

ALIGNING LEADERSHIP QUALITIES OF SPECIAL
EDUCATION TEACHERS WITH
TEACHER/PARAEDUCATOR
COLLABORATION

by

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Abstract

Most special education teachers work with a number of paraeducators in the classroom. Working with multiple paraeducators requires being an effective leader. If teachers are not trained to appropriately supervise paraeducators, then there is likely to be a disconnect between what should be going on in the classroom and what is actually taking place in the classroom. Teachers who are not adequately prepared to supervise paraeducators may not be able to model the best example for paraeducators or make the best use of paraeducators' time.

The purpose of this study was to align the leadership qualities mentioned by John Adair (2009) with the qualities effective special education teachers must possess in order to have effective collaboration with paraeducators.

An online survey was used to measure demographics, leadership, and collaboration variables. Individual interviews with teachers on how they learned to supervise, work with, and collaborate with paraeducators were also conducted. Results from 58 surveys and 11 individual interviews found that teachers reported a lack of preparation to work with paraeducators.

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We did it! 🎉🎓

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Background

Special education teachers service students with a variety of disabilities. In order to provide essential support for students with disabilities, special education paraeducators are often assigned to assist special education teachers. Most of the schools in America have paraeducators employed as staff responsible for assisting with delivery of instruction and support (Ashbaker & Morgan, 2012). Working in a special education classroom requires collaboration among both paraeducators and special education teachers.

Although teachers are assigned paraeducators to support and supervise, very little training, if any, is given to special education teachers. As mentioned by Carnahan, Williamson, Clarke, and Sorenson (2009), many teacher education programs focus on classroom organization and managing student behavior instead of offering guidance to prepare teachers to supervise other adults. Boudreau (2011) confirmed that current special education teacher-training curriculum seldom includes information or instruction on the appropriate ways to include and supervise paraeducators in day-to-day activities. Research also indicates that very few paraeducators receive training before they begin working in the classroom (French, 1998). Boudreau also added that both paraeducators and teachers require further training regarding the most effective ways to incorporate paraeducators into the classroom.

Paraeducators help create a more personalized learning environment and support students with their specific needs (Carter, O'Rourke, Sisco, & Pelsue, 2009). If trained appropriately, paraeducators can greatly benefit the special education classroom (French, 2001). However, as mentioned by French (2001),

few districts have employed comprehensive training for paraeducators. With appropriate supervision, paraeducators can provide students with more appropriate and effective instruction (Ghere & York-Barr, 2007).

Demographics

Special education teachers work with students as young as 3 years old, and students can continue to receive services until their 22nd birthday. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, U. S. Department of Labor, Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2016-17 Edition (2016a) there were a total of 450,700 special education teachers employed in preschool through secondary school in 2014. Additionally, in 2014, there were 1,234,100 paraeducators employed throughout the nation (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016b). The Bureau of Labor Statistics (2016a) projected employment of both special education teachers and paraeducators to grow 6% from 2014 to 2024. With the increase in hires of both special education teachers and paraeducators, it is crucial that both learn to work together effectively and efficiently.

According to the U.S. Department of Education in 2014-2015, there were a total of 6,697,938 students ages 3-21 who were served under IDEA in the United States (U. S. Department of Education, 2015). Of these students, 18.63% spent between 40-79% of their day in a general education classroom, and 13.5% spent less than 40% of their school day in a general education classroom (U. S. Department of Education, 2015). These struggling students are most likely to be the ones working closely with paraeducators (Goe & Matlach, 2014).

In her 2001 study, French surveyed 240 special education teachers to examine their responsibility in supervising paraeducators. French (2001) found that the 240 special education teachers collectively supervised more than 400 paraeducators. Of those 240 teachers, those who taught students with profound

needs supervised between two and four paraeducators. When surveying the extent of supervision of paraeducators by caseload, French found that teachers with the smallest caseloads did not supervise the highest number of paraeducators. Similarly, teachers with the largest caseload did not supervise the highest number of paraeducators. Teachers with caseloads between 21 and 40 were most likely to supervise four or more paraeducators.

Problem Statement

Working with multiple paraeducators requires being an effective leader. Teachers are not receiving the training they need in order to effectively and efficiently work along with paraeducators (French, 2001). If teachers are not trained to appropriately supervise paraeducators, then there is likely to be a disconnect between what should be going on in the classroom and what is actually taking place in the classroom. Teachers who are not adequately prepared to supervise paraeducators may not be able to model the best example for paraeducators or make the best use of paraeducators' time. "Real-life experience" is reported as the way teachers learned to work with and supervise paraeducators (French, 2001 p. 45). This is not adequate training to work with or supervise paraeducators. Because neither teachers nor paraeducators are being trained on how to work with other adults in the special education classroom, the instruction provided to students may be lacking.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to align the leadership qualities mentioned by John Adair (2009) with the qualities effective special education teachers must possess in order to have effective collaboration with paraeducators. Teachers working with paraeducators take on a leadership role in the special education

classroom. Special education teachers' responsibilities include delivering on-the-job training to paraeducators, holding and planning meetings, designing lessons, and directing and monitoring the everyday activities of paraeducators (Capizzi & Da Fonte, 2012). When surveying teachers on their primary method of learning to work with paraeducators, French (2001) found that most special education teachers reported "real-life experience" as their primary source of information to work with paraeducators (p. 45). Because teachers are not receiving the necessary training to work with and supervise paraeducators, it is essential to determine how teachers learn to work with paraeducators and how effective they feel they are at working with and supervising paraeducators.

Theoretical Framework

John Adair's (1973) action-centered leadership model and Wiggins and Damore's (2006) elements of collaboration were utilized to create the framework for this research. Adair's action-centered leadership is made up of three overlapping areas: achieving the task, building and maintaining the team, and developing individuals. The ability of a leader to manage these overlapping needs is referred to as action-centered leadership.

Adair (2009) also listed the leadership functions that are essential for team success: defining the task, planning, briefing the team, controlling what happens, evaluating results, motivating individuals, organizing people, and setting an example. These leadership functions can be applied in the special education classroom. Special education teachers are essentially the leaders of their teams when working with students and paraeducators. By including these functions in their work with paraeducators, special education teachers are more likely to be effective leaders.

Wiggins and Damore (2006) described the six elements necessary for collaboration between educators: a positive attitude, team process, professional development, leadership, resources, and benefits. Collaboration is an essential component of the special education classroom when teachers and paraeducators are required to work together to meet the needs to each individual student.

Significance of Study

The effective leadership of special education teachers affects those paraeducators working in the classroom with them. Malone and Gallagher (2010) stated that ineffective leaders are not likely to have strong collaboration in their classroom, and therefore, the best possible team is not serving the students. Collaboration is a necessary component in a special education classroom. Groups of adults working together must function as a team in order to have the best possible results (Malone & Gallagher, 2010). Malone and Gallagher added that teamwork could positively affect communication, enhance planning efforts, improve student outcomes, encourage parental involvement, and allow for more efficient problem solving and decision-making. Team members believe that teamwork can improve camaraderie, feelings of being included, expansion of personal knowledge, and the provision of personal supports (Malone & Gallagher, 2010). Similarly, French (2001) looked into the roles and responsibilities of special education teachers and paraeducators and found that many of the tasks were shared equally. This highlights the need to train teachers to work in a team approach rather than managerial type training.

Research Questions

This research studied Adair's (1973) action-centered leadership and leadership functions as related to collaboration between special education teachers

and paraeducators in special education classrooms. Some of the current literature in special education has indicated that both teachers and paraeducators lack formal training in working together (Ashbaker & Morgan, 2012; Berry, Petrin, Gravelle, & Farmer, 2011; French, 2001; Katsyiannis, Hodge, & Lanford, 2000; Welch & Tulbert, 2000). The purpose of this research was to align the leadership qualities mentioned by John Adair (2009) with the qualities effective special education teachers must possess in order to have successful collaboration with paraeducators. The following two research questions were used to guide this study:

1. How do teachers learn to supervise, collaborate, and work with paraeducators despite the fact that neither had any training on how to do it?
2. Are leadership skills of special education teachers related to the quality of collaboration with paraeducators in the classroom?

Limitations

This study focused only on special education teachers working with paraeducators. Teachers working in the special education field often supervise more than one paraeducator. Working with one or more adults in the classroom makes the team dynamic more difficult to obtain. As the number of adults in the classroom increase, the classroom dynamics begin to shift. Therefore, leadership styles may vary by teachers depending on the number of paraeducators they are assigned to supervise.

Special Education teachers working for Kern County Superintendent of Schools (KCSOS), Delano Joint Union High School District (DJUHSD), Delano Union School District (DUSD), and Fairfax School District (FSD) in Kern County, California were surveyed. The students serviced by these teachers ranged in ages from preschool (age 3) to transition programs (21 years). The number of

paraeducators assigned to work with these teachers varied but were no less than one paraeducator per teacher. Surveys were emailed to teachers in January and February of 2017. Teachers were asked to complete the survey online. The survey provided to teachers contained a section for interested teachers to provide their contact information in order to be contacted for an individual interview.

Research Design

This research employed a mixed-methods study. Teachers were sent a survey to rate themselves based on the leadership functions listed by John Adair (2009) and on the elements of collaboration by Wiggins and Damore (2006). By looking at self-ratings provided by teachers, the amount of collaboration present in their classroom can be estimated. It was hypothesized that teachers who rated themselves higher in displaying the leadership functions by Adair (2009) would have more effective collaboration in their classroom as opposed to teachers who rated themselves as not displaying the functions.

Teachers were also invited to participate in individual interviews to provide more information about collaboration in their classroom. Teachers were able to indicate their interest in participating in an individual interview on the survey portion of the study. Wiggins and Damore's (2006) elements of collaboration were used as the basis for the collaboration interview questions.

Definition of Terms

Caseload- total number of students for whom a special education teacher has some responsibility (Jackson, 2003)

Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)- the guaranteed educational rights of children with disabilities as mentioned under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 1990)

Individualized Education Program- An Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a document describing the educational program developed to address the specific needs of the child. IEP contains present level of performance, goals, benchmarks, and supports aimed at giving a child a free and appropriate public education (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 1990)

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)- a federal law aimed to safeguard the rights of students with disabilities so that they receive an education under FAPE (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 1990)

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)- the opportunity for disabled students to be education among their non-disabled peers to the greatest extend possible (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 1990)

Mild to moderate special education- educational services for students that qualify for special education services under the categories of mild to moderate disabilities. Such disabilities include specific learning disabilities, mild/moderate intellectual disabilities, autism spectrum disorders, emotional disturbance, and other health impairments (California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2010)

Moderate to severe special education- providing services to students with moderate to severe disabilities. These include more severe debilitating cases of intellectual disabilities, autism spectrum disorders, emotional disturbance, and other health impairments (California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2010).

Paraeducator- assistant to certificated staff, usually a special education teacher, who assists with providing instruction and other services to students (Geo & Matlach, 2014)

Self-efficacy- perception of competence (Bandura, 1977)

Team efficacy- how a team will work together in order to overcome obstacles
(Welch & Tulbert, 2000)

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to exam collaboration between special education teachers and paraeducators as related to the history of special education, the action-centered leadership theoretical framework by John Adair (1973, 2009), the elements of collaboration by Wiggins and Damore (2006), and the existing research. This chapter will also examine how special education teachers learn to work with paraeducators. The literature has suggested that special education teachers are often not taught leadership skills or skills in collaboration in order to effectively work with and supervise paraeducators (Berry et al., 2011). Research also has indicated that special education teachers learn how to work with paraeducators through on-the-job experiences (Drecktrah, 2001).

A majority of special education teachers work with one or more paraeducators in the classroom setting. Often times the special education teacher is responsible for supervising these paraeducators. Most paraeducators are assigned to only one classroom and complete their scheduled work hours with one teacher. Yet, special education teachers do not receive adequate training, if any, to work and collaborate with or supervise paraeducators (Giangreco, 2003). Research has indicated that paraeducators lack adequate training to work in the special education classroom (Ratcliff, Jones, Vaden, Sheen, & Hunt, 2011). This can cause concerns in the classroom. A majority of preservice programs offered at universities do not require special education teachers to take courses in leadership or in supervision of other adults (Drecktrah, 2001). Furthermore, few teachers still do not receive appropriate professional development on how to work with and supervise paraeducators (Ratcliff et al., 2011). The lack of training special

education teachers and paraeducators receive can greatly impact the dynamics of the classroom environment (Goe & Matlach, 2014).

Education for all Handicapped Children Act 1975

The Education for all Handicapped Children Act (EHA), also known as Public Law 94-142 (11/19/1975), was passed by the federal government in 1975.

The four main purposes of EHA were:

To assure that all children with disabilities have available to them...a free and appropriate public education which emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs

To assure that the rights of children with disabilities and their parents...are protected

To assure States and localities to provide for the education of all children with disabilities

To assess and assure the effectiveness of efforts to educate all children with disabilities. (Education for all Handicapped Children Act, 1975, p. 314)

There were several reauthorizations that made changes to P.L. 94-142 since it was first passed. EHA later became the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, which is more commonly referred to as IDEA (Smith, 2005).

The reauthorization of IDEA in 2004 also included a name change to the act. The word “improvement” was added, making the new title of the legislation the “Individuals with Disabilities Education and Improvement Act” (Smith, 2005). Some of the changes included in the reauthorization were the need to hire highly qualified special education teachers, changes in funding, changes in the amount of paperwork required for Individualized Education Programs (IEP), the steps for due process, policy regarding expulsion and suspension, as well as the eligibility for students classified as having learning disabilities (Smith, 2005).

No Child Left Behind Act (2001)

Another piece of legislation, Title I, defines a paraprofessional as “an employee of a LEA (local educational agency) who provides instructional support” (U.S. Department of Education, 2004, p. 1). Instructional support provided by paraeducators “must be under the direct supervision of a highly qualified teacher” (U.S. Department of Education, 2004, p. 1). Paraeducators may be responsible for providing one-on-one tutoring to students, assisting with instructional services, or assisting with classroom management (Goe & Matlach, 2014). Additionally, Title I indicates that paraeducators working in publicly funded programs must have at the very least an associate’s degree. If the paraeducator does not have such a degree, he or she must have passed a state or local district assessment that evaluates knowledge and possible ability to instruct students with reading and writing skills (U.S. Department of Education, 2004). Having highly prepared and supported staff members is essential for districts in ensuring success for all parties involved (French, 2001).

Paraeducators are typically supervised and work closely with special education and/or general education teachers as they assist the special education students they are employed to serve (Ashbaker & Morgan, 2012). Recent implementation of college and career-ready standards leaves paraeducators requiring more support from their districts or state in order to help students learn the rigorous content (Wallace, Shin, Bartholomay, & Stahl, 2001). With the appropriate training and support, paraeducators often become critical members of the school community (Goe & Matlach, 2014). Paraeducators can offer multiple services, which are benefits to students, teachers, and parents (French, 2001).

With over 1 million paraeducators employed in elementary and secondary schools (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016b), highly prepared and supported staff

members are vital in guaranteeing student success. Requirements for hiring paraeducators are extremely basic as described in NCLB (Goe & Matlach, 2014). This leaves states to their own discretion to place requirements on paraeducators (Goe & Matlach, 2014). However, if states do not establish those requirements, districts are left to develop training criteria to ensure that programs are highly defensible by developing skills in competent staff members (Goe & Matlach, 2014).

