What is the Lived Experience of the Learners in a Coteaching Classroom?

Janet Adams
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WHAT IS THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF THE LEARNERS IN A COTEACHING CLASSROOM?

by

Janet Adams

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

in

Education
(Curriculum and Instruction)

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2012
ABSTRACT

What Is The Lived Experience of the Learners in a Coteaching Classroom?

by

Janet Adams, Doctor of Education
Utah State University, 2012

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The purpose of this study was to describe the lived experiences of the learners in a fifth-grade coteaching classroom. Because the practice of coteaching is gaining popularity in schools, there is increasing use of this teaching method in general education classrooms. If learning in a coteaching classroom is to be meaningful for students, it is important to have their perspective of this instructional delivery option. Through careful listening, observation, and interpretation of the students’ lived experience, a better understanding of the students’ perspective in a coteaching classroom was gained.

Data for this qualitative study were triangulated using classroom observations, student drawn images, and interviews with selected students and the coteachers. Findings indicate that (1) students can give voice to their lived experience when given the opportunity to use images to do so; (2) the ability of coteachers to get along with each other is an important aspect of students lived experience in the coteaching classroom; (3) another aspect of the lived experience of students in the coteaching classroom is learning
the ethics of the caring classroom from their coteachers.

The findings support the literature, which suggests coteaching can be an effective teaching delivery option and that the voices of the learners in the classroom are an important source of information about what works in schools. These results are significant because they help to inform future decisions about the practice of coteaching. The results of this study also clarify ways the coteaching model can be strengthened or improved for greater success and benefit for both the teachers and the students.
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The results of this study suggest coteaching can be an effective teaching delivery option and that the voices of the learners in the classroom are an important source of information about what works in schools. These results are significant because they help inform future decisions about the practice of coteaching. The results also clarify ways the coteaching model can be strengthened or improved for greater success and benefit for both the teachers and the students.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

I began my career in education as a fourth-grade teacher in an elementary school located near a university. Every semester for the 8 years I taught in that school I mentored a student teacher from the education program at the university. Most of these preservice teachers did a fine job and earned high marks from me, but in my memory there is one mentoring experience that stands out from the others. I do not remember her name, but she was younger than me, she was outgoing and bubbly where I was more calm and reserved, she was blonde and trendy where I was dark haired and fairly traditional in my manner and dress. In other words, we were quite different from one another in both appearance and manner. Even so, I do remember with perfect clarity that she and I truly became coteachers in the classroom.

In a relatively brief period of time we established a synergy, a partnership, a collaborative style of teaching that was energizing and effective. We were both present in the classroom all day, every day. The students seemed to thrive on the dynamic learning experience of having two teachers working together in the classroom, as evidenced by the smiles on their faces and their level of engagement in the learning activities. Students were respectful to the student teacher, as well as to me. They acknowledged us both as their teachers, and perhaps just as importantly, my student teacher and I respected one another and acknowledged one another as coteachers in the classroom. We did our planning together and we taught together. We often used a parallel teaching approach in which we took turns with the lesson, at times almost being able to finish each other’s
sentences. I remember saying once during this experience, “Wouldn’t it be great to have two teachers in the classroom all of the time?”

**Objective and Purpose**

Perhaps this is an idea whose time has come. Recently, a classroom practice known as coteaching has evolved in response to the pressures educators feel to provide differentiated instruction in order to meet the academic needs of a diverse group of learners (Kohler-Evans, 2006). I am no longer a fourth-grade teacher. At the time of this study, I was an elementary school principal and also completing the requirements for my doctoral degree in instructional leadership. When two faculty members from the elementary school approached me with a desire to try a coteaching experience, I was very much in favor of the idea. Because of my own positive coteaching experience with my former student teacher, I gave them my full support and decided to make this coteaching classroom the subject of my doctoral study.

**Problem Statement and Research Question**

Also known as collaborative teaching, team teaching, shared teaching, cooperative teaching, and job sharing; coteaching is the practice of having more than one teacher in the classroom that is responsible for delivering instruction (Cook & Friend, 1995). Coteaching is usually thought of as an inclusion model associated with meeting the academic needs of special education students in a regular classroom setting. Typically, a special education teacher works jointly with the regular education teacher for
at least some part of the school day to deliver instruction. Research suggests that
coteaching between a regular education teacher and a special education teacher is an
effective practice that benefits both teachers and students in several ways, but little is
known about the effectiveness of the coteaching practice between two regular education
teachers. Teachers who have been part of a coteaching team report positive experiences
and believe that coteaching benefits students, but does it really? Despite the vast number
of changes in education in recent years, learners are usually not consulted in the change
process (Rudd, 2006). If learning is to be meaningful for students, their views must be
heard. Some say that education should be shaped around the needs of the learner, rather
than having the learner conform to the established system.

In order to make future decisions about the effectiveness of a coteaching model, it
is important that we understand the students’ perceptions. Their voices should be heard.
Although one study was found reporting the perceptions of college students in a team-teaching
classroom, none were found reporting elementary students’ perceptions in the
school setting. What is the lived experience of the learners in a coteaching classroom?
The purpose of this study was to answer that question.

**Theoretical Lens**

Phenomenology is the theoretical lens through which I viewed student perceptions
for this research. The term phenomenology is difficult to pronounce, let alone understand.
To add to the confusion, the term is often used interchangeably with the term
hermeneutics, or the analyses of the written word (Byrne, 2001). Indeed, there is great
diversity of thought in the field of phenomenology. Throughout time, even the great thinkers of phenomenology have had different conceptions of it, different methods, and different results (Smith, 2011).

Phenomenologists seek to gain understanding of the basic truths of people’s lived experience (Byrne, 2001). Phenomenologists believe that knowledge and understanding are not quantifiable; rather they are intertwined in our everyday world (Byrne, 2001). In fact, one criticism of phenomenological theory is that it lacks scientific precision (Smith, 2011). Further, phenomenologists believe that people’s life experiences can uncover the truths of life.

Historically, human understanding of the world was based on religion or nature. After Rene Descartes defined a distinction between our mental and physical beings, there was a push to connect all knowledge to the world of science (Byrne, 2001). Scientists of that time now valued objectivity and an organized approach to research and discovery. However, many philosophers considered this approach to be too limiting. They promoted phenomenology as a preferred method to discover the meaning of life experiences (Byrne, 2001). Though phenomenology had been practiced for centuries, it came into its own with Edmund Husserl, the German philosopher and mathematician who is usually cited as the father of phenomenology (Byrne, 2001).

When Hindu and Buddhist philosophers reflected on states of consciousness achieved in a variety of meditative states, they were practicing phenomenology. When Descartes, Hume, and Kant characterized states of perception, thought, and imagination, they were practicing phenomenology. When Brentano classified varieties of mental phenomena (defined by the directedness of consciousness), he was practicing phenomenology. When William James appraised kinds of mental activity in the stream of consciousness (including their embodiment and their dependence on habit), he too was practicing phenomenology. And when recent
analytic philosophers of mind have addressed issues of consciousness and intentionality, they have often been practicing phenomenology. Still, the discipline of phenomenology, its roots tracing back through the centuries, came to full flower in Husserl. (Smith, 2011, p. 8)

Husserl asserted that researchers must set aside (i.e., bracket) their preconceived notions in order to objectively describe the phenomena being studied (Byrne, 2001). If I, for example, want to understand the students’ lived experience in a coteaching classroom, Husserl’s approach would assume I would bracket everything I know about being a teacher. According to Husserl, bracketing would enable me to identify the essences of learning free of my previous experience of being either a student or a teacher in a classroom. Bracketing assumes people can separate their personal knowledge from their life experiences (Byrne, 2001).

Husserl’s colleague, Martin Heidegger, did not believe it was possible to bracket our assumptions of the world (Byrne, 2001). He believed that our background knowledge and life experiences allow us to share practices and find common meanings. I agree with Heidegger. As a researcher, I observed phenomena for this study through the lens of my own background and experiences. Although I was careful to maintain an awareness of my subjectivity, I also used my previous life experiences as a filter which allowed me to understand the classroom setting and the phenomena being observed. I considered this to be a strength of the research, not a weakness. Researcher subjectivity can be seen as bias and something to be avoided. In contrast, Peshkin (1988) asserted that subjectivity “can be seen as virtuous, for it is the basis of researcher’s making a distinctive contribution, one that results from the unique configuration of their personal qualities joined to the data they have collected” (p. 18).
Importance of the Study

This study is important because the results inform future decisions about the practice of coteaching in schools. Because the practice of coteaching is gaining popularity, there is increasing use of this teaching method in general education classrooms. Other teachers at this school have expressed an interest in participating in a coteaching partnership. Before those kinds of decisions are made, it is important to have the students’ perspective. Further, the results of this study may clarify ways the coteaching model can be strengthened or improved for greater success and benefit for both the teachers and the students. Through careful listening, observation, and interpretation of the students’ lived experience, we gain a better understanding of their perspective of coteaching.
A review of the literature on coteaching reveals that much of what has been studied focuses on coteaching as a way for special education teachers to work closely with regular education teachers in the classroom. Because my study was conducted in a classroom with two regular education teachers, I excluded literature that focused on special education unless it provided relevant insights about the phenomena of coteaching in general.

Knowing the teachers’ perspective adds another dimension to understanding the experiences of the learners in the coteaching classroom. Several studies were found that sought to reveal the experience of the teachers in a coteaching classroom. The study included in this review was selected because the methodology used was similar to the methodology I planned to use for my study.

Search terms for this literature review included team teaching, elementary, coteaching, cooperative teaching, and learner voice. No studies were found that sought to reveal the experience of the learners in an elementary coteaching classroom. However, one study was found that reported college students’ perceptions of team teaching in a preservice teacher education course. This study was included in this review of literature because it reported the experience of the learners in the classroom.

What Is Coteaching?

Educators have long been intrigued with the possibilities created by two teachers
sharing one classroom (Cook & Friend, 1995). With increasing demands to mainstream special education students; and the need for special education teachers to work closely with regular education teachers in the classroom, the coteaching model and framework have grown. According to Cook and Friend, “By the late 1980s, coteaching was discussed most often as a means for special education teachers to meet students’ needs in general education settings” (p. 2).

The rapid increase of student diversity in classrooms and schools has reached the point where students can no longer be segregated into groups according to ability, culture, or language backgrounds (Bauwens & Hourcade, 1991). Bauwens and Hourcade asserted that classroom instruction must be provided in the regular classroom that meets the needs of all students, including those with diverse backgrounds and learning aptitudes. They note that in recent years, a variety of collaborative structures has emerged in the regular classroom to address this need. Coteaching, also known as cooperative teaching or collaborative teaching, is no longer a teaching model used only by special educators.

When discussing coteaching, it is important to have a clear understanding of the concept. Coteaching is defined as two or more professionals delivering substantive instruction to a group of students with diverse learning needs in a single physical space (Cook & Friend, 1995). Ideally, both teachers are present at all class sessions. This optimizes the integration of learning, allows students to view their teachers as model learners, and provides an opportunity for both teachers to connect learning across the subjects being taught. Coteachers are educational professionals who are both actively
involved in the instruction of students (Cook & Friend, 1995).

My review of the literature revealed that having two teachers responsible for instruction in the same classroom is not always defined as coteaching. Recent changes in the economy have contributed to the growth of another flexible teaching delivery option known as job sharing (Mumford, 2005). In this model, two teachers split their workweek to oversee one classroom (Blair, 2003). Job sharing creates a collaborative atmosphere, increases accountability, and reduces teacher burnout (Blair, 2003). Proponents of the job sharing model say that students benefit from having two energized teachers in the classroom (Blair, 2003). Challenges of this teaching model include consistency with the curriculum and quality control. Though job sharing and coteaching have similar characteristics and benefits, since both teachers are not usually present in the classroom at the same time, job sharing is not usually considered a coteaching approach.

**What Coteaching Looks Like**

Several coteaching approaches, as outlined by Cook and Friend (1995), can serve as a starting point for considering what coteaching might look like in a classroom. These coteaching approaches are unique in that they could not occur if just one teacher were present. No one approach is best or worst. In fact, each of the approaches—or some variation—is likely to be used alone or with another in any cotaught classroom. The teaching approaches that coteachers use depend on several factors including personal preferences, curriculum requirements, student characteristics, and even physical space. Most teachers will use their creativity to select and adapt the various approaches to fit
their situation and particular teaching skills. To do this, coteachers develop an array of classroom approaches for their shared instruction.

One approach coteachers might use is the one teaching, one assisting strategy. In this strategy, one teacher takes the lead in the delivery of instruction, while the other teacher circulates, monitors, and assists where needed. The danger in this approach is that the teacher who is not delivering instruction may feel like more of an assistant than a teacher in the classroom. Wise coteachers will alternate taking the lead so that both teachers are perceived by students as “real teachers” (Cook & Friend, 1995, p. 8).

Another coteaching approach is station teaching, in which both teachers prepare and teach different parts of the instruction in separate locations in the room. Students are divided into two groups and each teacher presents his or her half of the instruction to one group. Timing must be coordinated so that students are transitioned at the same time to be taught by the other teacher. A third group can be formed to work independently. One advantage of this approach is the reduced student-teacher ratio that allows for more differentiation and individualized instruction (Cook & Friend, 1995).

