

Teachers' Perspectives of Team Teaching in the Elementary Classroom

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Ethics Statement

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Abstract

In literature, team teaching is mainly defined as 'collaborative teaching or coteaching, and is an instructional strategy where teachers work together regularly.' This paper discusses teachers' perceptions of team teaching in urban elementary classrooms. According to the results, team teaching is a significant experience in teaching practice, with both positives and negatives being prominent in the research. In this research, two teachers working in an urban elementary school were asked to share their perceptions on team teaching, each teacher being interviewed twice on their experiences. This paper explores some of the themes found in the research data, including: teacher benefits, teacher challenges, teachers' perceived level of enjoyment in the team teaching classroom, measuring the success of team teaching, and student benefits.

Keywords: team teaching; teacher benefits; teacher challenges; measuring success, student benefits; urban elementary school

Dedication

I dedicate this work and give special thanks to my best friend and husband, Karun Sharma. Our challenges this year have strengthened us, and I am grateful to have your love and support throughout my master's program.

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List of Acronyms

EA	Educational Assistant
LST	Learning Support Teacher
SD	Social Development Program

Glossary

G designation	Autism
H designation	Severe mental illness or behaviour
R designation	Moderate behaviour or mental illness

Please note that all definitions were derived from "Leadership in Learning (2022)".

Introduction

My interest in team teaching began in September 2018, when I started my first year as a grade 2 classroom teacher. I was supported as a new teacher by being given administrative time. My principal would come and teach my elementary classroom for 40 minutes, and I would use this time to join another teacher and support their teaching. This time in other classrooms contributed to me learning new strategies, classroom management techniques, and teaching skills that I had not picked up in my 12-month Education Program at UBC. By visiting various classrooms and participating in their learning, I began my inspiring journey toward an open exploration of the benefits and challenges of team teaching.

My research topic looks at the benefits and challenges of team teaching in the urban elementary classroom. This research paper introduces my broader topic area and identifies my specific research interest. I aimed to understand team teaching better; therefore, my research question is, 'What are teachers' perceptions of team teaching?' In this section, I will identify the context of my research, explain why this topic is essential, and identify similar researchable problems, concerns, and questions. Following this information on my research topic, I provide my literature review on team teaching.

My literature review defines team teaching and looks at the research surrounding team teaching in urban contexts. When reviewing the literature, I wanted to see how teachers can use a team teaching model to impact instruction. By exploring the literature, I have better understood the valuable impact team teaching can have on teachers and students in the elementary classroom. My literature review aimed to identify themes in the research, looking specifically for points of conflict and agreement within the research and identifying gaps in the research.

In order to answer my research question, I have adopted a qualitative approach. I chose a qualitative approach because it uses inductive reasoning, which involves using specific observations, evidence, or patterns to draw conclusions about specific circumstances (Thomas, 2006). I wanted to collect data specific to learn more about team teaching, so I interviewed teachers to learn more about their experiences.

In the research, there needs to be more research that shows the connection between team teaching and working in an urban school environment. The voices of teachers working in an inner-city elementary school are missing in the research. In this team teaching scenario, the teachers simultaneously work in the same classroom with the same students on the same topic, delivering the same activities and using the same resources. In my study, Thelma and Louise are two grade 3 and grade 4 teachers working in an urban elementary school in a large school district in Metro Vancouver. They are a team teaching partnership that, through interviews, has shown that they have a good understanding of both team teaching and the urban school environment they work in.

Team teaching in an urban environment demands further study because there is limited research on this topic, and the research provides various findings that only sometimes add up. While Buckley (2002) indicates the benefits of team teaching, other research indicates that it can also have downsides (Conderman et al., 2009; Spörer et al., 2011; Walther-Thomas, 1997).

Some benefits of team teaching include that it creates an effective and fun learning environment, it allows for shared ideas, and two teachers can better combine their ideas and knowledge to create better learning opportunities for their students (Buckley, 2000). Due to these benefits and my own experiences, team teaching in an urban setting, I felt motivated to explore this topic and gain a better understanding of teachers' perspectives on team teaching in the urban elementary school.

Literature Review

Researchable Problems, Concerns, and Questions

I was curious about the research behind team teaching in urban schools because both elementary schools I have worked for in Metro Vancouver have been classified as inner-city schools. For this research, an inner city school is a school that accepts students from an especially dense or large area; the name is also frequently used to designate a population of immigrants and minorities, often living in poverty (Raynas, 2022). At both elementary schools I have worked at, I have had discussions with colleagues regarding issues that occurred during team teaching. Most of these issues were due to student behavioural issues in the classroom.

About student needs, Zuberi published a book titled, "Schooling the next generation: creating success in urban elementary schools". In his work, he documents the challenges facing ten schools in Vancouver, British Columbia. All these schools are in diverse lower-income communities, and Zuberi takes the time to address the many challenges that administrators, teachers, and parents face in an urban school environment. Such challenges include "children who come to school hungry, who are frequently absent, or who resort to violence to settle disputes (Zuberi, 2015). Some students in an urban elementary school "have unmet medical needs." Other students may "have undiagnosed and untreated behavioural or learning disabilities." In regards to trauma, students that go to urban elementary schools are more likely to have unstable and insecure home lives. "Others are coping with much more serious issues, such as abuse and neglect or violence" (Zuberi, 2015).

As well, "Urban schools in lower-income neighbourhoods often do not have adequate resources to successfully educate and meet the needs of their students" (Zuberi, 2015). While adequate funding does not guarantee quality education, Zuberi argues it remains a prerequisite (2015).

It is also important to note that, in an elementary school with a higher level of student needs, there are more likely to be peer issues amongst students with behavioural issues (Zuberi, 2015). Unfortunately, behavioural problems of one student can impede learning for the rest of the students in a classroom.

At the study site, staff purposely split classes into combined grades instead of straight grades. They do this because they are trying to keep some students with a higher level of need separate from one another. By separating these students into different classes, the teachers are better supported in performing their teaching obligations. These split classes also give most students more opportunities to learn in the classroom.

This year, I have observed two grade 3/4 classes that merged and were team-taught by two teachers. It was likely that each teacher would receive one student with a behaviour designation or a student in the social development (SD) program.

The SD program provides services to children between the ages of 6 and 13 (Grades 1-7) who are designated as requiring Intensive Behavioural Intervention or having Serious Mental Illness (in accordance with the Ministry of Education criteria). Students are included in regular classes and have access to additional support in an alternative setting when required" (Leadership in Learning, 2022).

How would team teaching go when one or both students with behaviour designations are present? Would having two teachers and two classrooms available to these students make student support easier or harder? How would the two classrooms be used in a way that best supports these grade 3 and 4 learners?

Reflecting on my experiences in an elementary classroom last year, I thought about the challenging behavioural issues I faced, often as the only adult in the room. These challenges included one of my students throwing objects across the room. Another student would have severe tantrums where he would scream in the classroom, frequently disrupting learning time. When these situations occurred, I always called for another adult in the building to support me. However, with a team teaching model, I knew that two teachers would be in the classroom regularly, which could impact student behaviour. I have enjoyed investigating how a team teaching model can best support learners, such as those with severe behaviour designations.

I found various articles documenting team teaching research in urban or inner-city settings (Murphy & Martin, 2005; Roth et al., 2004; Tobin et al., 2001; Wassell & LaVan, 2009). According to Tobin et al. (2001), "teaching in urban schools, with their problems of violence, lack of resources, and inadequate funding, is difficult ." Murphy and Martin (2015) researched team teaching in an urban environment, focusing

specifically on student teachers who participated in team teaching. They found that "coteaching promotes more equal roles in the classroom, supporting a less hierarchical model of teacher practicum, in which co-teachers share" (Murphy & Martin, 2015, p.277). This research demonstrated that team teaching not only has benefits for teachers but also for those who are new to the profession. Wassell and LaVan (2009) also suggest that team teaching in an urban environment has many positive benefits for beginning teachers. Their research shows that team teaching enhanced teacher agency, allowing them to spend additional time working with students one-on-one or in small groups. These beginning teachers also felt they could take risks in planning and enacting curriculum by incorporating activities they might have otherwise avoided for fear of losing control of the class (Wassell & LaVan, 2009). In another article that references beginning teachers in an urban school setting, Roth et al. (2004) remind the reader that learning to teach is difficult! However, what is more difficult is learning to teach in an urban school setting. The reasons for this include poverty, lack of resources, low exam success rate, and low attendance (Roth et al., 2004). However, the researchers also see so much value in learning in this type of environment if a team teaching model is implemented:

Coteaching provides an answer (but not a panacea) to some constraints, increasing the possibilities for collective action and, therefore, the room to manoeuvre. In this context, the new teacher can avoid getting stuck in dead ends, but the cooperating teacher can help move the lesson into new directions or pull together ideas that still need to be completed (Roth et al., 2004).

These articles answered many questions regarding team teaching in an urban environment, but not all. What remains is, "How does an urban environment directly impact teachers who choose to team-teach?" Most articles referencing team teaching in an urban environment examined studies with one experienced teacher and one student teacher. Unfortunately, there is little research where, in an urban setting, the team teaching team being researched contained two experienced teachers. I hoped that two teachers, working collaboratively and using a team teaching model to support approximately 50 students, would be better able to support the needs of their classroom, regardless of the schools' socioeconomic status.

Identifying Biases and Expectations

When looking at team teaching in the elementary classroom, if the team teaching partnership is right, it can help prevent teacher burnout. By combining their knowledge and understanding of the elementary classroom, teachers that team teach can lessen their workload. Also, those teachers who use a team teaching model can provide emotional support for one another as they engage in the teaching profession. Not only does team teaching have the opportunity to create a compelling and fun learning environment, but it also allows for shared ideas and breaks up the monotony of one person doing all the teaching.

Team teaching is not the only answer to all problems that arise in elementary schools for teachers and students. There is a considerable level of need in inner-city schools. These needs can be hard to meet for even the most experienced classroom teacher. This level of need means that, even though these two teachers are collaboratively teaching, they may still need help with many struggles that they would usually face in the classroom due to the lack of appropriate support available to the students and teachers. On top of that, they may experience more behavioural challenges due to students with behavioural issues being in the same classroom as one another. Another item worth noting is that some students may do better with one person leading the classroom, as relationships may get triangulated, where the student is unsure who requires their respect. The teaching team dynamics are an essential factor in the success of this approach. The team teaching model is not going to be the panacea for every problem in inner-city elementary classrooms. However, it is one approach that can help support teachers in a time when the issue of burnout or emotional need may arise.

Overall, in regards to team teaching, my bias is that team teaching should be experienced at least once by every elementary teacher and student. Team teaching can have many positive implications in the elementary classroom for both teachers and students. Teachers have the opportunity to engage in new teaching practices with the support of a colleague. Teachers can also learn new ways of approaching students with behavioural issues, as collaboration can help broaden their perspective and help teachers with problem-solving in the classroom..

Themes

Several themes emerge when looking at the literature on team teaching. These themes include both the challenges and benefits of team teaching. Overall, the research shows that team teaching is an effective method of teaching for a variety of reasons (Anderson & Speck, 1998; Conderman et al., 2009; Lee & Li, 2015; Pugach & Wesson, 1995; Walther-Thomas, 1997; Welch, 2020).

In their research, Walther-Thomas (1997) identified a variety of challenges that have been observed in team teaching. These include issues such as needing more scheduled time for planning and the need for more staff professional development on team teaching (Buckley, 2000; Walther-Thomas, 1997). Also, some teachers feel that team teaching requires more time and energy as teachers must work collaboratively (Conderman et al., 2009). When looking at other challenges in team teaching, research by Spörer et al. (2011) indicates that students with special needs interact less with their classmates and more with their teachers compared to students without special needs. When using a team teaching model where one teacher taught and the other teacher assisted, the research by Spörer et al. (2011) found that for students without special needs, the probability of interacting with classmates remained almost the same. However, for students with special needs, it was reduced. This research suggests that students with special needs in a cotaught classroom may be at more of a disadvantage socially. This also shows that teachers who take on the role of a co-teacher may need to take the effects of coteaching on students' interactions into greater consideration (Spörer et al., 2011). Lastly, Fluijt et al. (2011) suggest that most challenges teachers face in team teaching are interpersonal.

