

COLLABORATION AMONG GENERAL AND SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS

Gwen Singer Landever
B.S., University of Kansas, 1992
M.S., University of Kansas, 1995

Submitted to the Faculty of the School of Education of Baker University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

April, 2010

Copyright 2010 by Gwen Singer Landever

Clinical Research Study Committee

Major Advisor

Abstract

The purpose of this mixed quantitative and qualitative study was to measure the perceptions of collaboration between special education (including gifted education) teachers and general education teachers in elementary and middle schools in a suburban Kansas public school district to see if those perceptions fit with what the experts call effective collaboration. Data were organized by the six factors of effective collaboration that was identified by the researcher based on the review of the literature: 1) team process, 2) benefits, 3) administrator support and shared leadership, 4) positive attitude, 5) resources, and 6) professional development.

Methodologies used to collect data for the study were both quantitative and qualitative. Quantitative data were collected through online surveys. The surveys were sent to general education, special education, and gifted education teachers who teach in three elementary schools and three middle schools in the district. Survey data were analyzed using chi square tests of equal percentages. Qualitative data were collected through interviews with building administrators, observations of collaboration sessions between special education (including gifted education) teachers and general education teachers, and follow up interviews with general education, special education, and gifted education teachers. Administrator and teacher responses to the interview questions and observation data were analyzed to determine to what extent effective collaboration practices were in place.

The results of the quantitative portion of the study indicate that the general education teachers and administrators believe effective collaboration exists in their

buildings while the special education teachers are not in agreement regarding the extent to which effective collaboration exists. The qualitative information collected from the interviews indicated that most of the teachers and administrators believe that effective collaboration exists in their buildings. The observation data collected supports the information collected through the interviews regarding effective collaboration.

Dedication

This clinical research study is dedicated to my family. With their support and cheerleading, I was able to complete this educational journey. My mom and grandparents were with me in my heart every step of the way as they watched over me in this challenge. My husband and children were with me physically and emotionally as I accomplished this educational adventure.

Acknowledgements

I am pleased to thank the many people who have helped me along my journey toward completing the doctoral program and in writing this clinical research study. To Dr. Harold Frye, my major advisor, a special thank you for providing me with guidance, encouragement, and patience throughout the doctoral program and clinical research study. My gratitude to Peg Waterman for the time and expertise she generously provided throughout the data collection and data analysis phases of this study. Thank you to Dr. Brad Tate for providing valuable feedback and suggestions during the revision phases of this study. Thank you to Dr. Sheri Stewart, my friend and mentor, who provided support to me throughout this educational journey. Thank you to the school district and administrators who allowed me to conduct research in their buildings as well as the teachers who shared their insights with me. And last but not least, a very special thank you to Alan (my cheerleader), Elyse and Noah (my mini cheerleaders) and my dad, Joel, who were flexible and willing to help me with my mom responsibilities during this journey of earning my doctorate of education

Table of Contents

Abstract	iii
Dedication	v
Acknowledgements	vi
Table of Contents	vii
List of Tables	xi
List of Figures	xv
CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE	1
Problem Statement	1
Background and Conceptual Framework	2
Significance of the Study	4
Purpose Statement	4
Delimitations	5
Assumptions	5
Research Questions	6
Definition of Terms	6
Overview Methods	8
Summary and Organization of the Study	9
CHAPTER TWO LITERATURE REVIEW	11
The Changing Role of the Special Educator	11
Special Education Legislation	11
The Role of Gifted Educators in the Collaborative Process	14
Collaboration between Special Education and General Education	15

Potential Barriers to Collaboration	16
Elements of Effective Collaboration.....	17
Team Process	18
Benefits of Collaboration.....	19
Administrative support.....	20
Positive Attitude towards Collaboration.....	22
Resources	22
Professional Development	22
Conclusion	24
Summary.....	25
CHAPTER THREE METHODS	26
Research Design.....	26
Quantitative.....	27
Qualitative.....	27
Population and Sample	27
Sampling Procedures	28
Quantitative.....	29
Qualitative.....	29
Instrumentation	30
Quantitative.....	30
Qualitative.....	30
Validity and Reliability.....	42
Quantitative (Surveys)	42
Qualitative (Observations and Interviews)	42

Data Collection Procedures.....	43
Quantitative.....	43
Qualitative.....	44
Data Analysis.....	46
Limitations	47
Summary.....	47
CHAPTER FOUR RESULTS	48
Quantitative Data	48
Qualitative Data.....	109
Summary.....	135
CHAPTER FIVE INTERPRETATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	136
Study Summary.....	136
Overview of the Problem.....	136
Purpose Statement and Research Questions.....	137
Review of Methodology.....	138
Major Findings.....	139
Findings Related to the Literature.....	149
Conclusions.....	153
Recommendations for Future Research.....	155
Concluding Remarks.....	156
References.....	158
APPENDIX A Data Collection and Sampling Materials.....	165
APPENDIX B Permission from Author to Use Elements of Collaboration.....	196

APPENDIX C Permission to Conduct Research in District.....	199
APPENDIX D Approval to Conduct Research	208
APPENDIX E IRB Request Form	211
APPENDIX F IRB Approval.....	216
APPENDIX G Tables	218

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Survey Question 1: Years of Teaching Experience	49
Table 2. Survey Question 2: Years of Teaching Experience in the District	50
Table 3. Survey Question 3: Years of Teaching Experience in Current Building.....	51
Table 4. Survey Question 3: Number of Students with IEPs (General education).....	52
Table 5. Survey Question 4: Caseload (Special education).....	53
Table 6. Survey Question 5: Amount of Time Collaborating with Special Education.....	54
Table 7. Survey Question 5: Amount of Time Collaborating with Gifted Education.....	55
Table 8. Survey Question 5: Amount of Time Collaborating with Grade Level Team....	56
Table 9. Survey Question 8: Clear Understanding the Roles-Special Education.....	57
Table 10. Survey Question 8: Clear Understanding the Roles-Gifted Education.....	58
Table 11. Survey Question 8: Clear Understanding the Roles-General Education	59
Table 12. Survey Question 9: Common Philosophies and Goals Special Education	60
Table 13. Survey Question 9: Common Philosophies and Goals Gifted Education.....	61
Table 14 Survey Question 11: Set Processes and Routines for Special Education.....	62
Table 15. Survey Question 11: Set Processes and Routines for Gifted Education.....	63
Table 16. Survey Question 12: Defined Roles and Responsibilities.	64
Table 17. Survey Question 12: Defined Roles and Responsibilities	65
Table 18. Survey Question 23: Ongoing Collaboration is Beneficial	67
Table 19. Survey Question 23: Ongoing Collaboration is Beneficial	68
Table 20. Survey Question 24: Existing Collaboration Benefits Students.....	69
Table 21. Survey Question 24: Existing Collaboration Benefits Students.....	70
Table 22. Survey Question 17: Input Regarding Scheduling and Delivery of Services....	71
Table 23. Survey Question 17: Input Regarding Scheduling and Delivery of Services....	72

Table 24. Survey Question 17: Input Regarding Scheduling and Delivery of Services.	73
Table 25. Survey Question 17: Input Regarding Scheduling and Delivery of Services.	74
Table 26. Survey Question 17: Input Regarding Scheduling and Delivery of Services.	75
Table 27. Survey Question 17: Input Regarding Scheduling and Delivery of Services.	76
Table 28. Survey Question 19: Special Education Teachers as Leaders	77
Table 29. Survey Question 19: Special Education Teachers as Leaders	78
Table 30. Survey Question 20: Principal Encourages Teacher Leadership.....	79
Table 31. Survey Question 21: Accountability for Collaboration	80
Table 32. Survey Question 6: Positive Feelings and Views Toward Collaboration.....	82
Table 33. Survey Question 6: Positive Feelings and Views Toward Collaboration.....	83
Table 34. Survey Question 6: Positive Feelings and Views Toward Collaboration.....	84
Table 35. Survey Question 6: Positive Feelings and Views Toward Collaboration.....	85
Table 36. Survey Question 7: Committed and Motivated to Collaborate.....	86
Table 37. Survey Question 7: Committed and Motivated to Collaborate.....	87
Table 38. Survey Question 7: Committed and Motivated to Collaborate.....	88
Table 39. Survey Question 10: Positive Communication and Relationships	89
Table 40. Survey Question 10: Positive Communication and Relationships	90
Table 41. Survey Question 10: Positive Communication and Relationships	91
Table 42. Survey Question 18: Sense of Community	92
Table 43. Survey Question 18: Sense of Community	93
Table 44. Survey Question 22: Necessary Resources for Collaboration	94
Table 45. Survey Question 22: Necessary Resources for Collaboration	95
Table 46. Survey Question 25: Amount of Time for Collaboration is Appropriate	96
Table 47. Survey Question 25: Amount of Time for Collaboration is Appropriate	97

Table 48. Survey Question 13: Clear Focus for Professional Development	99
Table 49. Survey Question 13: Clear Focus for Professional Development	100
Table 50. Survey Question 13: Clear Focus for Professional Development	101
Table 51. Survey Question 14: Voice in Professional Development.....	102
Table 52. Survey Question 14: Voice in Professional Development.....	103
Table 53. Survey Question 15: Professional Development Connects to Practice	105
Table 54. Survey Question 15: Professional Development Connects to Practice	106
Table 55. Survey Question 16: In-house Expertise for Professional Development	107
Table 56. Survey Question 16: In-house Expertise for Professional Development	108
Table 57. Number of Teacher Participants by School	109
Table 58. Interview Classification Codes	110
Table G1. Survey Question 5: Amount of Time for Collaborating with Individuals.	219
Table G2. Survey Question 5: Amount of Time for Collaborating with Others.....	220
Table G3. Survey Question 9: Common Philosophies and Goals.....	221
Table G4. Survey Question 11: Set Processes, Expectations, and Routines.....	222
Table G5. Survey Question 12: Defined Roles and ResponsibilitiesI.....	223
Table G6. Survey Question 18: Sense of Community	224
Table G7. Survey Question 20: Building Principal Encourages Teacher Leadership ...	225
Table G8. Survey Question 21: Accountability for Collaboration.....	226
Table G9. Survey Question 7: Commitment to Collaborate.....	227
Table G10. Survey Question 25: Time for Collaboration is Appropriate.....	228
Table G11. Survey Question 14: Voice in Professional Development.....	229
Table G12. Survey Question 14: Voice in Professional Development.....	230

Table G13. Survey Question 15: Professional Development Connects with Practice....231

Table G14. Survey Question 16: In-house Expertise for Professional Development....232

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Elements of Collaboration.....	18
Figure 2. Data Collection Matrix	195

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE

Collaboration among general education and special education/ gifted education professionals is essential to meeting the diverse needs of student learners in the classroom (NAGC, 1998). A general education teacher simply cannot meet the needs of all the diverse learners on his or her own without additional support from trained special education teachers. Resource teachers with training in special education should support classroom teachers with their expertise in differentiation and modification of curriculum. General education teachers can share their knowledge of grade level and content expectations with the special education/gifted education teachers to ensure that the students have manageable and meaningful goals. Other factors also need to be in place to further support collaboration. The factors include: team processes, perceived benefits, administrator support and shared leadership, positive attitude toward collaboration, essential resources, and professional development opportunities (Friend & Cook ,1996; Wiggins & Damore, 2006; Cramer, 2006; and Tannock, 2009).

Problem Statement

General education and special education/gifted education teachers historically have not had a strong collaborative relationship due to the pull out model of services (Skrtic, Harris, & Shriner, 2005). Prior to legislation requiring schools to be inclusive of students with special needs, students were provided separate services often in separate classrooms or even separate buildings. With the increase of inclusion and special education services provided in the classroom as a result of IDEA 1990, general education and special education teachers need to be able to collaborate and work together to meet

the needs of the students who are eligible for an Individual Education Plan (IEP) or even those students who are achieving below, at, or above grade level.

Although teachers may agree that collaboration is a valuable goal, collaborative relationships are difficult to develop and maintain due to factors such as competing priorities, limited resources, and lack of focused professional development (Walther – Thomas, Korinek, and McLaughlin, 2005). Also, although collaboration between general education and special education teachers is necessary, both groups of teachers may be unsure of their collaborative roles and tasks (Rainforth & England, 1997).

The group, *Bright Futures for Exceptional Learners*, conducted a survey of pre-service general education classroom teachers and special education teachers in 2000. The results of the survey revealed that general educators were concerned with being prepared to meet the exceptional needs of their students, and special educators expressed concerns about not being prepared for their role in a collaborative relationship with general education teachers (Kozleski, Mainzer, Deschler, Coleman & Rodriguez-Walling, 2000). These results indicate a need for a formal framework that general classroom education and special education teachers follow as they enter into collaborative relationships.

Background and Conceptual Framework

Inclusion of special needs students, including gifted students, in the regular classroom began with the implementation of Public Law 94-142, Education of All Handicapped Children Act passed by Congress in 1975. Inclusive practices became more prevalent in the 1990s as part of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). With the implementation of these laws issues arose related to training of the classroom teachers, changing role of the resource specialist and the increasing need for

collaboration (Cramer, 2006). Reauthorized by Congress and signed into law by President Bush in December 2004, the federal Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA-04) now guides all special education practices in the United States. IDEA-04 mandates that each student identified as eligible for special education services receive a “free and appropriate public education” in the “least restrictive environment” and be afforded “due process rights” as delineated in the legislation (Department of Education Website, 2009).

Mandates for gifted education services are determined at the state level, meaning it is up to individual states to determine what, if any, services are provided to students who show a need for specialized education. According to the Davidson Institute for Talent Development (2009), Kansas is one of only seven states in the United States in which gifted education programming is mandated and fully funded by the state. In Kansas, gifted education is considered special education, and students who qualify for services have an Individual Education Plan (IEP) just as students who are identified with specific learning disabilities (Davidson Institute for Talent Development Website, 2009).

The suburban school district in the Kansas City metropolitan area that participated in this study has embraced inclusion of students in the regular education classroom both for students who qualify for special education and those who qualify for gifted education services. According to the Executive Director of Student Services for the district, since the majority of students’ instructional time is spent in the general education classroom, it is essential that general education and special education/gifted education teachers collaborate on a regular basis (personal communication, 2009).

In this district, each building has at least one full-time gifted education teacher to directly serve the students who have an IEP in gifted services. According to the District

Coordinator for Gifted Education Services, since the gifted education teachers are based at each building, collaboration with classroom teachers can be more efficient and easier to schedule since the teachers can be readily available to meet student needs on a regular basis as part of the regular school day schedule (personal communication, 2009).

In addition, in 2005, as part of the district's strategic plan, Professional Learning Communities were formally adopted as a vehicle to better meet the needs of students. Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) are used as a framework to discuss curriculum, instructional strategies, and ways to help students succeed based on their individual needs (District website, 2009).

Significance of the Study

This study examined the perceptions that exist between general education, special/ gifted education teachers, and administrators regarding the factors in place to support current collaborative practices in their schools. Knowing what is in place can assist administrators in providing additional support to teachers to expand on current collaborative practices. Additionally, the results of this study could drive professional development plans to further support collaborative practices between general education teachers and special education/gifted education teachers that can be used district-wide and in other districts with similar demographics and programs available.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to investigate existing perceptions of teachers and administrators regarding collaborative practices among general education and special education/ gifted education teachers.

Delimitations

Data were obtained from three elementary schools and three middle schools in a medium-sized suburban public school district in Kansas. Generalizations can potentially be made only to populations possessing similar demographics. Additional data collection with larger sample sizes might be necessary in order to generalize the results to larger populations.

Assumptions

1. The assumption was made that the responses given on interviews and surveys were honest, accurate, and valid measures of the teachers' perceptions of the collaborative practices currently in place in their school building.
2. An additional assumption was that observations made were of authentic collaboration sessions and not contrived for the benefit of the researcher.
3. The principal interviews were appropriate to obtain participants' perceptions of their role of supporting collaborative practices in their building and creating a culture of collaboration with their staff.
4. Survey instruments were appropriate to obtain participants' self-ratings of their perception of existing collaborative practices.
5. Demographic composition of participants was representative of all the district general education teachers, special education /gifted education teachers, and building administrators.

Research Questions

The research questions for this study were related to determining the six factors that contribute to effective collaboration between general education and special education/gifted education teachers (Wiggins & Damore, 2006).

1. What perceptions exist concerning team processes that support collaboration between special education/gifted education and general education teachers?
2. What perceptions exist concerning the benefits of collaboration between special education/gifted education teachers and general education teachers?
3. What perceptions exist concerning administrator support and shared leadership for collaboration between special education/gifted education and general education teachers?
4. What perceptions exist concerning attitude toward collaboration between special education/gifted education and general education teachers?
5. What perceptions exist concerning the resources currently available, and what is still needed to support collaboration between special education/gifted education and general education teachers?
6. What perceptions exist concerning the professional development that is provided to support collaboration between special education/gifted education and general education teachers?

Definition of Terms

Caseload: The number of students who are served by one individual either in a resource room setting or through consultation (Kansas Department of Education, 2009).

Collaboration: A systematic approach in which people work, interdependently, to analyze and affect professional practice to improve individual and collective results (Dufour, Dufour & Eaker, 2008).

General education teacher: Classroom teachers who have general education certification (Department of Education, 2009).

Interviews: Focused questions used to guide discussion between researcher and study participants to seek to understanding of the participants' perceptions (Lunenbergh & Irby, 2008).

Gifted education teacher: An educator who is specially trained in the unique needs of gifted students (NAGC).

Gifted: Performing or demonstrating the potential for performing at significantly higher levels of accomplishment in one or more academic fields because of intellectual ability, when compared to others of similar age, experience, and environment (KAR 91-40-1 Adopted May 2005)

Individualized Education Plan (IEP): A legal document that outlines the specialized plan for a student who receives special education services (Kansas Special Education Process Handbook, 2008).

Learning Disability: A general term that describes specific kinds of learning problems. A learning disability can cause a person to have trouble learning and using certain skills. The skills most often affected are: reading, writing, listening, speaking, reasoning, and doing math (National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities).

Observations: What the researcher learns from systematically observing and documenting collaboration sessions between special education and regular education

teachers to determine which elements of successful collaboration are demonstrated. (Lunenberg & Irby, 2008).

Professional Development: Formal or informal experiences that continue the advancement of skills, knowledge, and ideals through purposeful learning efforts to facilitate the ability of individuals to perform more competently in their professional positions, support their organization's mission, and be a factor in the progress of their career (McLagan, 1989).

Special Education Services: Specially designed, individualized services that make it possible for the student to meet his or her academic and functional goals and needs provided in the location that is the best place for him or her to learn (Kansas Department of Special Education, 2006)

Special education teacher: An educator who is specially trained to provide individualized instruction for a child with a disability so he or she can achieve his or her expected educational outcomes (CEC, 2000).

Team Process: Day to day activities in which colleagues work together to solve problems and learn together (Defour, Defour & Eaker, 2008).

Overview Methods

This mixed quantitative and qualitative study was designed to investigate teacher and administrator perceptions regarding factors that are in place for collaboration between general education teachers and special education/gifted education teachers. The research tools were selected to find out the perceptions that teachers and administrators have regarding existing collaboration in their respective buildings. The mixed qualitative and quantitative research method was appropriately chosen for this study. Using a

qualitative research method for the study provided in-depth teacher and administrator perspectives that would not have been known from quantitative data alone.

The quantitative data were collected for this study through online surveys. Through email, building administrators provided three different survey links (which were created by the researcher) to their teachers so they could access the appropriate online survey. The results were collected through [surveymonkey.com](https://www.surveymonkey.com), and the information collected was anonymous.

Qualitative data were collected through interviews of administrators, observations of collaborative meeting sessions between general education and special education/gifted education teachers and interviews with different subgroups. The qualitative data were used to support the quantitative data collected from the online survey. The qualitative data provided more substance to the survey data in illustrating the existing factors that are currently in place between general education and special education/gifted education teachers.

Summary and Organization of the Study

Introduction to the problem statement and design components including background, significance, purpose statement, delimitations, assumptions, research questions, definition of terms, and overview of research methods information were included in Chapter One. Relevant review of 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. 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

LITERATURE REVIEW

The review of literature for this study includes the history of the role of the special education teacher in the United States, collaboration in education and factors that support effective collaboration.

The Changing Role of the Special Educator

Winn and Blanton (2005) suggest that the job descriptions of special educators have changed over the last 10-20 years. Friend and Cook (1991) described the consultative model beginning in the 1970's where special educators were seen as consultants to general education teachers about how to implement strategies used to assist students with special needs in the classroom setting. However, through ongoing collaboration, strategies designed for special education students can be effectively used in the general education classrooms as well (Murawski & Hughes, 2009). Collaboration is expected to be an increasing part of the role of the special educator. In order for special educators to be more effective, they need the skills to be true collaborative team members (Cramer, 2006). To understand the benefits of collaboration between special education and general education teachers, it is valuable to review the role of special educators and how their role has changed over the years.

Special Education Legislation

Historically, special educators worked with their students in isolation, either in a separate classroom or a separate facility (Salend, 2005). Then, in 1975, there was an amendment to the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EHA), P.L. 94-142. Most professionals agree that this act significantly expanded the educational rights of

children and youth with disabilities (NICHCY, 1991). After the passage of P.L. 94-142, special educators' roles began to change from being outside experts to being a collaborative part of a team that makes decisions on placement of students. According to Sharon Cramer (2006), there are at least three features of P.L. 94-142 that required collaboration between general educators and special educators that did not occur prior to EHA. These three features were Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE), the Individual Education Plan, and Least Restrictive Environment. Cramer asserts that these features contributed to the importance of collaboration between general educators and special educators since they now need to work together rather than in isolation. However, along with the need to work together, there came challenges. General education teachers and special education/gifted education teachers historically have not had a strong collaborative relationship due to the pull out model of services (Skrtic, Harris, & Shriner, 2005).

Prior to legislation requiring schools to be inclusive for students with special needs, students were provided separate services often in separate classrooms or even separate buildings. With the increase of inclusion and special education services provided in the classroom as a result of IDEA 1990, general education teachers and special education/gifted teachers need to be able to collaborate and work together to meet the needs of the students who are eligible for an Individual Education Plan (IEP) or even those students who are achieving below, at, or above grade level (Winn and Blanton, 2005).

According to the IDEA website, IDEA was reauthorized in 2004 and included regulations for ensuring student success, provided funding for professional development

for special education teachers, and streamlining the IEP and other paperwork. IDEA included provisions for collaboration with the increase of student assistance teams and cooperative teaching to benefit student achievement and success. Both IDEA and IDEA 2004 support the use of the least restrictive environment (LRE) for students with disabilities and increased time in the general education classroom for special education students, which required an increase in collaboration between general education teachers and special education teachers.

According to Tina Itkonen (2007), collaboration is necessary to meet the needs of special education students as required by the No Child Left Behind Act. Discussions between special and general educators on “how to achieve high standards for students with disabilities while meeting their unique educational needs and providing appropriate accommodations” (p. 14) is now essential. While the concept of collaborative planning and delivery of services should be straightforward, these collaborative teams can be difficult to maintain when there are conflicting priorities and time constraints (Barnes, Bullock, & Currin, 1997). These barriers lead to ineffective collaboration and impact the success of students in the classroom setting (Dearman & Alber, 2005).

According to Brownell, Adams, Sindelar, Waldron, & Vanhover (2006), collaboration is seen as a powerful tool for special education teachers to help general education teachers meet the needs of classroom teachers. Collaboration appears as a content area in all the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) recommendations and also appears in the tenth set of standards included in the knowledge and skills domain areas:

“Special Educators routinely and effectively collaborate with families and other educators, related services providers, and personnel from community agencies in

culturally responsive ways. This collaboration assures that the needs of the individuals with exceptional learning needs are addressed throughout schooling” (CEC, 2004).

The Role of Gifted Educators in the Collaborative Process

In examining the role of gifted education teachers in the collaborative process, it is vital to understand how gifted education services are provided to students. In the 1970’s legislators began to recognize that gifted students needed specialized curriculum and instruction to meet their educational needs in the public schools. The federal government began to define gifted education and create funds for gifted education services (Davis & Rimm, 2004). Also, in the 1970’s, states passed legislation that formalized the existence and needs of gifted students and often provided funds for additional resources including state directors, teachers, and programs. Districts began to hire gifted program directors and teacher-coordinators that resulted in the development of identification procedures, acceleration policies, and enrichment plans (Davis & Rimm, 2004).

Even though efforts were made at the national level to provide for gifted education services, more than 30 years later gifted education is still not federally mandated in the U.S. That means each state determines whether it funds gifted education services and how those services are provided. In Kansas, gifted education is mandated under the umbrella of special education. Therefore, gifted education services need to follow the same guidelines as other exceptionalities (Kansas State Department of Education, 2009).

Collaboration between Special Education and General Education

Currently, schools across the nation are implementing Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) as a model of collaboration (Hord & Sommers, 2007). Teachers can come together in a concerted effort to better meet the needs of students by examining data, making instructional decisions based on the data, and discussing best practices that will meet the needs of students. By having focus and a common language in the discussions about student learning, districts have seen marked improvement in student achievement (Dufour, Dufour, & Eaker, 2008).

Sharon Hall (2007) said that as a result the accountability of special education students that appear in both NCLB and IDEA mandates, special education teachers' role has changed. Now, special education teachers need to know how to work in the general education setting and how to collaborate with general education teachers. According to Wiggins and Damore (2006), collaboration between colleagues is a necessity as a result of increased accountability. Murawski and Hughes (2009) suggest that special education teachers have historically been the experts in individualizing instruction and assessing student needs so the easiest way to include these strategies into the general education classroom is through ongoing collaboration between special education/gifted education teachers and general education teachers.

However, Wiggins and Damore (2006) point out that teachers do not necessarily know how to collaborate effectively with their colleagues to help them meet the diverse learning needs in their classroom. Winn and Blanton (2005) note that all teachers, including special education teachers working with general education teachers, need specific frameworks for collaborating to address student needs and help the students

better achieve success in the general education classroom. While there are suggestions for elements of effective collaboration, the literature shows few established models of collaboration between special education and general education teachers.

