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# Best Practices For Collaboration Between ESL And General Education Teachers

Mike Burgess

*Minnesota State University - Mankato*

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BEST PRACTICES FOR COLLABORATION BETWEEN ESL  
AND GENERAL EDUCATION TEACHERS

By

Mike Burgess

An Alternate Paper Plan Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

In

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Mankato, Minnesota

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BEST PRACTICES FOR COLLABORATION BETWEEN ESL  
AND GENERAL EDUCATION TEACHERS

Michael Burgess

This alternate paper plan has been examined and approved by the following members of the committee.

Dr. Nancy Drescher, Advisor

Dr. Stephen Stoyhoff

## ABSTRACT

The research begins with a historical overview of ESL service models and explores how different types of collaboration between ESL and general education teachers impact student learning. The historical overview section delves into the origins of ESL and how ESL has evolved since its inception. Also included is information about how ESL programming has changed in response to the type of English Language Learners it serves. The next focus is on the recent trend toward close collaboration between ESL and general education teachers in terms of program effectiveness and the overall strengths and weaknesses of different models. The paper closes with research on current types of ESL programming using data and research.

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# Chapter 1: Introduction

In this paper I will outline and discuss rationale for creating and implementing co-teaching partnerships between general education (GE) teachers and English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers. In Chapter 1, I will give an overview of my research topic, share my experience with these partnerships, and explain why I chose this topic. In Chapter 2, I will discuss current research in the area of co-teaching by summarizing and discussing several case studies from around the world that reflect the variety of co-teaching implementation models that have been implemented and studied. In Chapter 3, I will summarize my findings and share my professional experience with implementing co-teaching partnerships. In Chapter 4, I will use these findings to draw conclusions about my topic.

My research and reflection while writing this paper has given me a clearer understanding of what effective co-teaching arrangements look like. Often educators term “co-teaching” without truly understanding the complexities of its implementation. For example, at my current school of employment, a K-4 elementary school where approximately 33% of the students speak a language other than English at home, our ESL, Title 1, and Special Education departments have long followed the model of small group “pull-out” instruction. Only recently have we begun to consider the benefits of a more inclusive model as we continuously strive to find the most effective learning environment for our English Language Learners. While we realize that pull-out instruction has its strengths, it all too often results in excessive fragmentation of academic instruction which in turn results in students growing disconnected from the content and learning objectives of the general education classroom.

Last year our school principal formed a Design Team for the purpose of restructuring how teachers deliver Language Arts instruction in order to provide a continuum of support that would benefit all learners. The Design Team was comprised of teachers representing general education, Special Education, Title I, and ESL and met throughout the school year to research and discuss different models for what was envisioned as a redesigned Literacy Block. After concluding its research, the Design Team brought forward the recommendation for a 90-minute Literacy Block composed of three tiers of instruction (Tier 1 – whole group, Tier 2 – independent practice and guided reading groups, Tier 3 – writing instruction) and planned five days of teacher training for the summer. During the summer training the Design Team presented a framework of guiding principles which outlined the rationale behind the changes to how the curriculum was delivered.

One of the most significant changes was a move from small group pullout support for Special Education, Title I, and ESL students to a push-in literacy support model. This meant that ESL, Title 1, and Special Education teachers were to provide instruction within the walls of the general education classroom. The Design Team also saw the potential for co-teaching of lessons, but without resources for training in co-teaching or designated time for planning together, co-teaching remained an option, whereas push-in literacy support was regarded as a mandate with only a few exceptions. These exceptions included ESL students who were new to the United States and / or those who had limited formal schooling. In addition, Special Education students whose Individual Education Plans (IEPs) specified pull-out instruction were exempt from the push-in mandate.

For the sake of discussion in this paper and my role as an ESL teacher, my focus of this paper will revolve around my experiences as an ESL teacher, with an understanding that Title 1 and Special Education teachers in my school are also struggling with how to make this new instructional practice meaningful and successful. My own personal belief is that co-teaching and consistent collaboration between general educators and ESL teachers can be a powerful arrangement, but as I will discuss throughout this paper, successful co-teaching models don't just happen. An abundance of hard work and dedication are essential as well as specific training in collaboration, and a commitment to the model's success. Although ecstatic about my school administration developing instructional principles and taking strides toward collaborative co-teaching, after one school year into the transition, I have some reservations, a few concerns, and lingering questions.

## CHAPTER 2: Research Findings

“Although most educators now agree that schools should provide ESL students with special services, there is no universal agreement about how or by whom such services should be delivered.” (Duke and Mabbott, 2000). This conclusion by Duke and Mabbott supports my own experience as a provider of special services, specifically ESL and reading support.

In this chapter, I provide a review of literature pertinent to the area of co-teaching between general education classroom teachers and ESL teachers. My review will include a discussion of best practices for collaboration between these teachers and an explanation of the benefits and drawbacks of an inclusive co-teaching arrangement according to this current research. In so doing, I will review and discuss the growing trend of inclusive co-teaching as traditional ESL pull-out instructional settings wane in popularity.

This review will also focus on the popularity and practicalities of the pull-out model commonly implemented by ESL teachers when the ground-breaking 1974 Lau vs. Nichols Supreme Court Decision resulted in the first legally-mandated adaptations for students who learned a language other than English in their home. According to Young (1996) the ruling meant that public schools were required to deliver an appropriate and comprehensible education for students with English as their second language. Young asserts that students had not only a need, but the legal right to access the same curriculum as English-speaking students, and it was the role of the ESL teacher to teach the ESL students the language and background knowledge for them to do so. As expressed on the St. Paul school’s website, (Retrieved January 24, 2010 from <http://www.ell.spps.org>) the following statement sums up the United States Supreme Court’s stance on this topic.