Every Student Succeeds Act (2015)

In accordance with the law, educator professional development should be provided to all school staff, including paraeducators, in order to better support school staff (American Federation of Teachers, 2016). Under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), the federally imposed highly qualified teacher requirements are removed; however, educators are still ultimately responsible for maintaining as well as complying with state certification and licensure policies (American Federation of Teachers, 2016). Under ESSA, resources will continue to be provided to states and school districts to continue professional development for teachers, paraeducators, principals, and other educators (American Federation of Teachers, 2016). ESSA will continue to require paraeducator certification in order to ensure that school districts are hiring people with educational experience (American Federation of Teachers, 2016). ESSA also supports collaboration and professional advancement of paraeducators (American Federation of Teachers, 2016). Professional advancement can include offering programs that can establish, expand, or improve pathways for paraeducators to earn a teacher certification (American Federation of Teachers, 2016).

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this research focused on John Adair's (1973) action-centered leadership model that is made up of three overlapping areas as shown in Figure 1: achieving the task, building and maintaining the team, and developing individuals. Adair's theory proposes that leadership can be taught and that it is a transferrable skill. The three components of the model overlap because a task needs to be accomplished by a team, team needs must be met or individuals will suffer, and individual needs must be met for the task to be completed. The ability to manage these overlapping needs is referred to as action-centered leadership. The function of the leader is to ensure that these three areas of need are met and kept in balance (Middlehurst, 2007). Adair (1973) added that the effectiveness of leaders can be measured by their ability to assist the team and individuals meet the three areas of need.

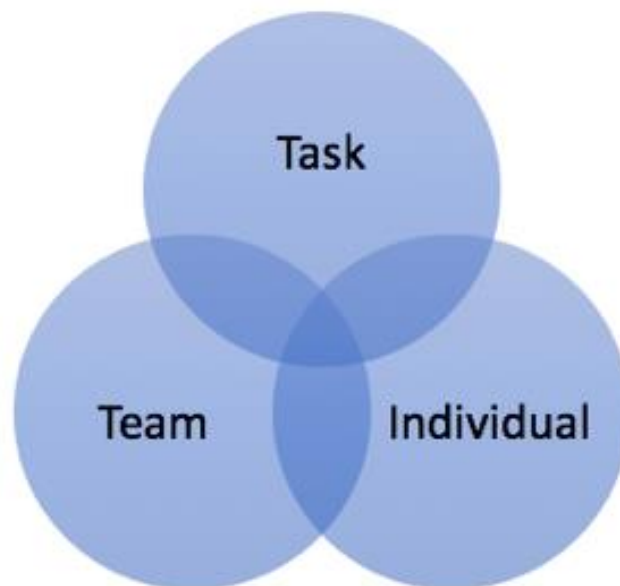


Figure 1. Adair's action-centered leadership model
Adapted from *Action-Centered Leadership* by J. Adair 1973, New York, NY: McGraw Hill, p. 10.

When working together as a team, Adair's model emphasizes that a team develops a unique personality (Braun, Avital, & Martz, 2012). The team has unique needs that need to be met in order for the team to be successful. Braun et al. added that a team cultivates team efficacy that contributes to the overall effectiveness of the action-centered leadership practice. Team efficacy is an extension of Bandura's (1977) self-efficacy theory. Self-efficacy is a perception of competence, not actual level of competence (Bandura, 1977). Efficacy expectations determine how much effort people will expend and how long they will persist in the face of obstacles and aversive experiences (Bandura, 1977). In turn, team efficacy determines how a team will work together to overcome obstacles (Welch & Tulbert, 2000).

The individual component of the model relates to the individuals' work in the team and also the benefits to the individual. One benefit is personal growth of individuals. Action-centered leadership enhances individual team member performance, collaboration, and increases individual learning (Braun et al., 2012). Finally, in order for the task to be achieved, the action-centered leader should identify a vision for the team, create a plan, set standards, and monitor and maintain overall performance of the team (Adair, 1973).

Adair (2009) listed the leadership functions that complement the model and are essential for team success: defining the task, planning, briefing, controlling, evaluating, motivating, organizing, and setting an example. All functions can be applied to the task, team, and individual. Adair (2009) provided examples for each function. Defining the task refers to taking responsibility, identifying the overall objective of the task, establishing a common purpose for the team, and clarifying individual objectives. Planning includes preparing a plan for the task, getting ideas for the team, and setting specific goals for individuals. Briefing

consists of presenting a well-defined plan of action appropriate for the task, outlining the proposed team structure, and checking people's understanding of issues. The leadership function of controlling includes making decisions based on the needs of the task, correcting team behaviors, and being assertive with individuals when necessary. Evaluating requires considering repercussions before acting and reflecting on how well the team is working. Motivating entails recognizing individual achievements, celebrating success, and communicating with the team the importance of the task. Organizing requires knowing the team's strengths and incorporating those in the team structure as well as using suitable systems to carry out the task. The final function of setting an example consists of remaining positive when working with the team, setting high standards, and treating others respectfully. These leadership functions can be applied in the special education classroom. Special education teachers are essentially the leader of their team when working with students and paraeducators. By including these functions in their work with paraeducators, special education teachers are more likely to be effective leaders.

Special Education Teachers

Roles and Responsibilities

The purpose of special education is to provide individualized instruction to meet the needs of students with disabilities. Special education teachers serve approximately 12% of students across the nation (Johnson & Semmelroth, 2013). Special education teachers can take on a variety of different roles. For example, special education teachers often work in collaboration with general education teachers in the classroom; in other instances, special education teachers might be designated to a resource room, where students are pulled out of the general

education classroom and provided with individual or small group instruction (Johnson & Semmelroth, 2013). Johnson and Semmelroth added that special education teachers may also provide instruction to students with more significant needs; this instruction typically takes place in a self-contained classroom. Another role that special education teachers may take on is a consulting role, where they provide support to teachers who include special education students learning the general curriculum in regular classrooms; in smaller districts, it is very likely that special education teachers may be responsible for multiple roles (Johnson & Semmelroth, 2013).

In regard to the roles and responsibilities of special education teachers, French (2001) wrote that teachers are responsible for delivering on-the-job training to paraeducators, which includes holding planning meetings, designing instructional plans, and directing and monitoring the day-to-day activities of paraeducators. French (2001) also added that teachers are responsible for assessing students and guiding the work of paraeducators.

Another responsibility that falls on special education teachers is building personal relationships with their students and their families. A positive, healthy, supportive relationship has been cited as one of the most effective practices to promote student well-being (Kaufman & Ring, 2011). In order to promote a positive and supportive relationship, a teacher must acknowledge students' feelings, make them feel safe in the classroom environment, and learn more about students' interests. Kaufman and Ring added that teachers can also promote this relationship by having open communication with parents. Parents should be kept involved with their child's education by receiving progress on their goals, classroom behavior, and academic progress (Kaufman & Ring, 2011).

Special education teachers are very likely to work with a number of paraeducators (French, 2001). Working with paraeducators adds to the responsibility of special education teachers (Katsyiannis et al., 2000). Special education teachers are also responsible for supervising paraeducators, and depending on the school district, may be responsible for training paraeducators in key areas such as behavior management, communication, and data collection (Carnahan et al., 2009). Carnahan et al. highlighted the need for teachers to provide formative and summative feedback to paraeducators. It is crucial for teachers to provide feedback to paraeducators on the areas they are doing well in as well as the areas that need improvement.

Teacher Supervision Responsibilities

In 2001, French surveyed 240 special education teachers regarding their supervision of paraeducators. French found that of the 240 teachers, 81 (33.8%) reported they did not supervise a paraeducator, 82 (34.2%) reported supervising one paraeducator, 52 (21.7%) reported supervising two paraeducators, 18 (7.5%) supervised three paraeducators, 3 (1.3%) supervised four paraeducators, and 4 (1.7%) supervised four or more paraeducators. French also found that most of the teachers of profound needs students supervised two to four paraeducators. Of the 159 teachers who supervised paraeducators, 140 (88.1%) reported “real-life experience” (p. 43) as the primary source of their knowledge, rather than in-service training, university-courses, or support from administrators. Therefore, teachers are learning how to supervise paraeducators as they are working with them.

Goe and Matlach (2014) have indicated that special education teachers do not believe they are as prepared as they need to be for supervising and directing the activities of paraeducators. This is most likely because they have little or no

preservice training in this area (Goe & Matlach, 2014). In order to address this need, Goe and Matlach indicated that states should work along with teacher preparation programs to modernize preservice requirements for teacher candidates in order to include instruction on supervising other adults in the classroom. In-service professional development that is offered for current special education teachers also should address supervisory practices.

French (1998) indicated that a majority of teachers entered their supervisory roles with some reluctance. Special education teachers did not feel prepared to supervise paraeducators, nor did they welcome the role and responsibility (French, 1998). In fact, French (1998) found that teachers preferred paraeducators who allowed them to avoid supervision or who were capable of operating with little supervision. Several teachers surveyed also expressed a desire for a colleague or peer relationships rather than a supervisory role. French (1998) also indicated five topics that might better prepare teachers to take on a supervisory role of paraeducators. These topics included “(a) knowledge of the legal limits of paraeducator authority, (b) liability issues regarding the delivery of IEP services, (c) skills in task delegation, (d) conflict management and negotiation, and (e) creative problem solving” (French, 1998, p. 366). French (1998) also noted that teachers should be provided with opportunities to refine their own skills when working with paraeducators and that there is also an overwhelming need for preservice preparation so that future teachers can start their jobs better prepared to supervise.

When surveying 240 teachers on formal meetings with paraeducators, French (2001) found that half (51.8%) met with paraeducators once per week for meetings that ranged from less than 15 to more than 45 minutes. In the same survey, teachers were asked if they plan alone or work with paraeducators to plan.

Roughly one-third (35%) of respondents reported that they “very often plan alone” (French, 2001, p. 45). Only 29% of teachers reported working together with paraeducators to plan for instruction. That same research also looked at different tasks to identify the responsibilities of paraeducators and teachers, or their shared responsibilities. What French (2001) found was that many of the tasks were equally shared among teachers and paraeducators. This finding highlights the need for teachers to receive more of a team approach to training rather than managerial training.

Training for Special Education Teachers

Appropriate and adequate training can provide teachers with the information and skills they need to feel confident in their positions (Berry et al., 2011). Berry et al. surveyed special education teachers in order to discover the types of professional development they felt they would benefit from and needed most. The four topics in highest demand were (a) working with paraprofessionals (22%), (b) working with parents (22%), (c) training in specific disability category (13%), and (d) including students with disabilities in general education curriculum (11%). Berry et al.’s research suggests that special education teachers who do not receive adequate training and lack experience feel overwhelmed and less effective. As a result of this, special education teachers’ level of commitment to their positions was deficient. This highlights the importance of properly training special education teachers in all areas. The same researchers also found that when special education teachers received professional development, their levels of stress were lower and their levels of competency were higher. The results also suggested that with professional development, special education teachers had higher levels of commitment to the field.

Special education teachers who work with paraeducators must be prepared to assign roles to paraeducators, direct and delegate responsibilities, and assess instructional services. Schonewise (2001) wrote that teachers are often unprepared to direct paraeducators. This lack of preparedness results in the inability to evaluate a paraeducator's performance. Because teachers are not being appropriately trained to work with paraeducators, they are unable to evaluate them fairly. Schonewise also listed the skills teachers need to work with paraeducators: delegating responsibilities, developing positive leadership skills, and defining roles and responsibilities of paraeducators (Schonewise, 2001).

Training teachers to be supervisors is essential for working with paraeducators. The unfortunate combination of lack of training for teachers to work with paraeducators and lack of training for paraeducators can negatively affect classroom functioning (Stockall, 2014). This lack of training for teachers results in teachers not having the necessary skills to provide needed training to paraeducators (Giangreco, 2003). Currently, there are very few states that require training in managing and supporting paraeducators as a teacher credential standard (Steckelberg et al., 2007). Teacher preparation programs provide limited or no training on how to work effectively with paraeducators (Wallace et al., 2001).

Another aspect of working with paraeducators that must be looked into is the area of collaboration and teamwork. Welch and Tulbert (2000) discussed the need for teacher preparatory programs to look at research in the field of collaboration and teamwork and to include them into teacher training programs. Welch and Tulbert highlighted some of the areas that should be researched in order to gain a better understanding of the teacher/paraeducator collaboration dynamic. Those areas are team teaching and IEP teams. In order to improve collaboration among classroom staff, Stockall (2014) recommended that teachers

work on improving their communication skills to more effectively work with paraeducators. Stockall also listed the essential components of communication as “listening, asking open-ended questions, asking closed questions, clarifying, paraphrasing, acknowledging, and providing reflective feedback” (p. 198). Effective communication is vital to the collaboration between teachers and paraeducators.

Ashbaker and Morgan (2012) found common themes in the literature when looking into increasing collaboration between teachers and paraeducators: clarifying roles/expectations, monitoring the support provided by paraeducators, and providing on-the-job training for paraeducators. These components are critical because it is essential for paraeducators to understand the range of their role as well as their boundaries, to receive feedback, and to continually learn from their practice (Ashbaker & Morgan, 2012).

Wallace et al. (2001) indicated that teachers are often not prepared through preservice or inservice training to work with paraeducators in a manner in which student performance will improve. In a survey conducted by Wallace et al., 96 administrators, 266 teachers, and 211 paraeducators (response rate was 30%) were surveyed in regard to the skill competency of teachers supervising paraeducators. In the survey, educational professionals were asked to determine skill areas of need when working with and supervising paraeducators. The areas that were identified as important components of working with paraeducators were “communication with paraeducators, planning and scheduling, instructional support, modeling for paraeducators, public relations, training, and management of paraeducators” (Wallace et al., 2001, p. 523). From these results, administration can work on designing training that would be beneficial to the teachers and the paraeducators they work with. At the time that Wallace et al. wrote this article,

only two states incorporated the supervision of paraeducators in their credentialing program. The Council of Chief State School Officers (2012) indicated that teacher preparation programs vary tremendously, and the readiness of candidates to enter classrooms and schools differs widely from program to program across states.

Drecktrah (2001) echoed those findings in her research. In a study conducted in 2000 in Wisconsin, a total of 212 special education teachers were surveyed. Of those, 142 (67.0%) reported that they were responsible for supervising paraeducators. One third of those teachers were also responsible for conducting evaluations. Drecktrah found that 28 (19.7%) teachers reported having received any type of university training in collaborating with paraeducators. Even fewer teachers, 19 (13.4%), indicated they had received training in supervising paraeducators, and only 13 (9.2%) received preparation on evaluating paraeducators.

Steckelberg et al. (2007) conducted a study to train teachers in working with paraeducators. They created a model to include five units of instruction: “working with paraeducators, paraeducator training, supervision of paraeducators, evaluation of paraeducators, and professional and ethical issues” (p. 52). The training model was presented online to preservice and credentialed teachers in different universities including Widner University, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, University of Nebraska Omaha, Southwest Missouri State University, Southern Illinois University, and University of Nebraska-Lincoln. This study resulted in demonstrating that delivering instruction through the online format was effective in increasing knowledge in supervising paraeducators of preservice and credentialed teachers.

Katsyiannis et al. (2000) highlighted legal issues that arose due to the placement of paraeducators in special education classrooms. In addition,

Katsyiannis et al. reported that 92% of special education teachers who completed a nationwide survey held the belief that prospective special education teachers need training and preparation to work with paraeducators.

Another study by French (1998) indicated that teachers who work in special education programs had minimal training to perform the supervisory role of paraeducators. In this study, 18 teachers were interviewed; 16 (88.9%) of the 18 special education teachers held master's degrees, but none of the teachers reported any type of training to supervise paraeducators. When asked how they had been prepared to supervise paraeducators, 14 (77.8%) reported that they had learned it "all on their own" (French, 1998, p. 365). The remaining respondents had taken some in-service courses that provided some preparation (French, 1998). How this occurs has yet to be researched.