Potential Barriers to Collaboration

While teachers may agree that collaboration is a valuable goal, collaborative relationships are difficult to develop and maintain due to factors such as competing priorities, limited resources, and lack of focused professional development (Walther - Thomas, Korinek, McLaughlin, & Williams, 2000). Although collaboration between general education and special education/gifted education teachers is necessary, special education/gifted education teachers and general education teachers may be unsure of their collaborative roles and tasks (Rainforth & England, 1997).

The group, *Bright Futures for Exceptional Learners*, conducted a survey of pre-service general education teachers and special education teachers in 2000. The survey found that general education teachers were concerned with being prepared to meet the needs of their exceptional students, and special education teachers expressed concerns with not being prepared in their role in a collaborative relationship with general education teachers (Kozleski, Mainzer, Deschler, Coleman & Rodriguez-Walling, 2000). These findings indicate a need for a formal framework that general education, special education, and gifted teachers follow as they enter in a collaborative relationship.

A common problem that gifted educators face is that most of the time and resources are provided for students achieving below grade level. Many teachers believe that students who are achieving above grade level do not need the focused support like their peers who are struggling with grade level objectives (NAGC website, 2009).

Elements of Effective Collaboration

Effective collaboration is the process of working together to create meaningful learning experiences for students (Cramer, 2006). School cultures that reflect collaborative practices are referred to as communities, rather than organizations (Senge, 1990). These communities expect and embrace diverse learners (Sergiovanni, 1994).

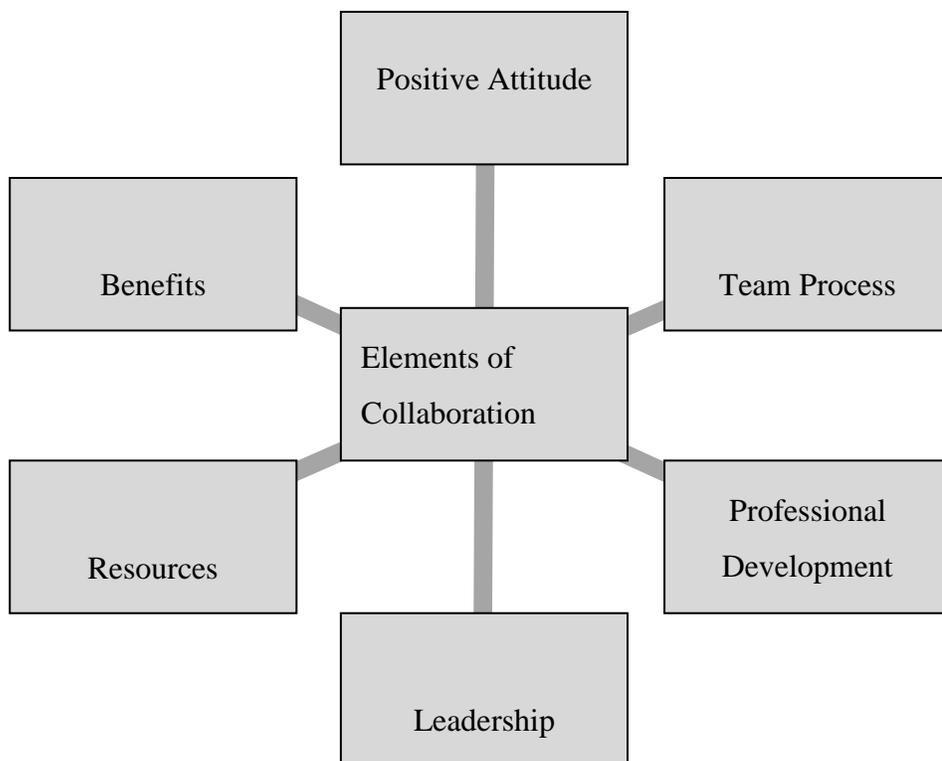
Collaboration becomes increasingly important as the needs of students are more diverse. When the needs of students are more diverse, it becomes increasingly difficult for a teacher to reach all these needs in isolation (Hall, 2007). According to Winn & Branton (2005), one of the major obstacles that special education and general education teachers face is working together to develop curriculum and instruction based on best practices that accommodate the needs of diverse learners. Regardless of the type of collaboration structure that is used, successful collaboration requires planning time and administrative support (Carter, Prater, Jackson & Marchant, 2009).

Friend and Cook (1991) discuss that while there are many definitions for collaboration, there is not one universally accepted definition or existing framework. According to Carter, Prater, Jackson & Marchant (2009), when teachers use a specific model and procedures to guide the collaboration process, students can improve academic achievement. Unless there is a structured model for collaboration between special education and general education teachers, they may only share information about students instead of planning instructional interventions for students (Carter, Prater, Jackson & Marchant, 2009).

Of the existing models of effective collaboration suggested by Friend & Cook (1996), Wiggins & Damore (2006), and Tannock (2009), there are common themes that

are evident. The review of literature revealed six common elements of effective collaboration having team processes in place, understanding the benefits of collaboration, administrative support of collaboration, positive attitude towards collaboration, resources in place to facilitate collaboration and professional development (Wiggins & Damore, 2006). Wiggins and Damore's Elements of Collaboration framework illustrates the six elements of effective collaboration (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Elements of Collaboration



Team Process

According to Friend & Cook (1996) and Murray (2004), some professionals may not have the skills to effectively collaborate and therefore processes need to be in place to facilitate collaboration among teams of teachers. Team process activities may include developing roles and responsibilities, building trust, and developing a shared focus

(Tannock, 2009). According to Etheridge & Green (1999), trust is always mentioned as key to the collaboration process. Building trust between colleagues is important since their level of trust may affect how they interact with students as well as with one another (Sawyer, 2001).

Sharon Hall (2007) explains that in order to be effective, collaborative teams must develop “roles and responsibilities, a common plan time and a way to communicate” (p.37). Often special education teachers are seen by general education teachers as the “expert” rather than a collaborative member of the team (Pugach & Johnson, 1989). According to Mainzer, et al. (2003), special educators have many responsibilities depending on their specific building. However, when roles are not clearly defined, it can affect their attitude towards their job. When collaborating teachers clearly understand one another’s roles and goals for students, they are more effective in promoting an inclusive environment (Tannock, 2009).

As part of the team process, there should be a shared vision and mission as well as philosophy. According to Garmston (1997), “to sustain collaboration requires a change in school culture.” Carter, Prater, Jackson & Marchant (2009) found that sharing a common philosophy about educating students with disabilities is an important aspect to successful collaboration.

Benefits of Collaboration

According to Crislip & Larson (1994), collaboration is a mutually beneficial relationship between people who work towards common goals by sharing responsibility, authority, and accountability for achieving results. Etheridge & Green (1999) suggest that one benefit of collaboration is that all parties have a common focus that all support.

Another benefit of collaborating in this manner is that teachers can make decisions about the instructional strategies that would best meet the needs of the students in a particular class or grade (Koppang, 2004). Carol Ann Tomlinson (2004) asserts that differentiation of instruction is a shared responsibility of both general education and special education/gifted education teachers in which all students ultimately benefit by having more individualized instruction.

Michelle Tannock (2009) discusses how both general education and special education/gifted education teachers bring unique experiences and training to the classroom, pointing out how these unique experiences offer opportunities to learn from one another and expand their knowledge bases. Through collaboration, both special education/gifted education teachers and general education teachers have the benefit of learning skills from one another to strengthen their instructional repertoire (Tannock, 2009). Carter, Prater & Marchart (2009) discuss that when curriculum is adapted to meet the needs of special education students, teachers, parents and students themselves report that these students benefit academically. The more often general education and special education/gifted education teachers can collaborate about strategies from their fields of expertise, the more likely students will benefit from researched based strategies used in the general education classroom (Murawski & Hughes, 2009).

Administrative support

The third element of effective collaboration discussed in the research is administrative support. Building and district leadership is vital to the success of collaborative practices since these administrators shape the school culture and are necessary component of systematic change (Sharpe & Hawes, 2003). According to Bryk,

Camburn & Louis (1997), administrators influence student learning by building collaborative communities that support teacher learning. VanTassel-Baska & Strambaugh (2005) also point out that “systematic change occurs only when leaders proactively support differentiated practices” (p. 215).

Dearman & Alber (2005) suggest that administrators must provide an environment that enables teachers to “study together regularly, to build a strong commitment to meeting the needs of each student through effective instruction, and to support one another as changes occur.” Kohm and Nance (2009), discuss how administrators can foster an environment that supports collaboration by sharing leadership responsibilities with teachers and giving them opportunities to develop the skills for collaborative problem solving.

Minnett (2003) reported that administrators have two roles in regard to managing collaborative teams: supporting the teams in working together for curriculum development and behavior management, and providing support by setting aside specific blocks of time for team planning at the school. Kohn and Nance (2009) suggest that school administrators should provide and communicate clearly defined roles and responsibilities for team members and model the expected behaviors during team meetings and building-wide meetings. In an interview regarding collaboration and special education, Dr. June Downing stated, “The administrators are the ones that have to structure the time to collaborate so that everyone has the opportunity to participate in an equal manner” (Spencer, 2005).

Positive Attitude towards Collaboration

The fourth element of effective collaboration is positive attitude. Winter (2007) discusses how collaboration between educators not only affects student learning, but also enhances the professional climate of the school. According to Michelle Tannock (2009), a “positive frame of mind” in the collaborative process is supportive to student learning. Wade, Welch & Jensen (1994) suggest that when teachers see that their efforts lead to student success, personal satisfaction, and further support, they are more likely to have a positive attitude towards the collaborative process.

Resources

The fifth factor related to effective collaboration is resources that support collaboration. Perhaps the most valuable resource in the collaborative process is time. According to Peter Milbury (2005), unless there is regular time set aside to collaborate, it is difficult to improve on collaborative practices, and teachers will not improve their collaborative skills. To create an atmosphere of collaboration, the administration must recognize that teachers need time to work together and collaborate. This time allotment needs to be built into the school schedule on a regular basis or collaboration will not occur. As Bouck (2007) points out, teachers value having time to plan together, daily if possible. As VanTassel-Baska & Stambaugh (2005) assert, educators need time to plan together with a gifted education teacher or they may feel overwhelmed with the idea of meeting the needs of gifted learners.

Professional Development

Sharon Hall (2007) states that it is “critical” that general and special education teachers participate in ongoing professional development to improve their skills and

understanding of the content being taught (p. 36). Hall (2007) also discusses the importance of investigating best practices in professional development and how these practices foster positive collaboration between general educators and special educators. In most districts across the country, professional development is thought of as formalized classes or workshops that teach participants a new concept or strategy. Schools even have half day or full days in which a speaker may come in to speak to a large audience of teachers where the topic may not be relevant to the entire group. Experts in the field are recognizing that this may not be the most effective way to provide meaningful professional development (Corcoran, 1995).

It is becoming more common to have professional development opportunities that are job-embedded, ongoing, and collaborative (Dufour, Dufour, & Eakers, 2008). In fact, The National Staff Development Council's (NSDC) current definition of professional development is "a lifelong collaborative learning process that nourishes the growth of individuals, teams, and the school through a job-embedded, learner centered, focused approach"(NSDC, 2001). In 2001, NSDC published 12 standards for successful professional development. One of the standards was "Staff development that improves the learning of all students provides educators with the knowledge and skills to collaborate" (NSDC, 2001). This shift in thinking about what works in professional development supports the collaborative process at the building level.

Special education/gifted education teachers face unique challenges when seeking to participate in professional development activities offered at the building or district level. While special/gifted educators are willing and interested participants in professional development, they frequently feel left out of activities planned for an entire

school staff (Voltz, 2001). In addition to being highly qualified in accordance with the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLBA), special/gifted educators must also participate in high quality professional development activities to increase student outcomes.

Collaboration with general education teachers who are highly qualified in their content area can be a way for special education/gifted education teachers to meet this requirement (Mainzer, Deschler, Coleman, Kozleski, & Rodriguez-Walling, 2003). The challenge for districts is to make professional development effective and meaningful for both general and special education teachers

Conclusion

Chapter Two discussed the historical perspective of the roles of special educators in the collaborative process. While the research shows that there is a strong need for collaboration between special education/gifted education teachers and general education teachers, there is not one model for effective collaboration. However, based on the review of the literature, there are six common factors that should be in place for effective collaboration between special education and regular education teachers. The factors are: 1) established team process, 2) positive attitude towards collaboration, 3) administrator support and shared leadership, 4) perceived benefits of collaboration, 5) resources, and 6) professional development. These factors provide a framework for successful collaboration for teams. Finally, the research demonstrates the role professional development plays in strengthening collaborative practices between special education/gifted education and general education teachers to better meet the needs of all students.

Summary

Chapter Two reviews the literature available on the topics related to collaborative practices, includes history of the role of the special education/gifted education teachers in the United States, collaboration in education, and factors that support effective collaboration. The references cited can be found in the references section. Chapter Three discusses the methodology that was used in the data collection for this study.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODS

This chapter contains information on the mixed research design of this study of collaboration practices between general education and special education/gifted education teachers. The study was focused on investigating perceptions regarding six factors associated with the effectiveness of collaboration among general education and special education/ gifted education teachers. These were: 1) team process, 2) benefits, 3) administrator support and shared leadership, 4) positive attitude, 5) necessary resources, and 6) professional development (Wiggins & Damore, 2006). Information about the sample and procedures of sample selection are included in 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 mixed methods research project that involved collection of data from surveys, interviews and observations to investigate the existing perceptions concerning collaboration between general education and special education/gifted education teachers in three elementary schools and three middle schools in the same suburban school district. According to Lunenberg & Irby (2008), a mixed methods research study refers to those studies that have both qualitative and quantitative research methods. The combined results of the survey, interviews, and observations allowed the

researcher to see the extent to which the identified factors of effective collaboration were present in the schools that were studied.

Quantitative

The purpose of the quantitative portion of the study was to collect information about perceptions that exist about current collaboration practices among general education, and special education/gifted education teachers at the elementary and middle schools who participated in the study. The survey questions were developed for this study based on the “Elements of Effective Collaboration” by Wiggins & Damore (2006). The permission from the author for the researcher to adapt this model can be found in Appendix B.

Qualitative

The purpose of the qualitative portion of the study was to gain deeper insights about perceptions that exist about current collaboration practices among general education and special education/gifted education teachers at the elementary and middle schools who participated in the study. The qualitative portion of this study involved interviews with building administrators, observations of collaborative sessions between general education and special education/ gifted education teachers, and interviews with general education and special education/gifted education teachers in the six buildings that participated in the study.

The interviews for both building administrators and teachers were designed with the intent to learn more about the participants’ experiences using open ended questioning and follow up to responses given in a face-to-face meeting. The observations conducted during the regularly scheduled collaboration sessions between general education teachers

and special education / gifted education teachers gave the researcher further insights in the factors of effective collaboration (team process, benefits, administrator support and shared leadership, positive attitude, resources, and professional development) currently in place and observable by a third party.

Population and Sample

The population for this study was general education teachers, special education/gifted education teachers, and administrators at the elementary and middle school level. A purposive sample was used based on groups selected by the researcher in a district of interest and volunteers who elected to participate in this study. Three elementary buildings and three middle school building administrators volunteered to participate in this research study.

There were a total of 114 general education classroom teachers, 38 special education teachers and seven gifted education teachers in the six participating schools. One administrator from each elementary and middle school in the study participated in the interview.

Sampling Procedures

Initially, an email was sent by the researcher to all elementary and middle school administrators in the district requesting volunteers to participate in this study. A copy of the email can be found in Appendix A. Three middle school and three elementary school administrators agreed to participate in the study. When the administrators volunteered to participate in the study, they consented to the following: allow the researcher to observe collaboration sessions between special education/gifted education and general education teachers, participate in the administrator interview, allow the researcher to conduct

interviews with volunteer teachers in their buildings, and email the link to the appropriate on-line survey link to the general, special education, and gifted education teachers in their building.

Quantitative

All general education, special education, and gifted education teachers in the six participating schools were invited through an email message to take the online survey and were provided the link to the survey within the email sent out to staff by the individual building administrators. The researcher provided the text for the email and the administrator forwarded the email to the appropriate staff members. Once the email was received, it was up to each teacher whether they took the survey accessing the provided link for the survey. A copy of the email can be found in Appendix A.

Qualitative

All six administrators participated in the interviews with the researcher as part of volunteering to be a part of the study. The administrator helped the researcher schedule observations of collaboration sessions and the administrator informed teachers that the sessions would have an observer on a particular day. If any teacher was not interested in participating in the observation, they could contact the administrator and ask that the session not be observed. To the researcher's knowledge, this did not occur. At least two observation sessions were scheduled at each school for a total of 15 observations.

To recruit volunteers for the teacher interviews, the researcher contacted teachers that had been involved in observations in person or through a follow up email. The researcher selected teachers that were representative of the population of teachers that participated in the observations.

Instrumentation

Four different instruments were used in this research study to assist in data collection. Each measurement tool is discussed in detail below.

Quantitative

The online survey was developed based on research related to effective elements of collaboration determined from the review of the literature and specifically the “Elements of Effective Collaboration” by Wiggins & Damore (2006). The surveys included one question about caseload and one question about how often the respondent collaborated with general education or special education teachers. The remaining questions in the survey addressed teachers’ perceptions of whether the school has effective collaboration as specified by the six factors identified. Questions about team processes, perceived benefits, administrator support and shared leadership, resources provided, and professional development were included in the survey. Blank copies of the surveys can be found in Appendix A. This survey method was selected because it gathered baseline data about collaboration practices in the district at the elementary and middle school level (Lumenberg & Irby, 2008).

Similar surveys were designed for each teacher group (general education, special education, and gifted education). The surveys consisted of 25 questions total, with the first five questions targeting demographics of the participants and then 20 Likert scale questions regarding the teachers’ perception of factors of collaboration that exist in their building. Questions 6-25 had the response choices: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Undecided, Agree and Strongly Agree.

The survey began with three questions targeting the participants' demographic information such as how long they have been teaching in their current role and how long have they been teaching in the district. The first question was how long he or she has been teaching. The response choices were: 1-3 years, 4-7 years, 8-11 years, 12-15 years, and 15+ years. Next teachers were asked how long they have been teaching in the district, with the same response choices. On the special education and gifted education surveys, there was an additional question related to the number of years he or she has been teaching in their current building, again with the same response choices.

The next question(s) on the survey had to do with caseload. General education teachers were asked about how many students with an IEP for learning disabilities they had in their classroom and then asked how many students with an IEP for gifted are in their class. The response choices were: None, 1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 7+. Special education and gifted education teachers were asked about their caseload, and how many students with IEPs for their specialty were on their caseload. The response choices for special education teachers were: 1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 7-8, 9-10, and 10+. The response choices for gifted education teachers were different because they tend to have large case loads compared to special education and general education teachers. They were: 1-5, 6-10, 11-15, 16-20, 21-25, and 26+.

Research Question 1: Team Process

Survey Questions 5, 8, 9, 11, 12, 17, and 18 connect to Research Question 1 about perceptions of team processes in place. Question 5 on the survey addressed how often collaboration between general education and special education / gifted education teachers occurred. This question connected to Research Question 1 since it determines how often

teachers collaborate, an indicator of team process. General education teachers were asked how often they collaborated with special education teachers and then asked how often they collaborated with gifted education teachers. The response choices were: Never, Quarterly, Monthly, Weekly and Not Sure. Both special education teachers and gifted education teachers were asked how often they collaborated with a grade level team, individual general education teachers, and other special education teachers. The same response choices were offered: Never, Quarterly, Monthly, Weekly and Not Sure.

Question 8 asked general education teachers if they were clear in understanding the roles in collaboration between general education and special education teachers in their building and whether they were clear in understanding the roles in collaboration between general education and gifted education teachers in their building. The response choices were Strongly Agree, Agree, Undecided, Disagree, or Strongly Disagree. These choices were used for the remaining questions on the survey. Special education and gifted education teachers were asked if they were clear in the roles between general education and special education/gifted education teachers in their building.

Question 9 asked general education teachers if they believe there are common philosophies and goals in their building regarding special education and if there are common philosophies and goals in their building regarding gifted education. Special education and gifted education teachers were asked if they believe there are common philosophies, goals and shared expertise in their building regarding special education/gifted education.

Question 11 asked general education teachers if there are set processes, expectations, and routines for collaboration sessions between themselves and special

education teachers in their building and if there are set processes, expectations, and routines for collaboration sessions between themselves and gifted education teachers in their building. The special education and gifted education teachers were asked if there were set processes, expectations, and routines for collaboration sessions between themselves and general education teachers.

Question 12 asked general education teachers if there are defined team roles and responsibilities for collaboration sessions between themselves and special education teachers in their building and then asked if there are defined team roles and responsibilities for collaboration sessions between themselves and gifted education teachers. Special education and gifted education teachers were asked if there are defined team roles and responsibilities for collaboration sessions between themselves and general education teachers in their building.

Research Question 2: Benefits

Survey Questions 23 and 24 connect to Research Question 2 about perceived benefits of collaboration.

Question 23 asked general education, special education, and gifted education teachers if they believe that it is beneficial to have regular ongoing collaboration between general education and special education/gifted education in their building. Question 24 asked all three groups of teachers if the collaboration that currently exists in their building benefits students in the classroom setting.

Research Question 3: Administrator Support and Shared Leadership

Survey Questions 17, 19, 20, and 21 connect to Research Question 3 regarding perceived administrator support and shared leadership.

Question 17 asked general education teachers to reflect on whether they had input regarding the scheduling and delivery options for special education and gifted education. General education teachers were also asked if they thought special education and gifted education teachers have input regarding the scheduling and delivery options for special education and gifted education. Special education and gifted education teachers were asked if they thought general education teachers have input regarding the scheduling and delivery options for special education/gifted education. Special education and gifted education teachers were also asked if they have input regarding the scheduling and delivery options for special education/gifted education.

Question 19 asked general education, special education, and gifted education if they see special education teachers (including gifted education teachers) as leaders in their building. Question 20 asked all three groups of teachers if they think their building administrator encourages teacher leadership and decision making regarding special education issues. Question 21 asked all three groups of teachers if there is accountability for collaboration in their building.

Research Question 4: Positive Attitude

Survey Questions 6, 7, 10, and 18 relate to Research Question 4 regarding positive attitude towards collaboration.

Question 6 asked general education teachers if they have positive feeling and views toward collaboration with special education teachers and gifted education teachers. Special education and gifted education teachers were asked if they had positive feelings and views toward collaboration with classroom teachers and if they had positive feelings and views toward collaboration with other special education teachers in their building.

Question 7 asked general education teachers if they were both committed and motivated to collaborate with special education and gifted education teachers in their building. Special education and gifted education teachers were asked if they were committed and motivated to collaborate with general education teachers and other special education teachers in their building.

Question 10 asked general education classroom teachers if they have positive communication and relationships with the gifted education teacher(s) and special education teachers in their building. Gifted education and special education teachers were asked if they have positive communication and relationships with the general education teachers in their building.

Question 18 asked general education teachers if there is a sense of community between themselves and special education teachers and if there is a sense of community between themselves and gifted education teachers. Special education and gifted education teachers were asked if there is a sense of community between themselves and general education teachers.

Research Question 5: Resources

Survey Questions 22 and 25 relate to Research Question 5 about resources that support collaboration.

Question 22 asked general education, special education, and gifted education teachers if they have the necessary resources in their building for general education teachers and special education teachers to collaborate effectively. If respondents answered “disagree” they were prompted to insert what resources were missing.

Question 25 asked general education teachers if the amount of time they currently collaborate with special education and gifted education teachers is appropriate to meet the needs of their students. Special education and gifted education teachers were asked if the amount of time they currently collaborate with general education teachers is appropriate to meet the needs of their students.

Research Question 6: Professional Development

Survey Questions 13-16 relate to Research Question 6 about professional development to support collaboration.

Question 13 asked general education teachers if there is a clear focus related to professional development for meeting the needs of special education and gifted education students. Special education and gifted education teachers were asked if there is a clear focus related to professional development for meeting the needs of special education/gifted education students.

Question 14 asked general education teachers if they feel general education teachers have a voice in professional development regarding special education and gifted education instructional strategies. The special education and gifted education teachers were asked if they feel general education teachers have a voice in professional development regarding special education/gifted education instructional strategies. The special education and gifted education teachers were asked whether they feel special education/gifted education teachers have a voice in professional development regarding special/gifted education instructional strategies.

Question 15 asked general education teachers if they feel professional development for special education and gifted education topics have connections with

classroom practice. Special education and gifted education teachers were asked if they feel professional development for special education /gifted education have a connection to classroom practice.

Question 16 asked general education teachers if they use in-house expertise and talent for professional development for special education and for gifted education.

Special education and gifted education teachers were asked if they use in-house expertise and talent for special education/gifted education.

Qualitative

Administrator Interviews

The interview questions for administrators and teachers were developed by the researcher to target the research questions posed in this study. The review of literature was also considered in the development of the questions with emphasis on the “Elements of Effective Collaboration” by Wiggins & Damore (2006). Questions for administrators focused more on their support of collaboration in their building while the questions for teachers were more detailed and focused on their perceptions about the collaborative processes in place in their particular building between themselves and other teachers. The interview used for administrators consists of, six open- ended questions format that related to the research question for this study. The questions were:

1. What processes do you have in place for collaboration between general education and special education/gifted education teachers?

2. What benefits do you see regarding collaboration between general education and special education/gifted education teachers in your building? What are some disadvantages?
3. What is your role in collaboration between general education teachers and special education/gifted education teachers in your building?
4. What is your perception of the teachers' attitude towards collaboration between general education and special education/gifted education?
5. What resources are provided for collaboration between general educational and special education/gifted education teachers in your building? What resources are still needed?
6. What types of professional development are provided regarding collaboration between general education and special education/gifted education in your building? Give an example.

These questions were selected to provide information related to the identified six factors of effective collaboration. This format was selected to provide an organized questioning structure for the respondents so the researcher would have some standardization in the responses while having the flexibility to ask follow up questions based on the responses that were received. The administrator interview questions were also selected based on feedback from the pilot interview of an administrator and team of experts. The researcher was interested in the responses and follow-up information provided about how the administrators support collaboration between general education

and special education/gifted education in their particular buildings. The review of literature shows that administrative support is a key feature in the success of the collaborative process that is in place in individual buildings.

