# LET'S ASK THE KIDS: CONSUMER CONSTRUCTIONS OF CO-TEACHING

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*The purpose of this study was to investigate student perceptions of co-teachers. Students with disabilities are more than twice as likely as their peers without disabilities to leave school early (Kortering & Braziel, 2002; Wilson & Michaels, 2006). Students in two inclusive classrooms in an urban middle school participated in interviews about their perceptions of being in a co-taught class. Data from the student interviews indicated that students were positive about having two adults in the classroom, however, willingness to ask for assistance varied across environments. Acceptance of instruction and discipline from either teacher also varied from classroom to classroom. The findings from this study illustrated the need for inclusion to apply to all members of the classroom—students and teachers. When teachers' roles are reduced to that of an assistant or aide in the classroom, the students show an awareness of that power differential and status. Implications of the study suggested that parity in co-teaching was in the best interest of the teachers and students.*

*Responding to a Mandate for Change*

Classrooms across the country continue to change, increasing in complexity and diversity, in response to mandates enacted in federal legislation. No Child Left Behind (NCLB) (2001) increased school accountability for the performance of students with disabilities and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (2004) mandated the inclusion of students with disabilities and required access to the general curriculum. Advocates of students with disabilities have urged the inclusion of students with disabilities in the general curriculum; much of the impetus for co-teaching, a method to support inclusion, can be traced directly to NCLB and its requirements for student performance on mandatory state tests (Cramer & Nevin, 2006).

The attempt by schools to implement these laws has resulted in a surge of students with disabilities receiving education in general education classrooms. Students with identified educational disabilities need an individualized education in order to meet students' specialized educational needs and the mandates of compulsory education and special education law. Is it realistic to expect individualization to be addressed in general education classrooms?

Many schools have chosen to work toward inclusivity and individualization through the use of co-teaching. Co-teaching is, in fact, the most common service delivery model for students with disabilities receiving instruction in the general education classroom (City University of New York, National Center on Educational Restructuring and Inclusion, 1995). Responding to these new complexities many schools sought instructional strategies that supported students with disabilities in the general education classroom (Weiss & Lloyd, 2002).

*Co-Teaching*

Co-teaching can be defined as two professional educators delivering substantive instruction to a diverse group of students, including students with disabilities, within a single space—typically a shared classroom (Cook & Friend, 1995). During co-teaching, special and general educators are partners in planning, delivery of instruction, and evaluation of diverse groups of students (Cook & Friend, 1995). While some research has been unclear as to the efficacy of co-teaching regarding student outcomes (Weiss & Brigham, 2000; Murawski & Swanson, 2001), and others have expressed concerns that co-teaching may not be effective for improving academic achievement of any students (Klinger, et al., 1998; Zigmond & Magiera, 2001), still others have illustrated benefits of co-teaching for teachers and students (Schwab & Learning, 2003; Villa, et al., 2004).

Cook and Friend (1995) described six variations of co-teaching and noted that no particular genre or mode of co-teaching should be used exclusively by a teaching team. The five variations are described in Table 1. One of the most well known models of co-teaching was described by Cook and Friend (1995) who delineated six strategies for co-teaching. They are: One teach/one assist; One teach/one observe, Station teaching, Parallel teaching, Alternative teaching, and Teaming; and will be discussed in detail below. No particular strategy for co-teaching is meant to be used exclusively by a teaching team (Cook & Friend, 1995). Each of these strategies has strengths and weaknesses and one may work better for a particular lesson or teaching partnership than another. Furthermore, teacher familiarity, comfort, and competence in using all of the strategies is essential to maintain parity and to ensure that the each teacher uses her or his specific areas of expertise in order to meet the needs of the individual students (Dieker & Little, 2005).