Drecktrah (2001) also highlighted on-the-job support for teachers working with paraeducators. Drecktrah surveyed 212 special education teachers and found that only 19 (9.0%) indicated being provided with preparation by their school system in regards to working with paraeducators. Of the 212 teachers, 186 (87.7%) indicated not having received any preparation from their school system. Consequently, teachers sought their own information on working with paraeducators. More than half (112) of the teachers surveyed reported they self-educated through books, conferences, and seminars.

Findings in the literature indicate that special education teachers are not receiving the type of training they are requesting (Berry et al., 2011; French, 2001; Schonewise, 2001; Welch & Tulbert, 2000). Special education teachers feel inadequately prepared in a number of areas including working with paraeducators (French, 1998). A number of teachers report learning "on-the-job" how to work

with paraeducators (Drecktrah, 2001; French, 2001). However, any further descriptions or details of “on-the-job” training are not specified.

Paraeducators

Paraeducators’ Job Titles

Paraeducators are known by a variety of names. They are also known as paraprofessional, educational assistant, instructional assistant, therapy assistant, transition trainer, job coach, and home visitors (Giangreco, Broer, & Sutter, 2001; Katsyiannis et al., 2000). Regardless of the title that is assigned to them, they are essentially school staff who provide support to students with special needs. In the 1980s, paraeducators were the “fastest growing, yet most under recognized, underprepared and underutilized category of personnel in the service delivery system” (Katsyiannis et al., 2000, p. 297). Katsyiannis et al. also revealed that more than 270,000 of the 500,000 paraeducators employed by public schools were employed in field of special education. Katsyiannis et al. added that as the number of paraeducators grew, more and more were placed in the special education settings. In a typical urban district, approximately 80% of the paraeducators hired worked in special education settings (Katsyiannis et al., 2000). In 2014, there were nearly a million paraeducators working with special education students in elementary and secondary schools (Goe & Matlach, 2014).

Roles and Responsibilities

Paraeducators take on a variety of roles; they may work one-on-one with students, support teachers, assist in independent living skills, collect data, assist with transportation to and from school, assist with creating materials for instruction, provide personal care, provide literacy instruction, provide social skills instruction, assist with community-based instruction, and provide clerical or

noninstructional support (Capizzi & Da Fonte, 2012; Carter et al., 2009). Paraeducators once functioned largely in clerical roles; however, there has been a shift to include paraeducators in roles of instruction (French, 1998). Other roles paraeducators may be responsible for under the direction of the teacher include performing functional assessment activities, observing and documenting data on learner performance and behavior, implementing behavior management programs, instructing individual and small groups, and assisting teachers with program modifications required to meet the needs of students (Wallace et al., 2001). A 2009 study by Carter et al. found that almost half of special education paraeducator time (47%) was spent delivering instruction. These same paraeducators reported spending 19% of their time implementing behavior support plans and 17% of their time engaging in self-directed activities.

When working with students, paraeducators must be under the direct supervision of a certified teacher if they are providing services required by a student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP) (Goe & Matlach, 2014). One task of paraeducators may be to assist teachers with promoting routine in the classroom. According to the Texas Education Agency (n.d.), one way teachers can promote routines and expectations to students is to provide paraeducators with a schedule, similar to the classroom schedule, which delineates their roles and responsibilities during given times and periods (Lewis & Mackenzie, 2009; Texas Education Agency, n.d). When paraeducators are provided with a detailed schedule of expectations, they are more likely to fulfill their job duties with confidence (Ashbaker & Morgan, 2012).

Katsyiannis et al. (2000) noted that due to credentialing programs inadequately preparing teachers and lack of standards in place to assist paraeducators to work with students, the roles as well as the qualifications shifted

for paraeducators. Presently, it is also common for paraeducators to have minimal formal training to competently perform their duties. The National Clearinghouse for Professions in Special Education indicated that 70% to 90% of paraeducators take on their positions with inadequate training if any training at all (Katsyiannis et al., 2000). Katsyiannis et al. also highlighted five areas of need of paraeducator training for those who support with individuals with disabilities: “(a) assessment of program and learner needs, (b) planning programs or instruction, (c) implementation of instruction, (d) job site training and instruction, and (e) evaluation of student progress” (p. 302). Lewis and Mackenzie (2009) confirmed these areas of need for paraeducators in their research. They reinforced the idea that effective paraeducators are developed when there are well-defined roles/responsibilities, team meetings, adequate preparation time, assistance with documentation to review progress, and when a teacher is well-organized.

There has been and continues to be a concern that unprepared or untrained individuals are being hired and placed into positions of responsibility. Vasa, Steckelberg, and Ronning (1982) examined the use of paraeducators in special education in the state of Nebraska. They found that although paraeducators were widely used across the state, there was little attention being paid to the selection criteria or preparation of paraeducators. The paraeducators, special education teachers, and building administrators surveyed agreed that there was a need to provide adequate training for paraeducators. In their survey, Vasa et al. found that 60% of administrators said no formal in-service was provided to paraeducators, and 81% of the paraeducators indicated that no training was provided for newly employed paraeducators.

Another area of concern in the field of special education, as listed by Giangreco et al. (2001), is the overreliance on paraeducators in schools and

districts. Overreliance can occur when teachers become less engaged with students who are assigned to a paraeducator (Carter et al., 2009). This is most likely to occur when paraeducators are specifically assigned to work with one student. Because students with disabilities often are those with the highest needs, a paraeducator assigned to work with a specific student can become viewed as the primary instructor for serving a student with an individualized education program in place (Fisher & Pleasants, 2012; Giangreco et al., 2001; Goe & Matlach, 2014). Strategically placing paraeducators by assigning paraeducators to a teacher rather than to a student is recommended to avoid overreliance, and it is recommended to review their current roles and consider potential alternatives or placements (Goe & Matlach, 2014). In some cases, Giangreco et al. suggested that additional special education teachers should be hired and paraeducators assigned to a teacher instead of an individual student to address overreliance that might occur. Additionally, by allowing more opportunities for special education teachers and paraeducators to plan and collaborate, it gives possibility for students' needs to be met more appropriately (Giangreco et al., 2011; Giangreco, Doyle, & Sutter, 2012).

Communication between paraeducators and teachers is essential to promote an effective and stable classroom environment (Malone & Gallagher, 2010). Students can recognize when there is a lack of communication between classroom staff (Ghere & York-Barr, 2007). In order for there to be consistency for students, it is vital that all classroom staff communicate regarding classroom expectations and responsibilities (Ashbaker & Morgan, 2012). Creating a culture of respect and collaboration can help paraeducators feel valued and decrease the likelihood of turnover (Goe & Matlach, 2014). When placed in appropriate roles and provided with the necessary training and supervision, research suggests that paraeducators can positively influence student learning (Goe & Matlach, 2014). There is a lot of

confusion among paraeducators, supervising teachers, and administrators about the roles and expectations of paraeducators, which therefore leads to inadequate training or supervision (Ratcliff et al., 2011). Goe and Matlach (2014) recommended that states should provide examples of the paraeducators' expectations to assist districts in clarifying the roles of different classroom staff members. For example, there should be a clear distinction among the overall role between the paraeducator, general education teacher, special educator, administrator, and substitute teacher.

Training for Paraeducators

Ratcliff et al. (2011) suggested several reasons for the lack of quality of training and quality of paraeducators in the education field. One issue for the lack of quality of paraeducators is that the districts/agencies do not clarify the role of the paraeducator. Ratcliff et al. also suggested that there is a definite misunderstanding among many paraeducators, teachers, and administrators in regards to duties and expectations of paraeducators. Their research recommended that states clarify roles through standards and job descriptions.

Additionally, Ratcliff et al. (2011) suggested that the inadequacies of districts/agencies in providing appropriate environments for proper supervision and growth of paraeducators is yet another reason for ineffective paraeducators. Districts/agencies can set policies so that it is required that paraeducators receive “adequate supervision and actionable feedback from supervisors as well as receive the initial and ongoing professional learning to continually improve their practice” (Goe & Matlach, 2014, p. 4).

Training for paraeducators is also mentioned by Wallace et al. (2001); their research suggests that underprepared general education and special education teachers are another factor that contribute to inadequately prepared paraeducators.

As mentioned previously, under the supervision of certificated staff, paraeducators rely on the guidance of those staff members in order to properly complete their duties (Ratcliff et al., 2011). Teachers are often not suited to work closely with or supervise paraeducators. Research shows that there is much debate about whether the fault lies with the teacher preparation programs or the districts that employ the teachers (Drecktrah, 2001). Wallace et al. indicated that when training for paraeducators is offered, it is not targeted to meet their specific needs. The effectiveness of paraeducators depends greatly on their preparation and supervision (Steckelberg et al., 2007).

French (1998) interviewed paraeducators about the type of trainings they were offered. When questioned, over 75% of the respondents indicated that teaching techniques as well as behavior management were often or always addressed. A topic that was not addressed as often was clarifying roles and responsibilities between teacher and paraeducators. Training was reported as “telling” and “giving feedback” (89.9% and 83.6%, respectively), and was more lecture type rather than collaborative. French (1998) also surveyed paraeducators and asked about the training they received. Paraeducators reported that actual job experience was the best preparation they received for performing their duties. Fourteen (77.8%) of the 18 paraeducators reported having received some training on behavior management, but nine (50%) of them wanted more training. Teachers also reported that more training of paraeducators was desirable.

Carter et al. (2009) and Riggs (2001) suggested that there is a disconnect between training opportunities provided and the training needs paraeducators feel are relevant. Carter et al. surveyed 313 paraeducators and found a majority of them reported receiving on the job training as their primary source of information. However, because most special education teachers are not taught in preservice or

professional development on how to supervise adults, this on-the-job training may not be adequate for the paraeducator (Carter et al., 2009). Carter et al. also suggested the possible reasons for lack of training: (a) many paraeducators work on a part-time basis, which does not allow for their involvement in trainings; (b) there are limited training opportunities for paraeducators during the school year and attendance is not mandatory; (c) the limited trainings that are available are not perceived to be important or are not funded; and (d) participating in trainings often does not benefit individuals in regards to advancement within the agency. Carter et al. added that specific and appropriate training combined with well-defined responsibilities, ample supervision, and support from classroom teachers and administrators may increase a paraeducator's confidence in abilities, qualifications, and overall satisfaction. Additionally, Carter et al. suggested that by providing paraeducators with the appropriate support they need, they may realize increased confidence in their own aptitudes, job qualifications, and overall satisfaction. Lastly, Carter et al. suggested that colleges and universities provide appropriate and adequate pre-service training to future teachers regarding working with, training, and directing paraeducators.

After hiring paraeducators, they should be provided with an orientation of their work site and their job duties. The orientation should consist of a tour of the school/agency, introductions to key individuals, location of supplies, identification of the available technology, overview of policy/procedures, review of school rules, and an overview of IEPs in how to access, read, and interpret them (Goe & Matlach, 2014).

Training Models

One training model for special education teachers working with paraeducators is the Direct Instruction Training Model (DITM; Stockall, 2014).

This model is designed for special education teachers to use when training paraeducators to work independently with students. The DITM begins with “For the Paraprofessional,” in which the teacher models the steps for the paraeducators. This step allows for further discussion of goals and objectives between the teacher and the paraeducators and enhances the paraeducators’ understanding of the meaning behind the work. The next step in the model is “With the Paraprofessional,” which requires the teacher to demonstrate the desired behavior and allows for any questions to be asked for clarification from the paraeducator. The next step in DITM is guided practice, where the teacher works along with the paraeducator in order to guide the necessary steps of the interaction between the paraeducator and the student. The last step in the DITM model is “By the Paraprofessional,” where the teacher steps back and allows the paraeducator to provide the instruction for the student independently. Stockall referred to the direct instruction training model (DITM) as a way in which independence and confidence can be gained while systematically transferring responsibility to the learner or in this case the paraeducator.

Cremin, Thomas, and Vincett (2003) also offered three training models when working with paraeducators. The first of the three models is room management, which entails classroom staff taking on different roles; roles are dependent on the needs of the students in the class. The second model is zoning. Zoning requires classroom staff to become responsible for particular content in a certain area of the room. Each staff member is responsible for their area/content and thereby providing more opportunities and responsibility to classroom staff by the teacher. The final model is reflective teamwork. This model requires that classroom teachers work along with the paraeducators for structured planning.

One final model for working with paraeducators mentioned in the literature is Capizzi and Da Fonte's (2012) Collaborative Classroom Support Plan (CCSP). The goal of the CCSP is to promote collaboration between team members, increase teamwork, promote open communication, and sharing of information by specifying responsibilities. The four components that encompass the CCSP are orientation to the setting, professional duties and responsibilities, communication, and professional development. All components have equal value and should mirror the needs of the team.

Capizzi and Da Fonte (2012) described what an orientation should consist of. Orientation to the setting consists of familiarizing the paraeducator to the school setting and facilities. Pre-service training should be provided before the paraprofessional begins working with students in order to increase the paraeducators' confidence and abilities (Capizzi & Da Fonte, 2012). A complete classroom orientation should also be provided. During the orientation expectations and procedures should be introduced and explained. Capizzi and Da Fonte added that orientation meetings should also introduce paraeducators to key staff members, a tour of the school, location of important areas, arrival and departure times, and absence procedures.

The next step in the CCSP process is review of professional duties and responsibilities (Capizzi & Da Fonte, 2012). Clear job duties are critical for success of the paraeducator; they should be provided with detailed information of their job duties, responsibilities to the students, and responsibilities to the supervising teacher (Capizzi & Da Fonte, 2012). Clear information on tasks, roles, and responsibilities are also necessary with the job description and duties. Gerschel (2005) mentioned the importance of providing paraeducators with plans in advance and a clear structure to their scheduled days. Gerschel added that

collaboration encourages consistency and coherence in the classroom environment.

The third component of the CCSP model, as mentioned by Capizzi and Da Fonte (2012), is communication. Effective communication is vital when working as part of a team. Open lines of communication will encourage information sharing about students, improve planning and instruction, increase overall motivation for the job, and promote constructive feedback (Capizzi & Da Fonte, 2012). In addition, communication should be based on providing support and guidance to one another. Confidentiality is an especially important area to cover with paraeducators in regards to communication. Most paraeducators know very little about the guidelines of confidentiality, and it is important to explain policies and guidelines of what information they are able to share and with whom, and what information should not be shared (Capizzi & Da Fonte, 2012).

The final component of Capizzi and Da Fonte's (2012) CCSP model is professional development. Paraeducators must be trained to deal with the various types of students and situations they will encounter, and they should be trained in evidence-based instructional strategies. Additionally, paraeducator training should be relevant to their job duties and responsibilities (Capizzi & Da Fonte, 2012).

All three of the training models highlight a shared collaboration and communication component. Stockall's (2014) model is based on communication with the paraeducator and guiding the paraeducator through the process of working with students. Cremin et al. (2003) focused on reflective teamwork between the teacher and paraeducator. Cremin et al. encouraged this by working along with paraeducators for structured planning. Capizzi and Da Fonte (2012) also promoted collaboration among teachers and paraeducators in their CCSP model through orientation and professional development. Collaboration and

communication is key to promoting a successful partnership between teachers and paraeducators.

Collaboration

In their research, Welch and Tublert (2000) sought to find an operational definition for collaboration. They indicated that collaboration is an important tool for leadership and fosters a sense of community in schools. They also noted that collaboration is necessary among educators in order to meet the diverse needs of their students. Welch and Tublert cited Mostert's (1998) definition of collaboration as "a professional interaction between and among professionals, parents, and families, and students themselves to share information through collective decision making to develop effective interventions that are in the best interest of the student" (p. 360).

