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Kylie Damico

Otterbein University, kydamico@gmail.com

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IMPROVING INCLUSION TEACHER SELF-EFFICACY THROUGH NARRATIVE

INQUIRY

Kylie Damico

Otterbein University

Dr. Dee Knoblauch
Advisor

Dr. Carol Young
Second Reader

Dr. Grace McDaniel
Third Reader

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By

Kylie Damico

2019

VITA

Teaching Experience

2013-2014 Intervention Specialist
Alum Crest High School
Columbus City School District
Columbus, Ohio

2014-Present Intervention Specialist
Walnut Ridge High School
Columbus City School District
Columbus, Ohio

Education

2019 Masters of Arts in Education
Curriculum and Instruction
Otterbein University
Westerville, Ohio

2012 Special Education Teaching License
Ohio Dominican University
Columbus, Ohio

2010 Bachelor of Science
Speech and Hearing Science
The Ohio State University
Columbus, Ohio

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this capstone project was to engage in narrative inquiry to explore teacher self-efficacy of inclusion teachers in a classroom where teachers may have low sense of teacher self-efficacy. Two special education teachers who have experienced challenges in co-teaching in the regular classrooms explored pre-conferencing with the general education teacher *before* class and reflecting with the general education teacher *after* the class period to try and increase teacher self-efficacy. They met regularly throughout the study and discussed their sense of teacher self-efficacy as it relates to the techniques explored and completed the Teaching Students with Disabilities Scale. The findings were that the teacher's self-efficacy was increased when meeting regularly with the general education teacher to reflect on the lesson.

SECTION ONE

Introduction

Special education has been a topic of interest in education for several years. In 1975, Congress created Public Law 94-142, also known as the Education for All Handicapped Children Act. This law was amended and renamed to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and again, reauthorized in 2014 (<https://sites.ed.gov/idea/about-idea/>). Under IDEA, each student with a disability receives an Individualized Education Plan, IEP, which is an individualized plan for their education. In the IEP, a student has individualized goals, accommodations and modifications to the curriculum that will help them meet their goals and a section called the least restrictive environment, LRE. The LRE is also based on the individual student's need and can differ from student to student. Some students may receive their special education services in a resource room with all special education students and a special education teacher. Others may be included in the general education class with a special education teacher accompanying them, which is referred to as inclusion and lastly, some may be in a general education class where there is not special education support which is called mainstream.

IDEA does not require schools to use inclusion, but states that they must make a *significant effort* to include students with disabilities in the general education classroom. Inclusion is a well-researched way to ensure a student's least restrictive environment is being met and that the student with disabilities is sharing classroom time with general education peers. Inclusion at all levels requires special education teachers to support their

students in their core classes; at the high school level this may be a little more complex because it requires special education teachers to provide support in upper level math and English classes.

Due to the increasing numbers of special education students in schools and the simultaneous push for more inclusive settings, special education teachers are often placed in inclusion classrooms in which they are not comfortable because they have limited to no experience in the content area (Dieker & Murawski, 2003). As of 2014, 62% of students with disabilities spent at least 80% of their day in the general education classroom and that number is expected to grow due to the success the special education students are having in that setting (<https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=59>).

Although students with special needs are showing growth in the general education classroom, many special education teachers are feeling less job satisfaction and leaving the field of special education. The high rate of teacher turnover creates a burden on the school districts who must hire and train new special educators and the students who must build a relationship with a new teacher. Research has shown that annually, 13% of special educators leave the field of special education and over half of them switch to general education, the others leave education completely (Viel-Ruma, Houchins, Jolivet & Benson, 2010). Although some may believe that special education teachers are leaving due to the challenges of working with students with disabilities and the large amounts of paperwork, it is actually special education teachers feeling like they are not adequately prepared to teach the curriculum and the lack of administrator support they are receiving (Urton, Wilbert and Hennemann, 2014, Dieker, L., & Murawski, W., 2003). Personally, I have experienced this as I am currently teaching two different content levels across four

grade levels, at a local high school. I have had no formal training in either of the content areas, but only in strategies to help special education students learn. My daily schedule consists of teaching Integrated Mathematics 1 ,2, 3, Advanced Quantitative Reasoning and an English 12 course. I have experienced anxiety and low teacher self-efficacy specifically when it comes to my English 12 class because I am not comfortable with the English 12 curriculum which has led to anxiety and worry that I am not properly teaching all students or helping them to reach their full potential.

Teacher self-efficacy is described as a teacher's belief of his or her own capabilities to help their students reach success and is embedded within Bandura's social cognitive theory. Research shows that there is a connection between student learning and a lack of teacher self-efficacy, therefore, a teacher with lower self-efficacy may not challenge the students as much and is less likely to try new strategies in the classroom (Mojavezi and Tamiz, 2012). There is also a relationship between low teacher self-efficacy and teachers leaving the profession. Instruction in an inclusion setting has become more prevalent and intervention specialists are in demand, yet, the rate of teacher burnout is increasing (O'Brennan, Pas, & Bradshaw, 2017). Due to the increasing number of special education students it is imperative to find techniques that can increase teacher self-efficacy and encourage teachers to stay in the profession. The question that guides this narrative inquiry is: How can I, as an inclusion teacher, improve my own teacher self-efficacy and help other inclusion teachers do the same?

SECTION TWO

Literature Review

History of Inclusion for Special Education Students

Special education has been a hot topic in education for many decades. Students with special needs, mental and physical, used to be institutionalized and were not permitted to be with “regular” students. As recent as 1970, some students were prohibited from attending public school based on their disability (McGovern, 2015). In 1975, Congress created Public Law 94-142, also known as the Education for All Handicapped Children Act. The purpose of this law was to guarantee that children, ages three and older, with disabilities would have access to free and appropriate public education. The number of children who were being identified continued to grow and the Education for All Handicapped Children Act was amended in 1997 to become the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and reauthorized in 2014 (<https://sites.ed.gov/idea/about-idea/>).