Parallel teaching also lowers the student-teacher ratio. As the name implies, in the parallel teaching approach both teachers are presenting the same curriculum at the same time to a group of students consisting of half the class. This type of instruction lends itself well to drill and practice exercises or learning differing perspectives of a particular issue for whole class discussion later on. The noise level in the room can get high and could be one disadvantage to this approach (Cook & Friend, 1995).

Sometimes a small group of three to eight students may need preteaching,
reteaching, or enrichment opportunities. In a coteaching approach known as alternative teaching, these needs can be addressed by having one teacher work with the small focus group while the other teacher is instructing the rest of the class. Groupings should be varied to avoid stigmatizing any student (Cook & Friend, 1995).

In a coteaching approach known as team teaching, both teachers share the instruction of students. The teachers might take turns leading a discussion, role playing, or modeling appropriate ways to ask questions (Cook & Friend, 1995). This coteaching approach requires a high level of mutual trust with which some teachers may not be comfortable. However, teachers who have used this approach report that they found it to be very rewarding (Cook & Friend, 1995).

Elements of Successful Coteaching

According to professional practice literature, teachers who have been part of a coteaching partnership report that coteaching has several benefits for both teachers and students (Cook & Friend, 1995; Gaytan, 2010; Kohler-Evans, 2006). Kohler-Evans wrote:

The practice of coteaching has the potential to be a wonderful strategy for meeting the needs of all students. Working in partnership with another teacher, bouncing ideas off of one another, planning and orchestrating the perfect lesson, having two pair of eyes and four hands, creating something that is better than that which each partner brings. (2006, p. 263)

One obviously appealing benefit of coteaching is the reduction of the student-teacher ratio. When the student-teacher ratio is lowered, students get more attention from the teacher (Cook & Friend, 1995). In addition, behavior problems are minimized; there
is a smooth delivery of instruction and seamless transitions; and teachers are able to adapt learning activities quickly and easily in response to students’ needs. Because both teachers know what comes next, nonacademic time in a successful coteaching classroom is virtually eliminated. Further, if the two teachers get along, coteaching provides an opportunity for teachers to model appropriate learning behaviors for students (Sebastian, 2001).

The benefits of a coteaching approach also include a dynamic learning environment, interactive learning as opposed to lecture-based learning, and critical thinking across disciplines (Gaytan, 2010). Coteaching provides support to the teachers involved and appears to encourage new research ventures among faculty (Gaytan, 2010). Overall, it seems fitting to compare the coteaching relationship to a professional marriage, in that it takes commitment from both teachers to make it work (Cook & Friend, 1995).

While the professional practice literature just cited sees positive possibilities in coteaching, the research literature must also be examined. For example, a study conducted by Hwang, Hernandez, and Vrongistions (2002) examined 24 elementary teacher education students’ thoughts, feelings, and attitudes about a university course taught using a team teaching approach. Ninety-two percent of the students in the class volunteered to participate in the study. None of the volunteers had any previous experience with team taught classes. Data were collected using open-ended questions and were analyzed using inductive content analysis.

The results of the study show that preservice students benefit from a
coteaching approach in the classroom in several ways including; learning from more than one expert and sharing their life experiences, experiencing more authentic learning opportunities through greater interaction among teachers and learners, and experiencing different teaching styles. These preservice students reported a positive change in their perceptions of team teaching approaches over time (Hwang et al., 2002).

At a small school providing classes for fourth through eighth grades in a poor minority community in Dallas, a pilot study was conducted that examined the practice of collaboratively teaming two certified teachers with one class of elementary school students all day, every day. The researcher sought to learn the processes involved in building successful two-person teaching teams. Teachers were recruited and hired because of their expertise and their desire to participate in the research. Two fourth grade teachers and two fifth-grade teachers participated in the study. These teachers believed that this form of teaching would promote their creative efforts and encourage collaborative planning (Minnett, 1998). They also believed that team teaching provided an environment in which teachers support one another in order to help all students learn.

Minnett (1998) used an ethnographic methodology in which she observed “naturally occurring events and interviewed the key participants using open-ended prompts” (p. 9). An analysis of transcripts and field notes prompted the development of a two-teacher teaming program in every classroom at the school “to provide more experiential learning for students of all abilities and to increase the one-to-one time between students and teachers” (p. 9). The staff at the school believes that two-teacher
Teaming has great potential to enrich children’s lives and enhance learning.

The results of the studies cited, in addition to the professional practice literature referred to, identify four characteristics that seem to contribute to the success of coteaching teams. These are (a) philosophical compatibility and attitudes about teachers’ work; (b) the importance of thorough collaborative planning; (c) a spirit of shared work; and (d) collaboration in the classroom (Cook & Friend, 1995; Gaytan, 2010; Kohler-Evans, 2006; Minnett, 1998).

The first component for building a successful teaching team, philosophical compatibility and attitudes about teachers’ work, is essential for successful coteaching. Teaching styles may differ, but the basic goals for the students must be similar (Minnett, 1998). Teachers who share similar educational philosophies with their coteaching partner feel that this contributes to a successful coteaching experience (Sebastian, 2001). In addition, both teachers must be motivated to be part of a team of teachers and maintain high expectations for themselves and their students. Coteachers must be highly self-reflective about their practice and constantly looking for better ways to help students learn, and must be willing to adjust their practice accordingly (Minnett, 1998).

The second component for building a successful teaching team, thorough collaborative planning, is the foundation of the coteaching classroom (Kohler-Evans, 2006; Minnett, 1998). The team of teachers must do their planning and preparation as if they were a single teacher. Coteaching works best when both teachers prepare together for all curriculum content. This makes the planning process more labor intensive, but the benefits are that both teachers are very knowledgeable about the learning topics from the
very beginning. Teachers report that they actually look forward to the planning time together (Minnett, 1998).

The third component for building a successful teaching team, a spirit of shared work, means that coteachers share all professional responsibilities for the class. Joint research, preparation, and planning ensure that subject areas are never left for one teacher to teach alone. Both teachers need to have a thorough knowledge of what is planned for the day, should teach all subjects, and be involved in every part of the school day with the students (Minnett, 1998).

The fourth component for building a successful teaching team, collaboration in the classroom, indicates that coteaching works best when teachers have opportunities to nurture their collaborative relationship. Instructors engaged in a coteaching experience must be highly collaborative and flexible. They must practice parity. Most teachers who have been part of a coteaching team have a positive view of coteaching and believe that it benefits students (Kohler-Evans, 2006). According to Gaytan (2010),

Even when only one instructor is actively teaching, the integrative model will reinforce one of the main objectives of team teaching: to assist students in achieving a much higher level of integration of new knowledge. To achieve this objective, each instructor must effectively integrate the perspectives of all instructors into instructional practices leading to a highly desired teaching practice: instructors refer to each other in all class meetings, demonstrating respect for each other and commitment to the team-teaching learning environment. Students become more interested and engaged in the learning process, gain a better understanding of instructors’ expectations, and improve their own learning outcomes. (p. 84)

When coteachers share compatible philosophies and attitudes about teaching, participate in intensive shared planning, and share teaching responsibilities, it contributes to a high quality of coteaching that permeates the classroom (Minnett, 1998).
The current literature on coteaching in the regular education classroom seems to focus on the experience of the teachers in the coteaching partnership. What is missing from what we know about coteaching, how it works best, and its many benefits is an understanding of the elementary school learners’ experience in the regular coteaching classroom.

**Experience of the Learners**

Research that places student experience at the center of attention is relatively scarce (Rudduck & Flutter, 2000) and yet, Maxwell asserts that children are the “ultimate consumers of the educational product” (p. 20). As such, they are central to the process of what takes place in the classroom. In a society that respects the market and the consumer it seems strange that students have not been seen as consumers worth consulting (Maxwell, 2006). Rudduck and Flutter suggested that the current movement to reform schools provides teachers, researchers, and policy makers with a common context and purpose for addressing the issue of students’ perspectives.

Students are capable of reliably reporting their experiences and views as learners in the classroom (Maxwell, 2006). Tuning in to what they say can provide important information about practices in school. Students’ views about school should be sought for and listened to because they have a right to “receive and make known information, to express an opinion, and to have that opinion taken into account in any matters affecting them” (Maxwell, 2006, p. 20).

Teachers have to be able to know a lot about their learners as well as their
Valuing the perspective of the learners in the classroom sends a message of caring and genuine concern for each student (Noddings, 2004). In this way, teachers build a sense of community by bonding with their students, as well as nurturing tolerance and acceptance among students. Teachers convey a supportive attitude that allows students to feel comfortable and safe in the classroom. In a caring environment, students will get the message that it is okay to take risks and to make mistakes (Bloom, Perlmutter, & Burrell, 1999).

More recently, The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) dedicated an entire journal issue to the theme of honoring student voices. In this issue, the editor, Wilhelm (2011), makes a case for a teacher-researcher inquiry approach that requires listening to students. Wilhelm states that through this listening approach teachers learn from their students how to best teach them, referring to students as “the most powerful data sources available to make us better teachers” (p. 49).

The Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) in London developed the Network Project as part of their program for consulting students about teaching and learning (Fielding, 2001). Altogether, schools across the country worked with researchers
on six different projects (Fielding, 2001). In one of these projects, students at Wheatcroft Primary School in Hertford were involved in developing a new framework for a caring learning community in which “the voices of pupils and the voices of teachers listen to and learn from each other in ways which are not only vibrant, challenging and productive, but joyful” (Fielding, 2001, p. 1). Ben, a student at the school, wrote:

   It is very important to give pupils a say because they are the ones that get taught and come to the school. It could make learning better for children if they get to say what they think is best. (p. 52)

In summary, a review of the literature suggests coteaching can be a successful teaching delivery option. The literature also suggests that the voices of the learners in the classroom are an important and oft underutilized source of information about what works in schools. This study seeks to listen to the voices of the learners in order to gain their perspective and reveal their lived experience in a coteaching classroom.
CHAPTER III
METHODOLOGY

Context

As principal of the campus laboratory school in which this research took place, I had a close working partnership with the department head of the school of education at the partner university. When I proposed the idea of piloting a coteaching model in one classroom at the school, she was willing to give it a try, but stipulated that a study would need to be done to evaluate the use of a coteaching model. This opportunity seemed tailor made for my doctoral research. I have worked closely with both teachers in a professional capacity for a number of years. I had been an instructor for the university education department and, therefore, knew the preservice teaching program well and what the expectations are for laboratory school teachers to model best teaching practices in the classroom. As school principal, I was onsite every day, which provided ease of access to the setting for this study.

Participants for this study were purposefully selected from a class of 27 white Caucasian students enrolled in a fifth-grade classroom at a charter laboratory elementary school in the western United States. The two teachers, Amy and Pat (pseudonyms), were veteran teachers with more than 40 years of combined teaching experience. At the time of this study, Amy was a full-time elementary school teacher at the school and also taught one class as an adjunct instructor for the university. Most recently, Pat was working as a full-time university instructor, but she had been a teacher at the school previously. The
two teachers planned to more or less share both jobs. Amy would do less elementary school teaching and more university teaching, and Pat would do less university teaching and more elementary school teaching (see Appendix D for Teacher Informed Consent).

Together they worked out a schedule for fall in which one taught on Mondays and Tuesdays, and the other taught on Wednesdays and Thursdays. On Fridays both teachers were usually there all day. Occasionally they split Friday with one teacher having the morning and the other teacher having the afternoon. In the spring, which is when the observations for this study took place, the teaching schedule changed so that Amy taught in the mornings and Pat taught in the afternoons every day. This change took place to accommodate the university class schedule. During spring semester, the two teachers decided that Pat would take on more of the college teaching responsibility. There were still times when the two teachers’ presence overlapped, but this occurred even less often than it had in the fall.

Each teacher had responsibility for certain curriculum content. Amy taught math and science and some writing, whereas Pat taught social studies and reading/language arts. The coteachers met together regularly to collaborate and plan together. They made specific efforts to convey to one another and to the students in the classroom an attitude of mutual respect. Both teachers also had additional teaching responsibilities in the education department on campus. When they were not present in the classroom, they were teaching college classes and taking care of related duties with preservice education students. This arrangement had a significant impact on the amount of time each teacher was available to spend with the fifth graders.
This teaching partnership had some of the elements of coteaching, but because both teachers were not in the classroom together for the majority of the week, this arrangement was considered predominantly a job sharing teaching model. As stated earlier, the definition of job sharing in an education setting is when two teachers split their work week to oversee one classroom (Blair, 2003). This description seems most apt to describe the amount of time each teacher spent in the classroom, whether alone or as coteachers.

**General Method**

As stated in the introduction, phenomenology was the theoretical lens through which I viewed the data for this study. However, phenomenology is a research method as well as a theoretical lens and was, therefore, the research method used for this study. A phenomenological methodology made sense for this study because at the heart of it is an in-depth questioning of a lived experience that seeks to reveal the voice of the learner. To describe the meaning of a lived experience is an interpretive process mediated by the researcher. Interpretations are revealed through text or some other symbolic representation. Phenomenological text is descriptive “in that it names something. And in the naming, it points to something and it aims at letting something show itself” (van Manen, 1990, p. 26).

Qualitative research seeks to examine life experiences by systematically collecting and analyzing narrative materials in such a way that ensures the trustworthiness of the results. Methodology links a particular philosophy to the
appropriate research methods and bridges philosophical ideas to practical and applicable research strategies. The primary focus of this research was to gather data regarding the perspectives of learners about the phenomenon of having two teachers in their classroom.