There is no equality of treatment merely by providing students with the same facilities, textbooks, and curriculum, for students who do not understand English are effectively foreclosed from any meaningful education. Basic English skills are the heart of what these schools teach. Imposition of a requirement that, before a child can effectively participate in the education program, he must have already acquired those basic skills is to make a mockery of public education. We know that those who do not understand English are certain to find their classroom experiences wholly incomprehensible and in no way meaningful (U.S. Supreme Court, 414 U.S. 563).

At the elementary level in the 1980's, McCeon (1987) found the pull-out model to be the most widespread practice that had resulted from the *Lau v. Nichols* decision. He stated that teachers believed that the primary advantage of this model was that it provided concentrated instruction according to students' needs in an environment more comfortable for the language learner.

However, a major disadvantage is the difficulty in scheduling ESL pull-out classes so that students do not miss important content in their mainstream setting. Friend and Cook (2000) express uncertainty in the effectiveness of pull-out ESL instruction. They conclude that in a typical pull-out setting, a separate ESL curriculum is utilized which often has limited connectivity to mainstream classroom content and students may struggle with relating this separate curriculum to the context of their mainstream environment. It is also thought to be a detriment to students' learning if they are missing content being taught in the mainstream classroom. According to Duke and

Mabbot (2000), negative stigmas can develop when mainstream students constantly see ESL students pulled out for instruction.

Because the use of the pull-out model for ESL instruction is waning, I have focused most of my research on collaboration and co-teaching.

As I searched for local and immediate findings of inclusion models being used with ELL students, I learned that during the 2007/2008 school year the St. Paul, Minnesota school district had an ELL population of 37%. Although I was unable to find published research conducted in the St. Paul Public Schools (SPPS), I did find the following relevant information as an extensive part of the district website devoted to information about English Language Learners in general as well as specific information about how ELL students are supported in the SPPS Also included was the rationale for why English Language Learners there are taught using a push-in model of instruction.

According to information stated on the website [www.ell.spps.org](http://www.ell.spps.org) , the district ELL department's strong belief in the benefits of collaborative instruction for ELLs has developed based on numerous factors, including the following:

- Research suggests that the most successful ESL program models have students learning English in the mainstream classroom.
- Professional learning communities (PLC), or school environments where teachers learn and reflect together, have been shown to increase student achievement. Collaboration among teachers contributes to the strength of PLCs in schools.
- The number of English language learners in the Saint Paul Public Schools has changed dramatically in the past ten years. It is no longer practical to provide supplemental English language instruction in a pullout instructional model.
- It is neither ethical nor effective practice to isolate newcomer students in alternative settings for extended periods of time. Students must be exposed

and have access to mainstream curriculum and resources as soon as they arrive in the United States.

- Federal and state funding allocated to districts for ELL services are required to “supplement, not supplant” regular instruction. ELL programs must enable students to participate in the mainstream and not replace or supplant any part of the “regular” academic program. (Retrieved January 24, 2010 from [www.ell.spps.org](http://www.ell.spps.org)).

The information presented on the district website also emphasized that it is important to make a distinction between working together and collaboration: and cited the work of DuFour (2003) who wrote that cooperative tasks and activities can be characterized as “collaboration lite” and are distinguished from “true collaboration” by the absence of substantive conversation and work around student needs and instructional practices. After identifying the four elements of collaboration as planning, co-teaching, assessment/evaluation and reflection, the author of the website emphasized these four elements as the instructional practices and habits in which teachers must become skilled, in order to collaborate successfully. The author expressed that one of the most important elements of the collaborative relationship is the co-taught instruction, and stressed the need for the expertise of both professionals to be utilized to the fullest possible extent. (Retrieved January 24, 2010 from <http://ell.spps.org/ELLResources.html>)

## **Inclusion and Collaboration**

Use of the so-called “inclusion model,” which for the purposes of this research review means that ESL teachers join the mainstream class during ESL time and co-teach with the mainstream teacher (Villa, Thousand & Nevin, 2008), has grown rapidly in

popularity during the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, replacing the pull-out models that had dominated ESL instruction from its inception to the end of the twentieth century.

“Collaboration can connect, but it can just as easily divide” (Hargreave & McMillan, 1994). These words foreshadow many of the research findings on collaboration between ESL and general education teachers. According to Davison (2006), there are many essential elements for effective collaboration between ESL and mainstream teachers. Some of the elements are: incorporating specific goals for ESL development into curriculum, assessment planning processes, negotiating a shared understanding of teacher roles and responsibilities, adopting common curriculum planning processes, and establishing systematic mechanisms for monitoring evaluation and feedback. Davison (2006) claimed that identifying these elements turned out to be much easier than finding them present in schools.

Little (1990) concluded that “effective collaboration between teachers is not only rare, but extremely difficult to sustain. The closer one gets to the questions of curriculum and instruction, there are fewer recorded instances of rigorous and meaningful collaboration” (p. 512). Davison (2006), too, pointed to the need for a strong emphasis on establishing clear expectations for both the general education and the ESL teachers and stated the follow, “Experience demonstrates that all too often collaborative teaching is seen as simply a case of another pair of hands; an attitude that two teachers are better than one. In such theorizations of collaboration, teachers are simply doubled rather than differentiated” (p. 456). Davison (2006) also noted that such partnerships are often associated with the subordination of ESL to the content area and characterized by an

imbalance between teachers in terms of curriculum authority, responsibility, and opportunities for input.

Inclusive practices, according to Watnick and Sacks (2006), are intended to modify the classroom environment so that all students receive educational services appropriate to their needs without being pulled from the general education classroom. Watnick and Sacks (2006) argue that a successful inclusive program exposes all students to age-appropriate curriculum and provides more natural social interactions that build language and self-esteem. Duke and Mabbot (2001) discuss the strong necessity for common planning time and the need for having collaborative teams of teachers willing to work together. They believe that an inclusion model can minimize scheduling issues and transition concerns for students which are often concerns associated with an ESL pull-out program.