Due to Education for All Handicapped Children Act and IDEA, Individualized Education Plans, known as IEPs, were introduced. The IEP gave each student with a disability an individualized path to their education. The IEP set individualized goals for each child to achieve and provided the necessary resources and accommodations the student needed to achieve those goals. The IEP team, must also decide on a student’s least restrictive environment. IDEA does not require schools to use inclusion, but states that they must make a *significant effort* to include students with disabilities in the general education classroom (McGovern, 2015). Inclusion is a well-researched way to ensure a

students' least restrictive environment is being met and that the student with disabilities is sharing classroom time with general education peers.

As of 2014, 62.2% of students with disabilities spent at least 80% of their day in the general education classroom and only 13.7% spent less than 40% of their day (<https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=59>). School districts who have implemented inclusion models have found that it supports both general and special education students and staff (Thousand and Villa, 1995).

Inclusion Co-Teaching Models

In response to the push for inclusion, different models of co-teaching have been developed. Co-teaching is defined as “two or more professionals delivering substantive instruction to a diverse, or blended, group of students in a single physical space” (Cook & Friend, 1995, p. 2). In order for co-teaching to be an effective form of instruction, both teachers should actively be involved in the instruction and monitoring of students (Ploessl, Rock, Schoenfeld, Blanks, 2010). It was also noted by Wallace, Anderson and Bartholomay (2002), that in order for an inclusive model to work, general education teachers and special education teachers must collaborate. The students in the class should not be able to recognize a difference between the two teachers, but see them both as equals. The most popular inclusive models that have emerged are: one teach/one assist, station teaching, parallel teaching, alternative teaching and team teaching.

One teach/one assist is a model where the general education teacher provides content instruction to the whole class and the special education teacher works with individual students as needed. In station teaching, each teacher is responsible for a station and small group instruction is provided in the stations. Parallel teaching is where teachers

are teaching similar content in two different areas. Alternative teaching is where the class is split, one teacher stays with the larger group and the other pulls out a small group.

Team teaching is where both teachers equally teach and lead activities in the classroom (Scruggs, Mastropieri, McDuffie, 2007).

Gately and Gately Jr (2001), identified three stages of the co-teaching process. In the beginning stages, teachers are more protective over their space as they try to build a professional relationship with one another. This is where one teach/one assist may take place. Once the teachers are able to build that relationship they move on the compromising stage. At this stage the special education teacher may be taking a more active role in the classroom and communication between the teachers is becoming more open and the teachers begin to share more responsibility for both the general and special education students. Station teaching could be occurring in this stage. Lastly is the collaborating stage. Here, the teachers are comfortable with each other, it is hard to tell who the special education teacher is versus the general education teacher. In the final stage co-teachers may be utilizing the parallel, alternative or team teaching models.

In a study (Keeley, 2015), students perceived learning and learning confidence was the least during one teach/one assist and the most during station teaching, parallel teaching and team teaching. In another study, (Scruggs, Mastropieri, McDuffie, 2007) it was found that at the secondary level one teach/one assist was the most popular form of co-teaching due to the lack of content knowledge by the special education teacher. The following section will discuss the benefits and the challenges that may arise from different co-teaching models and the secondary level.

Co-Teaching at the Secondary Level

While co-teaching seems like it would be beneficial to all students and teachers, flaws have emerged with the approach. Dieker and Murawski (2003) studied co-teaching at the secondary level and found many challenges preventing a successful classroom such as common planning time, mastery of the content level by the special education teacher, large class sizes and the amount of high-stake tests. Murawski and Dieker (2004) discussed the importance of collaboration between the educators and support from the administration; the researchers suggested that the teachers involved in co-teaching need to recognize each other's strengths and collaboratively build upon them. The administrative team can play a key role in supporting the staff to best implement co-teaching models. The biggest support that the administration can provide is common planning time. Murata (2002) found that planning time is more essential than the actual co-teaching. If teachers are working together to implement their ideas, the general education teacher will not feel overburdened with all of the planning.

Murawski and Dieker (2004) found that general educators are typically more territorial because they are accustomed to teaching in isolation. In order to overcome the obstacles, both teachers must have a common goal of ensuring the success for *all* students to become responsible and productive citizens. "A sense of ownership by the teachers results in them investing in the co-teaching relationship and increases the likelihood of success and sustainability" (Nierengarten, 2013, p. 75). The general education teacher may also feel less territorial if they volunteered to teach an inclusion class and were teamed with a special education teacher with whom they want to work with (Jones, Zirkel and Barrack, 2008). It is also beneficial for the special education teacher to choose one

content area that they are passionate about to develop more content strength. If the teachers have a good working relationship, the general education teachers could become more willing to modify the curriculum and share the planning and teaching time with special education teacher (Gately & Gately, Jr., 2001). In addition to common planning time, the teachers should have time to reflect on student and teacher performance, discussing what worked and how to make their lessons better.

Nierengarten (2013) discusses the importance of maintaining the teaching teams from year to year, stating that it can take two to three years for the teachers to establish a good working relationship and routines. “Co-teaching is an effort that takes time and patience” (Nierengarten, 2013, p. 81). Because of the time and effort that go into building a successful co-teaching team, a special education teacher should not be expected to work with a large variety of teachers in the same day (Dieker & Murawski, 2003).