In conducting this research, I remained true to phenomenological theory and research methods by focusing on the experience of the learners in this classroom. By carefully and purposefully looking and listening, I discovered the truth of the students’ everyday lives at school.

Data Gathering

In an effort to minimize issues of validity that might be present in a single data source or method, qualitative researchers depend on a variety of methods for gathering data (Glesne, 1999). In the case of this study, data was gathered using a variety of methods and sources. Specific methods and sources used for gathering data included classroom observations, images students were asked to create, interviews with selected students, and interviews with both teachers.

Classroom Observation

Though I had hoped and intended to see both teachers teaching together some of the time, during each of my scheduled observations I saw only one teacher teaching. The other teacher may have been present and working in the office near the classroom, or perhaps be somewhere else in the school, but I did not observe both teachers teaching together at the same time. Nevertheless, I know there were times the two teachers taught together because of the data collected from other sources, including the student
interviews and the teacher interview

As an observer, I visited the classroom once a week over the period of a month. For each observation I was in the classroom for about an hour. I visited in the morning and again in the afternoon on the same day. I recorded my observations in a spiral notebook for later transcription. As a participant-observer, my goal was to “carefully observe, systematically experience, and consciously record in detail the many aspects of the classroom situation” (Glesne, 1999, p. 52). I read and reread my notes in between my observation visits to remind myself to focus on details as recommended by Glesne including, but not limited to, the physical appearance of the classroom, who was present, student behavior, teacher behavior, explicit and implicit rules, regulations, rituals that described how the group worked, and what students said to each other.

This was in the back of my mind while I was observing. Because I was interested in the perspective of the students, I made a conscious effort to notice their attitudes and behavior. I have spent so much time observing in classrooms to evaluate teacher effectiveness. It required an effort on my part to avoid focusing most of my attention on the teacher, as that is what I would normally do during a teacher evaluation. During the observations, I was watching particularly for some key event to use as a focal point for the student interviews.

After observing each teacher on four separate occasions, I noticed that my observations were yielding pretty much the same data each time. My initial plan was to watch for a shared classroom event or critical moment to use as a focus for the students’ drawings. When I did not observe such an event during my observations, I sought advice
from my peer reviewer—a trusted colleague who recently completed her own doctoral work. Because we have worked together on other projects during our doctoral coursework, I have both heard and seen the quality of her work. She helped me regain my perspective, stay focused, and to make adjustments.

Together we concluded that what I was seeing in each of the observations was consistent and representative of the way things normally were in the classroom with each teacher. For instance, each time I observed in the classroom I saw students engaged in similar activities, such as science in the morning and reading or social studies in the afternoon. Teachers and students seemed to be following an established schedule wherein the topic or the discussion might vary, but the basic interactions did not. It seemed appropriate to proceed to the next step, which was having the students produce the images.

**Student Images**

To understand the students’ lived experience, the researcher must create an environment in which students feel safe and comfortable to express their thoughts and emotions openly (Zambo & Zambo, 2006). One method is through drawing. Leavy (2010) asserted that visual imagery was not a window into the world, but a created perspective. Researchers can use image-based techniques to get students to represent what they know, feel, and think about what they know—and to help them to talk. Cubist painter, Pablo Picasso, said that “painting is just another way of keeping a diary” (Leavy, 2010, p. 75). Researchers have used drawing to get at the inner thoughts and feelings of children when traditional qualitative methods do not yield what the researcher is after.
Le Count (2000) said that drawings allow adults working with children to understand them “from the inside out” (p. 20) because they are able to express their emotions in a way that they might not be able to articulate.

When utilizing participatory visual arts-based methods the issue of aesthetics becomes important. For example, the fifth-grade students involved in this study were not trained artists. Therefore the aesthetic quality of their images took a back seat to the other advantages of the methodology. Even though these images were produced by amateurs, they still conveyed powerful representations of students’ emotions and multiple meanings of their lived experience in the coteaching classroom (Leavy, 2010).

The students in this fifth-grade classroom were asked to create an image that represented their lived experience in the coteaching classroom. Six of these students were then selected using previously developed criteria, which will be explained later in this chapter, and asked to talk about their image and explain in detail how their picture related to their experience. In this way, their drawings became data as well as representations of data. With this approach, the student images served as a jumping off point for dialogue in the form of interviews.

Young students know more than they realize (Burnard, 2000). Certainly they know more than the researcher does about what they know. As the researcher, I made the simple but important step of using novel instruments with which to conduct interviews with these students. This kind of evidence gave me very convincing insights into students’ perspectives. Not surprisingly, Noe (2000) suggested that art can be a useful tool for phenomenological research.
Instead of asking students to draw images in response to some crucial event, I decided to adjust my approach and have students draw in response to a broader question of what their experience had been like in having two different teachers in their classroom that year. I arranged to spend some time with the whole class without the teachers present. In preparation for this activity, I created my own drawing to use as a model for the students (see Figure 1).

My drawing depicted key events in my own life during that year. Using my drawing, I modeled for the students how to tell their own story using pictures and symbols to represent what they wanted to say. I pointed out that whereas my images were about my own life, their drawings should represent experiences from their classroom that year. I explained that if they were to have an interview with me, we would use the drawing as a starting point and I would ask them to tell me more about what they drew.

Figure 1. The image I drew depicting key events from my own life.
Students had 1 hour to complete their drawings. I instructed students to add as much detail as possible and to fill the whole space on the 8.5” x 11” paper. They were given the option to make more than one drawing, and had the choice to add color if they wanted. I pointed out to the students that not everyone’s drawing would look the same, that some of them might draw one event or several, and that their drawings might be arranged in time order or in order of importance to them. In other words, I stressed flexibility and choice in an effort to make the activity engaging, personal, and meaningful for each student.

Students wanted to know if they could write some words on their drawing. Because I was interested in the nonverbal details an illustration would provide, I told the students that they could use words as labels, but that most of their story should be told using pictures. I had students use white drawing paper and fine-tipped black sharpie markers so that their images could be successfully photocopied. I set the expectation that the room should be quiet so that students could concentrate and be very thoughtful about their year and what they wanted to include in their drawings. They were asked to remain in their seat the entire time and to read quietly when finished. At the end of the period I thanked the students for their efforts and collected the drawings. Later the students’ drawings became part of a set of established criterion used to select students for interviews. Participants’ drawings were chosen that best matched the criteria.

**Interview Selection**

From my observations I had formed an idea of what I was looking for in interview participants. I wanted to interview students who seemed typical as well as students who
seemed atypical. I knew that I wanted to select; (a) some boys and some girls, (b) some students who had strong academic performance and some who were more average or even below grade level, (c) some students with an outgoing personality and some who seemed more quiet or reserved, (d) some students who were more popular and some who seemed less so, and (e) I was looking for something in the student’s drawing that stood out or set the drawing apart from the others in some way. After careful and thoughtful consideration using the established criteria, six students were selected for student interviews; four girls and two boys. Using pseudonyms, a brief description of each student and the reasons they were selected for an interview are included below.

Following each student’s description is a full image of their drawing. This information is also summarized in Table 1.

Table 1

*An A Brief Description of Each Student and the Reasons They Were Selected for an Interview*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Academic performance</th>
<th>Personality</th>
<th>Social status</th>
<th>Student drawing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Karen</td>
<td>Girl</td>
<td>Above average</td>
<td>Conscientious, calm, reserved</td>
<td>Well-liked, a few close friends</td>
<td>Included events outside of school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maggie</td>
<td>Girl</td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>Cheerful, outgoing</td>
<td>Joined class late</td>
<td>Creative, used speech bubbles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Penny</td>
<td>Girl</td>
<td>Above average</td>
<td>Articulate, mature, caring</td>
<td>Respected, interacts well with all students</td>
<td>Wanted to know about “V-Day with teachers,” heart-shaped balloons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charlie</td>
<td>Boy</td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>Quiet, not the center of attention</td>
<td>Accepted and included</td>
<td>Drew more events than most</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyle</td>
<td>Boy</td>
<td>Below average, special education student</td>
<td>Precocious, outspoken</td>
<td>Considered a bit odd. Has unique perceptions</td>
<td>Looked like he had drawn just one key event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greta</td>
<td>Girl</td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>Silly, funny, athletic</td>
<td>Good at sports</td>
<td>Switched classes, joined the class late, might have a unique perspective</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Karen was a fifth-grade girl with long, wavy, reddish hair and a fair complexion. She was of average height and weight for her age. Karen had a quiet manner and a calm demeanor. She was a conscientious student who performed a little above grade level. She was well-liked by her peers and got along well with them. In my field log I noted that it seemed easy for Karen to find students to work with her in a partner or small group situation. She was on task during work periods and a good listener during instruction. Karen had attended the school since she was in kindergarten. Her mother worked as a classroom aide, often in Karen’s classroom. Karen’s drawing was unique in that it appeared to include events from outside of school, and I was curious about that (see Figure 2).

*Figure 2. Karen’s drawing.*
Maggie had long, wavy, dark hair and her eyes crinkled up when she smiled. Maggie was fair-skinned, with a sprinkling of freckles across her nose. She was happy and friendly and fun to be around. Whenever I was in the classroom, I noticed Maggie had a ready smile and was quick to laugh. Maggie joined the class a short time after school started, but she knew most of her classmates because she attended the school when she was younger. During her fifth-grade year life at home was difficult because her parents were going through a divorce. Academically, Maggie was a little below average. In her drawing, Maggie used a lot of speech bubbles to indicate what people were thinking or saying. This was a unique feature that made her drawing stand out from the others (see Figure 3).

*Figure 3. Maggie’s drawing.*
Penny was a tall, athletic girl with medium brown hair that was usually pulled back into a ponytail. She wore braces on her teeth and multiple braided and beaded bracelets on both wrists. Penny impressed me from the first time I went to the classroom to observe. She was confident, compassionate, bright, quick to smile, and very articulate. She was well-liked and well-respected and seemed to have great influence with her peers.

One day when I was in the classroom for observation, the Spanish teacher was there. She asked for a student to volunteer to have a conversation with her in front of the class. Penny volunteered to do it. Afterward, other students were willing to try it, too. On another occasion students were working in small groups. I did not hear all that they were saying to each other, but at one point a boy in Penny’s group turned to her and said, “See, I have some politeness in me!” Penny kindly replied, “Yes, you do!” Academically, Penny is an above average student. In her drawing she drew large heart-shaped balloons and then drew each event inside one of the balloons. One balloon was labeled, “V-Day With Teachers.” I wanted to know more about that (see Figure 4).

![Figure 4. Penny’s drawing.](image-url)
Charlie was a quiet boy with light brown hair and a winning smile. He had dimples that appeared when he smiled, which wasn’t all that often. Charlie was a student of average ability who was well liked by peers, but not the center of attention. Charlie’s name did not even appear in my field notes. He was soft spoken, well mannered, and a good citizen in the classroom. He pretty much stayed under the radar. But when I saw Charlie’s drawing, I noticed that he had drawn notably more events than most other students, and I knew I wanted to find out more about his experiences (see Figure 5).

Kyle was a fifth-grade boy of average size who wears black-rimmed glasses. He had short, somewhat disheveled dark hair and a bit of a slump in his posture. Kyle was a precocious young man with a unique and often odd or unexpected view of the world. He

![Figure 5. Charlie’s drawing.](image-url)
presented himself as easy going, confident, and likeable. During one observation I noted
in my field log that Kyle was gazing out the window, seemingly lost in thought.

Academically, Kyle performed below grade level in reading and math and therefore
received special education services. In the classroom, Kyle sat up front next to where the
teacher sat or stood during instruction. Kyle’s drawing appeared to be an image of one
main event. He was the only student who had chosen to depict just one event, so I was
curious to know what the image represented (see Figure 6).

Greta was full of energy. She was slightly smaller than the other girls in the class.
Her chin length hair was reddish-brown and parted on the side. Greta loved sports. She
was outgoing, kind of silly, and liked to have fun. One day when the students were
working in small groups in the science room, Greta let out a huge, long burp. She looked
at me, smiled, and then said, “I am the champ, even the boys can’t beat me!” She was not

![Figure 6. Kyle’s drawing.](image-url)
the least bit chagrined or embarrassed by this. Greta was an average student who began the school year in another fifth-grade class at the school. Unlike the rest of the students who did not elect to be in a class with two teachers, Greta requested to move from the other fifth-grade class in the school to this one just after the school year began. I wondered what her perception of going from having one teacher to having two teachers would be (see Figure 7).

**Student Interviews**

An interview was recorded and transcribed with each participant. Permission for the student interviews was obtained through a signed parental permission form (see Appendix B for a letter explaining the study to parents, Appendix C for Parent Informed Consent, and Appendix E for parental permission form). I met individually for about 30 minutes with each student whom I had selected for interview. The student and I met in a

![Figure 7. Greta’s drawing.](image)
small private room where we were not disturbed or interrupted. According to Fine and Sandstrom (1988), participants at this age have developed a sense of self separate from their families. They are exploring ways to establish their own society beyond the bounds of family and the classroom. They are beginning to exercise their rights to privacy. The implications for my research were that the participants may tell me about themselves, but they may be careful or try to control what they say (Fine & Sandstrom, 1988).