It is important to note that, in the research that indicates team teaching challenges, explicitly looking at interpersonal relationships, the members of the team were not given the teaching autonomy to choose whether or not they team-taught or given the opportunity to choose their teaching partner (Buckley, 2000; Conderman et al., 2009; Spörer et al., 2011; Walther-Thomas, 1997).

This is different from my own study, where these teachers had the autonomy to merge their two classrooms voluntarily. This teacher autonomy has resulted in a more positive classroom dynamic, where both teachers feel engaged in their practice and

excited to learn new things. Not only that, both teachers acknowledge in their interviews that their relationship is one that is built on "respect" and "mutual acceptance of decisions."

Despite obvious challenges with the team teaching model, the benefits of team teaching are well-researched (Anderson & Speck, 1998; Conderman et al., 2009; Lee & Li, 2015; Pugach & Wesson, 1995; Walther-Thomas, 1997; Welch, 2020). When looking at a team teaching model, I wanted to know if the team teaching framework would best support our most vulnerable learners, such as students with special needs. Pugach & Wesson (1995) agree that students with special needs can have their needs met in a classroom with a team teaching model. Teachers in their study stated that they felt confident meeting the needs of nearly all students, including those who required enrichment (Pugach & Wesson, 1995). Another study showed that, after examining 24 elementary teacher students' perceptions of team teaching, 92% of the students felt that having two instructors affected the classroom environment and their understanding of course content positively (Hwang et al., 2002). In the following study, Altstaedter et al. (2016) state that team-teaching colleagues believed they experienced enriched learning and that their students had better learning outcomes. The teachers became more confident in their teaching abilities! Lastly, Buckley (2000) shares clear benefits of team teaching, including that it creates an effective and fun learning environment, it allows for shared ideas, and two teachers can better combine their ideas and knowledge to create better learning opportunities for their students (Buckley, 2000).

While some research documents the challenges of team teaching, the research behind team teaching and the impact it can have in the classroom has been overwhelmingly positive (Altstaedter et al., 2016; Anderson & Speck, 1998; Conderman et al., 2009; Lee & Li, 2015; Pugach, & Wesson 1995; Walther-Thomas, 1997; Walther-Thomas, 1997; Welch, 2020). It clearly shows that teachers and students have something to gain from this teaching model (Anderson & Speck, 1998).

Points of Conflict

In the research, teachers, overall, positively responded when asked their opinion on team teaching (Anderson & Speck, 1998; Conderman et al., 2009; Scruggs et al., 2007; Walther-Thomas, 1997; Welch, 2000). However, when researching feedback on team

teaching, it is essential to note that some students who provided feedback did not enjoy the experience (Pugach & Wesson, 1995). While interviewing individual students was, unfortunately, beyond the scope of this research, it is vital to identify some contention in the team teaching world regarding how students perceive team teaching. Another suggestion was that teachers in a team teaching role could disagree, which could result in workplace conflict (Gurgur & Uzuner, 2011).

One issue I considered was, 'What might happen to the classroom environment if one teacher deviated from the teaching team due to illness or other reasons?' This situation could leave the remaining teacher with a more significant workload as they try to collaborate with a replacement teacher who may not be invested in the team teaching process. When considering the impact that COVID-19 has had on the world, teacher attrition could impact team teaching negatively. I could not find anything about this in my research about team teaching. Some research also identified how difficult it is to measure the effectiveness of team teaching (Beninghof, 2020).

With team teaching, there is an abundance of research to back up the positive impact that can occur in the classroom as a result (Anderson & Speck, 1998; Conderman et al., 2009; Durlak et al., 2011; Lee & Li, 2015; Pugach & Wesson, 1995; Walther-Thomas, 1997; Welch, 2020). Team teaching better supports students with special needs (Pugach & Wesson, 1995). Buckley (2000) also shares the clear benefits of team teaching, including that it creates an effective and fun learning environment, it allows for shared ideas, and two teachers can better combine their ideas and knowledge to create better learning opportunities for their students (Buckley, 2000).

Despite this, it is essential to note that there are still many questions that still need to be answered concerning team teaching. We need to look at many different dimensions, including but not limited to academics, social-emotional goals, and attendance, to determine if positive change is occurring in the classroom with a team teaching model. Beninghof's (2020) research found that so many different definitions and interpretations of team teaching exist that it has been challenging to gather data on the effectiveness of coteaching. Unfortunately, far more literature exists describing team teaching and offering advice than carefully studying it (Graziano et al., 2012). In another study, the researchers found that most teachers lacked an informed understanding of specific strategies to support coteaching, and instead, they relied on an experiential,

"trial and error" approach (Mackey et al., 2017). This research shows much to be done regarding how we assess the effectiveness of team teaching.

Points of Agreement

When researching team teaching, the points of agreement were clear. The research indicates many benefits of team teaching for teachers and students (Tisdell & Eisen, 2000). However, the research also points out many potential issues that arise in a team teaching partnership. When looking at the benefits, those that team-teach generally spread responsibility across the workload so that both parties have less to plan for (Krammer et al., 2018). Brookfield (2017) states that team teaching "has benefits for students and teachers. One of the most important is the way it offers a wonderful opportunity for critical reflection." Team teaching also encourages creativity and allows those with specializations to shine (Friend & Cook, 2007).

Jang's (2006) research found the following:

Teachers benefited from team teaching because the implementation of team teaching not only provided them with the opportunities to collaborate and assist one another in their teaching but also widened their concept of teaching strategies and class management (p. 192).

One challenge found in the research on team teaching included the issue of clashing personality types among colleagues (Perez, 2012). Luckily, the research also states that teachers who can self-select their team partner know from their own experience and knowledge whom they are most likely to be compatible with and with whom they can share classroom responsibilities more easily (Krammer et al., 2018). Another concern is that the time it takes to collaborate while team teaching is significant (Conderman et al., 2009). Most teachers believe that team teaching is more time-consuming due to the collaborative piece of team teaching (Fennick & Liddy, 2001; Stokowski et al., 2021).

Gaps

When examining conflicts or contradictory findings in the research, I saw some disagreement regarding students' opinions of team teaching. I am still looking for research that confirms or denies that team teaching works for all, only that it works for

the vast majority (Hwang et al., 2002; Pugach & Wesson, 1995). Thinking about this brought up another topic of interest: What about extremely shy students who enter the team teaching environment? Do shy students fall through the cracks more easily in a classroom with two teachers and approximately 50 students, or do they benefit from the opportunities two teachers provide? For this research, shy will be defined as reserved students or showing nervousness or timidity in the company of other students or teachers. Spörer et al. (2011) did research that indicates that cotaught lessons offered slightly more opportunities for students to interact with significant others than traditional lessons. This opportunity for more interaction matters for students who are shy and may need more opportunities to build relationships with their peers. I have found little research on student-teacher relationships and the team teaching model.

Methodology

The Research Questions

I look forward to developing a better understanding of team teaching; therefore, my research question is, "What are teachers' perceptions of team teaching?"

These are my sub-questions:

- What do teachers and students have to gain from team teaching?
- What are the challenges teachers experience while team teaching?
- Do these two teachers enjoy team teaching?
- What issues may the team teaching co-workers experience over the course of this research?
- How do we measure success in team teaching?

Researcher Role

In this section, I will address my role as the researcher. I have a bachelor's degree in English Language and a bachelor's in Education, focusing specifically on methods of inquiry. Both of these degrees are from the University of British Columbia. As a teacher, I have worked towards specializing in social-emotional learning through training offered by the school district I work for. This training has benefited me by giving me a better understanding of the power of connection, which this research paper will address, looking at both teacher-to-teacher and student-to-student connections. Previous to conducting this research, I have worked at the research site for approximately a year and a half but have not yet worked closely with these colleagues due to our different grade levels; previously, I taught a grade 1/2 combined class, and now I teach a grade 4/5 combined class, whereas my colleagues are both grade 3/4 teachers.

My prior understanding of team teaching and urban elementary schools influenced the research by enhancing the process. With a basic understanding of the team teaching model and having worked in urban elementary schools for the last six years, I was able to take this understanding and apply it to data appropriately. For example, previous to working at my current urban elementary school, I had little to no

understanding of the Social Development (SD) Program that is offered at several schools in Metro Vancouver. These last two years have led to a better understanding of the ins and outs of this program, such as who qualifies for the program and more about the unique system that is set up to support learners who struggle to attend school in a regular classroom setting, often due to mental health issues. This knowledge was advantageous when looking at the students with challenging behaviours that Thelma and Louise were dealing with, as I better understood the policy involved with supporting students who were struggling with trauma or other emotional needs.

Over the years, I have been a director of my own professional development, focusing specifically on mathematical pedagogy, social-emotional learning, and team teaching. During the Covid-19 pandemic, in September 2021, I had a teaching partner who taught grade 2, like myself at the time. I was eager for the opportunity to team teach with her! Unfortunately, when we approached the administration about this idea, we were turned down due to social distancing requirements at our elementary school. Since then, I am still seeking a teacher who meets my requirements for engaging in a team teaching partnership. With this in mind, I have chosen to focus my research on team teaching in hopes of developing a better understanding of the process and meeting my curiosity about this topic.

Research Site and Participants

The purpose of this study is to learn more about the dynamics of team teaching. This study is being conducted in partial fulfillment of a Master's degree in Education. I wanted to explore what challenges or benefits teachers experience when engaging in team teaching.

This research took place at an urban elementary school in the Greater Vancouver area of British Columbia. The quotations that follow come from a series of interviews carried out with teachers at the elementary school. Participants are referred to pseudonymously. My participants were Thelma and Louise, two elementary school teachers who work in this urban elementary school environment. I chose these two teachers to be the focus of my research because these teachers teach a grade 3/4 combined class in a team teaching environment. Thelma has 34 years of teaching

experience. Louise is in her 5th year of elementary teaching and states, "I'm starting to get the feel of teaching under my skin."

Thelma and Louise did an excellent job of answering my research questions, providing detailed answers that demonstrated a great understanding of both team teaching and the urban elementary school context that they work in. The selection of these participants adhered to the standards of ethical research practice. My research participants were known contacts through the urban elementary school where we all work. The recruitment was done through email.

To ensure I was dealing with participants in an ethical manner, I did transcript verification to ensure that I had captured what the participants have stated accurately. Participant checking was done both during the interview process and at the end of the study to increase the credibility of the data (Candela, 2019; Creswell, 2015). At the end of the study, I looked forward to sharing the whole findings with the research participants. Also, before conducting this study with my research participants, I had the data collection and analysis reviewed by colleagues with expertise in this area.

For qualitative researchers, maintaining respondent confidentiality while presenting rich, detailed accounts of social life presents unique challenges. Since I have conducted research involving human participants, I have the duty to keep their participants' information confidential. This duty entails that I implement safeguards to protect the confidentiality of the participants throughout all stages of the research cycle (DeCarlo et al., 2021).

I have protected the research participants by respecting their privacy and confidentiality throughout this research project. I did this by obtaining informed consent from research participants. I also maintained the confidentiality of data provided by individuals by using pseudonyms.

There are several other ways I have maintained the confidentiality of the participants and their data. Any personally identifiable information has been stored on the cloud in a locked account on my secured personal laptop. It has also been backed up on my SFU OneDrive account.

