

Teachers Perceptions on Collaboration Between General and Special Education Teachers

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Abstract

The problem addressed in this research is that elementary general and special education teachers are ill-prepared for collaboration and have limited knowledge of the application of content within the other's professional field. The purpose of this qualitative descriptive case study is to explore the perceptions of elementary general and special education teachers about the nature of their collaboration, their preparedness for collaboration, and the collaboration strategies that may be beneficial in a school setting. In this study, the social interdependence theory applied cooperation to the specific problem. The study took place at a rural Kentucky elementary school. The population for this study includes special and general education elementary school teachers that services student grades kindergarten through fifth grade. The sample included 21 general education teachers and seven special education teachers. There were general education teachers represented for each grade (K–5) and special education teachers that represented both inclusion and resource as well as primary and intermediate grade levels which allowed for varying perspectives. The themes that emerged indicate communication is needed as well as consistency with collaboration so both general and special education teachers understand expectations and have a shared focus with a common goal. All recommendations involve developing protocols and setting expectations which will allow the teachers to have clear expectations. When discussing recommendations for practice, it is important to consider that it is most beneficial when recommendations are promoted by administration in effect having top-down management support who have the ability to change the culture and environment while providing resources.

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1 Thessalonians 5:16–18 states, “Rejoice always, pray continuously, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.” This journey has made me thankful for the opportunity to enhance my education and the ability to do so is cause for rejoice. With that being said, in times of hardship and joy throughout this journey, praying continuously to God is what kept me going forward.

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Table of Contents

Section 1: Foundation.....	1
Statement of the Problem	6
Purpose of the Study.....	7
Research Questions	8
Theoretical Framework	9
Definitions of Key Terms.....	11
Review of the Literature.....	15
Ethical Assurances.....	37
Summary.....	38
Section 2: Methodology and Design	40
Design and Method.....	40
Population and Sample	45
Instrumentation.....	47
Data Collection and Analysis	53
Assumptions	57
Limitations.....	57
Delimitations	58
Summary.....	58
Section 3: Findings, Implications, and Recommendations	59
Findings	62
Evaluation of the Outcomes	84
Implications and Recommendations for Practice.....	91
Recommendations for Future Research.....	94
Conclusions	97
References	100
Appendices	114
Appendix A Site Permission	116
Appendix B Recruitment Email	117
Appendix C Inclusion Questionnaire Protocol.....	118
Appendix D Inclusion Questionnaire	119
Appendix E Special Education Teacher Open-Ended Questionnaire Protocol.....	120
Appendix F Open-Ended Questionnaire for Special Education Teachers	121

Appendix G General Education Teacher Open-Ended Questionnaire Protocol.....	122
Appendix H Open-Ended Questionnaire for General Education Teachers.....	123
Appendix I Open-Ended Special Education and General Education Teacher Questionnaire Item Alignment to Research Questions	124
Appendix J Special Education Teacher Focus Group Protocol.....	127
Appendix K General Education Teacher Focus Group Protocol	128
Appendix L Focus Group Item Alignment to Research Questions	129
Appendix M Informed Consent.....	132
Appendix N IRB Approval.....	133
Appendix O Open-Ended Questionnaire Email for Special Education Teachers	134
Appendix P Open-Ended Questionnaire Email for General Education Teachers	135
Appendix Q Benefits of Collaboration Supporting Resource Infographic	136
Appendix R Modes of Communication Supporting Resource Infographic	137
Appendix S Collaboration Strategies Supporting Resource Infographic	138
Appendix T References for Supporting Resource Infographics.....	139
Appendix U Focus Group Sign-Up Email for Special Education Teachers.....	140
Appendix V Focus Group Sign-up Email for General Education Teachers.....	141
Appendix W Data Coding for General and Special Education Teacher’s Questionnaires and Focus Groups.....	142
Appendix X Dissertation Data Table for Special Education Teachers	146
Appendix Y Dissertation Data Table for General Education Teachers.....	154
Appendix Z Research Questions Alignment to Data Matrix.....	165

List of Tables

Table 1 School Population Overview	46
Table 2 Participant Demographic Table	66
Table 3 Research Question 1 Themes	69
Table 4 Research Question 2 Themes	75
Table 5 Research Question 3 Themes	78
Table 6 Research Question 4 Themes	82

List of Figures

Figure 1 Research Question 1 Alignment to Data Chart.....	74
Figure 2 Research Question 2 Alignment to Data Chart.....	77
Figure 3 Research Question 3 Alignment to Data Chart.....	81
Figure 4 Research Question 4 Alignment to Data Chart.....	84

Section 1: Foundation

Collaboration is an evidence-based practice to implement the multidisciplinary team approach that involves mutual problem solving and professional exchange (Pettersson & Ström, 2019; Stubbs et al., 2017). Collaboration presents benefits for teachers and students, such as increased communication, motivation, retention, and continuous growth, which should always be a goal, as well as success that can promote a positive school climate (Berry, 2021; Meredith et al., 2022; Nyström et al., 2018). A positive climate is built off values and allows for a teaching and learning environment that encompasses confidence, hopefulness, and optimism and that increases the overall effectiveness of the teaching and student learning (Woolley et al., 2010; Zhang et al., 2023). Such a climate has a major impact on a teacher's overall perception and will affect the student's learning positively (Zhang et al., 2023). Creating a positive climate involves creating an environment that exhibits positive attitudes and feelings of all individuals within a school, implementing effective teaching strategies based on evidence-based practices which may include collaboration (Berry, 2021; Moore et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2023). The objective of this research was to explore the perceptions of elementary general and special education teachers regarding the nature of collaboration, their preparedness for collaboration, and beneficial collaboration strategies to assist with increasing the rate at which collaboration is implemented. Collaboration between general and special education teachers can allow for communication and centralization of the values that serve as the foundation of teaching and allows one to support another promoting a positive school environment (Zhang et al., 2023).

General and special education teachers differ because a general education teacher has received a degree and certification to address the "uniform orientation and core educational contents" to prepare for implementation of "educational plans suitable to the educational

subjects” while a special education teacher has received certification and a degree in special education which focuses on the needs and education of students with exceptionalities (Hang & Hiep, 2023, p. 34; Special Education Guide, 2024; Wright, 2015). In this case, rate refers to the percentage of teachers implementing collaboration methods, not the quantity of collaboration between general and special education teachers (Alghazo & Alkhazaleh, 2021). This study discusses the fact that although collaboration is seen as beneficial, it is not occurring with a high percentage between general and special education teachers (Alghazo & Alkhazaleh, 2021; Berry, 2021; Cornell & Saymen, 2020).

Collaboration among teachers, specifically general and special education teachers, is seen as incompatible at times, according to a study performed in Ireland (Fitzgerald & Radford, 2021). Collaboration is reported to not be implemented at a high rate, rate meaning percentage of teachers implementing collaboration (Alghazo & Alkhazaleh, 2021). Alghazo and Alkhazaleh (2021) indicated that collaboration between teachers within a school is occurring some of the time, more than little but not much. Based on a scale of one to five, where one is no collaboration and five is a lot of collaboration, it was rated as three out of five (Alghazo & Alkhazaleh, 2021). According to Alghazo and Alkhazaleh (2021), the study took place within United Arab Emirates at the Abu Dhabi school district. Moreso, it was reported by Cornell and Saymen (2020) that research in Poland concluded that 37% of students with a disability of emotional behavior disorder primarily only received education within a self-contained classroom and the other 63% may have only spent 40% of their day within general education. This research showed that post-school outcomes are poor for these students due to decreased generalization (Cornell & Saymen, 2020). Gajdzica and Belza-Gajdzica (2021) also concluded from research that took place in Poland that only 1.87% of mainstream and special education teachers within urban areas

collaborate, whereas 2.01% in rural areas collaborate. Additionally, a study in Indonesia reported that general education teachers, special assistant teachers, and special education teachers demonstrated a low ability to assess and teach a class with complexities involving special needs due to lack of coordination (Kartini & Aprilia, 2022). There has been reported limited time for collaboration as well, which was found within a study in Malaysia (Leatherman & Wagner, 2022). A study in Norway reported that there was limited coordination and cooperation between general and special education teachers, resulting in the students' needs that were written on their Individualized Education Program (IEP) were not met (Nilsen, 2020). These teachers revealed they are challenged by the lack of additional support and time (Nilsen, 2020). Also, rural schools in Sweden have reported a lack of professional development opportunities and a need for supportive and professional collaboration with leadership that supports collaborative methods, as well as the resources needed to accomplish this (Pettersson & Ström, 2019).

There has been a study regarding inclusion and collaboration between general and special education teachers within the United States that discusses the necessity to be compliant with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA); yet many general education teachers find the concept overwhelming (Monahan et al., 2023). The limited knowledge on how to implement the accommodations and modifications has also lessened its use (Monahan et al., 2023). However, this study primarily addressed physical education teachers, which are considered general education teachers (Monahan et al., 2023). There are minimal studies regarding collaboration within rural areas but there is a study specific to rural elementary schools within the United States that took place within the state of Vermont (Haines et al., 2022). This study revealed that the inclusion of students who spent 80% of their day, or more, within the general education setting had more than doubled between 1989 to 2018; however, it is important

to note that during inclusion, the special education assistant is the primary teacher assisting in the classes implementing inclusion, not the special education teacher (Haines et al., 2022). This is important to note because this study revealed that those students who were spending the most time with the paraprofessionals in a collaborative manner instead of with the special education teacher were performing the lowest (Haines et al., 2022). Paraprofessionals are beneficial; however, they are not the most qualified to work with students who need individualized education via evidence-based practices that address these students' specific needs because the special education teacher has specialized certification in this area regarding how to address their needs (Haines et al., 2022; Hang & Hiep, 2023).

Regarding the lack of collaboration between general and special education teachers, there is a study that took place within the United States between a university in California and a university in Georgia (Alghazo & Alkhazaleh, 2021; Cornell & Saymen, 2020; Gajdzica & Belza-Gajdzica, 2021; Pettersson & Ström, 2019; Ricci et al., 2022). This study revealed that general and special education teachers tend to focus on their own area of expertise starting at the college level of education (Ricci et al., 2022). Ricci et al. (2022) revealed that for inclusion to be successful, both forms of educators need to be flexible, have increased communication, and have shared responsibility (Ricci et al., 2022). To assist with this, universities such as California State University have some of their students participate in an urban residency promoting collaboration throughout general and special education courses (Ricci et al., 2019). Other universities are encouraging prospective general education teachers to take special education courses and vice versa, as well as to participate in reality simulation to promote collaboration and understanding of the other's profession (Driver et al., 2018; Sheppard & Wieman, 2020).

Although some universities are beginning to encourage education involving the collaboration of general and special education teachers and collaboration has been promoted for decades, there is still a lack of current collaboration within the schools regardless of the benefits (Alabdallat et al., 2021; Alghazo & Alkhazaleh, 2021; Berry, 2021; Chatzigeorgiadou & Barouta, 2021; Cornell & Saymen, 2020; Pugach & Johnson, 1989; Ricci et al., 2019; Sheppard & Wieman, 2020). These benefits include teacher retention and satisfaction as well as increasing student's pragmatic skills, self-esteem, academic success, and motivation to succeed (Berry, 2021). Neither general education nor special education teachers are prepared for collaboration and have limited knowledge of the application of content concerning the other field (Fogo & Requa, 2020). Collaboration between the two disciplines can be viewed as incompatible at times and alter the overall success of collaboration (Fitzgerald & Radford, 2022). Research has stated that positive collaboration can increase overall teacher satisfaction and retention as well as student's success, achievement, self-esteem, and social skills (Berry, 2021). General and special education teachers may disagree on lessons, plans, implementation of content, evaluations, and overall classroom and behavior management, but consistency is the best practice for students to be successful (Alabdallat et al., 2021). This requires collaboration between the two disciplines (Alabdallat et al., 2021). The challenge of time needed for successful collaboration is inevitable as well (Leatherman & Wegner, 2022; Nilsen, 2020; Tichenor & Tichenor, 2019). There needs to be a means of support in place to encourage and promote collaboration for the benefit of the students and teachers (Berry, 2021; Chatzigeorgiadou & Barouta, 2021; Grenier et al., 2020). This could be done by increasing the teacher's knowledge and level of comfort in implementation of successful collaboration or by providing another support (Alghazo & Alkhazaleh, 2021; Fitzgerald & Radford, 2022; Monahan, et al. 2023).

Statement of the Problem

The problem addressed in this research was that elementary general and special education teachers are ill-prepared for collaboration and have limited knowledge of the application of content within the other's professional field (Fogo & Requa, 2020; Kartini & Aprilia, 2022). Consequently, general and special education teachers are not effectively collaborating at a high rate, although it has been proven that it is beneficial for both teachers and the learners (Alghazo & Alkhazaleh, 2021; Berry, 2021). Collaboration allows for centralization of values and open communication that supports a positive school climate (Zhang et al., 2023). Consistency is best practice for students to be successful in both academics and behavior in which collaboration allows (Alabdallat et al., 2021; Berry, 2021; Zarate et al., 2023). If successful collaboration continues to not be implemented at a high rate, the general and special education teachers' satisfaction, retention, and overall success may be reduced (Berry, 2021; Fitzgerald & Radford, 2022). Moreover, student academic and behavior success, self-esteem, and social skills will not be as promoted as they would if collaboration was implemented (Berry, 2021; Fitzgerald & Radford, 2022). Collaboration has several benefits, but a few is that collaboration is linked to increased student overall success, motivation, and pragmatic skills as well as teacher retention (Berry, 2021). Collaboration can occur within the classroom throughout the school day typically through the following modes: whole group, co-teaching, complementary teaching, small group/stations, parallel teaching, and supportive teaching (Zurawski, 2023). Collaboration in regard to planning can also be completed during a teacher's planning period, Professional Learning Community (PLC) groups, and/or multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) meetings throughout the instructional schedule. The level of implementation of collaboration has the potential to increase with the knowledge of what teachers need to successfully collaborate based

upon teacher input and understanding of what collaboration is perceived to be by the teachers. There is limited research regarding strategies for successful collaboration specifically between general and special education teachers (Collins & Wolter, 2019; Kammer et al., 2021; Nichols et al., 2017). The study focused on the perceptions of elementary general and special education teachers in rural Kentucky public schools regarding collaboration between general and special education teachers. There was a need for research regarding what teachers' perceptions are concerning what they need to be successful collaborators and which strategies would be beneficial in implementing collaboration.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive case study was to explore the perceptions of elementary general and special education teachers about the nature of their collaboration, their preparedness for collaboration, and the collaboration strategies that may be beneficial in a school setting. The methodology and design allowed for real-world situations to be studied in their natural environment that was implemented through open-ended questions and focus groups (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019; Salkind, 2010). Exploring the perspectives and experiences from elementary general education and special education teachers can be useful for the development of a possible plan that could lead to increased success of implementation of collaboration in schools. Addressing general and special education teachers' perceptions regarding implementation of collaboration strategies is important because it can lead to increased collaboration which is beneficial for both the teachers and the students in a school setting (Berry, 2021). The sample goal was to include at least 10–15 general education teachers with at least one from each grade level within the elementary school (i.e., kindergarten through fifth grade) and at least four to five special education teachers, which serve as both inclusion and resource teachers

for their students, with at least one representing primary and intermediate grades. For this proposed research, purposeful sampling was utilized to allow for specific representation of different roles within the school including both general and special education teachers (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The inclusion criteria to participate in the study was that the individual was a licensed and practicing special or general education teacher, which the speech language pathologist in this school is dual licensed, within this rural Kentucky elementary school. The participants were recruited via email to participate within the study with a brief explanation of the study. The individuals were asked to complete a questionnaire and participate in a focus group. The questionnaire was given via Google Forms, which allowed for color-coding anticipated answers via Google Sheets. The focus group interviews were transcribed, allowing for color-coding of answers and themes using Google Sheets, which allowed for quick analysis for determining emergent themes (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The researcher is the primary instrument during the analysis of the data implementing constant comparison analysis (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019).

Research Questions

These research questions are qualitative because they can review teachers' perceptions regarding collaboration and investigate what the teachers need in order to be successful collaborators while increasing collaboration within the school.

RQ1

What are the perceptions of rural Kentucky elementary general education and special education teachers regarding their collaboration protocol?

RQ2

What are the perceptions of general education and special education teachers working in rural Kentucky elementary schools regarding preparedness or professional development to support increased rates of collaboration?

RQ3

Which collaboration strategies do general and special education teachers in a rural Kentucky school believe would be successful in leading to increased collaboration between the two disciplines?

RQ4

What do general and special education teachers believe districts/schools can do to support high rates of collaboration besides the inevitable aspect of needed time?

Theoretical Framework

The origin of the social interdependence theory was started by Kurt Koffka who stated that interdependence among a group could vary; this research was continued by Kurt Lewin who determined that the interdependence among a group is determined by common goals and changes among the group would result in a change in the overall group (Johnson & Johnson, 2001). However, Morton Deutsch continued this research and officially formulated the social interdependence theory in 1949 (Deutsch, 1949; Johnson & Johnson, 2001). The social interdependence theory is the foundation of cooperative learning and indicates that social interdependence exists when common goals are shared and each member of a group's actions affect others, which can be positive meaning the actions promote the success of a combined goal when cooperative interdependence is utilized (Deutsch, 1962; Johnson & Johnson, 2001; Johnson & Johnson, 2009). The social interdependence theory is based on competition and

cooperation being the two forms of social interdependence; cooperation refers to individuals working together to achieve a common goal whereas competition refers to individuals working to achieve a goal few, or only one, can achieve (Johnson & Johnson, 2001). The social interdependence theory is created on the foundation that cooperation allows for greater psychological health, achievement, and positive relationships in the comparison to competitive and individualistic efforts (Johnson & Johnson, 2008). It is important to discuss that Johnson and Johnson (2008) mentioned five components that are needed for successful collaboration, including positive interdependence, individual accountability, promotive interaction, appropriate use of social skills, and group processing.

In this study, the social interdependence theory applied cooperation to the specific problem that there is a low rate of collaboration between general education and special education teachers due to being ill-prepared then address teachers' perceptions on collaboration, which involves cooperation, leading to positive solutions to collaborating with one another by seeing what they need to be successful in achieving the common goal (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019; Johnson & Johnson, 2009; Johnson & Johnson, 2008; Salkind, 2010). In this case, the collaboration between general and special education teachers served as the action and the goal was for the students to be behaviorally and academically successful (Johnson & Johnson, 2009; Zarate et al., 2023). This research aimed at finding possible solutions for ease of implementing successful collaboration by researching teachers' perspectives on collaboration and the varying strategies which may transfer to other samples as solutions as well.

Social interdependence theory framework was implemented in this study to specifically focus on how general and special education teachers in a rural school district in south central Kentucky can successfully collaborate with an emphasis on the importance of collaboration

(Alghazo & Alkhazaleh, 2021; Johnson & Johnson, 2008). Social interdependence theory framework can assist in leading to a solution for low collaboration through the implementation of successful strategies and researching what the teachers need to be successful by focusing on their perceptions (Alghazo & Alkhazaleh, 2021; Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019; McGregor, 2018; & Salkind, 2010).

Definitions of Key Terms

This section provides key terms that correspond specifically to the research topic or that could have multiple operational definitions from the research literature so that readers have a common understanding of how the terms are being used and the literature the research is pulling from. Having a common understanding about operational definitions is important because the function of the definition is to articulate how to identify the value of the research (Dunn, 2021).

Accommodation

Accommodation is a change to the physical or environment that assists a student to work around or overcome a disability (i.e., giving oral answers versus written answers, preferential seating, daily agendas, readers, multiple choice responses, use of spell-checker, etc.; Hamilton & Kessler, n.d.).

Administration/Campus Leadership

When discussing the administration in this context, there can be two forms of administration: district and school (American Institutes for Research, 2023). District administrators include the superintendent and other central staff “under the direction of a school board” whereas school administrators primarily consist of principals and assistant principals (American Institutes for Research, 2023, para 1).

Admission, Review, and Dismissal (ARD)/Admission and Release Committee (ARC)

The two terms can be used interchangeably and refer to the team of individuals that meet to determine if a student is eligible for special education services and develop the Individual Education Program (IEP) if the student is determined to be eligible (Lewisville ISD, n.d.; Kentucky Administrative Regulations for Exceptional Children, 2008). This team is typically made of a parent, the child if they are 13 years old or in eighth grade, special education teacher, general education teacher, principal or another member trained to be the chairperson, a diagnostician/psychologist, and any related service staff member (Occupational Therapist, Speech Therapist, Physical Therapist, etc.; Lewisville ISD, n.d.; Kentucky Administrative Regulations for Exceptional Children, 2008).

Collaboration/Co-Facilitation

Collaboration or co-facilitation involves two or more teachers working together towards a common goal of improving educational outcomes and processes while sharing information and knowledge, problem-solving, and planning (Tichenor & Tichenor, 2019). Collaboration and co-facilitation can be used interchangeably due to co-facilitation referring to more than one person leading and/or planning (McGill University, 2024).

Complementary Teaching

Complementary teaching occurs when the general education teacher teaches the curriculum content while the special education teacher assists specific students (Zurawski, 2023).

Co-Teaching

Co-teaching is when two teachers, which could be both a general and special education teacher, are teaching together by enhancing the other's strengths, allowing the special education teacher to focus on providing specially designed instruction and accommodations/modifications

to assist student learning, while the general education teacher focuses on the specific academic content; but both teachers are teaching content (Zurawski, 2023).

General Education Teacher

A general education teacher is a person who receives a degree that addressed the “uniform orientation and core educational contents,” preparing them to implement “educational plans suitable to the educational subjects” (Hang & Hiep, 2023, p. 34).

Individual Education Program/Plan (IEP)

An IEP is the plan or program that describes specially designed instruction and related services the student with the identified disability needs as well as goals and objectives, accommodations, and modifications that will be implemented for a student to be successful (Kentucky Department of Education Exceptional Children Services, 2004).

Modifications

Modifications are tangible changes to what are being taught and/or expected from the student and typically connected to instruction and assessment (i.e., reduction of homework/class work, grading based on work completion, tests written at a lower level of understanding, providing a study guide, picture supports, use of calculator, etc.; Hamilton & Kessler, n.d.).

Parallel Teaching

Parallel teaching is when the students are divided and the general education and special education teacher are teaching the same content simultaneously, but the special education teacher may be providing more supports (Zurawski, 2023).

Positive Climate

A positive climate is an environment that exhibits positive attitudes and feelings of all individuals within a school (Zhang et al., 2023). A positive climate is built off values and allow

for a teaching and learning environment that encompasses confidence, hopefulness, optimism, which increases the overall effectiveness of the teaching and student learning, and research has shown that such a climate has a major impact on a teacher's overall perception, which can affect the student's learning positively (Woolley et al., 2010; Zhang et al., 2023).

Positive School Culture

Positive school culture refers to the classroom social-emotional tone, which is defined by the values and beliefs of a school community (Children's Literacy Initiative, 2016; The Thomas B. Fordham Institute, 2021). Positive school cultures are demonstrated by a shared vision, habits, narratives, and effectiveness, which are influenced ultimately by the school climate (The Thomas B. Fordham Institute, 2021).

Small Group/Stations

Small groups or stations are when the curriculum is divided into parts, where each station teaches a different aspect and there is a teacher/assistant at each station (Zurawski, 2023).

Special Education Teacher

A special education teacher has certification in special education, which focuses on the education of students with exceptionalities (Wright, 2015).

Student-Centered Teaching

Student-centered teaching is a collaborative approach where the focus is shared by the teacher and the student (Lathan, n.d.). This approach allows the students to have more choice over topics, independence, ability to practice what they are learning through activities and demonstration, and the ability to assist in evaluation along with the teacher since there is less monitoring on the teacher's part although they continue to be the authoritative figure in the classroom (Lathan, n.d.).

Supportive Teaching

Supportive teaching occurs when there is a combination of indirect instruction provided within the classroom and pull-out sessions in a resource room to support the academic content (Zurawski, 2023).

Teacher of Record

The teacher of record is a certified teacher who is responsible for a student's learning regarding a course and/or subject (Meisberger, 2023).

Whole Group Teaching

Whole group teaching occurs when only one teacher is teaching the entire group and the teacher could be either the general education or special education teacher (Zurawski, 2023).

Review of the Literature

The literature review will discuss the role of the general education and special education teachers as well as the push for inclusion. The review will discuss collaboration within the schools including benefits, challenges, levels, and strategies. Moreover, existing trainings in Kentucky and the need for trainings to promote collaboration between teachers will also be discussed.

Background of Collaboration

Schools that implement inclusiveness with all students develop a culture where teachers are learning from one another as well as from their students which promotes an inclusive environment (UNICEF, 2014). Successful collaboration is a critical and essential component for inclusivity within the general education setting to be successful for all students with a disability (Monahan et al., 2023; Vostal et al., 2022; Zarate et al., 2023). Collaboration between general and special education teachers can involve support, shared responsibilities, as well as sharing of

norms which increases the organizational identification due to everyone being in sync with the norms, which is also reported to increase job commitment and satisfaction (Meredith et al., 2022). Collaboration can occur within the classroom throughout the school day with planning of collaboration being completed during a teacher's planning period, Professional Learning Community (PLC) groups, and/or multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) meetings throughout the instructional schedule as to not add more time a teacher is needed to fulfill their job outside of the instructional schedule due to time being the greatest challenge (Leatherman & Wegner, 2022; Nilsen, 2020; Tichenor & Tichenor, 2019). Moreover, collaboration involves professional exchange and mutual problem solving, in this case between general and special education teachers (Pettersson & Ström, 2019). Collaboration is necessary for successful inclusion of all students which is federally mandated and is being promoted within states and carried out through student's Individualized Education Programs (Monahan et al., 2023).

Federal Involvement with Collaboration in the Schools. Inclusiveness has been necessary by federal mandate since 1975 with the intent of students with disabilities receiving interactions with nondisabled children, ending segregation and exclusion through the Education for All Handicapped Children Act which enforced a student receive appropriate education in their least restrictive environment (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 2002). In 1997, Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA), previously known as Education for All Handicapped Children Act, was reauthorized and placed emphasis on inclusion of all students in a general school and classroom (Monahan et al., 2023; U. S. Commission on Civil Rights; 2002). IDEA ensures children ages 3–21 have equal opportunity to access services and education within the United States (Monahan et al., 2023). Part of this includes that children should be learning alongside their peers with the appropriate support from general and special education teachers in

their least restrictive environment and mainstreaming all students has been shown as the most beneficial form of education through collaboration (Fitzgerald & Radford, 2022; Monahan et al., 2023; Pettersson & Ström, 2019). Therefore, collaboration between general and special education teachers is encouraged to assist in providing an inclusive education for their students in their least restrictive environment which is a mandated aspect of IDEA and should be the aim for students with disabilities (Grosche & Opitz, 2023; Zarate et al., 2023).