According to Coltrane (2002), inclusion can simplify lesson planning for teachers and believes that the opportunity to share strategies and ideas leads to lessons that are more meaningful for all students. However, Coltrane (2002) also recognized the territorial challenges that can result from inclusive co-teaching. He stated that ESL teachers may unintentionally adopt the role of classroom paraprofessional as it can be difficult for some teachers to level the playing field of collaboration. Creese (2002) explored collaboration between ESL and mainstream teachers and observed subject teachers displaying command and ownership of their subject area while the observed ESL teachers did not project similar levels of ownership of language objectives in the content area classroom. She also observed ESL teachers solely assuming the role of facilitating learning rather than teaching their own language content.

Hargreaves & McMillan (1994) also found concerns about issues of ownership and control when two teachers attempt a co-teaching model as well as personality clashes and resistance to advice given from a co-teacher. Roth and Tobin (2004) observed that co-teaching can be very uncomfortable, even threatening, especially if co-teaching has been mandated rather than performed willingly.

Arkoudis (2006) attributes the frequent struggles involved in collaborative co-teaching models to several factors. She argues that ESL and mainstream classroom teachers belong to distinct discourse communities, each with their own assumptions and beliefs about their subject area and its importance within the school curriculum. Arkoudis (2006) stresses the importance of the collaborative relationship but questions how ESL teachers, that he feels are often viewed as low-status teachers within schools, can take on the role of educating mainstream teachers on the importance of language curriculum and objectives.

Thesen (1997) contrasts the roles of ESL teacher and classroom teacher in his study:

<b>Role of ESL teacher</b>	<b>Role of classroom teacher</b>
Establish and nurture/foster the collaborative process and maintain communication	Establish and nurture/foster the collaborative process and maintain communication
Establish clear language focus for instruction	Establish clear content focus for instruction
Participate in planning and preparation as equals or team members	Participate in planning and preparation as equals or team members
Negotiate flexible, regular teaching role in the mainstream classroom	Negotiate responsibilities for classroom management/overall direction of class
Identify language demands of content area/develop additional materials for language support/participate in text selection	Identify language demands of content area/develop additional materials for language support/participate in text selection
Joint reflection/evaluation of teaching/modification of aims of unit	Joint reflection/evaluation of teaching/modification of aims of unit

plan/teaching activities/time allocation	plan/teaching activities/time allocation
Take an active role in monitoring and assessing the language development of all students and contributing to common assessment processes	Take responsibility for overall assessment and reporting of students' progress in content/grade level/negotiate nature of assessment tasks and language demands
Contribute to reporting on language development/feedback to parents on ESL students' progress	Report on students' outcome/feedback to parents and students
Establish clear language focus for unit/be responsible for collecting materials and strategies in a particular content area	Co-write language approaches section of curriculum unit plan
Support and foster cross-curricular language development	Be prepared to experiment with ESL strategies in own classroom/evaluate and report effectiveness
Assist groups in analysis of language demands of content area and identify linguistic needs of particular students	Consider own level of language awareness and negotiate time for intensive planning with ESL teacher
	Identify and share language issues at own content area/grade level meeting

Collaborative teaching: Extract of roles and responsibilities. Thesen (1997, p. 504)

Because the purpose of his research was strictly to observe and classify these roles, he drew no conclusions in his research.

### **Stages of Collaboration**

As a result of one of the more comprehensive studies, Davison (2006) suggested that there tend to be five sequential stages of collaboration in general education-ESL teacher partnerships. The levels are: passive resistance, compliance, accommodation, convergence, and creative co-construction. He described each stage by observing the behaviors of both of the teachers.

Davison (2006) labels the first stage as “passively resistant” when both teachers invest little time in collaboration or display an explicit rejection of collaborative practices. He claims that compliant teachers may have a positive attitude and express good intent for collaboration. However, Davison (2006) feels teachers may feel frustrated

and defensive of conflicting demands, and dealing with conflict in roles is viewed as part of the job but leads to teacher frustration and unhappiness.

At the accommodation level, Davison (2006) assumes teachers have a willingness to experiment, but have a limited understanding of the theoretical premise of collaboration. According to Davison (2006), if collaboration models are positively implemented, teachers will begin to recognize the intrinsic rewards from their developing partnerships and move to what Davison calls “convergence.”

Davison (2006) discusses the convergence level as a time when teachers embrace opportunities to learn from colleagues, while displaying a high level of respect for one another. He states that although teachers may be open to the strategies and ideas of the other, they still may lack an understanding of the strategy rationale of their counterpart which leads to a growing preference to engage in peer-directed professional development.

Lastly, teachers who reach the level of creative co-construction view collaboration as the preferred option for ESL teaching. At this level, teachers’ roles become more interchangeable, and a high degree of trust in the other teacher is vividly evident. Conflicts in roles are accepted as a condition that leads to greater understanding. Also, teachers can see achievements demonstrated across the whole curriculum (Davison, 2006).

## **Co-Teaching Models**

Honigsfeld and Dove (2008) affirm that co-teaching can be an effective teaching model in meeting the needs of English language learners. Co-teaching can also help students meet local, state, and national standards. They illustrate 5 co-teaching models and describe ways in which they are applicable to the context of ESL teacher inclusion.

Honigsfield and Dove (2008) label the first model as one teach-one drift, in which there is one lead teacher and one teacher is to “teach on purpose.” In practice this means that the ESL and mainstream teachers take turns assuming the lead teacher role.

According to Honigsfield and Dove (2008), this model allows teachers to give 1-5 minute mini-lessons to individuals or small groups of students and includes the possibilities of pre-teaching and re-teaching content as needed.

In the second model, two teachers teach the same content to separate groups of students. Honigsfield and Dove (2008) explain how students are placed in heterogeneous groups and each teacher works with one group. They feel that since group size is cut in half, ESL students have more frequent opportunities to interact with each other, listen to student role models, volunteer responses, and receive feedback from the teacher.

