Agree

10. Please select the choice that best matches your experience.
I believe that I have positive communication and relationships with the special education teachers in my building.

Strongly Disagree

1
2
3
4

5

Strongly Agree

11. Please select the choice that best matches your experience.
There are set processes, expectations, and routines for collaboration sessions between general and special education teachers in my building.

Strongly Disagree

1
2
3
4
5

Strongly Agree

12. Please select the choice that best matches your experience.
There are defined team roles and responsibilities for collaboration sessions between general and special education teachers in my building.

Strongly Disagree

1
2
3
4
5

Strongly Agree

13. Please select the choice that best matches your experience.
There is a clear focus on professional development for meeting the needs of special education students.

Strongly Disagree

1
2
3
4
5

Strongly Agree

14. Please select the choice that best matches your experience.
I feel general education teachers have a voice in professional development regarding special education instructional strategies.

Strongly Disagree

1
2
3
4
5

Strongly Agree

15. Please select the choice that best matches your experience.

I feel professional development for special education topics have a connection with classroom practice.

Strongly Disagree

1
2
3
4
5

Strongly Agree

16. Please select the choice that best matches your experience.
We use in-house expertise and talent for professional development for special education.

Strongly Disagree

1
2
3
4
5

Strongly Agree

17. Please select the choice that best matches your experience.
General education teachers have input regarding scheduling and delivery options for special education.

Strongly Disagree

1
2
3
4
5

Strongly Agree

18. Please select the choice that best matches your experience.
Special education teachers have input regarding scheduling and delivery options for special education.

Strongly Disagree

1
2
3
4
5

Strongly Agree

19. Please select the choice that best matches your experience.
In my building there is a sense of community between general and special education teachers.

Strongly Disagree

1

2
3
4
5

Strongly Agree

20. Please select the choice that best matches your experience.
I see special education teachers as leaders in my building.

Strongly Disagree

1
2
3
4
5

Strongly Agree

21. Please select the choice that best matches your experience.
Our building principal encourages teacher leadership and decision making regarding issues related to special education.

Strongly Disagree

1
2
3
4
5

Strongly Agree

22. Please select the choice that best matches your experience.
There is accountability for collaboration in my building.

Strongly Disagree

1
2
3
4
5

Strongly Agree

23. Please select the choice that best matches your experience.
We have the necessary resources in my building for general education teachers and special education teachers to collaborate effectively.

Strongly Disagree

1
2
3
4
5

Strongly Agree

24. Please select the choice that best matches your experience.
I believe that it is beneficial to have regular ongoing collaboration between general and special education (including gifted education) teachers.

Strongly Disagree

1
2
3
4
5

Strongly Agree

25. Please select the choice that best matches your experience.
The collaboration that currently exists in my building benefits students.

Strongly Disagree

1
2
3
4
5

Strongly Agree

26. Please select the choice that best matches your experience.
The amount of time that I currently collaborate with special education teachers in my building is appropriate to meet the needs of my students.

Strongly Disagree

1
2
3
4
5

Strongly Agree

Appendix E: Sample Email of Staff Survey Completion Request

Staff,

Please take a few moments to complete the linked Collaborative Practices survey. Participation is voluntary; responses are anonymous, and by completing the survey you agree to allow the collected data to be utilized for research. You may discontinue participation at any time without consequence for partial completion.

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/166kYks0ivNw3PQqLGr1SoPrxb2drmHso_dKO53cCf4U/viewform

Sincerely,

Mr./Mrs. Superintendent

Appendix F: Permission to Conduct Survey

Ryan Vaughn <rvaughn@three-lakes.org> 11/24/15

to Cheryl

Cheryl

I am writing to request your permission to survey teaching staff in your district. The survey will be unveiled relatively soon, and data will be utilized to complete my dissertation. All six districts within our cooperative will participate in the survey, and all results will be anonymous. The survey will center around perceptions of collaboration between general and special education teachers.

Please let me know if I can provide further clarification.

Thank you.

Cheryl Cook <cookc@usd421.org> 11/24/15

to me

Sounds like fun. Yes, you can survey staff at USD 421 Lyndon.

Thanks

Ryan Vaughn <rvaughn@three-lakes.org> 12/1/14

to Allen

Mr. Konicek,

I will be completing my dissertation this spring and was hoping to use data collected from the Burlingame school district in my work. My dissertation is examining collaboration practices between general and special education staff. All that would be involved from a teacher's perspective would be completing a short survey. All survey results would be anonymous as I will not be utilizing district, teacher, or administrator names. I hope to survey all certified general and special education staff within the six cooperative districts. I will not be comparing one district to another, but need all districts to obtain a large enough data set.

I am attaching the survey questions that will be used for data collection purposes. I am replicating a study, so a few of the questions that I am sending will be modified slightly to match your district.

After you've had a chance to look over the questions, please reply by email as to whether or not you will give permission for part of the study to be conducted at Burlingame.

Thank you.