Individualized Education Program's Role in Collaboration. Advocacy for collaboration, implementation of accommodations and modifications defined in a student's Individualized Education Program (IEP), and inclusion to help promote the student's overall success falls upon the special education teacher (Monahan et al., 2023). However, there are many that collaborate to produce the IEP including the special education teacher, general education teacher, service providers, and parents which lays out the student's specific needs and discusses how much a student will be in classes with nondisabled students (U. S. Commission on Civil Rights; 2002). This advocacy for implementation of collaboration as well as individualizing teaching within the classroom by both the special education teacher and the general education teacher is necessary for the student to be successful within an inclusive environment (Fitzgerald & Radford, 2022). The best way for an inclusive environment, which involves collaboration, to be successful is for general education teachers, special education teachers, and administration to present with more communication, shared responsibility, and flexibility (Ricci et al., 2022). Due to this, the nature of teaching, functions, and roles has taken a shift among the years to promote more of an inclusive environment for students which involves collaboration between the professions; however, collaboration is still considered difficult and not used at a high rate

(Gajdzica & Belza-Gajdzica, 2021; Sheppard & Wieman, 2020; Squillaci & Hoffman, 2021; Tichenor & Tichenor, 2019).

Trainings in Kentucky. As with all organizations, schools are continuously changing to promote growth while offering grants and trainings (Green River Regional Educational Cooperative; n.d.; Kentucky Department of Education, 2024; Nyström et al., 2018). Currently Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) is offering a Kentucky Innovative Learning Network (KYILN) Travel Grant for up to \$2500 to support travel to schools and/or conferences that support learner-centered and innovative practices (Kentucky Department of Education, 2024). This could be an opportunity, if granted, to visit schools/conferences that are implementing collaboration within the school with reported success.

More local to the area in which this research took place, there is a grant specific to Exceptional Education which provides assistive technology specific to co-teaching and inclusion as well as incorporation of academics for support provided by the Green River Regional Educational Cooperative (GRECC) (Green River Regional Educational Cooperative, n.d.). Coaching, mentoring, and consultation services are offered as well as the network meets three times per year to discuss, collaborate, and problem solve specific to assistive technology (AT) and augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) devices leading to a capacity model for students (Green River Regional Educational Cooperative, n.d.). The concept of moving towards a capacity model for students with the need for AT or AAC requires collaboration among individual services and educating a child.

Regarding trainings local to where the research was completed, there is also a network training specific for co-teaching and inclusion (Green River Regional Educational Cooperative, n.d.). This network is based on the concept that successful co-teaching (collaboration) is

beneficial for both students and teachers (Green River Regional Educational Cooperative, n.d). The network states that students are benefited social-emotionally, academically, and linguistically while being exposed to core-content with nondisabled peers (Green River Regional Educational Cooperative, n.d). This specific network supports collaboration through trainings and coaching (Green River Regional Educational Cooperative, n.d).

Research on the Necessity of Collaboration with Specific Student Needs. It is federally mandated for a student to receive their education in their least restrictive environment which promotes inclusion, but for this to be successful effective collaboration is essential (Vostal et al., 2022). Students receiving education within a general education setting must receive high-quality and appropriate education for their specific needs; it is not enough for students to just be mainstreamed but the education must be appropriate for them (Kuntz & Carter, 2021). This is specifically important for students with a diagnosis of Autism to assist with opportunities to utilize social communication skills which may be difficult for students with a diagnosis of Autism (Jaffal, 2022). Furthermore, it is important for students with an emotional and behavior disorder to receive services within the general education classroom with collaboration to increase post-school outcomes as approximately 37% are receiving services in a self-contained classroom and research indicates post-school outcomes are poor for these students (Cornell & Saymen, 2020). Moreover, collaboration has been documented to improve performance for all students with disabilities regarding academics and behavior (Mofield, 2020). Collaborating, which may include co-teaching, co-planning, and co-instructing, assists in meeting each student's diverse learning needs within the general education setting (Ricci et al., 2017).

Students Receiving Special Education in Mainstream Classrooms

General and special education teachers serve different purposes within the school system and have received different trainings to perform their role (Hang & Hiep, 2023; Wright, 2015). Mainstreaming students is a goal because the students are to receive equal opportunities for services and education in their least restrictive environment with the general education classroom being the absolute least restrictive (Grosche & Opitz, 2023; Monahan et al., 2023; Zarate et al., 2023). Services may be provided within a resource environment to provide specially designed instruction, but the goal is to provide the least restrictive environment while still allowing the student to receive equal opportunities and make progress (Monahan et al., 2023; Zurawski, 2023). Collaboration has been shown to be successful in promoting inclusion of all students but does require collaboration between general and special education teachers to be successful which requires general and special education teachers to change their image working as a transdisciplinary team to best serve the student (Grosche & Opitz, 2023; Petterson & Ström, 2019; Zarate et al., 2023).

Role of General Education Teachers in Elementary. A general education teacher has received certification to carry out education to all students addressing core educational content to prepare them for future education (Hang & Hiep, 2023; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics). In Kentucky, core educational content includes reading and writing, science, computer science, mathematics, health education and physical education, career studies and financial literacy, social studies, visual and performing arts, world language, library media, and technology (Kentucky Department of Education, 2022). However, it is important to note that the core subject areas are considered English language arts, math, science, and social studies (Great Schools Partnership, 2013). To be an elementary general education teacher, one must usually have at

least a bachelor's degree and must have a state license or certification to teach in a public school (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, n.d.).

Role of Special Education Teachers in Elementary. A special education teacher has specific training to provide specially designed instruction to students with exceptionalities (Wright, 2015). Services can be provided within a resource room or may be provided via collaboration (Zurawski, 2023). However, it is important to note that it is the special education teacher's responsibility for advocating for specially designed instruction as well as providing modifications and accommodations for students with exceptionalities (Monahan et al., 2023). It is essential to understand that inclusion is the goal and is a federal mandate per Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) regarding students receiving their education within their least restrictive environment (Cornell & Saymen, 2020; Monahan et al., 2023; U.S. Commission of Civil Rights, 2002). This encourages students to be within a mainstream classroom which increases the need for the special education teacher within the general education classroom to assist students within an inclusive environment succeed through modifications, accommodations, and specially designed instruction (Cornell & Saymen, 2020; Monahan et al., 2023).

Modes of Collaboration

Collaboration can occur in different models throughout the educational environment. The most common modes of collaboration include whole group, co-teaching, complementary teaching, small group/stations, parallel and supportive teaching (Zurawski, 2023). Whole group refers to the teacher, which could be the special education or general education teacher, teaching the entire group whereas co-teaching refers to teachers teaching together playing off the other's strengths and weaknesses (Zurawski, 2023). Co-teaching allows for the special education teacher

to better support the students and breakdown the information providing specially designed instruction while the general education teacher focuses on the academics (Zurawski, 2023). Complementary teaching refers to the general education teacher being the lead teacher teaching the curriculum content while the special education teacher then assists specific students providing specially designed instruction to enhance the curriculum taught by the general education teacher (Zurawski, 2023). Small group/stations refer to the curriculum being divided into parts where each station teaches a different aspect (Zurawski, 2023). Parallel teaching refers to students being divided, and the general education and special education teacher are teaching the same content simultaneously, but the special education teacher may be providing more supports (Zurawski, 2023). Supportive teaching refers to the concept of a mixture of indirect within the classroom and pull-out sessions in a resource room to support the academic content (Zurawski, 2023). Another form of collaboration involves collaboration between the student and the teacher known as student-centered teaching (Baysal et al., 2023). Student-centered teaching allows the students to have more choices over their learning and environment and the students have more independence, there is less monitoring, and both the teacher and students work to evaluate their learning together (Lathan, n.d.). There are benefits to all at varying times, but it is important to note that all these models represent that both teachers are teaching, one is not acting as a tutor/paraeducator (Zurawski, 2023).

Level of Collaboration

Although there are many benefits of collaboration, studies still show that the level regarding collaboration between general and special education teachers is a medium and collaboration is not implemented regularly (Alghazo & Alkhazaleh, 2021; Tichenor & Tichenor, 2019). One study revealed a low-level regarding cooperation between general and special

education teachers: only 1.87% for rural schools and 2.01% for urban schools (Gajdzica & Belza-Gajdzica, 2021). Teachers on average only spend 2.7 hours per week collaborating with one another through structured collaboration (Tichenor & Tichenor, 2019). Overall, there is a lack of collaboration and coordination between general and special education teachers and limited access to learn more about how to implement collaboration between the two provided professionally (Kartini & Aprilia, 2022; Nilsen, 2020). Moreover, there is a lack of standardization and adequate adaptation within the general education environment which results in the likelihood of a student with special needs not receiving the assistance they are mandated to receive per their IEP, especially students that are quiet and/or withdrawn (Monahan et al., 2023, Nilsen, 2020).

It is important to note that although inclusion is the goal under IDEA, a self-contained and alternative setting allows for more focus on student's academics and behavior (Cornell & Saymen, 2020). This determination of placement can be made by the ARD/ARC if it is determined that a student's education is deemed unsatisfactory even when provided supplementary aids and services in the general education classroom (KY DoSE Support, n.d.). One study addressed these alternative benefits and explained that 37% of students with a disability of emotional and behavior disorder are educated in this type of setting while the other 63% are in the general education setting at least 40% of their school day (Cornell & Saymen, 2020). With this being said, although there are benefits such as focusing on academics and behavior, the outcomes for these students' post-school have been shown as poor (Cornell & Saymen, 2020). Allowing a student to be engaged in an inclusive environment is a way for a student to also practice the pragmatic social skills (behavior) and learn with peers in a more

natural setting and these qualities have been shown to increase in students when they are within an inclusive environment (Berry, 2021).

Challenges of Collaboration

One of the biggest challenges with collaboration is the general and special education teachers tend to still view their services as two separate units rather than a collaborative unit and collaboration between special and general education teachers can be viewed as incompatible making collaboration as a whole very difficult (Alabdallat et al., 2021; Fitzgerald & Radford, 2022; Sheppard & Wieman, 2020). This may be because the two professions are typically separate departments and are not taught within their education program how to collaborate to successfully meet the needs of all their students while also having two separate perspectives (Jaffal, 2022; Sheppard & Wieman, 2020). The two professions tend to focus on their own professional areas of expertise rather than a multidisciplinary approach which is less beneficial because a multidisciplinary approach increases creativity, points of view, areas of expertise, and experience within the team (Ricci et al., 2022; Stubbs et al., 2017). This can lead to disagreements regarding planning and management (Alabdallat et al., 2021). However, bonding this partnership can be more challenging than it seems (Pugach & Johnson, 1989). Overall, the relationship between general and special education teachers needs to be redefined by building a new foundation that is supportive of the collaboration between the two professions and overcoming the challenge of getting the two to participate in collaboration willingly (Pugach & Johnson, 1989).

Another challenge that is noted is that general education teachers can be hesitant and not have as positive of an attitude in comparison to special education teachers regarding inclusion for all students (Alabdallat et al., 2021; Chatzigeorgiadou & Barouta, 2021; Monahan et al. 2023).

This can be due to teachers feeling as though collaboration is overwhelming and teaching students with disabilities is going to make their program more difficult when in fact, this is only true when the students have severe to profound disabilities (Monahan et al., 2023). Kartini and Aprilia (2022) found that general education teachers present with a low ability to prepare and implement assessments as well as plan and manage programs regarding the complexities of teaching a class with diverse needs. General education teachers also report they do not have time within the class to give additional support and are already challenged by the large number of diverse students they have in their classes due to having no extra help (Nilsen, 2020). Even when an assistant is in the classroom to provide extra support, it is important to note that a paraprofessional is not allowed to provide services referred to on the IEP including collaboration services nor specially designed instruction (Kentucky Department of Education, 2024). However, it is noted there is a correlation between higher education among teachers and their positivity toward collaboration and increased implementation (Alghazo & Alkhazaleh, 2021). On the same note as higher education, a teacher's level of knowledge regarding special education affected their co-teaching (Chatzigeorgiadou & Barouta, 2021). Another interesting concept to note is that Chatzigeorgiadou and Barouta's (2021) study revealed that female teachers were more accepting of inclusive collaborative practices and agreed to the importance of collaboration; however, there was a significantly unbalanced proportion of responders regarding female versus male with 79% of all respondents were.

Another challenge that may arise is that although special education teachers may be more willing to participate within collaborative methods of teaching, including co-teaching, there are studies that collaboration can lead to burnout specifically regarding special education teachers (Squillaci & Hoffman, 2021). This may be because general education teachers are typically the

main teacher that makes the decisions within their classroom, not the special education teachers (Chatzigeorgiadou & Barouta, 2021). Moreover, implementing the complexities of interventions within the general education setting, even when given resources with a supportive atmosphere, is stressful for the special education teachers (Moore et al., 2021).

A further challenge is the need for more qualified staff to provide collaborative services to students with disabilities (Haines et al., 2022). Research shows that students who are performing the lowest are those spending the most time with paraprofessionals rather than teachers qualified on specialized needs and individualizing the material (Haines et al., 2022). Having more qualified individuals to carry out evidence-based decision-making strategies through collaboration will increase the student's overall success (Haines et al., 2023).

Overall, administrators are going to need to be the ones to change the culture of collaboration and promote the importance of it because they will lead in creating a positive culture and climate promoting collaboration throughout the district and building (Moore et al., 2021). Although teachers are essential for the effectiveness of collaboration, school leaders are reported to have a better culture and climate with special education teachers and the ability to alter the culture of the school (Moore et al., 2021). Moreover, the administration and school leaders are the ones that can bring about change to supporting a more inclusive environment for all students by promoting collaboration and the resources needed for collaboration (Pettersson & Ström, 2019).

Another challenge was determined by Grosche and Opitz (2023), although there are many benefits reported regarding collaboration, they are all difficult to measure due to their subjectivity. Mofield (2020) states that although many have reported the benefits of collaboration within the classroom, the claim lacks a strong empirical base. Overall, there is a need to

determine if there is any quantitative, objective data to merit the benefits being claimed (Grosche & Opitz, 2023; Mofield, 2020).

One of the biggest challenges of all however is the challenge of time (Leatherman & Wegner, 2022; Nilsen, 2020). Overall, lack of time is the overwhelming reason for the lack of collaboration when teachers are asked (Tichenor & Tichenor, 2019). Teachers feel overwhelmed by the work load they are already carrying and do not feel as though they have enough time to collaborate with one another much less provide the interventions necessary and mandated by a student's IEP to a large number of diverse students within their classroom while still teaching the content (Nilsen, 2020; Tichenor & Tichenor, 2019).

Benefits of Collaboration

Collaboration, as well as co-teaching, have many benefits for both teachers and students and has been shown as a meaningful method to implement in a classroom of diversity and effective when addressing challenges that may arise in these classrooms (Berry, 2021; Chatzigeorgiadou & Barouta, 2021). It is noted in this study that co-facilitation and collaboration may be used interchangeably because co-facilitation and collaboration both refer to more than one person leading, planning, and/or teaching (McGill University, 2024). It has been overwhelmingly reported that students and teachers both view collaboration as beneficial and result in positive outcomes (Leatherman & Wegner, 2022).

Teacher Benefits of Collaboration. As for teachers, Berry's study reveals that job retention and satisfaction are increased when collaborative methods are implemented; in fact, a significant correlation between a collaborative environment and job satisfaction as well as affective commitment have been reported (Berry, 2021; Meredith et al., 2022; Tichenor & Tichenor, 2019). Moreover, teacher performance, content, and overall affective commitment to

the job has been noted to increase when collaborative methods are utilized as well as higher levels of trust within the environment (Chatzigeorgiadou & Barouta, 2021; Harbour et al., 2022; Meredith et al., 2022; Tichenor & Tichenor, 2019). Trust, which is a difficult component to build, is an essential aspect within the environment for collaboration to be successful because it supports communication and a positive school climate (Vostal et al., 2022). Trust within the organization involves benevolence, reliability, honesty, openness, and competence all which collaboration helps build and incorporation of these qualities can lead to trust (Tichenor & Tichenor, 2019; Vostal et al., 2022). The positive climate that collaboration assists in establishing is not only characterized by trust, but also high ethical standards and integrity (Woolley et al., 2010). This positive climate encourages fellow teachers to model the values being modeled before them which can include supportive communication and trust all demonstrated through collaborative methods (Woolley et al., 2010). The positive school climate that can be created through collaboration promotes effective teaching and efficient learning (Tichenor & Tichenor, 2019; Zhang et al., 2023).

Many early educators also state they recognize the personal benefits of professionally engaging in collaboration (Chatzigeorgiadou & Barouta, 2021). Increased communication between the two professions is also noted as a positive gain due to collaboration (Driver et al., 2018; Grenier et al., 2020). Collaboration allows for general and special education teachers to bridge students learning differences which increases the success of inclusion (Grenier et al., 2020). Collaboration has been specifically noted to be beneficial during the planning process of teaching between general and special education teachers (Kuntz & Carter, 2021). Once teachers all agree on a plan and implementation of the plan, success begins with collaboration of these choices and processes (Leatherman & Wegner, 2022). Increased collaboration and

communication allow for the student's needs to be more individually addressed promoting their academic success through specially individualized instruction (Grosche & Opitz, 2023). Overall, collaboration between general and special education teachers encouraged the teachers to have an increased motivation to do better in all aspects (Ricci et al., 2019).

Student Benefits of Collaboration. Moreso, students with disabilities spend more time with similar aged peers through inclusion which is successful through collaboration (Berry, 2021; Monahan et al., 2023). Many students report they feel collaboration and co-teaching are supportive (Grosche & Opitz, 2023). Another aspect of collaboration is collaboration among the teachers and students where the student-centered teaching collaborative approach is utilized which increases motivation (Baysal et al., 2023). Moreover, not only are students' academic performance noted to improve but also their behavioral performance, specifically among students with a disability (Mofield, 2020). By spending more time in an inclusive environment, it is reported that students present with increased excitement, pragmatic social skills, motivation, engagement, and achievement (Berry, 2021; Harbour et al., 2022; Henbest et al., 2019; Kuntz & Carter, 2021). Moreso, collaboration allows for challenges in a diverse classroom to be addressed regarding student's specific needs (Chatzigeorgiadou & Barouta, 2021).

Henbest et al. (2019) discussed increased achievement when general education teachers were required to have collaborative meetings with a speech language pathologist regarding morphological awareness. The teachers completed this program and results shown that students increased their morphological awareness, spelling, and vocabulary significantly (Henbest et al., 2019). Overall, collaboration not only benefited students with special needs but also students without (Ricci et al., 2019). It is essential to note the benefits of successful collaboration which lead to successful inclusion does not only extend to students with disabilities but also

nondisabled students (U. S. Commission on Civil Rights; 2002). All students within this environment have been shown to be more prepared for after graduation and have documented more tolerance and understanding (U. S. Commission on Civil Rights; 2002).

Teacher Preparation for Collaboration

General and special education teacher trainings differ due to having diverse roles within the school (Hang & Hiep, 2023; Wright, 2015). Therefore, there is a need for trainings regarding collaboration to decrease challenges (Alghazo & Alkhazaleh, 2021; Fogo & Requa, 2020). As there is a push for increased inclusion, the need for administration support is greater (Ricci et al., 2022). Administration support is needed because ultimately, the campus and district administration are the ones planning trainings and professional developments throughout the year.

General Education Teacher Training. A person who receives a degree that addressed the “uniform orientation and core educational contents” preparing them to implement “educational plans suitable to the educational subjects” (Hang & Hiep, 2023, p. 34). Many general education teachers report they do not feel prepared nor have the time to assess nor prepare lessons that include the necessary accommodations and modifications that are required for students with exceptionalities (Kartini & Aprilia, 2022; Nilsen, 2020). Moreover, some general education teachers report they do not know how to collaborate and there is a need for training on collaboration to better serve students with exceptionalities (Alghazo & Alkhazaleh, 2021; Fogo & Requa, 2020; Tichenor & Tichenor, 2019). Many universities require students who are seeking a degree in general education take only a few courses regarding special education resulting in general education teachers not being effectively trained to teach students who need modifications, accommodations, and interventions (Jaffal, 2022).

Special Education Teacher Training. A special education teacher is someone who has certification in special education assisting in providing students with exceptionalities education (Wright, 2015). A special education teacher often needs to perform collaboration with general education teachers to truly meet the individual needs of their students with disabilities while promoting inclusion and executing services in a student's least restrictive environment (Monahan et al., 2023; Ricci et al., 2017). One university has had success by having students seeking licensure for special education complete fieldwork in an urban community allowing for co-teaching and collaboration with other educators while still under the university supervision (Ricci et al., 2017). It is reported that some teacher programs are beginning to prepare teachers for collaboration through mixed reality stimulation which has led to improved communication (Driver et al., 2018). However, many special education teachers are not prepared for collaboration experiences because they are not given opportunities to be experienced and knowledgeable in specific content areas (Fogo & Requa, 2020). Overall, special educators have shown a more willingness to collaborate in comparison to general education teachers, but there need to be enough professionals specialized in special education for collaboration to be successful (Chatzigeorgiadou & Barouta, 2021; Fitzgerald & Radford, 2022).

Campus and Central Office Support for Inclusion. Administration includes both the administration of the district and the school (American Institutes for Research, 2023). The district administration primarily consists of the superintendent and central staff whereas the school administration typically consists of the principal and the assistant principal (American Institutes for Research, 2023). Research states that for inclusion to be successful, the administration needs to participate in more shared responsibilities, communication, and flexibility within the environment (Ricci et al., 2022). Moreover, for the climate to change to

supporting collaboration and the promotion of inclusion, the administration needs to be supportive and provide resources to assist in inclusion and collaboration because administration is the primary leader when changing the culture of an environment (Moore et al., 2021; Pettersson & Ström, 2019).

Call for Further Trainings to Decrease Challenges With Collaboration. Many educators are not prepared for collaboration nor been given experience in collaboration to be skillful (Fogo & Requa, 2020). Some report they do not know how to collaborate (Tichenor & Tichenor, 2019). Alghazo and Alkhazaleh's research did reveal that there is a need for increased training on collaboration between general and special education teachers which could be provided within their teaching programs or through professional development, which can be provided through the schools (2021). Rural schools have specifically reported a lack of professional development opportunities (Pettersson & Ström, 2019). For an inclusive environment to be truly supported and promoted, teaching strategies and methods as well as the overall image for both general and special education teachers need to change (Grosche & Opitz, 2023). Some teaching programs have begun implementing such programs through mixed reality simulation as well as teacher residencies who are given opportunities of collaboration models to differentiate instruction (Driver et al., 2018; Ricci et al., 2019). These teaching programs encourage the inclusive environment of learning, in effect encouraging collaboration (Ricci et al., 2019). Some of these teaching programs are also having each discipline take courses of the other discipline to increase their knowledge; an example would be general education teachers taking special education courses which prepares them for collaboration with the other (Sheppard & Wieman, 2020).

However, there is not much research nor studies demonstrating resolution of increased collaboration within the schools nor the opportunity of professional developments regarding collaboration. Administration, both at the district and school level, are essential in improving the academic progress of all students and improve the learning environment as a whole; they are the ones that could set up trainings regarding collaboration between general and special education teachers discussing the benefits and need for implementation and have the ability to provide resources to assist in increased collaboration between general and special education teachers (American Institute for Research, n.d.; Pettersson & Ström, 2019). The director of special education also plays a vital role in this as they can help set up trainings regarding the appropriate information as well as allowing teachers learn from one another (Fitzgerald & Radford, 2022). When teachers are given trainings revealing the importance of collaboration as well as the process of implementation, general education teachers are more apt to learn the strategies, accommodations, and modifications needed while special education teachers are more apt to learn the content being taught which increases the success of the student through collaboration (Fogo & Requa, 2020).

Strategies for Collaboration

Although there is limited data regarding successful collaboration between general and special education teachers within the school system, there are other situations and environments where collaboration has been documented to be successful. There has been a study regarding a librarian successfully collaborating with general education teachers as well as speech language pathologists (Collins & Wolter, 2019; Kammer et al., 2021). An area of collaboration within the schools that has been researched as well is the collaboration of school support staff and school-based mental health providers (Nichols et al., 2017). An important aspect to note in this research

is that collaboration is documented to be less in rural schools in comparison with urban schools (Nichols et al., 2017). It is also important to note that within rural communities there are often cultures and traditions, and it is important for to be aware of these, become a member of the community, and work collaboratively (Nichols et al., 2017). Specific to Kentucky, there has been research regarding multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) as well (Sicard, 2023). This research has created a model where the goal is for a student to receive equitable access and opportunity involving academics, behaviors, and social-emotional aspects (Sicard, 2023). An interesting aspect of this research is that it not only discusses evidence-based instruction and supports as well as data-based decision making but also the importance of collaborative problem-solving teams and collaboration among the school, families, and community (Sicard, 2023). Another study discusses successful collaboration within a medical setting (Malviya et al., 2024). However, all three studies have reported collaboration strategies that have been successful and discuss similar strategies including: top management support, frequent communication, having a shared focus, monitoring and documentation of the collaboration, and planning (Collins & Wolter, 2019; Kammer et al., 2021; Malviya et al., 2024).

Top Management Support. Top management is referring to administration in which there can be two forms of administration: district and school (American Institutes for Research, 2023). The superintendent and other central staff who are directed by the schoolboard are considered district administration whereas principals and assistant principals are considered to be school administration (American Institutes for Research, 2023). For collaboration to be successful, administration, which may also include the director of special education at the district level, need to support collaboration as they are the ones that have the ability to change the culture of an environment as the primary leaders and provide trainings and resources promoting

successful collaboration (Fitzgerald & Radford, 2022; Moore et al., 2021; Pettersson & Ström, 2018; Ricci et al., 2022).

Frequent Communication. Communication between all members of the team is necessary for collaboration to be successful (Ricci et al., 2022). However, planning is a key component for successful collaboration therefore frequent communication should be planned to ensure it occurs (Malviya et al., 2024). Frequent communication between providers results in the communication gap to be diminished which is an important quality for successful collaboration (Malviya et al., 2024).

Shared Focus. Having a shared focus to increase the student's success academically and behaviorally through successful collaboration refers to the social interdependence theory through the use of cooperation (Deutsch, 1962; Johnson & Johnson, 2001). When the teachers share the common goal and cooperate to meet the goal, there are more positive relationships, greater achievement, and greater psychological health (Johnson & Johnson, 2008). An important aspect of this is to work together as a multidisciplinary team rather than individually to ensure all providers are working to achieve the same goal (Stubbs et al., 2017).

Monitoring and Documentation of Collaboration. Using data to guide the decisions is an important aspect to providing a student their individualized needs (Sicard, 2023). Monitoring refers to overseeing the progress and documentation is part of the monitoring process (Fougerou-Leurent et al., 2019). It is critical for progress to be monitored and documented for there to be high-quality and reliable data to be evident (Fougerou-Leurent et al., 2019).

Planning. Planning is a key component for successful collaboration, so all teachers are working toward the same goal with clear guidelines and maximizing the benefits of collaboration (Berry, 2021; Deutsch, 1962; Malviya et al., 2024). Joint lesson planning is one way to carry out

collaboration because it does provide context and structure (Malviya et al., 2024; Yuan & Zhang, 2016). It is noted that an important aspect of planning for successful collaboration is the involvement of multi-levels and multi-parties, decisions should not be made independently (Jiangchun et al., 2020).

Gaps in Research

Research discussing collaboration between general and special education teachers have a theme that a more inclusive, collaborative, and mainstream environment implementing a multidisciplinary approach to teaching is necessary for students as well as the teachers themselves due to the many benefits for both (Berry, 2021; Fitzgerald & Radford, 2022; Kuntz & Carter, 2021; Meredith et al., 2022; & Ricci & Fingon, 2017; Stubbs et al., 2017). However, there are gaps within the research that has been analyzed and synthesized. There is a need for more statistical and objective data at a large-scale. Data within the research primarily is taken at a small-scale limiting the amount of information received which increases the assumptions that must be made to generalize the information to other demographics (Alghazo & Alkhazaleh, 2021; Kuntz & Carter, 2021; Leatherman & Wegner, 2022; & Stubbs et al., 2017).