Little research is to be found about the benefits of co-teaching exclusive to the English classroom, however there is plenty of research on the benefits of co-teaching at the secondary level and specifically in the math classroom. Magiera, Smith, Zigmond & Gebauer (2005) examined eight high schools and observed their co-taught math classes over the course of a school year. The findings were that many teachers were in the beginning stages of co-teaching where the general education teacher is the lead instructor and the special education teacher works one on one with students. The students were still benefiting because two teachers were present and available to provide support. The students were receiving a wider range of instructional alternatives, which increased participation and learning for all students. Special education teachers reported that the

first year was the most challenging, but were able to build upon their content knowledge from the previous year and take on a more active role in the content teaching the following year. When a teacher has higher confidence in the classroom they have increased teacher self-efficacy.

Teacher Self-Efficacy

Teacher self-efficacy is described as a teacher's belief of his or her own capabilities to help their students reach success and is stemmed from Bandura's social cognitive theory. A teachers' sense of efficacy is connected to student achievement and motivation (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). Teachers with a high sense of self-efficacy are more likely to try new approaches, stay in teaching longer, spend more time lesson planning and have higher job satisfaction (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001, Shaukat & Iqbal, 2012 and Aldridge & Fraser, 2015). In today's state of education this is crucial due to the amount of teacher turnover every year (Viel-Ruma, Houchins, Jolivette & Benson, 2010).

Johnson and Birkeland (2003) interviewed 50 new teachers and found that the deciding factor to stay or leave the teaching profession came down to the belief of being effective with their students. The teachers identified working conditions, administrative support and collaboration with colleagues as supportive tools to help them feel more confident in their teaching ability.

In another study, Shaukat and Iqbal (2012) assessed teachers' sense of efficacy in terms of student engagement, instructional strategies and classroom management. The findings of this study were that between males and female teachers there was no difference in self efficacy in instructional strategies, but males tended to have better

efficacy in classroom management and teachers with higher education, masters versus bachelors, showed better classroom management self-efficacy. Another study done by Shazadi et al., (2011) found that female teachers had a higher sense of self-efficacy and felt more comfortable teaching, therefore were more effective teachers.

Mojavezi and Tamiz (2012) investigated the relationship between teacher self-efficacy and student motivation and achievement. The researchers used a teacher self-efficacy questionnaire and a student motivation questionnaire. Their findings were that the higher the teacher self-efficacy, the higher the students' motivation. In the second part of the study, they looked to see if there was any difference in achievement of students based on the teacher's level of self-efficacy. The students taught by a teacher who had higher self-efficacy, scored higher on the assessment. In a meta-analysis of teacher efficacy and academic achievement, researchers found that effective teachers are able to build positive relationships with students which in turn, builds a positive classroom atmosphere. When students feel like their teachers care about them, they tend to be more motivated to do well in the class. Before learning about ways to support teacher efficacy one must understand how to measure teacher self-efficacy.

There have been several different tools created to measure teacher efficacy. Most of the tools that have been created are a type of scale where the teacher rates themselves on each statement. Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2001), found problems with the measurements used and proposed a new measurement tool to be used. The results from their research suggested that the TSES, Teacher's Sense of Efficacy Scale, be used because it is a more reliable and valid scale. The scale can be used with 12 or 24 items which makes it more reasonable in terms of length and time needed to complete. Unlike

previous scales, the TSES encompasses a wider range of teaching tasks that include instructional strategies, student engagement and classroom management.

Teachers with a higher sense of self-efficacy have the support of their school administration in common. Bettini, et al (2016) showed a correlation between the collaborative relationship of teachers, co-teachers and administrators to the implementation of successful strategies and increased student achievement in their schools. The next section will explore different research that has helped to support teacher self-efficacy.

Supporting Teacher Self-Efficacy

Principals and school administrators were able to affect the school climate by cultivating a learning environment that was safe, cooperative and collaborative as well as encouraging leadership among the teachers (Vega, 2013). When teachers feel supported in their working environment, they are more confident in their classrooms and their teaching methods.

Calik, et al. (2012) examined the relationship between school principals' behaviors and the self-efficacy of their teachers using an associational research model. The findings of the study were that when there was a positive and supportive environment, a clear vision for the school, and opportunities for professional development, high expectations and shared leadership the self-efficacy of teachers was increased. This is important because it shows that the administration's leadership is crucial to supporting and growing teacher self-efficacy.

Wood and Olivier (2004), recognized the problem that pre-service teachers were coming to their university, but had very little teacher self-efficacy. In their research, they

identified ways to increase teacher self-efficacy which could also be used by administrators in schools. One way was to improve knowledge, skills and attitude. This could be implemented through professional development inside or outside of the school. Peer mentors were also a valuable tool because they were able to provide successful experiences for the teacher which led to higher self-efficacy. Lastly was reflection. Reflection was imperative for increasing teacher self-efficacy because it allowed for the teacher to acknowledge their thoughts on what worked and didn't work and recreate a plan that would be more successful for the future (Wood & Oliver, 2004).

Similarly, Bruce and Ross (2008), believed that current teachers must continue with professional development. Teachers who attended professional development and created goals for their students were more likely to try challenging strategies in their classroom and have higher student learning outcomes. The researchers also suggested that through positive and constructive peer feedback and more first-hand experiences with success, teachers were more likely to have higher self-efficacy.

Knowing that higher self-efficacy leads to higher student outcomes, it is important to look at self- efficacy of the teachers working with students with disabilities.

Teacher Self-Efficacy and Special Education

Instruction in an inclusion setting has become more prevalent and intervention specialists are in demand, yet, the rate of teacher burnout is increasing (O'Brennan, Pas, & Bradshaw, 2017). Research has shown that in order for inclusion to be successful, staff and the administrative team must foster a positive atmosphere for all that are involved (Urton, Wilbert and Hennemann, 2014). Factors leading to the burnout of special education teachers are teacher self-efficacy and the feeling of connectedness to the school

community including leadership. Every year, 13% of special education teachers leave the profession of special education for reasons like poor school climate, role confusion, low job satisfaction and overwhelming caseloads (Viel-Ruma, Houchins, Jolivette & Benson, 2010).