Observations

To record pertinent information collected during the observations, the researcher designed an observation checklist which was adapted (with permission from the author) from the “Elements of Collaboration” created by Wiggins & Damore (2006). This tool was piloted in collaboration sessions in a school that was not participating in this study. The checklist that was used to record the observations had a matrix with the six factors listed on the side and had check boxes for whether each factor was observed during the session, the evidence of factors, and comments related to the factor. The six sections of the form matched up with the six research questions that guided the research study: team process, benefits, administrator support and shared leadership, positive attitude, resources and professional development (The observation form can be found in Appendix A).

Before each session was observed, the researcher explained that she was there to observe their collaboration and any notes taken during the session would be kept confidential and specific names or schools would not be revealed. The researcher hand recorded notes on the checklist during the observation session and compiled the information into a larger matrix to compare fifteen different observation sessions.

Additionally, the researcher predetermined which observation behaviors were connected to the various research questions. The following are some examples of observable behaviors related to each research question and identified factor. Evidence of a set agenda and team norms reflected descriptors of team process and related to

Research Question 1. If participants noted any benefit of collaborating during the session, it indicated evidence of Research Question 2. Research Question 3 related to administrator support and shared leadership and was evidenced if the administrator was in attendance at the collaboration session. Body language reflected Research Question 4, a positive attitude towards collaboration. Time and materials provided indicated resources provided for collaboration which connected to Research Question 5. Finally, any evidence of professional development strategies presented during the session connected to Research Question 6.

Teacher Interviews

Interview questions were designed based on the review of literature and input provided by a team of educators who are knowledgeable about collaboration and special education. The questions were again based on the factors of effective collaboration with the purpose to learn more about teacher perceptions of collaboration practices in their setting. Eleven questions were provided for general education teachers, special education teachers and gifted education teachers. The questions were similar between the different subgroups and follow-up questions were asked by the researcher to gain additional insights when needed.

Research Question 1: Team Process

Interview Questions 1-6 related to Research Question 1 concerning team process. The questions were:

Describe the procedures in place at your building for collaboration sessions with special education teachers.

How often do you meet with special education teachers?

How is the collaboration schedule developed for collaboration between you and special education teachers?

What do you discuss in the collaboration sessions with special education teachers? What would you like to discuss during these sessions?

Describe the relationship between you and the special education teachers.

What works well in the collaboration process at your building? What needs to be improved?

Research Question 2: Benefits

Interview Question 8 connects to Research Question 2 concerning benefits.

What are the benefits of collaboration between special education and general education teachers in your building?

Research Question 3: Administrator Support and Shared Leadership

Interview Question 7 connects to Research Question 3 concerning administrator support.

What role does your administrator play in the collaborative process in your building?

Research Question 4: Positive Attitude

Interview Question 11 connects to Research Question 4 concerning attitude.

What is your overall attitude towards collaboration between special education/gifted education and general education teachers in your building?

Researcher Question 5: Resources

Interview Question 10 connects to Research Question 5 concerning resources.

What resources are in place for collaboration between special education and general education teachers in your building? What is still needed?

Research Question 6: Professional Development

Interview Question 9 connects to Research Question 6 concerning professional development.

Describe some professional development opportunities that are provided related to special education/gifted education. What else would you like to see in terms of professional development related to special education/gifted education?

Validity and Reliability

Quantitative (Surveys)

A team of people knowledgeable about collaboration between classroom teachers and special education teachers reviewed the survey and interview questions. The feedback provided by the team allowed for the researcher to check for content validity of the survey questions and interview questions used in the data collection. Minor changes were made in the survey questions based on the feedback received to make the questions more clear.

Qualitative (Observations and Interviews)

Since qualitative data were collected using interviews and observations, generally it is not expected that there would be specific validity or reliability tests for these methods. Instead, Flick (2006) suggests that researchers can increase the reliability of qualitative data by ensuring quality in recording and documenting information using specific coding techniques. Flick goes on to say that validity is more important than reliability in qualitative studies. According to Wolcott (1990), there are important points to consider as a researcher when seeking validity in qualitative data. The points which the researcher considered when collecting the data for this study included: 1) listen rather

than talk during observations and interviews, 2) take notes that are as detailed as possible, 3) write notes during the entire session, and 4) make sure the notes are as complete and candid as possible.

Data Collection Procedures

Before any data could be collected, the researcher needed to receive permission from the selected district and from Baker University. The researcher submitted and obtained permission to collect data in the selected district in mid 2009. The researcher received verbal approval upon submission to conduct research in the district during the 2009-10 school year and received an email confirmation mid September with permission to proceed with the study (see request to conduct research in Appendix C and permission email in Appendix D).

Upon approval of the committee, the researcher submitted the IRB proposal to the University (see Appendix E and F for proposal and approval forms). Once the approval was received, the research contacted the administrators that previously volunteered to participate in the study to schedule interviews and observations.

The researcher designed a data collection matrix to assist in aligning measurement tools used for data collection to the research questions in this study. The matrix lists the research question, method of data collection, and the items from the instrument match the research question(s) targeted (see Appendix A for matrix).

Quantitative

Quantitative data were collected using online surveys administered to three different groups from the buildings that agreed to participate in the research study: 1) gifted educators, 2) special education teachers and 3) general education teachers. A copy

of the email sent can be found in Appendix A. Quantitative data were collected in order to collect information about feelings and beliefs about collaboration using statistical analysis. The researcher sent each participating administrator an email with three survey links, one for general education teachers, one for special education teachers, and one for the gifted education teacher. Within the email, the researcher included a brief note explaining the purpose of the research and an assurance that their responses would be anonymous. When teachers received the link to the survey from the administrator, it was up to teachers to decide whether they completed the online survey. The raw data that were collected through SurveyMonkey.com were downloaded and input into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) for Windows.

Qualitative

The interviews and observations were conducted by the researcher in the individual participating schools in January and February, 2010 respectively. Data were collected in each individual building by the researcher.

Administrator Interviews

Interview questions for administrators were developed in advance and used as a guide for discussion between the researcher and the administrator. The researcher took detailed notes of the responses by hand during the interview and later transcribed electronically for data analysis. Prior to beginning the interview, the researcher explained the purpose of the interview and provided assurance that the responses would be kept confidential and identifying information such as building name, administrators' names and teacher names mentioned would not be revealed in the study. Each interview lasted approximately 30 minutes and took place in administrator's office at his or her respective school.

Observations

Observations of collaborative team planning sessions were scheduled through the administrators and were based on the existing schedule. The researcher observed multiple collaborative sessions in a given building between the team of general education teachers who teach the same subject or grade level and a special education teacher(s) and/or a gifted education teacher. In some cases, the collaboration session took place between an individual general education teacher and a special education teacher or gifted education teacher. The planning sessions lasted from 30 to 60 minutes and took place in the building where the teachers are assigned. At the beginning of each session, the researcher explained what the purpose of the observation was and the connection to the study. The researcher asked for permission to observe and take notes during the session using the Observation Checklist, which a copy can be found in Appendix A. The researcher also assured the teachers that confidentiality would be maintained and names or schools would not be revealed in the data collected. At the end of an observation, the researcher took the notes that were recorded by hand on the Observation Checklist (see Figure 2 in Appendix A) and typed up the notes for review at a later time for data analysis.

Teacher Interviews

Individual follow-up interviews were conducted with general education, special education and gifted education teachers who volunteered from each of the six schools. The interviews were conducted one- on -one with the researcher in each teacher's classroom setting in his or her school. Prior to the interview, the researcher assured the participants that the information shared would be kept confidential and names would not

be revealed in the data collection or results. The researcher hand recorded the responses from the interviewee and later transcribed the information to be used for data analysis. Eleven questions were asked of each interviewee and the researcher asked follow up questions as needed to gain further insights. The interviews lasted approximately 60 minutes and took place in the teacher's classroom.

Data Analysis

Data analysis used information from both quantitative and qualitative sections. Responses to the surveys were used for quantitative data analysis. Responses collected from the interviews as well as observational data were used for qualitative analysis to supplement the quantitative data.

Quantitative

Analysis of the data collected from the online survey was completed after all participants submitted their surveys. The statistical analysis of the data was conducted using a chi square test for equal percentages for each survey question using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) for Windows. Data collected from the online survey are presented in Chapter Four and the discussion of the results can be found in Chapter 5.

Qualitative

Analysis of the qualitative data from the interviews and observations were completed during and after the data were collected. The researcher reviewed the notes taken during the data collection sessions to find commonalities and differences. The process the researcher used can be described according to Wolcott (1994) as transformation to analytical data. The data collected were organized according to the six identified factors and expanded upon in the results that are presented in Chapter 4.

Limitations

The sample used was limited by availability of subjects who were willing to participate in this study. Since the research occurred in the school buildings, teachers may have felt that they needed to respond or behave in a certain way that could have affected the authenticity of their responses and actions. It is possible that since the researcher has a relationship with district personnel, teachers and administrators may not have been as candid as they may have been with another researcher. Since the researcher had experiences in this district and as a gifted education, there may have been some biases present during data collection and analysis.

Summary

This study was designed to be mixed method in order to collect multiple data on effective collaboration in a suburban Kansas school district. Methods for data collection included: surveys, interviews, and observations. The purpose of the research was to collect data regarding perceptions of factors in place that support effective collaboration between general education and special education/gifted education teachers.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

The purpose of this mixed qualitative and quantitative study was to determine what perceptions exist regarding which factors are currently in place related to collaborative practices between general education teachers and special education/gifted education teachers in three elementary and three middle schools in a suburban school district in Kansas. Quantitative research was conducted with teachers completing an online survey about collaboration practices. Qualitative research was conducted through administrator interviews, observations, and teacher follow-up interviews. The six specific research questions proposed in Chapter One are addressed.

Quantitative Data

Sixty-five general education teachers and twenty- one special education (including gifted education) teachers from six buildings completed the online survey in February, 2010. Because there were so few gifted education teachers who responded to the survey (5), their responses were combined with the special education teacher responses (16) for the statistical analysis. The first four questions on the survey had to do with years of experience and caseload or amount of students with IEPs in the teachers' classroom. For Survey Question 1, general education and special education teachers were asked how many years they have been teaching. The response choices were 1-3 years, 4-7 years, 8-11 years, 12-15 years, and 15 + years. Table 1 illustrates the years of experience for both general education and special/gifted education teachers who responded to the survey.

Table 1

Survey question 1

Years of Teaching Experience	N
General education teachers	
1-3	6
4-7	11
8-11	12
12-15	11
15+	25
Special education teachers	
1-3	3
4-7	1
8-11	2
12-15	3
15+	12

Survey Question 2 asked general education, special education, and gifted education teachers how many years they have taught in the district. Table 2 shows the number of years of teaching experience general education and special education teachers have in this district.

Table 2

Survey question 2

Years of experience in the district	N
General education teachers	
1-3	15
4-7	15
8-11	13
12-15	8
15+	14
Special education teachers	
1-3	8
4-7	4
8-11	5
12-15	1
15+	3

Survey Question 3 for special education and gifted education teachers asked how many years the teachers have been teaching at their current assigned building. Table 3 shows the amount of years that special education/gifted education teachers have in their current building.

Table 3

Survey question 3 for special education/gifted education teachers

Years at current building	N
1-3	9
4-7	4
8-11	4
12-15	1
15+	2

For Survey Questions 3 and 4, general education teachers were asked about the amount of students with IEPs in their classroom. The response choices were 0, 1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 7 or more.

Table 4

Survey Question 3 and 4 for general education teachers

Students with IEPs	N
Special education	
None	8
1-2	19
3-4	21
5-6	7
7 or more	10
Gifted education	
None	16
1-2	11
3-4	13
5-6	7
7 or more	10

For Survey Question 4, Special education teachers were asked how many students were on their caseload. The response choices were: 1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 7-8, 9-10, 11-15, 16-20, 20+.

Table 5

Survey Question 4 for special education teachers

Students with IEPs	N
1-2	0
3-4	1
5-6	0
7-8	5
9-10	10
11-15	1
16-20	1
20+	3

For each of the Survey Questions 5-25, there was a chi square test of equal percentages conducted to determine if there was a statistically significant difference between the observed frequencies and the expected frequencies. If the differences were significant, the frequency table is included in the text. If the differences were not significant, the tables can be found in Appendix G.

Research Question 1-Team Process

Question 5 on the survey asked general education teachers how often they collaborate with a special education teacher and how often they collaborate with a gifted education teacher with the response choices being, *Never, Quarterly, Monthly, Weekly or Not Sure*. A chi square test of equal percentages was conducted to test Survey Question 5

for general education teachers. The results of the test indicate a statistically significant difference between the observed frequencies and the expected frequencies ($X^2 = 43.23$, $df = 3$, $p = .000$). General education teachers responded weekly (33) more than is expected by chance (13) about how often they meet with a special education teacher. For Question 5 on this survey, 4 general education participants did not respond or skipped this part of the question.

Table 6

Survey question 5 for general education teachers

	Observed N	Expected N
Never	2	13.0
Quarterly	9	13.0
Monthly	8	13.0
Weekly	33	13.0
Total	52	52

A chi square test of equal percentages was conducted to test Survey Question 5 on the general education teacher survey. The results of the test indicate a statistically significant difference between the observed frequencies and the expected frequencies ($X^2 = 16.43$, $df = 3$, $p = .001$). General education teachers responded monthly (23) and quarterly (20) more than is expected by chance (14) about how often they collaborate with a gifted education resource teacher.

Table 7

Survey question 5 for general education teachers

	Observed N	Expected N
Never	7	14.0
Quarterly	20	14.0
Monthly	23	14.0
Weekly	6	14.0
Total	56	56

For Survey Question 5, special education teachers and gifted education teachers were asked how often they collaborate with a grade level team, individual classroom teachers and other special education teachers with the response choices being *Never*, *Quarterly*, *Monthly*, *Weekly* or *Not Sure*. A chi square test of equal percentages was conducted to test Survey Question 5 regarding how often special education teachers collaborate with a grade level team. The results of the test indicate there was a statistically significant difference between the observed frequencies and the expected frequencies ($X^2 = 9.69$, $df = 4$, $p = .046$). Special Education teachers responded weekly (7) more than is expected by chance (2.6) about how often they collaborate with a grade level team. For this question, 8 respondents either skipped or did not answer this part of the question which may have had an effect on the overall results.

Table 8

Survey question 5 for special and gifted education teachers

	Observed N	Expected N
Not Sure	2	2.6
Never	1	2.6
Quarterly	2	2.6
Monthly	1	2.6
Weekly	7	2.6
Total	13	13

A chi square test of equal percentages was conducted to test Survey Question 5 for special education teachers in regard to how often they meet with individual teachers. The results of the test indicate there was not a statistically significant difference between the observed frequencies and the expected frequencies ($X^2 = 1.00$, $df = 3$, $p = .801$). The frequency table for this question can be found in Appendix G (Table G1).

A chi square test of equal percentages was conducted to test Survey Question 5 for special education teachers in regard to how often they meet with other special education teachers. The results of the test indicate there was not a statistically significant difference between the observed frequencies and the expected frequencies ($X^2 = 6.00$, $df = 3$, $p = .112$). The frequency table for this question can be found in Appendix G (Table G 2). Survey Question 8 asked general education teachers if they are clear in understanding the roles in collaboration between general education and special education

teachers in their building. A chi square test of equal percentages was conducted to test Survey Question 8 regarding the general education teachers' perception of the roles of collaboration between general education and special education teachers. The results of the test indicate there was a statistically significant difference between the observed frequencies and the expected frequencies ($X^2 = 43.86$, $df = 3$, $p = .000$). General education teachers responded Strongly Agree (24) and Agree (33) more than is expected by chance (15.8) that general education teachers are clear on the roles in collaboration in their building. Two participants in the survey did not respond to this question.

Table 9

Survey question 8 for general education teachers

	Observed N	Expected N
Strongly Agree	24	15.8
Agree	33	15.8
Undecided	3	15.8
Disagree	3	15.8
Total	63	63

The second part of Question 8 asked general education classroom teachers if they are clear in understanding the roles in collaboration between general education and gifted education teachers in their building. A chi square test of equal percentages was conducted to test Survey Question 8 for general education teachers regarding the roles of collaboration between general education and gifted education teachers. The results of the

test indicate there was a statistically significant difference between the observed frequencies and the expected frequencies ($\chi^2 = 30.13$, $df = 3$, $p = .000$). General education teachers responded Strongly Agree (20) and Agree (30) more than is expected by chance (15.0) that general education teachers are clear on the roles in collaboration in their building. Five respondents did not answer this question.

Table 10

Survey question 8 for general education teachers

	Observed N	Expected N
Strongly Agree	20	15.0
Agree	30	15.0
Undecided	4	15.0
Disagree	6	15.0
Total	60	60

For Survey Question 8, special education and gifted education teachers were asked if they are clear in understanding the roles in collaboration between general education and special/gifted education in their building. A chi square test of equal percentages was conducted to test survey Question 8 for special education and gifted education teachers. The results of the test indicate there was a statistically significant difference between the observed frequencies and the expected frequencies

($X^2 = 16.14$, $df = 3$, $p = .001$). Special education teachers responded Strongly Disagree (13) more than is expected by chance (5.3) that special education teachers are clear on the roles in collaboration in their building.

Table 11

Survey question 8 for special and gifted education teachers

	Observed N	Expected N
Strongly Agree	3	5.3
Undecided	4	5.3
Disagree	1	5.3
Strongly Disagree	13	5.3
Total	21	21

Survey Question 9 asked general education classroom teachers if they believe there are common philosophies and goals in their building regarding special education. A chi square test of equal percentages was conducted to test Survey Question 9 for general education teachers. The results of the test indicate there was a statistically significant difference between the observed frequencies and the expected frequencies ($X^2 = 79.125$, $df = 4$, $p = .000$). General education teachers responded Strongly Agree (19) and Agree (38) more than is expected by chance (12.8) that classroom teachers believe there are common philosophies and goals in their building regarding special education. One respondent skipped this question.

Table 12

Survey question 9 for general education teachers

	Observed N	Expected N
Strongly Agree	19	12.8
Agree	38	12.8
Undecided	5	12.8
Disagree	1	12.8
Strongly Disagree	1	12.8
Total	64	64

For the second part of Survey Question 9, general education teachers were asked if they believe there are common philosophies and goals in their building regarding gifted education. A chi square test of equal percentages was conducted to test Survey Question 9 for general education classroom teachers. The results of the test indicate there was a statistically significant difference between the observed frequencies and the expected frequencies ($X^2 = 30.34$, $df = 3$, $p = .000$). General education classroom teachers responded Agree (32) more than is expected by chance (15.3) that general education classroom teachers believe there are common philosophies and goals in their building regarding gifted education. Four teachers did not respond to this question.

Table 13

Survey question 9 for general education teachers

	Observed N	Expected N
Strongly Agree	17	15.3
Agree	32	15.3
Undecided	8	15.3
Disagree	4	15.3
Total	61	61

For Survey Question 9, special education and gifted education teachers were asked their perceptions about whether they believe there are common philosophies, goals and shared expertise regarding special/gifted education. A chi square test of equal percentages was conducted to test Survey Question 9 for special education teachers. The results of the test indicate there was not a statistically significant difference between the observed frequencies and the expected frequencies ($X^2 = 7.81$, $df = 4$, $p = .099$). The frequency table for this question can be found in Appendix G (Table G 3).

Survey Question 11 asked general education classroom teachers their perceptions regarding set processes, expectations, and routines for collaboration sessions between general education and special education teachers their building. A chi square test of equal percentages was conducted to test survey question 11 for general education teachers. The results of the test indicate there was a statistically significant difference between the observed frequencies and the expected frequencies

($X^2 = 44.125$, $df = 3$, $p = .000$). General education classroom teachers responded Agree (38) more than is expected by chance (16) that classroom teachers believe there are set processes, expectations, and routines for collaboration sessions between general education teachers and special education teachers. One teacher did not respond to this question.

Table 14

Survey question 11 for general education teachers

	Observed N	Expected N
Strongly Agree	15	16.0
Agree	38	16.0
Undecided	6	16.0
Disagree	5	16.0
Total	64	64

Survey Question 11 for general education classroom teachers asked if they think there are set processes, expectations, and routines for collaboration sessions between general education/ gifted education teachers in their building. A chi square test of equal percentages was conducted to test Survey Question 11 for general education classroom teachers. The results of the test indicate there was a statistically significant difference between the observed frequencies and the expected frequencies ($X^2 = 42.84$, $df = 4$, $p = .000$). General education teachers responded Agree (32) which was more than is expected by chance (12.4) that general education classroom teachers believe there are set processes, expectations, and routines for collaboration sessions between general

education teachers and gifted education teachers. Three teachers did not respond to this question.

Table 15

Survey question 11 for general education teachers

	Observed N	Expected N
Strongly Agree	12	12.4
Agree	32	12.4
Undecided	8	12.4
Disagree	8	12.4
Strongly Disagree	2	12.4
Total	62	62

Survey Question 11 asked special education and gifted education teachers if they think there are set processes, expectations, and routines for collaboration sessions between general education and special (gifted) education teachers in their building. A chi square test of equal percentages was conducted to test Survey Question 11 for special education teachers. The results of the test indicate there was not a statistically significant difference between the observed frequencies and the expected frequencies ($X^2 = 13.52$, $df = 4$, $p = .009$). The frequency table for this question can be found in Appendix G (Table G 4).

Survey question 12 asked general education classroom teachers their perceptions regarding defined team roles and responsibilities for collaboration sessions between general education teachers and special education teachers in their building. A chi square

test of equal percentages was conducted to test survey question 12 for general education classroom teachers. The results of the test indicate there was a statistically significant difference between the observed frequencies and the expected frequencies ($X^2 = 59.75$, $df = 4$, $p = .000$). General education teachers responded Agree (37) more than is expected by chance (12.8) that general education teachers believe there are defined team roles and responsibilities for collaboration sessions between general education teachers and special education teachers. One teacher did not respond to this question.

Table 16

Survey question 12 for general education teachers

	Observed N	Expected N
Strongly Agree	7	12.8
Agree	37	12.8
Undecided	11	12.8
Disagree	6	12.8
Strongly Disagree	3	12.8
Total	64	64

Survey Question 12 asked general education teachers were asked if there are defined team roles and responsibilities for collaboration sessions between general education teachers and gifted education teachers in their building.

A chi square test of equal percentages was conducted to test Survey Question 12 for general education classroom teachers. The results of the test indicate there was a statistically significant difference between the observed frequencies and the expected frequencies ($\chi^2 = 59.75$, $df = 4$, $p = .000$). General education teachers responded Agree (37) more than is expected by chance (12.8) that general education classroom teachers believe there are defined team roles and responsibilities for collaboration sessions between general education teachers and gifted education teachers. One teacher did not respond to this question.

Table 17

Survey question 12 for general education teachers

	Observed N	Expected N
Strongly Agree	7	12.8
Agree	37	12.8
Undecided	11	12.8
Disagree	6	12.8
Strongly Disagree	3	12.8
Total	64	

Survey Question 12 asked special education and gifted education teachers their perceptions regarding defined team roles and responsibilities for collaboration sessions between general education teachers and special education /gifted education teachers in their building. A chi square test of equal percentages was conducted to test survey question 12 for special education teachers. The results of the test indicate there was not a statistically significant difference between the observed frequencies and the expected frequencies ($X^2 = 2.57, df = 4, p = .632$). The frequency table for this question can be found in Appendix G (Table G 5).

Research Question 2 Benefits

Survey Questions 23 and 24 were used to address Research Question 2 related to teachers' perceptions of benefits of collaboration.

Survey Question 23 asked general education classroom teachers, special education and gifted education teachers about their perceptions regarding whether they think it is beneficial to have regular ongoing collaboration between general education and special education (including gifted education). A chi square test of equal percentages was conducted to test Survey Question 23 for general education classroom teachers. The results of the test indicate there was a statistically significant difference between the observed frequencies and the expected frequencies ($X^2 = 28.57, df = 2, p = .000$). General education teachers responded Strongly Agree (31) and Agree (31) more than is expected by chance (21) that classroom teachers believe that it is beneficial to have ongoing collaboration between general education teachers and special education (including gifted) teachers. Two teachers did not respond to this question.

Table 18

Survey question 23 for general education teachers

	Observed N	Expected N
Strongly Agree	31	21.0
Agree	31	21.0
Strongly Disagree	1	21.0
Total	63	63

A chi square test of equal percentages was conducted to test Survey Question 23 responses for special education and gifted education teachers. The results of the test indicate there was a statistically significant difference between the observed frequencies and the expected frequencies ($\chi^2 = 29.86$, $df = 3$, $p = .000$). Special education teachers responded Strongly Disagree (16) more than is expected by chance (5.3) that special education teachers believe that it is beneficial to have ongoing collaboration between general education teachers and special education /gifted education teachers.

Table 19

Survey question 23 for general education teachers

	Observed N	Expected N
Strongly Agree	1	5.3
Undecided	1	5.3
Disagree	3	5.3
Strongly Disagree	16	5.3
Total	21	21

Survey Question 24 asked general education classroom, special education and gifted education teachers if they thought the collaboration that currently exists in their building benefits students in the classroom setting. A chi square test of equal percentages was conducted to test Survey Question 24 for general education teachers. The results of the test indicate there was a statistically significant difference between the observed frequencies and the expected frequencies ($X^2 = 34.07$, $df = 2$, $p = .000$). General education teachers responded Agree (40) more than is expected by chance (20.3) that general education teachers believe that it is beneficial to have ongoing collaboration between general education teachers and special education (including gifted) teachers. Four teachers did not respond to this question.

Table 20

Survey question 24 for general education teachers

	Observed N	Expected N
Strongly Agree	18	20.3
Agree	40	20.3
Undecided	3	20.3
Total	61	61

A chi square test of equal percentages was conducted to test Survey Question 24 for special education and gifted education teachers. The results of the test indicate there was a statistically significant difference between the observed frequencies and the expected frequencies ($\chi^2 = 11.62$, $df = 4$, $p = .020$). Special education teachers responded Strongly Disagree (8) and Disagree (8) which was more than is expected by chance (4.2) that special education teachers believe that it is beneficial to have ongoing collaboration between general education teachers and special education (including gifted) teachers.