Much of the research discussing collaboration within the schools has not been within the United States; what research that has been completed within the United States focused on physical education courses or was performed in urban areas or northern rural school districts, which are taught by general education teachers (Alghazo & Alkhazaleh, 2021; Cornell & Saymen, 2020; Driver et al., 2018; Fitzgerald & Radford, 2021; Gajdzica & Belza-Gajdzica, 2021; Haines et al., 2022; Kartini & Aprilia, 2022; Leatherman & Wagner, 2022; Monahan et al., 2023; Nilsen, 2020; Pettersson & Ström, 2019; Ricci et al., 2022; Ricci et al., 2019; Sheppard & Wieman, 2020). It is noted that whether the study took place in a different country, urban areas,

or rural areas, collaboration between special and general education teachers is low (Alghazo and Alkhazaleh, 2021; Haines et al., 2022; & Monahan et al., 2023). It is important to note that the school that was involved in this research is located in a city with 20.8% poverty rate and qualifies for the Community Eligibility Provision where breakfast and lunch is served to students at no cost due to the high poverty rate (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.; U.S. Department of Agriculture, n.d.; French, 2017). This study aimed to target the perceptions of general and special education teachers in rural Kentucky elementary schools regarding collaboration. Specifically, the research aimed to determine which collaboration strategies would be successful in increasing the percentage of collaboration; as well as, what the teachers need from the district and/or school based on teachers' given perceptions.

Ethical Assurances

The study received approval from National University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) prior to data collection. Also, the permission was granted from the district in which the research is taking place. Data retrieved through the research was stored within Google which is protected by password security for the website and password security for the device. All data remained in the Google drive which is cloud protected for three years in accordance with IRB requirements. If documents are printed for easier review, they will be stored in a locked filing cabinet inside of a locked office until they are no longer needed and then will be shredded since all data will remain in an electronic storage. No names will be mentioned throughout the research and reporting to ensure confidentiality.

This topic is relevant to me personally because of my profession. I am currently a speech language pathologist in a public school who works with children ages four through eighteen with multiple levels of severity. Roughly two-thirds of my caseload also receives special education

services besides speech. Many times, students are learning similar information but learning different strategies to implement to be successful. The professionals that are working with the students on their team are working as a multidisciplinary team rather than individually and the multidisciplinary teams have more advantages such as bringing more experience, points of view, and creativity (Stubbs et al., 2017). Collaboration is an evidence-based practice to implement the multidisciplinary team approach while increasing student and teacher success (Berry, 2021; Stubbs et al., 2017). Now the question is, what do general and special education teachers in rural elementary schools need to be successful collaborators with one another which is what this research is aimed at discovering.

Summary

While this study aimed to target general and special education teachers' perceptions regarding collaboration, it sought to determine strategies that would assist in increasing the percentage of collaboration while determining what teachers need to be successful collaborators. This section reviews the need for this study due to the limited amount of research completed in rural areas in the United States, specifically within Kentucky (Alghazo & Alkhazaleh, 2021; Cornell & Saymen, 2020; Driver et al., 2018; Fitzgerald & Radford, 2021; Gajdzica & Belza-Gajdzica, 2021; Haines et al., 2022; Kartini & Aprilia, 2022; Leatherman & Wagner, 2022; Monahan et al., 2023; Nilsen, 2020; Pettersson & Ström, 2019; Ricci et al., 2022; Ricci et al., 2019; Sheppard & Wieman, 2020). The section does review the importance of collaboration and the role of the general and special education teachers within the schools as well as benefits, challenges, trainings, and strategies of collaboration that have been documented in other scenarios. The social interdependence theory framework was utilized throughout this study to

determine the necessities of working together successfully toward a common goal (Johnson & Johnson, 2009; Johnson & Johnson, 2008).

Section 2: Methodology and Design

Collaboration in this study references teachers participating in professional exchange and problem solving which leads to benefits for both teachers and students (Berry, 2021; Pettersson & Ström, 2019; Stubbs et al., 2017). The problem addressed in this research is that elementary general and special education teachers are ill-prepared for collaboration and have limited knowledge of the application of content within the other's professional field (Fogo & Requa, 2020; Kartini & Aprilia, 2022). Consequently, general and special education teachers are not effectively collaborating at a high rate although it has been proven that it is beneficial for both teachers and the learners (Alghazo & Alkhazaleh, 2021; Berry, 2021). The purpose of this qualitative descriptive case study design was to explore the perceptions of elementary general and special education teachers about the nature of their collaboration, their preparedness that led to lower rates of collaboration, and what collaboration strategies may be beneficial in a school setting. This section will review the design and method, population and sample, instrumentation, data collection and analysis, as well as assumptions, limitations, and delimitations, and a summary.

Design and Method

Qualitative methodology promotes a deeper understanding regarding perspectives, social settings, and activities (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). The purpose is seeking variations in the findings and truly delving into the topic to learn more about the needs through human experiences and their perspectives which aligns directly with qualitative research (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019; Nowell et al., 2017). Qualitative methodology is the best suited and in alignment with this study because the purpose of the study was to determine the needs of the teachers. This study is sought to understand and discover meanings through teachers while being reflective on

their own personal experiences and engaging in the natural setting which is the role for a researcher in qualitative methodology (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). The research questions being addressed are all open-ended questions and allowed for me to be the primary instrument of data collection rather than using closed-ended questions, scales, and ranking order checklists or existing instrumentation which aligns with qualitative data collection rather than quantitative (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). Quantitative methodology would not have been suited for this study because there was no quantifying of results nor addressing cause and effect which is the purpose of a quantitative study (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). This research did not seek to verify or test a theory which rules out the possibility of implementing a quantitative methodology (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). Overall, since this study sought to gain knowledge on human experiences and not verify or test a theory quantifying results the study aligned more with qualitative methodology in comparison to quantitative methodology (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019; Nowell et al., 2017).

The research design chosen for the study was a descriptive case study. Case studies explore individual's perspectives regarding a social phenomenon being a social unit or system, in this case a school (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). Case studies allow for data to be more individualized rather than pertain to an entire population (Salkind, 2010). Specifically, descriptive case studies' purpose is to describe a specific phenomenon, in this case general and special education teachers' perceptions on collaboration, in a real-world context to gain more of an understanding (Priya, 2020). The design can be implemented through open-ended questionnaires, interviews, and focus groups (Salkind, 2010). This type of design allows for real-world situations to be studied in a natural environment (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). Case studies allow for deeper insights and understanding which serves to inform developments, actions, and

professional practices which served the purpose of this study to explore the perceptions of elementary general and special education teachers about the nature of their collaboration, their preparedness that led to lower rates of collaboration, and what collaboration strategies may be beneficial in a school setting (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019).

Another research design that aligns with qualitative research but was not best suited for the proposed study is ethnography. Ethnography does not directly apply to education (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Moreover, although a case study does involve the researcher to be at the research site and involved to implement the researcher-as-instrument quality, it does not require the full emersion into the study as ethnography does (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Ethnography requires a researcher to be completely immersed within the environment being studied to truly understand, interpret, and describe the human experiences being observed which also requires only direct observations (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This design is linked more with socialization studies and can take a significant amount more time and engagement (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Action research is another design aligning with qualitative designs but was not best suited for this specific research (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). Action research focuses on finding effective solutions to problems which finding a solution to increasing the rate of collaboration would be beneficial, but this specific research did not seek a solution but delved into the perceptions of teachers (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019).

The research was gathered through multiple methods including an inclusion questionnaire, open-ended questionnaire specific for general and special education teachers, and focus groups specific to general and special education teachers (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Another feature that was utilized throughout this study was categorization of the findings (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The data was categorized via Google Sheets through Google Forms. When a form is

created in Google, the responses can be transferred to a Google Sheet. Within Google Sheet, I could alter the settings to color-code responses that have specific words within the answer. For instance, if a teacher responded they need more time, any response with the word time in it could be color coded purple. This allowed for the researcher to quickly analyze the data and see a theme (Creswell & Poth, 2018). My role as the primary investigator was to remain as the primary source of instrumentation and could alter the settings to include words or delete words throughout the study to assist with the categorization. The proposed study also remained context-dependent and took place within a natural setting (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Within the Google Form a teacher needed to list the grade they teach, how many years of experience they have, and if they are a general or special education teacher which allowed me to identify characteristics that may have affected the overall results. Moreover, the teacher completed the research questions via a questionnaire and focus group regarding what they needed to be more successful collaborators such as more training on collaboration, professional developments, and top management support. Teachers were also asked questions regarding their personal perceptions of their role in collaboration, observable benefits of collaboration, most successful mode of collaboration, and which collaboration strategies they believe would be most successful regarding their natural setting of a rural public elementary school. Prior to completing the questionnaire or participating in the focus group, teachers received infographics via email explaining a variety of modes of collaboration, strategies of collaboration, and benefits of collaboration. Lastly, I implemented reflexivity through journaling to ensure they are aware of any biases they may have that could alter the results due to their background and personal experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I was transparent within the research to ensure trustworthiness and allow the readers to interpret the information for themselves by providing

audit trails, implementing reflexivity and reflection, discussing implicit biases, limitations, and delimitations (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019; Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Researcher Positionality

Research positionality refers to the researcher's personal world view which guides the point of view they adopt within a study (Homes, 2020). It is specifically important within qualitative research because it guides how the study is completed, outcomes, and results (Holmes, 2020). Reflexivity is an important aspect of the researcher positionality as it allows one to delve into their assumptions, biases, and views while recognizing they are always changing (Holmes, 2020). I have worked for seven years throughout my career within a rural Kentucky elementary school as a speech language pathologist which falls under the special education umbrella. Speech-Language services are provided underneath the Speech-Language Impairment special education eligibility or are provided as a related service to students who have one of the other thirteen eligibilities in Kentucky if it is deemed necessary by the Admissions and Release Committee (ARC) (Kentucky Department of Education, 2024). The other areas of eligibility to receive special education services in Kentucky include Autism, Deaf-Blindness, Developmental Delay three through age eight, Emotional-Behavior Disability, Functional Mental Disability, Specific Learning Disability, Traumatic Brain Injury, Mild Mental Disability, Multiple Disabilities, Visual Impairment, Orthopedic Impairment, Hearing Impairment, and Other Health Impairment (Kentucky Department of Education, 2024). I have had the opportunity to work within two school districts within the area and eight different schools with students aging three to 21. This has given me the opportunity to work closely with multiple general and special education teachers which has allowed me to discuss topics and become aware of concerns as well as positive strategies implemented which is an advantage. I am also dual licensed with a

certification in learning and behavior disorders as a special education teacher in the state of Kentucky. This has given me the opportunity to understand the responsibilities and duties that are required of a special education teacher, which is an advantage. However, I am more relatable to special education teachers than general education teachers which is a disadvantage due to biases from my personal world views since I have never been a general education teacher and held their responsibilities. With this being said, I can maintain an unbiased perspective due to my experience with collaborating with both general and special education teachers.

Population and Sample

The study took place within a rural Kentucky elementary school (see Appendix A). Blind Tiger Elementary (pseudonym) qualifies for A1 classification and is Title 1 eligible (Cite, XXXX). Blind Tiger Elementary is in a city with 20.8% poverty rate and qualifies for the Community Eligibility Provision where breakfast and lunch are served to students at no cost due to the high poverty rate (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.; U.S. Department of Agriculture, n.d.; French, 2017). It is reported that 70.4% of the students who attend Blind Tiger Elementary are identified as economically disadvantaged and 62.6% of students are white, 14.6% of students are Hispanic or Latino, 12.6% of students are two or more races, and 10.2% of students identified as other. (Cite, XXXX). 91.1% of faculty are female and 97.8% of faculty identify as white (Cite, XXXX). The average salary for teachers at Blind Tiger Elementary is \$54,366 with an 18:1 student-teacher ratio for preschool through high school for the district (Cite, XXXX). Blind Tiger Elementary services grades kindergarten through fifth has approximately 636 students attending (Cite, XXXX).

Population

The population for this study includes special and general education elementary school at Blind Tiger Elementary that services student grades kindergarten through fifth grade (see Table 1). Blind Tiger Elementary currently has 26 general education teachers, four per grade for kindergarten through fifth grade, except five general education teachers in second and fifth grade. The school has seven special education teachers: one special education teacher for kindergarten (A), one for first grade (B), one for second grade (C), two that services third through fifth grade (D-E), another that serves students with a disability of emotional and behavior disorder (F), and one that services students with a disability of moderate and severe disabilities (G).

Table 1

School Population Overview

	Kindergarten	First grade	Second grade	Third grade	Fourth grade	Fifth grade
# of Classrooms	4	4	5	4	4	5
# of General Education Teachers	4	4	5	4	4	5
# of Special Education Teachers	A-F-G	B-F-G	C-F-G	D-E-F-G	D-E-F-G	D-E-F-G

Sample

The sample goal was to include general education teachers ($N = 10-15$) and special education teachers ($N = 4-5$). Ideally, the goal was to secure general education teachers that represent at least one for each grade (K-5). Likewise, I preferred to secure special education teachers which serve as both inclusion and resource teachers for their students with at least one representing primary and intermediate grades. The inclusion criteria to participate in the study was that the individual is a licensed and practicing general or special education teacher at Blind Tiger Elementary.

Purposeful Sampling Method. For this research, purposeful sampling was utilized since the study was specifically to view varying perspectives on the problem of not knowing what teachers need to be successful collaborators (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Sampling that allows for specific choosing of the sample to represent different perspectives on the event, problem, and process (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Recruitment. The principal from Blind Tiger Elementary assisted me with recruiting general and special education teachers through email (see Appendix B). The recruitment email did include the inclusion questionnaire protocol (see Appendix C) for individuals to view if they wanted more information regarding the questionnaire. The recruitment email included a link to the inclusion questionnaire (see Appendix D) to determine if an individual met the criteria for participation. If an individual met the criteria to be eligible for participation and granted consent, they received another email specific to their profession.

Instrumentation

Data was collected via open-ended questionnaires and focus groups. A protocol for the special education teacher open-ended questionnaire (see Appendix E) was provided with the

open-ended questionnaire for the special education teachers (see Appendix F). A protocol for the general education teacher open-ended questionnaire (see Appendix G) was provided with the open-ended questionnaire for the general education teachers (see Appendix H). There were two open-ended questionnaires, one for special education teachers and one for general education teachers. Questions within the open-ended questionnaires were designed to align with research questions and have been placed in a matrix to be transparent about each item and alignment with the research questions (see Appendix I). There were also two focus groups, one specifically for special education teachers and another for general education teachers. Protocols for the special education teacher focus group (see Appendix J) and general education teacher focus group (see Appendix K) were provided prior to the focus group meeting to provide more detailed information. Focus group items were designed to align with guiding research questions and have been placed in a matrix to be transparent about each item and align with research questions (see Appendix L). Questions needed to be aligned to carry out the purpose of the study as the questions were the primary method of data collection for this research making the questions critical (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019).

Open-Ended Questionnaires

Open-ended questionnaires were used not only because of the alignment with qualitative methodology but also because of the ease of administration and management of data collection (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). These questionnaires had open-ended questions to gain data on teachers' personal experiences and perceptions on what they need to be successful collaborators as well as what collaboration strategies they believe would be most successful (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019).

Special Education Teacher Open-Ended Questionnaire. The voluntary questionnaire was provided in a Google form document which allowed for the data to be recorded anonymously and categorized by color-coding anticipated answers utilizing Google Sheets (see Appendix F). This also allowed for immediate review of accuracy. The open-ended questionnaire was only sent to individuals at Blind Tiger Elementary so demographics will be known. The open-ended questionnaire began by asking which certification they held (i.e., Learning and Behavior Disorders [LBD], Emotional and Behavior Disorder [EBD], Moderate and Severe Disabilities [MSD], Speech Language Pathology [SLP], etc.). The open-ended questionnaire then asked what grades they primarily teach (Kindergarten through fifth grade). The open-ended questionnaire included questions regarding their perceptions on collaboration such as how they felt about collaboration with general education teachers and which areas do teachers see students with special education needs have the most difficulty in. The questionnaire then addressed the teachers' perceptions on their strengths regarding collaboration by asking what has helped them be successful collaborators, modes of collaboration they use, and strategies of collaboration they implement. The open-ended questionnaire also asked hypothetical scenario questions specific to special education teachers such as scheduling collaboration, providing assistance, and times when scheduled collaboration is off schedule due to meetings. The open-ended questionnaire concluded with a question inquiring if they intended on participating in the focus group specific for special education teachers via Google Meet. The open-ended questionnaire did state the scheduled month, day, year, and time the focus group would take place. The open-ended questionnaire had 12 open-ended questions. The questionnaire was expected to take five to 10 minutes. Individuals were given two calendar weeks to complete the open-ended questionnaire and review their responses which were automatically sent to them upon completion. The

questionnaire was constructed by the researcher. The open-ended questionnaire was field tested with a former special education teacher at Blind Tiger Elementary and a former special education teacher at another elementary school in rural Kentucky that is comparable in size, demographics, and economics as Blind Tiger Elementary but at another school making them not eligible for participation in the study, so as not to skew the data by having possible participants in the sample participate. The questionnaire was field tested by a previous special education teacher within a school district that has similar demographics and another special education teacher that works within the same district as Blind Tiger Elementary with similar school demographics. Both reported the questions were easy to understand and took five to 10 minutes.

General Education Teacher Open-Ended Questionnaire. The voluntary questionnaire was provided in a Google form document which allowed for the data to be recorded anonymously and categorized by color-coding anticipated answers utilizing Google Sheets (see Appendix H). This also allowed for immediate review of accuracy. The open-ended questionnaire was only be sent to individuals at Blind Tiger Elementary so demographics will be known. The open-ended questionnaire began by asking which certification they held (i.e., Interdisciplinary Early Childhood Education [IECE], elementary education, etc.). The open-ended questionnaire then asked what grades they primarily teach (Kindergarten through fifth grade). The open-ended questionnaire asked questions regarding their perceptions on collaboration such as how they felt about collaboration with special education teachers and which areas teachers see students with special education needs have the most difficulty in. The questionnaire then addressed the teachers' perceptions on their strengths regarding collaboration by asking what has helped them be successful collaborators, modes of collaboration they use, and strategies of collaboration they implement. The open-ended questionnaire also asked

hypothetical scenario questions specific to general education teachers such as planning collaboration time amid meetings, understanding strategies the special education teacher suggests for implementation, and about times when collaboration that is planned is off schedule. The open-ended questionnaire concluded with a question inquiring if they intended on participating in the focus group specific for general education teachers via Google Meet. The open-ended questionnaire does state the scheduled month, day, year, and time the focus group would take place. The open-ended questionnaire had 12 open-ended questions. The questionnaire was expected to take five to 10 minutes. Individuals were given two calendar weeks to complete the open-ended questionnaire and review their responses which were automatically sent to them upon completion. The questionnaire was constructed by the researcher. The open-ended questionnaire was field tested with two general education teachers within the same district as Blind Tiger Elementary but at another school making them not eligible for participation in the study. It was also field tested with a retired general education teacher from the same district, so as not to skew the data by having possible participants in the sample participate. Two general education teachers reported the questionnaire took approximately 10 minutes and was easy to understand. The other general education teacher stated the questionnaire took five to seven minutes and was easy to understand.

Focus Group

To ensure triangulation of data, multiple methods were used as a data collection (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). Focus groups is another form of data collection that was used throughout this study. Focus groups allow for participants to be interviewed in a group aspect which allows the interview to feel more like a discussion in which individual's may be more honest in this scenario in comparison to a one-on-one interview (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019;

Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009). However, it is noted this data collection method does require strong facilitation skills for the method to be successful (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). Focus groups offer information that will result in thick descriptions and will be offered to all participants, but it is important to note that there were two focus groups, one for general education teachers and one for special education teachers (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). The focus groups were held within a week.

Special Education Teacher Focus Group. The protocol for the special education focus group explains the purpose of the research as well as the questions that were asked (see Appendix J). There were 12 questions including two debriefing questions asked during the focus group session. The focus group session was expected to last approximately 15 to 20 minutes. The focus group then concluded with a reminder that the participants would receive a transcription of the interview within the week. The focus group was field tested with a current special education teacher within the same district as Blind Tiger Elementary and a former special education teacher at another elementary school in rural Kentucky that is comparable in size, demographics, and economics as Blind Tiger Elementary but at another school making them not eligible for participation in the study. Both individuals stated the questions were easy to understand. This field test lasted 15 minutes. Google Meet was successful, and a secondary device was utilized to audio record the meeting. The audio recording was easy to understand afterward.

General Education Teacher Focus Group. The protocol for the general education focus group explains the purpose of the research as well as the questions that were asked (see Appendix K). There were 12 questions including two debriefing questions asked during the focus group session. The focus group session was expected to last approximately 15 to 20 minutes. The focus group then concluded with a reminder that the participants would receive a transcription of

the interview within the week. The focus group questions were originated by the researcher. The focus group was field tested with two general education teachers within the same district as Blind Tiger Elementary but at another school making them not eligible for participation in the study. Both general education teachers stated the questions were easy to understand. The focus group lasted 15 to 20 minutes.

Researcher as an Instrument

The researcher was the primary instrument when analyzing the data implementing constant comparative analysis since understanding is the primary goal for qualitative research (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). As the researcher, it is important for me to discuss personal insights and experiences as well as conceptual reflection (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). However, it is important for me as a researcher to explore how biases and prejudices could impact interpretations through reflexivity and being transparent (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). Creating a clear audit trail so the results can be traced back (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019).

Data Collection and Analysis

Participants gave their consent by checking they agree to participation after viewing the informed consent form (see Appendix M) within the inclusion questionnaire. Upon IRB approval (see Appendix N) data was collected via multiple methods. It is important to note and consider that data can be gathered through multiple methods within qualitative research (Creswell & Poth, 2018). These methods may include open-interviews, questionnaires, review of documents, observations to name a few (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Collecting data in multiple means allows for more range to grasp the phenomena or problem in a larger picture. This study implemented open-ended questionnaires and focus groups to collect data (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). The data collection aligned with the research questions to ensure the purpose of the study was carried

out (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). This study specifically aimed to explore rural Kentucky elementary general and special education teachers' perceptions regarding their collaboration protocol, their preparedness or professional development that support collaboration, what could be provided to increase success with collaboration, and what districts/schools can do to support high rates of collaboration. Using multiple forms of data collection allows for a more comprehensive understanding of what teachers need to be successful collaborators. Triangulation addresses the trustworthiness of a study by cross-checking information gathered through multiple sources of data collection to allow for findings to be triangulated or converged (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). Triangulation of the data collected was implemented to determine if the findings are congruent with one another by gathering data via questionnaires and focus groups, allowing opportunities for member checking, and engaging in peer debriefing at the end of the focus groups.

Data Collection Method 1. Special education teachers received an email (see Appendix O) with the link to the open-ended questionnaire for special education teachers and general education teachers received an email (see Appendix P) with a link to the open-ended questionnaire for general education teachers. Within both the special education teacher and general education teacher recruitment emails individuals also received the following handouts: Benefits of Collaboration (see Appendix Q), Modes of Collaboration (see Appendix R), Collaboration Strategies (see Appendix S), and References for the Handouts (see Appendix T). The questionnaire was given using Google Forms. The questionnaire was anticipated to take five to 10 minutes for participants to complete. The responses to the individual's questionnaire were emailed to them following completion for their review for member checking. Member checking involved the members of the study being asked to review the transcribed responses to increase

the credibility of the study decreasing the risk of the researcher's biases having influence on the study (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019).

Data Collection Method 2. A focus group is another form of data collection used throughout this study. Special education teachers then received a sign-up email for the special education teacher focus group (see Appendix U) inviting them to participate in a focus group specific for special education teachers and general education teachers also received a sign-up email for the general education teacher focus group (see Appendix V) inviting them to participate in a focus group specific for general education teachers. The focus group was scheduled after the questionnaire and was completed via Google Meet and was anticipated to take 15 to 20 minutes. The focus group were recorded allowing for the audio to be transcribed to text using Google and a manual review of the transcription. The transcription, which was completed within one week of the focus group, was also sent to the participants for their review in which they will had one week to review for member checking and send feedback if necessary. The transcription was input into Google Sheets connecting answers to specific questions. Different answers were color-coded based on themes, for instance if a teacher stated something regarding training Google Sheets could be coded to color-code this response green. This allowed for quick analysis for determining emergent themes (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Data Analysis Methods

Because the research was looking to gain information to find practical solutions to real-world problems, a qualitative methodology was most in alignment because it allowed for the researcher to truly delve into the topic and seek variations within the findings (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019; Salkind, 2010). When choosing the method of qualitative data analysis, there are multiple choices to choose from. However, *Charles Ragin's* qualitative comparative analysis

method was the approach chosen for the proposed study as it also aligned with case studies of multiple teachers (Maxwell, 2018). Considering the topic revolved around the collaboration of special education teachers and general education teachers there needed to be a variety of case studies completed to have a sample that truly represents the entire population, and the sample was justified through data saturation (Hennink & Kaiser, 2019). *The Charles Ragin's* qualitative comparative analysis method is documented to be beneficial when there are many case studies in qualitative research (Maxwell, 2018). It was also chosen because it is used to examine and identify cross-case patterns to determine if when specific variables change within the environment, then is the same outcome generated (Maxwell, 2018). This study specifically researched both general and special education teachers' perspectives regarding collaboration.

As for a data analysis method, Google Forms was the primary data collection method used to present open-ended questions via questionnaires. The data was categorized by color-coding anticipated answers. For instance, when asked what teachers may need most to be successful collaborators if they use time anywhere in their answer the answer could be color-coded purple whereas if they mention education or training the answer could be color-coded green. However, it is important to note that the researcher was the primary instrument when analyzing data (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). The researcher was to implement constant comparative analysis and assist with the categorization through comparing previous data and incoming data to assist in developing emergent themes (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). This allowed for categorization then a quick glance to determine if there are emergent themes present (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In qualitative research, it is important to remember that the primary instrument and although computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) is beneficial because of the efficiency, the researcher always needs to be the primary instrument

and delve into the data to be able to interpret it (Creswell & Poth, 2018). CAQDAS is beneficial however because it allows for the categorization process to begin allowing a visualization of emergent themes and assists with efficiency throughout the analysis process (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Assumptions

Assumptions are statements based on premises the researcher believes to be true allowing some conclusions to be made; however, these assumptions may not hold true as the study prevails (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). A major assumption that the data relied heavily upon was that the general and special education teachers answered the questionnaire and questions within the focus groups with truthfulness and integrity concerning their student's, growth, perceptions, and collaboration. Another assumption was that the teachers were sincere about collaboration with one another to increase student achievement and teaching effectiveness. It was also assumed that if the collaboration is beneficial, the teachers would continue to implement collaboration after the study is completed.