Because my role in the lives of these students was not only one of researcher but also their school principal, I may have had more access to their lives at school than others would. The students knew me and were accustomed to seeing me frequently in their classroom and in other places in the school. However, these preadolescent students might have been reluctant to be honest with me with their thoughts and feelings about the coteaching experience. They were not familiar with this type of interaction with me, and they may have felt pressure to give me the “right” answer in order to please me. To address these issues, during the interview I spent some time initially in informal conversation to set the student at ease. Rather than sit directly across from the student, which may have been perceived as a position of power and authority, I sat next to the student at the corner of a table. I assured the student that anything they talked about with me in that setting would not affect their standing in their classroom or in the school.

Interview questions focused on the students’ images of their experience of having two teachers in the classroom all year. While students recalled each event, they were allowed to reflect and to talk without interruption from me. I asked follow-up questions to probe for clarification, additional insights, and information (Prosser, 1998).
Coteacher Interview

Prior to beginning this study it was determined that a spiral notebook would serve as a reflective journal to be used by the coteachers as a communication tool to keep one another informed about happenings in the classroom. The notebook was to sit on the corner of the teachers’ desk in their office so that it was readily available and accessible. The reflective journal was meant to document the academic, instructional, behavioral, and social developments in the classroom.

Because both teachers were not always present at the same time, the journal was to provide a vital link for responsive dialogue and collaboration between the coteachers. The reflective journal would be made available to me as researcher. Being able to read about the classroom experiences from the teachers’ perspective would have added another important dimension to understanding the students’ lived experiences.

However, this did not take place. The coteachers quickly realized that keeping a hand-written journal was unrealistic due to time and scheduling constraints. The teachers found that they were together often enough for collaborative planning so that the dialogue that would have been written in the journal was taking place verbally through their conversation. It seemed appropriate to replace the reflective journal with a joint teacher interview in order to learn about the classroom experiences from their perspective. This interview lasted about an hour and was conducted just after the school year ended. The interview was recorded and transcribed and member checking was performed.

I did not use a scripted list of questions for the coteacher interview. Rather, I opened our conversation by suggesting that the coteachers tell me about their overall
experience with coteaching that year and what they thought the students’ experience had been. The dialogue evolved naturally as the teachers related their views and experiences of coteaching. As the interview progressed, I asked questions for clarification or elaboration on topics the teachers initiated. At one point I asked the coteachers to describe the methods of communication that worked for them in place of the hand-written journal they had intended to use. I also asked the two teachers to describe their professional relationship and what influence it had on the coteaching experience for the class.

**Data Analysis**

Since qualitative data analysis does not provide any fixed formulas or cookbook recipes to the researcher, much depended on my own way of thinking about the data (Yin, 2003). As I analyzed the collected data, I watched for patterns and themes that may emerge. I used both comparative and thematic analyses as I moved backwards and forwards between transcripts, memos, notes, and the research literature. I read and reread each data source multiple times. Gradually, I began to identify consistent and recurring themes. After identifying the important themes, I used color coding to categorize the relevant talk from the data to support the themes. The data collected from the student images, the classroom observations, and the interviews was stored in a database in a secure room.

Glesne (1999) said, “Data analysis involves organizing what you have seen, heard, and read so that you can make sense of what you have learned. Working with data,
you describe, create explanations, pose hypotheses, develop theories, and link your story to other stories” (p. 130). To begin the analysis process, I kept a reflective field log for recording descriptive notes following each observation and interview. Glesne wrote,

After each day of participant observation, the qualitative researcher takes time for reflective and analytic noting. This is the time to write down feelings, work out problems, jot down ideas and impressions, clarify earlier interpretations, speculate about what is going on, and make flexible short- and long-term plans for the days to come. (p. 59)

My field notes captured thoughts, questions, and ideas when they occurred. In my log I jotted down possible emerging themes, issues, coding schemes, and periods of subjectivity that I could use throughout and in the final reporting of the study. In my reflective field log I reviewed the work I had done, the problems or questions I had, and ideas to solve or answer them. For example, at one point during a classroom observation I wrote this in my field log.

I realized early on that it would be hard for me not to be evaluative during my observations! I have to make a conscious effort not to do so. My professional role has long been to supervise and evaluate students and teachers. It seems to be almost instinctive for me now when I visit a classroom.

Noting this in my journal reminded me to keep my focus on observing the phenomena for my study while I was in the classroom. I would read and reread this entry each time I added notes to my log. Doing so helped me resist my tendency to evaluate the teachers while I conducting my research for this study.

My first step in the analysis was to use a pencil to underline key words and passages that I wanted to remember or refer to later. In the margin next to these key words and passages I labeled or summarized each one with words such as “students working together,” or “student attitudes,” or “about the two teachers.” Later, these margin
notes helped me to recognize patterns and identify the prevailing themes in the data that seemed most applicable to the study.

As I worked, I continued to write my thoughts and impressions in my field log. These notes took the form of a list of key ideas I noticed in the various data texts, connections I made to the research literature, and my own impressions and opinions about what I was reading. This list was instrumental in helping me to crystallize my thinking and find my focus for the important themes in this study. Making this list revealed to me the key patterns and themes emerging from the data. I include it here because this list illustrates and summarizes my process for analysis. The items on this list are in no particular order, are not necessarily complete thoughts or sentences, and not all of the ideas were necessarily included in the findings. In this case, it was the process that was important.

- I learned more from student images
- Students can represent what they want to say through drawing—it helps them express it
- Students do have a voice
- Coteaching works best when teachers get along
- Coteachers model for students the attributes of a caring classroom
- Relationships matter more to students than other things
- Students can tell when teachers care
- Students would have liked teachers both in the classroom together more of the time
- Students feel safe and willing to risk
- School is fun
After careful analysis and thoughtful consideration of the data from all sources for this study, three themes emerged. These are; (a) the two teachers themselves, (b) the other students in the class, and (c) the class trip to the science school.

My next step was to use three different colored highlighting pens to code the key words and passages I had marked in the text from each of the data sources. Each color represented a different one of three themes. A green highlighter was used to mark passages that supported the theme about the two teachers, a pink highlighter was used to mark passages that supported the theme about the students in the class, and an orange highlighter was used to mark passages that supported the theme about the class trip to the science school. It was relatively easy, then, to locate and include the relevant highlighted text from each data source when I described each of the three themes.

In analyzing the student-drawn images for this study, I did not decode or attempt to translate the images, but used the information that the images provided as “a bridge between the visual and the verbal” (Leavy, 2010, p. 217). The student images were used as a jumping-off point for talk during the student interview. During the interview, the student’s drawing remained on the table as a visual reference. Students were asked to explain or clarify the images and the event or idea each image represented. In some cases, I asked the student’s permission to use a pencil to make brief notes on their drawing for my own reference and clarification later on. These notes are visible as additions on the students’ images. I used the information from the images to further refine the important themes emerging from the collective data sources.
Trustworthiness

To ensure that the data and conclusions from this study were trustworthy, I employed three methods: researcher bracketing, member-checking, and peer debriefing. Each is discussed in turn.

**Researcher Bracketing**

Three basic assumptions explain the limitations of this study and also provide the foundation for my attitude toward the participants (Burnard, 2000). First, all children are smart. They know what works in their world and what does not. The only way for me to get as smart as they are about their world is to learn from them. Second, all children make sense. Behavior or attitudes that seem confusing to the observer make perfect sense to the children. The only way for me to understand and make sense of their behavior is to listen and observe very carefully. Third, the participants for this study were considered my co-researchers, not of the project as a whole, but of their own lived experiences.

As the researcher, I hold explicit beliefs and I cannot be detached from my own background and biases and should not pretend otherwise. I am very interested in the discovery of the effectiveness of the coteaching technique with students. My own experience with this model may have led me to data that supports my own hypothesis. I may have heard what I wanted to hear and may have seen what I want to see. I addressed researcher bias by continually exploring my own subjectivity. Researcher subjectivity can be seen as bias and something to be avoided. In contrast, Peshkin (1988) asserted that subjectivity “can be seen as virtuous, for it is the basis of researcher’s making a
distinctive contribution, one that results from the unique configuration of their personal qualities joined to the data they have collected” (p. 18).

By writing both before and after my interviews and observations, I was able to address preconceived opinions and reflect upon my subjectivity. Reflection and analysis helped me to develop questions and understand the patterns and themes of this study. I conducted multiple informal observations in this fifth-grade classroom at different times and on different days so that each of the two teachers was observed working with the students.

**Member Checking**

To further validate the findings, I performed member checking with the student participants during the interviews by echoing what the students said and by clarifying their responses to the interview questions. An example of echoing and clarifying student responses occurred in my interview with Cole.

**ME:** What are these other drawings? It looks like– Is that a skull?

**COLE:** No, that’s supposed to be a lake.

**ME:** Oh, that’s a lake.

**COLE:** Yeah.

**ME:** Are you swimming in the lake?

**COLE:** Um, no, that’s the trail to the lake.

**ME:** That’s one of the hikes that you did?

**COLE:** Yeah.

Following the interview with the two teachers, I sent each teacher an electronic copy of
their joint interview transcript and gave them the opportunity to verify, change, or make additions to the interview. The email reply I received was that the transcript “sounded fine.” Member checking with both the student participants and the coteachers allowed me to more accurately capture their thoughts and beliefs regarding their experiences.

Peer Debriefing

I also worked with a peer debriefer—a colleague who recently completed her own doctoral work. Because we have worked together on other projects during our doctoral coursework, I have both heard and seen the quality of her work. I trust her advice and perspective. She had valuable experience mentoring graduate students through the proposal process as she was the university distance learning endorsement coordinator for 2 years. The courses she taught included segments on how to write and evaluate a literature review, as well as how to write a proposal and evaluate learning outcomes. Her successfully defended dissertation was a qualitative case study and included several unique methods of evaluating her data. These methods closely match what I feel would be effective in my own case, making her experience of value to me. In a meeting one day, I mentioned this arrangement to the department head who worked with my colleague. The department head’s response was that my colleague was an excellent choice to fill that role.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) asserted that the ultimate purpose of peer debriefing is to enhance credibility, or truth value, of a qualitative study, by providing an “external check on the inquiry process” (p. 301). This is a good idea because of the subjective nature of qualitative research. As the researcher, I realize that I bring a particular set of
knowledge, skills, and values to this research endeavor. The peer debriefer helped me to see these unique characteristics as tools for my research and understand how my subjectivity affected my research. We communicated approximately every two weeks during the data collection process to review progress and discuss next steps.

Working with a peer debriefer was invaluable to me as a researcher. Each time we met to discuss my research I approached the meeting feeling a bit uncertain about the progress and unsure of how to proceed. Each time I left our meeting with a clear mind and a sense of renewed purpose. The most noteworthy example of this was mentioned earlier in this report. I was doing regular classroom observations and seeing the same things each time. I was getting worried that I would not find a key event on which to base the student images and interviews. My peer debriefer listened to my lament and said, “But Janet, this is a good thing! This tells you that what you are observing each time is typical of what takes place in the classroom on a daily basis.” As we continued to talk, a weight was lifted, and I realized the study was progressing in a good way.

In this chapter, a detailed description of my research methodology has been presented. First, I described the context for this study. I then explained the theoretical perspective that guided the analysis for this research and the study design. Data gathering methods for each data source were detailed, followed by a description of the analysis process and procedures used. Finally, issues of trustworthiness were considered.
CHAPTER IV
FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to discover the perspective of the learners in this classroom and their experience of having two teachers. An analysis of the data collected for this study revealed that each data source had its own story to tell. When I considered all the stories together, I developed three theories: (a) students can give voice to their lived experience using an image-based interview technique; (b) the ability of coteachers to get along with each other is an important aspect of students lived experience in the coteaching classroom; (c) another aspect of the lived experience of students in the coteaching classroom is learning the ethics of the caring classroom from their coteachers. In this chapter, I discuss each of these theories in turn and how they were supported by a synthesis of the data collected for this study.

In discussing the data that supports these three theories, it is first important to establish which specific type of coteaching was used in this classroom. As mentioned in Chapter III, the coteaching model in this fifth-grade classroom was most accurately defined as job sharing (Mumford, 2005), with some elements of team teaching added (Cook & Friend, 1995). The reader will recall that in the job sharing instructional delivery option, two teachers divide their workweek to oversee one classroom (Blair, 2003). According to the data collected through observations, student interviews, and the teacher interview, the job sharing label best describes the teaching format used in this fifth-grade classroom. The following note from my journal confirmed this when I wrote, “I observed both teachers on four occasions” and also, “I noticed a difference between
the instruction in the morning taught by Amy and the afternoon taught by Pat” inferring that the teachers were not there together during my observations. I know there were times that they were both present and teaching together because of the data collected from other sources, including the student interviews and the teacher interview. For example, during the interview with the coteachers they commented that they felt the students would have liked it if both teachers were there at the same time more often. This comment further validates the conclusion that job sharing is the most fitting label for this teaching model.

Further support for the finding that the teachers were using a job sharing model was found in the student interview with Charlie. In his interview, Charlie said he really liked it when both teachers were “there together at the same time” and that he wished “they were both there the whole time.” As Charlie’s comment indicates, there were times when both teachers were there together at the same time sharing the responsibility for instruction. When this occurred, both teachers shared the instruction of students and took turns leading discussions, role playing, or modeling appropriate ways to ask questions (Cook & Friend, 1995).