**Table 1. Six Co-teaching Models**

| Co-teaching Model | Definition |
|---|---|
| One Teach/One Assist | One teacher has primary responsibility for teaching while the other circulates through the room providing unobtrusive assistance to students as needed. |
| One Teach/One Observe | One teacher teaches while the other teacher observes/gathers data. Teachers decide in advance what information needs to be gathered and how data will be collected. Both teachers analyze the information together. |
| Station Teaching | Teachers divide content students rotate from one teacher to another to an independent station. Each teacher repeats instructions three times and students access both teachers and the independent station. |
| Alternative Teaching | Large group completes the planned lesson while smaller group completes an alternative lesson or the same lesson taught at different levels or for different purposes. |
| Parallel Teaching | Both co-teachers teach the same information, but they divide the class and conduct the lesson simultaneously. |
| Team Teaching | Both teachers deliver the same instruction at the same time. Each teacher speaks freely during large-group instruction and moves among all students in the class. Instruction becomes conversation, not turn taking. |

*One teaches and one assists.* In this type of co-teaching, both educators are present, but one takes the lead while the other teacher moves about the room assisting students and providing support as needed (Cook & Friend, 1995). This approach requires little planning and allows one teacher to provide individual support for students. However, this model does not encourage teacher parity and could force

one teacher into the role of an aid (Friend & Cook, 2003; Vaughn, Schumm, & Arguelles, 1997; Weiss & Lloyd, 2002). Friend and Cook (1995) suggest that this problem could be overcome if teachers alternate roles between lead and support.

*One teaches and one observes.* This type of co-teaching appears similar to the *one teach/one assist* model in that one teacher takes the role of a lead teacher. The second teacher then engages in a detailed observation of the students or teacher and actively collects data. This approach requires teachers to plan in advance what type of data needs to be collected, how to gather the data, and how the data will be analyzed and used by both teachers (Cook & Friend, 1995). The same concerns with teacher parity and one teacher falling into the role of an aid exist with this model as with the one teach/one assist model. Care must be taken to avoid static roles with this strategy.

*Station teaching.* Station teaching allows teachers to divide instructional content into two, three, or more segments and present that content at different locations in the classroom support (Cook & Friend, 1995). Two teachers may divide content into two stations and teach half of the material to half of the class and then trade and repeat the instruction with new students. Teachers may also choose to add a third independent station where students may work independently or with a partner. Station teaching requires teachers to share responsibility for planning and content delivery. Station teaching may help new co-teachers feel more comfortable, students may benefit from the lower student-teacher ratio, and the integration of students with disabilities. Station teaching is appropriate for all grade levels. Moreover, equal teacher status in the classroom is not a serious concern because both teachers have active teaching roles. Challenges to station teaching include increased noise and activity level as well as maintaining the pace of the lesson to match the other teacher for transitions (Cook & Friend, 1995).

*Parallel teaching.* Parallel teaching involves each teacher delivering instruction to a heterogeneous group made up of half of the class support (Cook & Friend, 1995). Parallel teaching lowers the student-teacher ratio and may be used when students would benefit from hands-on activities, peer interaction, or responding aloud. Co-teachers plan instruction jointly, but deliver the lesson independent of the other teacher. Considerable planning may be needed to ensure that both groups of students receive the same instruction in the same amount of time. Similar to station teaching approaches, noise and activity levels may be problematic.

*Alternative teaching.* Alternative teaching allows one teacher to work with a small group of students (e.g., 3-8 students) while the other teaches the large group support (Cook & Friend, 1995). Students with disabilities may benefit from this approach more than the station or parallel teaching approaches. Alternative teaching may be used for enrichment interest groups, assessments as well as pre-teaching and re-teaching. Alternative teaching does risk stigmatizing students those students grouped for re-teaching often; but the risk can be reduced by varying groupings (Cook & Friend, 1995).

*Team teaching.* Team teaching allows both teachers to share the planning and instruction of students support (Cook & Friend, 1995). Teachers may role-play, take turns leading discussion, demonstrate a concept while the other teacher speaks, or model note-taking or other skills. While many veteran co-teachers find this type of teaching effective and rewarding, some teachers are not comfortable with it. Team teaching requires mutual commitment, trust, and communication (Cook & Friend, 1995).