Collaboration is a necessary component of the special education classroom. Successful collaboration in the classroom includes a shared philosophy among the instructional team (Carnahan et al., 2009). Carnahan et al. defined a shared philosophy as "a summary of the team's values, goals, and desires for the school year" (p. 36). When a shared philosophy is present in the classroom, teachers and paraeducators are more likely to collaborate to reach their shared goals and outcomes.

Special education teachers working with paraeducators should do their best to help paraeducators feel like part of the classroom team. Ashbaker and Morgan (2012) found that a team approach was cited as a major factor in retaining paraeducators. A team approach can be built by clarifying paraeducators roles/expectations, monitoring/providing feedback, providing on-the-job training for paraeducators, and maintaining positive relationships with all team members (Ashbaker & Morgan, 2012). Ashbaker and Morgan added that paraeducators feel

valued and respected when included in the decision-making process as an instructional team.

Other researchers have highlighted the need for collaboration when working with paraeducators. Hauge and Babkie (2006) highlighted the paraeducators' point of view in working with special educators. Paraeducators stress the need for collaboration in the classroom. By having collaboration among the classroom staff, the students will be better served. It is also essential to make clear what the paraeducators' responsibilities are as well as classroom expectations. Other areas that should be clarified are expectations for paraeducators, providing feedback, and team functioning. Ghore and York-Barr (2007) also found that a collaborative and supportive environment had the potential of reducing stress in paraeducators and thereby reducing turnover.

As suggested by Capizzi and Da Fonte (2012) teachers can help paraeducators be successful by providing clear expectations and instruction on how to work with students. Teachers should not assume that paraeducators are familiar with the concepts that they want them to teach. Capizzi and Da Fonte added that if teachers want paraeducators to assist in data collection, the needs and steps for data collection should be explained beforehand versus later correcting. This will allow paraeducators to better understand what they are being asked to do. Additionally, it is also essential to provide feedback to paraeducators in regards to student progress (Capizzi & Da Fonte, 2012). Any areas of concern should be addressed immediately and privately with the paraeducator. By providing feedback to paraeducators, they feel a part of the process and are more likely to take ownership over their work with students (Capizzi & Da Fonte, 2012).

When surveyed on sit-down meetings between special education teachers and paraeducators, teachers indicated that formal, sit-down, pre-planned meetings

were the exception and not the rule (French, 1998). Teachers reported a lack of time as the reason they were not able to formally plan with paraeducators (French, 1998). Patterson (2006) surveyed paraeducators and found that they reported collaborative and working relationships as necessary for those involved in the student's education in order to meet the unique needs of the students being served.

There are a number of variables that contribute to effective teamwork between special education teachers and paraeducators. Flexibility, communication, problem solving, role clarity, monitoring and evaluation are all variables necessary for effective teamwork (Malone & Gallagher, 2010). Welch and Tulbert (2000) defined flexibility as the ability for a person or persons to compromise, accept changes, and/or accept new ideas. As mentioned by Malone and Gallagher, flexibility is essential when working in the classroom setting because students needs and emotions can vary day by day. Communication skills that are necessary for effective communication are listening, ability to effectively express ideas, and using as well as interpreting body language (Capizzi & Da Fonte, 2012). The need for problem solving is also evident in a special education classroom. In order for teachers and paraeducators to problem solve, they must encompass the ability to identify needs, brainstorm, evaluate, and adjust the plan of action (Malone & Gallagher, 2010).

Kratz et al. (2015) stated that "Team functioning, which can include a number of dimensions such as collaboration, conflict resolution, leadership, and cohesion, has been shown to affect both performance and outcomes across a broad range of settings" (p. 2). Kratz et al. noted that even though there have been studies that have examined general staff cohesion and its impact on job performance, very few have examined the staff cohesion in a special education classroom. Malone and Gallagher (2010) mentioned the surprising lack of

research in the field of teamwork in regard to paraeducators working with special education teachers.

Elements of Collaboration

Wiggins and Damore (2006) developed a model to define collaboration between general educators and special educators and described collaboration as “a system of planned cooperative activities” (p. 49). Wiggins and Damore listed six elements necessary for collaboration to be productive and effective: positive attitude, team process, professional development, leadership, resources, and benefits.

Wiggins and Damore (2006) provided additional information describing the six elements of collaboration. They noted a positive attitude involves trust, respect, and initiating communication with collaborative partners and described a team process as a necessary element of effective collaboration. Goal-driven activities and interactions contribute to the team process. Professional development allows teachers and paraeducators to form collaborative partnerships and can also be motivating and energizing. Effective leadership results in a supportive work environment and encouragement of others. An important resource for schools to allow their staff is time. Planning time and time to work collaboratively is an essential resource required for collaboration among staff. Lastly, benefits must be experienced and evident in the collaboration process (Wiggins & Damore, 2006). Figure 2 shows the model for the elements of collaboration.



Figure 2. Elements of collaboration

Adapted from “Survivors or friends? A framework for assessing effective collaboration,” by K. Wiggins and S. Damore, 2006, *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 38(5), p. 50.

Adair’s Leadership Functions and Special Education Training

Several researchers (Ashbaker & Morgan, 2012; Berry et al., 2011; Drecktrah, 2001; French, 1998; Katsyiannis et al., 2000; Schonewise, 2001; Steckelberg et al., 2007; Stockhall, 2014; Wallace et al., 2001) indicated that both teachers and paraeducators felt that they lacked training to effectively work in a special education classroom. The types of training teachers would like to receive is documented in Table 1. This table is a matrix that outlines areas teachers sought training in. These areas include communication, on the job training for paraeducators, conflict management, working with paraeducators, defining roles and responsibilities, planning, modeling for paraeducators, and supervision. Of these nine areas, the area of training that was most sought after was working with paraeducators. Under the areas of training special education teachers requested are the corresponding leadership functions highlighted by Adair (2009). The eight

functions that Adair highlighted are still relevant today and address the leadership needs special education teachers are seeking. These columns are crossed with authors who have done research in those areas.

Table 1

Training Requests by Special Education Teachers

Teachers	Communication skills	On the job training for paras	Task delegation	Conflict management	Working with paras	Defining roles and responsibilities	Planning	Modeling for paras	Supervision/evaluation of paras
<i>Adair's Functions</i>	<i>Briefing</i>	<i>Briefing Planning Organizing</i>	<i>Organizing Defining the task</i>	<i>Controlling</i>	<i>Planning Setting an example</i>	<i>Defining the task</i>	<i>Planning</i>	<i>Setting an example</i>	<i>Evaluating</i>
French, 2001		X	X		X		X	X	X
French, 1998			X	X					
Berry et al. 2011					X				
Schonewise, 2001			X			X			
Welch and Tublert, 2000					X				
Stockall, 2014	X								
Wallace et. al., 2001	X						X	X	X
Steckelberg et al., 2007		X			X				X
Katsyiannis et al., 2000					X				
Ashbaker and Morgan, 2012	X	X				X	X		
Texas Education Agency, (n.d.)	X					X	X		
Drecktrah, 2001		X		X	X				X

Several researchers in the field of paraeducator training also highlighted the training needs of paraeducators (Ashbaker & Morgan, 2012; French, 1998, 2001; Goe & Matlach, 2014; Katsyiannis et al., 2000; Ratcliff et al., 2011; Riggs, 2001;

Vasa et al., 1982). When surveyed, paraeducators requested training in seven key areas (Ashbaker & Morgan, 2012; French, 1998, 2001; Goe & Matlach, 2014; Katsyiannis et al., 2000; Ratcliff et al., 2011; Riggs, 2001; Vasa et al., 1982): assessment, planning, implementation of instruction, evaluation, roles and job descriptions, behavior management, and interpreting IEPs (see Table 2). The area of training that was found to be the most requested by paraeducators was defining roles and job descriptions, which really corresponds to the need for training (Ashbaker & Morgan, 2012; French, 1988, 2001; Goe & Matlach, 2014; Katsyiannis et al., 2000; Ratcliff et al., 2011; Riggs, 2001; Vasa et al., 1982). The areas of training paraeducators requested can also be aligned with Adair's (2009) leadership functions. The leadership functions presented by Adair (2009) align with the training needs that both special education teachers and paraeducators requested. It is evident that these leadership functions would support an effective special education teacher. The extent to which a teacher possesses and utilizes these leadership functions would likely relate to the effectiveness of his or her classroom team.

Table 2

Training Requests by Paraeducators

Paraeducators	Assessment	Planning	Implementation of instruction	Evaluation	Roles and job descriptions	Behavior management	Interpreting IEPs
<i>Adair's leadership functions</i>	<i>Evaluating</i>	<i>Planning</i>	<i>Setting an example</i>	<i>Evaluating</i>	<i>Defining the task</i>	<i>Controlling Evaluating</i>	<i>Briefing Evaluating</i>
Katsyiannis et al., 2000	X	X	X	X	X		
Vasa et al., 1982					X		
Goe, 2014					X		X
Riggs, 2001						X	
Ratcliff et al., 2011					X		
French, 2001					X	X	
French, 1998						X	
Ashbaker and Morgan, 2012		X	X		X		

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research was to align the leadership qualities mentioned by John Adair (2009) with the qualities effective special education teachers must possess in order to have effective collaboration with paraeducators. Research (Ashbaker & Morgan, 2012; Berry et al., 2011; French, 1998; Schonewise, 2001; Stockall, 2014; Wallace et al., 2001; Welch & Tubert, 2000) has documented the lack of training teachers and paraeducators receive to work together in the special education classroom. Special education teachers receive very little training, if any at all, in how to supervise, collaborate, and work with paraeducators (Drecktrah, 2001; Wallace et al., 2001). Yet teachers are expected to work with several paraeducators in the classroom and utilize them to improve the functioning of the classroom, and successful collaboration is related to leadership (Welch & Tubert, 2000). Ashbaker and Morgan (2012) as well as Ghere and York-Barr (2007) noted that teachers and paraeducators working together as a team contributed to the retention of paraeducators.

Working with several paraeducators in the special education classroom requires leadership skills on behalf of the teacher (Goe & Matlach, 2014). Special education teachers are essentially leaders of their classrooms, having to guide the work of paraeducators to best meet the needs of the students being serviced. Special education teachers are required to plan, prepare and hold meetings, delegate tasks, and make the best use of their paraeducators time (Johnson & Semmelroth, 2013). This study examined the leadership qualities of special education teachers and their self-rating of collaboration in their classroom.

John Adair's (2009) action-centered leadership model and Wiggins and Damore's (2006) elements of collaboration were used as the basis for this study. The leadership functions mentioned by Adair were used for the quantitative portion of this research. As mentioned by Wiggins and Damore (2006) "ever-growing demands on classroom teachers have made collaboration with educators a must" (p. 49). Collaboration among special education teachers and paraeducators based on the elements of collaboration from Wiggins and Damore (2006) were also analyzed in this research.

Research Design

This research employed a mixed-methods study using sequential explanatory design. The sequential explanatory design consisted of a four-section survey in the first portion of data collection and an individual interview for the second portion. A sequential exploratory design was used for this research because it "explains and interprets quantitative results by collecting and analyzing follow up qualitative data" (Creswell, 2009, p. 211). As noted in Figure 3, sequential explanatory design allowed for quantitative data collection and data analysis prior to the qualitative data collection and analysis, followed by the interpretation of the entire analysis.

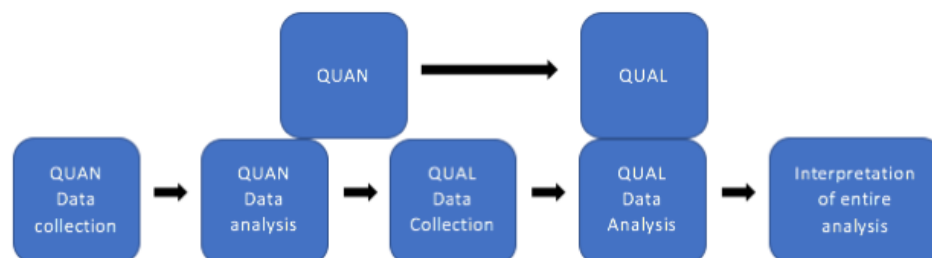


Figure 3. Diagram of sequential explanatory research design

Adapted from Research design: *Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*, by J. W. Creswell, 2009, Los Angeles, CA: Sage. p. 209.

Quantitative

An online survey measuring demographics, leadership and collaboration variables was selected as the best tool for this research because it allowed for simple directions, a clean layout, and a drop down menu in order to be as easy as possible for the participant to complete (Rubin & Babbie, 2016). The survey instruments utilized for this survey were adapted from John Adair's (2009) action-centered leadership model and from Wiggins and Damore's (2006) elements of collaboration.

The survey consisted of four sections. Demographic questions were asked in the first section of the survey. The second portion of the survey focused on eight leadership functions. The third section focused on the six elements of collaboration. The final section of the survey allowed interested participants to provide their name, phone number, and email to be contacted for an individual interview. It was expected that the online survey took no more than 10 minutes to complete.

Qualitative

Qualitative methods were used in order to learn more about collaboration and training to supervise among special education teachers and paraeducators in the special education classroom. The elements of collaboration by Wiggins and Damore (2006) were used as the basis for the qualitative portion of this research. Wiggins and Damore focused on the following six areas of collaboration: positive attitude, team process, professional development, leadership, resources, and benefits.

Because each teacher has different experiences when working with paraeducators, it was important that teachers be interviewed individually, in order to best understand their personal experiences. Each of the interview questions was

based on collaboration, leadership and on teachers' professional training in the area of supervising paraeducators. Individual interviews lasted between 5-30 minutes.

Research Questions

The following two research questions were used to guide this study:

1. How do teachers learn to supervise, collaborate, and work with paraeducators despite the fact that neither had any training on how to do it?
2. Are leadership skills of special education teachers related to the quality of collaboration with paraeducators in the classroom?

Teachers were asked to rate the extent to which they engage in Adair's leadership functions: defining the task, planning, briefing, controlling, evaluating, motivating, organizing, and setting an example in the special education classroom. Teachers were asked to rate themselves on the leadership functions in relation to the task, team, and individual. For example, teachers would rate themselves on planning for an assigned task, a team task, and an individual task. Teachers were also asked to rate the effectiveness of collaboration in their classroom based on the six elements of collaboration: positive attitude, team process, professional development, leadership, resources, and benefits. It was expected that teachers who more frequently engaged in leadership functions and who rated themselves higher in the leadership functions would also rate themselves higher in the collaboration aspect.

Tables 1 and 2 in chapter 2 indicate that the leadership functions outlined by Adair align with the same areas that teachers requested training in. Special education teachers and paraeducators also requested similar training areas (Ashbaker & Morgan, 2012; French, 1988, 2001; Goe & Matlach, 2014;

Katsyiannis et al., 2000; Ratcliff et al., 2011; Riggs, 2001; Vasa et al., 1982).

Teachers were asked how they learned to supervise, work with, and collaborate with paraeducators if they did not receive any, or very little, training to do so.

Participants

Quantitative Participants

Participants invited for this research were special education teachers employed by the following districts: Kern County Superintendent of Schools (KCSOS), Delano Joint Union High School District (DJUHSD), Delano Union School District (DUSD) and Fairfax School District (FSD). Each district provided their approval to participate in the research prior to any data being gathered. Table 3 indicates the number of special education teachers, both mild/moderate and moderate/severe, for the participating districts that were invited to participate in the survey.