Honigsfield and Dove (2008) break down the third model as one teacher re-teaching content while the other teacher delivers alternative information. The teachers form groups based on the students’ language-proficiency levels or student proficiency in the skills being targeted. In this model, Honigsfield and Dove (2008) affirm that group composition is highly transient due to the students’ skill levels in that particular area and topics change according to the curriculum.

In the fourth model, teachers create multiple groups like learning centers, stations, guided reading groups, listening stations to name a few. Honigsfield and Dove (2008) point out that this model includes groups of students who can perform learning tasks independently, and teachers can target specific students with individualized attention at the same time.

Lastly in the fifth model, team teaching, Honigsfeld and Dove (2008) reveal that both teachers teach the same content as a whole group which means they plan cooperatively and teach the same lesson to the class as a whole. Teachers assume a co-lead role with one presenting lesson and the other consistently offers examples, explanations, and extensions of key topics simultaneously.

The following figure details the aforementioned models and in addition, includes what Honigsfeld and Dove (2008) found to be beneficial and what Coltrane (2002) considered detrimental of such arrangements.

### Co-Teaching Arrangements

<b>Model</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Benefits</b>	<b>Disadvantages</b>
Team teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One group, two teachers teach the same content</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allows two teachers to interject with explanations and extensions of key ideas presented</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requires a lot of planning</li> <li>• Teaching styles must mesh</li> <li>• Requires a great level of trust and commitment</li> </ul>
Parallel teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students are placed in two heterogeneous groups; each teacher works with a group</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Smaller group size increases opportunity for interaction between teachers and students</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cannot be used for initial instruction</li> <li>• Noise level</li> </ul>
Station teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multiple groups; two teachers monitor as students work on designated tasks</li> <li>• Two teachers monitor stations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allows students to pull selected students for targeted instruction</li> <li>• The centers, stations, or</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Noise level</li> <li>• Does the order matter</li> </ul>

	and/or pull selected students for targeted skill development	guided reading groups typically allow for lots of social interaction	
Alternative teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two groups; one teacher re-teaches and the other teaches alternative information</li> <li>• Teachers assign students to groups based on students' skills for the target content, and language proficiency levels</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students assigned to groups on a temporary basis</li> <li>• Allows time for enrichment activities</li> <li>• Gives students struggling with content retention small group and individualized attention</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stigmas can develop if the same students are always working in the small remediation group</li> </ul>
One teach, one drift	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mainstream teacher and ESL teacher take turns assuming lead role</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allows teacher to tap into their specific talents depending on content being delivered</li> <li>• Drifting teacher can monitor students' comprehension of lesson and pull students for mini-lessons as needed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If used exclusively, one teacher can be viewed as assistant</li> </ul>

Honigsfeld and Dove (2008, pp. 10-12), Coltrane, B. (2002, Center for Applied Linguistics Newsletter, 25(2), 1-5)

Common to the statements of various researchers, Honigsfeld and Dove (2008) strongly believe in the importance of dedicated co-planning time for ESL and general education teachers who assume co-teaching roles. They asserted that teachers should at least be able to meet once a week to map out lesson plans and daily objectives. Unfortunately dedicated common planning time can be hard to create because often the ESL teacher will be co-teaching with multiple teachers throughout the school day. According to Coltrane (2000), working through the logistics of finding time to meet with general education teachers during their prep periods can be a cumbersome and time-consuming task. Honigsfeld and Dove (2008) also stressed the need for collaborating teachers to communicate freely and develop communication strategies that allow for shared decision-making. This, in turn, they believed, will allow the individual teaching strengths of each teacher to be utilized most effectively.

### **Collaboration and Inclusion Case Studies**

The following compilation of case studies highlights many current complexities of collaboration and inclusion. The first study summarizes collaborative teaching attempts between a high school Science teacher and an ESL teacher. The second involves a study targeting instructional methodology for ESL and special education students in Miami-Dade County, which welcomes an estimated 50,000 people from other countries annually. (Watnick and Sacks, 2006) The third discusses a multi-year collaboration study, and the final explains a University of Minnesota based study in which participating educators were required to commit to two years of professional development with four phases of workshops.

### **Melbourne, Australia**

Arkoudis (2006) conducted a study in a Melbourne, Australia secondary school setting with the intention of analyzing planning meetings between a tenth grade Science teacher and an ESL teacher. The teachers had regular meetings in an attempt to balance the Science and ESL curriculum. This study was conducted throughout the course of one complete school year and contained individual teacher interviews to gather perceptions of feelings and beliefs toward co-teaching. Arkoudis (2006) felt that recent educational policies suggested collaboration between content area teachers and ESL teachers to be without problems or complications, and he wasn't convinced of the assumptions of these policies.

In analyzing the collaboration meetings between the Science teacher and ESL teacher, Arkoudis (2006) soon found conversational patterns. The ESL teacher would often sustain the conversation to avoid risking damage to their professional relationship, and Arkoudis (2006) determined she would frequently lower the interpersonal impact of her utterances for the purpose of maintaining the option of negotiating her stance on the topic at hand. Arkoudis (2006) believed such linguistic features signal that she was deferring to Alex as the more assertive in this professional relationship. Another hindrance to meeting productivity was the differing views and perspectives of idealized lesson delivery. The ESL teacher was having difficulty in conveying her linguistic goals and objectives in a manner that the Science teacher found relevant to his Science curriculum and instruction.

After numerous observations, Arkoudis (2006) determined that ESL is a strategy-driven instruction and does not have the same authority as subject areas such as Math and Science. She affirms that ESL instruction is perceived as being lower in the subject hierarchy of the school, and found that this institutionalized positioning may lend itself to impacting collaborative and co-teaching practices between ESL and mainstream teachers negatively. Arkoudis (2006) also documented the notion that ESL teachers felt uneasy about working with mainstream teachers as the professional relationship can be riddled with misunderstandings and misconceptions. For example, the mainstream teacher or subject specialist has the power to accept or reject suggestions. Arkoudis (2000) found that this imbalance leads ESL teachers to feel increased levels of frustration and a sense of powerlessness.