Allen Konicek <konicek@usd454.net> 12/2/14

to me

Feel free to survey the staff

Ryan Vaughn <rvaughn@three-lakes.org> 12/1/14

to darrel.finch

Mr. Finch,

I will be completing my dissertation this spring and was hoping to use data collected from the MdCV school district in my work. My dissertation is examining collaboration practices between general and special education staff. All that would be involved from a teacher's perspective would be completing a short survey. All survey results would be anonymous as I will not be utilizing district, teacher, or administrator names. I hope to survey all certified general and special education staff within the six cooperative districts. I will not be comparing one district to another, but need all districts to obtain a large enough data set.

I am attaching the survey questions that will be used for data collection purposes. I am replicating a study, so a few of the questions that I am sending will be modified slightly to match your district.

Although we've had a phone conversation regarding this dissertation, please reply by email as to whether or not you will give permission for part of the study to be conducted in the MdCV district.

Thank you.

Darrel Finch <darrelfinch@gmail.com> 12/1/14

to me

You may survey USD #456 teachers as part of your dissertation. Good luck with the project.

Mr. Turner,

I will be completing my dissertation this spring and was hoping to use data collected from the West Franklin school district in my work. My dissertation is examining collaboration practices between general and special education staff. All that would be involved from a teacher's perspective would be completing a short survey. All survey results would be anonymous as I will not be utilizing district, teacher, or administrator names. I hope to survey all certified general and special education staff within the six cooperative districts. I will not be comparing one district to another, but need all districts to obtain a large enough data set.

Please let me know of the process obtaining district approval and if I can answer any questions.

Thank you.

Jerry Turner <turnerj@usd287.org> 11/20/14

to me

Ryan
West Franklin will be glad to help you.
Turner

Ryan Vaughn <rvaughn@three-lakes.org> 11/19/14

to Troy

Mr. Hutton,

I will be completing my dissertation this spring and was hoping to use data collected from the Osage City school district in my work. My dissertation is examining collaboration practices between general and special education staff. All that would be involved from a teacher's perspective would be completing a short survey. All survey results would be anonymous as I will not be utilizing district, teacher, or administrator names. I hope to survey all certified general and special education staff within the six cooperative districts. I will not be comparing one district to another, but need all districts to obtain a large enough data set.

Please let me know of the process obtaining district approval and if I can answer any questions.

Thank you.

Troy Hutton <thutton@usd420.org> 11/19/14

to me

Ryan,

This sounds fine to me. Let me know if you need anything further.

Good luck with your dissertation!

Ryan Vaughn <rvaughn@three-lakes.org> 11/17/14

to Steve

Dr. Pegram,

Is it still okay with you that I conduct research for my dissertation in your district? Basically, I would be collecting survey data from general and special education teachers.

Thank you.

Steve Pegram <spegram@usd434.us> 11/17/14

to me

No problem with me.

Appendix G: Permission to Partially Replicate Prior Study

Ryan Vaughn <rvaughn@three-lakes.org> 12/1/14

to Gwen.Landever

Dr. Landever,

I have recently competed my coursework through Baker University's Educational Leadership Program and am now working with Dr. Harold Frye on writing my dissertation. As a long-time special education teacher and coordinator, I was fascinated with your study on collaboration between general and special education staff. With your permission I would like to replicate your study, taking it from an urban, single district setting and expanding it to six school districts in a rural setting.

I look forward to your response.

--
Ryan Vaughn
Transition Facilitator
Three Lakes Educational Cooperative

Landever, Gwen <Gwen.Landever@stmary.edu> 12/2/14

to me

Sure, that would be great! I would be interested in your findings. Keep me posted and good luck.

Gwen
Gwen Landever, Ed.D
Education Department Chair
Director of MAT program
University of Saint Mary
4100 S. 4th Street | Leavenworth, KS 66048
p. 913-758-6159 gwen.landever@stmary,edu
stmary.edu

Appendix G: Data Collection Matrix

Research Question	General Education Survey Questions	Special Education Survey Questions
#1 Team Process	8, 9, 11, 12	
#2 Team Process		8, 9, 11, 12
#3 Team Process	8, 9, 11, 12	8, 9, 11, 12
#4 Benefits	22, 24, 25	
#5 Benefits		22, 24, 25
#6 Benefits	22, 24, 25	22, 24, 25
#7 Leadership	17, 18, 20, 21	
#8 Leadership		17, 18, 20, 21
#9 Leadership	17, 18, 20, 21	17, 18, 20, 21
#10 Attitude	6, 7, 10, 19	
#11 Attitude		6, 7, 10, 19
#12 Attitude	6, 7, 10, 19	6, 7, 10, 19
#13 Resources	23, 26	
#14 Resources		23, 26
#15 Resources	23, 26	23, 26
#16 Professional Development	13, 14, 15, 16	
#17 Professional Development		13, 14, 15, 16
#18 Professional Development	13, 14, 15, 16	13, 14, 15, 16