Table 3

Summary of Special Education Teachers per Participating District

District	Mild/Moderate	Moderate/Severe	Total
District 1	15	7	22
District 2	11	2	13
District 3	0	92	92
District 4	30	7	37
Total	56	108	164

Qualitative Participants

Moderate/severe special education teachers working with three or more paraeducators were the ideal participants for the individual interviews. Both mild/moderate and moderate/severe teachers work with paraeducators; however, moderate/severe teachers typically work with more than one paraeducator adding to the need for collaboration in the classroom (French, 2001). Teachers working

with students with the most intense needs report collaboration with and supervision of paraeducators as a challenging aspect of the classroom (Carnahan et al., 2009).

Special education teachers working for KCSOS, DJUHSD, DUSD, and FSD were asked if interested in a follow up interview on collaboration in the classroom. Teachers interested in participating in the individual interview were contacted. Only moderate/severe special education teachers were interviewed for this study. Attempts to select teachers all along the range of teacher experience were made. Table 4 illustrates the number of moderate/severe special education teachers and paraeducators of the participating districts and schools invited to participate in the individual interview.

Table 4

Summary of Moderate/Severe Special Education Teachers and Paraeducators per Participating School

District/School	Number of teachers	Number of paraeducators
District 1, School A	18	60
District 1, School B	1	3
District 1, School C	2	2
District 1, School D	1	3
District 1, School E	6	18
District 1, School F	1	4
District 1, School G	1	3
District 1, School H	3	10
District 1, School I	1	3
District 1, School J	3	6
District 1, School K	1	2
District 2, School A	4	12
District 2, School B	4	12
District 3, School A	2	8
District 4, School A	2	8
District 4, School B	2	9
District 4, School C	1	5
District 4, School D	1	4
District 4, School E	1	5
TOTAL	55	177

Instruments

This research consisted of a quantitative and qualitative portion. The quantitative portion of this research was an online survey. The survey measured the extent to which special education teachers display leadership functions in the special education classroom. Teachers were given an 11-point rating scale (never, very rarely, occasionally, as often as not, mostly, almost always, always) to rate their extent of engaging in the leadership functions with paraeducators. Teachers were also asked to participate in individual interviews about collaboration with paraeducators in the special education classroom. These instruments were not protected by copyright, as they are published tools of support.

Quantitative

The quantitative portion of this research consisted of a four-section survey measuring leadership and collaboration in the special education classroom. The first portion of the survey was composed of seven questions used to gather demographic data about the participant. Demographic data collected were gender, the number of paraeducators the teacher works with, grades taught, and number of years teaching.

The second portion of the survey measured leadership functions as listed in John Adair's (2009) action-centered leadership model and the elements of collaboration by Wiggins and Damore (2006). Wiggins and Damore originally applied the elements of collaboration to collaboration among special education and general education teachers. For the purpose of this research, those elements have been applied to collaboration between special education teachers and paraeducators. Teachers were asked to rate their role as a leader and collaboration in the classroom on a scale from 0-10. The rating scale was as follows:

Rating scale:

0 never

1 very rarely

2

3 occasionally

4

5 as often as not

6

7 mostly

8

9 almost always

10 always

The fourth portion of the survey allowed interested teachers to provide their contact information in order to be contacted for an individual interview. Interested teachers were asked to provide their name, phone number, and email address in order to schedule an interview at a time most convenient for the participant. It was expected that the survey portion of the research would take no more than 10 minutes.

A team of special education teachers who work with paraeducators were used to pilot the survey. The team provided feedback to the researcher in order to check content validity of the survey questions. Minor changes were made to the survey as needed in order to increase the content validity of the survey (Carmines & Zeller, 1979).

Qualitative

Individual interviews with moderate/severe special education teachers measured special education collaboration with paraeducators. Individual

interviews sought to learn more about collaboration in the special education classroom and how teachers learned to work with paraeducators. As mentioned by Creswell and Miller (2000) qualitative research allows the researchers to build on “views of people” rather than scores or instruments (p. 125).

Triangulation was used as a validity procedure for this research. Creswell and Miller (2000) described triangulation as a “validity procedure where researchers search for convergence among multiple and different sources of information to form themes or categories in a study” (p. 126). Additionally, Wolcott (1990) added the importance of listening rather than talking during interviews, taking notes, and making sure notes are detailed and complete. These points also helped the researcher gain validity. Reliability for qualitative data can be ensured by maintaining quality in recording and appropriate documenting of information (Flick, 2006). The following interview protocol questions were utilized:

1. How many paraeducators do you work with?
2. Describe your experiences working with paraeducators?
3. What are your supervising duties?
4. Tell me how you manage or direct paraeducators.
5. How did you learn to manage or direct paraeducators?
6. What kind of training did you receive?
7. What kind of training would you like to receive? Was it enough?
8. Describe a situation when you had a difficult time managing paraeducators? How did you handle that?
9. What do you consider successful collaboration in the special education classroom?
10. What would make collaboration with paraeducators more effective?

11. How does a teacher accomplish successful collaboration?

12. Thank you, is there anything else you would like to share?

Data Collection

Data were collected through surveys and individual interviews with teachers. Special education directors were sent surveys electronically and forwarded surveys to mild/moderate and moderate/severe special education teachers working for the participating districts. Teachers participating in the survey were asked if they were willing to participate in an individual interview. Teachers were contacted to schedule a date and time for individual interviews that was most convenient for them.

Quantitative

The quantitative portion of this research consisted of surveys being sent out to special education teachers employed by KCSOS, DJUHSD, DUSD, and FSD. Special education directors were contacted and provided with information on the research. The survey link was sent to special education directors and forwarded to both mild/moderate and moderate/severe special education teachers. Teachers received the survey via email and were asked to participate in the study. Special education directors were asked to send out the surveys an additional time in order to increase number of participants. Qualtrics was used for the surveys and they were sent out via email and completed electronically. All information was stored on a password-enabled computer that only the researcher had access to.

Qualitative

The qualitative portion of this research included individual teacher interviews with moderate/severe special education teachers working for KCSOS,

DJUHSD, and DUSD. Special education teachers working with three or more paraeducators on a daily basis were the ideal sample for this research.

Electronic surveys included space for interested teachers to indicate their interest in participating in an individual interview. Teachers interested in participating in an interview were contacted via email to set up a time and location most convenient for an interview. The researcher gained permission from participants to record interviews. Interviews took place in a private place where they were recorded, as suggested by Onwuegbuzie, Leech, and Collins (2010). Participants were presented with informed consent prior to the interview and were asked to sign consent. Participants were reminded of the purpose of the study before the interview began. Individual interviews consisted of 12 questions.

Interviews were recorded as to not rely on the researcher's memory, and notes were taken during the interviews (McNamara, n.d.). Participants were thanked for their participation and were reminded that their names would not be listed in the research. All data was stored on a password-enabled laptop that only the researcher had access to. It was expected that 20% of participants (24) would be interested in an individual interview.

A total of 11 participants were selected to be interviewed. Participants were selected based on the age/grade area they teach and the district in which they work. The ideal participants for the individual interviews were three teachers from each age group preschool, elementary, middle school, and high school. Table 5 indicates the number of participants per district.

Participants were encouraged to provide thick and rich descriptions of their experiences. Thick descriptions consist of deep, dense, detailed accounts (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Thick descriptions allow for the readers to feel they

Table 5

Summary of Qualitative Participants per District and Grade Taught

Grade Level	District 1	District 2	District 3	District 4
High School	3			
Middle School			1	1
Elementary			2	1
Preschool			1	2
TOTAL	3	0	4	4

have experienced or could have experienced the events described in the study. Expansive and descriptive descriptions also provide credibility to the research. Participants were made to feel comfortable with the researcher in order to share both their good and bad experiences. Probes were also included in individual interviews in order to gain as much information as possible from the participant.

Researcher's Perspective

The researcher has worked in the field of special education for 9 years. The researcher has had the experience of working as a paraeducator and as a special education teacher. The researcher began working in special education as a paraeducator in a preschool moderate/severe special education class. As the researcher worked as a part time paraeducator, she continued her studies in education to become a moderate/severe special education teacher. In 2012, the researcher began teaching a moderate/severe special education class for the same district she worked for as a paraeducator. When the researcher began teaching special education, eight different paraeducators were assigned to her classroom. The researcher did not receive any formal preservice or inservice training to work

with paraeducators. The researcher believes that collaboration with paraeducators is an important component of special education that is not being addressed as it should be.

Data Analysis

Quantitative

Data for leadership subscales, collaboration and demographic information were collected. Multiple linear regression analysis was used to predict collaboration from teacher leadership skills. The independent variables in this research were the eight leadership functions. The dependent variable in this research was collaboration in the special education classroom. Means and standard deviations for all variables were calculated along with Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients. Full model and tests for each leadership subscale was run using SPSS. The .05 level of significance was used. This research analyzed if leadership skills lead to better collaboration in the special education classroom.

Qualitative

Creswell (2007) suggested that data analysis begin with preparing and organizing the data from the individual interviews for analysis. Interviews were transcribed using a highly trained and accurate online transcription service. Once transcriptions were received they were read in their entirety to better understand them as a whole before breaking them into parts (Creswell, 2007). Interpretations were then made from the interview data. Interpretation occurred as the researcher took a step back and looked at the larger picture of the data.

Larger thoughts and initial categories were formed from the transcription data. The researcher then compiled the data into codes or themes and subthemes. Codes and themes are made up of "consistent phrases, expressions, or ideas that

were common among research participants” (Turner, 2010, p. 759). Subthemes also emerged. Creswell (2007) described subthemes as the children and grandchildren of the themes. Once the data were interpreted and coded, they were presented in text form.

Delimitations

This research was limited to special education teachers in Kern County. Participants of the survey were special education teachers working for Kern County Superintendent of Schools, Delano Joint Union High School District, Delano Union Elementary School District, and Fairfax School District. Participants of the individual interview were moderate/severe special education teachers working with one or more paraeducators daily.

Limitations

One of the limitations of this study was the amount of time the teacher had been teaching. Teachers who were newer to the field of special education may have been able to provide more accurate information on the struggles of first working with paraeducators. Veteran teachers may have been working with paraeducators for so long that they may not recall the obstacles of first working with paraeducators. To alleviate this problem, teachers with varying amounts of experience were selected to be interviewed.

Summary

This chapter explained the format of the methodology for this research. The purpose of the study was explained as well as the quantitative and qualitative portions of the research design, research questions, participants/sample, research instruments, data collection, and data analysis. Delimitations and limitations were explained in this chapter.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

Introduction

This mixed-methods study aligned the leadership abilities of special education teachers and their collaboration with paraeducators in the classroom. John Adair's (2009) action-centered leadership functions were utilized for teachers to rate their leadership skills when working with paraeducators. Teachers also rated their collaboration in the classroom working with paraeducators based on the elements of collaboration by Wiggins and Damore (2006). Effective collaboration in the classroom can enhance communication, improve student outcomes, and improve planning efforts (Malone & Gallagher, 2010).

Research Questions

The following two research questions were used as a guide for this study:

1. How do teachers learn to supervise, collaborate, and work with paraeducators despite the fact that neither had any training on how to do it?
2. Are leadership skills of special education teachers related to the quality of collaboration with paraeducators in the classroom?

Instrumentation

Quantitative Survey

The electronic survey measuring leadership skills and collaboration uploaded to Qualtrics consisted of four sections. The first section of the survey asked about demographic information of the special education teachers such as gender, area taught, years teaching special education, and the number of paraeducators worked with daily basis. The second portion of the survey focused

on leadership skills using the leadership functions listed by John Adair (2009) that are essential for team success. Those functions include defining the task, planning, briefing the team, controlling what happens, evaluating results, motivating individuals, organizing people, and setting an example.

The third portion of the survey asked teachers to rate their collaboration based on the elements of collaboration listed by Wiggins and Damore (2006). The six elements listed as necessary for collaboration between educators include a positive attitude, team process, professional development, leadership, resources, and benefits (Wiggins & Damore, 2006). The final portion of the survey asked moderate/severe teachers to provide their name, phone number, and email addresses if they were willing to participate in an individual teacher interview on collaboration with paraeducators.

Qualitative Interviews

A total of 11 interviews were scheduled with moderate/severe special education teachers. Interviews took place in a natural setting, each teacher's classroom. The researcher reviewed the purpose of the study and encouraged participants to share as much information as they felt comfortable sharing about their experiences. Teachers were very willing to share both their positive and negative experiences working with paraeducators and collaboration in the classroom.

Quantitative Participants

The demographic data on the quantitative participants indicated that 60 teachers began the online survey, two surveys had missing information, and 56 teachers completed the survey to its entirety. Table 6 represents information on the teachers who completed the survey, teaching area, number of paraeducators

teacher's work with, and teachers' gender. A total of 24 (41.4%) mild/moderate special education teachers and 32 (55.2%) moderate/severe special education teachers completed the survey. A total of 55 (94.8%) teachers reported yes to working with paraeducators daily. Thirteen (22.4%) of the respondents were male, 43 (74.1%) of the respondents were female. Table 7 lists the frequencies and percentages of the grade levels taught. Some teachers may teach multiple grade levels. Table 8 lists the means, standard deviations, and sample sizes for the number of paraeducators teacher's work with and number of years teaching special education.

Table 6

Frequencies and Percentages of Demographic Variables

	Mild/moderate		Mod/severe		Missing	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Teaching Area	24	41.4	32	55.2	2	3.4
	Yes		No		Missing	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Work with PE daily	55	94.8	1	1.7	2	3.4
	Male		Female		Missing	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Gender	13	22.4	43	74.1	2	3.4

Table 7

Frequencies and Percentages of Grade Levels Taught

Grade	Yes		No	
	N	%	N	%
Pre-K	6	10.3	52	89.7
K	3	5.2	55	94.8
1	16	27.6	42	72.4
2	18	31.0	40	69.0
3	17	29.3	41	70.7
4	17	29.3	41	70.7
5	21	36.2	37	63.8
6	23	39.7	35	60.3
7	20	34.5	38	65.5
8	10	17.2	48	82.8
HS	12	20.7	46	79.3
Transition	10	17.2	48	82.8

Table 8

Mean, Standard Deviation, and Sample Size for Number of Paraeducators working with and Years Teaching Special Education

	Mean	SD	N
Number of paraeducators working with	3.43	2.30	56
Years teaching special education	7.25	5.26	56

Quantitative Results

Descriptive Statistics

Tables 9 and 10 present the mean and standard deviation for the subscales of the independent variable of Adair's leadership functions and the subscales of the dependent variables of elements of collaboration.

Table 9

Mean and Standard Deviation for Independent Variables Using Adair's Leadership Functions

Leadership Function	Mean	SD
Defining the Task	5.89	.78
Planning	6.13	.76
Briefing	5.82	.93
Organizing	6.04	.88
Evaluating	6.04	.85
Controlling	6.02	.90
Motivating	6.25	.77

Table 10

Mean and Standard Deviation for Dependent Variables using Elements of Collaboration

Elements of Collaboration	Mean	SD
Positive Attitude	6.46	.66
Team Process	6.23	.90
Professional Development	5.84	1.06
Leadership	5.96	.99
Resources	6.04	.93
Benefits	5.70	1.17

Correlation coefficients among the dependent variables using the elements of collaboration are presented in Table 12. Correlations between dependent variables ranged from a low or weak correlation between team process and resources ($r = .16, p = .23$), which is the only non-significant correlation, to a strong correlation between professional development and benefits ($r = .65, p = <.001$). Several coefficients between variables showed a positive moderate correlation, those were team process and positive attitude ($r = .52, p = <.001$), team process and professional development ($r = .54, p = <.001$), professional development and leadership ($r = .53, p = .001$), and leadership and resources ($r = .55, p = <.001$). A total of three variables indicated a strong correlation, those variables were benefits and professional development ($r = .65, p = <.001$), benefits and leadership ($r = .53, p = <.001$), and benefits and resources ($r = .64, p = <.001$).