Viel-Ruma, et al. (2010) created a voluntary survey completed by 68% of special education teachers in a school district. The researchers aimed to discover what the relationship was between job satisfaction, teacher-self efficacy and collective efficacy and how they relate to different teaching levels, settings and certification type. The results were that there was a high correlation between high teacher self-efficacy and job satisfaction and a significant relationship between collective efficacy and self-efficacy. There was not a significant change in the results based on the setting or different certification types. This study was important because it showed that special education teachers need to learn ways to increase their teacher self-efficacy in order to have higher job satisfaction and want to continue in the field.

One way to improve teacher self-efficacy is from increased administration support. Bettini, et al. (2016) published a literature review which explored a variety of working conditions determined to affect instruction and create a connection between these conditions and the academic outcomes for students with disabilities. The research team determined that the collaboration between colleagues had a positive impact on teacher self-efficacy and on student learning outcomes.

In the review, Bettini, et al. (2016) identified six major components that affected working conditions of special education teachers. Two of the conditions studied were the climate of the school/district and the level of administrative and collegial support

received by special education teachers. Principal leadership was an important factor as it was determined that schools who demonstrated the highest level of achievement for students receiving special education services viewed the education of these students as a shared responsibility that included teachers and administration.

Bishop, et al. (2010) observed and interviewed 25 special education teachers with 1 to 3 years of experience. They found that the highly accomplished teachers had instructional support from administrators and colleagues, they were often reflecting on their lessons with the general education teachers and working to find more resources to help their students. The less accomplished teachers were more on their own and did not seek out help from colleagues or administrators. They appeared more overwhelmed and frustrated. Noormohammadi (2014) also found that there was a relationship between teacher reflection and teacher self-efficacy. He found that through reflection, job satisfaction was increased and teachers had more confidence which led to higher teacher self-efficacy.

Because research has shown that teachers with less experience have lower self-efficacy and many special educators are leaving the profession within their first few years it's crucial to find ways to support them and improve teacher self-efficacy to encourage them to stay in the profession.

Supporting Teacher Self- Efficacy in Special Education/Inclusion

There is substantial research that shows with support from the administrative team, teacher efficacy in the inclusion classroom can be improved. Weisel and Dror (2006) provided a foundation for this research through their findings that “self-efficacy was the single most important factor affecting attitudes” (p. 157) toward inclusion and

that teachers who had the trust of their principals were more likely to possess higher self-efficacy. Hoppey and McLeskey (2013) studied a school where teachers showed high self-efficacy and successful inclusion classrooms during an era of high stakes testing and mandated accountability. The researchers credited the principal, who described his role in the process as “lubricating the human machinery” (p. 248). He created an atmosphere where teachers were encouraged to grow and develop and there was an open dialogue between him and the staff. He stated that displaying trust in his teachers was a major factor in the success of their inclusion program. The principal implemented a mentorship program for the new teachers where both mentor and mentee were increasing their confidence by collaborating, which led to higher job satisfaction and more risks taken with their classroom instruction. Teachers were also encouraged to seek out professional development opportunities and share their new knowledge with peers. The research from this study concluded that a supportive leadership team not only increased job satisfaction, but also led to increased teacher self-efficacy (Hoppey & McLeskey, 2013).

Urton, Wilbert and Hennemann (2014) explored the connection between the self-efficacy at multiple levels within the school building, including teachers and principals, and their corresponding attitudes toward inclusion of students receiving special education services into the general education classroom. The researchers collected questionnaire data from 276 teachers and 35 principals to evaluate their attitudes toward inclusion. The questionnaire included statements regarding the educational and social aspects of inclusion, teacher self-efficacy and collective school efficacy. While results were recorded anonymously, demographic information was gathered including age, gender, years teaching, and participants were asked to indicate if they previously had any

experience teaching in an inclusion setting prior to the study. Comparable to results published by Hudson, et al. (2012), the findings by Urton, et al. (2014) indicated that principals viewed the implementation of new strategies in a more positive way. This research concluded that principals had a higher score for self-efficacy and collective efficacy compared to the opinions and attitudes shared by the teachers in their schools. Moreover, principals were found to have more optimistic attitudes toward all variables measured including the benefit of inclusion for educational and social growth of students with disabilities. It is also interesting to note that the principals participating in the study had less to no teaching experience in the inclusion setting.

Self-efficacy was demonstrated to increase with experience, however, research conducted by O'Brennan, Pas and Bradshaw (2017) found that many special education teachers are experiencing burnout and leaving the field of teaching prior to obtaining the multiple years of experience that will increase their self-efficacy. Therefore, it is imperative that administrators and school staff work together to build a positive atmosphere that cultivates positive and constructive relationships, job satisfaction and encourages growth for both the students and the staff and encourages staff to stay in the profession over an extended period of time.

The connection to this project is that through support and collaborative practices it is possible to increase inclusion teacher self-efficacy and based on the current literature available there is a need to identify ways to do so. Therefore, the purpose of the Capstone project was to determine if I could improve my teacher self-efficacy in the inclusion English 12 classroom.

SECTION THREE

Research Design and Method

Setting and Participants

The purpose of this study was to determine how I, as an inclusion teacher, could improve my own teacher self-efficacy and help other inclusion teachers do the same, using two different interventions. This study took place over a six-week period. I have described the interventions in this section.