I have minimised the risk of harm to participants by avoiding questions that cause discomfort, burden, or inconvenience to them. I have not misled or lured anyone into participating in this critical study. Also, the participants had the right to withdraw from this research study at any time, to skip or not answer any question, and to participate in the interviews at a time that is convenient for them. Participants have been made aware of how I was seeking to collect data: Through an interview where I took detailed notes and also an audio recording. Once the data was analysed, I also considered how the participants might be affected by this. Following the completion of this study, the audio recordings, transcripts, and any other data collected during this process will be destroyed by September 2026.

Classroom Composition and Classroom Setup

Class Composition

This elementary classroom is composed of grade 3 and grade 4 students. There are 46 students, with 23 students assigned to each teacher. In this section, I will discuss the students in these two classes and how they are involved in this research.

I asked Thelma and Louise if they thought their class was an average representation of a class at this urban elementary school. Thelma responded that this is "probably a typical class in an inner city school" (Thelma, personal communication, 6 May, 2023).

In Thelma's class, she has seven students in grade 3 and sixteen students in grade 4. She has five students with designations. These designations include three students who have autism and two students with behavior designations. Thelma refers to their classroom of 46 students, saying, "This is a stacked class." When Thelma says this, she refers to the fact that she has many designated students and many other students who still need designations. One of Thelma's students, Darell, who has a behaviour designation, shows up prominently in the research, first under the sub-theme: behavioural challenges. Darell is an excellent example of a student whose designation does not match his level of need in the classroom.

One of Thelma's students, Troy, a grade 3 male student with autism, is brought up in the section on teacher challenges: inclusivity. Thelma's other two students with designations did not appear prominently in the research. Unfortunately, the amount of designations in a classroom is not a good representation of student needs, as many students in Thelma and Louise's class have not yet received a designation or lack the required designation to receive the support the student needs to be capable in a school setting. Lack of designation is common at the primary level, with many students not receiving assessments until they reach the 4th grade. One example of a student without a designation in Thelma's class that shows up in the research includes Halima, a grade 4 female student. A refugee from Iraq, Halima is brought up in the research under the sub-theme 'systemic issues.'

Louise responded to my question, saying, "I think my classroom is a good representation of the school. However, I don't have support for my [student with an] H designation as much as I need" (Louise, personal communication, 6 May, 2023). In Louise's class, she has eleven grade 3s and twelve grade 4s. She has three designated students assigned to her class. Naval, a grade 4 boy, has an H designation for severe mental illness and behaviour. Naval comes up in the research multiple times, the first time being when exploring the sub-theme 'behavioural challenges.' In this section on behavioural challenges, both Thelma and Louise share their daily attempts at supporting this student who has a high level of need. Another one of Louise's designated students, Manaav, is a grade 4 male student who has been designated with autism, who comes up in the research under the sub-theme 'inclusivity'. Andrew, a grade 3 male student, has a D designation for public health. He is assigned to Louise's class and the SD program but spends most of his school hours in the social development classroom and rarely visits the team teaching classroom. Andrew's lack of presence in these interviews is interesting to note because previously, I was curious how a student from the SD program might impact the classroom learning environment.

Louise also brings up her student, Marcus, a grade 4 male, who reads at "a grade 1 level". She describes Marcus as "very self-conscious and anxious". Louise talks about Marcus under the sub-theme 'inclusivity', saying that, in this example, this student is not thriving in the team teaching environment. Marcus needs a designation because both Louise and his learning support teacher "suspect they've got a learning disability." Louise says that "because their attendance has been so poor this year, the school psychologist does not want to put them on [the assessment list] just yet. Louise believes this student's poor academics are causing him an "undue amount of stress and anxiety."

These students all play a role in the research and will each be brought up under one of the many themes and sub-themes I have created.

Classroom Set Up

This team teaching environment takes place in two rooms across the hall from one another. Thelma's room is the larger of the two; therefore, much of the learning takes place in this space.

At the beginning of the year, Louise moved most of her tables into Thelma's classroom to create a better learning space for the students. Thelma states, "We rarely have all 46 kids in Louise's room because we don't have enough tables." The two teachers have also set up the rooms so that all the games and toys are in Louise's room, making Thelma's room the spot for academic time with the students. While Thelma's room is the central spot for academic activities, Louise's classroom is often used as a quiet space for students who need it and is referred to as the "Quiet Room."

In the next section, I will address my data collection for this research..

Data Collection

In this research, my attempt as the researcher was to understand the interviewee's subjective perspective of the team teaching experience. With this in mind, McGrath et al. suggest using qualitative research interviews as a method for data collection (2019). Qualitative data collection is more appropriate for the scope of this research, as it is generally considered a more open and flexible approach and focuses on words, descriptions, concepts, beliefs, and ideas (Flick, 2004). I did the interviews face-to-face, as I knew that body language could play a role in interpreting the data. I used an audio recording device on my personal laptop to record the interviews, as I wanted the data to be as accurate as possible. I took notes while I listened, including notes regarding the interviewee's body language. I enjoyed taking this approach because, with my background as an English major, I have a wide range of experience in this type of data collection, the transcription process, and analysis through my studies at UBC.

I used a semi-structured interview style, asking questions based on the literature on team teaching. I hoped that this would allow the interview to flow more like a natural conversation. Then, I could also modify my questions to suit the participant's specific experiences. There are several positive aspects of semi-structured interviews, including that they are more flexible as questions can be adapted and changed depending on the respondents' answers (Flick, 2014). Also, semi-structured interviews generate qualitative data where the respondents can talk in depth, choosing their own words. This approach helped me better understand the person's understanding of team teaching. Also, a semi-structured interview has increased validity because it gave me, as the interviewer, the opportunity to probe for a deeper understanding and ask for clarification..

Data Analysis

I chose to use a qualitative analysis approach for this research on team-teaching. I chose this approach because I knew that, unlike quantitative research, with qualitative research, my questions could change throughout this study (DeClaro et al., 2021). Due to my focus this year being on experiences in team teaching, qualitative analysis is the best approach. However, I also knew that by choosing qualitative analysis, I would rely a lot on my judgment. When reviewing my data, I knew I must reflect carefully on my choices and assumptions to avoid research bias (Pannucci & Wilkins, 2010).

As the researcher, I knew I would need to adapt my approach based on what participants said or did during the interviews I conducted. I also recognized that, as someone who is using a qualitative analysis approach, I must constantly evaluate whether my research question is still relevant, as I have learned that a natural part of qualitative research is for research questions to evolve or shift based on information I gained from my interviews (DeClaro et al., 2021). DeClaro et al. (2021) state that "reflexivity and openness is unacceptable in quantitative research for good reasons." With this in mind, for the purposes of this research, I believe a qualitative analysis approach will provide a better insight into team teaching.

"Thematic coding is better understood as an umbrella term, designating different approaches aimed at identifying patterns ("themes") across qualitative datasets" (Vaughn & Turner, 2016). In thematic analysis, the researcher closely examines the data to identify common themes, topics, ideas, and patterns of meaning that come up repeatedly.

There are various approaches to conducting thematic analysis (Vaughn & Turner, 2016). I chose to follow a six-step process: familiarisation, coding, generating themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and writing up my final research paper. I knew from my research that following this process can also help you avoid confirmation bias when formulating your analysis (Vaughn & Turner, 2016).

When doing thematic analysis, once the data was collected, the first step would be to gain insights and familiarise myself with the data.

I began to get an understanding and overview of the data I collected before I began to analyse individual items. I did this by transcribing the audio files I had recorded and then listening to each interview again twice. Once it was typed up, I read through my transcriptions to begin taking initial notes and become more familiar with the data, reading through the text several times.

Once I had finished my first interviews and gathered my audio transcription and transcription notes, my second step was to begin coding. This coding involved highlighting sections of my text and creating shorthand labels or codes to describe their content. When coding my data, I also pulled phrases or sentences from the text that I felt described the idea or feeling expressed in that part of the text. By using coding, I could discover patterns that I might not have seen directly in a large amount of text when I first began to analyse my transcripts (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003).

At this stage, I knew it was essential to be thorough, and I highlighted many items in the interviews that I thought might be relevant or interesting in regard to my topic of team teaching. While highlighting all the phrases and sentences that matched my original codes, I kept adding new codes as I went through the transcriptions of my four interviews.

After going through the entire text, I collated my data into code-identified groups. These codes allowed me to get a better overview of the main points. It also gave me a better understanding of the shared meanings that recurred throughout the data, identified by code. These codes gave me a condensed overview of the main points and common meanings that recur throughout the data.

Step three in thematic analysis involved generating themes by reviewing the codes I had created. Several of my codes were combined into one theme. Once I identified my themes, I acknowledged that some of my codes needed to be more specific or relevant, not appearing often in the data. These codes were discarded. Other codes were so prominent in the four interviews that they became themes. For example, I decided that the code "teacher benefits" would be appropriate as a theme. When creating my themes, I knew my final goal was to gain themes that told me something about the variety of data I had collected.

Next, I began reviewing my themes to determine that they were valuable and accurate data representations. I took my data sets and compared my themes against them. It was vital that I make sure I didn't miss any crucial details that may contribute to my study on team teaching in urban elementary schools. Another item I focused on was seeing if I could change any themes to make them work better with the data I had collected. With some of my themes, I encountered problems. One such problem involved doing a second wave of coding to confirm that my subthemes were appropriate for my collected data. In the four interviews, sub-themes such as 'experienced teacher: classroom management,' 'opportunity to try new methods of teaching,' and 'exploring different resources from experienced teacher' all fit under the theme 'teacher benefits'. All these sub-themes were re-coded and placed under the sub-theme: 'improved teaching practice.' Some themes were split up, others were combined, and some were discarded. This helped to create more valuable and accurate data. An example of a discarded code came up under the theme 'teacher challenges', titled 'unfinished work' was removed from the data after it was clear that this sub-theme was only supported by one quote from one interview out of the four.

Step number five in thematic analysis is to define and name themes. This involved precisely describing what I meant by each theme and figuring out how it helped me to understand the data. I needed to develop an easily understandable name for each theme and sub-theme so that when I presented my research findings, they would be as clear as possible. I turned these codes, themes, and sub-themes into my final research paper.

Trustworthiness

When doing qualitative research, it is essential to focus on the transparency and trustworthiness of your research. While engaging in this research, I needed to check the reflexivity of my research repeatedly during this process. Checking reflexivity involved examining my judgments, practices, and belief systems during data collection. The goal of being reflexive is to identify any personal beliefs that may have incidentally affected my research. During reflexivity, I needed to be prepared to question my assumptions. The researcher plays an integral role in the data collection, especially during qualitative studies.

As part of the qualitative data analysis process, coding is where the researcher begins to interpret and assign meaning to the data. It represents one of the first steps as we filter the data through our own subjective lens as the researcher (DeClaro et al., 2021). I analyzed the transcribed data and the notes I took by hand during the interview to identify patterns in the research. The advantages of qualitative coding are that it increases validity, decreases bias, accurately represents the participants, and enables transparency by allowing other researchers to review the analysis (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003).

This study has been carried out in one teaching practice context. The first limitation is that, due to the case study design, the sample size is relatively small, and although qualitative analysis is commonly used in educational research, a larger-scale quantitative approach would provide much-needed further information and opportunities to make better comparisons. To fully understand the different experiences in this team teaching environment, more research is needed to deepen and understand the factors leading to a successful experience for both teachers. Another limitation was that the data collected for the research question, 'How do we measure success in team teaching?' was unclear. The research done for my literature review has shown that many teachers are unsure of how to assess the process of team teaching, and Thelma and Louise are no exception. While Thelma and Louise have many beginning ideas for measuring the success of team teaching, their ideas are often contradictory to one another. Suppose I had the chance to do this study again. In that case, something I would do differently is ask more questions around themes such as assessment and measuring success in hopes that I may better understand these topics in future research..