Table 12

Correlation Coefficients among Dependent Variables using Elements of Collaboration

		1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Positive Attitude	<i>r</i>	1	.52	.40	.30	.45	.33
	<i>p</i>	.	<.001	.005	.02	.001	.01
2. Team Process	<i>r</i>		1	.54	.42	.16	.26
	<i>p</i>		.	<.001	.001	.23	.05
3. Professional Development	<i>r</i>			1	.53	.49	.65
	<i>p</i>			.	<.001	<.001	<.001
4. Leadership	<i>r</i>				1	.55	.63
	<i>p</i>				.	<.001	<.001
5. Resources	<i>r</i>					1	.64
	<i>p</i>					.	<.001
6. Benefits	<i>r</i>						1
	<i>p</i>						.

Table 13 presents the correlation coefficients between independent variables using Adair's leadership functions and dependent variables using elements of collaboration. All correlations between independent and dependent variables are positive and range from .23 to .57. There was a total of 4 weak correlations found between team process and motivating ($r = .23, p = .09$), resources and controlling ($r = .26, p = .05$), positive attitude and controlling ($r = .29, p = .03$), and resources and setting an example ($r = .29, p = .03$). All other correlations are positive and indicated a moderate correlation, ranging from .31 to .57.

Table 13

Correlation Coefficient between Independent Variables using Adair's Leadership Functions and Dependent Variables using Elements of Collaboration

IV/DV		Positive Attitude	Team Process	Professional Development	Leadership	Resources	Benefits
Defining Task	<i>r</i>	.49	.48	.42	.51	.36	.44
	<i>p</i>	<.001	<.001	.001	<.001	.007	.001
Planning	<i>r</i>	.39	.33	.34	.32	.50	.35
	<i>p</i>	.003	.01	.01	.01	<.001	.009
Briefing	<i>r</i>	.31	.57	.50	.54	.36	.43
	<i>p</i>	.01	<.001	<.001	<.001	.006	.001
Organizing	<i>r</i>	.35	.36	.42	.55	.42	.47
	<i>p</i>	.008	.006	.001	<.001	.001	<.001
Evaluating	<i>r</i>	.42	.47	.41	.35	.34	.41
	<i>p</i>	.001	<.001	.002	.009	.01	.002
Controlling	<i>r</i>	.29	.53	.50	.45	.26	.40
	<i>p</i>	.03	<.001	<.001	.001	.05	.002
Motivating	<i>r</i>	.38	.23	.45	.44	.52	.47
	<i>p</i>	.004	.09	<.001	.001	<.001	<.001
Setting an Example	<i>r</i>	.45	.38	.45	.41	.29	.41
	<i>p</i>	<.001	.004	.001	.001	.03	.002

Multiple Linear Regression Results

A regression analysis was run for each of the six elements of collaboration which served as the dependent variables. The regression model to predict positive attitude is presented below.

$$\text{PosAtt} = 3.086 + .329*\text{DefTask} + .074*\text{Plan} - .093*\text{Brief} - .001*\text{Org} + .174*\text{Eval} - .126*\text{Cntrl} + .082*\text{Mot} + .117*\text{SetEx}$$

The overall model predicting a positive attitude from defining the task, planning, briefing, organizing, evaluating, controlling, motivating, and setting an example is significant ($F(8, 47) = 2.767, p = .014, \text{Adj. } r^2 = .205$). Table 14 displays the beta, t-value, and probability of coefficients using the dependent variable positive attitude. However, none of the independent variables were significant predictors.

The regression model to predict team process is presented below.

$$\text{Team} = 2.093 - .109*\text{DefTask} + .075*\text{Plan} + .452*\text{Brief} + .009*\text{Org} - .042*\text{Eval} + .373*\text{Cntrl} - .452*\text{Mot} + .398*\text{SetEx}$$

The overall model predicting team process from defining the task, planning, briefing, organizing, evaluating, controlling, motivating, and setting an example is significant ($F(8, 47) = 5.087, p < .001, \text{Adj. } r^2 = .373$). Table 15 displays the beta, t-value, and probability of coefficients using the dependent variable team process. Briefing ($\beta = .473, t = 2.907, p = .006$), controlling ($\beta = .378, t = 2.306, p = .026$), and motivating ($\beta = -.388, t = -2.154, p = .036$) were significant predictors of a team process.

The regression model to predict professional development is presented below.

$$\text{PD} = .376 - .155*\text{DefTask} - .037*\text{Plan} + .398*\text{Brief} - .016*\text{Org} - .095*\text{Eval} + .340*\text{Cntrl} + .123*\text{Mot} + .345*\text{SetEx}$$

Table 14

Dependent Variable: Positive Attitude

Variable	β	t	p
Defining the Task	.89	1.93	.06
Planning	.09	.51	.61
Briefing	-.13	-.72	.48
Organizing	-.00	-.00	.99
Evaluating	.23	1.16	.25
Controlling	-.17	-.94	.35
Motivating	.10	.47	.64
Setting an Example	.13	.65	.52

Table 15

Dependent Variable: Team Process

Variable	β	t	p
Defining the Task	-.096	-.53	.60
Planning	.06	.43	.67
Briefing	.47	2.90	.01
Organizing	.01	.05	.96
Evaluating	-.04	-.23	.81
Controlling	.38	2.31	.03
Motivating	-.39	-2.15	.04
Setting an Example	.32	1.85	.07

The overall model predicting professional development from defining the task, planning, briefing, organizing, evaluating, controlling, motivating, and setting an example was significant ($F(8, 47) = 3.503, p = .003, Adj. r^2 = .267$). Table 16 displays the beta, t-value, and probability of coefficients using the dependent variable professional development. Briefing ($\beta = .352, t = 2.001, p = .051$) was an almost significant predictor of professional development.

The regression model to predict leadership is presented below.

$$\text{Lead} = .989 + .170*\text{DefTask} - .083*\text{Plan} + .341*\text{Brief} + .348*\text{Org} - .212*\text{Eval} + .130*\text{Cntrl} + .064*\text{Mot} + .079*\text{SetEx}.$$

The overall model predicting leadership from defining the task, planning, briefing, organizing, evaluating, controlling, motivating, and setting an example was significant ($F(8, 47) = 4.386, p = .001, Adj. r^2 = .330$). Table 17 displays the beta, t-value, and probability of coefficients using the dependent variable leadership. None of the independent variables were significant, but briefing ($\beta = .322, t = 1.915, p = .062$) and organizing ($\beta = .307, t = 1.849, p = .071$) approached significance.

The regression model to resources is presented below.

$$\text{Res} = 1.544 + .206*\text{DefTask} + .313*\text{Plan} + .008*\text{Brief} + .181*\text{Org} + .113*\text{Eval} - .233*\text{Cntrl} + .551*\text{Mot} - .404*\text{SetEx}.$$

The overall model predicting resources from defining the task, planning, briefing, organizing, evaluating, controlling, motivating, and setting an example was not significant ($F(8, 47) = 3.721, p = .002, Adj. r^2 = .284$). Table 18 displays the beta, t-value, and probability of coefficients using the dependent variable resources. Motivating ($\beta = .453, t = 2.352, p = .023$) was a significant predictor of resources.

The regression model to predict benefits is presented below.

$$\text{Bnfts} = -.176 + .196*\text{DefTask} - .071*\text{Plan} + .149*\text{Brief} + .219*\text{Org} + .127*\text{Eval} + .008*\text{Cntrl} + .335*\text{Mot} + .007*\text{SetEx}.$$

The overall model predicting benefits from defining the task, planning, briefing, organizing, evaluating, controlling, motivating, and setting an example was significant ($F(8, 47) = 2.696, p = .016, \text{Adj. } r^2 = .198$). Table 19 displays the beta, t-value, and probability of coefficients using the dependent variable benefits. None of the independent variables were a significant predictor.

Table 16

Dependent Variable: Professional Development

Variable	β	t	p
Defining the Task	-.11	-.60	.56
Planning	-.03	-.17	.87
Briefing	.35	2.00	.05
Organizing	-.01	-.08	.94
Evaluating	-.08	-.41	.68
Controlling	.29	1.64	.11
Motivating	.09	.46	.65
Setting an Example	.24	1.25	.22

Table 17

Dependent Variable: Leadership

Variable	β	t	p
Defining the Task	.13	.73	.47
Planning	-.06	-.41	.68
Briefing	.32	1.92	.06
Organizing	.31	1.85	.07
Evaluating	-.18	-1.03	.31
Controlling	.12	.70	.49
Motivating	.05	.27	.79
Setting an Example	.06	.32	.75

Table 18

Dependent Variable: Resources

Variable	β	t	p
Defining the Task	.17	.90	.37
Planning	.26	1.61	.12
Briefing	.01	.05	.96
Organizing	.17	.99	.33
Evaluating	.10	.56	.58
Controlling	-.23	-1.29	.20
Motivating	.45	2.35	.02
Setting an Example	-.31	-1.68	.10

Table 19

Dependent Variable: Benefits

Variable	β	t	p
Defining the Task	.13	.645	.52
Planning	-.05	-.27	.79
Briefing	.12	.65	.52
Organizing	.16	.90	.37
Evaluating	.09	.48	.64
Controlling	.01	.04	.97
Motivating	.22	1.08	.29
Setting an Example	.00	.02	.98

Qualitative Participants

Eleven special education teachers were interviewed. Table 20 lists the demographics of teachers interviewed, including gender, grade levels taught, teaching experience, and the number of paraeducators working with. When asked how many paraeducators teachers worked with daily, teachers reported working with between one and four paraeducators. One teacher (9%) worked with one paraeducator, one teacher (9%) worked with two paraeducators, three teachers

(27%) worked with three paraeducators, and six teachers (55%) worked with four paraeducators. Amount of years teaching special education ranged from 1 to 18 years with a mean of 8.45 and a standard deviation of 6.15.

Table 20

Demographics of Teachers Interviewed

Name	Gender	Grades Taught	Years Teaching Special Education	Number of Paraeducators working with
Caroline	Female	Pre-K	8	3
Emma	Female	Pre-K	6	4
Gretchen	Female	Pre-K	11	4
Cady	Female	K-2	1	4
Kevin	Male	K-3	1	4
Janis	Female	2-4	18	2
Regina	Female	3-8	8	4
Karen	Female	6-8	14	4
Shane	Male	High School	3	1
Aaron	Male	Transition	5	3
Taylor	Female	Transition	18	3

Note. Names have been changed.

Qualitative Results

The qualitative portion of this study was comprised of individual interviews with 11 moderate/severe special education teachers. Three interviews were conducted with moderate/severe high school teachers, two with moderate/severe middle school teachers, three with moderate/severe elementary teachers, and three with moderate/severe preschool teachers. Interviews consisted of 12 questions that sought to learn more about teacher collaboration with paraeducators. Below are summaries of each of the interviews by teacher.

Pre-K: Caroline

Caroline was a paraeducator for 23 years prior to becoming a special education teacher. Caroline has been teaching special education for eight years. During her interview, Caroline stated that she works with three paraeducators daily and is responsible for setting a positive tone in the classroom, listing classroom rules, and maintaining a professional relationship with classroom staff.

Caroline was able to provide an example of having to sit down with paraeducators to discuss an issue between the two paraeducators. She likened the two staff members to part of a family, showing the interrelated connection they all share:

I sat both of them down without anybody being around, and myself. I said, how can we go about this? Because we need to get along, you know we're like a family. If something doesn't work, the family's going to be dysfunctional, we can't do that.

During her interview, Caroline also stated that she did not receive any formal training to work with paraeducators. However, she was able to adapt material covered in several of her college courses to use with paraeducators. Caroline adapted team building activities and creative dramatics lessons that were intended for students and incorporated those lessons with the paraeducators in her classroom.

Respect and communication were the two factors that Caroline emphasized most throughout her interview. She stated that both respect and communication are necessary to have effective collaboration in the classroom. Being respectful when communicating with paraeducators and having time to sit down and communicate with paraeducators during weekly meetings are some of the things she has implemented in her classroom to improve collaboration amongst staff members.

Pre-K: Emma

Emma has been teaching special education for six years and currently works with four paraeducators. During her interview, Emma mentioned that her first years working with paraeducators were “really, really, really, really bad” because classroom staff members were not consistent. However, now that Emma has been working with the same paraeducators for several years, her experiences working with paraeducators have become a lot better.

Emma is responsible for making sure her classroom paraeducators are on task, know their expectations, and having materials ready for paraeducators when needed. Sharing lesson plans with paraeducators allowed each staff member to know what areas/subjects they were responsible for.

When asked how Emma learned to work with paraeducators, she responded that was briefly covered in one chapter of a book during a credential course. Some examples were given of situations that might occur in the classroom with paraeducators, but they were not expanded upon. She also added that she completed her own research in order to better understand how to work with paraeducators in the classroom: “That’s not really something they teach you and so yeah, my own research.”

Successful collaboration in the special education classroom would consist of having planning time to meet with all classroom staff. Because paraeducators have different schedules, Emma found herself repeating instructions to classroom staff three times a day and often accidentally forgetting to mention the instructions to one paraeducator. Therefore, Emma added that planning time where all classroom staff meets would be a first step to more effective classroom collaboration.

Pre-K: Gretchen

Gretchen has been teaching special education for 11 years, she currently works with four paraeducators. Gretchen described her experiences with her paraeducators as positive. She also stated that she provides her paraeducators with training in order for them to understand the classroom expectations.

When asked what type of training Gretchen received to work with paraeducators, she stated her previous experience as a paraeducator was what helped her better understand how to work with paraeducators in the classroom:

I think that the best way that I learned was that I was actually a paraeducator before I became a teacher. I knew what I felt like I needed when I was a paraeducator. I implemented that into my own classroom because I think there's definitely a shortage of training for paraeducators.

Gretchen also added that having allotted time to train paraeducators would make collaboration with paraeducators more effective. She continued to add that oftentimes paraeducators do not receive adequate training and teachers should be able to have the opportunity to sit down, plan, and train paraeducators to best meet the classroom needs. Gretchen also added that the collaboration between teachers and paraeducators is the most important collaboration after that of the teacher and parent, and yet no emphasis is placed on that essential classroom partnership by districts or in pre-service courses.

The importance of involving paraeducators in the classroom and asking for their ideas was also brought up during Gretchen's interview. Gretchen shared that paraeducators have often provided her with very good insight and ideas and that paraeducators should feel respected enough to share their ideas and opinions with the classroom teacher.

K-2: Cady

Cady is a first-year special education teacher who works with four paraeducators. She described her experiences working with paraeducators as difficult and an on-going learning process. Cady did not receive any type of formal training to work with paraeducators and added that addressing working with adults in credential courses would have been beneficial. Cady also added that she feels intimidated managing four adults and working with different types of personalities. Each paraeducator brings to the classroom a different personality and added to that is the teacher's personality, which Cady mentions can be difficult to work with. However, Cady did add that working with paraeducators could be successful when everyone works together to benefit the students: "If you're working well for the students even though you might not agree on everything all the time as long as whatever is going on is working good for the students. I think that's important, that's always a success."

Having regular meetings with paraeducators is one way Cady tries to make collaboration more effective. There is no set time for meetings which means Cady tries to take advantage of breaks or when students leave early to catch up with the paraeducators on what is going on in the classroom. Cady added that open communication should address both what is working and what is not working in the classroom. Cady also added that more classroom experience as a teacher would also likely contribute to successful collaboration in the classroom.