Limitations

External conditions of the study that may constrain or restrict the study resulting in potential weaknesses are considered limitations (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). These limitations may involve weaknesses in the research design (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). Limitations for this study may have included that it took place within a single school. Although the sample is representative of the population of rural Kentucky elementary general and special education teachers, this study took place at only one school. To overcome this limitation, data from teachers working with students' kindergarten through fifth grade was taken to include perspectives from a variety of grades. Another limitation for this study may be reliable, self-

reported data. Since it is a small school, some teachers may feel uncomfortable sharing their perspectives. To overcome this limitation, the questionnaires were specific to their profession and the focus groups only consisted of individuals in the same profession, besides the researcher. Another limitation was the lack of prior research studies on the topic of rural Kentucky elementary general and special education teachers regarding collaboration. Open-ended questions and discussions were used as data collection methods to not limit the teachers' reported perspectives.

Delimitations

Boundaries that limit the scope of the study such as conditions or parameters the researcher imposed purposefully are considered delimitation (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). Delimitations of this specific study may be the timeframe given and may need more of a longitudinal design to truly determine the impact of collaboration. Another delimitation may be the sample population is too small, and more data is needed across the board. Delimitations may be altered however to increase the success of the study.

Summary

Overall, the purpose of this qualitative methodology and descriptive case study design was to explore the perceptions of elementary general and special education teachers, specifically in rural Kentucky, regarding the nature of their collaboration, their preparedness that led to lower rates of collaboration, and what collaboration strategies may be beneficial in a school setting. Data was gathered via open-ended questionnaires via Google Forms and focus groups via Google Meets, both were recorded and transcribed then sent to the participant for their review. This research hoped to increase collaboration rates by enhancing the understanding of general and special education teachers' perspectives regarding collaboration.

Section 3: Findings, Implications, and Recommendations

Collaboration between general and special education teachers can allow for communication and centralization of the values that serve as the foundation of teaching and allows one to support another while promoting a positive school environment (Zhang et al., 2023). The function of collaboration between general and special education teachers is to serve as the action promoting student success both behaviorally and academically (Johnson & Johnson, 2009; Zarate et al., 2023). Collaboration has positive effects to both students and teachers (Berry, 2021). In this study, the social interdependence theory was applied in cooperation to the specific problem that there is a low rate of collaboration between general education and special education teachers due to being ill-prepared then address teachers' perceptions on collaboration, which involves cooperation, leading to positive solutions to collaborating with one another by seeing what they need to be successful in achieving the common goal (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019; Johnson & Johnson, 2009; Johnson & Johnson, 2008; Salkind, 2010). The purpose of this qualitative descriptive case study was to explore the perceptions of elementary general and special education teachers about the nature of their collaboration, their preparedness for collaboration, and the collaboration strategies that may be beneficial in a school setting. This section will discuss findings, evaluation of the outcomes, implications and recommendations for practice, recommendations for future research, and conclusions.

Limitations

External conditions that are potential weaknesses due to restrictions of the study are known as limitations (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). A qualitative limitation is a weakness of the study that threatens transferability, credibility, confirmability, and dependability (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). This study involved five limitations which involved transferability, credibility, and

dependability. The first two limitations threatened transferability, the third limitation threatened credibility, and the fourth and fifth limitation threatened dependability.

The first and second limitations discussed relate to transferability, referring to the ability the study could relate to other contexts (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). The first limitation is that the study took place within a single rural Kentucky public elementary school limiting transferability. Specifically, transferability is limited to other regions of the United States and could not transfer to other rural regions with differing licensure and certifications qualifications effecting expectations, protocols, and roles. Moreso, this study cannot be transferred to more urban areas or environments with more diversity among teachers and students in comparison to this study. A second limitation threatening transferability is the lack of prior research studies on the topic of rural Kentucky elementary general and special education teachers regarding collaboration limiting the volume of detailed information provided in the literature review (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). To overcome these limitations, data from teachers working with students' kindergarten through fifth grade was taken to include perspectives from a variety of grades allowing for purposeful sampling and open-ended questions and discussions were used as data collection methods to not limit the teachers' reported perspectives and include thick descriptions and detailed information (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019).

The third limitation of the study relates to credibility, referring to if I accurately portrayed the participants' perceptions (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). Since it is a small school, some teachers may feel uncomfortable sharing their perspectives which may limit reliable, self-reported data. Because the study asked for qualifications and there are some positions that are only filled by one teacher in the small school, some teachers may feel as though they are easily identified. To overcome this limitation, the questionnaires were specific to their profession and

the focus groups only consisted of individuals in the same profession with the exception of me. The questionnaires and focus groups were also field tested with individuals in the same profession who did not qualify for participation in the study due to not working at Blind Tiger Elementary prior to the study. Focus groups also allowed for peer debriefing to assist in overcoming this limitation (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). Participants in the focus group were encouraged to answer questions allowing them to share their perspectives which evoked conversations. Participants were also sent transcripts of their questionnaire and the focus group allowing for member checks to assist in overcoming this limitation (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). It is important to note that during the focus group, the data could not be aligned to specific individuals due to the focus group being audio recorded only resulting in a limitation. This limitation was not overcome but accommodated as such during analysis since the focus groups were specific to general education and special education professions.

The fourth and fifth limitation refer to dependability, referring to data consistency (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). The fourth limitation that did occur within the study is I did not ask follow-up question or probe during the special education focus group for special education teachers (i.e., “How do you feel that general and special education teachers affect overall teacher performance?”) due to an oversight. However, it is noted this question was asked in the focus group for general education teachers. The fifth limitation is one general education teacher who teaches kindergarten and one general education teacher who works with students in kindergarten through fifth grade as a special’s teacher (i.e., library, physical education, music, and art) participated in the questionnaire but not the focus group. However, there were participants representing kindergarten and the specials’ team (i.e., library, physical education, music, and art).

Findings

The findings section will discuss the trustworthiness of the study, including dependability, credibility, confirmability, and transferability. Participant demographics will also be reviewed along with an overview of the study, and findings according to each of the research questions will be reported.

Trustworthiness of the Study

Trustworthiness involves the readers trusting the researcher's analysis and interpretation (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). Reflexivity is a large part of trustworthiness and needs to be implemented intentionally and actively throughout the entire study (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). Reflexivity is achieved by having the researcher reflect on how their personal experiences, biases, and assumptions may impact the study allowing for more critical thinking (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). Trustworthiness is achieved through achieving dependability, credibility, confirmability, and transferability (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019).

Dependability. Dependability refers to data consistency (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). Dependability was established through in-depth description of methodology and design to allow the study to be repeated. Triangulation of the data collected was implemented to determine if the findings are congruent with one another by gathering data via questionnaires and focus groups, allowing opportunities for member checking, and engaging in peer debriefing at the end of the focus groups which also assisted with establishing dependability (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). Audit trails of the data were also established which support dependability as well (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019).

Credibility. Credibility refers to the researcher accurately portraying the participants' perceptions (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). Credibility was established through triangulation and

member checks (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). Triangulation of the data collected was implemented to determine if the findings are congruent with one another by gathering data via questionnaires and focus groups, allowing opportunities for member checking, and engaging in peer debriefing at the end of the focus groups. Member checking involves the members of the study being asked to review the transcribed responses to increase the credibility of the study, decrease the risk of the researcher's biases having influence on the study (Bloomberg & Volpe), 2019). The answers to members questionnaires were automatically sent to their provided email upon their review and the transcriptions of focus group were emailed to all members for the group within one week of the meeting in which they had one week to review for member checking and send feedback if necessary.

Confirmability. Confirmability refers to the concept that the findings of the researcher were derived from the data (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). Confirmability was established through reflexivity through journaling to ensure the reader is aware of any biases that could alter the results due to their background and personal experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Confirmability was also established through audit trails and triangulation of data (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019).

Transferability. Transferability refers to the ability the study could relate to and be transferred to other contexts (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). Transferability was established by finding possible solutions for ease of implementing successful collaboration by researching general and special education teachers' perspectives in a rural school district in south central Kentucky on collaboration and the varying strategies which may transfer to other samples as solutions as well as in schools with similar demographics. Purposeful sampling, thick

descriptions, and detailed information allowed for transferability to be established (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019).

Participant Demographics

In total, there were 28 participants for the questionnaires and 26 participants for the focus groups. Table 2 is a visual representation describing the participants' credentials, which grade level they work with per the questionnaire, and which focus group they participated in (i.e., general education or special education). There was one Speech Language Pathologist that participated in the questionnaire and focus group and six special education teachers who participated in the questionnaire and focus group. In total, there were seven participants in the category of special education teachers. Two of these teachers work with only students in primary grades (i.e., kindergarten or second grade), two work with students only in intermediate grades (i.e., third thru fifth grade), and three work with students in primary and intermediate grades (i.e., kindergarten or fifth grade). There were 21 general education teachers participated in the questionnaire and 19 participated in the focus group. Three general education teachers who work with students in kindergarten participated in the questionnaire and two participated in the focus group. Three general education teachers who work with students in first grade participated in the questionnaire and focus group. Three general education teachers who work with students in second grade participated in the questionnaire and focus group. Four general education teachers who work with students in third grade participated in the questionnaire and focus group. Two general education teachers who work with students in fourth grade participated in the questionnaire and focus group. Four general education teachers who work with students in fifth grade participated in the questionnaire and focus group. Two general education teachers who work with students in kindergarten through fifth grade as a special's teacher (i.e., library,

physical education, art, and music) participated in the questionnaire and one participated in the focus group.

Table 2*Participant Demographic Table*

Participant #	Credential	Questionnaire grade level	Focus group participation
P1	Middle grades (5 th –9 th) Certificate (Math and Social Studies), Rank 1	5 th	Gen. Ed.
P2	Elementary Education (Elem. Ed.), Interdisciplinary Early Childhood Education (IECE)	5 th	Gen. Ed.
P3	Elem. Ed.	3 rd	Gen. Ed.
P4	Elem. Ed.	3 rd	Gen. Ed.
P5	Elem. Ed.	Kindergarten	Did Not
P6	Elem. Ed.	Kindergarten	Gen. Ed.
P7	Elem. Ed., Rank 1	4 th	Gen. Ed.
P8	Master Elem. Ed.	2 nd	Gen. Ed.
P9	Elem. Ed., Special Education (SPED)	3 rd	Gen. Ed.
P10	K–12 Library Media Specialist, 5–9 English Language Arts (ELA), 5–12 Math	K–5	Gen. Ed.
P11	Elem. Ed., Masters in Teacher Leadership	4 th	Gen. Ed.
P12	Elem. Ed., IECE	2 nd	Gen. Ed.
P13	Masters	1 st	Gen. Ed.
P14	Elem. Ed.	2 nd	Gen. Ed.
P15	Elem. Ed., Masters+30, Rank 1	5 th	Gen. Ed.
P16	K–6 Elem. Ed., K–12 Literacy Specialist	1 st	Gen. Ed.
P17	Elem. Ed.	1 st	Gen. Ed.
P18	IECE	Kindergarten	Gen. Ed.
P19	Bachelors, Masters, Rank I	K–5	Did Not
P20	Elem. Ed.	5 th	Gen. Ed.
P21	Elem. Ed., Master’s in Literacy Specialist, Rank I in Literacy	3 rd	Gen. Ed.
P22	Masters in Speech Language Pathology	K-5	SPED
P23	Elem. Ed., Learning and Behavior Disorders (LBD)	1 st , 3 rd , 4 th , and 5 th	SPED
P24	LBD/Emotional Behavior Disorder (EBD)	Kindergarten	SPED
P25	Moderate and Severe Disabilities (MSD)	K–5 th	SPED
P26	Elem. Ed., LBD K–12	2 nd	SPED
P27	LBD	3 rd and 4 th	SPED
P28	SPED, Elem. Ed., Gifted and Talented Endorsement	3 rd , 4 th , and 5 th	SPED
TOTALS		28	26

Note. This table was created from data that was self-reported during the open-ended questionnaire. The answers were a fill in the blank response and therefore not all participants provided consistent degree types.

Overview of the Study

The study took place at a rural Kentucky elementary school. The population for this study includes special and general education elementary school teachers at Blind Tiger Elementary that services student grades kindergarten through fifth grade. The sample included 21 general education teachers and seven special education teachers. There were general education teachers represented for each grade (K–5) and special education teachers that represented both inclusion and resource as well as primary and intermediate grade levels which allowed for varying perspectives. Individuals of the study were recruited via email and data was collected via open questionnaires and focus groups.

Charles Ragin's qualitative comparative analysis method was implemented allowing for cross-case relations between general and special education teachers regarding their perceptions of collaboration (Maxwell, 2018). Each question asked within the questionnaires and focus group had its own column with a coding scheme guideline for categories at the bottom of each column which was color coded (see Appendix W). Once coding was completed, a table for the special education teacher's (see Appendix X) and general education teacher's (see Appendix Y) responses for each question asked in the questionnaire and focus groups was created which included the coding categories rather than their responses. In parenthesis next to the coding category is the number of individuals that stated a response in that category. The general and special education teacher's responses were kept separately to look at themes between the two

professions individually rather than combining general and special education teacher's responses. Next, the coding categories were recorded into a table for general and special education teacher's responses referencing the matrix for the research questions which states which question in the study aligned with which research question just as another visual (see Appendix Z). The table states the research question in the first column, then the general education teacher's coding themes based on their responses to questions in alignment with that research question in the second column, and the special education teacher's coding themes based on their responses to questions in alignment with that research question in the third column. The questions asked to the two groups were very similar and therefore are visually aligned in the chart next to one another for easy correspondence between the two groups' themes. This allowed for cross-case comparative analysis to be implemented as *Charles Ragin's* qualitative comparison analysis method discusses analyzing general and special education teachers' perspectives regarding collaboration (Maxwell, 2018).

Research Question 1

Research Question 1 states, "What are the perceptions of rural Kentucky elementary and special education teachers regarding their collaboration protocol?" The *Charles Ragin's* Comparison Theory was implemented to relate general and special education teacher perceptions regarding collaboration protocols (Maxwell, 2018). Figure 1 assists in easy correspondence of categorized answers to research questions in alignment with research question 1. Utilizing the visual, themes for research question 1 were identified and implemented in Table 3 to relate general and special education teacher perceptions regarding collaboration.

Table 3*Research Question 1 Themes*

<i>RQ1</i> What are the perceptions of rural Kentucky elementary general education and special education teachers regarding their collaboration protocol?	
General Education Teachers	Special Education Teachers
THEME 1.0: Inconsistent Collaboration Practices	
THEME 1.1: Collaboration Confined to Core Academic Subjects	THEME 1.1: Collaboration Without Consistency
THEME 1.2: Desire for Regular Weekly Collaboration	THEME 1.2: Unclear Communication Expectations for Cross-Role Collaboration
THEME 1.3: Preference for Direct Communication with Special Education Teachers	
THEME 2.0: Positive General Education Teacher Feelings Toward Collaboration	THEME 2.0: Mixed Special Education Teacher Feelings Toward Collaboration
THEME 2.1: Collaboration Affects Student Performance Positively	THEME 2.1: Inconsistent Perceptions on General Education Teacher's Feelings Toward Collaboration
THEME 2.2: Collaboration Affects Teacher Performance Positively	THEME 2.2: Inconsistent Perceptions on Student Performance and Collaboration
THEME 3.0: Communication and Relationships Benefit Success	
THEME 3.1: Limited Communication During Conflicts	THEME 3.1: Limited Prior Cross-Role Communication
THEME 3.2: Need for Communication for Scheduling	THEME 3.2: Knowledge, Planning and Experience Also Benefit Success
THEME 4.0: Highest Special Education Teacher Concerns with Academic Content and Behavior	

Inconsistent Collaboration Practices. The study revealed there was not a consistent collaboration protocol in place within Blind Tiger Elementary referring to the frequency, duration, planning, strategies, and modes implemented. The first theme that was the same between general and special education teachers is that there are inconsistent collaboration practices. General education teachers elaborated on this theme by expressing that collaboration is confined to core academic subjects by reporting collaboration between general and special

education teachers occurred during math and reading and some science and specials teachers reported collaboration did not occur. General education teachers also reported anywhere from an hour and a half a week of collaboration to ten hours per week. General education teachers elaborated on this theme by expressing a desire for regular weekly collaboration. One direct quote from a general education teacher when asked how often the two professions need to meet outside of the classroom to collaborate on lessons successfully was, “at least once a week” with two other general education teachers agreeing with this comment during the focus group. General education teachers also reported that they prefer direct communication with special education teachers in comparison to electronic communication. Special education teachers expressed that they do collaborate with general education teachers, but there is inconsistency across frequency and how it is implemented. Special education teachers reported a range of one to two hours to 20 hours of collaboration weekly with general education teachers. Special education teachers elaborated on this theme by expressing there is unclear communication expectation for cross-role collaboration. P26 expressed that currently the special education teacher and general education teacher are not meeting outside the classroom to collaborate on lessons successfully while P24 reports weekly meetings. P22 reported they believe communication expectations varies based on the position. While P23 reported that it is hard to communicate in intermediate grades.

Positive General Education Teacher Feelings Toward Collaboration. Although there is inconsistency with the school’s specific collaboration protocol, overall general education teachers have positive perceptions regarding the concept collaboration. A second theme regarding general education teachers’ perceptions of collaboration is that they have positive feelings toward collaboration. General education teachers primarily reported positive feelings

such as feeling supported, comfortable, compatible, great, love, thankful, helpful, and that they enjoy collaboration. Some did report feeling as though special education teachers are assistants and mixed positive and negative feelings. For instance, P15 stated that during collaboration they felt “Pretty good! Sometimes there are communication issues.” General education teachers expressed that collaboration affects student and teacher performance positively. A general education teacher reported in the focus group that collaboration “gives kids extra support for the ones that are kind of struggling” and another general education teacher reported it “makes sure that you’re meeting each of those students like on a level they need to be working at”. General education teachers reported collaboration positively affects teacher performance because it allows for teachers to “bounce ideas off each other” and that “they [special education teachers] may have some opinions that might help students that we [general education teachers] don’t” which was reported by a general education teacher within the focus group.

Mixed Special Education Teacher Feelings Toward Collaboration. Special education teachers had a combination of positive and negative perceptions regarding the collaboration concept. In comparison to general education teacher’s, a second theme regarding special education teachers’ perceptions of collaboration is that they have mixed feelings toward collaboration. There are inconsistent perceptions on general education teachers’ feelings and student performance regarding collaboration. A special education teacher, P25, reported that collaboration allows for the “opportunity of inclusion.” One special education teacher, P23, stated they believe collaboration “improves student performance because kids are getting support, they’re getting the help they need, the accommodations/modifications in the classroom setting”. P25 also reported that “general education teachers may lack the knowledge or the

understanding of what to do about certain behaviors that they may see and how to accommodate children.”

Communication and Relationships Benefit Success. Research question 1 references teachers’ perceptions regarding collaboration. This theme relates to this research question because cross-role communication and relationships would have a positive impact on their perceptions of collaboration because they benefit success. A third theme that emerged was consistent between general and special education teachers. Both professions believe communication and relationships benefit success. However, general education teachers reported there is currently limited communication during conflicts. They also expressed a need for communication for scheduling purposes. Special education teachers elaborated on this theme expressing that there is limited cross-role communication prior to collaboration. Special education teachers also expressed knowledge, planning, and experience that benefits success.

Highest Special Education Teacher Concerns with Academic Content and Behavior. This theme references student difficulty with academic content and negative behaviors during collaboration which have a negative impact on teacher’s overall perceptions regarding collaboration. A fourth theme identified regarding research question 1 was consistent between the two professions. Both professions believe the highest special education concerns involve both academic content and behavior. P6 reported that students with special education needs have difficulty with “following directions and basic social skills”. Whereas P19 reported students with special education needs have difficulty with “following classroom procedures”. P11 reported students with special education needs have difficulty with “reading and comprehension” and P9 difficulty with “inability to perform at grade level”. P7 reported students with special education needs have difficulty with “confidence” whereas P8 reported difficulty with “feeling inclusive

because a special education is basically over them the entire time”. P12 reported students with special education needs have difficulty with “lack of foundational skills”, P18 and P20 reported “pace”, and P13 reported “transitions”. Special education teachers reported that students with special education needs have difficulty with “instruction on a level they can understand” per P22, “understanding their [classroom] expectations” per P24, “reading” per P28, “engaging” per P26, following directions per P25, “self-confidence” per P27, and that “classrooms are stimulating places, and this doesn’t typically help them to stay in a calm state of mind” per P23.

Research Question 2

Research Question 2 states, “What are the perceptions of general education and special education teachers working in rural Kentucky elementary schools regarding preparedness or professional development to support increased rates of collaboration”. The *Charles Ragin’s* Comparison Theory was implemented to relate general and special education teacher perceptions regarding collaboration protocols (Maxwell, 2018). Figure 2 assists in easy correspondence of categorized answers to research questions in alignment with research question 2. Utilizing the visual, themes for research question 2 were identified and implemented in Table 4 to relate general and special education teacher perceptions.

Table 4

Research Question 2 Themes

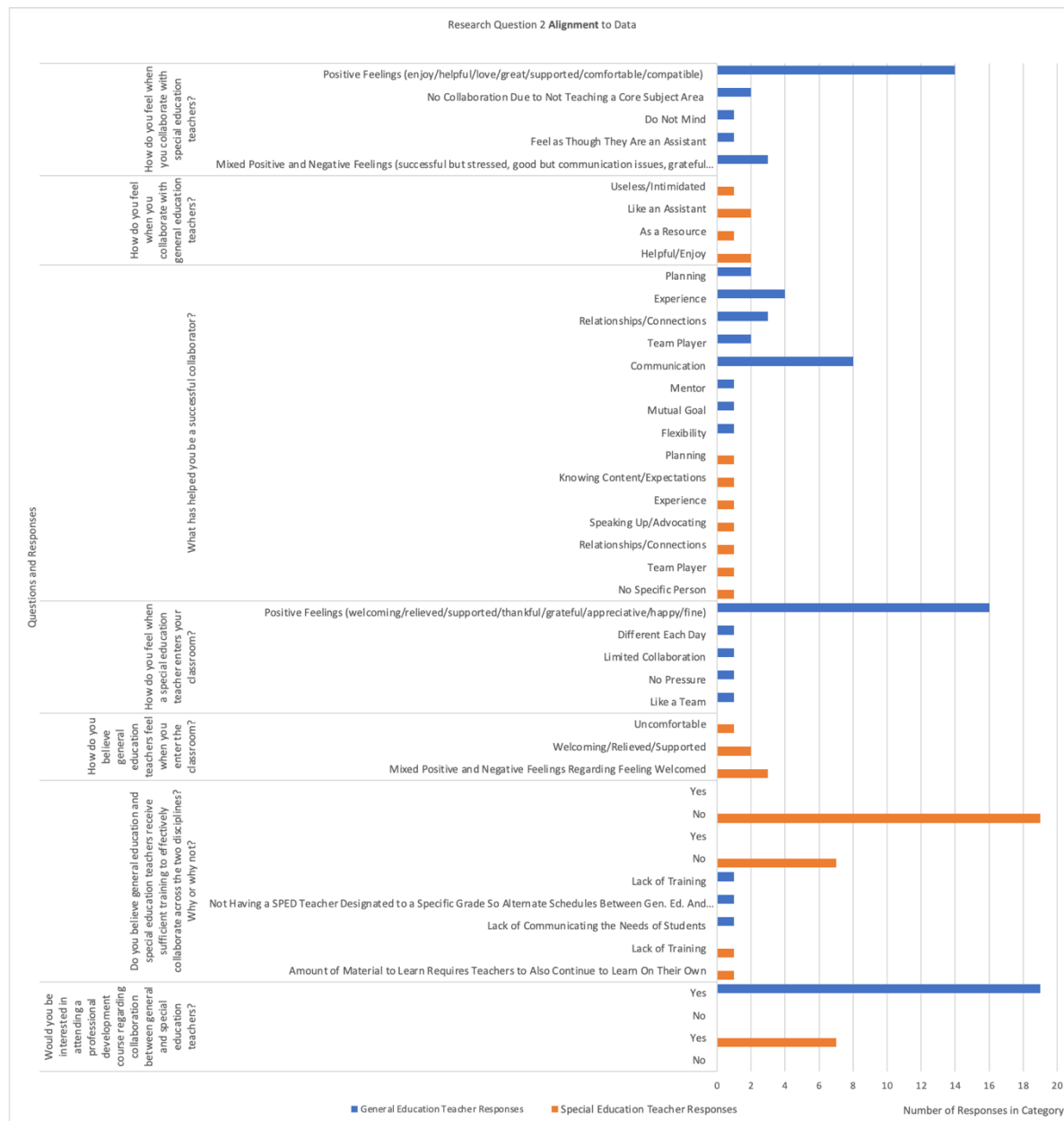
<i>RQ2</i> What are the perceptions of general education and special education teachers working in rural Kentucky elementary schools regarding preparedness or professional development to support increased rates of collaboration?	
General Education Teachers	Special Education Teachers
THEME 1.0: Insufficient Training on Collaboration	
THEME 1.1: Lack of Training and Communication	
THEME 1.2: General and Special Education Teacher Interest in Attending Training	

Insufficient Training on Collaboration. This theme indicates that general and special education teachers perceive they are not prepared nor have received sufficient professional development that support increased collaboration. This theme was consistent for research question 2 between the two professions. Both general and special education teachers believe there is insufficient training specifically regarding collaboration between the two professions. Both elaborated on this theme by expressing a lack of training and communication. One general education teacher reported in the focus group they “don’t really think we [general education teachers] receive any training” while “in college”. Another general education teacher reported in the focus group they “had one special ed. class” while in college and “that one special ed. Class did not prepare me [general education teachers] for having those students [students with special education needs] in my [the] classroom.” This same general education teacher also reported in the focus group they do not remember collaboration being covered in the classroom. Another general education teacher in the focus group reported a lack of training on the special education terminology as well. A general education teacher did express in the focus group the need for time to communicate to plan otherwise it is more like they come in to assist. Four special education teachers reported in the focus group that they did not receive sufficient training regarding collaboration (P25, P22, P26, and P27). P25 reported, “When a general education teacher goes to school, they are given special education class and taught in order for them to learn about what an IEP is, how to implement it, a 504 plan, but does not always receive strategies in order to modify or accommodate children in the way that they need to and that’s typically left for the special education teacher.” P22 stated, “I think there’s just so much that they [general education teachers] need to learn.” However, both professions did express interest in attending training regarding collaboration by stating “yes” or nodding “yes” during the focus group when asked if

they would be interested in attending a professional development course regarding collaboration between general and special education teachers.

Figure 2

Research Question 2 Alignment to Data Chart



Research Question 3

Research Question 3 states, “Which collaboration strategies do general and special education teachers in rural Kentucky schools believe would be successful?” The *Charles Ragin’s* Comparison Theory was implemented to relate general and special education teacher perceptions regarding collaboration protocols (Maxwell, 2018). Figure 3 assists in easy correspondence of categorized answers to research questions in alignment with research question 3. Utilizing the visual, themes for research question 3 were identified and implemented in Table 5 to relate general and special education teacher perceptions.