**Students’ Lived Experiences**

Students can give voice to their lived experience using an image-based interview technique. Students do have something to tell us if we listen. The use of student drawings was very effective in helping me discover what students had to say about their coteaching experience in three distinct ways. First, using the students’ images as part of the student interviews helped me decide what questions to ask each student. Second, using the
students’ images as part of the student interviews helped me avoid misinterpretations. And third, using the students’ images as part of the student interviews gave them the opportunity to more fully describe key events from their experience that year. I discuss each of these findings in turn using support from the collective data. Please note that the images used in this section show only a specific portion of the students’ drawings. Full images of the students’ drawings can be found in Chapter III as well as in Appendix A.

Using the students’ images as part of the student interviews helped me decide what questions to ask each student. For example, Maggie drew an “I LOVE SCIENCE” label with a flask to represent the letter “I” in the word “SCIENCE.” Close to this were the letters “S.S.,” which stood for social studies, and there was a frowning face by the letters (see Figure 8).

When I saw this image, I wondered why Maggie had included it in her drawing, so I asked her about it. Maggie’s reply was, “I do love science. I don’t like history, as you

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**Figure 8.** Maggie’s image about science and social studies.
can see.” I asked Maggie what she loves about science. She said,

Well, she Ms. Amy just makes it like, seem so real and like we get into it by like doing the experiment and stuff and like altogether just like...it’s so hard to explain. She just like makes it sound like really fun and then when we do it, we believe her and so we decide that it’s going to be fun. So she sorta like tricks our minds.

I asked Maggie why there was a frowning face next to the letters for social studies. She told me that Ms. Pat is “really nice” and “she’s fun,” but she does not make the learning fun like it is in science. Maggie felt that science was just “more boring.”

A second example of the way students’ images helped me decided what questions to ask was found in Greta’s drawing. Shortly after the beginning of the year, Greta’s mom requested to have Greta moved from the other fifth-grade classroom at the school into Ms. Amy’s and Ms. Pat’s classroom. Greta said this was because of the way the students in the other class treated her. The first image on Greta’s drawing was about her first class, and the second image on her drawing was about switching to a different class (see Figure 9).

Figure 9. Greta’s images about switching fifth-grade classrooms.
When I saw what Greta had drawn, I wanted to know more about why she had chosen this experience as one of her key events. She explained it to me this way.

It was, like, not the kids that I was used to, and I didn’t have very many friends and stuff. I loved my teacher and after he left for his hip surgery, like, everything was kind of weird and the substitute was trying to help me feel comfortable in my class and, like, things just weren’t working out so I switched classes and that’s my second picture. And ever since then, I’ve been, like, really, really happy because those are the kids since, like, 3rd grade and 4th grade that I’ve known. And we just get along so well and it’s like we always have something to tell each other.

A third example of the way students’ images helped me decided what questions to ask was found in Penny’s drawing. One of Penny’s drawings showed a figure lying on a couch that has tipped over, and two other figures were standing nearby and smiling at the person on the couch (see Figure 10).

The label for this picture read, “Ms. A flips the couch.” I was curious about the story behind this drawing and so I asked Penny for an explanation. This is what she told me.

This is a kinda funny memory cause that’s when um Ms. Amy—she was sitting on the couch and it flipped and...she claimed she did it on purpose and we all didn’t believe it at all because we knew she’d accidentally done it and everybody was laughing and yeah, it was really funny.

Figure 10. Penny’s image of Ms. Amy tipping over the couch.
I would not have asked about this experience if I had not seen the image. The story Penny told about the drawing gave me a glimpse into the relationship the students had with their teacher. It told me that they could laugh together and experience funny and embarrassing moments together. When asked what else she wanted to add about having two teachers during her fifth-grade year, Penny said that it had been an “awesome” year. “Probably the best year that I’ve ever had in school.”

A final example of the way students’ images helped me decided what questions to ask was found in Kyle’s drawing. In the center section of Kyle’s drawing were two large rectangles. One was divided into squares and the other had squiggly lines drawn across it with what appears to be one of the coteachers standing next to it. The teacher has a big frown on her face. Beneath these two rectangles are six boxes with items inside of them (see Figure 11). I really had no idea what this image might represent, so I asked Kyle to explain it to me.

Figure 11. The center portion of Kyle’s drawing.
Our conversation about this image let me know that Kyle had drawn it because science is important to him. His experiences in the science lab with his classmates were one of his key events from that year in school. I added the labels above the rectangles as notes to help me remember what they represented.

Me:  Tell me what we’re looking at here in this picture.
Kyle: This is Ms. Amy. (Pointing to the stick figure next to the larger rectangle.)
Me:  She looks kind of mad. Is she mad?
Kyle: Yeah, cause we always talk sometimes.
Me:  Oh, she’s telling you all to be quiet?
Kyle: Yeah, she’s sorta like, “Dang.” And this is her teaching us science.
Me:  And these are students at the tables?
Kyle: Yes. This is that box container that carries all the supplies.
Me:  Why did you choose to draw about science down in the lab?
Kyle: ‘Cause we were doing electricity that day and I really liked it.
Me:  What did you like about it?
Kyle: ...cause I want to try and be a mechanical engineer one of these days. So I really like science. It’s like my favorite subject.

Using the students’ images as part of the student interviews also helped me avoid misinterpretations. The students’ and I both referenced their drawings throughout the interview process. In this way, students had the opportunity to clarify, or more fully describe the key events represented in their drawing. One example of the way the students’ drawings helped me avoid misinterpretations occurred during my interview with Kyle. Overall, Kyle’s drawing was a bit confusing and difficult for me to decipher (see Figure 12). I was curious to know which key event or events he had chosen to represent and I wanted to understand his particular experiences in the classroom.
At one point during our interview I indicated the lower part of his drawing and prompted Kyle by saying, “Down across the bottom of your drawing you have three different boxes. Which one do you want to talk about first?” Kyle’s response was, “Actually, this is all one picture.” I replied, “It is all one picture? Okay, tell me about it,” which he did. I found out that because I saw something quite different than he had intended, I had completely misinterpreted his drawing. Using his image as a reference point during our conversation revealed what he was really trying to say.

A second example of the way the students’ drawings helped me avoid misinterpretations was found in Maggie’s drawing. I asked Maggie to explain the image on her drawing that showed her saying hello to the school counselor. See Figure 13. That is, I thought it was a drawing of Maggie just saying hello to the school counselor. It turned out to be something much more significant than that to Maggie.

When I got here the first day, around right after lunch recess, the counselor pulled me out to ask me a few questions. And I was just like “Sure” because I didn’t know what he was going to ask me...and um...he introduced himself and I introduced myself and then he starts asking these questions that were just a little odd for me. And so I was just like, “Mmmmm,” but I answered them anyway. It was a little odd.
Maggie added that this was an awkward and uncomfortable memory for her and was a somewhat “Weird” start to her experience at the school. Seeing the image prompted me to ask about it, and this gave Maggie the opportunity to clarify the experience more fully.

A third example of the way the students’ drawings helped me avoid misinterpretations was found on Charlie’s drawing. Charlie drew an image of himself and another student next to a lunch tray (see Figure 14). When I looked at this image I assumed it represented that Charlie liked having lunch with his friend. But Charlie told me that the drawing actually represented something more significant to him.

Charlie said that Ms. Amy had some overdue library books she could not find and she did not want to keep paying fines for them. She told the class that whoever found them would get to go out to lunch with her. So when Charlie and the other boy found the books, Ms. Amy took them to lunch. That was a key event for Charlie.

Using the students’ images as part of the student interviews also gave them the
opportunity to more fully describe key events from their experience that year. Five of the six students interviewed included an image about the class trip to the science school as part of their drawing. The next three examples in this section show three of these students’ perceptions about the trip. Because it was part of their drawing, we talked about the trip during the students’ interviews. Both teachers also went on the trip and also talked about it during their interview. Clearly, this was a key event for the students and teachers in this class. It is possible that the trip to the science school would have served as a critical event for this study if I had been present to observe and take notes. However, because the trip took place in the early fall, before data for this study was collected, it was not used as a critical event for the focus of this study.

The first example of the way using the students’ images as part of the student interviews gave them the opportunity to more fully describe key events from their experience if from my interview with Maggie. Maggie’s image about the class trip to the science school was the one that showed a lot of luggage and the clock showing 6:00 a.m. (see Figure 15).
Maggie explained that even though it was “A big stress” to pack a bag, and she did not like leaving so early in the morning, the trip was “Worth it.” She said it was “Probably one of the best memories I’ve had with the class in my life.” When I asked her to tell me more about it she said,

Well, everyone there was just altogether in a group. We wouldn’t separate or be all stranded. And if like someone was down or unhappy, they would just like hang around that person or help them out. And so it was just like our close moments and after the science trip, we sorta stayed like that.

The next example of the way using the students’ images as part of the student interviews gave them the opportunity to more fully describe key events from their experience is from Penny’s interview. Penny’s drawing showed an image of the students, with smiles on their faces, relaxing in the field where the bus broke down on the way home from the science school (see Figure 16). In this drawing the stars are coming out, illustrating the fact that it was “Starting to become late and getting dusk.” There was a small house that belonged to the kind family who opened their home to the group for drinks or bathroom needs. There is even a cow in the picture to show that they were in a “Really rural area.”

Figure 15. Maggie’s image about the class trip to the science school.
Penny related that when the bus started having trouble the bus driver wasn’t going to do anything about it, that he just wanted to keep going. But Penny said her teachers “Really care about us and they’re, like, this is not safe.” She and the other students did “A lot of fun activities while they were in that farm field.” After they took their luggage off the bus they played games with a tiny basketball one of the boys had brought with him. As the sun went down, the students took their pillows from the luggage and leaned them against their backpacks and listened to their teacher read aloud to them while they waited for their parents to come and get them. Ms. Pat got a flashlight and “She waved it around so when the parents drove past, they would see that’s where we were.” Penny said that “Being out in the middle of nowhere added a lot of adventure to the whole thing.”

Greta was another student who included an image representing the class trip to the science school (see Figure 17). Greta remembered that on their last night at the science school their teachers told the students to “just grab someone that helped you and you had
fun with on this trip.” Greta said she grabbed her mom because she was there. Greta said they could “say anything they wanted to about who helped them and stuff and all our memories.”

The next example of the way using the students’ images as part of the student interviews gave them the opportunity to more fully describe key events from their experience is from Karen’s interview. Karen’s drawing showed a boy holding a wand. He was standing next to a Golden Snitch, a pair of glasses, and a broom (see Figure 18). Next to all of this is written the word, “Bye.” Karen explained that this drawing represented the time a boy in her class moved away. She said this boy loved Harry Potter and that is why she drew some objects from the Harry Potter story. I asked Karen if she was good friends with the boy. Her response was, “Yeah, we all became more friends with him. I mean at the first of the year, we didn’t really like him, but then we ended up really liking him and we were really sad when he left.”
Another example of the way using the students’ images as part of the student interviews gave them the opportunity to more fully describe key events from their experience also occurred during Karen’s interview. In a different place on her image Karen drew a heart with a picture of a fountain above it (see Figure 19). Karen said that this image was about a class party they had for Valentine’s Day that was “really fun. We played Just Dance II on the Wii and we had a chocolate fountain.” Karen went on to tell me that both teachers were there for the party and said again that it was “really fun.” She also told me that the teachers both danced with the students and that “it was fun.”

The next example of the way using the students’ images as part of the student interviews gave them the opportunity to more fully describe key events from their experience is from Charlie’s interview. Charlie drew an image of himself lying in a hospital bed with an intravenous tube in his arm (see Figure 20). He has included the sign for the Red Cross to represent that he is in the hospital. Nearby he has drawn a fellow classmate holding a card with some writing on it. The classmate has a frown on his face. Charlie told me he had his appendix out in November and he remembers the class made
cards for him. He drew the frown on the student’s face because he said his classmates were sad that he was in the hospital.

**Coteachers’ Ability to Get Along with Each Other**

The ability of coteachers to get along with each other is an important aspect of students’ lived experience in the coteaching classroom. All six of the students interviewed for this study talked about having two teachers. When they talked about their experience of having two teachers in the classroom, the students used words like “It was really fun” and “It was great” or “It was good.” The interviews with these students
revealed that they noticed their coteachers’ ability to get along with each other, and that this was an important aspect of their classroom experience.

One example that the ability of coteachers to get along with each other was an important aspect of students’ lived experience in the coteaching classroom occurred during Penny’s interview. As I began the interview, I asked Penny to talk about her drawing. I told her that she could start with any image. The first thing Penny wanted to tell me about was the drawing she had done of her two teachers (see Figure 21). This image showed the two teachers wearing tiaras and heart-shaped glasses that the students had given them. It is interesting to note that the two teachers have their arms around each other and both are smiling hugely. There is also a bright sun toward the top left of the balloon.

When I asked Penny why she drew the two teachers with big smiles and their arms around each other, Penny said, “Well, they just get along really well, and they’re almost, like, really close friends or sisters or something and they just are both teaching us and so I wanted to include that.”

*Figure 21.* Penny’s image of her two teachers.
Another example that the ability of coteachers to get along with each other was an important aspect of students’ lived experience in the coteaching classroom occurred during Greta’s interview. Greta also talked about her two teachers during her interview (see Figure 22). When she was telling me about how the two teachers were when they were together, she shared this experience:

Mrs. Pat and Mrs. Amy together, like, they just make us laugh. Even if they’re not together, it’s still fun but when they’re together, they just goof off and stuff and it’s really funny to watch. Like at the science school, and on the last night, um, Mrs. Amy, she was being really quiet and she was staring at us and then Mrs. Pat was talking and then one of the parents or someone said, “Is Mrs. Amy awake or sleeping?” And then Mrs. Pat, she was just like “You would know if she was sleeping, she’d be a lot louder!” It was funny and then Mrs. Amy, she came over and like tipped her hat down and so it was funny. And like they just make a lot of jokes together.