Table 21

Survey question 24 for special and gifted education teachers

	Observed N	Expected N
Strongly Agree	1	4.2
Agree	2	4.2
Undecided	2	4.2
Disagree	8	4.2
Strongly Disagree	8	4.2
Total	21	21

Research Question 3: Administrator Support and Shared Leadership

Survey Questions 17, 19, 20 and 21 relate to Research Question 3 regarding Administrator Support and Shared Leadership.

Survey Question 17 asked general education teachers if they have input in scheduling and delivery options for special education. A chi square test of equal percentages was conducted to test Survey Question 17 regarding general education teachers having input for special education services according to general education classroom teachers. The results of the test indicate there was a statistically significant difference between the observed frequencies and the expected frequencies ($X^2 = 35.02$, $df = 4$, $p = .000$). General education teachers responded Agree (28) more than is expected by chance (12.6) that general education classroom teachers have input regarding

scheduling and delivery options for special education. Two teachers did not respond to this question.

Table 22

Survey question 17 for general education teachers

	Observed N	Expected N
Strongly Agree	4	12.6
Agree	28	12.6
Undecided	5	12.6
Disagree	19	12.6
Strongly Disagree	7	12.6
Total	63	63

For Survey Question 17, general education classroom teachers were asked if they thought general education teachers have input regarding scheduling and delivery options for gifted education. A chi square test of equal percentages was conducted to test Survey Question 17 about general education teachers having input for gifted education services according to classroom teachers. The results of the test indicate there was a statistically significant difference between the observed frequencies and the expected frequencies ($X^2 = 49.41$, $df = 4$, $p = .000$). General education teachers responded Agree (25) more than is expected by chance (12) that general education teachers have input regarding scheduling and delivery options for gifted education. Five teachers did not respond to this question.

Table 23

Survey question 17 for general education teachers

	Observed N	Expected N
Strongly Agree	5	12.0
Agree	25	12.0
Undecided	8	12.0
Disagree	15	12.0
Strongly Agree	7	12.0
Total	60	60

For Survey Question 17, general education classroom teachers were asked if they thought special education teachers have input regarding scheduling and delivery options for special education. A chi square test of equal percentages was conducted to test Survey Question 17 about special education teachers having input for special education services according to classroom teachers. The results of the test indicate there was a statistically significant difference between the observed frequencies and the expected frequencies ($X^2 = 52.52$, $df = 4$, $p = .000$). General education teachers responded Agree (34) is expected by chance (12.4) that special education teachers have input regarding scheduling and delivery options for special education. Three teachers did not respond to this question.

Table 24

Survey question 17 for general education teachers

	Observed N	Expected N
Strongly Agree	12	12.4
Agree	34	12.4
Undecided	10	12.4
Disagree	4	12.4
Strongly Disagree	2	12.4
Total	62	62

For Survey Question 17, general education classroom teachers were asked if they thought gifted education teachers have input regarding scheduling and delivery options for gifted education.

A chi square test of equal percentages was conducted to test Survey Question 17 about gifted education teachers having input for gifted education services according to general education classroom teachers. The results of the test indicate there was a statistically significant difference between the observed frequencies and the expected frequencies ($\chi^2 = 49.41$, $df = 4$, $p = .000$). General education teachers responded Agree (32) more than is expected by chance (12.2) that gifted education teachers have input regarding scheduling and delivery options for gifted education. Four teachers did not respond to this question.

Table 25

Survey question 17 for general education teachers

	Observed N	Expected N
Strongly Agree	15	12.2
Agree	32	12.2
Undecided	9	12.2
Disagree	4	12.2
Strongly Disagree	1	12.2
Total	61	61

Survey Question 17 for special education and gifted education teachers had two parts. First, special education and gifted education teachers were asked if they thought. General education teachers have input regarding scheduling options for special education/gifted education in their building. A chi square test of equal percentages was conducted to test Survey Question 17, general education teachers having input for special/gifted education services according to special education and gifted education teachers. The results of the test indicate there was a statistically significant difference between the observed frequencies and the expected frequencies ($X^2 = 13.37$, $df = 4$, $p = .010$). Special education teachers responded Disagree (9) more than is expected by chance (3.8) that general education teachers have input regarding scheduling and delivery options for special/gifted education. Two teachers did not respond to this question.

Table 26

Survey question 17 for special and gifted education teachers

	Observed N	Expected N
Strongly Agree	1	3.8
Agree	2	3.8
Undecided	6	3.8
Disagree	9	3.8
Strongly Disagree	1	3.8
Total	19	19

For the second part of Survey Question 17 for special education and gifted education teachers, they were asked about their perceptions whether they have input regarding scheduling and delivery options for special education/gifted education. A chi square test of equal percentages was conducted to test Survey Question 17, special/gifted education teachers having input for special/gifted education services according to special education and gifted education teachers. The results of the test indicate there was a statistically significant difference between the observed frequencies and the expected frequencies ($\chi^2 = 9.5$, $df = 4$, $p = .050$). Special education teachers responded Disagree (9) more than is expected by chance (4) that special/gifted education teachers have input regarding scheduling and delivery options for special/gifted education. One teacher did not respond to this question.

Table 27

Survey question 17 for special education and gifted education teachers

	Observed N	Expected N
Strongly Agree	1	4.0
Agree	2	4.0
Undecided	4	4.0
Disagree	9	4.0
Strongly Disagree	4	4.0
Total	20	20

Survey Question 19 asked general education classroom, special education, and gifted education teachers if they see special education teachers as leaders in their building. A chi square test of equal percentages was conducted to test Survey Question 19 about general education teachers' perceptions of special education teachers being leaders in their building. The results of the test indicate there was a statistically significant difference between the observed frequencies and the expected frequencies ($X^2 = 22.85$, $df = 4$, $p = .000$). General education teachers responded Agree (25) more than is expected by chance (12.2) that special/gifted education teachers are leaders in their buildings. Four teachers did not respond to this question.

Table 28

Survey question 19 for general education teachers

	Observed N	Expected N
Strongly Agree	9	12.2
Agree	25	12.2
Undecided	13	12.2
Disagree	12	12.2
Strongly Disagree	2	12.2
Total	61	61

A chi square test of equal percentages was conducted to test Survey Question 19 asking special education teachers about their perceptions regarding special education teachers being leaders in their building. The results of the test indicate there was a statistically significant difference between the observed frequencies and the expected frequencies ($\chi^2 = 12.095$, $df = 4$, $p = .017$). Special education teachers responded Disagree (10) which was more than is expected by chance (4.2) that special/gifted education teachers are leaders in their buildings.

Table 29

Survey question 19 for special and gifted education teachers

	Observed N	Expected N
Strongly Agree	2	4.2
Agree	5	4.2
Undecided	3	4.2
Disagree	10	4.2
Strongly Disagree	1	4.2
Total	21	21

Survey Question 20 asked general education, special education and gifted education teachers if they thought their building administrator encourages teacher leadership and decision making regarding special education issues. A chi square test of equal percentages was conducted to test Survey Question 20 regarding general education teachers' perceptions of whether building administrators encourage teacher leadership in decision making regarding special education issues. The results of the test indicate there was a statistically significant difference between the observed frequencies and the expected frequencies ($X^2 = 64.61$, $df = 4$, $p = .000$). General education teachers responded Agree (37) more than is expected by chance (12.4) that their administrator encourages teacher leadership regarding special education issues. Three teachers did not respond to this question.

Table 30

Survey question 20 for general education teachers

	Observed N	Expected N
Strongly Agree	10	12.4
Agree	37	12.4
Undecided	9	12.4
Disagree	4	12.4
Strongly Disagree	2	12.4
Total	62	62

A chi square test of equal percentages was conducted to test Survey Question 20 asked for special education perceptions of whether administrators encourage teacher leadership in decision making regarding special education issues. The results of the test indicate there was not statistically significant difference between the observed frequencies and the expected frequencies ($\chi^2 = 7.33$, $df = 4$, $p = .119$). The frequency table for this question can be found in Appendix G (Table G 6).

Survey Question 21 asked general education, special education and gifted education teachers about their perceptions regarding accountability for collaboration in their building. A chi square test of equal percentages was conducted to test Survey Question 21 regarding general education perceptions of accountability for collaboration

in their building. The results of the test indicate there was a statistically significant difference between the observed frequencies and the expected frequencies ($X^2 = 29.73$, $df = 3$, $p = .000$). General education teachers responded Agree (31) which was more than is expected by chance (15) that there is accountability for collaboration in their building. Five teachers did not respond to this question.

Table 31

Survey question 21 for general education teachers

	Observed N	Expected N
Strongly Agree	18	15.0
Agree	31	15.0
Undecided	5	15.0
Disagree	6	15.0
Total	60	60

A chi square test of equal percentages was conducted to test Survey Question 21 about accountability for collaboration in their building according to special education teachers. The results of the test indicate there was not statistically significant difference between the observed frequencies and the expected frequencies ($X^2 = 6.24$, $df = 3$, $p = .101$). The frequency table for this question can be found in Appendix G (Table G 7).

Research Question 4: Positive Attitude

Survey Questions 6, 7, 10, and 18 relate to Research Question 4 about positive attitude towards collaboration.

Survey Question 6 asked general education classroom teachers if they have positive views toward collaboration with special education teachers in their building. A chi square test of equal percentages was conducted to test Survey Question 6 about general education teachers having positive feelings and views toward collaboration with special education teachers. The results of the test indicate there was a statistically significant difference between the observed frequencies and the expected frequencies ($\chi^2 = 60.89$, $df = 4$, $p = .000$). General education teachers responded Strongly Agree (24) and Agree (31) more than is expected by chance (12.6) that they have positive feelings and views toward collaboration with special education teachers in their building. Two teachers did not respond to this question.

Table 32

Survey question 6 for general education teachers

	Observed N	Expected N
Strongly Agree	24	12.6
Agree	31	12.6
Undecided	4	12.6
Disagree	2	12.6
Strongly Disagree	2	12.6
Total	63	63

For Survey Question 6, general education classroom teachers were asked if they have positive views toward collaboration with gifted education teachers in their building. A chi square test of equal percentages was conducted to test Survey Question 6 about general education teachers having positive feelings and views toward collaboration with gifted education teachers. The results of the test indicate there was a statistically significant difference between the observed frequencies and the expected frequencies ($X^2 = 56.33$, $df = 4$, $p = .000$). General education teachers responded Strongly Agree (23) and Agree (29) more than is expected by chance (12) that they have positive views toward collaboration with gifted education teachers in their building. Five teachers did not respond to this question.

Table 33

Survey question 6 general education teachers

	Observed N	Expected N
Strongly Agree	23	12.0
Agree	29	12.0
Undecided	3	12.0
Disagree	4	12.0
Strongly Disagree	1	12.0
Total	60	60

For Survey Question 6, special education and gifted education teachers were asked first if they have positive views toward collaboration with general education teachers in their building. A chi square test of equal percentages was conducted to test Survey Question 6 that asked special education teachers about having positive feelings and views toward collaboration with classroom teachers. The results of the test indicate there was a statistically significant difference between the observed frequencies and the expected frequencies ($X^2 = 10.80$, $df = 3$, $p = .013$). Special education/gifted education teachers responded Disagree (10) more than is expected by chance (5) that they have positive feelings and views toward collaboration with classroom teachers in their building. One teacher did not respond to this question.

Table 34

Survey question 6 for special and gifted education teachers

	Observed N	Expected N
Strongly Agree	2	5.0
Agree	1	5.0
Disagree	10	5.0
Strongly Disagree	7	5.0
Total	20	20

For Survey Question 6 special education and gifted education teachers, were asked if they have positive feelings and views toward collaboration with other special education teachers in their building. A chi square test of equal percentages was conducted to test Survey Question 6 asking special education/gifted education teachers about having positive views toward collaboration with other special education teachers. The results of the test indicate there was a statistically significant difference between the observed frequencies and the expected frequencies ($X^2 = 12.57$, $df = 4$, $p = .014$). Special education/gifted education teachers responded Disagree (9) more than is expected by chance (4.2) that they have positive views toward collaboration with other special education teachers in their building.

Table 35

Survey question 6 for special and gifted education teachers

	Observed N	Expected N
Strongly Agree	3	4.2
Agree	1	4.2
Undecided	1	4.2
Disagree	9	4.2
Strongly Disagree	7	4.2
Total	21	21

Survey Question 7 asked general education classroom teachers if they are committed and motivated to collaborate with special education teachers in their building. A chi square test of equal percentages was conducted to test Survey Question 7 asking General education teachers about being committed and motivated to collaborate with special education teachers. The results of the test indicate there was a statistically significant difference between the observed frequencies and the expected frequencies ($X^2 = 71.21$, $df = 4$, $p = .000$). General education teachers responded Strongly Agree (29) and Agree (29) more than is expected by chance (12.6) that they are committed and motivated to collaborate with special education teachers in their building. Two teachers did not respond to this question.

Table 36

Survey question 7 for general education teachers

	Observed N	Expected N
Strongly Agree	29	12.6
Agree	29	12.6
Undecided	2	12.6
Disagree	2	12.6
Strongly Disagree	1	12.6
Total	63	63

Survey Question 7 asked general education classroom teachers if they are committed and motivated to collaborate with gifted education teachers in their building. A chi square test of equal percentages was conducted to test Survey Question 7 asking general education teachers about being committed and motivated to collaborate with gifted education teachers according to general education teachers. The results of the test indicate there was a statistically significant difference between the observed frequencies and the expected frequencies ($\chi^2 = 59.13$, $df = 4$, $p = .000$). General education teachers responded Strongly Agree (24) and Agree (30) more than is expected by chance (12.4) that they have positive feelings and views toward collaboration with gifted education teachers in their building. Three teachers did not respond to this question.

Table 37

Survey question 7 for general education teachers

	Observed N	Expected N
Strongly Agree	24	12.4
Agree	30	12.4
Undecided	3	12.4
Disagree	4	12.4
Strongly Disagree	1	12.4
Total	62	62

For Survey Question 7, special education and gifted education teachers were asked if they are committed and motivated to collaborate with general education teachers in their building. A chi square test of equal percentages was conducted to test Survey Question 7 asking special education/gifted education teachers about being committed and motivated to collaborate with gifted education teachers. The results of the test indicate there was not a statistically significant difference between the observed frequencies and the expected frequencies ($X^2 = 5.2$, $df = 2$, $p = .074$) The frequency table for this question can be found in Appendix G (Table G 8).

For Survey Question 7, special education and gifted education teachers were asked if they are committed and motivated to collaborate with other special education teachers in their building. A chi square test of equal percentages was conducted to test special education/gifted education teachers' responses about being committed and

motivated to collaborate with other special education teachers. The results of the test indicate there was a statistically significant difference between the observed frequencies and the expected frequencies ($\chi^2 = 23.52$, $df = 4$, $p = .000$). Special education/gifted education teachers responded Strongly Disagree (13) more than is expected by chance (4.2) that they are committed and motivated to collaborate with other special education teachers in their building.

Table 38

Survey question 7 for special and general education teachers

	Observed N	Expected N
Strongly Agree	2	4.2
Agree	1	4.2
Undecided	2	4.2
Disagree	3	4.2
Strongly Disagree	13	4.2
Total	21	21

Survey Question 10 asked general education classroom teachers if they believe that they have positive communication and relationships with the gifted education teachers in their building. A chi square test of equal percentages was conducted to test Survey Question 10 about general education perceptions regarding whether there is positive communication and relationships with the gifted education teachers in their building. The results of the test indicate there was a statistically significant difference between the observed frequencies and the expected frequencies ($X^2 = 44.90$, $df = 3$, $p = .000$). General education teachers responded Strongly Agree (34) and Agree (21) more than is expected by chance (15.3) that they believe they have positive communication and relationship with gifted education teachers in their building. Four teachers did not respond to this question.

Table 39

Survey question 10 for general education teachers

	Observed N	Expected N
Strongly Agree	34	15.3
Agree	21	15.3
Undecided	3	15.3
Disagree	3	15.3
Total	61	61

Survey Question 10 asked general education classroom teachers if they believe that they have positive communication and relationships with the special education

teachers in their building. A chi square test of equal percentages was conducted to test Survey Question 10 about general education teachers' perceptions about positive communication and relationships with the special education teachers in their building according to general education classroom teachers. The results of the test indicate there was a statistically significant difference between the observed frequencies and the expected frequencies ($X^2 = 66.46$, $df = 4$, $p = .000$). General education teachers responded Strongly Agree (31) and Agree (24) more than is expected by chance (12.2) that they believe they have positive communication and relationship with special education teachers in their building. Four teachers did not respond to this question.

Table 40

Survey question 10 for general education teachers

	Observed N	Expected N
Strongly Agree	31	12.2
Agree	24	12.2
Undecided	4	12.2
Disagree	1	12.2
Strongly Disagree	1	12.2
Total	61	61

For Survey Question 10 special education and gifted education teachers were asked if they believe they have positive communication and relationships with the

classroom teachers in their building. A chi square test of equal percentages was conducted to test Survey Question 10 about special education teachers' perceptions about positive communication and relationships with the general education teachers in their building. The results of the test indicate there was a statistically significant difference between the observed frequencies and the expected frequencies ($X^2 = 6$, $df = 2$, $p = .050$). Special education teachers responded Strongly Disagree (11) more than is expected by chance (7) that they believe they have positive communication and relationship with general education teachers in their building.

Table 41

Survey question 10 for special and gifted education teachers

	Observed N	Expected N
Strongly Agree	2	7.0
Agree	8	7.0
Strongly Disagree	11	7.0
Total	21	21

Survey Question 18 asked general education classroom teachers if there is a sense of community between general education and special education teachers in their building. A chi square test of equal percentages was conducted to test Survey Question 18 about the perceptions of general education teachers regarding whether there is a sense of community in their building between special education and general education teachers. The results of the test indicate there was a statistically significant difference between the

observed frequencies and the expected frequencies ($X^2 = 60.42$, $df = 4$, $p = .000$).

General education teachers responded Strongly Agree (20) and Agree (33) more than is expected by chance (12.4) that general education teachers believe there is a sense of community between general education teachers and special education teachers. Three teachers did not respond to this question.

Table 42

Survey question 18 for general education teachers

	Observed N	Expected N
Strongly Agree	20	12.4
Agree	33	12.4
Undecided	2	12.4
Disagree	4	12.4
Strongly Disagree	3	12.4
Total	62	62

Survey Question 18 asked general education classroom teachers if there is a sense of community between general education and gifted education teachers in their building. A chi square test of equal percentages was conducted to test Survey Question 18 about General education teachers' perceptions of whether there is a sense of community between general education and gifted education teachers. The results of the test indicate there was a statistically significant difference between the observed frequencies and the expected frequencies ($X^2 = 51.73$, $df = 3$, $p = .000$). General education teachers

responded Agree (37) more than is expected by chance (15) that classroom teachers believe there is a sense of community between general education teachers and gifted education teachers. Five teachers did not respond to this question.

Table 43

Survey question 18 for general education teachers

	Observed N	Expected N
Strongly Agree	17	15.0
Agree	37	15.0
Undecided	3	15.0
Disagree	3	15.0
Total	60	60

Survey Question 18 asked special education and gifted education teachers if there is a sense of community between general education and special/ gifted education teachers in their building. A chi square test of equal percentages was conducted to test Survey Question 18 about special education teachers' perceptions about whether there is a sense of community between general education and special education teachers. The results of the test indicate there was not a statistically significant difference between the observed frequencies and the expected frequencies ($\chi^2 = 13.52$, $df = 4$, $p = .009$). The frequency table for this question can be found in Appendix G (Table G 9).

Research Question 5: Resources

Survey Questions 22 and 25 relate to Research Question 5-Resources

Survey Question 22 asked general education, special education and gifted education teachers about their perceptions regarding necessary resources in their building for general education and special education/gifted education teachers to collaborate effectively. A chi square test of equal percentages was conducted to test Survey Question 22 about having the necessary resources in their building for general education and special education/gifted education teachers to collaborate effectively according to general education teachers. The results of the test indicate there was a statistically significant difference between the observed frequencies and the expected frequencies ($X^2 = 42$, $df = 3$, $p = .000$). General education teachers responded Strongly Agree (37) more than is expected by chance (15.5) that they believe they have necessary resources to collaborate with special education teachers effectively. Three teachers did not respond to this question.

Table 44

Survey question 22 for general education teachers

	Observed N	Expected N
Strongly Agree	13	15.5
Agree	37	15.5
Undecided	7	15.5
Disagree	5	15.5
Total	62	62

A chi square test of equal percentages was conducted to test Survey Question 22 about special education teachers' perceptions if they have necessary resources in their building for general education and special education/gifted education teachers to collaborate effectively. The results of the test indicate there was a statistically significant difference between the observed frequencies and the expected frequencies ($\chi^2 = 12.10$, $df = 4$, $p = .017$). Special education teachers responded Disagree (10) more than is expected by chance (4.2) that they believe they have necessary resources to collaborate with classroom teachers effectively.

Table 45

Survey question 22 for special and gifted education teachers

	Observed N	Expected N
Strongly Agree	2	4.2
Agree	1	4.2
Undecided	3	4.2
Disagree	10	4.2
Strongly Disagree	5	4.2
Total	21	21

Survey Question 25 asked the general education classroom teachers if the amount of time they currently collaborate with special education teachers in their building is appropriate to meet the needs of their students. A chi square test of equal percentages was conducted to test Survey Question 25 about general education teachers' perceptions of

whether the amount collaboration time with special education teachers is appropriate to meet the needs of their students. The results of the test indicate there was a statistically significant difference between the observed frequencies and the expected frequencies ($X^2 = 51.47$, $df = 4$, $p = .000$). General education teachers responded Agree (33) more than is expected by chance (12.2) that the amount of time they currently collaborate with special education teachers is appropriate in meeting their students' needs. Four teachers did not respond to this question.

Table 46

Survey question 25 for general education teachers

	Observed N	Expected N
Strongly Agree	14	12.2
Agree	33	12.2
Undecided	6	12.2
Disagree	7	12.2
Strongly Disagree	1	12.2
Total	61	61

Survey Question 25 asked the general education classroom teachers if the amount of time they currently collaborate with gifted education teachers in their building is appropriate to meet the needs of their students. A chi square test of equal percentages was conducted to test Survey Question 25 about the perceptions general education teachers have about whether the amount of time they currently collaborate with gifted

education teachers in their building is appropriate in meeting the needs of students. The results of the test indicate there was a statistically significant difference between the observed frequencies and the expected frequencies ($X^2 = 54.50$, $df = 4$, $p = .000$).

General education teachers responded Agree (34) more than is expected by chance (12) that the amount of time they currently collaborate with gifted education teachers is appropriate. Five teachers did not respond to this question.

Table 47

Survey question 25 for general education teachers

	Observed N	Expected N
Strongly Agree	10	12.0
Agree	34	12.0
Undecided	6	12.0
Disagree	9	12.0
Strongly Disagree	1	12.0
Total	60	60

For Survey Question 25, special education and gifted education teachers were asked if amount of time they currently collaborate with general education teachers in their building is appropriate in meeting the needs of students. A chi square test of equal percentages was conducted to test Survey Question 25 about perceptions special education teachers regarding the amount of time they collaborate with general education teachers in their building being appropriate in meeting the needs of students. The results

of the test indicate there was not a statistically significant difference between the observed frequencies and the expected frequencies ($X^2 = 4.95$, $df = 4$, $p = .292$). The frequency table for this question can be found in Appendix G (Table G 10).

Research Question 6-Professional Development

Survey questions 13, 14, 15, and 16 relate to Research Question 6 about Professional Development.

Survey Question 13 asked general education classroom teachers if there is a clear focus related to professional development for meeting the needs of special education students. A chi square test of equal percentages was conducted to test Survey Question 13 about general education teachers' perceptions whether there is a clear focus related to professional development for meeting the needs of special education students. The results of the test indicate there was a statistically significant difference between the observed frequencies and the expected frequencies ($X^2 = 37.87$, $df = 4$, $p = .000$). General education teachers responded Agree (31) more than is expected by chance (12.6) that the amount of time they currently collaborate with special education teachers is appropriate. Three teachers did not respond to this question.

Table 48

Survey question 13 for general education teachers

	Observed N	Expected N
Strongly Agree	9	12.6
Agree	31	12.6
Undecided	9	12.6
Disagree	12	12.6
Strongly Disagree	2	12.6
Total	63	63

Survey Question 13 asked general education classroom teachers if there is a clear focus related to professional development for meeting the needs of gifted education students. A chi square test of equal percentages was conducted to test Survey Question 13 about general education teachers' perceptions whether there is a clear focus related to professional development for meeting the needs of gifted education students. The results of the test indicate there was a statistically significant difference between the observed frequencies and the expected frequencies ($X^2 = 41.87$, $df = 4$, $p = .000$). General education teachers responded Agree (31) more than is expected by chance (12.2) that the amount of time they currently collaborate with special education teachers is appropriate. Four teachers did not respond to this question.

Table 49

Survey question 13 for general education teachers

	Observed N	Expected N
Strongly Agree	5	12.2
Agree	31	12.2
Undecided	12	12.2
Disagree	11	12.2
Strongly Disagree	2	12.2
Total	61	61

For Survey Question 13, special education and gifted education teachers were asked about their perceptions of whether there is a clear focus related to professional development for meeting the needs of special education students in their building. A chi square test of equal percentages was conducted to test Survey Question 13 about special education perceptions if there is a clear focus related to professional development for meeting the needs of special education/gifted education students. The results of the test indicate there was a statistically significant difference between the observed frequencies and the expected frequencies ($X^2 = 15.50$, $df = 4$, $p = .004$). Special education/gifted education teachers responded Agree (10) more than is expected by chance (4) that the amount of time they currently collaborate with special education teachers is appropriate. One teacher did not respond to this question.

Table 50

Survey question 13 for special and gifted education teachers

	Observed N	Expected N
Strongly Agree	3	4.0
Agree	2	4.0
Undecided	2	4.0
Disagree	11	4.0
Strongly Disagree	2	4.0
Total	20	

Survey Question 14 asked general education classroom teachers if general education teachers have a voice in professional development regarding special education instructional strategies. A chi square test of equal percentages was conducted to test Survey Question 14 about general education teachers' perceptions about having a voice in professional development regarding special education instructional strategies. The results of the test indicate there was a statistically significant difference between the observed frequencies and the expected frequencies ($X^2 = 35.65$, $df = 4$, $p = .000$). General education teachers responded Agree (25) and Disagree (23) more than is expected by chance (12.6) that they have a voice in professional development regarding instructional strategies for special education. Two teachers did not respond to this question.