Table 5

Research Question 3 Themes

RQ3 Which collaboration strategies do general and special education teachers in rural Kentucky schools believe would be successful?	
General Education Teachers	Special Education Teachers
THEME 1.0: Communication is the Paramount Strategy of Collaboration	
THEME 1.1: Shared Focus and Top Management Support Benefit Success	THEME 1.1: Knowledge, Planning, and Experience Benefit Success
THEME 1.2: Documented Lack of Collaboration	THEME 1.2: Increased Needs Require Increased Support
THEME 2.0: Inconsistent Modes of Collaboration are Implemented	THEME 2.0: Complementary Teaching is the Paramount Mode of Collaboration

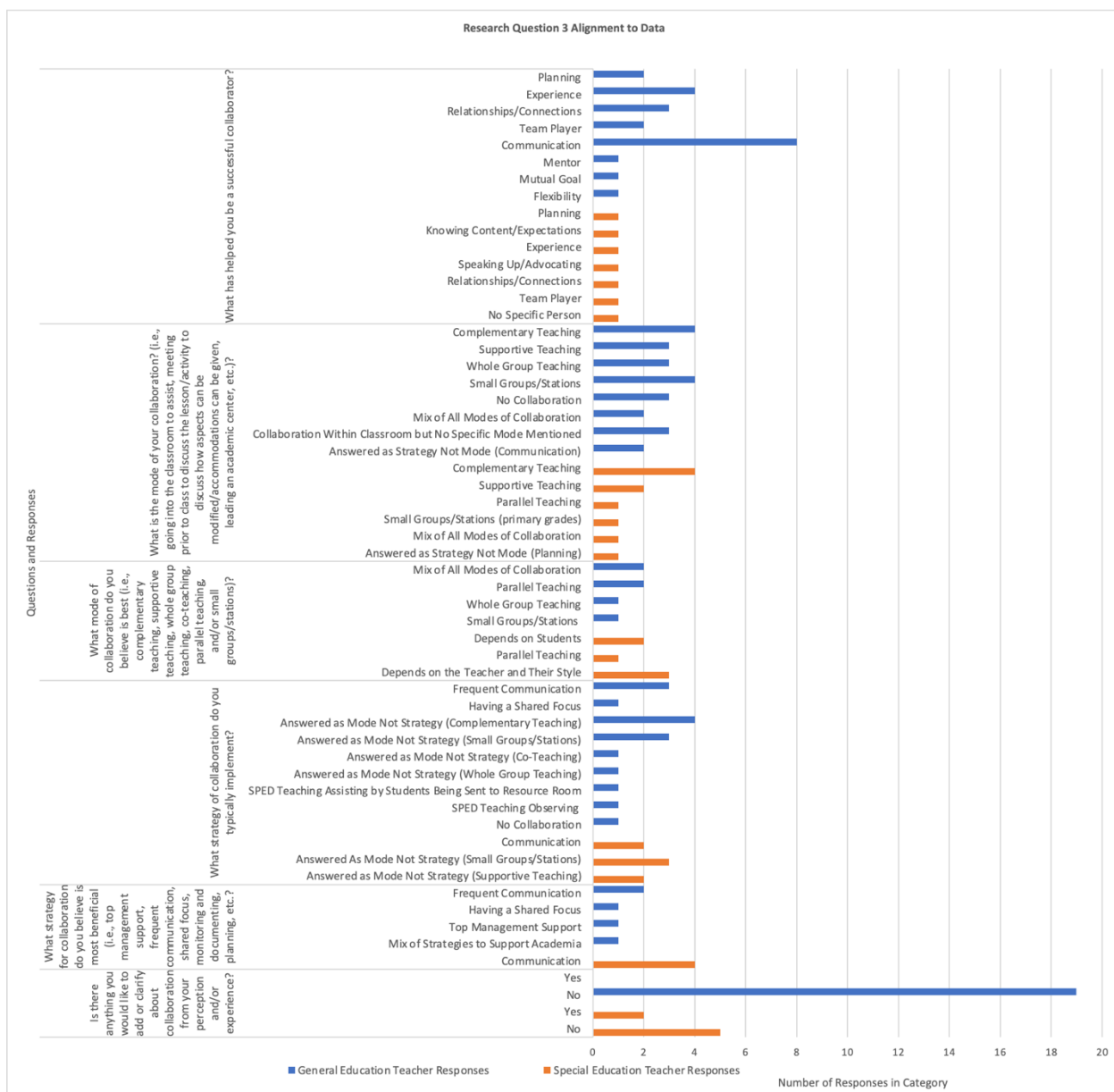
Communication is the Paramount Strategy of Collaboration. The research question inquired on which collaboration strategy would be successful in which communication was determined to be the paramount collaboration strategy by both special and general education teachers. A quote by P23 states, “communication is key” which represents the majority of data for both general and special education teacher responses when asked which strategy most beneficial in the focus groups. General education teachers mentioned they primarily use frequent communication as a collaboration strategy and believe this is the most beneficial strategy. General education teachers elaborated by reported shared focus and top management support benefit success while special education teachers reported knowledge, planning, and experience benefit success. General education teachers also reported there is a documented lack of collaboration in areas outside of reading and math. When asked general education teachers if a special education teacher collaborates with them, it was reported by most grades, second, third, fourth, and fifth collaboration took place in math and reading. However, it was just reported in kindergarten and first grades that collaboration took place but not specifically when. It was reported by P10 there was not collaboration during library. P3 expressed during the focus group for general education teachers that there was not collaboration during their grade’s science and social studies class but had previously elaborated during the questionnaire that collaboration does not occur often due to science and social studies not being a tested subject for their grade but that students go to special education teachers for important tests/assignments. Special education teachers did make a point in expressing that increased student needs require increased support, specifically P25 who indicated some students are in more self-contained rooms and not in the general education classroom as much as peers.

Inconsistent Modes of Collaboration are Implemented. This research question addressed which collaboration strategies would be the most successful however this research determined there are currently inconsistent modes implemented per general education teachers. General education teachers reported that complementary teaching, supportive teaching, whole group teaching, small groups/stations, and a mix of all modes of collaboration are the primary modes implemented but it was reported that parallel teaching, whole group teaching, small groups/stations, and a mix of all modes of collaboration is the most beneficial.

Complementary Teaching is the Paramount Mode of Collaboration. Special education teachers reported they typically implement complementary teaching, supportive teaching, parallel teaching, small groups/stations, and mix of all modes of collaboration as the primary modes of collaboration implemented and reported they believe complementary teaching is the most beneficial. Four out of the seven special education teacher participants described they use complementary teaching within the classroom. However, special education teachers reported modes of collaboration that are beneficial also depend on the students and teachers per P23 and P25 and another special education teacher in the focus group.

Figure 3

Research Question 3 Alignment to Data Chart



Research Question 4

Research Question 4 states, “What do general and special education teachers believe districts/schools can do to support high rates of collaboration besides the inevitable aspect of time”. The *Charles Ragin’s* Comparison Theory was implemented to relate general and special education teacher perceptions regarding collaboration protocols (Maxwell, 2018). Figure 4 assists in easy correspondence of categorized answers of research questions in alignment with research question 4. Utilizing the visual, themes for research question 4 were identified and implemented in Table 6 to relate general and special education teacher perceptions.

Table 6

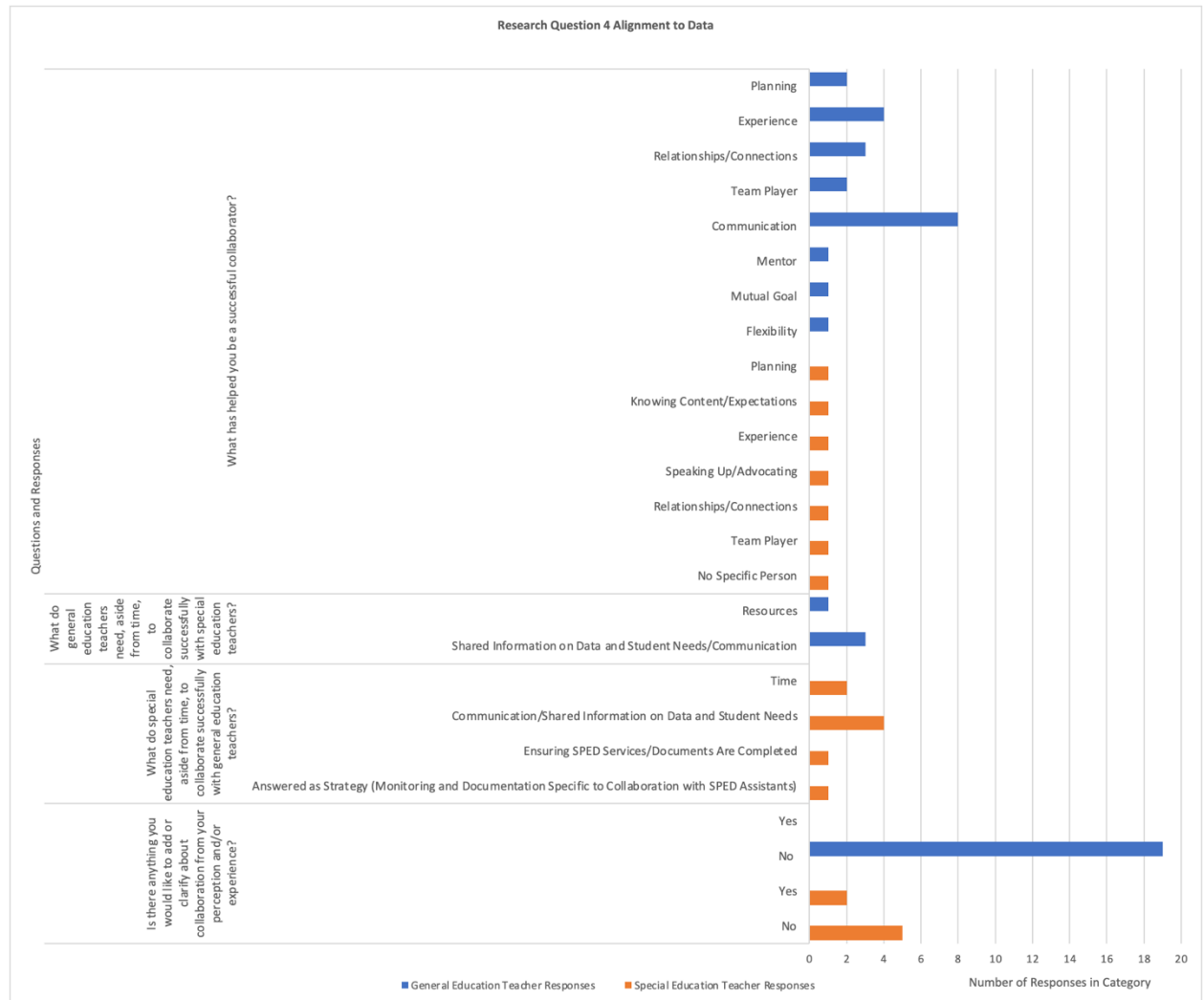
Research Question 4 Themes

<i>RQ4</i> What do general and special education teachers believe districts/schools can do to support high rates of collaboration besides the inevitable aspect of needed time?	
General Education Teachers	Special Education Teachers
THEME 1.0: Increased Communication Support High Rates of Collaboration	

Increased Communication Support High Rates of Collaboration. This research question referred to what top management, such as districts and schools, can do to assist and support high rates of collaboration between general and special education teachers besides the inevitable aspect of time. However, some special education teachers did mention “time is what we [special education teachers] need (P24) and “there’s not enough time in anything” (P22). One theme was identified regarding research question 4 between both general and special education teachers indicating they believe increased communication support high rates of collaboration. One general education teacher reported in the focus group they believe general education teachers needed “shared information on data” while another general education teacher elaborated, they have never seen the data and therefore not “able to use it in my [the] class”. Another general education teacher elaborated in the focus group by sharing they are shared information before school prior to knowing the students and therefore do not connect to it. This general education teacher recommended “some refreshers too through the year for all of us [general education teachers] for what those kids specifically need”. When this teacher made this comment other general education teachers were agreeing by nodding during the focus group. P23 shared in the special education focus group that a “quick look sheet” to give the teachers a view of the student’s needs. P28 agreed stating they do this listing the student’s accommodations for the teacher. P22 also shared ensuring the general education teachers are linked on the database where they can view their documents digitally. All of these are shared ways to increase communication to assist in higher rates of collaboration between general and special education teachers.

Figure 4

Research Question 4 Alignment to Data Chart



Evaluation of the Outcomes

The problem addressed in the research was that elementary general and special education teachers are ill-prepared for collaboration and have limited knowledge of the application of content within the other professional field (Fogo & Requa, 2020; Kartini & Aprilia, 2022). This study confirmed this. Research question 2 specifically addressed general and special education

teachers working in rural Kentucky elementary schools' perceptions regarding preparedness or professional development to support increased rates of collaboration.

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive case study was to explore the perceptions of elementary general and special education teachers about the nature of their collaboration, their preparedness for collaboration, and the collaboration strategies that may be beneficial in a school setting. This study addressed general and special education teacher's perceptions regarding collaboration via open-ended questionnaires and focus groups which provided questions aligning with four research questions to fulfill the purpose of this study. Teachers were asked questions to seek their perceptions specifically regarding their collaboration protocol within their school, preparedness, and professional development to increased rates of collaboration, successful collaboration strategies, and what districts/schools can do to support high rates of collaboration.

Research Question 1

Research Question 1 focused on seeking general and special education teacher's perceptions regarding their collaboration protocol. Overall, a theme emerging for this study is there are inconsistent collaboration practices. General education teachers reported collaboration primarily takes place within core academic subjects such as math and reading while special education teachers reported they collaborate, but it is inconsistent across grade levels due to varying special education teachers. A divergent result in the study is that there is a communication barrier at this time during collaboration which may be due to inconsistent collaboration protocols which was found as a theme with research question 1. Research shows that collaboration allows for open communication which support a positive school climate (Zhang et al., 2023). However, it is important to note that consistency is best practice for student success which collaboration allows, unless there is inconsistency with collaboration which this

study has added to the research indicating (Alabdallat et al., 2021; Berry, 2021; Zarate et al., 2023). Previous research stated collaboration assists open communication, but it is important to note that increased communication allows for collaboration (Zhang et al., 2023). One important concept that emerged from this study is when one general education teacher reported in the focus group that when there is a lack of communication, collaboration within the classroom looks as though the special education teacher is assisting rather than truly collaborating. General education teachers reported a preference for weekly direct communication while special education teachers reported unclear communication expectations for cross-role collaboration. General and special education teachers both agree that communication and relationships benefit success but there are times of limited communication. General education teachers specifically reported a lack of communication during conflicts and a need for communication for scheduling purposes. Special education teachers reported there is a lack of communication prior to the act of collaborating; however, knowledge, planning, and experience benefit success.

Another theme for teacher perceptions regarding their collaboration protocol is that both general and special education teacher's highest area of concerns for students receiving special education involve both academic and content and behaviors (i.e., instruction not on their level, inclusion, following directions/procedures, reading/comprehension, understanding expectations, behavior/lack of focus). Again, general education teachers reported a lack of training on special education. Special education teachers reported a lack of training on implementing the accommodations and modifications needed within the actual classroom. This is consistent with previous research that both professions have limited knowledge of application of content within the other's professional field (Fogo & Requa, 2020; Kartini & Aprilia, 2022). Collaboration can

allow for open communication about these concerns which can allow consistency increasing student success (Alabdallat et al., 2021; Berry, 2021; Zarate et al., 2023, Zhang et al., 2023).

Research states that collaboration has positive effects on teachers and is beneficial (Berry, 2021). A theme for research question one was that general education teachers had positive feelings towards collaboration believing it affects student and teacher performance positively. However, there was a divergent for special education teachers as they had mixed positive and negative feelings regarding collaboration and how it affected overall student and teacher performance.

Research Question 2

Research Question 2 focused on seeking general and special education teacher's perceptions regarding preparedness or professional development to support increased rates of collaboration. The theme that emerged for both general and special education teachers is that there is insufficient training on collaboration. This is consistent with previous research that both professions have limited knowledge of application of content within the other's professional field (Fogo & Requa, 2020; Kartini & Aprilia, 2022). General education teachers reported during the focus group they only had one class throughout college that involved special education and they do not recall being trained in collaboration throughout college. Another general education teacher within the focus group discussed lack of knowledge with terminology that is utilized within special education which creates a communication barrier. Special education teachers reported during the focus group they did not receive training on collaboration. P25 elaborated by referencing their classes focused on what an IEP and 504 plan is, but not specifically how to provide accommodations and modifications for the student within the classroom. However, both

general and special education teachers are willing to participate in professional developments to increase collaboration.

Social interdependence is the foundation of cooperative learning which requires sharing of a common goal, in this case the goal is for students to be behaviorally and academically successful by general and special education teachers collaborating (Deutsch, 1962). This requires teams to work together as a multidisciplinary team rather than transdisciplinary ensuring they are communicating and have a shared focus as to what the goal is (Deutsch, 1962; Johnson & Johnson 2001; Johnson & Johnson 2008; Johnson & Johnson, 2009; Ricci et al., 2002; Stubbs et al., 2017). Trainings and resources are needed to promote successful collaboration to assist in changing the culture which can be implemented by top management support of collaboration (Fitzgerald & Radford, 2022; Moore et al., 2021; Pettersson & Ström, 2018; Ricci et al., 2022). Trainings would allow for general and special education teachers to share a common goal and understand how each of their actions affects the others (Deutsch, 1962; Johnson & Johnson 2001; Johnson & Johnson 2009). This assists in ensuring some of the key components needed for successful collaboration such as group processing, promoting interaction, positive interdependence, and allowing teachers to have individual accountability in learning more about how to implement collaboration (Johnson & Johnson 2008).

Research Question 3

Research Question 3 focused on seeking general and special education teacher's perceptions regarding what collaboration strategy they believe would be successful. An overall theme for both general and special education teachers is that communication is the paramount strategy of collaboration. This supports current research that frequent communication is a successful strategy for positive collaboration and is necessary to diminish communication gaps

(Malviya et al, 2024; Ricci et al., 2022). An underlying theme for general education is that a shared focus and top management support benefit success. The theme of having a shared focus benefiting success directly supports the social interdependence framework of this study by supporting cooperation between the two disciplines to promote cooperative learning and success of a combined goal (Deutsch, 1962; Johnson & Johnson 2001; Johnson & Johnson 2009). Top management support aligns with previous research in which top management, administration, are the ones that can change the culture of the environment as primary leaders by providing trainings and resources that support collaboration (Fitzgerald & Radford, 2022; Moore et al., 2021; Pettersson & Ström, 2018; Ricci et al., 2022). Whereas an underlying theme for special education teachers is that knowledge, planning, and experience benefit success which adds to the research. Special education teachers did report that collaboration can be more difficult as the severity of student needs increases due to the correlation with the need of support. Another underlying theme to the paramount strategy of collaboration for general education teachers is that there is a documented lack of collaboration. This is consistent with previous research that general and special education teachers are not collaborating at a high rate (Alghazo & Alkhazaleh, 2021). It is important to note that documentation of collaboration is part of the overall process of monitoring which is necessary to use data to guide decisions (Fougerou-Leurent et al., 2019; Sicard, 2023). It is important to plan for collaboration involving multi-levels and multi-parties ensuring all teachers are working toward the same goal (Berry, 2021; Deutsch, 1962; Jiangchun et al., 2020; Malviya et al., 2024).

When discussing which mode of collaboration is paramount, a theme for general education teachers was that there are inconsistent modes are implemented based on student needs/age while special education teachers reported complementary teaching is the paramount

mode of collaboration. This adds to the research as an important factor to consider when developing future recommendations. Complementary teaching refers to the general education teacher teaching the curriculum content while the special education teacher assists specific students (Zurawski, 2023).

Research Question 4

Research Question 4 focused on seeking general and special education teacher's perceptions regarding what they believe districts/schools can do to support high rates of collaboration besides the inevitable aspect of time. Existing literature is consistent with the challenge of time for successful collaboration, therefore this research sought to find another aspect that could increase collaboration (Leatherman & Wegner, 2022; Nilsen, 2020; Tichenor & Tichenor, 2019). General education teachers also reported a lack of communication concerning data for the student therefore not knowing what each student's specific needs or ability is. This study contributes to the research by reporting that increased communication would support collaboration per the theme emerged from research question 4. This supports previous research that communication is necessary for successful collaboration (Ricci et al., 2022). A key point to mention is that planning communication is essential to ensure the communication occurs allowing for time to discuss a shared focus which promotes cooperation in effect supporting the social interdependence theory (Deutsch, 1962; Johnson & Johnson, 2001; Malviya et al., 2024). When the teachers share the common goal and cooperate to meet the goal, there are more positive relationships, greater achievement, and greater psychological health (Johnson & Johnson, 2008).

Implications and Recommendations for Practice

There are four primary recommendations for practice. All recommendations involve developing protocols and setting expectations which will allow the teachers to have clear expectations. When discussing recommendations for practice, it is important to consider that it is most beneficial when recommendations are promoted by administration in effect having top-down management support who have the ability to change the culture and environment while providing resources (Fitzgerald & Radford, 2022; Moore et al., 2021; Pettersson & Ström, 2018; Ricci et al., 2022).

The first recommendation for practice is to develop a collaboration protocol. A theme from research question one which asked, “What are the perceptions of rural Kentucky elementary general education and special education teachers regarding their collaboration protocol” was that there are inconsistent collaboration practices reported by both general and special education teachers. General education teachers reported that they desire for weekly collaboration with special education teachers while special education teachers reported they collaborate but without consistency. This inconsistency aligns with research stating that how collaboration occurs is typically weak because it is unclear how collaboration should be organized (Kluge et al., 2025). Research has shown that a successful inclusive environment has collaboration between general education and special education teachers due to diverse needs of student’s being unable to be managed successfully by a single teacher but requiring a multidisciplinary approach (Kluge et al., 2025). By exploring the perceptions and experiences of rural Kentucky elementary general and special education teachers, developing a collaboration protocol could lead to increased success of implementing collaboration within schools. A theme that emerged from research question three which asked, “Which collaboration strategies do

general and special education teachers in rural Kentucky schools believe would be successful?” was that complementary teaching is the paramount mode of collaboration where the general education teacher teaches content while the special education teacher assists specific students (Zurawski, 2023). It is noted that another recent research stated co-constructive collaboration was the paramount mode of collaboration in another study which defined co-constructive collaboration as a “joint development of strategies for dealing with complex educational challenges” (Kluge et al., 2025). Co-constructive collaboration involves both general and special education teachers collaborating to plan and construct a lesson ensuring all students are immersed in the lesson due to both teachers teaching the class instead of teaching individual students or groups of students which aligns more with co-teaching (Kluge et al., 2025; Zurawski, 2023).

A second recommendation for practice is to implement a communication protocol between general and special education teachers (i.e., weekly contact, shared plans, etc.) so expectations are known. The theme for research question four which asked, “What do general and special education teachers believe districts/schools can do to support high rates of collaboration besides the inevitable aspect of needed time?” was that increased communication support high rates of collaboration. This aligns with the theme that emerged from research question three which asked, “Which collaboration strategies do general and special education teachers in rural Kentucky schools believe would be successful?” was that communication is the paramount strategy of collaboration. General education teachers reported they desire direct communication with special education teachers. Special education teachers reported unclear communication expectations for cross-role collaboration. Having top management support for communication with a protocol in place regarding communication expectations would allow for

clearer expectations in this area in effect supporting the social interdependence theory that the individuals are working together to achieve a common goal being intentional about communicating with a shared focus (Deutsch, 1962; Johnson & Johnson, 2001; Johnson & Johnson, 2008; Malviya et al., 2024; Ricci et al., 2022).

A third recommendation for practice is administration mandating collaborative meetings (i.e., weekly during planning periods). This goes further than having a communication protocol in place because it also mandates general and special education teachers to meet to plan. Frequent communication should be planned to ensure it occurs (Malviya et al., 2024). Planning is necessary for successful collaboration and assists in diminishing the communication gap which improves the quality of collaboration occurring (Malviya et al., 2024; Ricci et al., 2022).

A fourth recommendation for practice is that professional development trainings be provided for all general education and special education teachers regarding implementation of collaboration. A theme that emerged from research question two which asked, “What are the perceptions of general education and special education teachers working in rural Kentucky elementary schools regarding preparedness or professional development to support increased rates of collaboration?” was that there is insufficient training on collaboration. Both general and special education teachers reported a lack of training and communication. However, both general and special education teachers expressed interest in attending a training to assist in knowledge of implementation. Trainings would allow for general and special education teachers to share a common goal and understand how each of their actions affects the others (Deutsch, 1962; Johnson & Johnson 2001; Johnson & Johnson 2009). Research has shown that there are unclear expectations of how collaboration should be organized and therefore how it is implemented is reportedly weak (Kluge et al., 2023). If there are trainings on implementation of collaboration,

there will be increased understanding of the common goal and actions needed to be successful with the goal (Deutsch, 1962; Johnson & Johnson, 2001).

Overall, the four recommendations of practice involve top-management support. These recommendations include developing a collaboration protocol, developing a communication protocol, administration mandating collaboration meetings, and requiring all teachers attend a professional development regarding implementation of collaboration. The overall goal is for students to be academically and behaviorally successful with productive collaboration being the action to support this goal. These practices allow for a shared focus of the common goal and actions needed applying social interdependence theory which applies cooperation (Deutsch, 1962).

Recommendations for Future Research

To build upon this study, there are five recommendations for future research. The recommendation for future research involves the population, cross-school relations which still will implement the *Charles Ragin's* qualitative comparative analysis, differing instrumentation, altering the order instrumentation will be implemented, and altering method of data collection. The recommendations will allow for more transferability and mitigate limitations.

The first recommendation is it that a study similar to this one which research teachers' perceptions on collaboration between general and special education teachers take place within other locations. This study exhibited limitations with transferability due to it taking place in a single rural Kentucky public elementary school. This study could take place in other rural counties/cities which may experience differing licensures and certifications which would increase transferability. Moreso, this study could take place in a more urban environment to

assist with transferability to urban areas in Kentucky which may experience more diversity among teachers and students.

Moreso, a second recommendation is a similar study could take place in multiple elementary schools within the same district or within an elementary school in the same county. This would allow the demographics to be similar but reduce the limitations of the researcher working within the same school district and increase transferability by making the research sample larger. Due to this study being performed in a small, rural elementary school there was a limitation of credibility due to teachers possibly feeling as though they could be easily identified. By the study taking place in a larger elementary school, or one where the researcher does not also work, teachers may feel more comfortable sharing their perspectives and there be more reliable, self-reported data. This would also allow for the *Charles Ragin's* qualitative comparative analysis to be implemented by comparing two school's teacher's perceptions on collaborations rather than comparing general education and special education teacher perceptions.

A third recommendation for future research is a change in instrumentation. Using an open-ended questionnaire allowed for ease of administration and manage of data collection however having multiple choice answers for some of the questions would be beneficial (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). Open-ended answers required clarification at times or left the researcher unknowing. For instance, not knowing if they received a Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Science, or master's degree. Another example was when asked about modes and strategies of collaboration, there were some answers that did not match the choices that were given as examples. For instance, some typed a mode for a strategy and vice versa. If a multiple-choice option was given, this could provide more clear answers.

A fourth recommendation for future research is a change in the order of instrumentation. It is recommended that the focus groups take place prior to the questionnaire. This would allow for more elaboration on topics that were discussed in the focus group while providing more anonymity in the questionnaire. With the focus group taking place secondly, topics in the questionnaire may have been new and unfamiliar with less guidance. The focus group could serve as a time to ask questions if terminology/questions are unfamiliar prior to completing the questionnaire.