Findings & Discussion

Teacher Challenges

Both Thelma and Louise acknowledge that there are challenges that arise from joining a team teaching partnership. One such challenge is that this is Thelma and Louise's first time teaching together. Thelma says one of the challenges was, "the beginning of the year was a bit tough because it's the first year that we've really done [team teaching] to this extent." Thelma feels like this is a benefit because they are able to try new things, however, it doesn't always result in success: "This is our experimental year. We've been trying things. Every once in a while, we'll [say], "Well, that didn't work!" We have a good laugh about it and say, "Okay, what are we going to do next time?"

Louise agrees with Thelma, saying that this year, "[Team teaching is] a lot of trial and error". Louise also says the beginning of the year brought some feelings of nervousness. She says, "At the beginning, I felt a little apprehensive, because, I don't know what it's go[ing to] look like with us two in a room". These feelings will be further explored under the sub- theme, 'vulnerability'.

First year team teaching together

Both Thelma and Louise acknowledge that there are challenges that arise from joining a team teaching partnership. One such challenge is that this is Thelma and Louise's first time teaching together. Thelma says one of the challenges was, "the beginning of the year was a bit tough because it's the first year that we've really done [team teaching] to this extent." Thelma feels like this is a benefit because they are able to try new things, however, it doesn't always result in success: "This is our experimental year. We've been trying things. Every once in a while, we'll [say], "Well, that didn't work!" We have a good laugh about it and say, "Okay, what are we going to do next time?"

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Vulnerability

While Thelma does not speak specifically to vulnerability in her two interviews, Louise brings up the concept several times in both her interviews. She says,

I think team teaching is a big risk. You're really putting yourself out there. You're with another person who is watching what you're doing and could critique you or offer you feedback that you were not expecting.

Louise admits to not wanting to upset her more experienced colleague, saying that questions came up at the beginning of the year, such as,

What if I say something wrong? What if I disagree with what she's saying? What if it doesn't work out?" There were a lot of nervous feelings with that.

While these feelings lingered in September, in May, Louise says, "I was worrying for nothing basically. We've been having a really good time. We're excited to do this again next year." Over time, Louise has learned to open up more as a teacher and says, through the team teaching experience, "I feel like I've gotten more playful in my teaching." She also says that she appreciates the atmosphere that Thelma and her have created in the classroom when she says, "When I thought about team teaching before, I didn't think of the dynamic in the classroom. It's nice to see that the dynamic works." In Louise's second interview in June, she said about her and Thelma's relationship: "We work really well together, and we enjoy each other's company." This shows that, while Louise started the year with some negative feelings, her growth in her relationship with Thelma has helped increase her levels of comfort in this team teaching environment.

These women share a powerful bond that will be more evident when explored in the benefits of team teaching when looking at the subtheme, 'connection'.

Behavioural Challenges

The most prominent issue regarding teacher challenges is classroom behavioural challenges occurring due to unregulated students; this sub-theme came up in three out of the four interviews. Thelma says that in their team teaching environment, there are "more behaviour issues because we're not just dealing with the behaviours of my class, I'm also dealing with behaviours in Louise's class. That's definitely been a challenge."

Thelma says,

I've always liked [team teaching], even with the chaos that we sometimes have. I won't deny it, there are times that we do have chaos in here. But, that's because of the behaviour. Not because of what we're doing with our structure.

Louise says that this team teaching partnership experiences "very defiant behaviour" from two students, Darrell and Naval. "You'll ask them to do something: a lot of times it's a "No!" Louise says these two students will also "run out of the room or they'll slam doors. Or, they'll scream in your face." Louise also mentions:

Both have very different home life situations. But, both of those home life situations are causing escalations and behaviour. And, with both of them escalated, then they get into mischief together.

Louise tells the story of when the District Behavioural Specialist came to visit their classroom to observe a few different students, including Naval and Manaav. She says,

Naval and Darrell could not handle being in the classroom. So, Thelma sent them outside to the hallway where they spent an hour [kicking] a soccer ball against the wall in the hallway. That was language arts for them: kicking a soccer ball around.

In regards to this incident, Louise says,

I can't possibly try to coerce [Darell and Naval] back into the classroom and try to maintain some normalcy for the rest of the class. When they're out of the room, the rest of the kids can settle down and get right to work. They get back in and they're making random screaming noises, or they're getting in the face of other kids.

When they join the classroom again, there are further issues, Louise says: "They're bothering kids and stealing their school supplies. Everyone else gets heightened too, because they're on edge, waiting to see what these two [students] will do next."

In regards to Darell and Naval's relationship, Louise says, "[At] the beginning of the year, they were at each other's throats. Both of them feed off of each other." However, in regards to student behavioural issues, Thelma says, "I don't think there would have been any change, even if we kept our own classes." Now, Thelma refers to Naval and Darrell as 'sometimes friends': "Sometimes they get along really well with the

other. Sometimes they don't!" Concerning this, Louise says, "If one kid's gonna get to break to go to play basketball, well the other one wants to go out and play basketball. If one of them's gonna go out and kick a soccer ball in the hallway as loud as they can, well the other one wants to go out with them." Louise mentions that, "Every once and a while they have a blow up and one of them wants the other one to get into trouble, since they [have] the same personality." However, over time, she says, "I think they've learned how to deal with each other."

It is clear from these interviews that both Darrell and Naval struggle to regulate in the team teaching classroom. Regarding supports available to these students, Louise says: "We do have childcare workers. But, they're also busy putting out fires in all these other rooms, too."

Regarding Thelma's student, Darrell, Louise says "We have one child who's not H designated, who absolutely should be H designated." This means that while Darrell has been designated with an R for mental illness or behaviour, Louise believes that he should be designated for severe mental illness. Louise says this student can be volatile, stating, "[He] will hurt kids. Physically hurt them. But, he'll do it when he knows the adults aren't looking."

Naval, a student assigned to Louise's classroom, joined the team teaching class in October. Thelma stated that, Naval "gets aggressive and in the face of other students. [He] has triggered kids in my class." Naval's struggles in the classroom have brought the administration on board to help support him. Some strategies have worked better than others. Louise said that one reward system that was put into place backfired and led to behavioural complications in the classroom. Once Naval knew he would receive a reward from the office, Louise said, "I didn't know where he was half the day, because he would just wander the building. He would scream in my face when I'd asked him to do things and flat out refuse. He was impossible."

Naval added a new challenge to the team teaching environment. Thelma says,

When he came in, we had just started team teaching. We're still getting the [student] used to it. It caused a lot of grief for us. I would say, on an hourly basis, we were thinking, "What are we going to do next? How can we fix this? How can we get this to work?" As time went on, we put things in place that would help [support Naval]."

Thelma also talks about the energy in the classroom with Naval present, stating that after he was out for a bit and then rejoined the classroom, the "anxiety went way up in the room" as Thelma says that students are waiting to "see what he's going to do".

Supporting these students' behavioural needs is challenging. Louise also finds these behavioural issues frustrating: "I understand that there is trauma, but it's not fair for two children to hold the rest of the class hostage." By interviewing Thelma and Louise, it is clear that one of the most challenging issues they face in the team teaching environment is maintaining classroom expectations when students struggle to regulate in this grade 3 and 4 classroom.

What is more interesting about these behavioural issues is that they come from students who have yet to be assigned to the social development (SD) program for behaviour. Louise has one student, Andrew, who is assigned to her classroom from the SD program, however, the student is on a gradual release and is rarely in class. When he does join the class, he stays until he can no longer regulate, and then he returns to his program. When it was suggested that Naval join the SD program, there was a concern from the administration about how it might affect the other eight students in the program. This shocked Thelma and Louise because they know he is currently impacting 45 students with his behaviour in the team teaching classroom.

In regards to Darell, because he lacks an H designation for severe mental illness or a D designation for public health, he is not qualified for the SD program, despite his escalating behaviour in the classroom. Thelma worked hard to bring Darell's parents in this year to help speed up this designation process; however, there has been little success, and Darell still only has his 'R' designation until the school can support the family with getting on board for the therapy or a separate outside agency that would be required for this H designation.

These are only two out of Thelma and Louise's 46 students in grade 3 and grade 4. However, Darell and Naval have been brought into this research as their behavior is clearly significantly impacting the team teaching environment.

Systemic Issues

It's frustrating. There's no perfect solution here. The problem is way deeper. There's just never going to be enough support for these kids. - Louise

One issue that is brought up repeatedly in these interviews is the systemic issues occurring at the classroom level. Louise says, "We have refugees coming from war torn countries, from refugee camps, where they're having to struggle to show that they are, 'the big man on campus' just to survive." Halima, a grade 4 student and refugee from Iraq, is assigned to Thelma's class. Halima, "has never been to school in their life." Due to not being able to attend school means that she is academically far behind her peers and is still determining how the school system works in Canada. Research shows that for elementary students who are refugees, "Developing a sense of belonging at school may assist students to settle into their new country and to gain some control over their lives" (Picton & Banfield, 2020).

However, 'for students with experience as refugees who have left so much behind and whose cultural way of being may be at risk, developing pathways to belonging in mainstream school is especially vital' (Correa-Velez et al., 2010).

"The Welcome Centre was removed this year" says Thelma, "It previously supported our new to Canada, ELL community, providing them with basic English skills they can then apply at school." Now, however, "[we're] throwing them into Canada with no Welcome Center." Thelma indicates that this makes life for these students difficult and puts them at a further disadvantage. Not only do they need to learn English and academically catch up with their peers, they are also dealing with the trauma of their previous experiences. Miller et al. (2005) say, "It is an enormous challenge for young resettled people to transition into mainstream primary school while, at the same time, learning about a new language and culture".

In regards to supporting her grade 3 and 4 students, Louise says, "We don't have the additional supports for these kids to use". Louise recognizes that some of these challenges are outside of Thelma and her control.

I feel like there's systemic problems here that need to be addressed. But, Thelma and I are the peanuts. We're not going to be able to actually make

those kinds of changes. But, we can affect what happens in our classroom, and that's been working for us.

Louise says that her students often miss a great need, which is "a stable home life. They're not getting that. And, that's where the behaviour is coming from. So, [there's] nothing that we can do at our level. There's nothing we can do that we aren't already trying! But unfortunately, we still have to deal with all of the behaviour that's caused by this unstable home life."

This is especially true for both Naval and Darell, who are often unregulated due to issues that are occurring at home. Louise stated, "I acknowledge that there is some very deep trauma that's happening right now with [Naval] that is preventing him from learning to the best of his capacity". Thelma adds to this, saying, "Naval is struggling with the trauma of his life."

As much as Louise and Thelma work together to meet the needs of these students, the systemic issues that play a role in the classroom's learning can negatively impact the stability of the teaching environment. Unfortunately, teachers in the Surrey School District are not explicitly trained on how to support trauma in elementary school students. Due to this, these elementary teachers are at a disadvantage when it comes to meeting the needs of students such as Halima, Darell, and Naval.

Inclusivity

In regards to supporting students with special needs, Zuberi states,

Elementary schools attempt to integrate students with special needs into classrooms (rather than segregating them as was often done in the past) and then provide them with resources and support both in and outside the classroom. However, there are not always enough resources for effectively managing integration in the schools studied.

This elementary school is a perfect example of the lack of resources available to support integration into the classroom. Due to this, one of my sub-themes became inclusivity. Louise says,

I'm noticing sometimes the kids get a little overwhelmed by how noisy the room can be and how much stuff is going on at once. We're already thinking about ways we can change it for next year. That's something that we can

definitely consider is how to give kids who need a quiet space, that space. Or, how to make sure that the room doesn't become overwhelmingly loud.