#### **All Students All Schools (ASAS)**

In Miami-Dade County public schools (M-DCPS), the fifth largest school district in the country, a full-fledged inclusion model pilot study has been implemented. Watnick and Sacks (2006) examined the project in this Florida district that they report suffers from overcrowding, limited resources, and language barriers. As noted in their research, the U.S. Census (2000) estimated that 50,000 people enter Miami-Dade County from other countries annually. Of the approximately 370,000 students served in this school district, nearly 200,000 of them have Spanish as their first language. District administrators have found it difficult to appropriately meet the needs of immigrant students that frequently deal with troublesome issues of acculturation and socioeconomic hardships. Teachers and administrators in the district attribute these ever present non-school factors to the overall decline of school climate and student achievement. “With pressure coming from

Washington, D.C., parent advocates, and the Florida Inclusion Network (FIN), the practice of inclusion is being added to the ‘mix’” (Watnick & Sacks, p.69).

The pilot program, *All Students All Schools (ASAS)*, was implemented in 75% of the Miami-Dade County public schools in the district during 2004-2005. With the implementation of this program, the district intended to target instructional methodology for ESL and special education students and was funded through the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA). In order to learn these skills, the teachers attended a two-day training seminar and the district was divided into six regions with each region having a designated ASAS coordinator to provide support to teachers and administrators. The Miami Dade County schools utilized three different models that were determined by the program leaders to fall under the category of “inclusion.” Schools could choose to implement any of the three: the specialized support model, in-class support model, and the external support model as defined by the characteristics in the table below:

Specialized support model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incorporates a resource room</li> <li>• Students receive specialized instructional services outside of the general education classroom</li> </ul>
In-class support model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A co-teaching model</li> <li>• Each teacher is expected to deliver instruction to all students in the class</li> <li>• No students singled out as needing special services</li> <li>• Two-thirds general education students and one-third ESL/special education students</li> </ul>
External support model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides accommodations with no direct services to students with special learning needs</li> <li>• Children monitored with consistent teacher to teacher collaboration</li> </ul>

Watnick & Sacks (2006, pp. 69-70)

Watnick and Sacks (2006) randomly selected thirty-five schools within the district and sent open-ended questionnaires to gather information about teacher and administrator perceptions regarding the pilot program. The researchers found that the positive

responses to the questionnaire questions outnumbered the negative and nearly all schools that completed questionnaires chose the internal support co-teaching model as their model of choice. The following graphic summarizes results compiled by Watnick and Sacks (2006).

<u>Positives:</u>	<u>Negatives:</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased opportunities for social interaction</li> <li>• Students benefited from a variety of accommodations</li> <li>• Heterogeneous learning environment exposes students to wider range of academic and social experiences</li> <li>• Teachers' instructional competencies improved from experience teaching students with wide range of learning styles/needs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some felt that their school site lacked adequate personnel capable of effectively co-teaching</li> <li>• Much more time and energy needed to be spent on student placement in appropriate class</li> <li>• Lack of community support</li> </ul>

Watnick & Sacks (2006, p.72)

## **Teamworks**

*Teamworks*, a project conducted in Chicago over the course of three years, addressed the need for better collaboration between mainstream and ESL teachers (Sakash and Rodriguez-Brown, 1995). The program's primary focus was to improve the education of all students in schools with high limited English proficient populations. It focused on providing professional development and support for teachers. The *Teamworks* staff consisted of 4 people trained to bring together teams of teachers from both ESL and mainstream programs. There were two primary goals of *Teamworks*: 1) Improve coordination between mainstream and ESL teachers in order to better meet the needs of LEP students, and 2) improve both mainstream and ESL teacher competence in providing instruction to LEP students (Sakash and Rodriguez-Brown, 1995, p. 10).

Sakash and Rodriguez-Brown (1995) reported that *Teamworks* staff did not take a one-model-fits-all approach. They collected needs assessment data and helped teachers and administrators develop a school-wide plan for increasing collaboration and improving teachers' instructional competencies in meeting the academic needs of LEP students.

During the 1992-1993 school year, 76 schools in Chicago were targeted for participation in *Teamworks*, with 14 schools agreeing to participate in the first year of the program. During the second year, 2 additional schools participated and 11 more schools joined in during the third. *Teamworks* staff chose to limit participation to Spanish-speaking populations during the first year, intending to insure that their training model was well developed for addressing the needs of the largest group of LEP students before expanding and including training for the multiple languages represented in the district (Sakash and Rodriguez-Brown, pp. 12-14).

Each teacher participating in the training signed a letter of commitment to attend training sessions weekly for three hours, for the first four months of the school year, and twice monthly for the rest of the year. Teachers conducted needs assessments at their individual schools by collecting data from parents, teachers, and administrators and then, with the assistance of the *Teamworks* staff, created specific objectives for their schools. Once these objectives were established and being practiced in schools, *Teamworks* staff provided follow-up training opportunities.

In addition, in order to analyze the impact of the project on schools involved, *Teamworks* staff conducted face to face interviews with those impacted by the program. One finding from these interviews was that many mainstream teachers realized they were

unfamiliar with their school's ESL program and felt that they were not as competent as they would like to be in facilitating language development in the mainstream classroom. Several teachers voiced the need for workshops and professional development opportunities that would allow all teachers to develop a shared vision to help all students succeed. One school purchased a video program of ESL teaching strategies and incorporated it into weekly staff meetings and discussions. Sakash & Rodriguez-Brown (1995) concluded that according to statements made by the principal and *Teamworks* teachers "communication and collaboration have definitely improved in the school," (Sakash & Rodriguez-Brown, 1995). The *Teamworks* staff expressed amazement at the amount of effort teachers exerted in attempting to learn new strategies for teaching English language learners.