Table 51

Survey question 14 for general education teachers

	Observed N	Expected N
Strongly Agree	7	12.6
Agree	25	12.6
Undecided	6	12.6
Disagree	23	12.6
Strongly Disagree	2	12.6
Total	63	63

Survey Question 14 asked general education classroom teachers if they thought they have a voice in professional development regarding gifted education instructional strategies. A chi square test of equal percentages was conducted to test Survey Question 14 about general education teachers' perceptions regarding having a voice in professional development regarding gifted education instructional strategies. The results of the test indicate there was a statistically significant difference between the observed frequencies and the expected frequencies ($\chi^2 = 35.83$, $df = 4$, $p = .000$). General education teachers responded Agree (22) and Disagree (24) more than is expected by chance (12) that they have a voice in professional development regarding instructional strategies for gifted education. Five teachers did not respond to this question.

Table 52

Survey question 14 for general education teachers

	Observed N	Expected N
Strongly Agree	5	12.0
Agree	22	12.0
Undecided	8	12.0
Disagree	24	12.0
Strongly Agree	1	12.0
Total	60	60

For Survey Question 14, special education and gifted education teachers were asked if they thought general education teachers have a voice in professional development regarding special education instructional strategies. A chi square test of equal percentages was conducted to test Survey Question 14 about special education teachers' perceptions regarding general education teachers having a voice in professional development regarding special education instructional strategies. The results of the test indicate there was not a statistically significant difference between the observed frequencies and the expected frequencies ($\chi^2 = 1.00$, $df = 4$, $p = .910$). The frequency table for this question can be found in Appendix G (Table G 11).

For Survey Question 14, special education and gifted education teachers were asked if they thought special education teachers have a voice in professional development regarding special education instructional strategies. A chi square test of equal percentages

was conducted to test Survey Question 14 about special education teachers' perceptions about having a voice in professional development regarding special education instructional strategies. The results of the test indicate there was not a statistically significant difference between the observed frequencies and the expected frequencies ($X^2 = 2.57$, $df = 4$, $p = .632$). The frequency table for this question can be found in Appendix G (Table G 12).

Survey Question 15 asked general education classroom teachers if they thought professional development for special education topics have a connection with classroom practice. A chi square test of equal percentages was conducted to test Survey Question 15 about general education teachers' perceptions about professional development for special education topics having a connection with classroom practice. The results of the test indicate there was a statistically significant difference between the observed frequencies and the expected frequencies ($X^2 = 35.97$, $df = 4$, $p = .000$). General education teachers responded Agree (30) more than is expected by chance (12.2) that professional development for special education topics has a connection to classroom practice. Four teachers did not respond to this question.

Table 53

Survey question 15 for general education teachers

	Observed N	Expected N
Strongly Agree	9	12.2
Agree	30	12.2
Undecided	12	12.2
Disagree	7	12.2
Strongly Disagree	3	12.2
Total	61	61

Survey Question 15 asked general education classroom teachers if professional development for gifted education topics have a connection with classroom practice. A chi square test of equal percentages was conducted to test Survey Question 15 about general education teachers' perceptions of professional development for gifted education topics having a connection with classroom practice. The results of the test indicate there was a statistically significant difference between the observed frequencies and the expected frequencies ($\chi^2 = 41.83$, $df = 4$, $p = .000$). General education teachers responded Agree (31) more than is expected by chance (12) that professional development for gifted education topics has a connection to classroom practice. Five teachers did not respond to this question.

Table 54

Survey question 15 for general education teachers

	Observed N	Expected N
Strongly Agree	7	12.0
Agree	31	12.0
Undecided	12	12.0
Disagree	8	12.0
Strongly Disagree	2	12.0
Total	60	60

For Survey Question 15, special education and gifted education teachers were asked if professional development for special/gifted education topics has a connection with classroom practice. A chi square test of equal percentages was conducted to test Survey Question 15 about special education teachers' perceptions regarding professional development for special/gifted education topics have a connection with classroom practice. The results of the test indicate there was not a statistically significant difference between the observed frequencies and the expected frequencies ($X^2 = 6.8$, $df = 4$, $p = .079$). The frequency table for this question can be found in Appendix G (Table G 13).

Survey Question 16 asked general education classroom teachers if they thought that in-house expertise and talent was used for professional development for special

education. A chi square test of equal percentages was conducted to test Survey Question 16 about general education teachers' perceptions of using in-house expertise and talent for professional development for special education. The results of the test indicate there was a statistically significant difference between the observed frequencies and the expected frequencies ($X^2 = 6.53$, $df = 3$, $p = .088$). General education teachers responded Agree (23) more than is expected by chance (15) that they use in-house expertise and talent for professional development for special education in their building. Five teachers did not respond to this question.

Table 55

Survey question 16 for general education teachers

	Observed N	Expected N
Strongly Agree	12	15.0
Agree	23	15.0
Undecided	15	15.0
Disagree	10	15.0
Total	60	60

Survey Question 16 asked general education classroom teachers if they use in-house expertise and talent for professional development for gifted education. A chi square test of equal percentages was conducted to test survey question 16 about General education teachers' perceptions about using in-house expertise and talent for professional

development for gifted education. The results of the test indicate there was a statistically significant difference between the observed frequencies and the expected frequencies ($X^2 = 18, df = 3, p = .000$). General education teachers responded Agree (27) more than is expected by chance (14.5) that they use in-house expertise and talent for professional development for special education in their building. Seven teachers did not respond to this question.

Table 56

Survey question 16 for general educator teachers

	Observed N	Expected N
Strongly Agree	9	14.5
Agree	27	14.5
Undecided	16	14.5
Disagree	6	14.5
Total	58	58

For Survey question 16, special education and gifted education teachers were asked if they use in-house expertise and talent for professional development in special/gifted education. A chi square test of equal percentages was conducted to test Survey Question 16 about special education and gifted education teachers' perceptions about using in-house expertise and talent for professional development in special/gifted education. The results of the test indicate there was not a statistically significant difference between the observed frequencies and the expected frequencies

($X^2 = 6.44$, $df = 4$, $p = .168$) The frequency table for this question can be found in Appendix G (Table G 14).

Qualitative Data

The qualitative portion of this study involved six schools (A, B, C, D, E, F). One administrator from each school was interviewed for this study (Administrator A-F). Fifteen observations took place and are coded by building and number of observation from that building (A team 1-4, B team 1, C team 1 and 2, D team 1-3, E team 1-4, F team 1). Ten teacher interviews were conducted: four general education teachers (Ge), three special education teachers (Se) and four gifted education teachers (Gt). See table 57 for coding technique used for each participant.

Table 57

Number of Teachers by School

	School					
	A	B	C	D	E	F
Observations						
Teams	4	1	2	3	4	1
Interviews						
Administrator	1	1	1	1	1	1
General Ed. Teacher	1		2			1
Special Ed. Teacher	1		1		1	
Gifted Ed. Teacher	1			1	1	

The following table illustrates how participants in the interviews were coded and named for identification purposes.

Table 58

Interview Classification Codes

School	A	B	C	D	E	F
Administrator	A	B	C	D	E	F
General Ed. Teacher	GeA1		GeC1 , GeC2			GeF1
Special Ed. Teacher	SpA1		SpC1		SpE1	
Gifted Ed. Teacher	GtA1			GtD1	GtE1	

The results from the qualitative data collection (administrator interviews, observations, and teacher interviews) are organized by research questions and appear below.

Administrator Interviews

To address the first research question regarding team process in collaboration between special education and general education teachers, the researcher posed the following question to six building administrators “What processes do you have in place for collaboration between general education and special education teachers?” All six administrators indicated that there are weekly meetings scheduled for collaboration between special education and general education teachers. Some buildings have names for their meetings such as CARE team or Problem Solving Teams where general education and special education teachers come together to discuss interventions for students who are having problems in the regular classroom. The three middle school

administrators stated that there are weekly Professional Learning Community (PLC) meetings scheduled each week for special education and general education teachers to collaborate about curriculum and discuss students.

The administrator at Building A, an elementary school, indicated that there are agendas that teams are expected to establish prior to the collaboration session and submitted with meeting notes included electronically to Administrator A so he is able to keep informed of what was discussed during the session. The administrator at building E, which is a middle school, also expects a predetermined agenda that the team follows during collaboration sessions and submits to the administrator after the session. Administrator E talked about the norms that are in place and the expectation that teams always meet in the same room with the same routines. This administrator discussed the importance of routines so that the team process is more effective. The other four building administrators suggested that their meetings are less formal and no agendas are required for the collaboration sessions.

Building administrators of schools B and C described the collaboration between special education and classroom teachers as casual. Both buildings are elementary level, and there are not set meeting times for collaborating about curriculum, only for discussing students who need services. The administrator at building C revealed that once students are identified and placed in special education “we don’t do a great job of collaborating.” This administrator felt that the collaborative process was well in place during the problem solving process, but once a student was placed on an IEP and begins receiving special education services, the special education teacher makes the accommodations without much formal collaboration with the general education teachers.

Five out of the six building administrators discussed PLC meetings and how collaboration occurs during those regular meetings. All five administrators talked about the fact that special education teachers are invited to participate in the grade level PLC meetings. Two of these principals went on to explain how special education teachers are expected to attend the weekly grade level PLC sessions.

Observations

The researcher observed fifteen different collaboration sessions. In the majority of the middle school observations, the sessions were attended by all the general education classroom teachers from a specific grade level (6th, 7th or 8th grade), special education teachers who are assigned to that grade level, and the gifted education teacher assigned to the grade level being observed. In one middle school observation, three general education teachers who teach the same content area were meeting with the special education teacher at that grade level. In the elementary schools, the majority of the observations occurred between a group of 2-4 general education teachers who teach the same grade level (grade level team) and a special education teacher. In two observations at the elementary level, one general education teacher met with one special education teacher.

During the observations the researcher was looking for evidence of team processes such as set agendas, norms, goal driven discussions, mutual respect, and specific roles for team members. In all fifteen observations, the sessions were structured, and there were clear goals for the session. There was evidence of respect for colleagues in each observation such as taking turns, using eye contact and maintaining focus on the discussion. Four observed sessions had a set agenda on paper or it was projected on the Smartboard so all participants could view easily. Seven of the observations had a

designated note taker. In seven of the observations, there was time to discuss and coordinate schedules with regard to pacing of the curriculum. Housekeeping topics such as field trips, testing schedules, and pull out schedules for students who need special education services arose in the same seven observations.

Teacher Interviews

When asked about the schedule for collaboration in their building, GeA1 shared that in her building there are scheduled grade level PLC meetings once a week for thirty minutes during the teachers' plan time. The agendas are determined by the team, and there are assigned roles such as note taker, timekeeper, and taskmaster. According to GeA1, during the sessions, the team discusses student progress and concerns, as well as any accommodations needed. GeA1 reported that the process works well since they have a consistent time to meet, an agenda to keep discussions on track and everyone is respectful and takes turns speaking. It was mentioned that sometimes discussions get off topic but someone usually redirects the discussions fairly quickly. GeA1 admitted that the special education teachers and gifted education teachers rarely attend the grade level PLC meetings since they are working with students during the grade level meeting times. But, they do make time to meet with special education teachers and the gifted education teacher when needed.

GeC1 reported that in her building the schedule for collaboration between general education and special education is less structured and more on an "as needed" basis. The classroom teachers meet monthly with special education teachers to discuss strategies and interventions. Additionally, they email and do daily check-ins depending on student needs. When asked what is discussed during collaboration sessions, GeC1 said they talk

about curriculum and ways to reinforce skills for students. GeC2 added that in collaboration sessions she has with special education teachers they look at work samples, testing data, and discuss observations of student behavior. When GeC2 was asked what can be improved in the team process, she mentioned that she would like to have more communication and coordination between extra services such as reading and math support so that they know what the students are working on when they are out of class for this support.

GeF1 said that he meets with the special education teacher assigned to their grade level everyday and talk about modification for all students who need them. GeF1 stated that the gifted education teacher meets with the grade level about every other week but keeps in contact through email. When asked about who sets up the collaboration schedule, GeF1 said that the principal organized the schedule but mentioned that since the special education teacher meets with the team daily, there is not a set schedule for those collaboration sessions. During the collaboration sessions, GeF1 said they spend most of the time discussing differentiation strategies and IEP goals.

Special education teachers echoed the processes that are in place as reported by the general education teachers at their buildings. However, SpE1 reported that she does not have any input in the agendas, that general education teachers set the agenda. SpE1 would like more input and be able to talk more about differentiation strategies, diversity of student learners and lesson plans so she can better coordinate their services for students with whom she works. SpA2 reflected that while she does not have set meeting times with general education teachers, they stay in constant communication through both email and before or after school contacts.

The gifted education teachers who were interviewed reported that collaboration between general education teachers is more casual in nature especially GeA4, who described most of her collaboration taking place in the hallway. However, when needed, she will meet with teachers to discuss any problems with students or look at test scores for students being considered for identification. GeA3 also said that when a teacher asks for differentiation strategies, she is happy to help and wished there was more time to spend collaborating about differentiating strategies.

GtD1 said she is invited to attend weekly meetings, but due to her schedule, she is usually available to meet every other week. When asked about what is discussed during the sessions that she does attend, GtD1 talked about sharing information related to the needs of gifted students, discussing progress of students whom she works with, and listening to any concerns the general education teachers may have. Further, she discusses options for students and this teacher sees herself as a facilitator of problem solving during these discussions.

GtE2 suggested that there was time built into the schedule for him to meet with teams. He also indicated that he had the support of administration if he needed additional coverage for students while he was meeting with general education teachers. When this gifted education teacher meets with general education teachers, they talk about topics related to the needs of gifted students as well as ways to further challenge students and differentiate instruction for high achieving and gifted students. GtE2 said that sometimes he meets with teachers weekly in addition to more structured monthly sessions. Additionally, GtE2 uses email and visits informally with teachers during lunch. While

they do spend time on gifted education topics during the collaboration sessions, he would like to spend more time on social and emotional needs of gifted students.

When asked about the relationships they have with the special education teachers in their buildings, GeA1, GeC1, GeC2, and GeF1 all said they have good, positive relationships. All four general education teachers interviewed said that they work well together with their special education and gifted education teachers.

Special education teachers SpA2 and Sp C3 feel that they have strong relationships with general education teachers. SpA2 spoke about how the kids are “ours” and reflected that their work together is a team effort. SpE1 reported that in her building she does not feel part of the team.

All three gifted education teachers interviewed reported they have good relationships with general education teachers. Both GtA1 and GtD1 used the words “mutual respect” in their description. GtE1 reported that he feels the school culture is like a family and he knows that if he needed anything the other teachers would help. GtE1 also feels there is a very open professional community at their school.

Administrator Interviews

To find out the perceptions of the administrators regarding the benefits of collaboration, all six administrators were asked, “What benefits do you see regarding collaboration between general education and special education teachers in your building? What are some disadvantages?” Every administrator interviewed mentioned communication as a benefit of collaboration between special education teachers and general education teachers in their building. All six administrators stated that communication is beneficial for special education and general education teachers

working together coordinating efforts and being on the same page. The administrator of Building B talked about never having a “division” between special education and general education (both teachers and students) as a result of collaborative efforts in their building. This administrator also mentioned trust as a benefit of collaboration in the building. Both administrators in buildings C and D mentioned the legal aspects of collaboration that accommodations for special education students are the responsibility of general education teachers. These administrators indicated that collaboration helps teachers meet this legal obligation.

All six administrators pointed out that special education teachers share differentiation strategies and ideas with general education teachers that can benefit all students. Administrator C went on to say that general education teachers can help special education /gifted education teachers understand the expectations and performance of “typical” students so the special education/gifted education teachers can use that as a reference point when working with the students who receive special education services. Both Administrators D and E suggested that collaboration has the benefit of all teachers being on the same team with no one feeling left out of the process. Administrator F indicated that the main benefit of collaboration is that it benefits the students with whom the teachers work.

When asked to share any disadvantages of collaboration between special education and general education, five out of six administrators mentioned time and scheduling. As both Administrator A and F suggested, it can be challenging to justify taking the time away from students for collaboration with teachers but it is worthwhile as the services are better for the students as a result of collaboration. Another disadvantage

that was mentioned by Administrator D was related to personality issues that affect productive collaboration.

Administrator E mentioned the amount of paperwork involved in the collaborative process as a disadvantage. Administrator B could not think of any disadvantages to collaboration between special education/gifted education and general education teachers. Overall, the administrators agreed that the benefits outweighed the disadvantages they mentioned.

Observations

During the observation sessions, the researcher was looking for behaviors related to benefits of collaboration between special education and general education teachers such as the teachers mentioning benefits, collaborating about strategies to use with students and being on the “same page” regarding students and curriculum. During one of the sessions at building A, a general education teacher stated, “we work so well together.” This team used the problem solving process to determine the best course of action to help students prepare for upcoming state assessments.

In a collaboration session at building B between a general education teacher and a special education teacher, they told the researcher that since they collaborate so frequently and also team -teach, the students think the special education teacher is their second teacher rather than a teacher who only works with certain students. The teacher also shared that there is no division between special education and general education because of the amount of collaboration.

While observing a collaboration session between a gifted education teacher and a grade level team at building C, the teachers discussed how it was easier to modify

curriculum for lower students. The general education teachers indicated were glad the gifted education teacher was able to help them with the “smart kids.” The gifted education teacher told the general education teachers not to worry, she would help them so they didn’t have to “reinvent the wheel” when it came to creating projects to challenge the higher level students.

In an observation with another team at building C involving two special education teachers and one general education teacher, the general education teacher suggested that the student they were discussing was usually behind the other students but because of the new plan they have put in place, the student is all caught up.

During a collaboration session at building D that included general education teachers, the gifted education teacher, and special education teachers, it was discussed that it was nice to have time together to plan and discuss students. Another team at building D indicated that having time with the special education teachers gave them the opportunity to brainstorm interventions, and that it was helpful to have the special education teacher providing ideas for strategies to use with students.

During a collaboration session that was observed at building F between a special education teacher and a grade level team of three general education teachers, the special education teacher talked about how knowing what the teachers are going to be doing in class helps her and her paraprofessionals “immensely” when working with the students they serve in the resource room. In turn, the general education teachers said that the special education teacher’s suggestions helped them modify the curriculum for the students she works with as well as all students they teach.

A general education teacher at a building E collaboration session told the researcher that it was really nice to have the time allocated to get together and collaborate. Another general education teacher at building E mentioned they were so “lucky” to have the special education teachers’ expertise while planning for upcoming state assessments.

Teacher Interviews

When asked about the benefits of collaboration with special education and gifted education teachers, GeA1 replied that having avenues for communication is beneficial and that this communication ultimately benefits the students. GeC1 also thought that collaboration with special education teachers is good for the students by providing consistency and being able to work at their own level to find success. GeC2 added that students benefit from the ideas that are shared during collaboration sessions between general education and special education teachers. GeF1 agreed that collaboration overall helps the students and the strategies shared during collaboration can be used for all students. Other benefits of collaboration, in addition to benefitting students, according to general education teachers included parents seeing the team as a united front (GeF1) and relying on special education expertise and research based strategies (GeC2).

When the special education teachers were asked about the benefits of collaborating with general education teachers, SpE1 talked about coordinating the curriculum and sharing ideas about the curriculum are helpful. SpA1 stated that collaboration helps move the kids forward and also mentioned that they are all here for the same purpose-“the kids”. SpC1 explained that it is beneficial for the students when

she and the classroom teacher are consistent in their approaches and strategies they use with the students.

The gifted education teachers talked about helping the teachers understand the needs of gifted students in their interviews. GtA1 explained that students are gifted all the time so the general education teachers have to meet their needs all the time not just when the students are with the gifted education teacher. GtE1 was also in agreement with the general education teachers who talked about collaboration ultimately benefitting the students. GtD1 said it is nice to get to meet with the teachers and share ideas. GtD1 added that since she works with the students for three years, she has historical perspective of the students and has the ability to share that information as needed with the general education teachers while collaborating.

When the teachers were asked about any potential disadvantages of collaboration, GeC1, GeC2, GeD1, GtE1, SpE1, GeF1 all shared that more time was needed to effectively collaborate. The other teachers interviewed could not think of any disadvantages of collaboration between special education and general education at their building.

Administrator Interviews

To determine the perceived level of support the administrators provide for collaboration between special education/gifted education and general education, the administrators were asked, "What is your role in collaboration between general education teachers and special education teachers in your building?" Three of six administrators indicated they attend the collaboration sessions on a regular basis. All six mentioned some form of accountability as their role in the collaboration process at their building,

which included reviewing agendas and reflection sheets after sessions and simply having the expectation that collaboration occurs regularly.

Administrator A added that he controls the financial and instructional resources and allocate these resources to aid in collaboration. Administrator C shared that she assists in the allocation of time, arranges the schedule for collaboration, and provides substitute teachers when needed to cover classes while teachers collaborate. This administrator said that she has a more managerial role in helping the teachers find the time to collaborate. She added that she will provide input when needed and help when there was a parent concern related to services provided.

Administrator B talked about the shared leadership in the building. Each grade level has a team leader who represents their team in the building leadership team meetings. Special education/gifted education teachers are also a part of the leadership team. The administrator uses the building leadership team as a way to keep informed and spread information back to the teachers.

Both Administrators C and D shared that they help teams remember that they are in the business of helping students. Administrator C went on to say that she knows the students and their history and shares the relevant information with teams when needed.

Administrator E talked about attending meetings and modeling norms. She indicated that she attends meetings to show the importance of collaboration but she never leads the meetings. Administrator F shared that she served as a mentor to her staff in the area of collaboration between general education and special education/gifted education teachers. This administrator went on to talk about how she provides support for the

special education/gifted education teachers to collaborate with general education teachers.

Observations

In one session of collaboration at Building A, the building administrator was in attendance and guided the discussion the team was having about how to better differentiate activities for students using grouping. Administrator A listened to the concerns expressed by classroom teachers, offered suggestions and guided the teachers toward a solution they seemed to feel comfortable with trying. Administrator A told the teachers to start small and suggested ways they could begin to implement the strategies discussed. For the other collaboration sessions at Building A, the note taker for the sessions submitted the completed agenda to the administrator electronically for his review.

During the observations at Building D, the administrator attended one of the sessions as an observer and did not participate in the discussions. For the other sessions, the note taker submitted the completed agenda and notes to the administrator electronically for review.

In Building E, the administrator attended part of one session and offered suggestions regarding scheduling issues being discussed. In another session Administrator E stopped by with a student to discuss missing work with the team of general education teachers and special education teacher.

Teacher Interviews

General education teachers were asked about their administrator's role in the collaboration process between themselves and special education (including gifted

education teachers) to determine level of administrative support. GeA1 stated that Administrator A gives input for problem solving and is kept in the loop if he does not attend the collaboration sessions. GeA1 added that Administrator A is involved if there is an issue with a parent or family. GeC1 and GeC2 agreed that Administrator C is involved when there is a parent issue and is always available when there is a question or concern. GeC1 went on to talk about how her administrator is very supportive. GeC2 added that Administrator C knows the students really well and gives good insights on student backgrounds when needed. GeF1 reported that Administrator F sets up the collaboration schedule and then leaves it up to the team to keep her informed. GeF1 added that Administrator F might drop by during a session or will come if invited by the team.

SpA1 sees Administrator A in a leadership role in the collaboration process. SpE1 indicated that the administrator mandates attendance at collaboration sessions and sets the schedule of meetings. SpE1 added that the administrators participate on collective inquiry days of PLCs. SpC1 sees her administrator as supportive and available whenever needed.

All of the gifted education teachers responded that their administrators were supportive of collaboration and gifted education in general. GtD1 remarked that Administrator D encourages her participation in the collaboration sessions. GtE1 said in addition to support Administrator E provides, she also wants to learn more about the needs of gifted students and empower teachers to learn more about gifted students. Further, GtE1 feels that the administrators set a positive tone and find creative ways to meet the needs of all students.

Administrator Interviews

To learn more about the perceptions in attitude toward collaboration between special education and general education teachers in their buildings, the administrators were asked about their perceptions of the teachers' attitude towards collaboration between general education and special education. Administrator A responded that the attitude in his building has evolved over time. He shared that when teachers begin to see students succeeding as a result of collaboration, the benefits are highlighted and attitude is improved. Administrator A added that the collaborative process has become more efficient and this has improved the attitude of his staff. Administrator B said that collaboration is part of the job and the teachers couldn't do their job without collaborating. She said that her staff respects, values, and "cherishes" the team approach. Administrator B also expressed that teachers know they have excellent test scores as a result of collaborative practices. Administrator C indicated that the attitude in her building is mixed, the teachers both "appreciate and resent" the process. She also discussed how teachers become frustrated with modifications that are required for high needs students and those student needs are harder for them to understand.

"Awesome" was the initial response in regard to the attitude toward collaboration for Administrator D. This administrator went on to express that teachers love using each others' expertise and they do a good job working together. Administrator E said that general education teachers value the time they get to collaborate with special educators and wished they had more time with the gifted education teacher. Administrator E believes that teachers look forward to their time together and hold each other accountable for collaboration. Finally, according to Administrator E, collaboration allows for time to

share strategies and have conversations about modifications that teachers find very valuable.

Administrator F indicated that in her building, the attitude depends on the grade level. One particular grade level team has a very positive attitude toward collaboration between special education and general education. In that grade level, the teachers are very involved in differentiating content and the special education teacher is seen as a team member rather than just as the special education teacher.

Observations

During all collaboration sessions that were observed, the researcher noted professional respect and active engagement in the collaboration process. Evidence of rapport, eye contact, and face to face interactions were observed. No conflicts or negative comments were noted during any of the observed sessions.

During a session at Building B, the general education teacher remarked, “we are a match made in heaven” about the collaboration she does with the special education teacher. During a collaboration session at Building D, complimentary comments such as “you are very good at meeting the needs of students” and “how can I help you meet the needs of the students?” were noted. It was observed in all the sessions at Building D that the teachers were willing to help one another in differentiating the curriculum.