*Co-teaching and Student Perceptions*

Current co-teaching research has focused on types of co-teaching and implementation of co-teaching (Bouck, 2007; Cook & Friend, 1995; Morocco & Aguilar, 2002), co-teacher behavior (Harbort, et al., 2007), and teacher attitudes and perceptions (Trent, 1998). Research on student perceptions of co-teaching strategies is limited and it warrants further investigation. Educational research addressing student perceptions in inclusive classrooms has focused on routines and procedures (Klinger, 1999; Lloyd, 1995), placement (Whinnery, 1995), individualization of homework and adaptations (Bryan & Nelson, 1994; Fulk & Smith, 1995; Lloyd, 1995), and grading practices (Bursuck, Munk, & Olson, 1998). As the body of literature regarding co-teaching in inclusive classrooms builds, research including student perceptions must be addressed because student understandings may lead to more effective practice and increased student engagement in the learning process (King, 2003; Kortering & Braziel, 1999; Wentzel, 1997).

Student perceptions of teachers and school environments can have a profound influence on student interaction, motivation, and effort (Kortering & Braziel, 1999; Wentzel, 1997). Recognizing the

popularity of co-teaching as a model for inclusion, it is imperative to consider student perceptions because these insights can act as an indicator for program effectiveness (King, 2003). Student perceptions are an important resource for teachers (Keefe, Moore, and Duff, 2004; Klinger and Vaughn, 1999; Kortering and Braziel, 2002) and those perceptions may influence motivation and success (Wilson and Michaels, 2006).

Students are consumers (Skrtic, 2005) and as such are a valuable and untapped resource in determining effectiveness of strategies such as co-teaching. Examination of student perceptions may change implementation of co-teaching as a method of inclusion and a means to access to the general curriculum for students with disabilities. Wiggins and McTighe (2005) drew comparisons to architects, engineers, and builders to teachers as designers who depend on the consumer, who are the end users, for their basic design purposes and features. Teachers are constrained not only by professional and content standards, but also by the needs of their consumers—the students.

*Purpose and Research Question*

The cost of student disengagement is substantial. Students with disabilities are more than twice as likely as their peers without disabilities to leave school early (Kortering & Braziel, 2002; Wilson & Michaels, 2006). Given the significance of student perceptions and their influence on educational outcomes (Kortering & Braziel, 1999), there is a critical need for research in this area. The purpose of this study was to investigate student perceptions of co-teachers. The questions that guided this investigation were: What are student perceptions of co-teachers and co-teaching? Does the co-teaching behavior of the teachers influence the students' perceptions?

## Methodology

*Context*

This study was conducted at a suburban, public middle school serving 678 seventh and eighth grade students. The site was selected as a convenience sample because the researcher taught in the district, although not in these classes. Nearly 40% of all students in the building met the qualification for economically disadvantaged, meaning that just under half of the student body had family incomes of 130% to 185% of the federal poverty guidelines. For example, in this community a family of four would have an annual income of less than $38,203 to qualify for reduced lunch and the same family would have an income of less than $26,845 to qualify for free lunch. The percentage of students identified with a disability in this district is 14.8%. Table 2 illustrates demographic data regarding the student population.

**Table 2. School Demographics**

| African-American | Multi-racial | Caucasian | Hispanic | Limited English | Students with Disabilities | Economically Disadvantaged |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 70% | 9.2% | 15% | 4.2% | 3.1% | 16.6% | 39.7% |

Note. Ohio Department of Education

*Participants*

Seven students in grades seven and eight participated in individual interviews. Three seventh grade students, Malik, Alyssia, and Aysha (pseudonyms), participated. Four eighth grade students, Shakir, Shandra, Javonda, and Terrell (pseudonyms), to protect anonymity, participated. Alyssia and Shandra had identified learning disabilities. All participants received instruction in Reading and Language Arts in an inclusive and co-taught with a general and special educator.