K-3: Kevin

Kevin is a first-year special education teacher who had previously worked as a paraeducator. He currently works with four paraeducators daily and described his first year as positive. Kevin added that paraeducators are responsible for

maintaining the classroom routine, assisting students with hygiene needs, and running small groups.

When asked if he received any formal training to work with paraeducators, Kevin stated that he had not. He also added that the paraeducators he works with receive a minimal amount of training at the beginning of the school year (2 hours). This was the only training that paraeducators received all school year. When asked about what type of training would be beneficial to special education teachers, Kevin mentioned that classroom management to work with paraeducators and not just students would be beneficial.

Communication was the main factor Kevin stated as being needed for effective collaboration with paraeducators. Kevin also added the importance of discussing ideas with paraeducators and listening to the opinions of paraeducators: “I think just constant communication since they’re also having to work with the students. I need that feedback from what they’re seeing and what they’re experiencing.”

2-4: Janis

Janis is in her 18th year as a special education teacher. Prior to teaching she was a paraeducator for 11 years. Janis currently works with two paraeducators. When asked about her experiences working with paraeducators, Janis responded: “I feel they’re invaluable. I personally believe that you need to build a team to maximize teaching experiences for the students.”

Janis added that she has informal team meetings with her paraeducators to discuss lesson plans, issues with students, and any scheduling needs or concerns. These team meetings are informal because there is no prep time to truly meet with paraeducators. Paraeducators are scheduled to work only when the students are

present which means there is no time for formal meetings between classroom staff since the students are always present.

Janis described successful collaboration in the special education classroom as asking and valuing the input of paraeducators. Tapping into previous experience or knowledge is one way to respect paraeducators and allows for more collaboration in the classroom. Janis also added that she makes an effort to include paraeducators in all aspects of the classroom. When paraeducators are familiar with the scheduled activities for the month and thematic units they are then given another opportunity to share their ideas or provide suggestions.

During her interview, Janis also mentioned the importance of being respectful to paraeducators and setting an example for paraeducators in the classroom. Respect and setting an example help contribute to collaboration in the special education classroom.

3-8: Regina

Regina works with four paraeducators daily and has been teaching special education for eight years. Regina described her supervising duties as providing lesson plans to paraeducators, making sure paraeducators are aware of classroom expectations, and providing clear direction on working with students. When asked if she received training to manage or direct paraeducators, Regina's response was no.

I know when we go to school they talk about working a lot and collaborating a lot with other educators. But they don't ever talk about how we can work with our aides. They don't ever really go over that.

Regina continued to add that she learned to work with paraeducators by reflecting on her previous job experiences and bringing those positive experiences into the classroom. She also added that her foundation for any working

relationship is respect. Regina highlighted the importance of respect in the classroom and that respect between teachers and paraeducators goes both ways.

When asked what type of training would be beneficial to special education teachers Regina had several suggestions. Her first suggestion was training on how to train paraeducators. Working with paraeducators in small groups was another suggestion. Behavioral issues and health concerns are also areas where training would be beneficial to teachers and paraeducators.

Communication was a contributing factor to successful collaboration in the special education classroom. Regina mentioned that paraeducators should feel comfortable communicating with one another and with her as the teacher and be able to discuss any issues in the classroom. She also added that she, as the teacher is open to making changes and listening to paraeducators classroom concerns.

6-8: Karen

Karen has been teaching special education for 14 years and currently works with four paraeducators. She described her experiences working with paraeducators as good and bad. Although Karen is responsible for directing and managing paraeducators daily, she is not considered the direct supervisor of the paraeducators assigned to her classroom.

Teachers are not their direct supervisors. It's the principal who is their supervisor. I'm their instructional leader, so what I need to do is help train them on working with the students in small groups on academics, behavior, setting the schedule, the routines, and the procedures.

Karen continued to add that she learned to be an instructional leader through trial and error over time. Over time she learned that different people have different types of work ethic. The types of paraeducators who work out in the classroom are the ones who are invested in the students and really care and take advantage of teachable moments.

When asked if she received any type of training to work with paraeducators, Karen responded no. She suggested that paraeducators would benefit from training with an expert teacher and having lessons and directions modeled in class. Having planning time or time to debrief with paraeducators would be one way to build successful collaboration in the classroom. Karen would like to be given time at the beginning or end of the day to discuss with paraeducators what took place during the school day, what worked well, what changes should be made, and any ideas of suggestions the classroom staff has to offer.

High School: Shane

Shane is in his third year of teaching high school special education. He currently works with one paraeducator all day long. He described his experiences with paraeducators as an open professional relationship. He continued to add that they are both open to criticism regarding approaches and how to individualize material for students.

Shane did not receive any type of formal training to work with paraeducators. He added that he had no preparation to direct adults and had never been in a position where he had to do so. He described his supervising duties as task oriented and organizing tasks for the paraeducator. At the beginning of the day Shane discusses the lessons for the day with the paraeducator and specific plans for certain students.

When asked what would make collaboration with paraeducators more effective Shane responded that planning time with paraeducators would be beneficial.

Set aside a time to actually meet with them where you know, in our school site we have a set-aside two hours to meet with our people in our departments. That's designated by our campus and our district. I think

special education is ignored on how important their rules should be and how much they [paraeducators] need a lot of information that we need as well. But it has to be a team collaboration.

Shane also added that being open to ideas and respectful of those ideas also adds to classroom collaboration. Facilitating meetings as a leader, allowing for open-ended responses, and making sure everyone contributes is another way to add to collaboration in the special education classroom.

Transition: Aaron

Aaron works with transition aged (18-22) special education students. He has been teaching for 5 years and currently works with three paraeducators. Aaron has had a mix of experiences working with paraeducators, he has dealt with paraeducators who did not take directions well and with paraeducators who truly enjoy what they do. When asked if he received any type of training to work with paraeducators, Aaron responded yes. He continued to add that he attended a couple of trainings put on by the county office of education and working with paraeducators was also a topic covered in one of his credential courses.

When asked about successful collaboration in the classroom Aaron listed several contributing factors.

Successful collaboration is when everything flows smoothly. What I mean by that is there's no arguing, there's no bad looks, there's no uncomfortableness. I'm very open in the sense of if my aides feel, or my paraeducators feel that we can do something better, or I can do something better, they have the confidence in which they could tell me, and I have the confidence in them that they're not doing it maliciously.

Aaron continued to add that collaboration also requires paraeducators knowing the roles in the classroom, knowing what is expected of them, and knowing how to react appropriately to certain situations. He also added the importance of being on the same page with the expectations of the students. Paraeducators also need to be aware of student's goals and what areas are areas of

need for students. These factors will contribute to successful collaboration in the special education classroom.

Transition: Taylor

Taylor works with three paraeducators in a transition special education program. She has been teaching special education for over 18 years. Taylor described her experiences working with paraeducators as good and bad. She continued to add that some paraeducators are not in the classroom for the right reasons, those are the situations in which paraeducators do not work out.

When asked if she received any type of training to work with paraeducators, Taylor responded no. She also shared that her supervising duties consist of making schedules, making decisions, encouraging paraeducators, and inviting paraeducators to share their opinions with the classroom teacher.

The main contributing factor to successful collaboration in the special education classroom that was mentioned by Taylor was trust. “We just work together, but we have to have that trust because you don’t want someone going behind your back and going up to the office or something. That ruins your day. You have to have that trust.”

Taylor shared one experience in which trust with paraeducators is extremely important. She shared that she sometimes requires interpreters to communicate with parents who do not speak English. As a first year teacher Taylor worked with paraeducators who misinformed parents by not correctly communicating what Taylor had asked them to say. Over the years, she has gained trust with paraeducators and is able to trust that paraeducators are correctly relaying information to parents, and therefore, supporting collaboration of the entire team.

Qualitative Themes

Data and interview notes were coded and merged into themes; figures of themes and their relationships were then created as suggested by Creswell (2007). Three themes emerged from the individual interviews with moderate/severe special education teachers. Figure 4 illustrates the themes that were coded from the qualitative interviews. These themes are lack of training to work with paraeducators, students' best interests, and communication and collaboration with two subthemes of planning time and personality and age differences.



Figure 4. Qualitative themes

Lack of Training

The first theme to emerge was a lack of training provided to special education teachers to work with paraeducators. When asked about learning to manage or direct paraeducators, 10 (91%) of the 11 teachers interviewed responded that they had not received any formal training to work with paraeducators in pre-service or in-service programs. Only one of the teachers interviewed reported having received brief training on working with paraeducators during the credential program. When asked how they learned to work with paraeducators, 4 (36%) of the 11 teachers reported during their previous experiences working as a paraeducator. One (9%) of the teachers responded that she learned to work with paraeducators through her own research (Emma). Another teacher reported that he “winged-it” (Shane), and another teacher honestly responded, “I still haven’t learned. It’s an ongoing process” (Cady).

When asked what type of training teachers would like to receive, teachers reported they would like to be trained on how to train other adults to work with students and collect data. Teachers also responded that they would like to receive training on classroom management with paraeducators and not just students. One teacher responded that she would like the opportunity to learn from other teachers and to be able to share information and real-life experiences.

When asked about supervising duties of teachers, teachers reported that they were responsible for making schedules, keeping track of absences, setting the tone and rules for the classroom, making sure paraeducators were on task, and maintaining a personal relationship with aides. Teachers believe that paraeducator duties include maintaining the classroom routine, running small groups, assisting with hygiene needs, and collecting data on individual goals.

Students' Best Interests

The second theme to emerge from the qualitative interviews was that classroom staff worked together in the best interest of the students. One teacher openly stated that although it may be difficult to get along with paraeducators with differing personalities, working together for the sake of the students was her overriding concern. Cady shared, "If you're working well for the students even though you might not agree on everything all the time as long as whatever is going on is working good for the students. I think that's important, that's always a success." During his interview, Aaron also shared those sentiments when he stated, "It's all about the kids."

Although teachers may work with several different personality types, teacher's primary concern was working together for the students. Caroline stated, "You just have to accommodate sometimes and have to have a lot of patience, and just go with the flow sometimes to make things go smoothly in the classroom for

the sake of the children.” Teachers reported being able to put personality differences aside in order to best benefit the students. Despite the challenges of working together with other adults, teachers were able to manage to work together with paraeducators when all classroom staff worked to benefit the students.

Communication and Collaboration

The third theme to emerge was communication and collaboration. This final theme also consisted of two subthemes, those being planning time and personality and age differences. Teachers reported that communication with paraeducators was extremely important. Communication, the sharing of ideas, and input would also be promoted during teachers planning time with paraeducators. Six (55%) of the 11 teachers reported communication as essential for successful collaboration. Open communication with paraeducators would provide a platform for paraeducators to share their ideas and input. Caroline mentioned, “It’s very, very, very, super important to let your aides give you ideas as well, and use them.” Similarly, Gretchen added, “I would say that they [paraeducators] need to be involved in almost everything in the classroom. I should be able to ask them their ideas and expectations on what we do in the classroom. They actually provide really good insight for me sometimes on things that I haven’t thought of.” Taylor also shared a similar opinion, “You have to work with them. Like, ask them their opinions. Let them be a part of the situation.”

Planning time. Planning time with paraeducators was the subtheme to emerge from the individual teacher interviews. Eight (73%) of the 11 teachers interviewed reported that planning time with paraeducators would contribute to successful collaboration in the classroom. However, this can be difficult to do when paraeducators are not given any prep time and are only present at the same time as the students. As Janis mentioned “The students are here the entire time my

aides are here, so there's not time to really collaborate formally throughout the day." Emma also shared, "Ideally you would have time when your staff is there, all together at the same time and you can address them all at the same time."

Planning time with paraeducators would allow for teachers to provide training to paraeducators. One teacher mentioned that she provides necessary training to paraeducators assigned to her classroom, instead of expecting paraeducators to come with any type of background or experience. During her interview Gretchen shared, "I think that teachers should be given allotted time to train their paraeducators. They're just, most of the time, thrown in with the teacher. In the paraeducator's defense, they have no idea what is expected of them." Janis shared Gretchen's sentiments, Janis shared of the paraeducators, "They come into this job, and they don't know everything and we can't expect them to know everything, but we also need to teach them and be patient about it."

Personality and age differences. During interviews teachers described both positive and negative experiences working with paraeducators. Teachers agreed that different personalities and attitudes could make for positive and negative experiences. Seven (64%) of the teachers reported that different personalities and different types of work ethic could be hard to manage in the classroom. Cady shared "Everybody has a different personality, so I have to deal with four different personalities. I'm sure they deal with mine, but it's tough". Aaron also shared, "Every paraprofessional brings a different attitude, different style."

Differences in personality and work ethic amongst classroom staff can also hinder collaboration in the classroom. Three (27%) of the 11 teachers interviewed stated that differences in work ethic can affect the classroom in a negative manner. During his interview Aaron shared, "In the situation where paraprofessionals do

not know what they're doing, or do not like what they're doing, it makes the classroom environment hard." Similarly, Karen shared, "It took me a long time to learn people are only going to do what they're going to do, no more, no less." When discussing her experiences working with paraeducators, Taylor shared, "I've had really good ones, and then I've had other ones that I don't think are here for the right reasons. Those ones are always kind of hard to work with." Taylor's closing remarks during her interview were:

You need to hire aides that have more in life than just wanting to be an aide. Like most of our aides are going to school. They want to better themselves or have goals. The lifers are the ones that don't work out.

Three (27%) of the 11 teachers continued to add that students are able to sense the tension in the classroom where there is conflict among staff. Caroline stated,

If we don't have a good team-building relationship, then things begin to fall out of place. Eventually, one thing happens, another thing happens, it's like a domino effect, and the children, they sense it. Next thing you know, it becomes chaotic in the classroom because the kids begin to escalate on their behavior, knowing that the adults or the staff, they're having a rough day.

Aaron echoed that sentiment when he stated, "The kids they feed off of that, and they feel it. When they walk into a happy, comfortable atmosphere as we have right now, it's great for the kids."

Another issue that emerged was age differences between teachers and paraeducators and how this can affect the classroom. One teacher reported that it could be more difficult for teachers who are working with paraeducators who are older than they are to provide direction. During her interview Regina shared,

When they're [paraeducators] older than us, I don't want to say they're set in their ways, but it's harder to get them to be on board with what we're doing, or to change the way they're doing things when they've done it a

certain way for so long. It takes them a while to understand that they have to take direction from someone younger.

Similarly, Caroline shared her experiences when she first began teaching. “When I first started teaching, I was a very young girl. Well, in the classroom, I was the young girl and back then they didn’t respect me.” She continued to add, “Now that I am older and I have all this gray hair and all these wrinkles, respect comes with that, and I like that.” As a first year teacher Cady also mentioned age differences during her interview. She mentioned that she feels “very intimidated” every day when going to work. She continued to add that she felt intimidated because “I come to work having to manage four adults and two of them being older than me I think makes it even more hard.”

Additionally, Karen also spoke of age differences during her interview. She referred to paraeducators with more classroom experience as “expert aides” and added that expert aides “want to control the new teacher if you’re not a strong person.” It is apparent that age differences between teachers and paraeducators can either contribute to or harm classroom dynamics. Overall, the three themes that emerged did provide insight to teacher/paraeducator collaboration in the special education classroom.

Teachers’ closing remarks during interviews included stating the need for more university courses for special education teachers to cover how to work with adults, paraeducators deserve better training, and paraeducators who are enrolled in school typically are the paraeducators that work out the best in special education classrooms.