In Building E evidence of humor and positive rapport were observed in each of the team collaboration sessions that were observed. It was obvious to the researcher that the teams had positive collegial relationships. In an observation at Building F, the general education teachers told the special education teacher that she is “great” and they are glad to have her as a resource.

Teacher Interviews

General education teachers were asked about the overall attitude of collaboration between general education, special education and gifted education teachers at their building. Three general education teachers responded that the attitude was positive. GeA1 reflected that teachers are open minded and the collaborative relationships work really well overall but there are a few teachers who feel that special education is not their area and should just be taken care of by the special education teachers.

The special education teachers had mixed responses. SpA1 said that the general education teachers are very satisfied and if a concern exists, she would know it. SpE1 felt that collaborative process could be much more beneficial but she thinks collaboration is more focused on general education issues. SpC1 said that the teachers seem to appreciate the time that she spends collaborating with them.

Gifted education teachers also had mixed responses to the question about attitude toward collaboration. GtA1 reported that the attitude in her building is about a “six on a scale of ten”. The reason it is not higher, according to GtA1 is that general education teachers are overwhelmed with classroom responsibilities and if the students are doing fine, then collaborating about their needs is not a priority. GtD1 responded differently to the question, she feels that it is great if they have the extra time but if they have to be in the session discussing special education students, then collaboration sessions are a waste of time for her. Finally, GtE1 responded with “fantastic” when asked about the attitude toward collaboration in his building between special education and general education. GtE1 went on to say that he has never had more support and encouragement from administration in any other buildings in which he has taught.

Administrator Interviews

To determine the perceived resources available and what is still needed to support collaboration between special education and general education teachers, the administrators were asked about what resources are provided for collaboration between general educational and special education teachers in their buildings. The administrators were also asked about what resources are still needed to better support collaboration.

All six administrators mentioned a set time to meet as a resource in place at their building. Five administrators stated that more time is needed for more effective collaboration.

Administrator A added that the staff have had specialized training on collaboration and they have books on Professional Learning Communities (PLC) as reference tools. The district software for curriculum mapping was also mentioned as a resource in place in Building A. The only resource missing was daily time for collaboration.

Administrator B discussed the resources in place such as time and expectation to meet, substitute teachers provided for collaboration on the development of IEP's, and class-within-a-class (CWC) model of services to students so special education teachers are in the classroom everyday to help special education students which allows for daily communication and collaboration to occur "on the fly." When responding to what resources are still needed, more time, more structure for collaboration, and more vertical teaming were discussed. Time, substitute teachers, curriculum programs and paraprofessionals to cover classes were the resources mentioned according to Administrator C that are currently in place in her building. Resources needed included

more time to collaborate and more inclusion of special education teachers in the review of school improvement goals.

Administrator D reported that time, place to meet, and a framework for collaboration are resources currently in place. This administrator added district School Improvement Specialists (SIS) and available data to help drive decisions as additional resources provided by the district. When reflecting on what was needed in terms of resources, she spoke about the need to dig deeper in the collaborative process and take collaboration to the next level.

The administrator of Building E stated that a set schedule, time available to meet, expectations, and set norms were resources that were in place to support collaboration. They reported that while the staff has set routines and expectations for collaboration, new staff needs to have more buy-in to the collaborative process and training in how to collaborate with their team members.

In Building F, the administrator reported that there is extra substitute time scheduled so general education teachers can meet with the special education teachers. She mentioned that there is a special education PLC and the members of the special education team meet to share information with each other and then pass information on to their grade level teams. This administrator shared that she thought special education/gifted education teachers need more time freed up from teaching to meet and plan with general educators. According to Administrator F, since this building has more significant student needs, the teachers require more help and have more schedule limitations than those who teach in other schools.

Observations

In Buildings A, E, D, it was clear that time was provided and a regular meeting place was established for collaboration. In the other buildings, teachers selected a general educational classroom to meet, but this was not their regular established meeting location. In addition to the resources of time and space, modified curricular materials were shared with the team by either the special education teachers or gifted education teachers in five of the observed sessions. These modified materials were produced by the special education teacher or gifted education teacher for the general education teachers to use with students in their classes.

It was observed in three different collaboration sessions that teachers used their laptop computers so they could have access to online materials and use the district curriculum mapping software during their collaboration sessions with the special education and gifted education teachers. By viewing the curriculum mapping software during the collaboration sessions, the special education and gifted education teachers could see what topics were approaching in the curriculum and they could assist in suggestions for differentiated instructional activities.

Teacher Interviews

Again, general education teachers were in agreement that time allocated to collaboration is a valuable resource and more is needed to increase effectiveness. GeC1 suggested that special education expertise is a resource and GeC2 added that an “attitude of flexibility” among special education teachers was another resource. GeF1 mentioned diagnostic testing information as another resource and the ability to communicate through

email when she is not able to meet with special education and gifted education teachers face-to-face.

SpA1 mentioned adaptive curriculum as a resource to aid in collaboration and said that teachers work together on differentiation strategies. SpE1 had trouble thinking of resources but mentioned learning target posters that the general education teachers gave her and wishes that the teachers would share their lesson plans with her more often. SpC1 indicated that the teachers in the building are open to suggestions and this makes it easier to work with the teachers.

All three gifted education teachers talked about differentiation materials as a resource they share with general education teachers. GtA1 elaborated to include other materials that the Administrator A had purchased for her to use with students and share with classroom teachers. Both GtD1 and GtE1 discussed the allocation of time to collaborate and they both indicated more time is needed to be more effective. GtE1 included encouragement and support from administrators and district coordinator as resources. GtA1 suggested she would like to use more online resources as a method of collaboration with classroom teachers.

Administrator Interviews

To address Research Question 6, the administrators were asked by the researcher what types of professional development are provided regarding collaboration between general education and special education in their building. Administrator A discussed how the building leadership team plans professional development as needed. Some examples of what had been provided recently included differentiation strategies and behavior

strategies. These learning opportunities were provided by special education teachers at Building A.

Administrator B reported that the staff had participated in a book study using one of Richard Dufour's recent books about Professional Learning Communities. In addition to a face-to-face discussion at the grade level teams, there was also a staff book study blog to further discuss the topics related to Professional Learning Communities. Other professional development opportunities are planned by the leadership team which includes representatives from both general education and special education/gifted education.

Administrator C initially replied that there was not enough professional development provided to support collaboration between special education and general education teachers. She went on to say that the professional development is provided on an "as needed basis." The problem solving team provides support to general education teachers who need additional support with strategies and interventions. Administrator C also indicated that teachers are beginning to improve use of differentiation strategies in their classrooms, but teachers need to be more open to using interventions with students in the classroom setting.

Administrator D talked about bringing in experts like the district Director of Special Education to provide information to teachers about the requirements for Individual Education Plans. She went on to share that the leadership team selects 1-2 strategies to focus on each year and throughout the year these strategies are the focus of professional development. Additionally, Administrator D reported that professional development is infused into all collaboration that occurs in the building.

Administrator E discussed how the staff has been involved in the PLC process for a long time and is now so comfortable with collaboration that it is almost second nature. However, she indicated that sometimes individual teams need reminders or modeling by administration to get back on track, but nothing formal. She also mentioned that the gifted education teacher regularly provides professional development to general education teachers during the collective inquiry PLCs on a formal basis and shares strategies at lunch on an informal basis.

Administrator F also reported that the staff has had extensive PLC training. Teachers have had additional training on building trust and relationships. As a staff, they need more of a structure for implementation, according to Administrator F. The staff has had professional development and training on developing common assessments, and they recently did a book study using a resource book about collaboration techniques.

Observations

Evidence of professional development occurring during collaboration sessions was observed in five different sessions. Two out of these five observations were sharing of specific strategies by a gifted education teacher and a special education teacher to the rest of the grade level team of teachers. In one of the previous examples that occurred in Building F, the other special education teacher asked if they could come in during her plan time to observe the use of the note taking strategy with students.

In the other three examples where there was evidence of professional development, they all involved a team member sharing what they learned at a recent professional development workshop that was provided by the district. In one case, Administrator A shared what he learned in regard to balanced literacy and shared how

blogging was incorporated into the balanced literacy program at another school in the district. In another example in Building E, a team member shared with the general education and special education teachers a new online tool they learned about in the professional development session they attended. Another team in Building E had a discussion about how the district professional development was a waste of time and it would have been more beneficial to use that time for collaboration at the buildings.

Teacher Interviews

General education teachers discussed that most of the professional development about special education or gifted education takes place on an informal basis during collaboration sessions. GeF1 mentioned that more reading interventions are needed but special education teachers meet together during professional development days instead of being able to share strategies with teachers. GeF1 indicated “we can do better” when it comes to incorporating professional development around special education and gifted education topics. GeC1 and GeC2 talked about how once a year the special education and gifted education teachers review the process for identification and placement in special education programs. GeA1 felt that the district should continue to offer more choices for professional development about special education topics.

SpA1 stated that most teachers are experienced with how to work with special education students and if there was something new that came up, she would work with the teacher individually. SpA1 added that teachers have a solid understanding of how to manage behavior plans for students. SpE1 remarked that she used to share differentiation strategies with teachers but now she just takes care of differentiation in the resource room

with the students themselves. If given the chance, SpE1 would like to share with the general education teachers what takes place in the resource room.

GtE1 talked about how he provides information regarding differentiation strategies, offering students choices in assignments, and underachievement. He shares this information with general education teachers in large groups, small groups, and individually but prefers small group configuration which generally occurs during collective inquiry PLC time. GtA1 feels there is not much formal professional development at her building focused on gifted education, but she does present about gifted education topics to the staff about once a year. Instead, she would like to have a make-it-take-it workshop during an early release time. GtA1 would also like to share more research articles with general education teachers to increase awareness of the needs of gifted students. GtD1 reported that she shares pieces of information about gifted students at collaboration sessions with general education teachers. GtD1 would like to be able to focus on 21st century technology skills and how to apply these in the classroom.

Summary

Qualitative and quantitative data results organized by specific research questions on perceptions of existing factors of effective collaboration were described and analyzed. Summaries and findings are discussed along with the supposition for practice, conclusions, and suggestions for future research are explained in Chapter Five.

CHAPTER FIVE

INTERPRETATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Chapter Five is organized into five sections presenting the data in this mixed quantitative and qualitative study's previous chapters. The study was guided by the research questions. An overview of the problem, purpose statement and research questions, review of methodology, and major findings of the study are found in the study summary. Findings related to the literature include a comparison and contrast of information in the review of literature and the findings of the study. A discussion of implications for action, recommendations for future research, and concluding remarks are included in the conclusions section.

Study Summary

Overview of the Problem

General education teachers and special education teachers historically have not had a strong collaborative relationship due to the pull-out model of services (Skrtic, Harris, & Shriner, 2005). Prior to legislation requiring schools to be inclusive for students with special needs, students were provided separate services often in separate classrooms or even separate buildings. With the increase of inclusion and class within-a-class service models as a result of IDEA 1990, classroom teachers and resource teachers need to be able to collaborate and work together to meet the needs of the students who are eligible for an Individual Education Plan (IEP) or even those students who are achieving below, at, or above grade level. Now both No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Legislation and Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) mandates promotes collaboration between special education/gifted education and general education teachers.

The group, *Bright Futures for Exceptional Learners*, conducted a survey of pre-service general education teachers and special education teachers in 2000. The results of the survey found that general educators were concerned with being prepared to meet the exceptional needs of their students, and special educators expressed concerns with not being prepared in their role in a collaborative relationship with general education teachers (Kozleski, Mainzer, Deschler, Coleman & Rodriguez-Walling, 2000). These results indicate a need for a formal framework that general education and special education/gifted education teachers follow as they enter in a collaborative relationship.

Purpose Statement and Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to investigate existing perceptions of teachers and administrators regarding collaborative practices between general education and special education/ gifted education teachers.

The research questions for this study were related to determining what factors contribute to effective collaboration between general education and special education/gifted education teachers. The research questions were:

1. What perceptions exist concerning team processes that support collaboration between special education/gifted education and general education teachers?
2. What perceptions exist concerning the benefits of collaboration between special education/gifted education teachers and general education teachers?
3. What perceptions exist concerning administrator support and shared leadership regarding collaboration between special education/gifted education and general education teachers?

4. What perceptions exist concerning attitude toward collaboration between special education/gifted education and general education teachers?
5. What perceptions exist concerning the resources currently available and what is still needed to support collaboration between special education/gifted education and general education teachers?
6. What perceptions exist concerning the professional development that is provided to support collaboration between special education/gifted education and general education teachers?

Review of Methodology

Methodologies used to collect data for the study were both quantitative and qualitative. Quantitative data were collected through online surveys. The surveys were sent out to general education and special education/gifted education teachers who teach in three elementary schools and three middle schools in the district. Once the survey data were collected, they were quantified and chi square tests of equal percentages were run on the individual survey question responses to determine if there were statistically significant differences between the observed frequencies and the expected frequencies. Qualitative data were collected through interviews with building administrators, observations of collaboration sessions between special education/gifted education teachers and general education teachers, and follow up interviews with general education, special education, and gifted education teachers. Data were organized by the research questions. Responses to the interview questions were grouped according to like answers and similarities and differences noted. Observation data were organized the research

questions and factors that were observed by the researcher during each collaboration session.

Major Findings

The results of this study reveal several important findings. The findings are organized by research questions below.

Team Process

Quantitative

The survey results indicate that general education teachers believe they meet with special education teachers weekly and gifted education teachers either quarterly or monthly. Most general education teachers agree there are set processes, clear roles and responsibilities in the collaboration process, common philosophies, goals and shared expertise, and set expectations and routines for collaboration between general education and special education /gifted education teachers.

The survey results for special education teachers were mixed regarding their perceptions of team processes in place at their individual buildings. The responses indicate that most special educator teachers meet with grade level teams on a regular basis, usually weekly. However, it is unclear from the results how often special education teachers meet with other special education teachers in their building. Special education teachers responded that they do not think they are clear on the roles between general education teachers and themselves regarding collaboration. The survey results were mixed for perceptions of special education teachers regarding team roles and responsibilities, set processes for collaboration or common philosophies and goals for collaboration between special education/gifted education and general education teachers.

Qualitative

Through the interviews and observations, it was evident that all three middle schools had set processes and schedule for collaboration between general education and special education/gifted education teachers on a weekly basis. The teams at the middle schools have a structured agenda and a common place to meet each week. The elementary schools, on the other hand, have a less structured approach to collaboration between general education teachers and special education/gifted education teachers. In most cases, individual teachers meet with special education and gifted education teachers on an as needed basis. One of the three elementary buildings have weekly times for special education/gifted education and general education to meet and the administrator expects an agenda of what was discussed during those sessions.

In all but one case, the general education, special education, and gifted education teachers who were interviewed reported that they have good relationships with one another. There was evidence of mutual respect and collegiality during the observed collaboration sessions which indicates a team approach to collaboration.

Benefits

Quantitative

The survey results indicate that general education teachers believe that collaboration between general education and special education/gifted education teachers is beneficial. In fact, all but one respondent answered Strongly Agree or Agree to the survey question. On the other hand, the majority of special education teachers responded Strongly Disagree to the same question about whether collaboration sessions are

beneficial. When general education teachers were asked whether they thought existing collaboration benefits students, the majority of respondents again indicated Strongly Agree or Agree. Yet, when the special education teachers were asked the same question, the majority of those respondents selected Strongly Disagree or Disagree that the existing collaboration is beneficial to students. These responses indicate that the general education teachers see benefits of collaboration with special education teachers but the special education/gifted education teachers do not see the same benefits.

Qualitative

When asked about the benefits of collaboration between general education and special education/ gifted education teachers, all six administrators who were interviewed indicated that increased communication, sharing differentiation strategies that benefit all students, and coordinated efforts related to serving special education/gifted students in the classroom were benefits they see in their buildings. Two administrators mentioned the legal obligation of general education teachers to meet special education/gifted education needs and these teachers need the support of special education/gifted education teachers to meet this obligation.

During the observations, the researcher noted relaxed body language, which indicated openness to the collaboration occurring. Comments from teachers during the sessions that indicate that they appreciate the time to collaborate with special education teachers and desire their suggestions and expertise related effective strategies to implement with students who need additional support in the classroom setting.

The teacher interviews echo the responses from the administrators about coordinated efforts, shared expertise and the overall benefit that students have from

collaboration between special education and general education teachers. Special education teachers discussed the benefit of general education teachers understanding the needs of special education and gifted students who are in their classroom as a result of collaboration.

There is a slight discrepancy between the quantitative data and qualitative data collected about the benefits seen by special education/gifted education teachers. This discrepancy can be explained in two ways. Either the special education/gifted education teachers who were interviewed were those that also agreed that collaboration is beneficial on the survey or the respondents were not as candid in the interviews as they were on the survey.

Administrator support and shared leadership

Quantitative

General education teachers were asked if they felt they had input regarding scheduling and delivery options for special education services which indicates shared leadership in their building. Most teachers agreed that they have input, but a number of teachers also disagreed that they had input. When general education teachers were asked about the input they have in gifted education services, the responses were similar, 25 teachers agreed while 15 disagreed that they had any input. Special education/gifted education teachers thought that general education teachers do have input in the scheduling options and delivery while the majority of special education teachers did not feel they had input in the schedule or delivery options for special education in their building. These responses indicate that special education teachers do not necessarily feel they have control over special education services which can mean that there is shared

leadership in their building but further investigation of special education teachers opinions need to occur before drawing this conclusion from the results.

When general education teachers were asked if they saw special education/gifted education teachers in their building as leaders, over half of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they saw the special education teachers as leaders. However, when special education and gifted education teachers were asked if they saw themselves as leaders in their building, the results indicated that 11 out of 21 respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that they are leaders in their buildings. This discrepancy reveals that special education teachers see themselves in a different role than general education teachers see them.

General education teachers were asked if they think administrators encourage teacher leadership when it comes to special education issues. The majority of the general education teachers agreed or strongly agreed that their administrator encourages teacher leadership which indicated shared leadership, while the results of the special education teachers were mixed.

Finally, general education teachers were asked if there was accountability for collaboration between general education and special education teachers. The majority of general education teachers agreed or strongly agreed that there is accountability. This indicates that the administrator values and expects collaboration to occur between special education and general education teachers. The results for special education teachers' perceptions of whether there is accountability in their building for collaboration between general education and special education/gifted education were mixed, meaning some

teachers agreed that there is accountability, while others did not think there was accountability for collaboration in their building.

Qualitative

All six of the administrators interviewed indicated that they support collaboration between general and special education/gifted education teachers. While most of the administrators attend meetings when they are invited or needed, they are more supportive behind the scenes by requesting agendas or meeting notes for accountability purposes, providing background information on students, modeling expectations and behaviors as well as being available when needed. The administrators all indicated they provide support by allocating time for special education and general education teachers to meet, having an expectation for meeting together, and encouraging teacher leadership through leadership teams.

Most general education, special education, and gifted education teachers interviewed expressed that their administrators supported and encouraged collaboration between special education/gifted education and general education teachers. All teachers interviewed indicated that administrators at their building expect collaboration to occur and while they may not always attend the collaboration sessions, they are informed about what is discussed while allowing the teachers to take ownership of the collaboration process, indicating shared leadership. This same level of teacher ownership with accountability to the administrator was evidenced during some collaboration sessions where the administrator may not have been present, but meeting notes were taken to share with the building administrator. While in other sessions, there was a level of trust

between general education and special education teachers without the administrator monitoring the sessions.

Positive attitude

Quantitative

General education teachers were asked if they had positive feelings and attitudes toward collaboration with special education and gifted education teachers. Most general education teachers indicated that they agreed or strongly agreed that they had positive feelings and views toward collaboration with special education and gifted education teachers. However, most special education and gifted education teachers responded that they did not have positive feelings or views toward collaboration with general education teachers. Special education and gifted education teachers were also asked if they had positive feelings and views toward collaborating with other special education teachers and the majority of the teachers disagreed or strongly disagreed.

General education teachers were asked if they were committed and motivated to collaborate with special education and gifted education teachers. Almost all general education teachers agreed or strongly agreed that they are motivated and committed to collaborate with both special education and gifted education teachers in their building. While the results to the question about whether special education teachers are motivated and committed to collaboration with classroom teachers are inconclusive, most special education teachers responded Strongly Disagree when asked if they were motivated and committed to collaborating with other special education teachers in their building.

When general education teachers were asked whether they had positive communication and relationships with special education and gifted education teachers in

their building, the majority of general education teachers agreed or strongly agreed. The special education teachers' results were split when asked whether they had positive communication and relationships with general education teachers. The most common responses were either agree or disagree, with disagree being slightly higher. When general education teachers were asked whether there was a sense of community between them and special education and gifted education teachers, the majority of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that there was a sense of community.

Qualitative

The six administrators revealed through the interviews that teachers in their buildings have mixed attitudes toward collaboration between general education, special education, and gifted education teachers. The administrators discussed that the teachers know it is important and valuable but not all teachers recognize the value until they see the benefits. Other administrators spoke about collaboration being a process and some teachers have a positive attitude while others do not see collaboration as part of their job.

In some schools, the administrator indicated that collaboration is part of the building culture and the teachers could not do their job without it. The teacher interviews mirrored the responses of administrators. While most shared that the overall attitude toward collaboration between special education and general education was positive, it depended on the team in some buildings and the culture of the building on whether the teachers viewed collaboration with a positive attitude. The observations revealed most teachers seemed to be positive about the collaboration and no negative body language or comments were observed. Instead, body language and comments during the sessions pointed toward a positive attitude about collaborating.

Resources

Quantitative

General education teachers were asked if there were necessary resources in place to support collaboration between themselves and special education and gifted education teachers. The majority of general education teachers agreed or strongly agreed that the resources are in place. Special education teachers strongly disagreed or disagreed that there were necessary resources in place to support collaboration between special education and general education teachers. In the survey, there was a place where respondents could indicate what was missing if they disagreed with whether there were the necessary resources in place and the majority of responses in that section was “time”. When asked if the amount of time allocated for collaboration between general education and special education / gifted education teachers is enough, the general education teachers agreed or strongly agreed the time was appropriate to meet the needs of their students. Special education/gifted education teachers did not have a significant response for this question.

Qualitative

In both the administrator and teacher interviews, time was mentioned as a resource that is available and it is also a resource that is still needed to support collaboration between general education and special education/gifted education teachers. Other resources that were mentioned included curriculum mapping software provided by the district, materials to assist with differentiation, substitutes to cover classes while teachers meet, and district personnel.

*Professional development**Quantitative*

General education teachers were asked if they thought there was a clear focus to professional development for meeting the needs of special education and gifted students. The majority of general education teachers agreed or strongly agreed that there was a clear focus on professional development to meet the needs of special education and gifted education students. Most special education and gifted education teachers disagreed or strongly disagreed that there is a clear focus in professional development to meet the needs of special education and gifted students. When general education teachers were asked if the strategies presented during professional development opportunities have a connection with classroom practice, most teachers agreed or strongly agreed that both special education and gifted education professional development topics have connections to classroom practice. After being asked whether they use in house expertise and talent for professional development about special education and gifted education, over half of general education teachers agreed or strongly agreed.

Qualitative

The general consensus among administrators that were interviewed was that most professional development occurs informally during collaboration sessions with special education and gifted education teachers sharing specific strategies that can be used in the classroom. Two of the administrators talked about formal opportunities planned by the leadership team or inviting district office personnel to provide professional development to teachers regarding strategies or IEP development.

Observations showed that strategies are shared during the sessions. Special education teachers and gifted education teachers shared information about strategies, especially on ways to differentiate or manage differentiated/modified learning activities in the classroom. General education and special education teachers even shared information they learned at recent district professional development sessions with one another. Interviews with general education teachers revealed that all the professional development regarding meeting the needs of special education and gifted students occur informally during collaboration sessions. The general education teachers indicated they would like more professional development but recognized there is little time built in for professional development in this area. In the interviews with special education and gifted education teachers, most indicated that they would like more opportunities to share strategies with the entire staff as well as share specific information about special education students and gifted students.

Findings Related to the Literature

There are several findings that can be related back to the literature. The findings are organized by research questions by the six factors of collaboration: team process, benefits, administrator support and shared leadership, positive attitude and professional development.

Team Process

While the concept of collaborative planning and delivery of services should be straightforward, collaborative teams can be difficult to maintain when there are conflicting priorities and time constraints (Barnes, Bullock, & Currin, 1997). The results of this study indicate that there are set times and routines in place to support collaboration

between special education/gifted education and general education teachers. These routines need to be in place and priority needs to be placed on collaboration so that it occurs without conflict. Although collaboration between general education and special education/gifted education teachers is necessary, both special education/gifted education teachers and general education teachers may be unsure of their collaborative roles and tasks (Rainforth & England, 1997). The results of the survey shows that special education/gifted education teachers may not be clear in their roles in the collaborative process, while general education teachers indicated that they are clear on their role.

Benefits

Tannock (2009) discusses how through collaboration, both special education teachers and general education teachers have the benefit of learning skills from one another to strengthen their instructional repertoire. The difference in opinion about benefits of collaboration between special education teachers and general education teachers in the survey for this study may be related to the special education/gifted education only sharing skills and not learning skills or information from the general educators. Since the results of this study shows special education/gifted education teachers do not agree that current collaboration is beneficial, it is necessary to find out if the special education/gifted education teachers feel this way because they are missing the mutual benefit of collaboration. Most investigation in the area of benefits needs to occur before determining the reason there is a difference of opinion between general education and special education/gifted education teachers.

The more frequently general education and special education teachers can collaborate about strategies from their fields of expertise, the more likely students will

benefit from researched based strategies used in the general education classroom (Murawski & Hughes, 2009). Perhaps the special education teachers would be more satisfied with the collaboration process if they had more opportunities to learn from general education teachers. In the observation sessions, the researcher saw more evidence of special education/gifted education teachers sharing their expertise regarding strategies instead of special education/gifted education teachers learning about the specific content of the curriculum. The teacher interviews also revealed that the benefits of collaboration came from sharing strategies instead of also sharing content specific information by the general education teachers.