Sakash and Rodriguez-Brown (1995) found a multitude of benefits resulting from the *Teamworks* project. For example, one school principal paired each ESL teacher at his/her school with a general education teacher. They assumed co-teaching roles, discussed the strategies weekly at team meetings, and documented their lessons for the principal to review. The co-teacher teams reported that many LEP students have made new friends and are expressing comfort in interacting with mainstream students on a daily basis. Other schools focused primarily on curriculum, used grade level meetings to develop a shared philosophy of literacy instruction and worked to align the curriculum and instruction in the ESL and general education classroom settings. One particular school developed a cross-age tutoring program in which middle school ESL students were paired with first and second grade mainstream students to read and write stories and yet other schools implemented opportunities for peer observations, so mainstream and

ESL teachers could observe each other and gain a better understanding of procedures and principles in each setting (Sakash and Rodriguez-Brown, 1995, pp. 17-18).

Overall, the implementation of *Teamworks* was deemed successful amongst the 27 different schools involved. Many new strategies and activities were developed, and coordination and collaboration techniques were greatly strengthened among staff members. The degree of program success varied among schools, but there were some common factors that led to program success: an elaborate written plan for success: a supportive and involved principal committed to better coordination, stability of student population, and low teacher turnover rates (Sakash and Rodriguez-Brown, 1995, p. 20).

### **TEAM UP**

In Minnesota, Teaching English Language Learners Action Model to Unite Professionals (TEAM UP) is an organization founded by the University of Minnesota Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition (CARLA) in 2002. According to TEAM UP administrators (information retrieved December 1, 2009 from <http://www.carla.umn.edu/teamup/model/html>), participating schools were identified based on Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment (MCA) scores and, in addition, in order to be chosen to participate, schools needed to have a high percentage of ESL students as well as students that have not made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) as determined by the requirements of the federal No Child Left Behind program (U.S. Department of Education, Elementary and Secondary Education Act, reauthorization 2001).

Teams of educators were required to commit to two years of professional development with four phases of workshops. Four schools enrolled in the program: two small rural schools with an approximate 13% ESL student population, one large suburban

school with over 20% ESL population, and a large urban school where over 60% of its students are English language learners. At each participating school the principal recruited a team of six members, including classroom teachers, paraprofessionals, community liaisons, ESL teachers, social workers, special education teachers, and social workers.

The TEAM UP project focused on helping educators to improve classroom instruction for their limited English proficient students through a field-based and team-centered model of professional development. Program administrators expected participants to become leaders who assisted participating schools in making informed decisions about ESL students. Participants agreed to set professional development goals, attend all phases of workshops, and collaborate with others to meet their goals. Program officials believed that attention to strong instructional practices and incorporation of practices known to be successful with English language learners would contribute to increased MCA competency among English language learners.

As part of the TEAM UP program, participating educators strove to uncover answers to the following questions:

1) What can I do to prepare myself to best meet the needs of English language learners in my classroom? 2) What major issues do we need to address so our instruction in the classroom can best meet the needs of English language learners? 3) What is my role within this school in meeting the needs of all students? 4) How do we work as a team to develop a school community conducive to a focus on learning and optimizing individual and collective skill (information retrieved December 1, 2009 from <http://www.carla.umn.edu/teamup/model/background.html>).

## **Chapter 3: Summary and Professional Experience**

Much of my research supports my own beliefs and concerns regarding collaboration and co-teaching. This chapter will be a summary and reflection of research with discussion of some of my own professional experiences regarding co-teaching and collaboration. The following sections highlight key research findings as they relate to the growing trend of collaboration and co-teaching, and my job as an ESL teacher.

### **Need for Training**

Although the Sakash and Rodriguez-Brown (1995) report on *Teamworks* displays a lengthy and comprehensive staff development, reading about the successes of this program's implementation made the positive impact such training can offer quite apparent. As stated in chapter 2, *Teamworks* administrators collected data and helped teachers and administrators develop a school-wide plan for increasing collaboration and improving teachers' competencies in working with LEP students. Through their interviews with *Teamworks* staff, many mainstream teachers realized they were unfamiliar with their school's ESL program and felt that they were not as competent as they would like to be in facilitating language development in the mainstream classroom.

At my school, one of the primary concerns of non-general education teachers like me has been the lack of professional guidance on how to implement collaborative co-teaching partnerships. Push-in was the buzz word around my school last year and it meant that the push-in model was to be implemented by non-general education teachers such as ESL, Special Education, Title 1, and Speech-Language in collaboration with mainstream teachers. The primary rationale behind the change was threefold: 1) to minimize transitions for students during the school day, 2) reduce the amount of

academic content that students miss during their time in a pull-out instructional setting, and 3) keep instruction delivered by non-classroom teachers connected to content being taught simultaneously by the general education teacher.

While these are valid reasons for implementing this change, after I had gained some experience pushing into general education classrooms, it quickly became apparent that not all general education teachers are comfortable with having additional teachers work within the confines of their classrooms. A mandate of push-in instruction with no professional development and no dedicated co-planning time can be a frustrating experience for both teachers and perhaps even detrimental to the students' learning.

As discussed earlier, Arkoudis (2006) argued that ESL and mainstream classroom teachers belong to distinct discourse communities, each with their own beliefs about their subject area and its importance within the school. Two professional educators holding differing views regarding the implementation of the push-in support instruction model and having had no training in how to reconcile these differences can lead to a confusing and frustrating teaching arrangement. Just as students bring a wide variety of backgrounds and beliefs into the classroom, teachers, too, have their own set of beliefs and philosophies. In my teaching role, the general education teachers and I often had conflicting expectations and contrasting styles, which interfered with a smooth and effective transition to the push-in model.