This inclusion teacher self-efficacy study took place in a 12th grade English inclusion classroom in an urban school district located in central Ohio. The school district has a total population over 50,000 students, 8,554 of those students have an IEP. The demographics of the district are 4% Asian, 6% two or more races 10% Hispanic, 24% Caucasian and 56% African American. Due to the high poverty rates in the district, a federal program provides free breakfast and lunch for 100% of the students.

The participants in this study were myself, one other English inclusion teacher, and an English general education teacher. The other inclusion teacher is included in the study because she works with the same general education teacher and I wanted to have someone to discuss the different interventions and results. The classroom of focus was a senior level class that consisted of students ranging from 17 to 19 years old. The group of students consisted of nine males and 20 females, 83% identify as African American, 14% as Hispanic and 3% as Caucasian. Eight of the students in the class period have an IEP and fall under my caseload.

Method and Procedure

I collected data using a qualitative approach with data sources that included weekly journals and recordings of conversations I had with the other inclusion teacher, my critical friend. I implemented two different interventions that are known to increase teacher self-efficacy in the classroom and collected data in a cycle of inquiry around each of the interventions before making final conclusions about improving teacher self-efficacy in the inclusion classroom. The interventions chosen for this study were conferencing with the general education teacher in a pre-conference and reflecting with the general education teacher in a post-conference. These two interventions were selected because it is discussed in chapter two by Murawski and Dieker (2004) that collaboration between the educators is beneficial to increasing teacher self-efficacy and something that I can control. According to Wood and Oliver (2004) reflection can help to improve teacher self-efficacy. It allows for teachers to acknowledge their thoughts on what worked and didn't work and recreate a plan that would be more successful for the future. Before starting the two interventions, I continued my normal routine and completed the Teaching Students with Disabilities Efficacy Scale (Dawson & Scott, 2013) daily for two weeks to calculate a baseline score.

The two major interventions that I used to try to improve my teacher self-efficacy in the classroom are one, I met with the general education teacher daily for two weeks *before* the class period where we had a pre-conference for the lesson and secondly, I met with the general education teacher *after* the lesson and reflected on the lesson for two weeks.

Cycle One, Pre-conference: During the pre-conference we planned the complete lesson together and assigned roles for the day. The general education teacher helped me to understand what standards were being met with the lesson and together, we decided which type of co-teaching model will be used for the lesson. I was then able to determine what modifications and accommodations were necessary for the students with IEPs and how I could best be used to help them reach the goal of the lesson. After each class period during this cycle I wrote in my journal about how the lesson went and if the lesson followed what was discussed during the pre-conference. At the end of this two week cycle I recorded a narrative journal entry about how I thought my teacher self-efficacy was effected and if it increased.

Cycle Two, Post-Conference: During the post-conference we discussed how the lesson went. Did we use the best co-teaching model? What could we have done differently to improve the lesson? Where will the lesson go for the next day? During this cycle I recorded the dialogue from the post-conference in my daily journal with a personal reflection. After this two week cycle I again recorded a narrative journal entry about how I think my teacher self-efficacy was affected and if I believed it was increased.

I also collected quantitative data for this study. After each intervention and data collection cycle pertaining to that intervention, I determined if the approach was effective in increasing my teacher self-efficacy by completing the Teaching Students with Disabilities Efficacy Scale (Dawson & Scott, 2013). This scale was created to measure the self-efficacy of teachers in an inclusive classroom. The scale consists of 19 statements that are scored on a Likert scale; below is an example, and the full scale is located in Appendix A.

Teaching Students With Disabilities Efficacy Scale	How much can you do?								
	Nothing	Very Little			Some Influence		Quite A Bit		A Great Deal
Instruction	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
I can adapt the curriculum to help meet the needs of a student with disabilities in my classroom.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
I can adjust the curriculum to meet the needs of high-achieving students and low-achieving students simultaneously.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
I can use a wide variety of strategies for teaching the curriculum to enhance understanding for all of my students, especially those with disabilities.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
I can adjust my lesson plans to meet the needs of all of my students, regardless of their ability level.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
I can break down a skill into its component parts to facilitate learning for students with disabilities.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)

The last section of the scale contains statements regarding related duties, which do not pertain to me, therefore I completed only 16 of the 19 statements on the scale.

My critical friend also met with the general education teacher to pre-conference and post-conference. We then met at the end of each two week cycle to discuss our feelings on the intervention and how we felt it changed our teacher self-efficacy in the classroom. After our discussion we each completed the Teaching Students with Disabilities Efficacy Scale.

Data Collection

To collect qualitative data on the two interventions I tested to increase teacher self-efficacy, I kept a daily journal. In that journal I wrote down the dialogue from my pre- and post-conference with the general education teacher. I also recorded and transcribed the conversations I had with my critical friend. At the end of the cycles, I wrote a reflective journal entry regarding my personal feelings on how I believed the strategy worked before completing the efficacy scale.

For quantitative data, my critical friend and I completed the Teaching Students with Disabilities Efficacy Scale before testing the interventions to calculate a baseline score and again after each strategy and compared it to our baseline scores.

Data Analysis

Data analysis consisted of transcribing and organizing audio recordings of pre- and post-conferences with the general education teacher and meetings with my critical friend, as well as describing and analyzing the results from the Teaching Students with Disabilities Efficacy Scales. I printed out the journals that both my critical friend and I kept from each cycle. I analyzed the journals looking for repeating themes, common words and topics by creating a word cloud.

SECTION FOUR

Results and Analysis

After six weeks of data collection, I calculated a baseline score for each of the subscales on the Teaching Students with Disabilities Efficacy Scale. The four subscales I analyzed were instruction, professionalism, teacher support and classroom management. This section will be divided into the subscales and compare the baseline score with the scores from the two cycles: pre-conferencing and post-conferencing with the general education teacher. I will use qualitative data collected to further discuss the outcome of the two tested interventions to see if my teacher self-efficacy was increased in the inclusion classroom.