Administrator Support and Shared Leadership

Minnett (2003) reported that administrators have two roles in respect to managing collaborative teams: supporting the teams in working together for curriculum development and behavior management and providing support by setting aside specific blocks of time for team planning at the school. It appears from responses provided by the administrators themselves as well as responses in the survey and teacher interviews, that the administrators in the buildings that participated in this study play these two roles suggested by Minnett in their schools to support collaboration between special education/gifted education and general education teachers. All but one teacher interviewed indicated that the administrators in their building are supportive of collaboration between special education/gifted education and general education teachers. The survey results show that administrators provide opportunities for shared leadership, according to the general education teachers while the special education/gifted education teachers were mixed on their perceptions of shared leadership in their building.

Kohm and Nance (2009), discuss how administrators can foster an environment that supports collaboration by sharing leadership responsibilities with teachers and giving them opportunities to develop the skills for collaborative problem solving. This practice was illustrated both when the administrators in this study discussed how they set up the structure for collaboration between general education and special education/gifted education teachers but allowed the teachers to meet without the administrator being present and in the observations where the administrator may not have been in attendance but supported the collaborative process by expecting that collaboration occurred and asked to be kept informed through agendas and meeting notes. The responses from the survey echo the observed behaviors of administrators in regard to shared leadership and administrator support.

Positive Attitude

It is understandable that special education teachers may not have a positive attitude toward collaboration in their building because according to Friend and Cook (1996), most teachers are accustomed to working in isolation, it is risky to assume that all teachers welcome collaboration. Teachers who indicated that they did not have a positive attitude towards collaboration may not see the benefits of collaboration or may need more time to feel comfortable with the collaborative process. According to Mainzer, et al. (2003), special educators have many responsibilities depending on their specific building. However, when roles are not clearly defined, it can affect the special education/gifted education teachers' attitude towards their job.

Resources

In this study, time was the resource mentioned by most participants, both as a resource and as something that is needed more of in order for effective collaboration between special education and general education teachers to occur. Boyd (1992) talks about how time is a significant issue for teachers who wish to work collaboratively and that it can be a barrier when it is not available as well as supportive when it is allocated. As Bouck (2007) points out, teachers value having time to plan together, daily if possible. Unless there is regular time set aside to collaborate, it is difficult to improve on collaborative practices and teachers will not improve their collaborative skills (Millbury, 2005).

Professional Development

It is becoming more common to have professional development opportunities that are job imbedded, ongoing, and collaborative (Dufour, Dufour, & Eakers, 2008). This connects to the results that indicated that the majority of professional development for strategies to meet the needs of special education and special/gifted education occurs during collaboration sessions between general education and special/gifted education teachers. The strategies shared are often related to specific students that the teachers have in their classroom.

Conclusions

When looking at better ways to meet the needs of special education and gifted students in the classroom setting, it is important to look at the degree to which collaboration happens as defined by the experts to determine if the collaboration is effective between general education and special education/gifted education teachers at the

building level. Administrators need to determine which factors are in place and which factors need to be added or refined. It is recommended that administrators elicit input from general education, special education and gifted education teachers to make sure factors are in place according to these teacher groups. Observations of collaborative groups also provide rich data regarding existing factors of collaborative practices.

If the administrators determine that teachers are not satisfied with the collaboration process, then it is their job to figure out what is not working in the process and provide avenues for improvement. General education, special education and gifted education teachers should all be involved in evaluating the current practices related to collaboration and provide solutions to make the process better. The administrator then needs to provide the support and resources for effective collaboration to occur between general education and special education teachers in their building.

It is recommended that administrators or district personnel investigate the reasons for less positive perceptions of collaboration for special education teachers than general education teachers in this research study. Perhaps special education teachers don't see the benefits of collaboration with general education teachers as much as general education teachers do. General education teachers rely on the collaboration with special education and gifted education teachers since they have a legal obligation to carry out the goals of the IEPs of their students, but the general education teachers do not have the expertise that special education teachers have in meeting the needs of the students. Also, the special education teachers may not be clear on their role in the collaboration process and general education teachers are more comfortable with collaboration since they already have experience collaborating with their grade level or content specific teams.

A formal framework for collaboration between general education, special education and gifted education teachers should be adopted by schools to ensure that successful collaboration occurs on a regular basis to benefit students in the classroom setting. The framework presented in this study is recommended because it contains the factors that translate to effective collaboration, according to the review of literature. Regardless of the framework selected, the administrator should facilitate the implementation of a framework and evaluate the implementation process with input from the general education, special education and gifted education teachers involved in the implementation process.

Recommendations for Future Research

There are some apparent directions for future study of collaboration practice between general education and special education teachers. First, this study could be expanded to more schools and even more school districts. The sample size of the study was small especially for the special education teachers and gifted education teachers. It would be worthwhile to collect data regarding perceptions of the existing factors of effective collaboration with more schools to make further generalizations.

Another direction for future study could be to implement the framework of effective collaboration in a school or district that does not currently have effective practices in place for collaboration between general education and special education/gifted education teachers. Data could be collected regarding existing perceptions of factors prior to implementation and then collect additional data after implementation to see if perceptions improve after successful implementation.

Investigations around special education/gifted education teachers' satisfaction of the collaborative process with general education teachers are worthwhile to pursue. It would be valuable to find out special education/gifted education teachers' perceptions of their role in the collaborative process and if they support the role they have been assigned.

Finally, this study could be replicated with some adjustments. It is recommended that teachers are interviewed off site, rather than in their buildings. By taking the interviews offsite, participants may feel more comfortable and be more candid in their responses. Also 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

There are few research-based models for effective collaboration between special education and general education teachers even though the review of literature demonstrates there are factors that indicate effective collaboration practices. Since general education teachers have a legal obligation to meet the special education needs of their students in the classroom setting, effective collaboration between general education and special education teachers is essential. The results of the quantitative data indicate that general education teachers are generally satisfied with the collaborative process while special education teachers responses are either negative or statistically insignificant related to their perceptions of the selected factors of collaboration in place.

The qualitative data reveal that general educators are satisfied with the collaborative relationship they have with special education teachers according to their perceptions of factors that are in place. Administrators are aware of challenges that teachers face in the collaboration process but support the efforts in their building to the best of their ability. Most special education and gifted education teachers are content with the current system in this district but wish they had more time, ownership and shared benefits from the process.

References

- Barnes, K., Bullock, L. & Currin, H. (1997). Professional development for special educators: Foundations for collaboration. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation*, 8(3), 253-58.
- Bouck, E.C. (2007). Co-teaching...not just a textbook term: Implications for practice. *Preventing School Failure*, 51(2), 46-51.
- Boyd, V. (1992). *School context: bridge or barrier to change*. Austin, TX: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory.
- Brownell, M., Adams, A., Sindelar, P. Waldron, N. & Vanhover, S. (2006). Learning from collaboration, the role of teacher qualities. *Exceptional Children*, 72(2), 169-185.
- Bryk, A., Camburn, E., & Louis, K.S.(1997) Professional community in Chicago elementary schools: Facilitating factors and organizational consequences. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association: Madison, WI. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 412 624)
- Carter, N., Prater, M., Jackson, A.and Marchant, M. (2009). Educators' perceptions of collaborative planning processes for students with disabilities. *Preventing School Failure*, 54 (1), 60-70
- Cook, L., & Friend, M. (1991). Collaboration in special education. *Preventing School Failure*, 35 (2), 24. Retrieved from Professional Development Collection database.
- Cook, L.& Friend, M. (1996). Co-teaching: What's it all about? *Today* 3, 12-13.

- Corcoran, T.B. (1995). Helping teachers teach well: Transforming professional development. Consortium for Policy Research in Education Policy Brief.
- Council for Exceptional Children. (2000). *Initial content standards*. Retrieved November, 2009 from <http://www.cec.sped.org/>.
- Cramer, S. (2006). *The special educator's guide to collaboration: Improving relationships with co-teachers, teams, and families*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Crislip, D & Larson, C. (1994). Collaborative leadership: how citizens and civic leaders can make a difference. San Francisco, CA.: Jossey-Bass.
- Davidson Institute for Talent Development (2009). *Davidson Institute e-news update*. Retrieved January, 2010 from http://www.davidsongifted.org/db/state_policies.aspx
- Davis, G. A. & Rimm, S. B. (2004). Education of the gifted and talented. Boston, VA: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Dearman, C.C. & Alber, S.R. (2005). The changing face of education: teachers cope with challenges through collaboration and reflective study. *The Reading Teacher* 58(7), 634-640.
- Dufour, R., Dufour, R., and Eaker, R. (2008). *Revisiting professional learning communities at work: New insights for improving schools*. Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree.
- Eisner, W. and Peshkin, A. (eds). *Qualitative inquiry in education: The continuing debate*. New York, NY: Teacher College Press.
- Flick, U. (2006). *An introduction to qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE

- Garmston, R. (1997). Can collaboration be taught? *Journal of Staff Development*, 18(4).
- Green, R.L. & Etheridge, C.P. (1999). Building collaborative relationships instructional improvement. *Education*, 120 (2), 388-397.
- Hall, S. (2007). NCLB and IDEA: Optimizing success for students with disabilities. *Perspectives on Language and Literacy*. 33(1), 35-38.
- Hord, S. and Sommers, W. (2007) *Leading professional learning communities from research and practice*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- In-service training for special education teachers. (2006). *Encyclopedia of special education: A reference for the education of the handicapped and other exceptional children and adults*. Retrieved January, 2010 from http://www.credoreference.com/entry/wileyse/in_service_training_for_special_education_teachers
- Itkonen, T. (2007). PL 94-142: policy, evolution, and landscape shift. *Issues in Teacher Education*; 16 (2) .
- Kansas State Department of Education (2008) *Kansas special education process handbook*. Retrieved September, 2009, from <http://www.ksde.org/Default.aspx?tabid=3152>.
- Koppang, A. (2004) .Curriculum mapping: Building collaboration and communication. *Intervention in School and Clinic*. 39(3) 154-161.
- Kohm, B. & Nance, B. Creating collaborative cultures (2009). *Educational Leadership*. 67(2), 67-72.

- Kozleski, E., Mainzer, R., Deshler, D., Coleman, M. R., & Rodriguez-Walling, M. (2000). *Bright futures for exceptional learners: An action agenda to achieve quality conditions for teacher and learning*. Arlington, VA: Council for Exceptional Children.
- Lunenburg, F. and Irby, B. (2008) *Writing a successful thesis or dissertation: Tips and strategies for students in the social and behavioral studies*. Thousand Oaks, CA. Corwin Press.
- Mainzer, R. Deschler, D. Coleman, M., Kozleski, E., and Rodriguez-Walling, M. (2003). To ensure the learning of every child with a disability. *Focus on Exceptional Children*. 35(5).
- McLagan, P.A (1989). *Models for HRD practice*, American Society for Training and Development, Alexandria, VA.
- Milbury, P. (2005). Collaboration: Ten reasons to take it seriously. *Knowledge Quest*. 33(5).
- Minnett, A. (2003) .Collaboration and shared reflections in the classroom. *Teachers and Teaching* 9 (3), 279-285.
- Murawski, W. and Hughes, C. (2009). Response to intervention, collaboration, and co-teaching: A logical combination for successful systematic change. *Preventing School Failure*, 53(4), 267-274.
- Murray, C. (2004). Clarifying collaborative roles in urban high schools. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 36(5), 44-51.

National Association For Gifted Children (NAGC). (2009). *Common myths about gifted education*. Retrieved December, 2009 from

<http://www.nagc.org/commonmyths.aspx>

National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities (NICHCY). (2009).

Educate Children. Retrieved December, 2009 from

<http://www.nichcy.org/Disabilities/pages/Default.aspx>.

National Staff Development Council (NSDC). (2010). *Standards: Collaboration skills*.

Retrieved January, 2010 from

<http://www.nsd.org/standards/collaborationskills.cfm>

No Child Left Behind Act (NCLBA), Public Law 107-110, (2002).

Pugach, M.C. & Johnson, L.J. (1989). The challenge of implementing collaboration

between general and special education. *Exceptional Children*, 56(3), 232-235.

Rainforth, B. & England, J. (1997). Collaborations for inclusion. *Education and*

Treatment of Children, 20, 85-104.

Salend, S.J. (2005). *Creating Inclusive Classrooms*. (5th ed). Upper Saddle River, NJ:

Pearson Education Inc.

Sawyer, R.D. (2001). Teachers who grow as collaborative leaders: The rocky road of

support. *Educational Policy Analysis Archives*. 9(38). Retrieved December, 2009

from <http://epaa.asu.edu/epaa/v9n38.html>.

Senge, P.M. (1990). *The Fifth Discipline*. New York, NY: Doubleday Currency.

Sharpe, M., & Hawes, M. (2003). Collaboration between general and special education:

Making it work. *National Center on Secondary Education and Transition*. Issues

Brief. 2(1).

- Skrtic, T., Harris, K., and Shriner, J.(2005). *Special education policy and practice: accountability, instruction, and social challenges*.Denver,CO: Love Publishing.
- Sergiovanni, T. J. (1994). *Building Communities in School*. San Francisco; CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Spencer, S. (2005) Lynne Cook and June Downing: The practicalities of collaboration in special education service delivery. *Intervention in School and Clinic*. 40(5), 296-300.
- Tannock, M. (2009) Tangible and intangible elements of collaborative teaching. *Intervention and School and Clinic*. 44(3), 173.
- Tomlinson, C. (2004). Differentiation in diverse settings: A consultant's experience in diverse settings. *The School Administrator*, 7(61), 28-35.
- U.S. Department of Education (2009) *Programs*. Retrieved November, 2009 from <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/>.
- Van Tassel-Baska, J. & Stambaugh, T. (2005) Challenges and possibilities for serving gifted learners in the regular classroom. *Theory into Practice* (44)3, 211-217.
- Voltz, D.L.(2001). Preparing general education teachers for inclusive settings: The role of special education teachers in the professional development school context. *Learning Disability Quarterly* 24(4), 288-296.
- Wade, S. Welch, M, & Jensen, J. (1994). Teacher receptivity to collaboration: Level of interest, types of Concerns, and school characteristics as variables contributing to successful implementation. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation*.

Walther-Thomas C., Korinek, L., McLaughlin, V., and Williams, B. (2000).

Collaboration for inclusive education: developing successful programs. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

Wiggins, K. and Damore, S. (2006). "Survivors or friends"? A framework for assessing effective collaboration. *Teaching Exceptional Children* , 38(5) pp 49-56.

Winn, J. and Blanton, L. (2005). The call for collaboration in teacher education. *Focus on Exceptional Children.* (38)2.

Winter, S. M. (2007). *Inclusive early childhood education: A collaborative approach.* Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.

Wolcott, H. (1990) "On seeking and rejecting: Validity in qualitative research," in W. Eisner and A. Peshkin (eds), *Qualitative inquiry in education: The continuing debate.* New York, NY: Teacher College Press.

Wolcott, H. (1994). *Transforming qualitative data.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

APPENDIX A: DATA COLLECTION AND SAMPLING MATERIALS

Dear Principals,

I am contacting you today asking for your participation in my research study investigating collaboration practices between general education and special education teachers. You may remember receiving a previous message from Elizabeth Parks regarding the district approval of this study.

Currently, I am pursuing my Ed.D in Educational Leadership through Baker University. I met many of you this past spring at Family Meetings that I attended as part of my administrative internship with Walter Carter. I also completed an administrative internship with Dr. Sheri Stewart last year. Among other teaching experiences in Lawrence and DeSoto, I spent over 7 years as the Enrichment Specialist at Heartland Elementary. I am now at home being a full time mom to my son Noah, who is 3 and daughter Elyse who is 5 and attends Kindergarten at Leawood Elementary. I hope to pursue leadership positions upon the completion of my degree.

The study I am conducting is strictly voluntary and I hope you and your staff will be interested in participating in it. The purpose of the study is to investigate the collaboration practices between special education (including gifted education) and general education teachers to meet the variety of learning needs in the classroom.

The data I will be collecting this fall and winter is broken down into 4 parts:

Online Survey I will be sending out an online survey to classroom teachers, resource teachers, and gifted education teachers to get their insights on current collaborative practices.

Interview I will be setting up interviews with principals to discuss the supports that are in place at their building for collaboration between special education and general education teachers.

Observations I will be observing classroom teachers and special education teachers' collaborative planning sessions.

Focus Groups I will be inviting classroom teachers, resource teachers and gifted education teachers to attend one focus group session that will give me additional insights about how these groups collaboratively plan to meet the needs of their students.

I am hopeful you are interested in participating this study. I believe the outcome of this study will be to celebrate best practices that are already in place and as well as learn about areas of possible growth . All data collected will be for research purposes only; individual buildings, teachers and principals will not be identified or reported to the district in any way. I will share my findings with those who participate in this study.

Please reply to this email by Friday, October 24th indicating your interest in having your building participate in this study and I will provide more details to you at that time. Please feel free to contact me with any questions you or your staff may have regarding participation in this study.

Best Regards,

Gwen Singer Landever

glandever@gmail.com

Dear Teachers,

I am conducting a research study to learn more about collaboration between special education and classroom teachers as part of my doctorate work through Baker University. Please click on the appropriate link to take the short survey. Your responses will be kept anonymous and you will not be identified in anyway, I am just looking at trends so your results will be collected along with other teachers in other Blue Valley Schools. I really appreciate your efforts to help me learn more about collaboration.

Thank you,

Gwen Landever

- If you are a classroom teacher [Click Here to take survey](#)
- If you are a special education teacher [Click Here to take survey](#)
- If you are a gifted education teacher [Click Here to take survey](#)

Figure 2

Data Collection Matrix

This matrix shows the data collection methods and which questions address each of the six research questions.

Research Question	Administrator Interview Questions	Teacher Interview	Survey Question
#1 Team Process	1	1, 2, 3,4, 5 6, 9, 10	5, 8, 9,11, 12
#2 Benefits	2	12	23, 24
#3 Administrator Support/ Shared Leadership	3	10,11	17,19,20,21
#4 Attitude	4	6, 8	6, 7, 10, 18
#5 Resources	5	1,7	22, 25
#6 Professional Development	6	9	13, 14, 15, 16

1. Collaborative Practices Survey

Please respond to the following questions by picking the choice that best reflects your experiences with collaboration between yourself and special education and/or gifted 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 Blue Valley?**

- 1-3 years
- 4-7 years
- 8-11 years
- 12-15 years
- 15+ years

3. How many students with an IEP with learning disabilities in are there in your classroom?

- None
- 1-2
- 3-4
- 5-6
- 7 or more

4. How many identified gifted students(with an IEP) are there in your classroom?

- None
- 1-2
- 3-4
- 5-6
- 7+

5. About how often do you collaborate with a

	Never	Quarterly	Monthly	Weekly	Not Sure
Special education resource teacher	<input type="radio"/>				
Gifted education resource teacher	<input type="radio"/>				

6. Please select the choice that best matches your experience

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
I have positive feelings and views toward collaboration with special education teachers in my building.	<input type="radio"/>				
I have positive feelings and views toward collaboration with gifted education teachers in my building.	<input type="radio"/>				

7. Please select the choice that best matches your experience

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
I am committed and motivated to collaborate with special education teachers in my building.	<input type="radio"/>				
I am committed and motivated to collaborate with gifted education teachers in my building.	<input type="radio"/>				

8. Please select the choice that best matches your experience

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
I am clear in understanding the roles in collaboration between general education and special education teachers in my building	<input type="radio"/>				
I am clear in understanding the roles in collaboration between general education and gifted education teachers in my building	<input type="radio"/>				

9. Please select the best choice based on your experience

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
I believe that there are common philosophies and goals in my building regarding special education	<input type="radio"/>				
I believe that there are common philosophies and goals in my building regarding gifted education	<input type="radio"/>				

10. Please select the choice that best matches your experience with collaboration

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
I believe that I have positive communication and relationships with the gifted education teacher(s) in my building	<input type="radio"/>				
I believe that I have positive communication and relationships with the special education teachers in my building	<input type="radio"/>				

11. Please select the choice that best matches your experience

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
There are set processes, expectations and routines for collaboration sessions between general education teachers and special education teachers in my building	<input type="radio"/>				
There are set processes, expectations and routines for collaboration sessions between general education teachers and gifted education teachers in my building	<input type="radio"/>				

12. Please select the choice that best matches your experience

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
There are defined team roles and responsibilities for collaboration sessions between general education teachers and special education teachers in my building	<input type="radio"/>				
There are defined team roles and responsibilities for collaboration sessions between general education teachers and gifted education teachers in my building	<input type="radio"/>				

13. Please select the choice that best matches your experience

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
There is a clear focus related to professional development for meeting the needs of special education students	<input type="radio"/>				
There is a clear focus related to professional development for meeting the needs of gifted education students	<input type="radio"/>				

14. Please select the choice that best matches your experience

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
I feel general education teachers have a voice in professional development regarding special education instructional strategies	<input type="radio"/>				
I feel general education teachers have a voice in professional development regarding gifted education instructional strategies	<input type="radio"/>				

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

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
I feel professional development for special education topics have a connection with classroom practice	<input type="radio"/>				
I feel professional development for gifted education topics have a connection with classroom practice	<input type="radio"/>				

16. Please select the choice that best matches your experience

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
We use in-house expertise and talent for professional development for special education	<input type="radio"/>				
We use in-house expertise and talent for professional development for gifted education	<input type="radio"/>				

17. Please select the choice that best matches your experience

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
General education teachers have input regarding scheduling and delivery options for special education	<input type="radio"/>				
General education teachers have input regarding scheduling and delivery options for gifted education	<input type="radio"/>				
Special education teachers have input regarding scheduling and delivery options for special education	<input type="radio"/>				
Gifted education teachers have input regarding scheduling and delivery options for gifted education	<input type="radio"/>				

18. Please select the choice that best matches your experience

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
In my building, there is a sense of community between general education and special education teachers	<input type="radio"/>				
In my building, there is a sense of community between general education and gifted education teachers	<input type="radio"/>				

19. Please select the choice that best matches your experience

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
I see special education teachers(including gifted education teachers) as leaders in our building	<input type="radio"/>				

20. Please select the choice that best matches your experience

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
Our building principal encourages teacher leadership and decision making regarding special education issues	<input type="radio"/>				

21. Please select the choice that best matches your experience

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
There is accountability for collaboration in my building	<input type="radio"/>				

22. Please select the choice that best matches your experience

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
We have the necessary resources in my building for general education teachers and special education teachers to collaborate effectively	<input type="radio"/>				

If you disagree with this statement, what resources are missing?

23. Please select the choice that best matches your experience

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
I believe that it is beneficial to have regular ongoing collaboration between general education and special education (including gifted education) teachers	<input type="radio"/>				

24. Please select the choice that best matches your experience

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
The collaboration that currently exists in my building benefits students in the classroom setting	<input type="radio"/>				

25. Please select the choice that best matches your experience

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
The amount of time I currently collaborate with special education teachers in my building is appropriate to meet the needs of my students.	<input type="radio"/>				
The amount of time I currently collaborate with gifted education teachers in my building is appropriate to meet the needs of my students.	<input type="radio"/>				

Gifted Education Teacher Survey

1. Collaborative Practices Survey

Please respond to the following questions by picking the choice that best reflects your experiences with collaboration between yourself and classroom 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 Blue Valley?**

- 1-3 years
- 4-7 years
- 8-11 years
- 12-15 years
- 15+ years

3. How many years have you been at your current building?

- 1-3 years
- 4-7 years
- 8-11 years
- 12-15 years
- 15+ years

4. How many students with an IEP for gifted education services are there on your caseload?

- 1-5
- 6-10
- 11-15
- 16-20
- 21-25
- 26+

5. About how often do you collaborate with

	Never	Quarterly	Monthly	Weekly	Not Sure
a grade level team?	<input type="radio"/>				
individual classroom teachers?	<input type="radio"/>				
other special education teachers?	<input type="radio"/>				

6. Please select the choice that best matches your experience

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
I have positive feelings and views toward collaboration with classroom teachers in my building.	<input type="radio"/>				
I have positive feelings and views toward collaboration with other special education teachers in my building.	<input type="radio"/>				

7. Please select the choice that best matches your experience

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
I am committed and motivated to collaborate with classroom teachers in my building.	<input type="radio"/>				
I am committed and motivated to collaborate with other special education teachers in my building.	<input type="radio"/>				

8. Please select the choice that best matches your experience

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
I am clear in understanding the roles in collaboration between general education and gifted education in my building	<input type="radio"/>				

9. Please select the best choice based on your experience

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
I believe that there are common philosophies, goals, and shared expertise in my building regarding gifted education	<input type="radio"/>				

10. Please select the choice that best matches your experience with collaboration

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
I believe that I have positive communication and relationships with the classroom teachers in my building	<input type="radio"/>				

11. Please select the choice that best matches your experience

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
There are set processes, expectations and routines for collaboration sessions between general education teachers and gifted education teacher(s) in my building	<input type="radio"/>				

12. Please select the choice that best matches your experience

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
There are defined team roles and responsibilities for collaboration sessions between general education teachers and gifted education teacher(s) in my building	<input type="radio"/>				

13. Please select the choice that best matches your experience

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
There is a clear focus related to professional development for meeting the needs of gifted education students	<input type="radio"/>				

14. Please select the choice that best matches your experience

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
I feel general education teachers have a voice in professional development regarding gifted education instructional strategies	<input type="radio"/>				
I feel gifted education teacher(s) have a voice in professional development regarding gifted education instructional strategies	<input type="radio"/>				

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

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
I feel professional development for gifted education topics have a connection with classroom practice	<input type="radio"/>				

16. Please select the choice that best matches your experience

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
We use in-house expertise and talent for professional development for gifted education	<input type="radio"/>				

17. Please select the choice that best matches your experience in your building

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
General education teachers have input regarding scheduling and delivery options for gifted education	<input type="radio"/>				
Gifted education teacher(s) have input regarding scheduling and delivery options for gifted education	<input type="radio"/>				

18. Please select the choice that best matches your experience

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
In my building, there is a sense of community between general education and special education teachers	<input type="radio"/>				

19. Please select the choice that best matches your experience

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
I see special education teachers as leaders in our building	<input type="radio"/>				

20. Please select the choice that best matches your experience

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
Our building principal encourages teacher leadership and decision making regarding special education issues	<input type="radio"/>				

21. Please select the choice that best matches your experience

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
There is accountability for collaboration in my building	<input type="radio"/>				

22. Please select the choice that best matches your experience

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
We have the necessary resources in my building for general education teachers and gifted education teachers to collaborate effectively	<input type="radio"/>				

If you disagree with this statement, what resources are missing?