The school administration implemented inclusion practices one year prior to the study at the start of the school year. Teachers were not consulted and neither planning nor preparation was employed. Students that had formerly received all instruction in a self-contained resource setting were rescheduled to attend co-taught classes with their typically developing peers. Resource class sections, where students with disabilities were pulled out for special instruction, were significantly reduced. Only students identified as having a cognitive disability or significant behavioral concerns received separate instruction in the resource room.

This study looked at students in a seventh grade language arts class and an eighth grade language arts class. Both classes were co-taught by two different teams of teachers. These teams used different co-teaching approaches. The teachers of the seventh grade co-taught language arts class taught together daily and employed only the one teach/one assist model of co-teaching. The general education teacher

maintained the teach role while the special educator utilized the assist role. According to the students and the teachers, the general education teacher prepared and delivered lectures, monitored grading, and communicated with parents. The special education teacher assisted students individually with work and testing and monitored IEP goals and progress.

The teachers of the eighth grade co-taught language arts class taught together daily and employed a variety of strategies, self-disclosing that they most often used the station, parallel, and team teaching strategies. Both general and special education teachers stated that they were interchangeable in the roles and shared time presenting information equally. Both teachers communicated with parents and monitored grades. The special education teacher maintained responsibility for IEP goal monitoring, but the general education teacher provided input on progress.

*Data collection and Analysis*

Semi-structured interviews with students were conducted at the middle school during a non-graded resource bell used for completing homework and reading time. Each student was asked to respond to a series of questions that explored the roles of teachers in their classrooms. For example, students all responded to the question: What are the roles of your teachers? See figure 1 in Appendix A for the complete interview protocol.

The interviews took place during the spring quarter, after students had received mid-term grades and before mandatory state achievement testing. Kortering and Braziel (1999) suggest that interviewing students at this time of the school year when students had established sufficient experiences with co-teachers to form perceptions. Due to the age of the participants, assent and parental consent were also obtained.

Data analysis for this study was multi-level and consisted of inductive analysis (Hatch, 2002) and open coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Interview transcripts were analyzed for common themes. Open codes were created by the first and second author individually and then discussed together. Disagreements were analyzed and re-coded and then axial codes were identified. Data was organized into displays and both authors discussed and analyzed emergent themes.

*Trustworthiness and Credibility*

Peer debriefing and member checking ensured the trustworthiness of this study (Hatch, 2002). Peer debriefing with a colleague and mentor at the university occurred at each stage of analysis. Interviews were digitally recorded and field notes were taken. All responses were transcribed. Student participants had the opportunity to review transcripts from interviews and give feedback (Brantlinger, et al., 2005; Hatch, 2002).

*Narrative of Findings*

Several themes emerged from the interview data. Student responses to the interviews were categorized as relating to role and perception of ability. Role and perception of ability were further delineated to role of general educator and role of special educator and perception of the student's own ability and perception of other students' abilities. When students described their teachers' roles, they did so in terms of what each teacher did or functions that he or she performed. Students identified jobs or tasks that were categorized into five roles: teach, re-teach, discipline, organize, and support. Table 3 illustrates the roles with samples of student responses.

**Table 3. Roles and sample responses**

| Teacher | Role | Student Response |
|---|---|---|
| General Educator | Teach | *To teach… Language Arts.* |
| | Re-teach | *You have somebody extra in there to explain it more to you.* |
| Special Educator | Discipline | *Makes sure people is paying attention and makes sure people ain't talking*; *Keep us out of trouble, like to stop talking and stuff like that*. |
| | Organize | *She gets everything prepared and together*. |
| | | *She helps them go over the test* |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | Support | *before they take it*; *To help us understand* |

All student responses regarding teacher roles were categorized as one of the five tasks shown above. Students attributed the majority of the roles to both teachers in varying degrees, and significant differences in attribution arose when comparing the seventh grade class, which exclusively used the one teach/one assist model, to the eighth grade class, which used several co-teaching models. Other responses were categorized as student perception of student ability. Students made some statements indicating their assurance in their own abilities while other statements were intended to separate the responding student from other students that did require additional help from teachers. Some examples can be seen in Table 4.