A fifth recommendation for future research involves altering the method of data collection. It is recommended that focus groups be video recorded as well as audio recorded. Focus groups were only audio recorded in this study which infringed on the data due to not knowing which participants made which comments in the focus group. It would be beneficial to know specific teacher perceptions during the focus groups since there was a range of kindergarten through fifth grade teachers who taught varying subjects/curriculum within the school. Moreso, teachers ranged from being first year teacher to 29 years of experience within this study. By not being able to determine which participant made specific comments within the focus group, although the information was still beneficial, the analyzation process was not as in depth as it could have been.

Overall, the recommendations for future research included increasing the population of the study allowing for more transferability. The recommendations also included allowing for cross-school relations instead of cross-role relations within the school. The future recommendations also involved instrumentation and data collection allowing for a greater range of information.

Conclusions

The problem addressed in this research is that elementary general and special education teachers are ill-prepared for collaboration and have limited knowledge of the application of content within the other's professional field (Fogo & Requa, 2020; Kartini & Aprilia, 2022). The purpose of this qualitative descriptive case study is to explore the perceptions of elementary general and special education teachers about the nature of their collaboration, their preparedness for collaboration, and the collaboration strategies that may be beneficial in a school setting. The methodology and design allowed for real-world situations to be studied in their natural environment and was implemented through open-ended questions and focus groups (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019; Salkind, 2010). Research questions reviewed teachers' perceptions regarding collaboration and investigated what the teachers needed to be successful collaborators while increasing collaboration within the school. Specifically, research questions asked general and special education teachers who work in rural Kentucky elementary schools their perceptions on their collaboration protocol, their preparedness or professional development to support increased rates of collaboration, strategies believed to be successful in leading to increased collaboration between the two disciplines, and what districts/schools can do to support high rates of collaboration.

In this study, the social interdependence theory was applied in cooperation to the specific problem that there is a low rate of collaboration between general education and special education teachers due to being ill-prepared then address teachers' perceptions on collaboration, which involves cooperation, leading to positive solutions to collaborating with one another by seeing what they need to be successful in achieving the common goal (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019; Johnson & Johnson, 2009; Johnson & Johnson, 2008; Salkind, 2010). The themes that emerged

indicate communication is needed as well as consistency with collaboration so both general and special education teachers understand expectations and have a shared focus with a common goal. A primary theme that emerged within the research is that there are inconsistent collaboration practices. General education teachers elaborated by stating collaboration was confined to core academic subjects. General education teachers desire for regular weekly collaboration and prefer direct communication with special education teachers. Special education teachers reported they collaborate without consistency and there are unclear communication expectations for cross-role collaboration. Another theme that emerged is there are positive general education teacher feelings toward collaboration in which they feel collaboration positively affects student and teacher performance. However, there are mixed special education teacher feelings toward collaboration. There are inconsistent perceptions on how they believe collaboration affects student and teacher performance. Moreso, a common theme between the two disciplines was that communication and relationships benefit success. However, general education teachers reported limited communication during conflicts and a need for communication for scheduling. Special education teachers reported limited prior cross-role communication but did report knowledge, planning, and experience also benefit success. Overall, both general and special education teachers have the highest concerns with student's academic content and behavior. Another common theme was general and special education teachers reported insufficient training on collaboration and a lack of training and communication however there is an interest in attending trainings. Another primary theme that emerged was that communication is the paramount strategy of collaboration and increased communication support high rates of collaboration. General education teachers did report a shared focus and top management support benefit success while special education teachers reported knowledge, planning, and experience benefit

success. General education teachers reported there is documented lack of collaboration and inconsistent modes of collaboration implemented while special education teachers reported increased student needs require increased support, but overall complementary teaching is the paramount mode of collaboration.

Overall, the four recommendations of practice involve top-management support. These recommendations include developing a collaboration protocol, developing a communication protocol, administration mandating collaboration meetings, and requiring all teachers attend a professional development regarding implementation of collaboration. The overall goal is for students to be academically and behaviorally successful with productive collaboration being the action to support this goal. These practices allow for a shared focus of the common goal and actions needed applying social interdependence theory which applies cooperation (Deutsch, 1962). The recommendations for future research included increasing the population of the study allowing for more transferability. The recommendations also included allowing for cross-school relations instead of cross-role relations within the school. The future recommendations also involved instrumentation such as multiple-choice questionnaires and data collection including video recording with audio allowing for a greater range of information.

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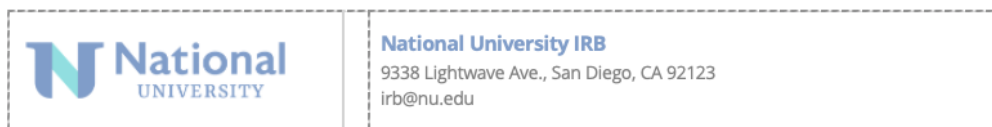
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Appendices

Appendix A

Site Permission



Date: August 30, 2024

Hello NU IRB,

My name is PRINCIPAL and I am Principal at Blind Tiger Elementary within Blind Tiger Elementary district.

I have reviewed Hannah Bush's study, and I understand that they are recruiting participants who meet all the following criteria:

1. Hold an elementary education, speech language pathology, and/or a special education (EBD, LBD, MSD) certification.
2. Work within the district of Blind Tiger Elementary at Blind Tiger Elementary.
3. Practicing as an elementary education teacher, speech language pathology, and/or a special education teacher (EBD, LBD, MSD) with students in elementary school (kindergarten through fifth grade).
4. Are age 18 or older.

I grant permission to Hannah Bush to do the following:

1. Invite participants to complete an online inclusion questionnaire via Google forms for approximately 5 minutes.
2. Invite participants to review questionnaire answers via email for approximately 5 minutes.
3. Invite participants to complete an online open-ended questionnaire via Google Forms for approximately 5-10 minutes.
4. Invite participants to review questionnaire answers via email for approximately 5 minutes.
5. Invite participants to participate in a focus group via Google Meet for approximately 15-20 minutes.
6. Invite participants to review the focus group transcripts via email for approximately 10-15 minutes.

If you have questions and would like to reach me, please do so at (123)456-7899.

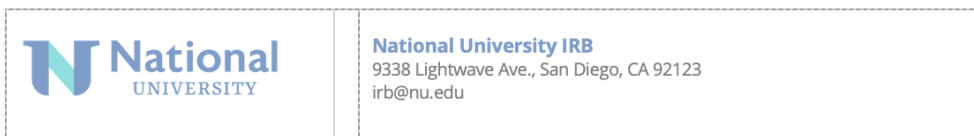
Thank you for your time,

Principal

PRINCIPAL

Appendix B

Recruitment Email



Recruitment Email

My name is Hannah Bush, and I am a doctoral student at National University. I am conducting a research study to explore the perceptions of elementary general and special education teachers about the nature of their collaboration, their preparedness for collaboration, and the collaboration strategies that may be beneficial in a school setting.

I am recruiting individuals who meet all of these criteria:

1. Hold an elementary education, speech language pathology, and/or a special education (EBD, LBD, MSD) certification.
2. Work within the district of Blind Tiger Elementary at Blind Tiger Elementary.
3. Practicing as an elementary education teacher, speech language pathology, and/or a special education teacher (EBD, LBD, MSD) with students in elementary school (kindergarten through fifth grade).
4. Are age 18 or older.

If you decide to participate in this study, you will be asked to do the following activities:

1. Complete an online inclusion questionnaire via Google forms for approximately 5 minutes.
2. Review your questionnaire answers via email for approximately 5 minutes.
3. Complete an online open-ended questionnaire via Google Forms for approximately 5-10 minutes.
4. Review your questionnaire answers via email for approximately 5 minutes.
5. Participate in a focus group via Google Meet for approximately 15-20 minutes.
6. Review your focus group transcripts via email for approximately 10-15 minutes.

During these activities, you will be asked questions about:

- Your profession.
- Years of experience.
- Grades you work with.
- Experience with collaboration.
- Your perceptions on collaboration regarding needs and strategies to be implemented to increase collaboration.

If you are interested in participating in this study, please click this link to view the informed consent, electronically agree to the informed consent, and take an inclusion questionnaire to determine if you qualify to participate:

<https://forms.gle/sWS51b4oWGgREz7D6>. If you have questions, please contact me at H.kuzma6074@o365.ncu.edu or at (123)456-7899.

Thank you for considering participating in this voluntary research!

Hannah Bush

Appendix C

Inclusion Questionnaire Protocol



National University IRB
9338 Lightwave Ave., San Diego, CA 92123
irb@nu.edu

Inclusion Questionnaire Protocol

Sample introduction: This questionnaire includes questions about personal information (certification, age, employment) to determine if the person meets inclusion criteria and will also include the consent form. This questionnaire will take approximately 5 minutes to complete. Please read the questionnaire instructions carefully before beginning. Respond to all questions as honestly as possible. Your responses will be confidential. You may skip any questions you do not wish to answer.

Sample instructions for qualitative survey/questionnaire: The purpose of this questionnaire is to determine if the individual meets inclusion criteria. Please read each question below and describe your experiences in your own words in the space provided.

Sample qualitative questionnaire item:

Do you hold a general education certification?

Conclusion: At the end of a questionnaire, thank study participants for their time and willingness to complete the survey/questionnaire.

Next Steps: If the individual qualifies, they will receive another recruitment email informing them they meet inclusion criteria. This email will include infographics regarding collaboration to assist with their knowledge and will also ask them to participate in an open-ended questionnaire to gain data regarding their perception.

Appendix D

Inclusion Questionnaire

Dissertation - Inclusion Questionnaire

hannah.b.kuzma@gmail.com [Switch account](#)

* Indicates required question

Email *

Your email

Informed Consent *

National University IRB
2125 S. University Ave., San Diego, CA 92123
(619) 495-4400

Consent Form

My name is Hannah Bush, and I am a doctoral student at National University (NU). I also hold a role as a Speech Language Pathologist at Glasgow Independent Schools.

I'm asking you to take part in a research study about exploring the perceptions of elementary general and special education teachers about the nature of their collaboration, their preparedness for collaboration, and the collaboration strategies that may be beneficial in a school setting. The name of this research is "Teachers' Perceptions on Collaboration Between General and Special Education Teachers".

You may participate in this research if you meet all the following criteria:

1. Hold an elementary education, speech language pathology, and/or a special education (EBD, LBD, MSD) certification.
2. Work within the district of Blind Tiger Elementary or Blind Tiger Elementary.
3. Practicing as an elementary education teacher, speech language pathology, and/or a special education teacher (EBD, LBD, MSD) with students in elementary school (kindergarten through fifth grade).
4. Are age 18 or older.

I hope to recruit at least 10-15 general education teachers with at least one from each grade level within the elementary school (i.e., kindergarten through fifth grade) and at least 4-5 special education teachers, which serve as both inclusion and resource teachers for their students, with at least one representing primary and intermediate grades in this research. Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to take part in the study.

What you will be asked to do: If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to do the following activities:

1. Complete an online inclusion questionnaire via Google Forms for approximately 5 minutes.
2. Review your questionnaire answers via email for approximately 5 minutes.
3. Complete an online open-ended questionnaire via Google Forms for approximately 5-10 minutes.
4. Review your questionnaire answers via email for approximately 5 minutes.
5. Participate in a focus group via Google Meet for approximately 30-20 minutes.
6. Review your focus group transcripts via email for approximately 30-35 minutes.

During these activities, you will be asked questions about:

- Your profession.
- Years of experience.
- Grades you work with.
- Experience with collaboration.
- Your perceptions on collaboration regarding needs and strategies to be implemented to increase collaboration.

Risks: There are minimal foreseeable risks or discomforts associated with this research. You can still skip any question you do not want to answer, assume activity, or skip participation at any time.

Benefits: If you participate, there are no direct benefits to you. This research may increase the body of knowledge in the subject area of this research.

Recording: I would like to audio/video record your responses and/or actions with Google Meet during the focus group. You can disable the video function of the online meeting platform at any time.

Minimal Reporting: My professional role outside of NU requires me to report suspicion of child or elderly abuse, suspicion of possible harm to self or others, and convicted crimes to the appropriate authorities.

Confidentiality: I will keep the records of this study private and take reasonable measures to protect the security of all your personal information. In any report I make public, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you. The data will be

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(619) 495-4400

left in One Drive and Google Drive, which are locked by a password within a computer. When I am not present, the computer will also be locked either in a cabinet or a room. After the study is completed, the information will be archived.

Timing and voluntary: Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may quit at any time.

If you have questions: Please ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact me at hbush@nu.edu or (123)456-7890.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a subject in this study, you may contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) via email at irb@nu.edu.

By clicking the next button and completing the survey you indicate that you have consented to participate in this research. If you do not want to participate, please close the browser.

Do you hold certification/licensure for general education?

Yes

No

Do you hold certification/licensure for special education (EBD, LBD, MSD)?

Yes

No

Do you hold certification/licensure for speech language pathology?

Yes

No

Are you actively practicing with your certification?

Yes

No

Do you work at Blind Tiger Elementary?

Yes

No

Do you work with students in grades kindergarten through fifth grade?

Yes

No

Are you age 18 or older?

Yes

No

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this questionnaire, a copy of your responses will be emailed to you. Information regarding an open-ended questionnaire to gather data regarding general and special education teachers perceptions of collaboration if you meet criteria.

Your answer

A copy of your responses will be emailed to the address you provided.

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Google Forms

Appendix E

Special Education Teacher Open-Ended Questionnaire Protocol



National University IRB
9338 Lightwave Ave., San Diego, CA 92123
irb@nu.edu

Special Education Teacher Open-Ended Questionnaire Protocol

Sample introduction: This survey/questionnaire includes questions about exploring the perceptions of elementary special education teachers about the nature of their collaboration, their preparedness that led to lower rates of collaboration, and what collaboration strategies may be beneficial in a school setting and will take approximately 5-10 minutes to complete. Please read the survey/questionnaire instructions carefully before beginning. Respond to all questions as honestly as possible. Your responses will be confidential. You may skip any questions you do not wish to answer.

Sample instructions for qualitative survey/questionnaire: The purpose of this survey/questionnaire is to determine teachers' perceptions regarding collaboration. Please read each question below and describe your experiences in your own words in the space provided.

Sample qualitative questionnaire item:

In your experience, how has introducing technology into classroom learning influenced students' engagement with the course material?

Conclusion: At the end of a survey/questionnaire, thank study participants for their time and willingness to complete the survey/questionnaire.

Next Steps: Information regarding the focus group will be included at the end of the questionnaire to let them know when, where, and how (Google Meet) it will occur. The individuals will also receive a recruitment email with a link to the Google Meet link. A reminder email will also be sent to the individuals the day before the meeting. Contact information of the researcher will be given at the end of the questionnaire and within the email.

Appendix F

Open-Ended Questionnaire for Special Education Teachers

Dissertation - Open-Ended Questionnaire for Special Education Teachers

hannah.b.kuzma@gmail.com [@switch account](#)

* Indicates required question

Email *

Your email

Which certification do you hold?

Your answer

What grades do you primarily provide services for?

Your answer

How do you feel when you collaborate with general education teachers?

Your answer

What has helped you be a successful collaborator?

Your answer

How do you believe general education teachers feel when you enter the classroom?

Your answer

As a special education teacher, what do you believe students with special education needs have the most difficulty with when in the general education classroom?

Your answer

What is the mode of your collaboration (i.e., going into the classroom to assist, meeting prior to class to discuss the lesson/activity to discuss how aspects can be modified/accommodations can be given, leading an academic center, etc.)?

Your answer

What strategy of collaboration do you typically implement?

Your answer

Hypothetical Scenario: You have an IEP meeting that has lasted longer than expected, ending at 2:05PM. You are scheduled to collaborate with teacher 2:00PM. What action steps would you take to resolve the following scenarios?

Your answer

Hypothetical Scenario: You would like to schedule a time to collaborate with each general education teacher you work with but multiple teachers have chosen the same time to collaborate. What action steps would you take to resolve the following scenarios?

Your answer

Hypothetical Scenario: A general education teacher has contacted you regarding how to best assist a student with special education needs. What action steps would you take to resolve the following scenarios?

Your answer

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this questionnaire. A copy of your responses will be emailed to you. There is a focus group for special education teachers to delve into deeper research on DAY, MONTH DATE YEAR, at TIME via Google Meet. Please indicate if you intend on participating.

Your answer

A copy of your responses will be emailed to the address you provided.

Submit
Clear form

Appendix G

General Education Teacher Open-Ended Questionnaire Protocol



National University IRB
9338 Lightwave Ave., San Diego, CA 92123
irb@nu.edu

General Education Teacher Open-Ended Questionnaire Protocol

Sample introduction: This survey/questionnaire includes questions about exploring the perceptions of elementary general teachers about the nature of their collaboration, their preparedness that led to lower rates of collaboration, and what collaboration strategies may be beneficial in a school setting and will take approximately 5-10 minutes to complete. Please read the survey/questionnaire instructions carefully before beginning. Respond to all questions as honestly as possible. Your responses will be confidential. You may skip any questions you do not wish to answer.

Sample instructions for qualitative survey/questionnaire: The purpose of this survey/questionnaire is to determine teachers' perceptions regarding collaboration. Please read each question below and describe your experiences in your own words in the space provided.

Sample qualitative questionnaire item:

- ◇ In your experience, how has introducing technology into classroom learning influenced students' engagement with the course material?

Conclusion: At the end of a survey/questionnaire, thank study participants for their time and willingness to complete the survey/questionnaire.

- ◇ **Next Steps:** Information regarding the focus group will be included at the end of the questionnaire to let them know when, where, and how (Google Meet) it will occur. The individuals will also receive a recruitment email with a link to the Google Meet link. A reminder email will also be sent to the individuals the day before the meeting. Contact information of the researcher will be given at the end of the questionnaire and within the email.

Appendix H

Open-Ended Questionnaire for General Education Teachers

Dissertation - Questionnaire for General Education Teachers

hannah.b.kuzma@gmail.com [Switch account](#)

* Indicates required question

Email *
Your email _____

Which certification do you hold?
Your answer _____

What grades do you primarily teach?
Your answer _____

How do you feel when you collaborate with special education teachers?
Your answer _____

What has helped you be a successful collaborator?
Your answer _____

How do you feel when a special education teacher enters your classroom?
Your answer _____

As a general education teacher, what do you believe students with special education needs have the most difficulty with when in the general education classroom?
Your answer _____

What is the mode of your collaboration (i.e., going into the classroom to assist, meeting prior to class to discuss the lesson/activity to discuss how aspects can be modified/accommodations can be given, leading an academic center, etc.)?
Your answer _____

What strategy of collaboration do you typically implement?
Your answer _____

Hypothetical Scenario: You are scheduled to collaborate with a special education teacher at 2:00PM and have an activity planned requiring the collaboration. It is 2:05PM and the special education teacher has not entered the room yet. What action steps would you take to resolve the following scenarios?
Your answer _____

Hypothetical Scenario: A special education teacher would like to schedule a time to meet to plan or collaborate but you do not have any time to meet due to PLC, meetings, and needing your planning time to prepare for class. What action steps would you take to resolve the following scenarios?
Your answer _____

Hypothetical Scenario: A special education teacher has sent you accommodations and/or modifications to assist a student with special education needs via email but you are unsure how to implement these strategies. What action steps would you take to resolve the following scenarios?
Your answer _____

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this questionnaire. A copy of your responses will be emailed to you. There is a focus group for general education teachers to delve into deeper research on DAY, MONTH DATE YEAR, at TIME via Google Meet. Please indicate if you intend on participating.
Your answer _____

A copy of your responses will be emailed to the address you provided.

Submit
Clear form

Appendix I

Open-Ended Special Education and General Education Teacher Questionnaire Item

Alignment to Research Questions

Item Number	General Education	Special Education	Research Question Alignment
1	Which certification do you hold?	Which certification do you hold?	Assists with data analysis.
2	What grades do you primarily teach?	What grades do you primarily provide services for?	Assists with data analysis.
3	How do you feel when you collaborate with special education teachers?	How do you feel when you collaborate with general education teachers?	RQ1–2
4	What has helped you be a successful collaborator?	What has helped you be a successful collaborator?	RQ 1–4
5	How do you feel when a special education teacher enters your classroom?	How do you believe general education teachers feel when you enter the classroom?	RQ 1–2
6	As a general education teacher, what do you believe students with special education needs have the most difficulty with when in the general education classroom?	As a special education teacher, what do you believe students with special education needs have the most difficulty with when in the general education classroom?	RQ1
7	What is the mode of your collaboration? (i.e., going into the classroom to assist, meeting prior to class to discuss the lesson/activity to discuss how aspects can be modified/accommodations can be given, leading an academic center, etc.)?	What is the mode of your collaboration? (i.e., going into the classroom to assist, meeting prior to class to discuss the lesson/activity to discuss how aspects can be modified/accommodations can be given, leading an academic center, etc.)?	RQ3
8	What strategy of collaboration do you typically implement?	What strategy of collaboration do you typically implement?	RQ3
9	Hypothetical Scenario: You are scheduled to	Hypothetical Scenario: You have an IEP meeting	RQ1

	collaborate with a special education teacher at 2:00PM and have an activity planned requiring the collaboration. It is 2:05PM and the special education teacher has not entered the room yet. What action steps would you take to resolve the following scenarios?	that has lasted longer than expected, ending at 2:05PM. You are scheduled to collaborate with a teacher at 2:00PM. What action steps would you take to resolve the following scenarios?	
10	Hypothetical Scenario: A special education teacher would like to schedule a time to meet to plan or collaborate but you do not have any time to meet due to PLC, meetings, and needing your planning time to prepare for class. What action steps would you take to resolve the following scenarios?	Hypothetical Scenario: You would like to schedule a time to collaborate with each general education teacher you work with but multiple teachers have chosen the same time to collaborate. What action steps would you take to resolve the following scenarios?	RQ1
11	Hypothetical Scenario: A special education teacher has sent you accommodations and/or modifications to assist a student with special education needs via email but you are unsure how to implement these strategies. What action steps would you take to resolve the following scenarios?	Hypothetical Scenario: A general education teacher has contacted you regarding how to best assist a student with special education needs. What action steps would you take to resolve the following scenarios?	RQ1
12	Thank you for your willingness to participate in this questionnaire. A copy of your responses will be emailed to you. There is a focus group for general education teachers to delve into deeper research on DAY, MONTH DATE YEAR, at TIME	Thank you for your willingness to participate in this questionnaire. A copy of your responses will be emailed to you. There is a focus group for special education teachers to delve into deeper research on DAY, MONTH DATE YEAR,	Preparing for focus groups.

	via Google Meet. Please indicate if you intend on participating.	at TIME via Google Meet. Please indicate if you intend on participating.	
--	------------------------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------------------------------------	--

Appendix J

Special Education Teacher Focus Group Protocol



Special Education Teacher Focus Group Protocol

Sample introduction: Hello and thank you for agreeing to participate in this focus group today. My name is Hannah Bush, and I am a doctoral student at National University conducting my dissertation research. I am also a Speech Language Pathologist within the district of Blind Tiger Elementary. If you don't care, would you introduce your position within the school and the years of experience you have with the group.

This focus group is expected to last 15-20 minutes. I will be audio recording our discussion and taking notes to make sure I have complete information. Your responses will be held in confidence. The discussion will be transcribed and emailed to you for your review following the meeting.

Sample consent: I would like to review the consent letter with you before we begin the discussion.

Do you agree to participate in the study?

Participant: Yes _____ or No _____

Lead into the interview: Thank you. I am interested in both general and special education teachers' perceptions of collaboration with one another. This information will be confidential, and your individual answers will not be shared with anyone outside of this group. Your perspectives and experiences are important to understanding what strategies may be beneficial for increasing collaboration in the school setting.

Do you have any questions before we get started?

Consider beginning the interview with questions that put the participants at ease before moving onto the more complex or sensitive questions.

Questions:

1. Do you collaborate with a general education teacher?
2. If you do collaborate with a general education teacher, how much per week do you collaborate with a general education teacher?
3. How do you feel that collaboration between general and special education teachers affects overall student performance?
4. How do you feel that collaboration between general and special education teachers affect overall teacher performance?
5. Do you believe general education and special education teachers receive sufficient training to effectively collaborate across the two disciplines? Why or why not?



6. Would you be interested in attending a professional development course regarding collaboration between general and special education teachers?
7. How regularly do you believe general education and special education teachers need to meet outside the classroom during common planning time within the instructional day to collaborate on lessons successfully?
8. What mode of collaboration do you believe is best (i.e., complementary teaching, supportive teaching, whole group teaching, co-teaching, parallel teaching, and/or small groups/stations)?
9. What strategy for collaboration do you believe is most beneficial (i.e., top management support, frequent communication, shared focus, monitoring and documenting, planning, etc.)?
10. What do special education teachers need, aside from time, to collaborate successfully with general education teachers?

Conclusion: Thank you for taking the time to meet with me today and to share your perspectives/experiences on collaboration with one another.

Close the interview with some debriefing questions. This can serve as a process for clarification or as review of the interview.

Sample debriefing questions:

1. Ask if they have any questions or concerns
2. Is there anything you would like to add or clarify about collaboration from your perception and/or experience?

Supporting Resources

INFOGRAPHICS: Benefits of Collaboration Supporting Resource Infographic, Modes of Communication Supporting Resource Infographic, Collaboration Strategies Supporting Resource Infographic, Resources Infographic

Next Steps: I will be emailing the transcribed discussion to each member in the group for member checking on the accuracy of the transcription within the following week. Reviewing the transcription should take 10-15 minutes. Thank you for your willingness to participate in the focus group.

Appendix K

General Education Teacher Focus Group Protocol



General Education Focus Group Protocol

Sample introduction: Hello and thank you for agreeing to participate in this focus group today. My name is Hannah Bush, and I am a doctoral student at National University conducting my dissertation research. I am also a Speech Language Pathologist within the district of Blind Tiger Elementary if you don't care, would you introduce your position within the school and the years of experience you have with the group.

This focus group is expected to last 15-20 minutes. I will be video and audio recording our discussion and taking notes to make sure I have complete information. Your responses will be held in confidence. The discussion will be transcribed and emailed to you for your review following the meeting.

Sample consent: I would like to review the consent letter with you before we begin the discussion.

Do you agree to participate in the study?

Participant: Yes _____ or No _____

Lead into the interview: Thank you. I am interested in both general and special education teachers' perceptions of collaboration with one another. This information will be confidential, and your individual answers will not be shared with anyone outside of this group. Your perspectives and experiences are important to understanding what strategies may be beneficial for increasing collaboration in the school setting.

Do you have any questions before we get started?

Questions:

1. Does a special education teacher, not the special education teacher assistant, collaborate with you?
2. If a special education teacher collaborates with you, how much do they collaborate with you per week?
3. How do you feel that collaboration between general and special education teachers affects overall student performance?
4. How do you feel that collaboration between general and special education teachers affect overall teacher performance?
5. Do you believe general education and special education teachers receive sufficient training to effectively collaborate across the two disciplines? Why or why not?
6. Would you be interested in attending a professional development course regarding collaboration between general and special education teachers?



7. How regularly do you believe general education and special education teachers need to meet outside the classroom during common planning time within the instructional day to collaborate on lessons successfully?
8. What mode of collaboration do you believe is best (i.e., complementary teaching, supportive teaching, whole group teaching, co-teaching, parallel teaching, and/or small groups/stations)?
9. What strategy for collaboration do you believe is most beneficial (i.e., top management support, frequent communication, shared focus, monitoring and documenting, planning, etc.)?
10. What do general education teachers need, aside from time, to collaborate successfully with special education teachers?