23. Please select the choice that best matches your experience

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
I believe that it is beneficial to have regular ongoing collaboration between general education and gifted education teachers	<input type="radio"/>				

24. Please select the choice that best matches your experience

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
The collaboration that currently exists in my building benefits students in the classroom setting	<input type="radio"/>				

25. Please select the choice that best matches your experience

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
The amount of time I currently collaborate with general education teachers in my building is appropriate to meet the needs of my students.	<input type="radio"/>				

Special Education Teacher Survey

1. Collaborative Practices Survey

Please respond to the following questions by picking the choice that best reflects your experiences with collaboration between yourself and classroom 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 Blue Valley?**

- 1-3 years
 4-7 years
 8-11 years
 12-15 years
 15+ years

3. How many years have you been at your current building?

- 1-3 years
 4-7 years
 8-11 years
 12-15 years
 15+ years

4. How many students with an IEP with learning disabilities are there on your caseload

- 1-2
 3-4
 5-6
 7-8
 9-10
 10+

5. About how often do you collaborate with

	Never	Quarterly	Monthly	Weekly	Not Sure
a grade level team?	<input type="radio"/>				
individual classroom teachers?	<input type="radio"/>				
other special education teachers?	<input type="radio"/>				

6. Please select the choice that best matches your experience

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
I have positive feelings and views toward collaboration with classroom teachers in my building.	<input type="radio"/>				
I have positive feelings and views toward collaboration with other special education teachers in my building.	<input type="radio"/>				

7. Please select the choice that best matches your experience

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
I am committed and motivated to collaborate with classroom teachers in my building.	<input type="radio"/>				
I am committed and motivated to collaborate with other special education teachers in my building.	<input type="radio"/>				

8. Please select the choice that best matches your experience

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
I am clear in understanding the roles in collaboration between general education and special education teachers in my building	<input type="radio"/>				

9. Please select the best choice based on your experience

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
I believe that there are common philosophies, goals, and shared expertise in my building regarding special education	<input type="radio"/>				

10. Please select the choice that best matches your experience with collaboration

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
I believe that I have positive communication and relationships with the classroom teachers in my building	<input type="radio"/>				

11. Please select the choice that best matches your experience

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
There are set processes, expectations and routines for collaboration sessions between general education teachers and special education teachers in my building	<input type="radio"/>				

12. Please select the choice that best matches your experience

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
There are defined team roles and responsibilities for collaboration sessions between general education teachers and special education teachers in my building	<input type="radio"/>				

13. Please select the choice that best matches your experience

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
There is a clear focus related to professional development for meeting the needs of special education students	<input type="radio"/>				

14. Please select the choice that best matches your experience

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
I feel general education teachers have a voice in professional development regarding special education instructional strategies	<input type="radio"/>				
I feel special education teachers have a voice in professional development regarding special education instructional strategies	<input type="radio"/>				

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

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
I feel professional development for special education topics have a connection with classroom practice	<input type="radio"/>				

16. Please select the choice that best matches your experience

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
We use in-house expertise and talent for professional development for special education	<input type="radio"/>				

17. Please select the choice that best matches your experience

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
General education teachers have input regarding scheduling and delivery options for special education	<input type="radio"/>				
Special education teachers have input regarding scheduling and delivery options for special education	<input type="radio"/>				

18. Please select the choice that best matches your experience

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
In my building, there is a sense of community between general education and special education teachers	<input type="radio"/>				

19. Please select the choice that best matches your experience

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
I see special education teachers as leaders in our building	<input type="radio"/>				

20. Please select the choice that best matches your experience

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
Our building principal encourages teacher leadership and decision making regarding special education issues	<input type="radio"/>				

21. Please select the choice that best matches your experience

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
There is accountability for collaboration in my building	<input type="radio"/>				

22. Please select the choice that best matches your experience

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
We have the necessary resources in my building for general education teachers and special education teachers to collaborate effectively	<input type="radio"/>				

If you disagree with this statement, what resources are missing?

23. Please select the choice that best matches your experience

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
I believe that it is beneficial to have regular ongoing collaboration between general education and special education teachers	<input type="radio"/>				

24. Please select the choice that best matches your experience

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
The collaboration that currently exists in my building benefits students in the classroom setting	<input type="radio"/>				

25. Please select the choice that best matches your experience

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
The amount of time I currently collaborate with general education teachers in my building is appropriate to meet the needs of my students.	<input type="radio"/>				

Guiding Questions for General Teacher Interviews

1. Describe the procedures in place at your building for collaboration sessions with special education teachers.
2. How often do you meet with special education teachers?
3. How is the collaboration schedule developed for collaboration between you and special education teachers?
4. What do you discuss in the collaboration sessions with special education teachers? What would you like to discuss during these sessions?
5. Describe the relationship between you and the special education teachers
6. What works well in the collaboration process at your building? What needs to be improved?
7. What role does your administrator play in the collaborative process in your building?
8. What are the benefits of collaboration between special education and general education teachers in your building?
9. Describe some professional development opportunities that are provided related to special education/gifted education? What else would you like to see in terms of professional development related to special education/gifted education?

10. What resources are in place for collaboration between special education and general education teachers in your building? What is still needed?

11. What is your overall attitude towards collaboration between special education and general education teachers in your building?

Guiding Questions for Special Education Interviews

1. Describe the procedures in place for collaboration sessions with general education teachers.

2. How often do you meet with general education teachers?

3. How do you create a schedule around collaborating with general education teachers?

4. What do you discuss in the collaboration sessions with general education teachers? What would you like to discuss during these sessions?

5. Describe the relationship between you and the general education teachers

6. What works well in the collaboration process? What needs to be improved?

7. What role does your administrator play in the collaborative process in your building?

8. What are the benefits of collaboration between special education and general education teachers in your building?

9. Describe some professional development opportunities that are provided related to special education? What else would you like to see in terms of professional development related to special education?

10. What resources are in place for collaboration between special education and general education teachers? What is still needed?

11. What is your overall attitude towards collaboration between special education and general education teachers in your building?

Guiding Questions for Gifted Education Interviews

1. Describe the procedures in place for collaboration sessions with general education teachers.

2. How often do you meet with general education teachers?

3. How do you create a schedule around collaborating with general education teachers?

4. What do you discuss in the collaboration sessions with general education teachers? What would you like to discuss during these sessions?

5. Describe the relationship between you and the general education teachers

6. What works well in the collaboration process in your building? What needs to be improved?

7. What role does your administrator play in the collaborative process in your building?

8. What are the benefits of collaboration between gifted education and general education teachers in your building?

9. Describe some professional development opportunities that are provided related to gifted education? What else would you like to provide terms of professional development related to gifted education?

10. What resources are in place for collaboration between gifted education and general education teachers in your building? What is still needed?

11. What is your overall attitude towards collaboration between gifted education and general education teachers in your building?

Elements of Collaboration Observation Checklist Form

Building/Team _____ Date _____

Element	Observed/Not Observed	Evidence	Comments
<i>Team Process</i>			
<i>Benefits</i>			
<i>Building Leadership</i>			
<i>Attitude towards collaboration</i>			
Resources			
<i>Professional Development</i>			

APPENDIX B: PERMISSION FROM AUTHOR TO ADAPT ELEMENTS OF
COLLABORATION FRAMEWORK

Hi Ms. Wiggins,

I am a doctoral student at Baker University in Kansas. I am planning my Clinical Research Study on collaboration between general education classroom teachers and special education resource teachers. In my literature review, I came across your article that you co-authored with Sharon Damore. I really like the framework for assessing effective collaboration and the checklists you included in the article.

I am writing you to ask you permission to use this framework in my study. The 6 attributes align closely with my study and my plans for collecting data on current collaboration practices. I plan to conduct my research in a medium sized suburban school district in the Kansas City area. Each school has full time resource teachers who work closely with classroom teachers to help differentiate the curriculum and provide modifications for grade level curriculum.

My study will consist of an online survey, interviews with building administrators, focus groups with general education teachers, special education teachers and gifted education teachers, and finally observations of collaboration sessions. Your framework and checklists are just what I am looking for to guide my questions for the survey as well as the observations.

If you are willing to grant me permission to use these tools in my study, I am happy to share the results with you to add to your current and future publications regarding this framework.

I hope you will consider this request and if you need more information from me, please let me know.

Sincerely,

Gwen Landever

glandever@gmail.com

Hi Gwen,

I am flattered and heartened that the instrument that my colleague and I created may be useful to you. Of course you can use the survey but it would be helpful if you would send me your research proposal, including the methodology that you will be using. I want to be assured that your study is compatible with my own efforts to use the instrument.

While I am not teaching over the summer months, I do check my emails pretty regularly. Look forward to hearing from you.

Dr. Kathy Wiggins

APPENDIX C: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Requests to Conduct Research in the Blue Valley Schools should include the following:

Principle Investigator Contact Information

Gwen Singer Landever, Doctoral Student Baker University

12308 Pawnee Lane

Leawood, KS 66209

913-661-0363

glandever@gmail.com

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this Clinical Research Study is to investigate collaborative best practices between resource teachers and regular classroom teachers to meet the educational needs of students. This study will fulfill my research component of my Educational Doctoral Degree in Educational Administration from Baker University

Advisor Contact Information

Harold B. Frye, Ed.D. Chair

Graduate Department

Baker University

913-344-1220

hfrye@bakeru.edu

Consultation of Blue Valley Staff

Name of any Blue Valley staff you have consulted about the proposed research.

I have consulted with the following Blue Valley Administrators about this project.

Wynne Begun (Director of Special Education)

Walter Carter (Director of Professional Development)

Sue Denny (Executive Director of Student Services)

Sheri Stewart (DCT for Gifted Education)

Names of any specific schools you are requesting to involve:

This study will be a district wide study and all elementary and middle school general education teachers, special education teachers and principals will be including in the random sampling procedures.

Description of Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate contributing factors that result in effective collaborative practices between general education teachers and special education teachers for the benefit of the achievement of diverse learners in the classroom. Based on study of collaborative practices, investigator has identified 6 factors that contribute to effective collaboration, which include positive attitude, team process, professional development, leadership, resources and benefits.

Research Questions

The research questions for this study are related to examining which factors contribute to effective collaboration between general education teachers and special education teachers. Once the factors are determined, these factors can be used to create a training model for professional development for new and veteran teachers.

What impact does attitude toward collaboration have on practice?

What effect does the team process have on collaborative practices?

What professional development is needed for effective collaboration?

What impact does building leadership have on effective collaboration?

What resources need to be in place to support effective collaboration?

What are the benefits of effective collaboration between special education (resource and gifted) and general education?

What impact does collaboration between general education teachers and special education teachers have on student learning?

What are barriers that general educators and special educators face in effective collaboration with one another?

To research the answers to these questions, the proposed study is a mixed method clinical research study that is designed to collect data in 4 stages. The proposed timeline for data collection is Fall 2009 (September-early December).

Proposed Research Timeline

Phase 1 (Mid September): Online Surveys. A set of questions (15-20) sent to general education teachers, special education teachers and gifted education teachers. The surveys will be sent to a random sample (about 60-75 subjects) of general education teachers (Elementary and Middle school), a random sample (about 60-75 subjects) of special

education teachers who work with students who have a specific learning disability (Elementary and Middle school), and all of the elementary and middle school gifted education teachers due to the relatively small sample size (about 30 subjects). The online survey should take about 20 minutes to complete and return to the investigator. Survey data will be collected anonymously, however questions about years of teaching experience and levels taught will be asked for demographic purposes. Participation is voluntary and sampling will be adjusted according to return rate of surveys.

Phase 2: (October) Focus Groups. Using the same samples as listed above, participants will be invited to participate in focus groups of 5-6 teachers in each group. The invitation will indicate that participation is voluntary. Six groups will be organized homogeneously (Elementary general education teachers, elementary gifted education teachers, elementary special education teachers, middle school general education teachers, middle school gifted education teachers, middle school special education teachers). The focus groups will meet for no more than 1 hour each either in a conference room at Blue Valley District Office or an off-site location.

Phase 3: (November) Interviews. Ten building principals (7 elementary and 3 middle schools) will be selected at random to participate in short interviews about collaboration practices in their buildings. Selected individuals will be informed that their participation is voluntary and if someone declines, another principal will be selected at random to fill the spot. The interviews will be conducted individually in the principals' school office.

Phase 4: (November) Observations. The same schools (7 elementary and 3 middle schools) that are selected for building principal interviews will also be selected for the investigator to conduct collaboration observations during either grade level PLC collaboration times or during problem solving team meetings in which special educators and gifted educators are included in these sessions. The teams will be informed that their participation is voluntary and another team will be selected at random if the original team declines. Any information disclosed about individual students during these observation sessions will be kept confidential by the investigator.

After the data is collected, it will be analyzed to determine which factors are in place as well as trends in effective collaboration based on the 6 key elements of collaboration. Information will be disaggregated by elementary and middle school results to determine if there are differences at the different levels.

This data will be used to recommend future professional development for both general education teachers and special education teachers so they may effectively collaborate and positively impact student achievement.

Data Collection (See attached surveys, focus group guiding questions, principal interview questions, and observation forms)

The data for this study is mixed method and will be collected in 4 phases:

Quantitative Data

- **Online Survey:** I am requesting to administer an online survey to a random sample of classroom teachers, resource teachers and gifted education teachers K-8th grade. The survey consists of 15-20 questions and should take no more than 20 minutes to complete. Participation is voluntary.

Sample sizes: General education teachers=60-75

Special education teachers=60-75

Gifted education teachers=30

Qualitative Data

- **Focus groups:** I am requesting to invite classroom teachers, gifted education teachers, and resource teachers to discuss collaborative practices. Each session of focus groups will have 5-6 participants. The participants will be asked about 10 questions and the sessions will last 45 minutes. These sessions would be held at district office or off site. Participation will be voluntary.
- **Interviews:** I am requesting to interview a random sample of 10 building principals (7 elementary and 3 middle schools) to gather qualitative data regarding their perceptions of collaborative practices between resource teachers and classroom teachers in their building. There are 5 guiding questions that will be asked during the interview and the interviews should last about 30 minutes in the principal's school office. Participation will be voluntary.
- **Observations:** I am requesting to observe collaboration meetings in a random sample of buildings (7 elementary and 3 middle schools) at the elementary and middle school levels. Once the buildings are selected, I will work with the building principal on the schedule to observe 1-2 collaboration sessions that are already occur on a regular basis in the buildings during the teachers' plan time. Participation is voluntary.

Treatment

How much time will each subject be involved in any treatment?

There is no treatment for this study. Data will only be collected on current and existing practices.

Time involved for data collection

How much time will each subject be involved in data collection?

Online Survey Participants who complete the online survey will take approximately 20 minutes or less to respond to the questions and submit.

Focus Groups Participants who attend in a focus group will meet for no more than 1 hour outside the school day.

Interviews Participants who are selected to be interviewed will need to allocate 30 minutes to answer to predetermined questions.

Observations Participants who will be observed during their scheduled collaboration session during the school day will be observed for about 1 hour.

Location and Timeframe

Where and when will the research activities and/or data collection take place?

Surveys will be administered online and data will be collected through the online survey program. The surveys will be sent out mid September, 2009. Expected time required from participant is 20 minutes.

Focus Groups will be held at Blue Valley District Office or at an off-site location to be determined. The focus groups will be scheduled in October, 2009. Expected time required from participants is 1 hour.

Interviews will be held at building principals' school office. The interviews will be scheduled early November, 2009. Expected time required from participants is 30 minutes.

Observations take place at individual during their regularly scheduled grade level PLC meetings or weekly problem solving team meetings where the teams usually

meet (team planning room, classroom) The observations will be scheduled in November. Each observation is expected to take 1 hour.

Parent (subject) permission materials

No students will be involved in this study so no anticipated permission materials are needed. Participation by teachers and principals are voluntary.

IRB Approval Status

My primary advisor and program research analyst has approved this study and the IRB is has been submitted for approval. See attached letter for approval status.

APPENDIX D: APPROVAL TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

From: EParks@bluevalleyk12.org

To: gwen@landever.com

Date: Wed, 23 Sep 2009 08:15:58 -0500

Subject: RE: clinical research study project for Baker

Hi Gwen,

I am pleased to give you permission to proceed with your project with the following changes. I cannot require schools or teachers to participate in your project but will let all middle school and elementary principals know that you have district permission for this work. You will then need to write letters (emails will be okay) to the principals to share with their staffs to ask for volunteers. You won't be able to use district office facilities for focus groups unless you go through the facilities department and, as a non-district entity, would need to pay a fee. You probably don't want to do that so using a public space, such as the public library, might be a better choice. I may have overlooked it but be sure you stress in writing that comments made in focus groups will remain anonymous, as well as all other responses, both for individuals and schools. Also, don't forget to send a copy of the IRB when available.

Please let me know if you have further questions and good luck with your project. I will send emails to principals to let them know that your work is approved.

Elizabeth

Elizabeth Parks

Director of Assessment and Research

Blue Valley School District

15020 Metcalf

Overland Park, KS 66283

913-239-4623

Education Beyond Expectations

APPENDIX E: IRB REQUEST FORM

IRB Request

Date 12/2/09

IRB Protocol Number _____
(IRB use only)

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

Department(s) School of Education

Name Signature

- 1. Gwen Landever _____ Principal Investigator
- 2. Dr. Harold Frye _____ Faculty sponsor
- 3. Peg Waterman _____

Principal investigator:

Gwen Landever
Phone 913-661-0363

Mailing address of Principal Investigator:

12308 Pawnee Lane
Leawood, Kansas 66209

Expected Category of Review: ___ Exempt x Expedited ___ Full ___
Renewal

II: Protocol Title

Investigating collaborative practices between special educators and general education teachers in a suburban Kansas school district

III. Summary:

The following summary must accompany the proposal. Be specific about exactly what participants will experience, and about the protections that have been included to safeguard participants from harm. Careful attention to the following may help facilitate the review process:

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

The purpose of this study is to investigate the contributing strategies that result in effective collaborative practices between classroom teachers and special education teachers for the benefit of the diverse learners in the classroom. Public Law 94-142, Education of All Handicapped Children Act passed by Congress in 1975 began the trend towards including students with special needs in the regular classroom. Inclusive practices became more prevalent in the 1990s as part of IDEA, Individuals with Disabilities Act. With the implementation of these laws different issues arose related to training of the classroom teachers, the changing role of the resource specialist and the increasing need for collaboration (Cramer, 2006). The results of this study may show the importance of collaboration and the role it plays in meeting the individual learner needs in the classroom, for students with a formal Individual Education Plan (IEP) and students who are not directly receiving formal special education services but who are either struggling with the grade level curriculum or excelling within the grade level curricular goals set by the teacher.

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

This proposed study is a 4 part mixed method investigation.

Data will be collected using the following methods:

- 1) **Online Surveys** will be sent to a random sample of general education, special education and gifted education teachers grades K-8. The surveys will be completed anonymously.
- 2) **Focus Groups** will be conducted and participants will be invited to participate in groups of 4-6 with others with similar roles (general education, special education, gifted education, middle school or elementary school). Guided questions will be used to facilitate the discussions by the investigator.
- 3) **Interviews** Principals will be randomly selected from 10 schools to be interviewed regarding the collaborative practices between special education and regular education teachers in their building
- 4) **Observations** Investigator will use an observation checklist while observing collaboration meetings at the same buildings where the principal was interviewed.

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.

There is no expected risk for the subjects who are participating in this study.

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

There is no expected stress to the subjects involved in the study.

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

The subjects will not be deceived or misled in any way during this study.

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

The only information collected from the subjects that might be considered personal is for demographic purposes and individuals will not be identified in 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 presented that would be considered offensive, threatening or degrading.

Approximately how much time will be demanded of each subject?

Completion of online survey 20 minutes

Participation in focus group-60 minute session

Participation in Interview-30 minutes

Participation in Observation-45-60 minute session

Who will be the subjects in this study? How will they be solicited or contacted? The subjects will be a convenience sample of classroom teachers (K-8), the convenience sample of special education resource teachers (K-8), and the entire staff of gifted education teachers (K-8). 10 Building principals will be interviewed. The subjects will be solicited through email with a follow up phone call inviting them to participate in the district approved study.

What steps will be taken to insure that each subject's participation is voluntary? In the initial email sent to principals, it will be made clear that their participation is voluntary and they are not obligated to participate. The researcher will indicate when scheduling of focus groups, observations, and interviews that participation is voluntary. In the instructions for the online survey, it indicates completion of the survey is optional.

What if any inducements will be offered to the subjects for their participation? No monetary compensation will be provided to the participants. The researcher will provide snacks for participants in the focus group portion of the study.

How will you insure that the subjects give their consent prior to participating? Participants will be notified in the solicitation email and again verbally at the beginning of the activity that their participation is voluntary and by participating in the activity (observation, interview, focus

group and online survey) they are giving consent. If selected subjects decline participation, there will be no negative repercussions.

Will a written consent form be used? If so, include the form. If not, explain why not. A written consent form will not be used, since subjects will indicate their consent by agreeing to participate in the study activities.

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 become 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.

What steps will be taken to insure the confidentiality of the data? To ensure confidentiality of subjects, names will not be recorded by the researcher and specific school names will not be included in the results of study.

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 in this 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 F: IRB APPROVAL

January 21, 2010

Gwen Landever
12308 Prairie Lane
Leawood, KS 66209



Dear Ms Landever:

The Baker University IRB has reviewed your research project application (M-0080-0115-0121) and approved this project under Exempt 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.

The Baker University IRB requires that your consent form must include the date of approval and expiration date (one year from today). Please be aware of the following:

1. At designated intervals (usually annually) until the project is completed, a Project Status Report must be returned to the IRB.
2. Any significant change in the research protocol as described should be reviewed by this Committee prior to altering the project.
3. Notify the OIR about any new investigators not named in original application.
4. Any injury to a subject because of the research procedure must be reported to the IRB Chair or representative immediately.
5. When signed consent documents are required, the primary investigator must retain the signed consent documents for at least three years past completion of the research activity. If you use a signed consent form, provide a copy of the consent form to subjects at the time of consent.
6. If this is a funded project, keep a copy of this approval letter with your proposal/grant file.

Please inform Office of Institutional Research (OIR) or myself when this project is terminated. As noted above, you must also provide OIR with an annual status report and receive approval for maintaining your status. If your project receives funding which requests an annual update approval, you must request this from the IRB one month prior to the annual update. Thanks for your cooperation. If you have any questions, please contact me.

Sincerely,

Charmaine B. S. Henry
Charmaine Henry, PhD
Chair, Baker University IRB

700 Baker
Leawood, KS 66209
781.596.6000 / 781.596.3100
www.baker.edu

APPENDIX G: TABLES

Frequency tables for chi square tests from the survey questions which did not have significant results.

Table G 1

Survey question 5 for special education/gifted education teachers

	Observed N	Expected N
Not Sure	2	2.8
Quarterly	2	2.8
Monthly	3	2.8
Weekly	4	2.8
Total	11	

Table G 2

Survey question 5 for special education/gifted education

	Observed N	Expected N
Not Sure	1	4.5
Quarterly	3	4.5
Monthly	7	4.5
Weekly	7	4.5
Total	18	

Table G 3

Survey question 9 for special education/gifted education teachers

	Observed N	Expected N
Strongly Agree	2	4.2
Agree	1	4.2
Undecided	4	4.2
Disagree	8	4.2
Strongly Disagree	6	4.2
Total	21	

Table G 4

Survey question 11 for special education/gifted education teachers

	Observed N	Expected N
Strongly Agree	2	4.2
Agree	1	4.2
Undecided	2	4.2
Disagree	10	4.2
Strongly Disagree	6	4.2
Total	21	

Table G 5

Survey question 12 for special education/gifted education teachers

	Observed N	Expected N
Strongly Agree	2	4.2
Agree	5	4.2
Undecided	3	4.2
Disagree	6	4.2
Strongly Disagree	5	4.2
Total	21	

Table G 6

Survey question 20 for special education

	Observed N	Expected N
Strongly Agree	1	4.2
Agree	4	4.2
Undecided	2	4.2
Disagree	7	4.2
Strongly Disagree	7	4.2
Total	21	

Table G 7

Survey question 21 for special education/gifted education teachers

	Observed N	Expected N
Strongly Agree	2	5.3
Undecided	3	5.3
Disagree	9	5.3
Strongly Disagree	7	5.3
Total	21	

Table G 8

Survey question 18 for special education/gifted education teachers

	Observed N	Expected N
Strongly Agree	2	4.2
Agree	1	4.2
Undecided	6	4.2
Disagree	10	4.2
Strongly Disagree	2	4.2
Total	21	

Table G 9

Survey question 7 for special education/gifted education teachers

	Observed N	Expected N
Strongly Agree	2	6.7
Disagree	8	6.7
Strongly Disagree	10	6.7
Total	20	

Table G 10

Survey question 25 for special education/gifted education teachers

	Observed N	Expected N
Strongly Agree	2	4.2
Agree	6	4.2
Undecided	2	4.2
Disagree	7	4.2
Strongly Disagree	4	4.2
Total	21	

Table G 11

Survey question 14 for special education/gifted education teachers

	Observed N	Expected N
Strongly Agree	3	4.0
Agree	4	4.0
Undecided	5	4.0
Disagree	5	4.0
Strongly Disagree	3	4.0
Total	20	

Table G 12

Survey question for special education/special education teachers

	Observed N	Expected N
Strongly Agree	3	4.2
Agree	4	4.2
Undecided	4	4.2
Disagree	7	4.2
Strongly Disagree	3	4.2
Total	21	

Table G 13

Survey question 15 for special education/gifted education teachers

	Observed N	Expected N
Strongly Agree	3	5.0
Undecided	3	5.0
Disagree	10	5.0
Strongly Disagree	4	5.0
Total	20	20

Table G 14

Survey question 16 for special education/gifted education teachers

	Observed N	Expected N
Strongly Agree	1	3.6
Agree	2	3.6
Undecided	5	3.6
Disagree	7	3.6
Strongly Disagree	3	3.6
Total	18	