In her first interview, Louise said, "I feel like right now, our team teaching is not as inclusive as I would like it to be." A student named Manaav, is one of Louise's examples of this. Manaav has a G designation because he has autism. Manaav receives full-time EA coverage, a rarity for a grade 4 student with autism but also a necessity. "It's been very difficult. [Manaav] does not come into the team teaching room. He doesn't come into our learning space, because it's too overwhelming for him."

Previously, Manaav would spend much time in Louise's room, as it is a designated quiet space for him and for other students who are willing to lower their voices while they complete their school work. While this showed promise at the beginning of the year, Louise says, when building relationships and social skills, "Manaav doesn't have that peer interaction, as much, to help him practise those skills." As well, his peer interactions have become even more limited for another reason: "Manaav spends a lot of time in the sensory room because right now he's having personal space [and] boundary issues" says Louise.

Currently, Louise says, Manaav "poses a physical risk to the other children because he's been attacking girls in class. He jumps on them, grabs on to them, and tries to kiss them. He squeezes their faces so hard he'll scratch them." In regards to this, Thelma says, "That was a bit of a problem. We've had to stop that for a while. We can still use that other space. It just means he can't use it when we're in there." While the beginning of the year showed promise, with Manaav frequently working with his peers in the designated "Quiet Room", it is clear that inclusion has become more complex with these new behaviours. In regards to his peers, Louise says, "It's been terrible for these poor girls. It's traumatic for them." Due to this, Manaav spends much of his time with his EA in the sensory room.

Marcus is another example of a student who is not thriving in this team teaching environment. In regards to this student, Louise says, "The boy is reading at a grade 1 level, [he] is self-conscious and anxious. His anxiety has ramped up. I have a suspicion that [there are] some issues with home." Louise mentioned that previous to Spring Break, Marcus was doing well in the team teaching environment. Since Spring Break ended, "He doesn't want to be in my classroom. He does not want to be around

anybody. He swears he doesn't have any friends, even though one of the boys in my class [says], "No, no. We're friends." Louise also mentions that "He doesn't want to eat lunch in my room. He's away a lot. I know that having a loud classroom with 40 plus [students] in it is not really helping his anxieties. It's loud and bustling. He needs a quiet space to work." This is another example of a student that is not thriving in this environment and is struggling to have his needs met in Thelma and Louise's classroom.

Lastly, one of Thelma's students, Troy, a third-grade student with autism, also struggles in this team teaching environment: "[Troy] finds it so overwhelming to be in a room with 40 other kids," said Louise. "It's too noisy. It's too chaotic. He has meltdowns quite frequently. He spends a lot of time in my room where it's quieter."

While this team teaching environment appears to be working for the vast majority, some students in this classroom are struggling to meet their needs due to anxiety or sensory issues related to noise level. Spörer et al. (2011) looked at research involving team teaching and students with special needs. Their findings were that,

When using a team teaching model where one teacher taught and the other teacher assisted, the research found that for students without special needs, the probability to interact with classmates remained almost the same. However, for students with special needs, it was reduced" (Spörer et al., 2011).

This suggests that students with special needs in a cotaught classroom may be at more of a disadvantage socially. Thelma and Louise's comments on inclusivity indicate that this may be the case.

Schedule Alignment

In the beginning, it wasn't working as well as we wanted. - Thelma
One change that Thelma acknowledges in both of her interviews was the issue of schedule alignment when merging these two grade 3 and grade 4 classrooms. Thelma says, "At the beginning of the year, it was a challenge to get our schedules aligned."

In regards to working with the LST team, Thelma says,

The problem is, because we've got so many split [grades] in the school, and [the LST department] have to try and find a way to help all these

different kids from all the different classes. There was no way that could give us the help we needed. So, we've had to sort of work around that.

For physical education, Thelma and Louise asked if they could have back-to-back gym blocks to help accommodate the two classes. Louise said they were told, "It's a draw, you get whatever comes out." Due to these scheduling constraints, they could get one gym block back-to-back but not two. Thelma says, "That means we had to rethink what we were going to do for the other [gym] times."

However, Thelma sees the benefit in the arrangement, saying, "It's better to have a smaller group. I'll take my class, and then Louise will take hers and teach them the skills too." She also states, "As it turned out, I think actually having the two separate and then one together is better."

Thelma indicates that schedule alignment was an issue at the beginning of the year, both in regard to the LST schedule and scheduling the gym for physical education.

Unbalanced Classes

Louise and Thelma both talk about the challenge of having two grade 3 and 4 classes that are, unfortunately, unbalanced in regards to academic needs. Louise mentions,

My students take a lot longer to get their work done than Thelma's students. I've got a board up in my room of all the unfinished work that my class is missing. But, Thelma's classroom board is clear, because all of her kids have already caught up on everything. That is one of the frustrations because Thelma's class is on pace, we have to keep going ahead. My [students] have you use some catch up time.

When asked why Louise believes that Thelma's students are finishing faster than her own students, Louise says, "Our current theory is, I have a lot more grade threes than [Thelma] does." Regarding student numbers, Louise's class has 11 grade 3s and 11 grade 4s, whereas Thelma has 7 grade 3s and 16 grade 4s. Louise says, "Those fours are always caught up." Louise also believes that, "because she's got so many 4s, it helps encourage the grade 3s in the class to move a little quicker."

Thelma has "all these grade fours, who are getting their work done, and also helping them so that they can play together or do free time together." On the other hand,

"A lot of my grade threes take forever to finish an activity." says Louise. "I also have kids who really value the social aspect of school."

Thelma agrees with Louise's perception of the unbalanced classes, stating:

I have more fours than Louise does. My grade threes [are] trying to keep up with that group of grade fours. They're finishing their work faster. Louise's grade threes are not capable of doing that. Because there's more [grade 3s in Louise's class], it makes a big difference.

Louise believes that "Thelma's [students] are a little more mature. They can stop talking for a bit, get to work, finish their work, and then pick up a conversation." She also says, "I think that Thelma is much better at being on top of them about [academics]".

Evidently, Louise and Thelma are on the same page regarding these two classes being unbalanced. Thelma says:

One thing we found is my grade fours are finishing their work faster than hers [Louise's] are. Having more grade fours has been telling. We found that really interesting this year. We are saying, next year, we should swap it and see if I have more threes and she has more fours, see if there's a difference. I don't know if there will be or not.

Thelma and Louise have agreed that next year, they will address how they can create more of a balance between the two grade 3 and 4 classrooms.

Compatibility

If you teach one way and your partner teaches a completely different way, then you're probably go[ing to] butt heads on certain things or disagree with each other. – Louise

Compatibility became a subtheme because Louise and Thelma repeatedly mention that challenges can arise in a team teaching environment due to a lack of compatibility. Interestingly, however, both women talk about compatibility in a hypothetical sense, and for the most part, they do not believe compatibility to be an issue in their own team teaching experiences.

Louise says "Teachers may have different styles of teaching. Everyone teaches so differently. There's nothing wrong with that." However, Louise also says that if you're going to take the plunge into team teaching, pedagogy needs to be similar: "If you're

going to be stuck in a room with them five days a week, you'd hope that your ideas somewhat coordinate".

When it comes to Thelma and Louise's compatibility in the classroom, Thelma says, in regards to lesson planning, "Sometimes, [Louise] will make a decision about something, and I'll just say, "Eh, I don't think we should do that." And, if I give her reasons why and she understands that, then she'll say, "Okay, fine." We respect each other enough that we can say "Yeah, okay, we'll just let that go". Thelma says it goes both ways, with her sometimes suggesting ideas that Louise does not always agree with.

While Thelma and Louise are primarily compatible, they both agree that compatibility is a possible challenge that could arise in the team teaching environment.

Time

Thelma and Louise indicate that team teaching can take more time due to the collaborative efforts and the discussion required around lesson planning. Therefore, time became a subtheme when analysing the research data. Thelma says, "[Team teaching] does take a little bit more work in the beginning." Thelma says that team teaching "does take a lot of patience."

Louise mentions, "It creates more [work] because we have two different opinions. A lot of the time we're going back and forth on which would be the better option to go with." Thelma also mentioned it can be hard to get out of school at times, at a decent hour. She accredited some of this time taking because "we like to talk. That's definitely a challenge". Louise also admits to bringing many new ideas to the table to engage her grade 3 and 4 students. One example of these new ideas is when they planned to teach students about pH indicators during their Harry Potter unit. She says, "I boiled a bunch of red cabbage and we came up with all these different solutions for the kids to test out. It costs way more money. It takes way more time to organise all these things."

Both Thelma and Louise acknowledge that team teaching can be time-consuming.

When looking at the theme, 'teacher challenges', in a team teaching environment, several issues came up in the four interviews. These sub-themes included

systemic issues, behavioural challenges, unbalanced classes, time, inclusivity, vulnerability, compatibility, schedule alignment, and 'first year team teaching together'. In the next section, I will address the 'measuring success' theme in team teaching..

Measuring Success

When looking at the research, Beninghof (2020) states that "it is difficult to measure the effectiveness of team teaching". In order to explore this topic, I created the research question, "How do we measure success in team teaching?" In their first interviews, Thelma and Louise were asked, "How will you measure the success of the team teaching program this year?" Sub-themes in the coded data include: other teachers see the benefits, student academic progress, and the power of connection.

In both her interviews, Thelma states that her main goal in initiating the team teaching model was to share the model with other teachers. She states, "I was hoping that other people would see what's happening between the two of us and be interested in doing the same thing." She reiterates this goal in her second interview: "I think my main goal is to be able to prove that this [team teaching] is a success. My main goal is to get [teachers] to understand and see the benefits of having the two teachers in the classroom." Louise says she has seen progress in this goal, stating, "I'm seeing a lot more teachers looking at the team teaching model in our school." Louise also says that to measure success, it may be important to look at "seeing the growth of the collaboration efforts of teachers in the future."

Louise explores the topic of success in team teaching further, stating,

We could track the progress of students. We could see how much they've learned over the course of a year. That's how we can assess it. But, then it becomes a question of, would they have done the same in a regular classroom? Was there actually a benefit to the team teaching? Is that what caused the learning?"

Louise continues, " I don't think that student success may be the deciding factor on how successful it was."

Louise also talks about the power of connection in an inner-city elementary school and how it relates to success in team teaching:

The more kids feel connected to a teacher, or teachers, or just like the building in general, I think that gives them a good structure for the rest of their lives," Louise provides an example of this, saying: "Thelma has a girl, that she used to teach in grade four, coming back and doing volunteer work for her. She's going into [the teaching program] soon. The fact that that relationship between her and Thelma has withstood time? I think that's really positive. So, maybe that's how I'll measure success. [Success is] the depth of the relationships that I've built with the students, the connections that we've made this year, and seeing the growth of the community within our school.

To conclude, it is clear that while 'success in team teaching' is an incredibly valuable research question, the answers given by this team teaching partnership indicate that, while there may be many ways to measure success in team teaching, they are varied and hard to measure. Sub-themes that arose when answering this research question included: teachers see the benefits, student academic progress, and the power of connection. More research is required in order to truly understand how to assess team teaching and measure success in the team-teaching classroom. Our third theme will look at 'enjoyment'.

Enjoyment

When looking at the theme of enjoyment, both Thelma and Louise have an overwhelming positive reaction to their partnership and team teaching in general. To analyze the themes, I looked at synonyms of enjoyment: fun, like, love, agree, enjoy, appreciate, entertain, pleasant, and satisfy. It was clear from the beginning of coding this data that words such as "entertain", "pleasant", and "satisfy" were not in the coded data at all, and therefore these terms were removed.