A third example that the ability of coteachers to get along with each other was an important aspect of students’ lived experience in the coteaching classroom occurred during Maggie’s interview. Maggie said she knew “Practically everyone” in her class because she had attended the school before. She said that she did not know her teachers, but she “Got the idea” about them from her older sisters who had been in their classes. Maggie did not include an image of her coteachers on her drawing, but when I asked her

![Figure 22. Greta’s image about having two teachers.](image-url)
what she wanted to say about her experience with having two teachers, our conversation went like this.

Maggie: I thought that it was a new experience and it was fun to get to know two more people. . . and I think I actually liked it better.

Me: Can you tell me why or are you not sure why?

Maggie: I’m not quite sure, it just seems much different than most years, that it seems more fun. I don’t know why...they always joke around together.

Me: They seem like they’re good friends?

Maggie: Mm-hmm. They’ve gone many places together. And so it’s very funny to see them joke; like fake fight. It’s funny.

A fourth example that the ability of coteachers to get along with each other was an important aspect of students’ lived experience in the coteaching classroom occurred during Charlie’s interview. The first image on Charlie’s drawing was of his two teachers welcoming him to fifth grade. See Figure 23. The two teachers have their arms around each other. They have big smiles on their faces. Charlie said he drew the teachers with their arms around each other because he thought “They were really happy to be teaching together.”

Figure 23. Charlie’s image of the two teachers greeting him on the first day of school.
Further support for the finding that having the coteachers get along with each other was an important aspect of the students’ experience was found in the data collected from the interview with the coteachers. The interview was conducted with both teachers together. I wanted both of the teachers together in the interview so that they could play off of one another’s comments and reflections about the coteaching experience. Amy and Pat share a similar educational philosophy and teaching style which made it easier for them to collaborate. They were both very respectful and openly caring of the other. Even their personalities are similar; congenial, easy-going, and good-natured.

I could see during the teacher interview that Amy and Pat got along well with each other. They agreed on most issues, but if they did not agree, they expressed their difference of opinion in a respectful way. At one point Amy told me that “On the days we didn’t see each other, we were either texting each other or talking on the phone” and that “There was daily communication in multiple forms” between the two of them.

Amy and Pat have been friends in and out of school for a number of years. During the interview I asked them to tell me whether the year as coteachers had any impact on their friendship. Both teachers reported that even though the coteaching experience was “Not without its problems,” after the year as coteachers they are still friends, even closer friends than they were before. Pat said this was because “They shared kids.” Amy added, “Yeah, and I think part of it, too, is that our friendship is what was able to help us keep an open dialogue, because we talk so much to each other anyway that it just fell naturally into place.”
Ethics of the Caring Classroom

In this section, I first describe the behaviors and attitudes of the coteachers themselves that support the finding that the coteachers were modeling the ethics of a caring classroom for the students. Then I describe what the students said and did to indicate that they had learned the ethics of caring from their coteachers.

One way that both coteachers modeled the ethics of a caring classroom for the students was through consistent delivery of the same message of classroom democracy and respect for all class members. I often heard each teacher respond to students’ comments by saying something like, “Thank you, John, that’s right.” During work periods, teachers would circulate and offer assistance or check for understanding. When students had questions, the teachers listened thoughtfully and with full attention to students’ questions and took the time to offer a thorough explanation.

During one observation I saw Pat model the ethics of caring. Students were reading independently, and Pat told the class that they were doing a very nice job. In my notes I wrote that “Pat is thoughtful, respectful, gives praise, and passes out tokens.”

I observed an example of the way Amy modeled the ethics of caring one day just before students were to go to the science lab. She reminded students of her expectations for their behavior by asking the class, “Have you been doing your best in science lately? How many would you give yourself out of five?” Students answered in unison, saying, “Three.” Amy asked, “What do I expect?” And the students said, “Five.” Amy prompted further, “And what should you expect?” All of the students said, “Five or Six.”

Another example of the way each coteachers modeled the ethics of a caring
classroom for the students was found in the interview with the two teachers. Pat and Amy talked about how, at the beginning of the school year, the students were not unified. Those who had been in fourth grade together stuck together; creating sort of an ‘us and them’ atmosphere. Amy’s comment was, “I think that with both of us there, they could see that, you know, you don’t belong to one teacher or it’s not an exclusive club what teacher you’re with.” One example of this was the experience of a boy in the class who had been an easy target for teasing. He wore thick dark glasses and was considered a bit of a nerd. He just did not fit in and wasn’t accepted well by the class. In the words of the coteachers,

Pat: Something happened right about that time that I think was very important that set up some things that happened further down the line, and I think that’s how we dealt with James and how he was being teased.

Amy: James was an easy target, but the science trip changed that, and unfortunately, he moved right after that.

Pat: It had started to change before we went on the science trip, but the science trip cemented it. I mean, we had set down the “This will not happen” type thing before we went.

It was not long, the teachers said, before the students were so unified that “Getting a good seating arrangement was almost impossible because they were always next to a best friend that they would talk to. And it didn’t matter whom you put them by. It was interesting—boys, girls. It didn’t matter.”

A community of caring was also modeled by teachers and learned by students during the class trip to the science school. Both teachers agreed that the trip really helped establish the foundation for a community of caring for the entire class. They felt this experience set the tone for classroom relationships for the rest of the school year.
Amy: Yeah, really, because the last day-the last night we were at science camp, we sat in a circle and students shared and said thank-yous, and it was so powerful. I’m not sure any of them were dry-eyed.

Pat: One boy spoke up and started to say something, and he said “I don’t usually cry in public,” and I said “this isn’t public, this is family.” And I think if I hadn’t said it, somebody would, but from then on, that’s what they would always say when someone started to cry, too.

Amy and Pat felt it was important that the students knew there was consistency between the two teachers in the area of class rules and the expectations for students’ behavior. They knew that teachers who care about their students are fair, firm, and consistent. Caring teachers also maintain high expectations for students. In this way these two teachers modeled the ethics of a caring classroom. The following excerpt from the coteacher interview supports this finding.

Amy: I think one of the first things that, you know, the kids needed to know was that we were not like divorced parents where, you know, one of them has custody one week and one the other and therefore, there are different rules. There were the same rules no matter what. If Pat told you “No,” Amy will know about it, or if Amy told you “No,” Pat will know about it, and we’re not your parents, you can’t play us against each other. You will be busted every time.

Pat: They tried that. A lot.

Amy: And they tried it. At the beginning.

Pat: They didn’t do it at all at the end. Not at all. Ever.

Amy: Mm-hmm.

Pat: It was an interesting thing to watch happen because it didn’t take very long. It really didn’t take very long.

Students observed the interaction of their two teachers when they were both in the classroom together. They also observed the way each teacher talked about their partner when they were not in the classroom together. Students learned an ethic of caring through
the example of their coteachers in the way they interacted with each other and in the way they modeled respect for one another.

I think the students saw us work together very closely.... I don’t know that we ever had any disagreements in front of them, but there were many times when I would say in front of them, I will have to talk to Ms. Amy about it, and then we would come back with a solution the next day, so they were seeing negotiation, they were seeing those kinds of things constantly.... I think we were modeling a lot of the things we were asking them to do.

Pat and Amy reported there were times when they were both present in the classroom, and a parent would come in to talk to them. Some of these parents had actually been in Pat’s class when she taught fifth grade at the school. Amy said that when those parents came in she would defer to Pat because those parents had such an amazing relationship with her. Amy thought it was “really neat” for those parents to see that, “The love and the education they got, their child was now getting.”

Finally, the coteachers established a community of caring by holding daily class meetings. During class meetings the teachers modeled the ethics of respectful listening and tolerance for different ideas. I observed Amy hold class meetings in the morning sometimes, but usually this ritual occurred right after lunch when Pat was there. Often the class meeting was combined with the story Pat was reading aloud to the students. She would gather the students on the rug at the back of the room and start to read aloud to them. The following excerpt from my field log describes this; “1:15—read aloud on the rug—students are quiet and attentive—sitting still, listening.”

One of the images Penny drew showed Ms. Pat reading aloud to the students who were gathered on the rug at the back of the classroom (see Figure 24). Penny talked at some length during the interview about these read aloud experiences. She said that Ms.
Pat was “Really good at reading books because she did different voices.” Penny said that her teacher chose books that “Gave us examples of people who have different lives—maybe not as good as ours so that we can think more deeply about that sort of stuff.” She went on to say,

Sometimes we have read-alouds and I think that’s what made our class connect so well. I think one of the most important things is all the conversations that the two of them have both brought up and it’s gotten us to say personal stuff and our opinions and to debate and so it’s really gotten everybody in the whole class to express themselves and it’s also made us, I think bond better because now we can understand each other and our views a lot better.

Students demonstrated through their own attitudes and behavior in the classroom that they had learned the ethics of caring from their teachers. Students often worked together in pairs or small groups for learning activities and enjoyed being with each other. The teachers reported that this sense of community happened over time. At the beginning of the year, students would refer to themselves at Ms. A’s class, but gradually students came up with the idea that they would refer to themselves as AP’s class, which stood for Ms. Amy and Ms. Pat’s class.
One day students were in the science lab working in small groups to rotate through various experiments dealing with electricity. As I moved around the room, every group was on task, brainstorming together, helping each other, and treating each member of the group with respect. In my field notes I wrote, “Kids are having fun—when electrical circuit is “interrupted” (role-play) they sort of “buzz” (shaking all over) like they’re in shock—very funny and clever. I laughed!”

While working with classmates, students were willing to share ideas and consider other opinions without causing others to get mad or to be upset. The following conversation from a small group during the same day in the science lab illustrates this point.

Let’s try this one.
Let’s just use this battery holder.
Okay.
It’s working—it worked!
Holy cow! You’re right.
Good one.
I need your help.
Okay.
I need you to hold the wire.
Yay! Whole group cheered when the light worked.
Students were told they had one more minute to work. In unison the students said, “No! We almost got it!”

It did not seem to matter what they were doing or who was in their group; the students in this class appeared to be a tight knit and cohesive unit. They were tolerant of other
students in the class who were a little awkward socially. When one boy began trying to
distract his group by singing a song, the other students in the group simply continued to
work. They did not criticize or tease him in any way. Another example was when Greta
let out a big, long burp just as I was walking by. She looked up at me and, grinning, said,
“I am the champ. Even the boys can’t beat me!” She was not in the least bit embarrassed
about the big burp, and the other group members simply agreed with her statement and
went back to work.

Maggie drew an image on her timeline showing a lunch tray (see Figure 25). She
said that even though she did not like the food served for school lunches, she liked “How
our class doesn’t have assigned tables or seating so we can like switch groups. We don’t
care who we sit by...and so we just talk to everyone.”

Another time students were supposed to be reading a social studies article about
the Civil War. One boy wanted to talk to Penny about it, but she wanted to read her
article. He finally got up and removed himself saying, “Okay, I’ll go over here and just
talk to my pencil.” He did so, seemingly without feeling hurt or rejected. Penny treated

![Figure 25. Maggie’s image of a lunch tray.](image-url)
him in a way that was respectful and also preserved his dignity. Here is another example from my field notes,

Overall, this group of students was respectful, cohesive, accepting, tolerant, disciplined, and excited to learn. They liked each other. They enjoyed being together. They worked well together. Students appeared to feel safe and comfortable in the classroom regardless of which teacher was present. These students were very different from each other in physical appearance, in personality, and in background, but they seemed to genuinely accept one another and to really enjoy working together. I think they know that their teachers cared about them a lot.

One morning when I was observing in the classroom just before school started for the day. About half the class was there and I noted that students were talking as a whole group about things they were interested in including motorcycles, last night’s basketball game, and even a stage play some of them were in. What was noteworthy was that none of the students made fun of something another student said, even when their own interests were quite different. In fact, differences were acknowledged and appreciated and the students made a genuine effort to listen to each other.

On another occasion I observed students practicing a reader’s theater script using props they had made themselves. I was impressed by their uninhibited use of expression during the reading. Some students even changed their voices to sound more like what they imagined the story character’s voice would sound like. As students practiced the reading, they coached each other and gave suggestions for improvement to each other, as well as compliments and encouragement. One of the students was reading the role of a mouse in the story. Whenever he read a part, he changed his voice to sound squeaky and high pitched. The other students in his group laughed every time and told him, “That was awesome.” After observing this behavior, I wrote in my field log “The students seem to
know that their classmates accept them as they are.”

Students were tolerant of certain kids who may be a little awkward socially. I observed this one day through students’ small group interaction. There was one boy in the class whom I noticed particularly during observations because he was frequently off task and behaving in ways that drew attention to him, perhaps in an effort to be funny. Once, when students were working in groups on science experiments, this boy kept singing the alphabet song. Though some may have considered his behavior annoying or distracting, perhaps even spoken sharply to him, the two girls in this boy’s group did not even ask him to stop. They simply did not react at all, and eventually the singing stopped.