Instruction

Below is the mean score for the baseline (the scale was taken ten times), pre-conference (the scale was taken once at the end of the cycle) and post-conference data (the scale was taken once at the end of the cycle) for the Instruction subscale on the Teaching Students with Disabilities Efficacy Scale. The subscale had five statements and were scored on a Likert scale from 1 to 9, 1 being I felt like I could do nothing and 9 meaning I could do a great deal.

Instruction	Baseline Mean Score	Pre-Conference Score	Post-Conference Score
I can adapt the curriculum to help meet the needs of a student with disabilities in my classroom	4.86	3	6
I can adjust the curriculum to meet the needs of high-achieving students and low-achieving students simultaneously	4.29	4	5

I can use a wide variety of strategies for teaching the curriculum to enhance understanding for all of my students, especially those with disabilities	4.57	4	5
I can adjust my lesson plans to meet the needs of all of my students, regardless of their ability	4.71	3	6
I can break down a skill into its component parts to facilitate learning for students with disabilities	5.86	4	5
Total	4.86	3.6	5.4

The quantitative data shows the lowest efficacy scores in the areas of adapting and adjusting the curriculum to meet the needs of my students and using different strategies. My highest baseline score was in the area of breaking down a particular skill to facilitate learning for a student with disabilities. The qualitative data I collected suggests a different area for my low sense of teacher self-efficacy.

When I analyzed the journals that my critical friend and I wrote from our pre-conference cycle regarding instruction, common themes began to emerge; we both discussed feeling more like an assistant in the classroom, being confused, unconfident, and unsure of what to do in the classroom.

“Today’s plan was for me to go over the new vocabulary with students, after completing 3 of the 10 words, Mrs. Smith asked that I go make more copies and she will finish the lesson”

There were also feelings of frustration due to discussing a plan during the pre-conference and the general education teacher taking over during the lesson, not sticking with the discussed plan.

“In today’s pre-conference it was decided to do parallel teaching. We would read the book as a whole, but then split the class into two parts to hold a discussion and then

complete comprehension questions. In class, Mrs. Smith decided that would no longer work and asked that I have 'phone duty' while she completes task."

Based on the qualitative data, it was not surprising that my teacher self-efficacy was decreased in regards to instruction in the classroom after completing the pre-conference intervention. It appears that my low sense of teacher self-efficacy was more from teacher relationship than content knowledge. Johnson and Birkeland (2003) discussed the importance of collaboration with colleagues as a supportive tool to help inclusion teachers feel more confident in their teaching ability. Unfortunately, during my intervention of pre-conferencing I did not feel supported by the general education teacher, there was discussion of allowing me to teach the lesson, but then in class she was not ready to share ownership of the class.

During cycle two, the post-conference intervention, my sense of teacher self-efficacy had better results than in cycle one. The area of adapting curriculum to meet my students' needs had a 1.14 increase from the baseline score. The journals kept from this cycle were also much more positive. The post-conferences were more of a reflection of the lesson and how we would proceed the next day.

"Today's discussion on Siddhartha was very interesting, the students were engaged and almost everyone had something to add into the discussion. Tomorrow, we are going to continue, but split the class into two groups so the conversation can continue. Afterwards each group is going to prepare a poster to share with the other group."

"In our reflection today, we discussed how the reading groups that students selected were off task. I suggested that we have students draw random numbers tomorrow for groupings and Mrs. Smith agreed to give that a try. We also brainstormed what a good final project would be for this literature unit. Mrs. Smith and I bounced ideas back and forth and together, we decided a playlist would be a neat project. We divided up duties to make this work. I am going to type up the explanation and she is going to make the rubric. It felt really great to be able to contribute to the curriculum and to have Mrs. Smith like my idea!"

The general education teacher was more open to ideas during the post-conference time and I felt more confident in sharing what I thought worked and didn't work from the lesson that just occurred. My critical friend also had similar results, stating she felt more confident and her voice mattered more in discussions with the general education teacher.

Professionalism

Below is the mean score for the baseline (the scale was taken ten times), pre-conference (the scale was taken once at the end of the cycle) and post-conference data (the scale was taken once at the end of the cycle) for the Professionalism subscale on the Teaching Students with Disabilities Efficacy Scale. The subscale had five statements and were scored on a Likert scale from 1 to 9, 1 being I felt like I could do nothing and 9 meaning I could do a great deal.

Professionalism	Baseline Mean Score	Pre-Conference Score	Post-Conference Score
I can be an effective team member and work collaboratively with other teachers, paraprofessionals, and administrators to help my students with disabilities reach their goals	6.43	4	7
I can model positive behavior for all students with or without disabilities	8.29	7	8
I can consult with an intervention specialist or other specialist when I need help, without harming my own morale	7.86	8	8
I can give consistent praise for students with disabilities, regardless of how small or slow the progress is	8.14	8	8
I can encourage students in my class to be good role models for students with disabilities	7.86	8	8

Total	7.72	7	7.8
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For professionalism, my results did not vary much except for in one area. The statement “I can be an effective team member and work collaboratively with other teachers, paraprofessionals, and administrators to help my students with disabilities reach their goals” had a 2.43 drop. Based on the qualitative data I had from my pre-conferencing cycle I know that I did not feel that collaborating with my general education teacher was successful.

“In class, the general education teacher took over the lesson and did not stick to our plan of station teaching. I walked around and assisted students one-on-one while she led discussion”

“Today’s plan of station teaching became a lecture given by the general education teacher. Once we were ready to do station teaching there was only four minutes left in the period. Very frustrating- I had discussion questions prepared for my station.”