Over the course of the school year, I worked with eight different classroom teachers. I learned a lot about what it is like to provide push-in support for ELL students and have a few concerns. One thing I learned, for example, was that if the general educator and ESL teacher have vastly differing views on how to approach classroom

management, instruction, and assessment, the need for training in how to resolve these differences is critical. It is important that the teachers feel like a team, not like one teacher is in charge and the other, the non-general education teacher, feel like the teacher's assistant.

As Roth and Tobin (2004) observed, co-teaching can be very uncomfortable if it is mandated rather than performed willingly. It is possible that some teachers may just never click, but with appropriate training before the teachers are expected to co-teach or push-in, it would be possible to increase the odds for a successful collaboration. It may be a lofty goal to collect needs assessment data and develop a school-wide plan for increasing collaboration and improving teachers' instructional competencies in meeting the academic needs of LEP students at my school of employment, but the research of Sakash and Rodriguez-Brown (1995) and the Teamworks project proved it to be an intriguing one for me.

Proponents of push-in instruction may rejoice in the simplifying of the logistics by having all students within the confines of the general education classroom. Others may believe that the stigma often associated with pulling out groups of students will subside once ESL students stay in the mainstream classroom and get support from the ESL teacher. However, the bottom line is that a successful collaboration between the general education and the teacher with a specialized role, be it ESL, Special Education, Speech / Language, does not just happen because it is mandated by the school administration or outlined in a document of agreed on principles. Successful implementation requires sustained professional development.

## **Hierarchical Relationships**

As noted in chapter 2, various researchers uncovered concern with the hierarchical relationships between general education and specialist area teachers. The research of Arkoudis (2006) led him to believe that ESL teachers are often viewed as low-status teachers within schools. He would like to see ESL teachers take on the role of educating mainstream teachers on the importance of language curriculum and objectives. Coltrane (2002) also recognized the territorial challenges that can result from inclusive co-teaching in stating that ESL teachers may unintentionally adopt the role of classroom paraprofessional. Again this is where professional development is critical, to provide teachers methodology and strategies for leveling the classroom responsibilities and balancing the collaborative partnership. Hargreaves (1994) found concerns about issues of ownership and control when two teachers attempt a co-teaching model as well as personality clashes and resistance to advice given from a co-teacher.

This discussion brings one specific example to mind. Last year I collaborated with a general education teacher whose teaching and management style was extremely structured. For this and other reasons I found it difficult to conduct instruction with my small group of students within her classroom. This teacher wanted to make it clear that she was superior to me and the other support teachers (Title I, Special Education) who worked in her classroom. She believed that her style was the correct one and she went so far as to redirect students while they were under my supervision. I had great difficulty communicating the nature of my role as a teacher of English language learners to her. It could prove advantageous to somehow share information related to what Thesen (1997)

contrasted in his study of the roles of co-teachers, with teachers struggling to break the adherent seal of their need for constant control.

Davison (2006) highlighted the complexities of co-teaching partnerships, and expressed concern over his findings on the subordination of ESL to the content area teacher. He felt this hierarchical imbalance could be characterized in terms of curriculum authority, responsibility, and opportunities for input. Ideally he would like to observe a balance of all three between co-teachers. Creese (2002) explored collaboration between ESL and mainstream teachers and observed ESL teachers assuming the role of facilitating learning rather than teaching their own language content. My experience with working in general education classrooms as an ESL teacher confirms these above research findings as complicated, challenging, and again it comes back to serious professional development among staff to effectively pull it off.

### **Co-teacher Roles**

Should educating general education teachers be part of my job? Yes, according to Arkoudis (2000) who contests ESL teachers are often viewed as low-status teachers within schools, can take on the role of educating mainstream teachers on the importance of language curriculum and objectives.

In my role underlying the “what is my job” conundrum is the fact that school administration, through the work of the Design Team, has created a document of principles and procedures with the expectation that these principles were to be adhered to. For example, with regard to ESL instruction, the document states that; “with the exception of ESL newcomers, all students will be supported in a push-in environment.” (Savage, M., et al., 2008). This may indeed be the conclusion drawn by the Design Team,

but no ESL teachers were included as members of the task-force that created the document. In addition, it is my understanding that the research used by the Design Team to support their conclusions was done on students whose home language was English. This naturally leads me to question the broad application of these principles for all students.

Next, the topic of planning time is also a constant area of concern and discussion. Duke and Mabbot (2001) believe that an inclusion model complete with consistent common planning time, can minimize scheduling issues and transition concerns for students which are often concerns associated with an ESL pull-out program. This is one area that I feel it could be most beneficial for me to propose solutions for such dilemmas, rather than simply expressing to administrators the need. Principals have a lot to manage, and if teachers can propose solutions to such a problem as limited common planning time, results may be more likely to materialize.

As discussed in chapter 2, Honigsfeld and Dove (2008) strongly believe in the importance of dedicated co-planning time for ESL and general education teachers, and believe that at minimum, weekly meetings are a necessity. Unfortunately, as Honigsfeld and Dove (2008) confirmed, dedicated common planning time can be difficult to arrange logistically. They attest often ESL teachers co-teach with multiple teachers throughout the school day, and finding time to meet with teachers during their prep periods can be cumbersome and time-consuming.

Lastly, as I search for clarity in the “what is my job” conundrum, I felt I was constantly contradicting the expectations general education teachers had that I was merely rotating through classrooms within the school delivering 20-30 minute lessons in

order to bring the ELL students up to grade level reading. I realize, of course, that reading is a major component of building English proficiency, but it is not the only one. The primary objective during push-in instructional time in the general education classroom was to oversee the learning needs of (my) ELL students. It was my responsibility as their ESL teacher to be an advocate for their academic development and success. I believe that a continuum of services is critical in meeting this objective and I found myself fending off the notion that I was simply to serve as a reading skills intervention specialist rather than a language teacher. ESL students need ample opportunities to converse freely as well as receive systematic guided language practice. Thus, although teaching vocabulary and grammar are integral parts of my job as an ESL teacher, general education teachers often overlook this aspect of my role and view me singularly as a reading intervention specialist.