Learning the ethics of the caring community from their coteachers was another aspect of the students’ lived experience in the classroom. The coteachers in this study modeled the attributes of caring themselves, and expected the same behavior from students. The students demonstrated that they had learned these ethics through their own attitudes and actions in the classroom.
In this chapter, I connect the study findings to the literature to answer the question about the lived experience of the learners in the coteaching classroom. First, the results provide evidence that the use of images can be helpful in learning about students’ lived experiences in the coteaching classroom. Second, the results suggest, through students’ lived experience, that the teaching approach being studied, predominantly job sharing, can be considered a coteaching delivery option. Finally, the voices of the learners in the classroom are an important source of information about what works in schools.

Figure 26 illustrates how these three elements answer the research question. The research question, the students’ lived experience in the coteaching classroom, is found in the center of the model. The arrows pointing toward the center from the two outside boxes represent input from the students in this study. Leading away from the center is an arrow pointing to the middle box. The statement inside the middle box, students’ experiences suggest that job sharing can be an effective coteaching model, represents the conclusion drawn about the students’ lived experiences based on their input.

Use of Images

First, the use of images can be helpful in learning about students’ lived experiences in the coteaching classroom. The findings support the literature about the use of image-based research techniques to help students to represent what they know, feel and think about what they know—and to help them to talk (Burnard, 2000; Leavy, 2010,
Prosser, 1998). Originally, I thought I would use the talk and draw technique recommended by Prosser. In the talk and draw approach, students recall key events in their histories while they locate each narration or drawing or image on different bends along the length of a winding river where each bend represents an influential incident or memory. I chose instead to have students reflect on their experiences and represent them in images using whatever format they chose, and to do so prior to an interview. I think this variation in my approach to using student images made a significant difference in the amount and quality of the data I gathered from the images and from the students during the interviews.

Having students draw their images before the interview allowed them time to reflect on their experiences in the classroom, to consider which events were most
significant to them and to decide which events they would choose to represent in their drawing. When they came to the interview, they were ready to talk to me about what they had drawn. Each student’s drawing became a jumping off point that guided not only the questions I asked, but also the experiences they talked about with me.

The use of images can also be helpful in learning about students’ lived experiences in the coteaching classroom because doing so creates a comfortable environment in which students feel safe to openly express their thoughts and emotions (Zambo & Zambo, 2006). Having the student’s drawing to look at during the interview seemed to take some of the pressure off the student. Certainly I was attentive to them and looked at them a lot during the interview, but we both also looked at their drawing much of the time. I think this shift of focus helped the student to relax and to feel a bit more comfortable to talk to me.

Additionally, the use of images can be helpful in learning about students’ lived experiences in the coteaching classroom because the images help the researcher to understand the students and what they are trying to express in a way that they might not be able to articulate (Le Count, 2000). Many times during the interview process the students had included details in their drawings that prompted my inquiry for more information and description about a particular event. This led to more in depth conversation which led to greater understanding for me about the students’ experiences.

The use of images can also be helpful in learning about students’ lived experiences in the coteaching classroom because the images convey powerful representations of the students’ emotions about their experiences (Leavy, 2010). The
students had a great deal to communicate to me about their experiences in the classroom that year. During the interviews, it was evident that drawing the images provided a vehicle through which students could represent key moments from the school year and express their feelings about those key moments. I believe the use of images produced a thicker, richer, more complete picture of the students’ lived experience in the classroom than I would have obtained through dialogue alone.

These findings add to the literature on the use of student drawn images in two ways. First, as a researcher, I found the use of student drawn images added an unexpected element of novelty and fun to the process of gathering data. The approach was unique enough to be engaging and meaningful for most students, too. This was a surprising element of the technique that I had not read about in the literature.

Second, I interviewed only six students, but every student in the class drew an image of their experiences in the classroom. Looking at all of these images gave me a glimpse of the lived experience of each student in the class; even without interviewing all of them. It occurred to me that the images themselves could stand alone as an important data source.

The use of images as they reflect the students lived experience is an important source of data for research. Producing the drawings gives students an opportunity to reflect on their experiences, and to make choices about which images they will depict. This reflection and selection process helps to hone the lived experience to those events that are most important to the student. Further, if given sufficient time, students will include details in their drawings that encourage a thicker, richer narration during an
interview. An added bonus was that the process of using images was interesting and fun for both students and researcher.

**Job Sharing as Coteaching**

Second, the results suggest, through students’ lived experience, that the teaching approach being studied, predominantly *job sharing*, can be considered a coteaching delivery option. In the literature, job sharing was treated as a flexible teaching option, but not necessarily as one of the coteaching approaches. Though there were times when both teachers in this study were present and teaching at the same time in what is considered a traditional coteaching approach, most of the time one teacher taught in the mornings, and the other teacher taught in the afternoons. In the literature, this is referred to as a job sharing approach.

Recall that coteaching is defined as two or more professionals delivering substantive instruction to a group of students with diverse learning needs in a single physical space (Cook & Friend, 1995). Based on this definition, I would argue that the job sharing model used by the teachers in this study can be described as a coteaching approach. First, both of the highly qualified teachers in this study were responsible for delivering instruction to the class. Second, the students in this classroom had a variety of individual learning needs that were being met by both teachers working together. Third, the two teachers shared a classroom—a single physical space.

But let us take it a step further. Coteaching is more than two teachers merely sharing a physical space or jointly planning lessons. It is important to also consider the
attitude, or frame of mind, of the two teachers in the coteaching partnership. I believe that Pat and Amy saw themselves as coteachers in every sense of the word. They were both very invested professionally and emotionally in the welfare and best interests of each student in the class. This attitude of caring and concern did not stop when they were technically off the clock. Though these two teachers were not together in the classroom on a regular basis, they did communicate frequently and in depth about their class. I submit that when viewed from this perspective, the job sharing model used by the teachers in this study fits the definition of a coteaching approach.

School districts that offer a job sharing option sometimes do so for reasons that have to do with staying within their budget (Blair, 2003; Mumford, 2005). For example, a part time teaching job does not usually include full benefits. By not having to pay teacher benefits, the district saves money. Further, teachers that accept a job sharing position may do so for reasons that have to do with their own scheduling needs. In other words, job sharing is often a way for schools to save money and for teachers to work part time. In the case of this study, however, the motivation for the two teachers to participate in a coteaching partnership was a decision they made to benefit the learning and the lived experience of the students in the classroom. It was not about saving money or having shorter work hours. In fact, the two teachers in this study worked harder than ever to plan, prepare, and collaborate so that each student’s needs were being met. School leaders that view job sharing as simply a time and money saving option should consider the benefits of having two highly qualified and motivated teachers working together to help students learn and succeed.
Coteaching works best when the students can tell that the coteachers get along with each other. When students observed that their teachers demonstrated respect for each other and shared a commitment to the coteaching learning environment, the students became more interested and engaged in the learning process, gained a better understanding of the teachers’ expectations, and improved their own learning outcomes (Gaytan, 2010). Every student I interviewed said they could tell the two teachers liked each other and liked teaching together because of the way they treated each other and the other students in the class. The teachers reported that at the beginning of the year there were times when some students tried to play one teacher against the other to see if they could get away with certain things. Because the teachers practiced parity, and because they communicated and collaborated so well with each other, these students quickly learned that the two teachers had shared expectations. The two teachers also reported that they felt they were able to reinforce each other’s teaching and integrate content in ways that increased students’ academic success.

The student participants in this classroom could tell that Amy and Pat got along well, that they were friends who liked each other and liked teaching together. The teachers, too, reported during their interview that their ability to get along with their coteaching partner was an important factor in their successful coteaching experience (Sebastian, 2001). I believe the two teachers got along so well and that the coteaching approach used in this classroom was successful because it was the teachers’ idea. Also, the teachers selected who they wanted to work with as a coteaching partner. Both of these things were their choice. This meant they already believed in the model and had a
commitment to making it work. When teachers make choices about instruction in their classroom, it increases their feelings of worth, gives them greater confidence in their abilities, and increases the chances for successful outcomes. That this all occurred within a job sharing model that others would not define as coteaching may be surprising is definitely noteworthy.

**Voice of the Learner**

Finally, the voices of the learners in the classroom are an important and oft underutilized source of information about what works in schools. These findings confirm that students do have a voice, they do have something to tell us about their learning environment, and we should listen and learn from them. The students in this classroom certainly knew more than I did about their lived experiences and were very capable of reporting them.

Further, the findings show that in order to make the best decision about the future of coteaching at this school, it is important to have the students’ perspective. If we agree that students are the ultimate consumers of the educational product, then they are perhaps the most important source of data we have for making decisions about school improvement (Wilhelm, 2011, p. 49).

**Implications of this Study**

The voices of the students in this study indicate that the particular coteaching approach being used was not a key factor for them in the success of this coteaching
experience. The lived experience of the learners in this classroom suggests that the most important factor for them was the visible working relationship of the two teachers. These results are significant because they can help to inform future decisions about the practice of coteaching on three different levels; the school level, the university level, and the general field level.

School Level

This study was requested by the department head of the school of education at the partner university for this laboratory school. The findings from this study helped to inform a decision to implement a pilot program at this school in which a preservice student teacher from the partner university was placed in the classroom with a regular teacher for the entire year. Specifically, as modeled in this study, teachers were able to choose whether to participate in the program or not, and teachers were involved in interviewing and selecting an intern to be their coteaching partner. At the time of this writing, the school is in its first year of this intern coteaching pilot program.

Recall that the student participants in this study would have liked to have both teachers present and teaching together more of the time. This finding helped to inform the structure of the intern coteaching pilot program so that both the regular classroom teacher and the intern are present in the classroom every day and share responsibilities for instruction.

We know that coteaching works best when there is true parity between the two teaching partners. The teachers in this study achieved parity by acknowledging each other as equal teachers in the classroom. Both Pat and Amy were purposeful and consistent in
teaching the students to do the same. Amy gave one example of this during the teacher interview.

The students came to view themselves as a fifth-grade class. At the beginning when they’d answer the phone in the classroom they’d answer, “Ms. A’s class. But we all talked about it and said well, you know this is more than Ms. A’s class. The students came up with the idea that they would answer the phone “AP’s class” They came to realize that regardless of what teacher they’d had in previous years, now we were together as a group.

Because of the inherent hierarchy in the relationship between the regular classroom teacher and the intern, true parity will probably not occur in the coteaching pilot program. This hierarchy can be downplayed if the teacher and the intern each take particular care to have students respond to both teachers as equals. To achieve this, teachers can arrange visual, verbal, and instructional signals that convey their equality. For example, teachers who coteach daily can put both teachers’ names on the board and on correspondence that goes to parents. They can arrange for two teachers’ desks, or share a large work table instead of having one teacher camping at a student desk. They can be sure that both take the lead on delivering instruction, and thy both can grade papers to make clear to students that both contribute to grades or other student evaluation (Cook & Friend, 1995).

Coteachers should keep in mind that the collaborative relationship of the coteachers seems to be of greatest importance to the students. The ability of the teacher and the intern to get along with one another must be visible and obvious to the students in the classroom.

University Level

The partner university has recently implemented a change in the structure of the
relationship between the student teachers and the cooperating teachers in the other public schools in the area. One goal of the new structure is to encourage a partnership approach between the cooperating teacher and the student teacher that is modeled after coteaching.

Under the previous model of student teaching, student teachers were left on their own for a period of time to solo teach. Student teachers were expected to completely take over all planning, instruction, and management of the classroom on their own. During this time the cooperating teacher would usually be away from the classroom. Given what we know from this study about how much the fifth-grade students valued the visible working relationship of their coteachers, it makes sense to keep both teachers in the classroom as much as possible.

Under the new model of student teaching, the university asks the cooperating teachers to develop a partnership with their student teacher. The student teacher and the cooperating teacher plan collaboratively and equally share responsibilities for the classroom. There is a gradual release of responsibility, but always with the presence and support of the cooperating teacher. Though it is a partnership, the cooperating teacher is still responsible for the content being taught, the implementation of instruction, and the management of the classroom.

As the findings indicate, the new structure will benefit preservice students and classroom teachers to the degree that the partnership is developed, and to the degree that they work well together. As with the intern pilot program mentioned above, there is an inherent hierarchy in the relationship between the cooperating teacher and the student teacher, therefore true parity will probably not occur. Because the regular teacher and the
preservice teacher do not share responsibilities for instruction in the classroom equally, this new model for student teaching may not be coteaching in its truest sense, but it reflects the same underlying goals and characteristics of coteaching.

The results of this study indicate that the opportunity to choose whether to participate in a coteaching delivery method and the opportunity to choose who your teaching partner will be are crucial components for success in the coteaching classroom. Due to the somewhat arbitrary way the university assigns student teachers to cooperating teachers, the possibility of a mismatch between the preservice teacher and the regular classroom teacher exists. Cooperating teachers do not select which student teacher will be placed in their classroom. Likewise, student teachers do not select who their cooperating teacher will be. There is a small element of choice in that classroom teachers do choose whether they want to be a mentor or not, and preservice students do sign up, or choose, to be student teachers. Beyond that, the vital component of choice is missing.

The results of this study confirm that coteaching works best when the two teachers to get along with each other. Because the element of choice is missing, it is possible that the teaching partners in this model may find their relationship lacking in this area. Even so, the motivation and commitment on the part of both participants may overcome this potential obstacle.