The word "like" came up multiple times in the four interviews, and I soon realized the challenge I had taken on. Louise's interview had the word "like" 367 times in the interview, and I quickly ascertained that these were not the type of "like" I was looking for. I, instead, chose to opt to search for "I like" and was able to find that this came up several times in three out of the four interviews about team teaching. In Louise's second interview, she mentions that "Thelma and I are like-minded. That's part of why we work so well!" I choose to keep "like-minded" in my codes because I thought the way Louise spoke in this interview encapsulated their close relationship perfectly. In Thelma's first

interview, she mentions that "Louise and I like each other and we're friends." These quotes shows the evident bond that Thelma and Louise share.

Concerning team teaching, Thelma states in both of her interviews that she enjoys it, stating, "I've always liked [team teaching]" and "I like [team teaching], it's a lot easier for both of us." Thelma has a similar opinion on team teaching: "I really enjoy [collaboration]. That's something that's been really fun, working with another person."

"Fun" was another sub-theme in the research. Thelma states, "[This year], it's been fun." When asked about her experience with team teaching, Louise said, "[It's] great! Thelma and I are gearing up to do this again next year. We're having so much fun!" Thelma spoke positively about the communication between Thelma and herself, saying, "We both feed off each other because we're both a little bit snarky, but in a fun way." Thelma also mentions their classroom interactions when she says, "It's become this fun dynamic, where, every once in a while, when one of us is teaching, the other one will cut in and add our two cents." The bond these two women share is both pleasant and unique.

Another subtheme in the research was 'enjoy'. The collaborative piece of team teaching is what Louise finds the most engaging. She says, "I really enjoy that part of the job". In regards to Thelma and Louise's relationship, Louise says, "we already enjoy working with each other as grade group partners" and "we enjoy each other's company." These quotes indicate that Louise views this partnership and team teaching in general to be an overall enjoyable experience.

I also looked up possible antonyms of enjoyment. These included words such as "unhappy", "unfun", "boring", "unpleasant", "dislike", "tiring" and "disagree". Concerning team teaching, the words "unhappy" "boring", "unfun", "unpleasant", "tiring" and "dislike" were not used at all in the four interviews, and therefore these words were removed from the coded data. Therefore, the only word that remained in the subcodes was "disagree".

In Thelma's interviews, antonyms of enjoyment were only used in a double negative, such as when she says, "We haven't had any disagreements. We haven't had any times where we didn't agree with what we're doing." Thelma further confirms her thoughts on the suitability of this team teaching partnership by stating in her second interview, "Louise and I haven't had any disagreements at all this year." These

quotations indicate that, from Thelma's perspective, this is a strong bond that Thelma and Louise share and that this team teaching partnership is working. By searching for both the synonyms and antonyms of "enjoyment" in the data, my coding indicates that team teaching is going well for this partnership and that they are enjoying the team teaching experience.

The fourth theme to be addressed in this research paper is teacher benefits.

Teacher Benefits

This section will look at teacher benefits. When Thelma speaks to teacher benefits, she says, "That was my main goal [in team teaching]. To get somebody to understand and see the benefits of having the two teachers in the classroom." Many sub-themes arose when doing this research. Sub-themes include time saved: administrative workload, collaboration, and, more specifically, addressing behaviour collaboratively. Other sub-themes include teacher connection, less stress, and being further ahead in curricular goals. Lastly, I will explore the sub-theme 'improved teaching practice'.

Time Saved on Administrative Workload

The first sub-theme, acknowledged in all four interviews, was: time saved on administrative workload. Thelma says that one of the benefits of team teaching is "having less work to do because instead of just planning for the one class being there, you plan it for the two [classes]. Thelma and Louise also share the teaching load: "I do the language arts, Louise does the math. Then we share the other subjects. [Team teaching] makes things a lot easier for you." Louise agrees with this: "I think we're really happy with what we're doing. Thelma is teaching language arts. I[m] teaching the math. Maybe next year, we would switch, and I would do the language arts, and she could do the math."

Thelma believes "one of the biggest benefits is that you're not having to do as much work when you have a partner, because you can share some of the administrative type duties, such as photocopying [and] preparing lessons." She says, "It's also great to have another adult in the room, when you are team teaching, because, if one is teaching, the other person might be either working with a small group, or one-on-one

[with a student]." As well, Thelma says that while one teacher is teaching the class, "if there's any marking, that can be done". Louise says that their collaboration efforts have "created less work" for the team.

Regarding a situation where one teacher was unwell, Thelma says, "Anytime either one of us is sick? We don't have to worry about leaving a full-day lesson plan. Usually [the TOC note] says, "Go see, Louise, or go see Thelma." This quote indicates that Thelma and Louise save the time it takes to write a lengthy plan for the teacher on call, as either Thelma or Louise is usually present in the classroom to support the students.

Thelma says it is due to these benefits that she can focus more on school-wide events. "[Louise] basically did all the teaching for two weeks", so Thelma could save her energy for the school-wide play. Running a school-wide musical was only possible due to the time Thelma and Louise saved through implementing team teaching: "I was able to focus more on the play and get everything done in time. That's a benefit."

Louise says that team teaching "directly benefited me when, a few weeks ago, I was horrifically unwell. I had to take several days off work. I asked [Thelma], "Do you need me to leave a day plan for this TOC? Do you need me to prep for them?" Louise said Thelma responded with, "No, I'm here." Louise says that in a situation such as illness, team teaching "created less work". Thelma provides another example of how collaborative work supports teachers, saying, "If I'm tired, or if she's tired, or not feeling 100%? The other one can step up, and nothing changes for the [students]."

Another direct benefit of team teaching is the sub-theme 'collaboration', which will be addressed in the next section. .

Collaboration

The second benefit mentioned was that collaboration time with a colleague was precious to both Thelma and Louise. Regarding the sub-theme, 'collaboration', Louise states, "I really enjoy that part of the job. That's something that's been really fun, working with another person." Thelma agrees, saying in her first interview, "I think the biggest benefit is having a partner to work with all the time." Thelma continues, "I wanted Louise to get excited with team teaching. I wanted her to have a positive experience so that she could

see what it's like to work closely with another teacher. That was my main goal." These quotes indicate that Thelma and Louise feel positive about the collaboration experience.

In previous years, Thelma and Louise worked collaboratively before. Now, however, Louise says, "Not only are we planning and talking about things together, but now we're doing everything together." Thelma says that team teaching is "nice, because even doing report cards, we do them together."

When talking about their physical education program, Thelma says that,

"You get these challenges and say, "Okay, what am I going to get? What are we going to do? But, we [have] the two of us to sit there and go, "How about if we try this?" Or, "Why don't we do this?" So, even though it's a bit of a challenge trying to get it done? You got two heads!"

Louise agrees that the collaboration process is going well: "I appreciate that a lot of the times we sit down, and we go, "So, what should we do for this? This is the activity I'm kind of thinking of...Will it work?" Thelma thinks this collaboration process is working well, stating: "The funny thing is, Louise and I haven't had any disagreements at all this year. It's always been mutual acceptance of decisions."

In her second interview, Louise was asked what she brings to the collaborative effort. In response, she says, "I always have these huge plans. That's what I bring to the table. I bring the big, crazy ideas, and I hope that they get sorted out." She references their Harry Potter unit and the extra experiments she and Thelma have added to the unit this year. When asked how they organize these plans, Louise says they sort the workload equally. For example, she says, "with this whole experiment. I basically made two lists of things that had to be done, and I handed her one of the lists and me one of the lists." Sometimes, these big ideas seem a bit much, and Louise asks herself, "Why do I do this to myself?" However, she says: "At the end of the day, the kids are having a great time! They're learning things. They're having fun. The unit is better for it." These quotes show that Thelma and Louise's collaborative effort is working not only in their favour but also in a way that benefits and influences their grade 3 and 4 students.

Louise says, regarding their shared workload, "I feel like we both work equally hard for the benefit of the kids." She provides examples, such as their Harry Potter unit: "When we gave the kids the wands, Thelma took that one upon herself, and she made every single wand. I did not participate in that. [Thelma] folded up all the [wand] boxes."

Louise says, "There's some things that I've taken upon myself. We gave the kids something over Easter break that I put together." Louise says, regarding their collaborative efforts, "We've been having a really good time. We're excited for next year."

The following section will talk more specifically about collaboration when addressing behavioural issues in the classroom.

Addressing Behaviour Collaboratively

More specifically, Thelma and Louise speak to the benefits of addressing student behavioural issues collaboratively in this grade 3 and 4 classroom. These benefits are essential because Thelma admits, "I know that there's so many schools out there that have [students with behavioural issues]." She says, "If needed, we can deal with behaviour concerns if they come up in the classroom, while the other [teacher] continues to teach." Thelma and Louise see the benefits of addressing behaviour collaboratively. These benefits include discussions that benefit student behaviour, helping to manage teacher frustrations, and how having two teachers in a room can allow lessons to continue, with only one teacher dealing with the issue, as the other teacher continues to teach.

Thelma believes teachers who teach alone are disadvantaged when supporting student behavioural issues. It is different in a team teaching environment:

When you've got two teachers, and they think the teacher's back is turned? 9 out of 10 times, the other teacher's got their eyes on them. We know, between both Louise and I, we know which kids we have to keep an eye on. We know which ones are not going to be finishing their work or focus on the work.

Louise also recognizes the value of addressing behavioural issues collaboratively, telling the story of when Darrell had a meltdown during a classroom lesson.

[Thelma] was up at the tech cart, writing answers [for] the sheet that the kids were working on. It was like a dance! The moment it happened: the kid slammed the door and went screaming out. Thelma went running after him. It was instantaneous. I got up from the rainbow table, and I glided over. "Question number seven?" I asked the class. "Who has an answer for

question number seven?" The [students] just put their heads down, and they got right back to it.

Louise indicates that dealing with student behavioural needs collaboratively is beneficial:

"Schools nowadays get so little support for the needs that we have in our building. It's nice having an extra person." With two teachers in one room, Thelma and Louise share the benefits of working together to create preventative measures to support behaviour before it escalates, or sometimes, before it even begins, by putting measures in place to support these students with a higher level of need. Specifically looking at their collaborative efforts towards supporting Louise's student, Naval, with behavioural issues, Thelma says,

"We spend a lot of time talking about, what are we going to do about this kid? And, not just what are we going to do in Louise's class or in my class, but the two of us. "What are we going to do with this kid? What support can we get? How can we get some help for him?" As time went on, we put things in place that would help [support Naval]. We figured out best ways to work with him and what he needed. A lot of the behaviours, they didn't stop. We still get them to this day. But, they're not affecting the kids as much. I remember one example: Naval was in our Quiet Room, where some of the other kids were working. And he was goading [Darell], who is quite volatile. It was getting to the point where it was going to be an absolute fight, a fist to cuff fight. The EA at the time came and said, "They're ramping up." I was in the middle of teaching at that time. So, I stepped away from what I was teaching, so I could go and deal with it. Louise basically walked over to where I was with the lesson, and carried on."

Thelma believes that addressing Naval's behaviour collaboratively has been beneficial: There's the two of us sort of talking back and forth about it. About, "Let's try this. Let's try this." That's been more beneficial than if it was just a teacher trying to deal with a kid on their own."

Having two teachers in this team teaching environment is beneficial not only from a collaborative perspective but also because it gives the two teachers the opportunity to take a break from a frustrating situation if needed, says Thelma. She says that one of the benefits of addressing behaviour collaboratively is that "sometimes it became a matter of, "I'm tired of having to repeat myself with this child 7, 8, 9 times...your turn!" So, we can sort of tag team off some of the [students with] bigger behaviours." It's nice to have options, Thelma admits, "I could go work with that kid for a while, or Louise could

go work with that kid." Thelma thinks team teaching is "beneficial because you're working with somebody who understands what you're going through".