**Table 4. Student Perception of Ability**

| Student's own ability | Others' ability |
|---|---|
| *The only time I need a tutor is in math. Everything else I'm good* | *the people that don't learn as fast; people that need help on mostly the stuff that we be doing* |

Another category, validity, emerged from the descriptors students used to describe either the teacher or location of teaching from particular teachers. Students in the seventh grade class, where co-teaching was less complex and roles were not shared, repeatedly referred to their general educator as the *real* or *regular* teacher. These descriptions indicated what we interpreted as a student perception that there was a lack of parity between the teachers and the perception of the special educator as not real or not valid as a teacher. Because these same students referred to those students that needed assistance as *other* indicated that this perception may have carried over from the teacher to students. This distinction is important because students' perceptions of the teacher as valid or conversely, invalid, may ultimately indicate a perception of their own learning needs or abilities as legitimate or illegitimate.

The co-teaching approaches used by the teaching pairs varied significantly and student perceptions of teacher performance showed great disparity between the two classrooms. Tables 5-8 illustrate the types of words and number of times a word was referenced by students in relation to particular teachers. In table 5, words and phrases used by the seventh grade students indicated the type of roles they perceived the general and special education teachers to have had. The words and phrases listed were used by the students and the number in the column to the right of the word indicates the number of times students used the word or phrase to describe the teacher's role.

The three seventh grade students, Malik, Alyssia, and Aysha, indicated that their general education teacher taught, organized, and disciplined students. Malik said, *Mrs. S, she's like the head teacher and she gets everything prepared and together.* These students also differentiated between the general education teacher and the special education teacher by describing her class as the real class. Alyssia describes the teachers saying, *[She is the] teacher who's always in the real class instead of taking other people to a different class to help them*. These same seventh grade students indicated that their special education teacher's role was to re-teach, organize, and support students. Aysha said of the special educator, *Mrs. D, she's like a helper and she helps out on the Daily Sponge and things and people who need help.* Malik described the special educator's role saying, *Mrs. D, she'll come over and go over it again and make sure we understand it and then we get all the answers. That makes it easier.* The role delineation was clear between the two teachers with the general educator holding a lead teacher status. The students viewed the special educator as an adult who helped students, but not someone in control of learning process or the classroom (see Tables 5 and 6).

**Table 5. Key words used to describe 7th grade general educator in co-taught classroom**

| Teacher | Role | Student Examples Coded |
|---|---|---|
| General Educator | Teach | Real class (1) |
| | | Goes over (3) |
| | | Head/lead/main teacher (1) |
| | | Makes sure [procedures] (2) |
| | Discipline | Enforces rules (1) |
| | Organize | Hands/passes out [home work, assignments] (3) |
| | | Get's everything prepared (1) |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | Gets class in order (1) |
| | Reward | Give us [rewards] (1) |

**Table 6. Key words used to describe 7th grade special educator in co-taught classroom**

| Teacher | Role | Student Examples Coded |
|---|---|---|
| Special Educator | Teach other | Different [class] (2) |
| | | Goes over (3) |
| | Re-teach | Explains (1) |

In Table 7 and Table 8, words and phrases used by the eighth grade students indicated the type of roles they perceived the general and special education teachers to have had. The four eighth grade students, Shakir, Shandra, Javonda, and Terrell, indicated that their general education teacher taught, helped or supported students, and enforced rules. Three of the four students responded that both teachers had the same job. One eighth grade student, Shakir, responded, *They got the same job…to teach us and make sure we understanding what we learning. [They] make sure we are following school rules and enforcing them.* In fact, three of the four eighth grade students interviewed indicated that both the general and special education teachers had identical jobs. The fourth student, Shandra, described the general education teacher's role saying, *It's Mrs. S's job to teach and Mrs. G's (special education teacher) to help people.* But when asked what the special education teacher did Shandra stated that she taught reading. Shandra also described the role of the special education teacher saying, *She [special education teacher] do both [teach and help in reading and language arts]*. The roles of the teachers in the eighth grade classroom appear to be much more interchangeable than the roles of the teachers in the seventh grade classroom.