Conclusion: Thank you for taking the time to meet with me today and to share your perspectives/experiences on collaboration with one another.

Close the interview with some debriefing questions. This can serve as a process for clarification or as review of the interview.

Sample debriefing questions:

1. Ask if they have any questions or concerns
2. Is there anything you would like to add or clarify about collaboration from your perception and/or experience?

Supporting Resources

INFOGRAPHICS: Benefits of Collaboration Supporting Resource Infographic, Modes of Communication Supporting Resource Infographic, Collaboration Strategies Supporting Resource Infographic, Resources Infographic

Next Steps: I will be emailing the transcribed discussion to each member in the group for member checking on the accuracy of the transcription within the following week. Reviewing the transcription should take 10-15 minutes. Thank you for your willingness to participate in the focus group.

Appendix L

Focus Group Item Alignment to Research Questions

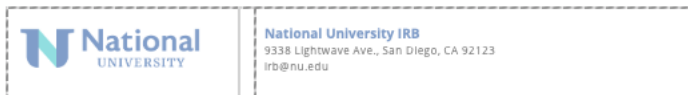
Item Number	General Education	Special Education	Research Question Alignment
1	Does a special education teacher, not the special education teacher assistant, collaborate with you?	Do you collaborate with a general education teacher?	RQ1
2	If a special education teacher collaborates with you, how much do they collaborate with you per week?	If you do collaborate with a general education teacher, how much per week do you collaborate with a general education teacher?	RQ1
3	How do you feel that collaboration between general and special education teachers affects overall student performance?	How do you feel that collaboration between general and special education teachers affects overall student performance?	RQ1
4	How do you feel that general and special education teachers affect overall teacher performance?	How do you feel that general and special education teachers affect overall teacher performance?	RQ1
5	Do you believe general education and special education teachers receive sufficient training to effectively collaborate across the two disciplines? Why or why not?	Do you believe general education and special education teachers receive sufficient training to effectively collaborate across the two disciplines? Why or why not?	RQ2
6	Would you be interested in attending a professional	Would you be interested in attending a professional	RQ2

	development course regarding collaboration between general and special education teachers?	development course regarding collaboration between general and special education teachers?	
7	How regularly do you believe general education and special education teachers need to meet outside the classroom during common planning time within the instructional day to collaborate on lessons successfully?	How regularly do you believe general education and special education teachers need to meet outside the classroom during common planning time within the instructional day to collaborate on lessons successfully?	RQ1
8	What mode of collaboration do you believe is best (i.e., complementary teaching, supportive teaching, whole group teaching, co-teaching, parallel teaching, and/or small groups/stations)?	What mode of collaboration do you believe is best (i.e., complementary teaching, supportive teaching, whole group teaching, co-teaching, parallel teaching, and/or small groups/stations)?	RQ3
9	What strategy for collaboration do you believe is most beneficial (i.e., top management support, frequent communication, shared focus, monitoring and documenting, planning, etc.?)	What strategy for collaboration do you believe is most beneficial (i.e., top management support, frequent communication, shared focus, monitoring and documenting, planning, etc.?)	RQ3
10	What do general education teachers need, aside from time, to collaborate successfully with special education teachers?	What do special education teachers need, aside from time, to collaborate successfully with general education teachers?	RQ4

11	Does anyone have any questions or concerns?	Does anyone have any questions or concerns?	Clarification question
12	Is there anything you would like to add or clarify about collaboration from your perception and/or experience?	Is there anything you would like to add or clarify about collaboration from your perception and/or experience?	RQ1, RQ3, RQ4

Appendix M

Informed Consent



Consent Form

My name is Hannah Bush, and I am a doctoral student at National University (NU). I also hold a role as a Speech Language Pathologist at Glasgow Independent Schools.

I'm asking you to take part in a research study about exploring the perceptions of elementary general and special education teachers about the nature of their collaboration, their preparedness for collaboration, and the collaboration strategies that may be beneficial in a school setting. The name of this research is "Teachers Perceptions on Collaboration Between General and Special Education Teachers".

You may participate in this research if you meet all the following criteria:

1. Hold an elementary education, speech language pathology, and/or a special education (EBD, LBD, MSD) certification.
2. Work within the district of Blind Tiger Elementary at Blind Tiger Elementary
3. Practicing as an elementary education teacher, speech language pathology, and/or a special education teacher (EBD, LBD, MSD) with students in elementary school (kindergarten through fifth grade).
4. Are age 18 or older.

I hope to include at least 10-15 general education teachers with at least one from each grade level within the elementary school (i.e., kindergarten through fifth grade) and at least 4-5 special education teachers, which serve as both inclusion and resource teachers for their students, with at least one representing primary and intermediate grades in this research.

Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to take part in the study.

What you will be asked to do: If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to do the following activities:

1. Complete an online inclusion questionnaire via Google forms for approximately 5 minutes.
2. Review your questionnaire answers via email for approximately 5 minutes.
3. Complete an online open-ended questionnaire via Google Forms for approximately 5-10 minutes.
4. Review your questionnaire answers via email for approximately 5 minutes.
5. Participate in a focus group via Google Meet for approximately 15-20 minutes.
6. Review your focus group transcripts via email for approximately 10-15 minutes.

During these activities, you will be asked questions about:

- Your profession.
- Years of experience.
- Grades you work with.
- Experience with collaboration.
- Your perceptions on collaboration regarding needs and strategies to be implemented to increase collaboration.

Risks: There are minimal foreseeable risks or discomforts associated with this research. You can still skip any question you do not wish to answer, skip any activity, or stop participation at any time.

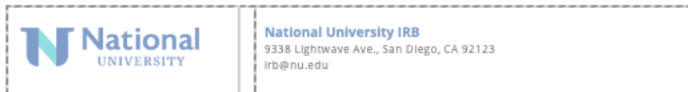
Benefits: If you participate, there are no direct benefits to you. This research may increase the body of knowledge in the subject area of this research.

Recording: I would like to audio/video record your responses and/or actions with Google Meet during the focus group. You can disable the video function of the online meeting platform at any time.

Mandated Reporting: My professional role outside of NU requires me to report suspicion of child or elderly abuse, suspicion of possible harm to self or others, and committed crimes to the appropriate authorities.

Confidentiality: I will keep the records of this study private and take reasonable measures to protect the security of all your personal information. In any report I make public, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you. The data will be

2



kept in One Drive and Google Drive, which are locked by a password within a computer. When I am not present, the computer will also be locked either in a cabinet or a room. After the study is completed, the information will be archived.

Taking part is voluntary: Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may quit at any time.

If you have questions: Please ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact me at H.kuzma6074@o365.ncu.edu or at (123)456-7899.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a subject in this study, you may contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) via email at irb@nu.edu

Appendix N

IRB Approval



9388 Lightwave Ave.
San Diego, CA 92123
irb@nu.edu

Notice of Exemption

February 14, 2025

To: Hannah Bush

Project Title: Teachers Perceptions on Collaboration Between General and Special Education Teachers

NU IRB Number: IRB-FY24-25-614

Determination: Exempt from further review 45 CFR 46.101 Category 2.(i). Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if at least one of the following criteria is met: Any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research would not reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, educational advancement, or reputation; or

Status: Active - Research activities may begin as of February 14, 2025

Dear Hannah Bush:

The study referenced above has been reviewed by the National University IRB. The IRB has determined your research is exempt from further review under 45 CFR 46.104, which means you will not need to renew your study and may begin your study effective immediately. However, if you find the need to change your study in any way, you will need to submit a modification to the IRB prior to implementing the changes. This will allow the IRB to determine whether or not the study still meets exemption criteria.

Please review your Post Approval Responsibilities here: [Approved Documents Guidelines](#)

For any questions regarding your protocol, please reach out to the IRB at irb@nu.edu.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Joseph Marron'.

Dr. Joseph Marron, IRB Chair

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Brianne Mongeon'.

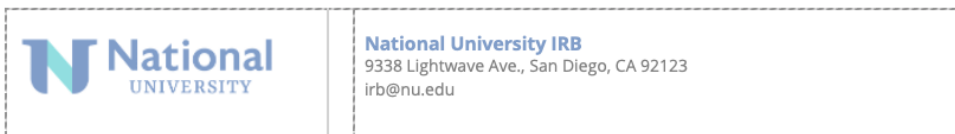
Dr. Brianne Mongeon, Director, HRPP & IRB

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Jenessa Eberhardt'.

Jenessa Eberhardt, Associate Director, HRPP & IRB

Appendix O

Open-Ended Questionnaire Email for Special Education Teachers



Open-Ended Questionnaire Email for Special Education Teachers

According to your answers on the inclusion questionnaire, you qualify for this research. Thank you for your willingness to participate. My name is Hannah Bush, and I am a doctoral student at National University. I am conducting a research study to explore the perceptions of elementary general and special education teachers about the nature of their collaboration, their preparedness for collaboration, and the collaboration strategies may be beneficial in a school setting.

If you decide to participate in this study, you will be asked to do the following activities:

1. Complete an online inclusion questionnaire via Google forms for approximately 5 minutes.
2. Review your questionnaire answers via email for approximately 5 minutes.
3. Complete an online open-ended questionnaire via Google Forms for approximately 5-10 minutes.
4. Review your questionnaire answers via email for approximately 5 minutes.
5. Participate in a focus group via Google Meet for approximately 15-20 minutes.
6. Review your focus group transcripts via email for approximately 10-15 minutes.

During these activities, you will be asked questions about:

- Your profession.
- Years of experience.
- Grades you work with.
- Experience with collaboration.
- Your perceptions on collaboration regarding needs and strategies to be implemented to increase collaboration.

If you are interested in participating in this study, please click this link to answer questions: <https://forms.gle/YKFW3DV6JwE5e7v77>.
If you have questions, please contact me at H.kuzma6074@o365.ncu.edu or at (123)456-7899.

I have attached a few infographics for information regarding collaboration which may assist with your answers.

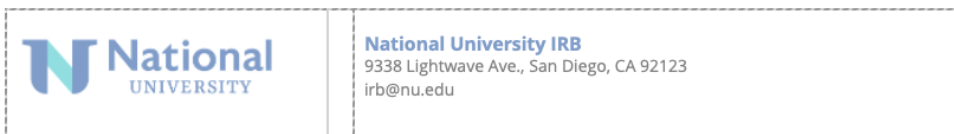
INFOGRAPHICS: Benefits of Collaboration Supporting Resource Infographic, Modes of Communication Supporting Resource Infographic, Collaboration Strategies Supporting Resource Infographic, Resources Infographic

Thank you for considering participating in this voluntary research!

Hannah Bush

Appendix P

Open-Ended Questionnaire Email for General Education Teachers



Open-Ended Questionnaire Email for General Education Teachers

According to your answers on the inclusion questionnaire, you qualify for this research. Thank you for your willingness to participate. My name is Hannah Bush, and I am a doctoral student at National University. I am conducting a research study to explore the perceptions of elementary general and special education teachers about the nature of their collaboration, their preparedness for collaboration, and the collaboration strategies may be beneficial in a school setting.

If you decide to participate in this study, you will be asked to do the following activities:

1. Complete an online inclusion questionnaire via Google forms for approximately 5 minutes.
2. Review your questionnaire answers via email for approximately 5 minutes.
3. Complete an online open-ended questionnaire via Google Forms for approximately 5-10 minutes.
4. Review your questionnaire answers via email for approximately 5 minutes.
5. Participate in a focus group via Google Meet for approximately 15-20 minutes.
6. Review your focus group transcripts via email for approximately 10-15 minutes.

During these activities, you will be asked questions about:

- Your profession.
- Years of experience.
- Grades you work with.
- Experience with collaboration.
- Your perceptions on collaboration regarding needs and strategies to be implemented to increase collaboration.

If you are interested in participating in this study, please click this link to answer questions: <https://forms.gle/ZvAKZYD3wusMn4587>. If you have questions, please contact me at H.kuzma6074@o365.ncu.edu or at (123)456-7899.

I have attached a few infographics for information regarding collaboration which may assist with your answers.

INFOGRAPHICS: Benefits of Collaboration Supporting Resource Infographic, Modes of Communication Supporting Resource Infographic, Collaboration Strategies Supporting Resource Infographic, Resources Infographic

Thank you for considering participating in this voluntary research!

Hannah Bush

Appendix Q

Benefits of Collaboration Supporting Resource Infographic



National University IRB
9338 Lightwave Ave., San Diego, CA 92123
irb@nu.edu

Supporting Resources



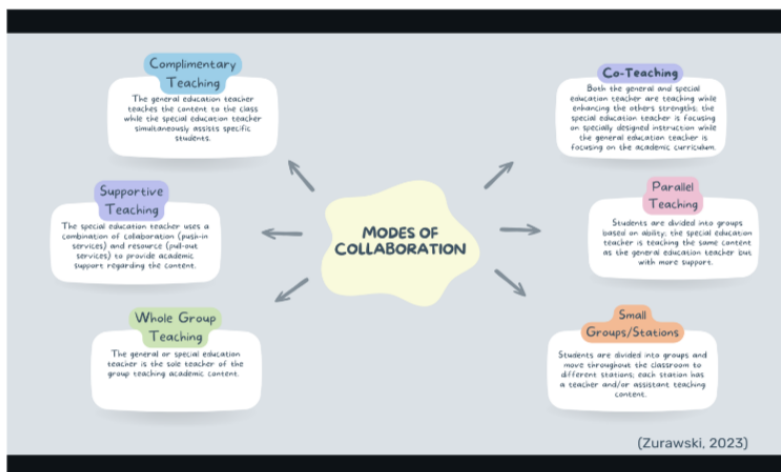
(Berry, 2021; Meredith et al., 2022; Patterson & Ström, 2019; & Stubbs et al., 2017)

Appendix R

Modes of Communication Supporting Resource Infographic

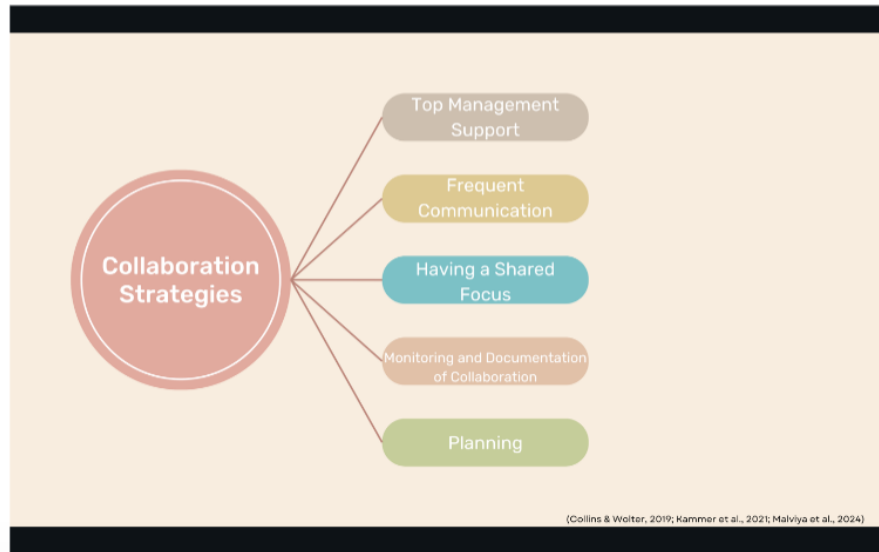


National University IRB
9338 Lightwave Ave., San Diego, CA 92123
irb@nu.edu



Appendix S

Collaboration Strategies Supporting Resource Infographic



Appendix T

References for Supporting Resource Infographics



National University IRB
9338 Lightwave Ave., San Diego, CA 92123
irb@nu.edu

References

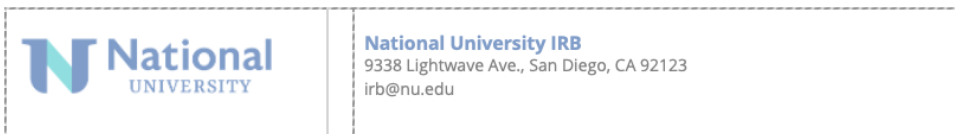
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Next Steps: I will be emailing the transcribed discussion to each member in the group for [member checking](#) on the accuracy of the transcription within the following week. Reviewing the transcription should take 10-15 minutes.

Thank you for your willingness to participate in the focus group.

Appendix U

Focus Group Sign-Up Email for Special Education Teachers



Focus Group Sign-Up Email for Special Education Teachers

Thank you for your participation thus far in this study. The next step in the research is participation in a focus group via Google Meet which will consist of just special education teachers. This meeting will take place on MONTH DAY, YEAR at TIME.

During this activity, you will be asked questions about:

- Your profession.
- Years of experience.
- Grades you work with.
- Experience with collaboration.
- Your perceptions on collaboration regarding needs and strategies to be implemented to increase collaboration.

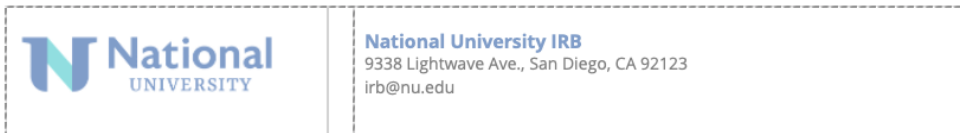
If you are interested in participating in this section of the study, please click this link to participate: [insert Google Meet link](#). If you have questions, please contact me at H.kuzma6074@o365.ncu.edu or at (123)456-7899.

Thank you for considering participating in this voluntary research!

Hannah Bush

Appendix V

Focus Group Sign-up Email for General Education Teachers



Focus Group Sign-Up Email for General Education Teachers

Thank you for your participation thus far in this study. The next step in the research is participation in a focus group via Google Meet which will consist of just general education teachers. This meeting will take place on MONTH DAY, YEAR at TIME.

During this activity, you will be asked questions about:

- Your profession.
- Years of experience.
- Grades you work with.
- Experience with collaboration.
- Your perceptions on collaboration regarding needs and strategies to be implemented to increase collaboration.

If you are interested in participating in this section of the study, please click this link to participate: [\[insert Google Meet link\]](#). If you have questions, please contact me at H.kuzma6074@o365.ncu.edu or at (123)456-7899.

Thank you for considering participating in this voluntary research!

Hannah Bush

Position Within the School	Years Teaching	Do you collaborate with a general education teacher?	If you do collaborate with a general education teacher, how much per week do you collaborate with a general education teacher?	How do you feel that collaboration between general and special education teachers affects overall student performance?	How do you feel that general and special education teachers affect overall teacher performance?	Do you believe general education and special education teachers to effectively collaborate across the two disciplines? Why or why not?	Would you be interested in attending a professional development session regarding collaboration between general and special education teachers?	How regularly do you believe general education and special education teachers need to meet outside the classroom during common planning time within the instructional day to collaborate on lessons successfully?	What mode of collaboration do you believe is best (i.e. complementary teaching, supportive teaching, whole group teaching, co-teaching, parallel teaching, and/or small group/rotations)?	What strategy for collaboration do you believe is most beneficial (i.e. management support, frequent communication, shared goals, monitoring and documenting, planning, etc.?)	What do special education teachers need, aside from time, to collaborate successfully with special education teachers?	Does anyone have any questions or concerns?	Is there anything you would like to add or clarify about collaboration from your perception and/or experience?
SEI	almost 20 years	Yes	20 times or more per week	think it improves	VOID (PI did not ask)	Absolutely not. Absolutely not	Yes	At least weekly if not more	Depends on the students	I think communication. Especially when we have a lot of times when we have to deal out for different reasons. Um, also just communicating to know about assessments, accommodations, and what's best for that kid. Um, so I think communication is probably the most important for me, anyways.	Asks from time to time. Because time is what we need to you know make it what I do I don't know	Members of the meeting about that people no	Oh I'm sorry. I was just going to ask if some schools in your district come and visit. Yes this is how we want you to collaborate. Or is it always just kind of open up to the individual teacher's
Kindergarten ECE teacher	8 years	Yes	None	think allowing children in the ECE setting with an EPI in general when the classroom isn't inclusion and working with other students seems that are same age peers as teachers in their. However sometimes when general education teachers may lack the knowledge or when the awareness of what to do about certain behaviors that they may see and how to deal with it. That's often	No	No	Yes	I agree because right now we don't have any	I've been parallel teaching with one of my gen. Ed teachers and it's going beautifully well!	Communication is for me also.	mean there's not enough time in anything as far as that goes		Well from the group of student's that I work with is certainly has to be somewhat a mix of different when it comes to the way that collaborating looks just because the majority of my students are in a self-contained classroom and they don't get to go out into the classroom in gen. ed. other as maybe a child that has an EPI in gen. ed. with certain accommodations. But as far as when it comes to actually planning with those teachers, there's something to be said about how that there is so many deviations when it comes to the whole child that is used to be in gen. ed. but in say receiving accommodations or modifications on certain aspects of their education versus the majority of the time they're at school.
2nd grade ECE teacher	25+ years	(I don't really use)	3 to 4 hours	think it improves student performance because kids are getting support. They're getting the help they need. When they're not getting it in the classroom setting. Um, I think the kids probably have a little bit more independence with the general ed. teacher because we focus on the general education teacher because we focus on a smaller number of kids than this one so we tend to have more time to spend with them to support trying to give him more confidence in the classroom.	No	No	Yes	I think it works with your position. I think it works in what you're working on right now.	I think it just depends on the teacher. The teacher's style.	Same.	Ugh. I think something. I can't remember if it was [ECE teacher's name] or if it could have been [ECE teacher's name], you know, in just the time when I had just a regular education teacher they always give us kind of like a quick look into that student, you know, Um, and that was very helpful. Um, kind of like a check-in on that student. Um, none of course those get put aside in binders and you forget and you get busy and what not, but, um, I think there's things like that, that can be reminded of. That we can do a better job reminding each other of, "Yes, this is what, this is what that kid's EPI says," we're following that. ECI, Um, because I think a lot of times when it comes to the regular education setting, I know a lot of times, I don't really know what was that kid's EPI even though I might have said in the meeting and signed off on it. Um, so I think that kind of goes back to communication. Just that we're clear that that kid was in Individual Education Plan and that we're following it, you know Um, and so I guess aside of time, on how to best collaborate, you know I'd say, "Are we doing all that we are legally saying we're doing providing for this kid?" That we've said, "hey, if you're ready to come together and talk, this is what the kid needs to learn best." So are we following that EPI? But, is that kind of what you're looking for, like, "But?"		
1st, 3rd, 4th, and 5th ECE teacher	almost 2.5 years		1 to 2 depending on the needs of my student.			That would be a no.	Yes	Your statements makes me think that their fourth and fifth grade because there's only three meeting sessions of meetings. That's on what we need.	Yeah, I do.	Yeah, I'm going to agree with the child's going with what's going on. Better than planning sessions. I mean don't state sessions with them. I'm probably not going to.		That's what I do for all my classroom goals as well. When I and my assistants are working with multiple students with multiple needs as I'll set a short, well once we receive those tickets and if those if that EPI changes at any point in time or even if we need to really address one that we thought we, we have a folder for each student that can just be picked up like a folder to kind of where can view any type things that we definitely want to make sure we're not going to miss on what it comes to that child's EPI or any other actual goals that they have.	