My critical friend shared a similar experience that she had where there was a small confrontation with the general education teacher because she was a couple minutes late to the class period and a special education student was having a meltdown. We both felt like it was a challenge to collaborate with our general education teacher and work as an effective team.

Cycle two, the post-conference cycle was more successful because we were able to immediately discuss and reflect on the class period. We had more open discussions on how students reached their goals and what we needed to change for the following day.

“Today in our post-conference we went through each student’s folder to see how much of their writing assignment they finished. Mrs. Smith then asked me what my thoughts were for tomorrow. I suggested we work in small groups with the students to help them finish. She agreed and wrote it down for the lesson tomorrow. It felt great for her to ask me my opinion and go with it!”

I felt like the general education teacher was more open to my plans and viewed me more as an equal than an assistant. My findings regarding teacher self-efficacy increasing through reflection were similar to Bishop, et al. (2010) who found that accomplished inclusion teachers were often reflecting on their lessons with the general education teachers.

“My critical friend and I feel that this cycle was much better than the pre-conference. Mrs. Smith was more open to our ideas and listened more to what we needed to do to help our students with disabilities reach their goals. We were able to meet directly after the lesson and stay to discuss what worked, what didn’t and what adjustments we should make for tomorrow. She was more flexible with co-teaching ideas and we actually wrote the lessons up together. We both felt that Mrs. Smith was more willing to work with us and we enjoyed going to class more, which meant our students were enjoying the class more! We both agree that we will continue to meet and do post-conferences at least three times a week!”

Teacher Support

Below is the mean score for the baseline (the scale was taken ten times), pre-conference (the scale was taken once at the end of the cycle) and post-conference data (the scale was taken once at the end of the cycle) for the Teacher Support subscale on the Teaching Students with Disabilities Efficacy Scale. The subscale had three statements and were scored on a Likert scale from 1 to 9, 1 being I felt like I could do nothing and 9 meaning I could do a great deal.

Teacher Support	Baseline Mean Score	Pre-Conference Score	Post-Conference Score
I can effectively encourage all of my students to accept those with disabilities in my classroom	7.14	8	8
I can create an environment that is open and welcoming for students with disabilities in my classroom	6.71	6	7
I can establish meaningful relationships with my students with disabilities	8	8	8
Total	7.28	7.33	7.67

In the category of teacher support, there was very little difference in my scores from baseline, to the pre-conference cycle, and then to the post-conference cycle. My teacher self-efficacy stayed relatively high in the areas of accepting students with disabilities and establishing meaningful relationships. The lowest category was in creating an environment that is open and welcoming to students with disabilities. I scored lowest in this area because I did not feel like I had much control over the environment. The classroom belongs to Mrs. Smith, I do not have anything belonging to me in the room and I am in there just as long as the students. When I am in the classroom, I make sure to welcome each student and make them feel comfortable and wanted.

“Today, I walked around and checked in on each one of my students to try and gage how their days were going I also had them show me their projects they are working on to see if they were on track to finish by Friday. Once I checked in with each one of my caseload students I checked in with general education students.”

The pre-conference was helpful in this area because I was able to discuss new information with the general education teacher. During one of our pre-conference meetings I discussed concerns that I had for a new student with emotional disturbances

who was easily set off by aggressive tones and movements. I shared that he needed to be seated close to the door where he was able to walk out for breaks if necessary. We were able to set-up a plan before we had him in the class. I also mentioned to Mrs. Smith that it may be beneficial to get flex seating options in the classroom to help some of our students with disabilities, but she expressed concerns on it being a distraction for other students and is not willing to try at this time.

Classroom Management

Below is the mean score for the baseline (the scale was taken ten times), pre-conference (the scale was taken once at the end of the cycle) and post-conference data (the scale was taken once at the end of the cycle) for the Classroom Management subscale on the Teaching Students with Disabilities Efficacy Scale. The subscale had three statements and were scored on a Likert scale from 1 to 9, 1 being I felt like I could do nothing and 9 meaning I could do a great deal.

Classroom Management	Baseline Mean Score	Pre-Conference Score	Post-Conference Score
I can effectively deal with disruptive behaviors in the classroom, such as tantrums	7.14	7	7
I can remain in control of a situation that involves a major temper tantrum in my classroom	7	7	8
I can manage a classroom that includes students with disabilities	6.86	6	8
Total	7	6.67	7

SECTION FIVE

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to test two different interventions to try and improve my own teacher self-efficacy. Cycle one was pre-conferencing with the general education teacher *before* the lesson. In the pre-conference, we discussed plans, what co-teaching model would be best for the lesson and what accommodations or modifications needed to be made for the students with disabilities. The second cycle of intervention was post-conferencing with the general education teacher. The post-conference took place immediately *after* the class period and served as a time to reflect on the class period. We discussed what worked, what didn't work, and where the lesson should go the following day. The post-conference/reflection intervention had a positive effect on my teacher self-efficacy.

Through this study I realized that my low sense of teacher self-efficacy was related more to my working relationship with my co-teaching partner than my lack of experience with the content. Unfortunately, in my experience, due to student numbers and staff turnover, teachers have very little control over their schedule year to year. It is crucial to have an open discussion with the administration about co-teaching and what support is necessary to make inclusive practices successful. Calik, et al. (2012) found that when there was a positive and supportive environment, a clear vision for the school, opportunities for professional development, high expectations and shared leadership the self-efficacy of teachers was increased. When making co-teacher assignments, the administration should be intentional with the pairings of teachers, making sure both are on board with the assignment, have high expectations for the classroom and provide

professional development to the teachers to help them build their inclusive practices tool box.