**Table 7. Key words used to describe 8th grade general educator in co-taught classroom**

| Teacher | Role | Student Examples Coded |
|---|---|---|
| General Educator | Teach | Teach (6) |
| | | Head/main/real teacher (1) |
| | | Same as the co-teacher (3) |
| | | Regular class (2) |
| | | Help us get better at (1) |
| | Re-teach | Makes sure [understanding](2) |
| | | Enforces rules (2) |
| | Discipline | |
| | | Helps [other] students (1) |
| | Support | Helps (5) |
| | | Asks questions (1) |
| | | Makes it easier (1) |

**Table 8. Key words used to describe 8th grade special educator in co-taught classroom**

| Teacher | Role | Student Examples Coded |
|---|---|---|
| Special Educator | Teach | Teach (8) |
| | | Main teacher (1) |
| | | Not *regular* teacher (1) |
| | | Regular class (2) |
| | | Gives attention (1) |
| | Re-teach | Breaks it down (1) |
| | | Makes sure (2) |
| | | Take people out (1) |
| | | Enforce rules (1) |
| | Discipline | Keeps students out of trouble (1) |
| | | Helps/helper (8) |
| | Support | Helps *other* students (2) |
| | | Help us get better at (1) |
| | | Asks questions (1) |
| | | Makes it easier (1) |

Responses to other question such as whether or not students liked having two teachers or why they thought there were two teachers held no significant distinction between the two classrooms. Students

generally appreciated having two teachers in the classroom because it decreased wait time for assistance and students that needed help could get help. Students indicated that the reason for having two teachers was to maintain order and discipline in the classroom.

**Discussion**

Because the teachers received no professional development in various approaches to co-teaching, and administration and expectation from administration regarding implementation was unclear, co-teaching practice in classrooms was diverse. As a result, students in the two classrooms perceived their teachers in different ways. The disparity was evident when students discussed the roles of the teachers. The significant difference between the two classrooms concerned co-teaching strategies used by the co-teaching team. The use of co-teaching strategies by both teachers affected how the students perceived each teacher. Researchers engaged in exploration of co-teaching consistently mention parity as a significant issue in co-teaching (Dieker & Little, 2005; Cook & Friend, 1995; Boudah, Schumacher, & Deshler, 1997; Walther-Thomas, et al., 1999). Parity is a prerequisite for effective co-teaching and learning. The strategies that each teaching pair employed and their implementation of those strategies had a direct impact on student perceptions of teacher roles and may have led to negative student perceptions of themselves as learners.

The seventh grade students consistently used words or phrases in their descriptions of their general education teacher that indicated that she was the main teacher, in charge, and controlled learning, assignments, and grading. This is not surprising given that the only strategy used for co-teaching by the pair was the one teaches and one assists model and that teachers did not alternate roles for teach and assist. Rather, the special educator was always assigned the assist role. Furthermore, it was in these seventh grade interviews that the student views of their teachers could be divided into categories of either legitimate or illegitimate based on which teacher engaged in the activity.

Students referred to the general education teacher as the real or head teacher and referred to her work space as the real class. Students labeled the special education teacher as a helper and referred to her work and students as other. One seventh grade student, Malik, stated that the special educator's job was to work with specific students that *don't learn as fast*. This kind of perception among students regarding a classroom teacher could have had a significant and negative impact on learning for all students. Students may be hesitant to ask for assistance when needed or refuse accommodations and differentiation that may make students successful in order to not be one of the others.

Students in the eighth grade co-taught class differentiated between the two teachers much less than their seventh grade counterparts as evidenced by their choices of words and phrases to describe their roles. Students insisted that their jobs were the same and that both teachers taught all students. It is interesting to note that students in the eighth grade co-taught class use the words teach/teacher more often to describe their special education teacher than their general education teacher and used the words help/helper/helping nearly equally for both teachers. While at least one student described the general education teacher as the main teacher and the special educator as not the regular teacher, that may be attributed to the fact that the particular student answering the question received special education services and the same special educator co-taught in her science class in the one teach/one assist role. That is, she may have differentiated the teachers based on her other experiences with inclusive education in a situation with less parity.