**General-Field Level**

There is increasing use of the coteaching approach in regular classrooms. As the university advocates a coteaching delivery approach in regular classrooms at both the laboratory school and in student teaching classrooms in the local area schools, more
teachers and school leaders may be influenced to adopt a coteaching approach in more regular education classrooms. As this occurs, job sharing should be considered as a possible coteaching option. As stated earlier, based on the results of the students’ experience in this classroom, the job sharing approach modeled by the teachers in this study can be considered coteaching.

As the use of various types of coteaching approaches increases, teachers and school leaders have an opportunity to seek for and listen to the voices of the learners. Future studies about the coteaching approach should always include the perspective of the learners in the coteaching classroom. Students do have a voice; they are at the center of any change that occurs in the classroom. As the ultimate consumers of the educational product, students must be considered our most important source of information about what works in schools.
REFERENCES


APPENDICES
Appendix A

Student Images
Figure A1. The full-size image I drew depicting key events from my own life.
Figure A2. Karen’s full-size drawing.
Figure A3. Maggie’s full-size drawing.
Figure A4. Penny’s full-size drawing.
Figure A5. Charlie’s full-size drawing.
Figure A6. Kyle’s full-size drawing.
Figure A7. Greta’s full-size drawing.
Appendix B

Explanation for Parents
Dear Parents of Students in Mrs. Amy and Mrs. Pat’s Fifth-grade Class,

When Mrs. Amy and Mrs. Pat approached me last spring with a desire to try a coteaching experience, I was very much in favor of the idea. Because of my own positive coteaching experience with a former student teacher, I gave them my full support and decided to make this coteaching classroom the subject of my doctoral study. The following explains a little more about the study.

Despite the vast number of changes in education in recent years, learners are usually not consulted in the change process (Rudd, 2006). If learning is to be meaningful for students, their views must be heard. Some say that education should be shaped around the needs of the learner, rather than having the learner conform to the established system. In order to make future decisions about the effectiveness of a coteaching model, it is important that we understand the students’ perceptions. Their voices should be heard. The purpose of this study is to describe the lived experiences of the learners in a fifth-grade coteaching classroom.

The results of this study will inform future decisions about the practice of coteaching at this school. Because the practice of coteaching is gaining popularity, there is increasing use of this teaching method. Other teachers at this school have expressed an interest in participating in a coteaching partnership. Before those kinds of decisions are made, it is important to have the students’ perspective. Further, the results of this study may clarify ways that the coteaching model can be strengthened or improved for greater success and benefit for both the teachers and the students. Through careful listening, observation, and interpretation of the students’ lived experience, we will have a better understanding of the effectiveness of coteaching in the classroom.

In order for me to begin collecting data for this study, I need a signed letter of permission from each parent. You should receive two copies of the permission form in the mail this week. One copy is for your records, the other copy needs to be signed and returned to me using the stamped addressed envelope included. Please feel free to call or email me with any questions or concerns you may have.

Thank you for your support,

Janet Adams—Interim Principal EBLS
Appendix C

Informed Consent for Parents
INFORMED CONSENT

What is the Lived Experience for the Learners in a Co-teaching Classroom?

Introduction Purpose Professor Scott Hunsaker and doctoral candidate Janet Adams in the Department of TEAL at Utah State University are conducting a research study to find out more about students’ perception of a co-teaching experience. As a parent/guardian, you have been asked to take part because your student is in the classroom in which they are co-teachers. There will be approximately 27 participants in the research.

Procedures If you consent to allow your child to be part of this study they may be present during multiple classroom observations during the months of April and May 2011. During the observations the researcher may note certain behaviors or comments of individual students. In addition to participation in classroom observations, your student may be invited to participate in a 30-minute personal interview with the researcher.

Risks Participation in this research involves minimal risk. There may be a sense of discomfort in having the school principal observe students in the classroom. There is also a small risk of loss of confidentiality but we will implement measures to reduce that risk as described below.

Benefits There may or may not be any direct benefit to you from these procedures. The investigator, however, may learn more about how students feel about their experience in having two teachers in their classroom. This information may help inform future decisions about continuing the practice of shared-teaching at the school. The information gained from this study may have either direct or indirect benefit to participants now or in the future.

Explanation & offer to answer question Prior to beginning this study, Dr. Scott Hunsaker or Janet Adams has explained this research study to you and answered your questions. If you have other questions or research-related problems, you may reach Dr. Hunsaker at (435) 797-0385.

Voluntary nature of participation and right to withdraw without consequence Participation in research is entirely voluntary. You may refuse to participate or withdraw at any time without consequence or loss of benefits.

Confidentiality Research records will be kept confidential, consistent with federal and state regulations. Only the investigator and the classroom teachers will have access to the data which will be kept on a secure computer in a locked room. Personal, identifiable information will be kept for one year following the study.

IRB Approval Statement The Institutional Review Board for the protection of human participants at USU has approved this research study. If you have any pertinent questions or concerns about your rights or a research-related injury, you may contact the IRB Administrator at (435) 797-0567 or email
INFORMED CONSENT

What is the Lived Experience for the Learners in a Co-teaching Classroom?

irb@usu.edu. If you have a concern or complaint about the research and you would like to contact someone other than the research team, you may contact the IRB Administrator to obtain information or to offer input.

Copy of consent You have been given two copies of this Informed Consent. Please sign both copies and retain one copy for your files.

Investigator Statement “I certify that, through this letter, the research study has been explained to the individual and an opportunity to ask questions was provided before the pre-workshop survey. Any questions that have been raised have been answered.”

Signature of PI & student or Co-PI

Scott Hunsaker, Ph.D.                      Jane Adams
Principal Investigator                    Student Researcher
435-797-3806                               435-797-3088
scott.hunsaker@usu.edu                     jane.adams@usu.edu

Signature of Parent/Guardian By signing below, I agree to participate.

Participant’s signature                      Date

Child/Youth Assent: I understand that my parent(s)/guardian is/are aware of this research study and that permission has been given for me to participate. I understand that it is up to me to participate even if my parents say yes. If I do not want to be in this study, I do not have to and no one will be upset if I don’t want to participate or if I change my mind later and want to stop. I can ask any questions that I have about this study now or later. By signing below, I agree to participate.

Name                                      Date
Appendix D

Informed Consent for Teachers
INFORMED CONSENT

What is the Lived Experience for the Learners in a Co-teaching Classroom?

Introduction Purpose Professor Scott Hunsaker and doctoral candidate Janet Adams in the Department of TEAL at Utah State University are conducting a research study to find out more about students’ perception of a co-teaching experience. You have been asked to take part because you are a co-teacher in the fifth grade classroom where this study is being conducted.

Procedures If you consent to be part of this study you may be present during multiple classroom observations during the months of April and May 2011. During the observations the researcher may note certain behaviors or comments of the co-teachers. In addition to participation in classroom observations, you will be asked to keep a reflective journal about your classroom experiences. This journal will be made available to the researcher.

Risks Participation in this research involves minimal risk. There may be a sense of discomfort in having the school principal observe your classroom. There is also a small risk of loss of confidentiality, but we will implement measures to reduce that risk as described below.

Benefits There may or may not be any direct benefit to you from these procedures. The investigator, however, may learn more about how students feel about their experience in having two teachers in their classroom. This information may help inform future decisions about continuing the practice of shared-teaching at the school. The information gained from this study may have either direct or indirect benefit to participants now or in the future.

Explanation & offer to answer questions Prior to beginning this study, Dr. Scott Hunsaker or Janet Adams has explained this research study to you and answered your questions. If you have any other questions or research-related problems, you may reach Dr. Hunsaker at (435) 797-0368.

Voluntary nature of participation and right to withdraw without consequence Participation in research is entirely voluntary. You may refuse to participate or withdraw at any time without consequence or loss of benefits.

Confidentiality Research records will be kept confidential consistent with federal and state regulations. Only the investigator and the classroom teachers will have access to the data which will be kept on a secure computer in a locked room. Personal, identifiable information will be kept for one year following the study.

IRB Approval Statement The Institutional Review Board for the protection of human participants at USU has approved this research study. If you have any pertinent questions or concerns about your rights or a research-related injury, you may contact the IRB Administrator at (435) 797-0567 or email irb@usu.edu. If you have a concern or complaint about the research and you would like to contact
INFORMED CONSENT
What is the Lived Experience for the Learners in a Co-teaching Classroom?

someone other than the research team, you may contact the IRB Administrator to obtain information or to offer input.

**Copy of consent** You have been given two copies of this Informed Consent. Please sign both copies and retain one copy for your files.

**Investigator Statement** "I certify that, through this letter, the research study has been explained to the individual and an opportunity to ask questions was provided before the pre-workshop survey. Any questions that have been raised have been answered."

**Signature of PI & student or Co-PI**

Scott Hunsaker, Ph.D.
Principal Investigator
435-797-3805
scott.hunsaker@usu.edu

Janet Adams
Student Researcher
435-797-3088
janet.adams@usu.edu

**Signature of Co-Teacher** By signing below, I agree to participate.

Participant’s signature

Date:
Appendix E

Parent Permission
PARENT PERMISSION

What is the Livid Experience for the Learners in a Co-teaching Classroom?

Introduction/Purpose Professor Scott Hussaker and doctoral candidate Janet Adams in the Department of TEAL at Utah State University are conducting a research study to find out more about students’ perception of co-teaching experience. As a parent/guardian, we are asking for your permission to allow your student to be in this research study because s/he is in the classroom in which are co-teachers. There will be approximately 27 participants in the research.

Procedures If you consent to allow your child to be part of this study they may be present during multiple classroom observations during the months of April and May 201. During the observations, the researcher may note certain behaviors or comments of individual students. In addition to participation in classroom observations, your student may be invited to participate in a 30-minute personal interview with the researcher. The interviews will be audio recorded.

Risks Participation in this research involves minimal risk. There may be a sense of discomfort in having the school principal observe students in the classroom. There is also a small risk of loss of confidentiality but we will implement measures to reduce that risk as described below under Confidentiality.

Benefits There may or may not be any direct benefit to your student from these procedures. The investigator, however, may learn more about how students feel about their experience in having two teachers in their classroom. This information may help inform future decisions about continuing the practice of shared-teaching at the school.

Explanation & offer to answer questions Prior to beginning this study, Dr. Scott Hussaker or Janet Adams has explained this research study to you and answered your questions. If you have other questions or research-related problems, you may reach Dr. Hussaker at (435) 797-0386.

Voluntary nature of participation and right to withdraw without consequence Participation in research is entirely voluntary. You may refuse to have your student participate or withdraw him/her at any time without consequence or loss of benefits. If you decide to withdraw your student please call Dr. Hussaker.

Confidentiality Research records will be kept confidential, consistent with federal and state regulations. Only the investigator and the classroom teachers will have access to the data which will be kept on a secure computer in a locked room. To protect the privacy of your student a pseudonym will be used to identify each student’s data throughout the study. Names will not be recorded. This code will be selected by the student. The code will be kept separate from the data collected and will be destroyed one year following the completion of the study along with the audiotapes.

IRB Approval Statement The Institutional Review Board for the protection of human participants at USU has approved this research study. If you have any pertinent questions or concerns about your rights or a research-related injury, you may contact the IRB Administrator at (435) 797-0567 or email irb@usu.edu. If you have a concern or complaint about the research and you would like to contact someone other than the research team, you may contact the IRB Administrator to obtain information or to offer input.
PARENT PERMISSION
What is the Lived Experience for the Learners in a Co-teaching Classroom?

Copy of Parent Permission: You have been given two copies of this Parent Permission document. Please sign both copies and keep one copy for your files.

Investigator Statement: "I certify that, through this letter, the research study has been explained to the individual and an opportunity to ask questions was provided before the Pre-workshop survey. Any questions that have been raised have been answered."

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Janet Adams
Student Researcher
435-797-3088
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Signature of Parent/Guardian: By signing below, I give permission for my child to participate.

Participant’s signature ________________________________ Date: ________________________________

Name of Child (please print) ________________________________

Child/Youth Assent: I understand that my parent(s)/guardian is/are aware of this research study and that permission has been given for me to participate. I understand that it is up to me to participate even if my parents say yes. If I do not want to be in this study, I do not have to and no one will be upset if I don’t want to participate or if I change my mind later and want to stop. I can ask any questions that I have about this study now or later. By signing below, I agree to participate.

Name ________________________________ Date: ________________________________
CURRICULUM VITAE

JANET ADAMS

435-797-2589
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Experience

Curriculum Specialist Edith Bowen Laboratory School 2009-2010
Lecturer Utah State University 2007-2010
• Department of Teacher Education and Leadership

Adm Interim
• Instructor Principal for Edith Bowen Laboratory School 2010-2011
Garfield County Schools Panguitch, UT 2003-2007
• Principal of Escalante High School
• Principal of Escalante and Boulder Elementary Schools
• District ALS Director
• District ALS Instructor

National Board of Professional Teaching Standards Certification 2003

Fourth Grade Teacher 1995-2003 Iron County Schools Cedar City, UT
• Vice Principal
• Literacy Coordinator

Adjunct Instructor USU Ephraim 1999-2007
• Art Methods for Elementary School Teachers

Education

Doctoral Candidate Utah State University 2011
• Instructional Leadership
• Learner experiences in a coteaching classroom

Southern Utah University Cedar City, UT 1994-2003
• Administrative Certificate
• Masters of Education Degree
• Bachelor of Science Degree
• ESL Endorsement
• Minor in Art and Spanish