The teachers in an inclusion classroom need to have shared responsibility and both be held accountable for student growth. The setting that this study took place in was still in the beginning stages of co-teaching as identified by Gately and Gately Jr (2001), where the general education teachers are more protective over their space as they try to build a professional relationship with one another. Opportunities to attend professional development on co-teaching would be very beneficial and hopefully start cultivating a professional relationship between the co-teachers. Research suggests that in order for co-teaching to be an effective form of instruction, both teachers should actively be involved in the instruction and monitoring of students (Ploessl, Rock, Schoenfeld, Blanks, 2010). Wallace, Anderson and Bartholomay (2002), also found that in order for an inclusive model to work, general education teachers and special education teachers must collaborate and be considered equals, students in the class should not be able to recognize a difference between the two teachers. Unfortunately, my co-teaching partner and I have not been able to reach this level of co-teaching. She is viewed by students as the teacher and I, as more of an assistant. I noticed more during this study that students would specifically ask me random question such as using the restroom, due dates or non-class related questions and her more questions related directly to the content. I do not believe either teacher is to blame for this because we were not able to build a successful inclusive practice due to scheduling complications. Research discussed the importance of maintaining the teaching teams from year to year, stating that it can take two to three

years for the teachers to establish a good working relationship and routine. “Co-teaching is an effort that takes time and patience” (Nierengarten, 2013, p. 81).

Intentional scheduling of teachers and students can help to increase teacher self-efficacy. In order for intervention specialists to gain content knowledge and increase their teacher self-efficacy in that area, it would be best to be scheduled with one content area and have the same planning time as their co-teacher. In order for me to have a pre-conference and post-conference with the general education teacher, I had to miss part of another inclusion class because the general education teacher and I had no common off times in our schedule. I also think we would have a better relationship if I was in her classroom for more than one class. Nierengarten (2013) discussed the importance of maintaining the teaching teams from year to year, stating that it can take two to three years for the teachers to establish a good working relationship and routines. Because of the time and effort that go into building a successful co-teaching team, a special education teacher should not be expected to work with a large variety of teachers in the same day (Dieker & Murawski, 2003). In my typical school day, I am working with three different general education teachers. Based on this research it is almost impossible to have a successful co-teaching experience with each one.

The goal of this project was to find a way to increase inclusion teacher self-efficacy, time to collaborate and reflect with the general education teacher emerged as a requirement to achieve this. With the help of administration, it is possible to build a schedule that will allow inclusion teachers to work with less general education teachers on a daily basis and create common planning time between the teachers. Through these changes it is possible to increase teacher self-efficacy.

Limitations

There were some notable limitations in this study. One limitation in this study is that this study took place in one building with one general education teacher and is only from my perspective and the sample size of teachers involved in the study. The choices of interventions were limited because I had to choose an intervention that could increase teacher-self efficacy that I could control, I was not able to change schedules or create different teaching assignments. Results may vary across subject levels and different grade levels. Another limitation was the duration of the interventions; they were cut shorter than anticipated due to snow days and ACT testing in our building.

Dissemination Plan for other Teachers and Administrators

I plan to share the results of my study by meeting with the administrator in my building who is in charge of special education and scheduling. I am going to share the research I have found about building a successful co-teaching team and how to increase teacher self-efficacy across all staff members. I am going to offer to help create a schedule where inclusion teachers have two or less general education teachers daily and have common planning time where teachers are able to collaborate and reflect together. I am going to provide the research that explains with higher teacher self-efficacy, teachers are more willing to try new techniques which can increase student motivation and achievement. I am also going to share the results from my study with other intervention specialists in my district at our monthly meeting. I want to help reduce the amount of special education turnover in our district and let other teachers know that it is possible to increase their own teacher self-efficacy.

Appendix A

Teaching Students With Disabilities Efficacy Scale

Inclusion

2013, Vol. 1. No. 3. 181-196

Table 3

Teaching Students With Disabilities Efficacy Scale	How much can you do?									
	Nothing	Very Little	Some Influence	Quite A Bit	A Great Deal					
Instruction										
I can adapt the curriculum to help meet the needs of a student with disabilities in my classroom.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	
I can adjust the curriculum to meet the needs of high-achieving students and low-achieving students simultaneously.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	
I can use a wide variety of strategies for teaching the curriculum to enhance understanding for all of my students, especially those with disabilities.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	
I can adjust my lesson plans to meet the needs of all of my students, regardless of their ability level.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	
I can break down a skill into its component parts to facilitate learning for students with disabilities.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	
Professionalism										
I can be an effective team member and work collaboratively with other teachers, paraprofessionals, and administrators to help my students with disabilities reach their goals.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	
I can model positive behavior for all students with or without disabilities.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	
I can consult with an intervention specialist or other specialist when I need help, without harming my own morale.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	
I can give consistent praise for students with disabilities, regardless of how small or slow the progress is.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	
I can encourage students in my class to be good role models for students with disabilities.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	
Teacher Support										
I can effectively encourage all of my students to accept those with disabilities in my classroom.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	
I can create an environment that is open and welcoming for students with disabilities in my classroom.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	
I can establish meaningful relationships with my students with disabilities.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	
Classroom Management										
I can effectively deal with disruptive behaviors in the classroom, such as tantrums.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	
I can remain in control of a situation that involves a major temper tantrum in my classroom.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	
I can manage a classroom that includes students with disabilities.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	
Related Duties										
I can effectively transport students with physical disabilities from vehicles to wheelchairs, from wheelchairs to desks, and to the restroom without becoming intimidated.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	
I can administer medication to students with disabilities if I am asked to and have the proper certifications.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	
I can assist students with disabilities with daily tasks such as restroom use and feeding.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	

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