Summary

This chapter presented the results of this research. The quantitative data and qualitative data were analyzed and presented. Descriptive statistics,

correlations, and multiple linear regression results were presented for the quantitative portion. A summary of interviews and themes were presented for the qualitative results.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION/SUMMARY

Introduction

The purpose of this mixed-methods study was to align the leadership abilities of special education teachers and collaboration with paraeducators in the classroom. John Adair's (2009) action-centered leadership model lists eight leadership functions that are vital for team success. Those functions include, defining the task, planning, briefing the team, controlling what happens, evaluating results, motivating individuals, organizing people, and setting an example were utilized to have teachers rate their leadership skills when working with paraeducators. Teachers also rated their collaboration in the classroom working with paraeducators based on the elements of collaboration by Wiggins and Damore (2006). Wiggins and Damore listed six elements as necessary for successful collaboration among educators, those elements are a positive attitude, team process, professional development, leadership, resources, and benefits.

Research Questions

The following two research questions were used as a guide for this study:

1. How do teachers learn to supervise, collaborate, and work with paraeducators despite the fact that neither had any training on how to do it?
2. Are leadership skills of special education teachers related to the quality of collaboration with paraeducators in the classroom?

Participants

Participants of the mixed-methods research consisted of special education teachers employed by four different school districts in Kern County. Four special

education directors were sent a survey link to be forwarded to mild/moderate special education teachers and moderate/severe special education teachers, 56 teachers completed the survey to its entirety. Of those teachers, moderate/severe special education teachers provided their contact information to be contacted for an individual teacher interview. A total of 11 interviews were scheduled and completed.

Summary of Quantitative Results

Correlations

The correlation coefficients among independent variables using Adair's leadership functions and all correlations were significant at $p < .001$. All correlations between independent variables were moderately to highly correlated (r 's ranged between .47 and .69). The strongest correlation between independent variables was between motivating and setting an example ($r = .69, p < .001$). Correlations between dependent variables using elements of collaboration had only one non-significant correlation, between team process and benefits ($r = .16, p = .23$). The strongest correlations between dependent variables was between benefits and professional development ($r = .65, p = < .001$). All correlations between independent and dependent variables are positive and range from .23 to .57. The weakest correlation between independent and dependent variables was between motivating and team process ($r = .23, p = .09$). The strongest correlation between independent and dependent variables was between briefing and team process ($r = .57, p = < .001$).

Multiple Linear Regression Results

A regression analysis was run for each of the six elements of collaboration. None of the independent variables were significant predictors for positive attitude.

Briefing, controlling, and motivating were significant predictors of a team process. Briefing was an almost significant predictor of professional development. None of the independent variables were significant predictors of leadership; however, briefing and organizing approached significance. Motivating was a significant predictor of resources. None of the independent variables were a significant predictor for benefits.

Of the independent variables, motivating was the most common significant predictor of dependent variables (team process and resources). Briefing was a significant predictor once (team process) and approached significance twice (professional development and leadership). Controlling was also a significant predictor once to the dependent variable team process. Defining the task, planning, organizing, evaluating, and setting an example were not significant predictors for any of the dependent variables.

Table 21 presents the probabilities for each overall regression model as well as for each of the independent variable beta weights for each of the dependent variables. Because all variables are highly correlated, multicollinearity statistics were run, but they were not high enough to indicate any variable to be deleted. Table 16 indicates that none of the independent variables were significant predictors for positive attitude, leadership or benefits. Team process had three significant predictors, briefing ($p = .006$), controlling ($p = .026$), and motivating ($p = .036$). Professional development had one significant predictor, briefing ($p = .051$). Similarly, resources had only one significant predictor, motivating ($p = .023$).

Table 21

Probabilities for Beta Weight for each Regression Equation using the Dependent Variables of Elements of Collaboration and the Independent Variables of Adair's Leadership Functions

DV/IV	Defining the task	Planning	Briefing	Organizing	Evaluating	Controlling	Motivating	Setting an Example
Positive Attitude ($p = .014$)	.059	.610	.477	.996	.250	.353	.641	.519
Team Process ($p < .001$)	.597	.668	.006	.958	.816	.026	.036	.071
ProfDevelopment ($p = .003$)	.558	.870	.051	.940	.682	.107	.648	.218
Leadership ($p = .001$)	.472	.681	.062	.071	.310	.486	.792	.750
Resources ($p = .002$)	.371	.115	.964	.329	.577	.203	.023	.101
Benefits ($p = .016$)	.522	.786	.521	.374	.637	.972	.288	.982

Summary of Qualitative Results

Summary of Themes

Individual teacher interviews were transcribed and coded for themes. Overall, three themes were found in the qualitative interviews which were illustrated in Figure 4 in Chapter 4. The themes were lack of training, having students' best interests in mind, and communication and collaboration which was also made up of planning time and personality and age differences.

Lack of training was the first theme to emerge in the individual interviews. Teachers interviewed reported a lack of formal training to work with, manage, and direct paraeducators. Teachers reported a lack of training from both preservice and in-service programs. Four (36%) of the 11 teachers interviewed stated that they learned to work with paraeducators from their previous experiences as

paraeducators. During her interview Gretchen stated, “I think the best way that I learned was that I was actually a paraeducator before I became a teacher”.

Working together for the best interest of the students was the second theme to emerge. While most teachers agreed that working with adults could be difficult, teachers also agreed that it was most important for classroom staff to work together in the best interest of the students. When classroom staff based their work day on student needs and how to best serve the students, that was considered a successful day. Regardless of the challenges teachers faced in the classroom, teachers overriding concern was working together to benefit students.

The final theme to emerge dealt with communication and collaboration and also consisted of planning time and personality and age differences.

Communication was listed by teachers as necessary for collaboration. Teachers also shared the importance of asking paraeducators for their ideas and input in order to build collaboration in the classroom. Janis stated she builds collaboration by “asking for ideas, opinions, input in regards to everything, whether it be lessons, activities, scheduling” of paraeducators. As Kevin stated, “I need that feedback from them, what they’re seeing and what they’re experiencing”.

The topic of planning time also came up when discussing communication. Teachers shared how difficult it can be to truly collaborate and plan with paraeducators when they are not given any planning time. During his interview Shane likened teacher and paraeducator collaboration to school-site planning meetings for departments, yet no planning time is given to allow teachers and paraeducators to collaborate at his school site.

Another aspect of collaboration and communication is that of personality and age differences among classroom staff. Differences in personality can make it difficult for classroom staff to effectively communicate and collaborate. As Aaron

stated, “every paraprofessional brings a different attitude, different style”.

Differences in age between classroom teacher and paraeducators can also hamper communication and collaboration. During her interview, Cady described how it could be difficult to direct or manage adults in the classroom who are older than she is, this can hinder classroom communication. Caroline was also able to relate to Cady. She talked about her experiences as a new teacher and her experiences now, having taught for 8 years, and the respect she has earned from paraeducators over time. Regina also stated that it may be more difficult to work with paraeducators who are older than she is because older paraeducators may have a harder time with change. She continued to add, “It takes them a while to understand that they have to take direction from someone younger”.

Discussion

Lack of Training

Giangreco (2003) stated that special education teachers do not receive adequate training, if any, to work and collaborate with paraeducators. This research was found to be in agreement with that statement. During the qualitative interviews teachers were asked if they received any type of training to work with, manage, or direct paraeducators. Ten of the 11 teachers responded no. In agreement with Drecktrah (2001), teachers learn how to work with paraeducators through on-the-job experiences.

Due to a lack of training for teachers to work with paraeducators, teachers reported trial and error as how they learned to manage or direct paraeducators. These findings are similar to French (2001) when she asked 159 teachers for their primary source of knowledge to supervise paraeducators. A majority of teachers did not respond in-service training, college courses, or help from administration.

Instead 140 (88.1%) teachers reported “real-life experience” (French, 2001, p. 43) as the primary source of their knowledge supervising paraeducators. This is most likely due to the fact that they have little or no preservice training in this area (Goe & Matlach, 2014). Other research by French confirms these findings. In her research, French (1998) asked 18 teachers how they had been prepared to supervise paraeducators. Of those 18 teachers, 14 (77.8%) responded that they had learned it “all on their own” (p. 365).

Lack of training is not only an issue for special education teachers. During their interviews teachers also reported a lack of training for paraeducators to work in the special education classroom. Lack of training provided to paraeducators is documented in the literature by Ratcliff et al. (2011). Ratcliff et al. also suggested that many paraeducators, supervising teachers, and administrators are unclear about the duties and expectations of paraeducators.

As listed in Table 1 of chapter 2, working with paraeducators is the training area most requested by special education teachers (Berry et al., 2011; Drecktrah, 2001; French, 2001; Katsyiannis et al., 2000; Steckelberg et al., 2007; Wallace et al., 2001).

Communication

Communication with paraeducators was another important topic mentioned during individual teacher interviews. Communication is necessary for effective teamwork among classroom staff (Malone & Gallagher, 2010). Teacher listed communication as one of the essential factors needed for collaboration in the classroom. Having appropriate planning time with paraeducators could help foster communication in the classroom.

Planning time with paraeducators was another topic that emerged during the qualitative interviews. French (1998) reported that formal planning time

between teachers and paraeducators was the exception and not the rule. Eight of the 11 teachers interviewed reported that planning time would be beneficial to both teachers and paraeducators and would help foster collaboration in the classroom. Teachers reported not having time to meet with paraeducators when the students are not present. Making it difficult to plan, prepare with, or train paraeducators. Patterson (2006) listed planning time as essential in order to meet the unique needs of special education students. Likewise, Giangreco et al. (2012) mentioned that appropriate planning time between teachers and paraeducators will allow for classroom staff to better meet the needs of the students.

Recommendations

Based on the information gained through this research and existing research in this field, two recommendations can be made. Those recommendations are to provide training for special education teachers and paraeducators and to allow for planning time between teachers and paraeducators. Both training and planning time should be made available to teachers and paraeducators on an on-going basis. Training for special education teachers and paraeducators should be provided thorough the school year as classroom staff and needs may change. Similarly, planning time should occur on a consistent basis in order to continually meet the needs of the classroom.

Teachers are often unprepared to direct paraeducators (Shonewise, 2001). Training for special education teachers is lacking both in pre-service or credential programs and in-service programs. Districts and schools should not rely on universities to provide adequate training to teachers. Wallace et al. (2001) indicated that teachers are rarely prepared through preservice or inservice training to work with paraeducators in a way that will improve student performance.

Therefore, both districts and universities should provide training to teachers in order to better prepare them for the realities of their positions.

Lack of training for teachers also results in teachers being unable to properly train paraeducators. Berry et al. (2011) found that professional development for special education teachers resulted in reduced levels of stress, increased levels of competency and teacher effectiveness, and an increased commitment to the field. Appropriate training can provide teachers with the information they need to feel more confident in their positions and the necessary background to appropriately train paraeducators.

Teachers should also be trained in how to provide trainings to other adults. Based on the results of this research, teachers did not feel that they were adequately trained to work with other adults and often felt intimidated to direct paraeducators. Additionally, when teachers are provided with training the focus of the training should be on team building with paraeducators rather than managerial type training. A team approach can help teachers better communicate and collaborate with paraeducators. Ashbaker and Morgan (2012) found that a team approach was cited as a major factor in retaining paraeducators. Several of the teachers interviewed discussed the importance of making paraeducators feel valued and a part of the team. One way this can be done is by asking for paraeducators ideas and opinions. Ashbaker and Morgan added that paraeducators feel valued and respected when included in the decision-making process as an instructional team. Therefore, when providing training to teachers on working with paraeducators, training should focus on building a team in the classroom rather than simply delegating responsibilities.

Training for teachers in the area of building leadership skills would be beneficial and ideal for special education teachers. Training on leadership skills

should focus on motivating, briefing and controlling as those were the most significant predictors of collaboration in the classroom. Special education teachers can learn to motivate classroom staff by setting classroom goals and celebrating successes along the way. Controlling the classroom can be done by setting schedules and classroom routines. Training in the area of controlling should also allow teachers to plan for unexpected events and sharing with classroom staff how to manage such situations. Lastly, teachers should be taught how to appropriately brief their classroom team. Teachers should be able to highlight the biggest needs or concerns of the classroom and learn how to prioritize classroom goals and appropriately sharing such information with classroom staff.

Allowing teachers and paraeducators quality planning time is the second recommendation of this research. Teachers interviewed in this research listed a lack of planning time as hindering classroom collaboration. Teachers continued to add that paraeducators scheduled work hours were the same as the hours students are present, resulting in no appropriate planning time amongst classroom staff. Lack of planning time among classroom staff can result in a lack of classroom cohesion. Any planning time allotted between teachers and paraeducators must be quality planning time where classroom staff collaborates together. It is essential that classroom staff work together during this time and not simply plan individually.

As presented by the results of this research, briefing, controlling, and motivating were significant predictors of a team process. A team process is an important step towards better collaboration and planning time in the classroom. Therefore planning time should consist of providing information to paraeducators on what should be taking place in the classroom and also providing paraeducators

with information on future classroom events. It is also essential to continue to discuss control of the classroom situation by maintaining and reviewing data collection, classroom schedules, and routines for classroom staff. Motivating was the final significant predictor of a team process and should be evident in planning time. As a classroom team, it is important that the classroom staff continue to motivate one another by celebrating successes and sharing input on classroom decisions (Ashbaker & Morgan, 2012). Planning time should allow for teachers and paraeducators to share what they feel is going well in the classroom and what areas allow for improvement.

Future Research

Further research should consist of implementing training for special education teachers and paraeducators. Training on how to work with, manage, and direct other adults should be made available to all special education teachers. Teachers should also be supported by their school districts and allowed to share their experiences with other special education teachers. Since special education teachers are not currently receiving any type of training to work with paraeducators, it would be interesting to see if special education teachers collaborate with other special education teachers. Research on how special education teachers collaborate with one another would provide valuable information. This would allow for researchers to find what type of support teachers are offering one another and how this can be duplicated by the district. Because each special education classroom dynamic is very unique, it would be beneficial to allow current teachers to learn from and collaborate with other special education teachers. Future research on providing and supporting mentorships of special education teachers could also be another area of focus. There is an apparent disconnect between what teachers are expected to be

responsible for in the classroom and what they are being trained to do during preservice programs. A better understanding of that disconnect would allow for a better understanding of how the appropriate changes could be made.

Similarly, research on appropriate training for paraeducators is another area in which future research would be beneficial. Research (Ashbaker & Morgan, 2012; French, 1998, 2001; Goe & Matlach, 2014; Katsyiannis et al., 2000; Ratcliff et al., 2011; Riggs, 2001; Vasa, et al., 1982) clearly stated a need for training for paraeducators; however, the areas of need vary among researchers. Further research on implementing training for paraeducators and research on the training process would provide a better understanding on how to best meet the training needs of paraeducators.

Finally, research to compare and contrast collaborative training versus managerial training for special education teachers would provide more insight on the style of training teachers need. Very little research has been conducted in the field of staff collaboration in the special education classroom (Malone & Gallagher, 2010).

Conclusion

This study was undertaken to examine how special education teachers learn to manage and direct paraeducators and how teacher leadership skills align with classroom collaboration. The results from this mixed-methods research was found to be supportive of the literature that stated current special education teacher training programs do not provide instruction on how to manage and direct paraeducators (Boudreau, 2011). Participating special education teachers in this study suggested planning time and open communication with paraeducators would promote successful classroom collaboration. A focus on motivating, briefing, and controlling would be constructive for both training and planning time. Ideally,

both pre-service and inservice programs would provide appropriate training to both special education teachers and paraeducators to allow for effective collaboration in the classroom. Improving collaboration among classroom staff would allow for teachers and paraeducators to best meet the needs of the very unique children they serve.

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