Louise says, "Schools nowadays, get so little support for the needs that we have in our building. It's nice having an extra person." Thelma provides another excellent example of why it is good to have another teacher in the room:

"We know which [students] are not good combinations. Not necessarily because they don't like each other, but because of the fact that they distract each other so much. They don't get any work done. So, when they think that nothing's happening, or that the teacher is not watching, because the teacher's busy teaching, they start messing around. But, there's another teacher all of the sudden standing behind them going, "Excuse me? What do you think you're doing?" It stops those behaviours."

Thelma and Louise share many benefits of addressing behaviour collaboratively, such as having two teachers in a room can allow lessons to continue, with one teacher supporting the student with a behavioural issue as the other teacher continues to teach. Discussions that benefit managing student behaviour and helping manage teacher frustrations were also two prominent sub-themes. The following section will detail why team teaching reduces teacher stress.

Less stress

Thelma and Louise indicate that this year's team teaching experience has led to less stress. Thelma says, "last year at this time, I felt so overwhelmed, so stressed, and I kept thinking, 'Why am I doing this to myself?'" In comparison, she says, "I feel way more relaxed at this time of the year than I did last year." Louise agrees with her, saying, "I'm feeling less overwhelmed. Working with a teacher who has more experience than me really helped."

When referring to the sub-theme 'time saved: administrative tasks', it was mentioned that Thelma and Louise split the planning for math and language 50-50. Due to team teaching, Louise says,

For part of your day, you're acting as support rather than direct instruction. That can take a lot of the mental load off of you. For someone who is introverted as me, I find that a bit relieving. I don't feel quite so exhausted by the end of the day.

Louise and Thelma taking turns with teaching the class or acting as support is creating a less stressful environment for them. Louise says, "We're really happy with the way that works."

Thelma references teacher burnout, stating, "We burnout easy. There have been times that I've walked in, and I've said to Louise, 'I don't know if I'm gonna be able to do this today.' She'll say, 'Not a problem, I'll go do this, this and this if you can do this.'" "Deal!" Thelma would reply. "That's huge. It is so nice having another adult in the room." Both teachers indicate that team teaching has provided a less stressful environment than last year. The following section will indicate why connection became a sub-theme in the research on teacher benefits.

Teacher Connection

I have read research that set out to answer one question: What makes the best, highest-performing team? This study found that one of the most significant indicators of high performance was: "People on the team understood the power of social connection with one another" (Duhigg, 2016).

'Connection' was a sub-theme under teacher benefits. When focusing on connection, Achor (2018) finds that "social connection is one of the great predictors of thriving both personally and academically. As well, teams that foster a sense of connection "are more productive and do better work, and as an additional bonus, the people on them are happier and healthier" (Markin, 2022). A connection can make a huge difference in a school setting where two teachers work together daily (Markin, 2022).

It was exciting to hear that Thelma and Louise are on the same page regarding their close relationship. Before team teaching in September 2022, Louise said, "we already enjoyed working with each other as grade group partners", indicating that this has been a long-lasting bond that Thelma and her share. When Thelma was asked in her first interview, 'what has surprised you about team teaching?' She said that Louise and her "really haven't had any disagreements. We haven't had any times where we didn't agree with what we're doing. It surprised me that we haven't had more conflict. That makes a big difference." Louis comments on Thelma and her relationship: "Thelma

and I are very like-minded. That's part of why we work so well. We just agree with each other!" In another part of her interview, Louise says, "We work really well together, and we enjoy each other's company." Louise also mentions that she feels that Louise and her own "pedagogy is aligned".

Thelma isn't entirely sure why this relationship works so well, but she suggests, "maybe it's because we have enough differences." Thelma speaks about compatibility, saying that she and Louise do have two types of personalities. She says, "I'm probably more of a type A personality. When my room is messy, or when I get behind [on administrative tasks], it stresses me out. Whereas that doesn't stress Louise out at all."

While Louise admits to some initial apprehension regarding the team teaching experience, she says, "I got over that quickly, when I saw how well everything in the room works. And, we already enjoyed working with each other as grade group partners." In another instance, Louise gives an example of where she had to be vulnerable in teaching:

In the beginning, I was worried about whether my teaching practices were best teaching practices. I specifically remember this one time where I was teaching a math lesson. I couldn't get the thought out that I wanted to convey to the [students]. They weren't getting the concept. I couldn't find the words to explain it. Then, Thelma jumped in. She started getting the [students] to move around the room. At the beginning, I was really embarrassed: "How can I have not just thought of that on the spot? That's embarrassing that she had to take over for me." And, then, I just rethought about it. "No. Wait. This isn't embarrassing. She's not digging on me. We're working together to support one another. It's become this fun dynamic where, every once in a while, when one of us is teaching, the other one will cut in and add our two cents.

Speaking of fun, Louise's open cups in the classroom and Thelma's "special deliveries!" have become a running joke amongst these two team teachers. In her second interview, Louise, sounding amused, elaborates on the story about the cups, saying:

So, one big issue Thelma and I ran into is I kept bringing in my coffee cups, that didn't have lids on them. And, I'd leave them there [on the desk] and they would get cold and then a kid would inevitably knock the coffee all over onto the papers. So, Thelma was about ready to kill me, I think.

She goes on to say:

I finally brought in a coffee tumbler that had a lid. We mostly eliminated that problem. Everything was going hunky dory. And then, this past week, when we were getting prepped for our like pH indicator tests? I had a cup full of baking soda mixed with water. (laughter) Thelma went to grab it, and she spilled it all over [the] table and I was like, "Oh my God. What is going on? This is brutal." So, open cups and me in her classroom are not a good combination.

Thelma looks thoughtful when she says, "I'm just trying to think if there's anything where there's been any negativity at all..." Then, she laughs, saying: "Cept she leaves her damn cups in my room!"

Louis says, "I feel like Thelma and I feed off of each other really well." Thelma says it's common for Louise to leave a variety of items on Thelma's desk or around the team teaching classroom. In the last two weeks of school, a running game with Thelma and Louise was that, on occasions when Louise's students were all working in her room, Thelma would send random items back to Louise via students. The student would come down to Louise's room and say, "Special delivery!" Then the student would hand Louise a random item, such as a water bottle or a pencil box. A few minutes later, a different student from Thelma's class would arrive with a "Special delivery!": another random item that Louise had left in the classroom. "Little things to drive her crazy." said Thelma, with a smile. These repeated 'special deliveries' are a great example of the sense of humour that Thelma and Louise clearly share.

Thelma admits, "Part of the reason why I'm coming back next year, instead of retiring, is because I want to have another year of being able to work with Louise. Having that connection? I think it's really beneficial." When Louise was asked, "How are you feeling about the team teaching experience?", she replied, "Great! Thelma and I are gearing up to do this again next year. We're having so much fun!" It is clear that both women are enjoying this experience and share a strong connection, something that is overall related to their well-being (Markin, 2022). In the next section, I will address the subtheme titled 'further ahead in curricular goals'.

Further ahead in curricular goals

"I think we're in a really good position towards the end of the year [with team teaching]. You know, how, at the end of the year, you always panic? I haven't taught them this, this, and this. We're not that at that

point. We've covered a lot of things. We've covered a lot of special and unique things." -Thelma

Thelma and Louise both agree that they are further ahead in curricular goals in comparison to last year, when they were not running a team teaching program. Due to being further ahead in the curriculum, Thelma and Louise say they've been able to add additional content during the year.

Thelma says,

We've been doing felting. The kids have had the [Aboriginal Helping Teachers] come in. After they finished doing the felting, they are going to write and tell us about their story place and why it's important to them. We started with working with a map of the school. Then we did a map of Hawthorne Park. And then we talked about your favourite place. And so then they had to learn how to do a bird's eye view of their favourite place. That's something that's unique that we haven't been able to do. And we're doing it with all 46 kids. That was a lot of fun.

Louise also talks about the additional curricular content, saying, "We've read two novels to [the students] this year, instead of one." Regarding teaching the curriculum, Louise says, "We're going faster. That's great." One of the reasons for this, says Louise, is because there are two teachers in the team teaching environment deciding, "Are these kids getting it? Can we move on?" She says this is helpful, "especially with the math. Math has always been my trickiest."

It is excellent that Louise and Thelma feel they are benefiting by further advancing their curricular goals. In the next section, I will acknowledge the benefits Louise and Thelma have noted, analyzing the sub-theme 'improved teaching practice'.

Improved teaching practice

In their interviews, Thelma and Louise talk about how team teaching has improved their teaching practice. Louise says her "personal goal was to get a better sense of my own pedagogy and teaching" and "I love trying new things. I love pushing myself to explore different resources, methods of teaching, [and] technologies. Louise feels like working with a more experienced teacher has improved her teaching, "seeing ways in which I can improve my practice through how Thelma do[es] things." Louise also mentions that "because Thelma and I are working together, I have that flexibility and that freedom to try

different things. See if they work." By team teaching with Thelma, Louise says, "It's [made me] assess what I'm doing in a classroom and look for ways to make it better".

Louise references one unit in particular: "Our Harry Potter unit. At its core, it's the same. We're reading the book. But, the way we've approached it is different this year. Because we've already done it once, now we get to add and play around with it."

Louise tells a story detailing the changes Thelma and her have made to improve their Harry Potter unit. She says,

We get to challenge each other as teachers to come up with new things. We're not just repeating old stuff over and over again; it's looking at how we can do it different. A couple years ago, separately, we noticed that the kids really struggled with the language [in Harry Potter]. They even struggled with how to sit and read a book. So, we changed it. We started differently. Before Spring Break, we started reading 'How to Train Your Dragon'. A much smaller and more accessible novel to these kids. We're noticing a much higher buy in for Harry Potter instantly because we've already set them up with that first story. The [students] are learning more.

Thelma agrees with Louise's upbeat assessment of the unit, saying that, now, "we're noticing that they're becoming more and more interested in reading and the chapter books, which is really cool to see because they are taking up a love for reading."

Thelma says Louise and herself are already discussing what can be improved in their second year of team teaching: "We're trying things. We're talking about our schedule not working because of what-have-you: it's too much, the kids aren't getting enough out of it, or it's just not happening. We're talking about next year, "We're not going to do that; we're going to do something else."

When looking at the theme 'teacher benefits', many sub-themes came up while doing this research. Sub-themes include time saved: administrative workload, collaboration, and, more specifically, addressing behaviour collaboratively. Other sub-themes include teacher connection, less stress, and being further ahead in curricular goals. The following section will address my fifth theme, the benefits that students experience in the team teaching classroom.

Student Benefits

One of my research questions is, "What do students have to gain from team teaching?" Due to this, I created a theme titled 'student benefits'. Under this theme, I found a variety of sub-themes, including: time saved: less behavioural interference, student-teacher connection, and 'the learning never stopped'.

What I find to be the most exciting finding, and perhaps one of the most important in team teaching in an urban elementary school, is that both Thelma and Louise agree that a substantial amount of time has been saved this year. This subtheme was titled 'time saved: less behavioural interference'. This sub-theme came up several times under 'teacher benefit' but was more prominently talked about in the interviews concerning 'student benefits'. The most significant indicator that students were benefiting from the team teaching arrangement was time saved on academics. In a nutshell, the teachers still have to deal with many behavioural issues, which creates a stressful environment for themselves; however, the students benefit from two teachers, one who can support an unregulated student and another who can carry on with the classroom lesson.

Thelma and Louise make it clear that they believe their two merged classrooms to be a good representation of the average classroom at their urban elementary school. This is a good indicator that most teachers in the school have at least one or two students with behavioural issues, which leads to lost learning time for most students. Specifically, I reflect on the grade 1 and 2 classroom I taught last year. Learning was frequently disrupted due to student behavioural issues. These disruptions were an unfortunate issue, as students' learning suffered. On occasion, the environment was considered unsafe, and the students would be relocated to the library or another classroom until the escalated student was no longer a safety issue. One such issue occurred when a grade 2 female student escalated and began to threaten, bully, and physically hurt another student. Another example was when a male student escalated and threw items across the room, including a rock he had brought in from outside.