*Limitations*

Certain limitations existed for this study that limits the ability to make generalizations about the results. First, the student sample was small with only seven students representing two grades participating in the interviews. Two of the students that participated had identified disabilities and may have struggled with understanding the questions being asked and/or expressing themselves adequately. Questions and student responses were rephrased for confirmation with those two students. The student population was not racially diverse. All students that participated in the study were African-American, and while a disproportionate number of African American students receive special education services, the student sample did not represent (racially) the proportions of the district. It should also be noted that observations were not conducted to verify the co-teaching strategies implemented. Rather, the teachers independently and anecdotally self-reported their teaching patterns. This information, along with student voice triangulation indicated agreement in what the teachers and students perceived to be their implementation of teaching strategies and techniques.

*Implications for practice*

Co-teaching approaches to instructional delivery may support the moral imperative to address the learning needs of all students in increasingly diverse classrooms. Previous research about student perceptions concerning strategies used in classrooms suggests that consumer perceptions cannot be ignored. The findings from this study illustrate the need for inclusion to apply to all members of the classroom—students and teachers. In order for students to be and feel fully included in the classroom, general and special teachers must demonstrate inclusion as equal and contributing members of the classroom community as well. When teachers' roles are reduced to that of an assistant or aide in the classroom, the students show an awareness of that power differential and status. Students who view their special educator in the classroom as *other* also view fellow students as *other;* and this was particularly clear in the seventh grader interviews.

**Conclusion**

Frequent role changes by the teachers and use of multiple strategies to fit the needs of the lesson and classroom are behaviors that the teachers can control and have an impact on the student perceptions of the teachers and themselves as learners. The students in the eighth grade classroom showed little difference in their perceptions of the two teachers in their classroom and recognized, received, and appreciated help from either teacher. Teacher behavior affects more than just what students learn about their content area. Findings from this study indicate that the power of teacher behavior may lie in what teachers may view as unintentional teaching. Teacher behavior toward one another can create a visible *us versus them* mentality among students or it can create a community of inclusive learners and teachers, as evidenced in the eighth grade class.

More work, however, needs to be done in this area. Larger samples with teachers using multiple strategies for co-teaching would show if these findings are unique. Additional research should also consider student work samples and performance in connection with teacher behaviors and student perceptions. Additional research in the area of co-teaching will build the body of literature and regarding this practice and will add to the strength of these findings. Also, while perception is important, is not enough. Further research investigating both perception and performance is necessary to draw further conclusions about the effectiveness of co-teaching as a strategy for teaching all learners. The information yielded from this further research will contribute to a growing foundation for co-teaching as an effective and evidence based practice in inclusive classrooms. Assessing the impact of the co-teaching model on student learning has been under researched (Morrocco and Aguilar, 2002), and given the prolific nature of co-teaching as an intervention for inclusion the student factor cannot continue to be overlooked.

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**Interview Protocol**

1. What are the roles of your teachers?
2. Do you like having two teachers?
3. Why do you think you have two teachers?
4. How would you feel if one of your teachers was a special education teacher?

Responses to these questions did not appear to have any impact on the students' understanding of roles or perceptions of teachers. Six of the seven participating students indicated that they liked having two teachers because it allowed them to understand work better and get help more often with less wait time. All students indicated that they thought they had two teachers to maintain classroom control and help students understand material better. Two students indicated that they found having two teachers mildly frustrating because they had to work harder to not get caught misbehaving or avoiding work; but both of those students also said that they appreciated having an extra teacher to help with questions and work. Only one student of the seven clearly understood and was able to articulate what a special education teacher was. The other students asked for an explanation of what a special education teacher is and does, so no real significance can be drawn from those responses.