I saw how this influenced the learning of two particular students I worked with, A.B. and C.D. While A.B. quickly learned the reading and language skills I taught and made immediate, measurable progress after a short period of time, another student in his group, C.D., did not experience similar success. I found that he, in particular, needed additional language building activities, including opportunities to use oral and written language to apply his newly learned vocabulary words. It was difficult for me to model oral language for him because I needed to keep my voice level so low. It was uncomfortable for him to echo my words and phrases or even practice incorporating the new vocabulary words into his oral language because he feared being “shushed” by his general education teacher. After further discussion with the general education teacher, we decided it would be more effective for me to work with C.D. outside of the classroom

three days per week to give him the affective environment he needed to improve his language skills. I believe that this individual classroom teacher viewed me strictly in the role of a reading teacher and didn't realize that as an ESL teacher my job is primarily to be a language teacher who uses the teaching of reading as one of many strategies to further the child's language growth.

In conclusion, it is promising to learn that programs such as Teamworks and TEAM UP exist, and are intent on building collaborative co-teaching skills within the educational arena. The overall theme of my research findings and experience thus far was that collaborative co-teaching can be an extreme challenge, while the benefits of successful implementation are immeasurable.

## Chapter 4: Conclusion

I reflected on the conclusions I am now drawing after having had the experience of being a co-teacher with general education teachers and the experience of researching the topic of co-teaching between ESL and general education teachers. The table below summarizes my findings with the middle column highlighting the similarities and the two outer columns differences.

<b>Professional Experience</b>	<b>Commonalities</b>	<b>Research Findings</b>
	Collaboration takes place	
	Core curriculum taught by both teachers	
	Shared student data for progress monitoring and making instructional decisions	
No dedicated common planning time for collaboration		Dedicated planning time a key component
Parallel teaching – teacher doubling results in differentiated teaching for some students		Co-teaching = differentiated teaching for all students
Random assignment of ESL teacher to general education teacher		General education teachers volunteer to collaborate with an ESL teacher
No training about how to collaborate		Professional development includes collaboration training
A sense of institutional hierarchy; ESL teacher of lower status than the general education teacher		Both teachers are equal in status and importance
Unclear definition of roles of ESL and general education teacher		Clear definition of roles of ESL and general education teacher

I remain primarily optimistic about the potential of collaborating with general education teachers to improve the quality of instruction for English Language Learners, yet I am also somewhat pessimistic based on what I have learned from my research. Knowing what it takes to maximize the effectiveness of collaboration while being unable to implement the research-supported components leaves me with a sense of unrealized promise.

For example, in terms of ensuring that the ESL teacher is viewed as having equal status and importance in the general education classroom, I believe that each collaborating ESL teacher needs to take ownership of this issue and address it with the teachers they team with. I realize that for some general education teachers, their classroom will always be their domain, but by addressing the issue honestly and clearly discussing expectations for the roles of the two teachers in advance of the start of the in-classroom collaboration, many of the kinds of misunderstandings and unclear role definitions I experienced personally and researchers noted in their observations can be prevented and if not completely eliminated, at least addressed in a professional manner that isn't taken personally by either teacher. This is something that I can control and take ownership of individually. Something that I have some influence over, but very little control is the implementation of any of the recommended elements that have a financial impact on the school and district.

Take, for example, the recommendation for common planning time. With tighter and tighter budgets on the horizon, I believe it is unlikely that this key element of an effective GE / ESL collaboration, dedicated common planning time, will become a reality for two reasons: cost and logistics. I don't know how a school can create common

planning time for the ESL teacher who is collaborating with multiple general education teachers without increasing the amount of time the teacher has to plan and this comes at a price. Even if money were no object, the logistical aspect of aligning the schedules of multiple teachers could prove to be difficult. It would be fabulous to be able to meet with teachers at least once a week as suggested by Honigsfeld and Dove (2008). However, working with several different grade levels and teachers during the day will make this goal a continuous challenge to attain.

One positive sign of support for one of the recommendations in my district came as a result of an audit by the Minnesota State Department of Education. The audit team recommended more professional development about teaching English Language learners for general education teachers. As a result, my supervisor made a commitment of both time and money to providing professional development in the form of Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) training to teams of GE / ESL during the 2010/2011 school year. I view this as an opportunity not only to increase the capacity of general education teachers to be the source of more effective instruction for English Learners in their classrooms, but to provide common knowledge and a mutual understanding of the role of the ESL teacher in supporting these students. From what I've gathered from the first couple sessions of SIOP training, one of the main goals for me as an English language teacher will be to assist classroom teachers in creating language goals and objectives for their daily lessons. This supports Little's (1997) belief in establishing a clear language focus for classroom instruction.

Looking back at what I've learned from my experience and my research, I am certain that I will use this new knowledge to continue to improve how effectively I

collaborate in varying capacities with my general education colleagues. Whether the full potential of the GE / ESL collaboration will be realized remains unclear for a number of reasons, but I view this collaboration as an evolving relationship between me and my colleagues that will continue to become stronger the more we commit to being engaged in the process of making the GE / ESL team an essential part of education for English language learners. I'll move ahead striving to promote the power of effective teacher collaboration amongst my colleagues. Ample planning time and staff development opportunities regarding co-teaching may continually be kept on the back burner. I am well aware of the potential that co-teaching strategies have in meeting the needs of diverse learners. If I can share, discuss, and practice what I've learned about teacher collaboration and co-teaching, I will be adding valuable integers to the ever-changing equation of what it means to effectively collaborate and co-teach.

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