Appendix X

Dissertation Data Table for Special Education Teachers

SPED Data for Analysis		
Question	Questionnaire Response	Focus Group Response
How do you feel when you collaborate with general education teachers?	Useless/intimidated (1) Like an Assistant (2) As a resource (1) Helpful/enjoy (2)	
What has helped you be a successful collaborator?	Plan (1) Knowing content/expectations (1) Experience (1) Speaking up/advocating (1) Relationships/connections (1) Team Player (1) No specific person (1)	
How do you believe general education teachers feel when you enter the classroom?	Uncomfortable (1) Welcoming/relieved/supported (2) Mixed positive and negative feelings regarding feeling welcomed (3)	

<p>As a special education teacher, what do you believe students with special education needs have the most difficulty with when in the general education classroom?</p>	<p>Instruction not on their level/too difficult (2)</p> <p>Increased stimulation (1)</p> <p>Understanding expectations (1)</p> <p>Reading/time/inclusion (1)</p> <p>Self-confidence (1)</p>	
<p>What is the mode of your collaboration (i.e., going into the classroom to assist, meeting prior to class to discuss the lesson/activity to discuss how aspects can be modified/accommodations can be given, leading an academic center, etc.)?</p>	<p>Complementary teaching (4)</p> <p>Supportive teaching (2)</p> <p>Parallel teaching (1)</p> <p>Small groups/stations - primary (1)</p> <p>Mix of all modes of collaboration (1)</p> <p>Answered as strategy - planning (1)</p>	
<p>What mode of collaboration do you believe is best (i.e., complementary teaching, supportive teaching,</p>		<p>Depends on the students (2)</p> <p>Parallel teaching (1)</p> <p>Depends on the teacher and their style (3)</p>

<p>whole group teaching, co-teaching, parallel teaching, and/or small groups/stations)?</p>		
<p>What strategy of collaboration do you typically implement?</p>	<p>Communication (2) Answered as mode - small groups/stations (3) Answered as mode - supportive teaching (2)</p>	
<p>What strategy for collaboration do you believe is most beneficial (i.e., top management support, frequent communication, shared focus, monitoring and documenting, planning, etc.?)</p>		<p>Communication (4)</p>
<p>Hypothetical Scenario: You have an IEP meeting that has lasted longer than expected, ending at 2:05PM. You are scheduled to collaborate with teacher 2:00PM. What action steps would you take to</p>	<p>Go to the class after the meeting if time allowed (1) Communicate with Gen. Ed. teacher prior to meeting (2) Message Gen. Ed. teacher during meeting (3)</p>	

<p>resolve the following scenarios?</p>	<p>Have SPED Asst. cover the class (1)</p>	
<p>Hypothetical Scenario: You would like to schedule a time to collaborate with each general education teacher you work with but multiple teachers have chosen the same time to collaborate. What action steps would you take to resolve the following scenarios?</p>	<p>Offer multiple times for collaboration and go with the highest need for a specific time (1)</p> <p>Collaborate all together (2)</p> <p>Group according to content area (1)</p> <p>Email instead of in-person (1)</p> <p>Meet with content teachers that are of most necessity (1)</p> <p>Pick another time (1)</p> <p>Look at order in which teachers replied (1)</p>	
<p>Hypothetical Scenario: A general education teacher has contacted you regarding how to best assist a student with special education needs. What action steps would you</p>	<p>Listen to concerns (1)</p> <p>Look over IEP together (!)</p> <p>Troubleshoot interventions (1)</p> <p>Discussion (2)</p>	

take to resolve the following scenarios?	Provide material and suggestions to assist the student (2) Observation (1)	
Do you collaborate with a general education teacher?		Yes (2) - others nodding yes
If you do collaborate with a general education teacher, how much per week do you collaborate with a general education teacher?		20 hours per week (2) 3–4 hours per week (1) 1–2 hours per week (1)
How do you feel that collaboration between general and special education teachers affects overall student performance?		Improves (2) Allows for inclusion and peer learning (1) Negative due to inability of teachers being able to provide appropriate accommodations (1)
How do you feel that general and special		VOID (PI did not ask)

<p>education teachers affect overall teacher performance?</p>		
<p>Do you believe general education and special education teachers receive sufficient training to effectively collaborate across the two disciplines? Why or why not?</p>		<p>No (4) Lack of training (1) Amount of material to learn requires teachers to also continue to learn on their own (1)</p>
<p>Would you be interested in attending a professional development course regarding collaboration between general and special education teachers?</p>		<p>Yes (4)</p>
<p>How regularly do you believe general</p>		<p>Weekly (2)</p>

<p>education and special education teachers need to meet outside the classroom during common planning time within the instructional day to collaborate on lessons successfully?</p>		<p>Difficult to collaborate due to ECE teachers servicing different grades with varying planning times (1)</p> <p>Varies on professional position (1)</p> <p>Due to student disabilities, a different lesson is needed (1)</p>
<p>What do special education teachers need, aside from time, to collaborate successfully with special education teachers?</p>		<p>Time (2)</p> <p>Communication/shared information on data and student needs (4)</p> <p>Ensuring SPED services/documents are completed (1)</p> <p>Answered as strategy - monitoring and documentation (discussed collab. With ECE asst. Not gen. Ed. teachers) (1)</p>
<p>Does anyone have any questions or concerns?</p>		<p>Members of the meeting shook their heads no.</p>

<p>Is there anything you would like to add or clarify about collaboration from your perception and/or experience?</p>		<p>Question about if there are individuals that come in to advise on collaboration.</p> <p>Clarifying that students in a self-contained classroom (MSD room) need more accommodations/modifications in comparison to students with specific area needs and their collaboration will look differently.</p>
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Appendix Y

Dissertation Data Table for General Education Teachers

Gen. Ed. Data for Analysis		
Question	Questionnaire Response	Focus Group Response
How do you feel when you collaborate with special education teachers?	<p>Positive feelings (enjoy/helpful/love/great/supported/comfortable/compatible) (14)</p> <p>No collaboration due to not teaching a core subject area (2)</p> <p>Do not mind (1)</p> <p>Feel as though they are an assistant (1)</p> <p>Mixed positive and negative feelings (successful but stressed, good but communication issues, grateful yet confused) (3)</p>	
What has helped you be a successful collaborator?	<p>Planning (2)</p> <p>Experience (4)</p>	

	<p>Relationships/Connections (3)</p> <p>Team Player (2)</p> <p>Communication (8)</p> <p>Mentor (1)</p> <p>Mutual Goal (1)</p> <p>Flexibility (1)</p>	
<p>How do you feel when a special education teacher enters your classroom?</p>	<p>Positive feelings (welcoming/relieved/supported/thankful/grateful/appreciative/happy/fine) (16)</p> <p>Different each day (1)</p> <p>Limited Collaboration (1)</p> <p>No Pressure (1)</p> <p>Like a team (1)</p>	
<p>As a general education teacher, what do you believe students with special education needs have the most difficulty with when in the general education classroom?</p>	<p>Instruction not on their level/too difficult/lack of foundational skills (4)</p> <p>Inclusion/focus (3)</p> <p>Independence/Need for assistance/pace (3)</p> <p>Self-confidence (2)</p> <p>Communication (1)</p>	

	<p>Following directions/procedures (2)</p> <p>Social (1)</p> <p>Reading/comprehension (3)</p> <p>Behavior/lack of focus/effort (2)</p> <p>Understanding expectations (1)</p>	
<p>What is the mode of your collaboration (i.e., going into the classroom to assist, meeting prior to class to discuss the lesson/activity to discuss how aspects can be modified/accommodations can be given, leading an academic center, etc.)?</p>	<p>Complementary Teaching (4)</p> <p>Supportive Teaching (3)</p> <p>Whole Group Teaching (3)</p> <p>Small Groups/Stations (4)</p> <p>No Collaboration (3)</p> <p>Mix of all modes of collaboration (2)</p> <p>Collaboration within classroom but no specific mode mentioned (3)</p> <p>Answered as strategy not mode → communication (2)</p>	

<p>What mode of collaboration do you believe is best (i.e., complementary teaching, supportive teaching, whole group teaching, co-teaching, parallel teaching, and/or small groups/stations)?</p>		<p>Mix of all modes of collaboration (2)</p> <p>Parallel teaching (2)</p> <p>Whole group teaching (1)</p> <p>Small groups/stations (1)</p>
<p>What strategy of collaboration do you typically implement?</p>	<p>Frequent Communication (3)</p> <p>Having a Shared Focus (1)</p> <p>Answered as mode not strategy → complementary teaching (4)</p> <p>Answered as mode not strategy → small groups/stations (3)</p> <p>Answered as mode not strategy → co-teaching (1)</p> <p>Answered as mode not strategy → whole group teaching (1)</p>	

	<p>ECE teacher assisting by students being sent to resource rooms (1)</p> <p>ECE teacher observing (1)</p> <p>No collaboration (1)</p>	
<p>What strategy for collaboration do you believe is most beneficial (i.e., top management support, frequent communication, shared focus, monitoring and documenting, planning, etc.?)</p>		<p>Frequent communication (2)</p> <p>Having a shared focus (1)</p> <p>Top management support (1)</p> <p>Mix of strategies to support academia (1)</p>
<p>Hypothetical Scenario: You are scheduled to collaborate with a special education teacher at 2:00PM and have an activity planned requiring the collaboration. It is 2:05PM and the special education teacher has not entered the room yet. What action steps would</p>	<p>Attempt communication then proceed with the lessons while providing accommodations/modifications (5)</p> <p>Attempt communication then proceed with alternate activity without ECE teacher (i.e., whole group teaching or independent activity) (3)</p>	

<p>you take to resolve the following scenarios?</p>	<p>Communicate to ask if they were still coming/ask for a meeting (4)</p> <p>Continue Teaching (6)</p> <p>Implement a more independent activity (2)</p> <p>Pair students where peer teaching can be provided (2)</p> <p>Ask for the assistant (1)</p> <p>Implement whole group teaching (1)</p>	
<p>Hypothetical Scenario: A special education teacher would like to schedule a time to meet to plan or collaborate but you do not have any time to meet due to PLC, meetings, and needing your planning time to prepare for class. What action steps would you take to resolve the following scenarios?</p>	<p>Outside of contract hours (i.e., before/after school) (4)</p> <p>Electronic mode of communication (i.e., phone, email, Google Doc) (4)</p> <p>Combination of outside contract hours and electronic communication (5)</p>	

	<p>Combination of utilizing contract hours (i.e., planning, PLC meetings, etc.) and electronic communication (1)</p> <p>Contract hours (i.e., planning, PLC meetings, transitions, lunch, etc.) (4)</p> <p>Combination of contract hours (i.e., PLC meetings, planning, lunch, transitions, etc.) and outside contract hours (3)</p>	
<p>Hypothetical Scenario: A special education teacher has sent you accommodations and/or modifications to assist a student with special education needs via email but you are unsure how to implement these strategies. What action steps would</p>	<p>Contact/meet with SPED teacher to ask for further clarification (14)</p> <p>Ask for clarification from SPED teacher or consult with teammate (2)</p> <p>Contact/meet with SPED teacher to ask for further clarification, specifically stating to meet in person (5)</p>	

you take to resolve the following scenarios?		
Does a special education teacher, not the special education teacher assistant, collaborate with you?		<p>Yes (2nd grade x3 - reading and math, 1st grade, 4th grade, 3rd grade math/reading, kindergarten, 5th grade math)</p> <p>No (library, 3rd grade science and social studies)</p>
If a special education teacher collaborates with you, how much do they collaborate with you per week?		<p>1–2 hours per week (2)</p> <p>2–4 hours per week (6)</p> <p>5–6 hours per week (5)</p> <p>7–10 hours per week (1)</p>
How do you feel that collaboration between general and special education teachers affects overall student performance?		<p>Allows for extra support (1)</p> <p>Allows for students to be met on their own level (1)</p> <p>Allows for increased preparedness and on-task behavior (1)</p>
How do you feel that general and special		Allows for increased communication (1)

<p>education teachers affect overall teacher performance?</p>		<p>Allows for growth (1)</p>
<p>Do you believe general education and special education teachers receive sufficient training to effectively collaborate across the two disciplines? Why or why not?</p>		<p>No (1) Lack of training (1) Not having a SPED teacher designated to a specific grade so alternate schedules between gen. Ed. and SPED teachers (1) Lack of communicating the needs of students (!)</p>
<p>Would you be interested in attending a professional development course regarding collaboration between general and special education teachers?</p>		<p>Yes (3, others nodding yes)</p>
<p>How regularly do you believe general</p>		<p>Weekly (3)</p>

<p>education and special education teachers need to meet outside the classroom during common planning time within the instructional day to collaborate on lessons successfully?</p>		
<p>What do special education teachers need, aside from time, to collaborate successfully with special education teachers?</p>		<p>Resources (1) Shared information on data and student needs/communication (3)</p>
<p>Does anyone have any questions or concerns?</p>		<p>No [individuals shaking head no]</p>
<p>Is there anything you would like to add or clarify about collaboration from your</p>		<p>No [individuals shaking head no]</p>

perception and/or experience?		
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Appendix Z

Research Questions Alignment to Data Matrix

Research Questions	General Education Data (Questionnaire and Focus Group)	Special Education Data (Questionnaire and Focus Group)
<p><i>RQ1</i> What are the perceptions of rural Kentucky elementary general education and special education teachers regarding their collaboration protocol?</p>	<p><i>How do you feel when you collaborate with special education teachers?</i></p> <p>Positive feelings (enjoy/helpful/love/great/supported/comfortable/compatible) (14)</p> <p>No collaboration due to not teaching a core subject area (2)</p> <p>Do not mind (1)</p> <p>Feel as though they are an assistant (1)</p> <p>Mixed positive and negative feelings (successful but stressed, good but communication issues, grateful yet confused) (3)</p>	<p><i>How do you feel when you collaborate with general education teachers?</i></p> <p>Useless/intimidated (1)</p> <p>Like an Assistant (2)</p> <p>As a resource (1)</p> <p>Helpful/enjoy (2)</p>

	<p><i>What has helped you be a successful collaborator?</i></p> <p>Planning (2)</p> <p>Experience (4)</p> <p>Relationships/Connections (3)</p> <p>Team Player (2)</p> <p>Communication (8)</p> <p>Mentor (1)</p> <p>Mutual Goal (1)</p> <p>Flexibility (1)</p>	<p><i>What has helped you be a successful collaborator?</i></p> <p>Plan (1)</p> <p>Knowing content/expectations (1)</p> <p>Experience (1)</p> <p>Speaking up/advocating (1)</p> <p>Relationships/connections (1)</p> <p>Team Player (1)</p> <p>No specific person (1)</p>
	<p><i>How do you feel when a special education teacher enters your classroom?</i></p> <p>Positive feelings (welcoming/relieved/supported/thankful/grateful/appreciated/happy/fine) (16)</p> <p>Different each day (1)</p> <p>Limited Collaboration (1)</p>	<p><i>How do you believe general education teachers feel when you enter the classroom?</i></p> <p>Uncomfortable (1)</p> <p>Welcoming/relieved/supported (2)</p> <p>Mixed positive and negative feelings regarding feeling welcomed (3)</p>

	<p>No Pressure (1)</p> <p>Like a team (1)</p> <p><i>As a general education teacher, what do you believe students with special education needs have the most difficulty with when in the general education classroom?</i></p> <p>Instruction not on their level/too difficult/lack of foundational skills (4)</p> <p>Inclusion/focus (3)</p> <p>Independence/Need for assistance/pace (3)</p> <p>Self-confidence (2)</p> <p>Communication (1)</p> <p>Following directions/procedures (2)</p> <p>Social (1)</p> <p>Reading/comprehension (3)</p>	<p><i>As a special education teacher, what do you believe students with special education needs have the most difficulty with when in the general education classroom?</i></p> <p>Instruction not on their level/too difficult (2)</p> <p>Increased stimulation (1)</p> <p>Understanding expectations (1)</p> <p>Reading/time/inclusion (1)</p> <p>Self-confidence (1)</p>
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	<p>Behavior/lack of focus/effort (2)</p> <p>Understanding expectations (1)</p> <p><i>Hypothetical Scenario: You are scheduled to collaborate with a special education teacher at 2:00PM and have an activity planned requiring the collaboration. It is 2:05PM and the special education teacher has not entered the room yet. What action steps would you take to resolve the following scenarios?</i></p> <p>Attempt communication then proceed with the lessons while providing accommodations/modifications (5)</p>	<p><i>Hypothetical Scenario: You have an IEP meeting that has lasted longer than expected, ending at 2:05PM. You are scheduled to collaborate with a teacher at 2:00PM. What action steps would you take to resolve the following scenarios?</i></p> <p>Go to the class after the meeting if time allowed (1)</p> <p>Communicate with Gen. Ed. teacher prior to meeting (2)</p> <p>Message Gen. Ed. teacher during meeting (3)</p> <p>Have SPED Asst. cover the class (1)</p>
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	<p>Attempt communication then proceed with alternate activity without ECE teacher (i.e., whole group teaching or independent activity) (3)</p> <p>Communicate to ask if they were still coming/ask for a meeting (4)</p> <p>Continue Teaching (6)</p> <p>Implement a more independent activity (2)</p> <p>Pair students where peer teaching can be provided (2)</p> <p>Ask for the assistant (1)</p> <p>Implement whole group teaching (1)</p> <p><i>Hypothetical Scenario: A special education teacher would like to schedule a time to meet to plan or collaborate but you do not have any time to meet due to PLC, meetings,</i></p>	<p><i>Hypothetical Scenario: You would like to schedule a time to collaborate with each general education teacher you work with but multiple teachers have chosen the same time to collaborate.</i></p> <p><i>What action steps would you take to resolve the following scenarios?</i></p>
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	<p><i>and needing your planning time to prepare for class.</i></p> <p><i>What action steps would you take to resolve the following scenarios?</i></p> <p>Outside of contract hours (i.e., before/after school) (4)</p> <p>Electronic mode of communication (i.e., phone, email, Google Doc) (4)</p> <p>Combination of outside contract hours and electronic communication (5)</p> <p>Combination of utilizing contract hours (i.e., planning, PLC meetings, etc.) and electronic communication (1)</p> <p>Contract hours (i.e., planning, PLC meetings, transitions, lunch, etc.) (4)</p> <p>Combination of contract hours (i.e., PLC meetings, planning, lunch, transitions,</p>	<p>Offer multiple times for collaboration and go with the highest need for a specific time (1)</p> <p>Collaborate all together (2)</p> <p>Group according to content area (1)</p> <p>Email instead of in-person (1)</p> <p>Meet with content teachers that are of most necessity (1)</p> <p>Pick another time (1)</p> <p>Look at order in which teachers replied (1)</p>
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	<p>etc.) and outside contract hours (3)</p> <p><i>Hypothetical Scenario: A special education teacher has sent you accommodations and/or modifications to assist a student with special education needs via email but you are unsure how to implement these strategies. What action steps would you take to resolve the following scenarios?</i></p> <p>Contact/meet with SPED teacher to ask for further clarification (14)</p> <p>Ask for clarification from SPED teacher or consult with teammate (2)</p> <p>Contact/meet with SPED teacher to ask for further</p>	<p><i>Hypothetical Scenario: A general education teacher has contacted you regarding how to best assist a student with special education needs. What action steps would you take to resolve the following scenarios?</i></p> <p>Listen to concerns (1)</p> <p>Look over IEP together (!)</p> <p>Troubleshoot interventions (1)</p> <p>Discussion (2)</p> <p>Provide material and suggestions to assist the student (2)</p> <p>Observation (1)</p>
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	<p>clarification, specifically stating to meet in person (5)</p> <p><i>Does a special education teacher, not the special education teacher assistant, collaborate with you?</i></p> <p>Yes (2nd grade x3 - reading and math, 1st grade, 4th grade, 3rd grade math/reading, kindergarten, 5th grade math)</p> <p>No (library, 3rd grade science and social studies)</p> <p><i>If a special education teacher collaborates with you, how much do they collaborate with you per week?</i></p> <p>1–2 hours per week (2)</p> <p>2–4 hours per week (6)</p> <p>5–6 hours per week (5)</p> <p>7–10 hours per week (1)</p>	<p><i>Do you collaborate with a general education teacher?</i></p> <p>Yes (2) - others nodding yes</p> <p><i>If you do collaborate with a general education teacher, how much per week do you collaborate with a general education teacher?</i></p> <p>20 hours per week (2)</p> <p>3–4 hours per week (1)</p> <p>1–2 hours per week (1)</p> <p><i>How do you feel that collaboration between</i></p>
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	<p><i>How do you feel that collaboration between general and special education teachers affects overall student performance?</i></p> <p>Improves (2)</p> <p>Allows for inclusion and peer learning (1)</p> <p>Allows for extra support (1)</p> <p>Allows for students to be met on their own level (1)</p> <p>Allows for increased preparedness and on-task behavior (1)</p> <p><i>How do you feel that general and special education teachers affect overall teacher performance?</i></p> <p>Allows for increased communication (1)</p> <p>Allows for growth (1)</p>	<p><i>general and special education teachers affects overall student performance?</i></p> <p>Improves (2)</p> <p>Allows for inclusion and peer learning (1)</p> <p>Negative due to inability of teachers being able to provide appropriate accommodations (1)</p> <p><i>How do you feel that general and special education teachers affect overall teacher performance?</i></p> <p>VOID (PI did not ask)</p> <p><i>How regularly do you believe general education and special education teachers need to meet outside the classroom</i></p>
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	<p><i>How regularly do you believe general education and special education teachers need to meet outside the classroom during common planning time within the instructional day to collaborate on lessons successfully?</i></p> <p>Weekly (3)</p> <p><i>Is there anything you would like to add or clarify about collaboration from your perception and/or experience?</i></p>	<p><i>during common planning time within the instructional day to collaborate on lessons successfully?</i></p> <p>Weekly (2)</p> <p>Difficult to collaborate due to ECE teachers servicing different grades with varying planning times (1)</p> <p>Varies on professional position (1)</p> <p>Due to student disabilities, a different lesson is needed (1)</p> <p><i>Is there anything you would like to add or clarify about collaboration from your perception and/or experience?</i></p> <p>Question about if there are individuals that come in to advise on collaboration.</p>
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	No [individuals shaking head no]	Clarifying that students in a self-contained classroom (MSD room) need more accommodations/modifications in comparison to students with specific area needs and their collaboration will look different.
<p>RQ2 What are the perceptions of general education and special education teachers working in rural Kentucky elementary schools regarding preparedness or professional development to support increased rates of collaboration?</p>	<p><i>How do you feel when you collaborate with special education teachers?</i></p> <p>Positive feelings (enjoy/helpful/love/great/supported/comfortable/compatible) (14)</p> <p>No collaboration due to not teaching a core subject area (2)</p> <p>Do not mind (1)</p> <p>Feel as though they are an assistant (1)</p> <p>Mixed positive and negative</p>	<p><i>How do you feel when you collaborate with general education teachers?</i></p> <p>Useless/intimidated (1)</p> <p>Like an Assistant (2)</p> <p>As a resource (1)</p> <p>Helpful/enjoy (2)</p>

	<p>feelings (successful but stressed, good but communication issues, grateful yet confused) (3)</p> <p><i>What has helped you be a successful collaborator?</i></p> <p>Planning (2)</p> <p>Experience (4)</p> <p>Relationships/Connections (3)</p> <p>Team Player (2)</p> <p>Communication (8)</p> <p>Mentor (1)</p> <p>Mutual Goal (1)</p> <p>Flexibility (1)</p> <p><i>How do you feel when a special education teacher enters your classroom?</i></p> <p>Positive feelings (welcoming/relieved/supporte</p>	<p><i>What has helped you be a successful collaborator?</i></p> <p>Plan (1)</p> <p>Knowing content/expectations (1)</p> <p>Experience (1)</p> <p>Speaking up/advocating (1)</p> <p>Relationships/connections (1)</p> <p>Team Player (1)</p> <p>No specific person (1)</p> <p><i>How do you believe general education teachers feel when you enter the classroom?</i></p> <p>Uncomfortable (1)</p>
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	<p>d/thankful/grateful/appreciative/happy/fine) (16)</p> <p>Different each day (1)</p> <p>Limited Collaboration (1)</p> <p>No Pressure (1)</p> <p>Like a team (1)</p> <p><i>Do you believe general education and special education teachers receive sufficient training to effectively collaborate across the two disciplines? Why or why not?</i></p> <p>No (1)</p> <p>Lack of training (1)</p> <p>Not having a SPED teacher designated to a specific grade so alternate schedules between gen. Ed. and SPED teachers (1)</p> <p>Lack of communicating the needs of students (1)</p>	<p>Welcoming/relieved/supported (2)</p> <p>Mixed positive and negative feelings regarding feeling welcomed (3)</p> <p><i>Do you believe general education and special education teachers receive sufficient training to effectively collaborate across the two disciplines? Why or why not?</i></p> <p>No (4)</p> <p>Lack of training (1)</p> <p>Amount of material to learn requires teachers to also continue to learn on their own (1)</p>
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	<p><i>Would you be interested in attending a professional development course regarding collaboration between general and special education teachers?</i></p> <p>Yes (3, others nodding yes)</p>	<p><i>Would you be interested in attending a professional development course regarding collaboration between general and special education teachers?</i></p> <p>Yes (4)</p>
<p>RQ3 Which collaboration strategies do general and special education teachers in rural Kentucky schools believe would be successful?</p>	<p><i>What has helped you be a successful collaborator?</i></p> <p>Planning (2)</p> <p>Experience (4)</p> <p>Relationships/Connections (3)</p> <p>Team Player (2)</p> <p>Communication (8)</p> <p>Mentor (1)</p> <p>Mutual Goal (1)</p> <p>Flexibility (1)</p>	<p><i>What has helped you be a successful collaborator?</i></p> <p>Plan (1)</p> <p>Knowing content/expectations (1)</p> <p>Experience (1)</p> <p>Speaking up/advocating (1)</p> <p>Relationships/connections (1)</p> <p>Team Player (1)</p> <p>No specific person (1)</p> <p><i>What is the mode of your collaboration? (i.e., going</i></p>

	<p><i>What is the mode of your collaboration? (i.e., going into the classroom to assist, meeting prior to class to discuss the lesson/activity to discuss how aspects can be modified/accommodations can be given, leading an academic center, etc.)?</i></p> <p>Complementary Teaching (4)</p> <p>Supportive Teaching (3)</p> <p>Whole Group Teaching (3)</p> <p>Small Groups/Stations (4)</p> <p>No Collaboration (3)</p> <p>Mix of all modes of collaboration (2)</p> <p>Collaboration within classroom but no specific mode mentioned (3)</p> <p>Answered as strategy not mode → communication (2)</p>	<p><i>into the classroom to assist, meeting prior to class to discuss the lesson/activity to discuss how aspects can be modified/accommodations can be given, leading an academic center, etc.)?</i></p> <p>Complementary teaching (4)</p> <p>Supportive teaching (2)</p> <p>Parallel teaching (1)</p> <p>Small groups/stations - primary (1)</p> <p>Mix of all modes of collaboration (1)</p> <p>Answered as strategy - planning (1)</p> <p><i>What mode of collaboration do you believe is best (i.e.,</i></p>
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	<p><i>What mode of collaboration do you believe is best (i.e., complementary teaching, supportive teaching, whole group teaching, co-teaching, parallel teaching, and/or small groups/stations)?</i></p> <p>Mix of all modes of collaboration (2)</p> <p>Parallel teaching (2)</p> <p>Whole group teaching (1)</p> <p>Small groups/stations (1)</p> <p><i>What strategy of collaboration do you typically implement?</i></p> <p>Frequent Communication (3)</p> <p>Having a Shared Focus (1)</p> <p>Answered as mode not strategy → complementary teaching (4)</p>	<p><i>complementary teaching, supportive teaching, whole group teaching, co-teaching, parallel teaching, and/or small groups/stations)?</i></p> <p>Depends on the students (2)</p> <p>Parallel teaching (1)</p> <p>Depends on the teacher and their style (3)</p> <p><i>What strategy of collaboration do you typically implement?</i></p> <p>Communication (2)</p> <p>Answered as mode - small groups/stations (3)</p> <p>Answered as mode - supportive teaching (2)</p>
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	<p>Answered as mode not strategy → small groups/stations (3)</p> <p>Answered as mode not strategy → co-teaching (1)</p> <p>Answered as mode not strategy → whole group teaching (1)</p> <p>ECE teacher assisting by students being sent to resource rooms (1)</p> <p>ECE teacher observing (1)</p> <p>No collaboration (1)</p> <p><i>What strategy for collaboration do you believe is most beneficial (i.e., top management support, frequent communication, shared focus, monitoring and documenting, planning, etc.?)</i></p> <p>Frequent communication (2)</p> <p>Having a shared focus (1)</p>	<p><i>What strategy for collaboration do you believe is most beneficial (i.e., top management support, frequent communication, shared focus, monitoring and documenting, planning, etc.?)</i></p> <p>Communication (4)</p>
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	<p>Top management support (1)</p> <p>Mix of strategies to support academia (1)</p> <p><i>Is there anything you would like to add or clarify about collaboration from your perception and/or experience?</i></p> <p><i>Is there anything you would like to add or clarify about collaboration from your perception and/or experience?</i></p> <p>No [individuals shaking head no]</p>	<p><i>Is there anything you would like to add or clarify about collaboration from your perception and/or experience?</i></p> <p>Question about if there are individuals that come in to advise on collaboration.</p> <p>Clarifying that students in a self-contained classroom (MSD room) need more accommodations/modifications in comparison to students with specific area needs and their collaboration will look different.</p>
<p>RQ4 What do general and special education teachers believe districts/schools can do to support high rates of collaboration besides the</p>	<p><i>What has helped you be a successful collaborator?</i></p> <p>Planning (2)</p> <p>Experience (4)</p>	<p><i>What has helped you be a successful collaborator?</i></p> <p>Plan (1)</p> <p>Knowing content/expectations (1)</p>

<p>inevitable aspect of needed time?</p>	<p>Relationships/Connections (3)</p> <p>Team Player (2)</p> <p>Communication (8)</p> <p>Mentor (1)</p> <p>Mutual Goal (1)</p> <p>Flexibility (1)</p> <p><i>What do general education teachers need, aside from time, to collaborate successfully with special education teachers?</i></p> <p>Resources (1)</p> <p>Shared information on data and student needs/communication (3)</p>	<p>Experience (1)</p> <p>Speaking up/advocating (1)</p> <p>Relationships/connections (1)</p> <p>Team Player (1)</p> <p>No specific person (1)</p> <p><i>What do special education teachers need, aside from time, to collaborate successfully with general education teachers?</i></p> <p>Time (2)</p> <p>Communication/shared information on data and student needs (4)</p> <p>Ensuring SPED services/documents are completed (1)</p> <p>Answered as strategy - monitoring and documentation (discussed collab. With ECE asst. Not gen. Ed. teachers) (1)</p>
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	<p><i>Is there anything you would like to add or clarify about collaboration from your perception and/or experience?</i></p> <p>No [individuals shaking head no]</p>	<p><i>Is there anything you would like to add or clarify about collaboration from your perception and/or experience?</i></p> <p>Question about if there are individuals that come in to advise on collaboration.</p> <p>Clarifying that students in a self-contained classroom (MSD room) need more accommodations/modifications in comparison to students with specific area needs and their collaboration will look different.</p>
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