Regarding being in a situation, such as this one, with students with behavioural issues and only one teacher available, Thelma says, "The one thing that kids figure out in a hurry, is that when there's one teacher and 23 kids? They have a bigger chance of

getting away with trouble. A teacher cannot keep their eyes on everybody, no matter how good they are."

Louise says that meltdowns, "are so disruptive to the learning process. Thelma agrees, clearly indicating that student learning can abruptly halt if a student becomes escalated:

[The students] are also not being taught anything anymore because they're in pause. So, then we've lost time. You think of how many hours we lose dealing with behaviour in the classroom. Whereas, for us, that doesn't happen. And, I think that makes a big difference when it comes to even dealing with some [students]. If you can get teachers to work together so that you can have a chance to do [team teaching], it makes sense. It means the kids are still benefiting, and you've got the time and the freedom to walk out of that classroom and deal with the problem and then walk back in and carry on where you left off.

Thelma says that when behavioural issues arise amongst students in a team teaching environment, for the most part, "there's no interference with the actual teaching in the classroom, which is good." Louise further expands on this by saying: "If an emergency happens or if a kid has a meltdown and we need to separate them from the group, one of us can be dealing with that, while the other [students] keep learning."

Thelma believes that the students with behavioural issues also benefit from the arrangement of two teachers in a room: "If, for any reason, whoever's teaching gets interrupted and has to walk away, the other person can slide right in. I think that makes a big difference when it comes to dealing with some [students]." Team teaching also means that two adults are in the room to support students with friendship issues. Thelma says, "[The students] might have fights and that, but there's two adults there to help get them through it, instead of one teacher trying to teach and deal with problems at the same time."

Thelma and Louise see a huge benefit for students in this inner-city elementary school by having two teachers in the classroom to help support student behavioural issues. The top two benefits were time saved on academics and student social support.

Student-teacher Connection

Another sub-theme under 'student benefits' was the 'student-teacher connection". Libbey (2004) indicates that "Young people who are connected to school, feel that they belong and that their teachers are supportive and treat them fairly, do better" in school. This sense of belonging is why a student-teacher connection is valuable in an urban elementary classroom.

When asked about her goals concerning team teaching, Louise says, "my goal was to make better connections in the year." This goal indicates that Louise believes the relationships Thelma and herself are building in this inner-city elementary school are precious. The research behind the impact Covid-19 has had on student's sense of connection is indicated below: "Overwhelmingly, the biggest stressor was the sense of disconnection, especially around the most vulnerable children who relied on that school connection for stability and safety" (Mason et al., 2021). Not only does a sense of belonging in the classroom help support vulnerable children, but a sense of belonging is more important than ever, with Covid-19 impacting and often limiting student social interactions.

Louise says, "I now know, not just my own class, but I [have] also built relationships with Thelma's kids, as well." Thelma agrees with this statement, saying, "We just did our putting kids in for next year's class [placements]. I didn't realize this until about the third person, but people were coming to me and asked me questions, not just about my kids, but about Louise's kids. I was able to give them good answers about it."

Regarding team teaching success, Louise said that success "is the depth of the relationships that I've built with the students." Louise believes that the student connections they are making contribute to the school community's development: "I like knowing the [students] in our school. I like connecting with the [students] in our school. Not just knowing their name but actually knowing these kids and getting to know more of them. I think that that helps build school community."

Thelma believes that "because [the students] see that Louise and I like each other, and that we're friends, I think that's big for them as well. Because they pick up on that and realize, "Oh, hey, look, our teachers are friends." And they use us as a role model." Thelma and Louise are modelling healthy relationships with the students, a

valuable tool for students who may not receive similar modelling at home. Louise believes these connections will last a lifetime, "The more kids feel connected to a teacher, or teachers, I think that gives them a really good structure for the rest of their lives. It gives them something to hang on to. "

The last sub-theme under student benefits, to be addressed in the next section, is "the learning never stopped."

“The learning never stopped”

This whole week where Thelma's been busy with the play, or a couple of weeks ago, when I was sick for three days, I was out of my room. The learning never stopped. - Louise

Creating the sub-theme, 'the learning never stopped' helps identify a previously difficult sub-theme to narrow down. Louise says:

When you get a TOC you never know. 'Are they going to get through the activities that I plan? Are they going to get through them the way that I want them to get through them? Will the kids have learned anything?' They never pay attention to a TOC anyway. We don't need to reteach them because one of us is in that room. One of us will know that it's been taught properly. The [students] have [learned] what they needed to know.

Thelma supports this, saying that, with one teacher always being available: "It's consistent, which is what [students] need. I think that's a big thing." Thelma references a similar situation where she was required to take a month-long medical leave in the fall.

The biggest benefit is having a partner to work with all the time. For instance, I was away for a month. We had a TOC that had to come in. For me to have to plan for my class for an entire month would have been hard for me. I would only have to plan a couple of days, but I would have felt bad leaving a teacher up in the air for a month, not knowing what they can do. So, Louise took over. She did the planning with [the TOC]. Because we had talked beforehand: "This is what we're going to do during this month. These are the things that we want to plan and do." We made sure that everything was planned, and then Louise executed it. It was a lot easier for a TOC to come in and sort of slip into that secondary role. And the classes continued!

Thelma and Louise have observed many positive benefits of team teaching for students, one of them being that the absence of a teacher does not hinder a student's academic progress.

Conclusion

Many themes have been observed throughout this research, such as teacher benefits, teacher challenges, and student benefits. Other themes include 'enjoyment' and 'success' in team teaching. These themes have allowed me to analyze the data and provide specific findings related to my initial research questions.

The first research question I set out to answer was, "What issues may the team teaching co-workers experience over the course of this research?" Thelma and Louise talk about the challenges associated with team teaching. Some issues that Louise and Thelma experienced in their team teaching classroom included the sub-themes: 'first year team teaching together', systemic issues, behavioural challenges, unbalanced classes, time, inclusivity, vulnerability, compatibility, and schedule alignment. Out of these eight subthemes, the prominent sub-theme appears to be behavioural challenges, with both participants talking about this in all four interviews. While Thelma and Louise talk about behavioural challenges a great deal, it is refreshing to see that they benefit from the collaborative aspect of team teaching and have prevented some aspects of student behaviour before it begins. This was further addressed in the benefits of team teaching under the sub-theme 'addressing behaviour collaboratively'.

This research on team teaching contributes to the existing research because it confirms some of the findings I had made while researching this topic and writing my literature review. One example is when I read the research from Spörer et al. (2011), indicating that students with special needs in a team teaching environment are socially disadvantaged. This research rings true when looking at the sub-theme 'inclusivity' and how some of Thelma and Louise's students struggle in the team teaching environment.

My second research question was, "How do we measure success in team teaching?" Thelma and Louise have various ideas of how they might measure success. Regarding the limitations of the research, this was the most challenging research question to answer. While, overall, Thelma and Louise had several ideas about measuring success, their comments would be considered, overall, an exploration of this topic rather than concrete objectives currently being put into practice. Louise suggests that connections with students play a prominent role in the success story of team teaching. She also explores academic progress and how they might be able to follow

academic progress after a few years of investing in the team teaching program. On the other hand, Thelma says she measured the program's success by getting "teachers to understand and see the benefits of having two teachers in the classroom". Louise says that she has seen progress in this goal, stating, "I'm seeing a lot more teachers looking at the team teaching model in our school." While this research gives better insight into the possible assessment strategies that could be used to assess the team teaching model, more research is required to understand how success in team teaching can be measured fully. These findings have helped me better understand the team teaching experience. Going back to my literature review, I noted that 'research found how difficult it is to measure the effectiveness of team teaching' (Beninghof, 2020). I agree with Beninghof, as I found coding the data for this area challenging, as both Thelma and Louise had a variety of ideas that did not overlap.

My third research question was, "Do teachers' enjoy team teaching?" The overall response to this question was profoundly positive, as both Thelma and Louise appear to be enjoying the team teaching environment they have created. Regarding this research question, the theme 'enjoyment' was created and explored in great detail, looking at synonyms of 'enjoyment' such as fun, like, and love. I also looked up antonyms of 'enjoyment', which was far less successful. The only antonym finding was 'disagree'. While this was the only antonym that was noteworthy as a sub-theme, even it yielded positive results for this research question, with Thelma saying, "We haven't had any disagreements. We haven't had any times where we didn't agree with what we're doing." It is encouraging to see what a positive bond these two women share and how it makes their team teaching experience more enjoyable. Thelma and Louise enjoy the team teaching experience and working with each other.

My fourth and last research question was, "What do teachers and students have to gain from team teaching?" When writing about the data I had collected, teacher and student benefits, each had their own section, as the findings were extensive. In teacher benefits, I observed that some of the more prominent benefits for teachers included: time saved: administrative workload, collaboration, addressing behaviour collaboratively, teacher connection, less stress, and being further ahead in curricular goals.

Looking at student benefits, sub-themes such as, less behavioural interference, student-teacher connection, and 'the learning never stopped' became apparent in the

research. When looking at the different sub-themes, one of the most profound benefits for an urban elementary school is 'less behavioural interference'.

Regarding similarities and differences within each theme, it is essential to note that, while student behavioural challenges are an issue in this team teaching environment, the way that Thelma and Louise have approached these behavioural situations collaboratively has considerably impacted their classroom learning this year. While Thelma admits that chaos happens in their classroom, she also says it is beneficial to "tag team off [students with] bigger behaviours." Thelma and Louise indicated in their interviews that behavioural challenges are a daily and, sometimes hourly, issue for them. However, Thelma and Louise agree that having two teachers in the room is incredibly useful when collaboratively addressing behaviour. The teachers work to solve behavioural problems with students using a joint collaborative effort. This joint collaborative effort is a powerful result of the research. In urban elementary schools, where the level of student need is higher than in many other schools and resources are stretched thin, teachers might benefit by joining forces and engaging in team teaching to help manage student behaviour collaboratively.

My findings relate to educational practice, indicating that, while team teaching has several benefits, it also has its challenges, and some of these issues, such as 'systemic issues' cannot be addressed overnight. These interviews with Thelma and Louise have demonstrated that, while they benefit from their team teaching practice, there is a deeper level of issues here. Zuberi (2015) says that, in an urban elementary school, the challenges are vast, including 'children who come to school hungry'. As well for students with "trauma, students that go to urban elementary schools are more likely to have unstable and insecure home lives" (Zuberi, 2015). Louise admits, "Thelma and I are the peanuts. We're not going to be able to actually make those kinds of changes." When dealing with trauma in the classroom and a lack of funding for student needs, these two teachers are up for the challenge. However, they also agree that these challenging systemic issues should not be occurring in the first place. More funding and resources for elementary students might make these two teachers' jobs more manageable, but unfortunately, it is out of their control.

My research project on team teaching represents a step in the right direction to having a better understanding of the benefits and challenges of team teaching. It has

enhanced my vision for improved collaboration practice in the future and has contributed to a stronger understanding of team teaching in general.

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Appendix. Data Collection Tools

Interview #1 – Spring 2023

How have you directly benefited from using a team teaching model?

How do you feel about team teaching this year?

Was it going how you thought it would?

What has surprised you about it?

How have you been challenged by team teaching this term?

What are the benefits of team teaching?

How will you measure the success of the team teaching program this year?

What are your personal goals for team teaching this year?

Interview #2 – Late Spring 2023

Do you feel like you have benefited from the team teaching model?

How do you currently feel about team teaching?

In the past four months, did you run into any issues while team teaching?

This could include challenges with colleague(s), students and parents.

Did you meet your personal goals for team teaching? How do you feel about your progress so far?