Positioning Co-Teachers in an Integrated English as a New Language Class: Making Sense of Teaching Roles

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Positioning Co-Teachers in an Integrated *English as a New Language* Class:

Making Sense of Teaching Roles

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This dissertation is dedicated in loving memory of my mother, Norma Alger, and to my father, Donald Alger, who were my first teachers, my loudest cheerleaders, and a lifelong source of inspiration, love, and support.
ABSTRACT

Positioning Co-Teachers in an Integrated *English as a New Language* Class:
Making Sense of Teaching Roles

Kelley E. Cordeiro

This study examined how co-teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and General Education (GE) perceived their roles, agency, and professional positioning within co-taught elementary integrated English as a New Language (ENL) classes. Theories of positioning and educational change guided this study, exploring teachers’ perceptions of parity and observations of their discourse and interactions within the context of school and district cultures and policies. ESOL and GE co-teachers who implemented the collaborative cycle of instruction with fidelity experienced parity in their partnerships. These teachers utilized their distinct areas of expertise and had a common understanding of each teacher’s roles and responsibilities. However, ambiguity or conflicting administrative directives concerning co-teaching often contributed to inequitable teacher hierarchies and challenged GE and ESOL teachers to make sense of their roles in supporting English Language Learners (ELLs). GE teacher discourse revealed perceptions of being lead teachers, with ESOL teachers serving in a supportive role. The study concluded that ESOL teachers perceived a loss of their professional identities when discourse and interactions placed them in a subordinate position to the GE teacher. Implications for policy and practice at the district and school building levels include increasing ESOL teachers’ involvement in curriculum writing at the district level to create a shared discourse of expertise among their GE and content area colleagues, as well as enacting policy change at the
POSITIONING CO-TEACHER ROLES IN ENL

district level to establish collaborative structures for co-planning to cultivate equitable roles for co-teachers. Recommendations are offered for future research to expand the understanding of co-teacher positioning.

Keywords: co-teaching, positioning, parity, agency, roles, professional identity
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Chapter 1: Introduction

“I think finding co-teachers that have a love and passion for teaching would be most important. Because if you start off with that, the knowledge can come after that. But without that in place, it’s very, very difficult for the partnership to be successful.”

~ Ms. Ellington

Being a co-teacher means working as a member of a team that shares a common goal of providing instruction and support for a group of students with diverse needs. However, the performance of a co-teaching team is not always equivalent to the sum of its parts. At times, co-teaching partnerships demonstrate a level of parity evidenced by equity in responsibility, accountability, and teacher agency, which propel the team’s performance beyond that of its individual components. Conversely, as Kayi-Aydar (2019) asserted, co-teacher parity and agency may be adversely influenced by inequitable positioning, which can result in limitations to a teacher’s “ability, capacity, or intentional effort to make choices” (p. 88) in support of student learning. To illustrate this point, I offer the following stories of two co-teaching teams of which I have been a member. The names of my co-teachers have been replaced by pseudonyms to ensure the confidentiality of these individuals.

The first day that I worked with “Mrs. G,” she expressed how thrilled she was to have a partner to help support a kindergarten class of 19 students, nine of whom had been identified as English language learners (ELLs). She spoke rapidly, clearly excited to collaborate on planning out the upcoming first weeks of school and to explore how we would approach this new co-teaching initiative being implemented in the district. I had just become a member of a co-teaching team: Mrs. G serving as the General Education (GE) teacher, and I as the English to speakers of other languages (ESOL) teacher in this integrated English as a New Language (ENL)
classroom. Throughout that school year, we honed our collaborative skills while working side by side both in and out of the classroom. Our partnership was marked by the sharing of expertise, communicating about students and instruction, compromising on our collaborative efforts, and respecting each other’s perspectives and contributions to student learning. We learned from each other, made decisions together, and anticipated how and when we each needed to contribute to best support *our* students. We had built a strong co-teaching team, the impact of which exceeded that which either Mrs. G or I could have accomplished individually.

Later in the school year, I learned I would also be working with “Mrs. O,” who recently had several newly arrived ELLs placed in her class. I was excited to start a new partnership, after experiencing how effective the co-teaching model could be in supporting ELLs. When I arrived at Mrs. O’s class, she motioned for me to wait at the door while she finished helping a student. She then waved me in and told me *my* kids were waiting for me at a table at the back of the room. Mrs. O said I could clear off some space at that table to work with *those* kids to help them finish the morning work that they could not keep up with, and then added that one of *her* kids would be joining me because he had been absent and I could help him catch up too. In this classroom, there was room only for one lead teacher. Clearly, on this team, I had just been relegated to a supporting role, from which I would spend the remainder of the school year trying to reposition myself. These two vastly different experiences with co-teaching motivated my inquiry into attaining a deeper understanding of the dynamics of the co-teaching approach, the qualities that make it an effective or ineffective practice, and the phenomenon of how two teachers assigned to a co-teaching team identify and navigate their respective roles in that partnership. I prepared to explore these questions by immersing myself in the extant literature on co-teaching.
The co-teaching instructional model involves two teachers working as a team to support a shared group of students in a variety of classroom contexts (Friend, Cook, Hurley-Chamberlain, & Shamberger, 2008; Friend, Reising, & Cook, 1993; Pratt, 2014; Santamaria & Thousand, 2004). The performance of co-teaching teams may be influenced by the participants’ attitudes and perceptions of their own and each other’s expertise, strengths, and roles that position them within the instructional partnership (Avila, 2014; Kregel, 2014; Norton, 2013). When implemented effectively, co-teaching has the power to benefit both students and teachers (Giles & Yazan, 2019; Pratt, 2014). Teachers may utilize co-teaching as a conduit for professional growth and learning (Pratt, 2014; Rytivaara & Kershner, 2012) and as an opportunity to pool their collective and distinct expertise, experience, and instructional approaches (Dove & Honigsfeld, 2010; York-Barr, Ghere, & Sommerness, 2007). In turn, diverse learners benefit from the combined expertise of their co-teachers, who can collaboratively differentiate instruction to address varied student needs (Friend, Cook, et al., 2008; Friend, Reising, et al., 1993; Santamaria & Thousand, 2004).

Since the 1960s, co-teaching has historically been used to support students with disabilities (Friend et al., 2010; Pratt, Imbody, Wolf & Patterson, 2017; Walther-Thomas, 1997). Documented use of this instructional model in support of English learners can be traced back to as early as 1992 (Nunan, 1992). However, it is only in more recent years that co-teaching has emerged as an instructional model to support ELLs through integrated content and language instruction (Atesoglu Russell, 2012; Bell & Baecher, 2012; Beninghof & Leensvaart, 2016; Davison, 2006), due in part to increasing populations of English learners (New York State Association of School Business Officials, 2017; NYSED, 2016; Ruiz Soto, Hooker, & Batalova, 2015). Prior to this emergence of co-teaching, ELLs were commonly supported through the pull-
out instructional model, which involved removing students from their mainstream classrooms for a portion of the school day to receive targeted language instruction (McClure, 2012; Theoharis & O’Toole, 2011).

The paradigm shift away from the pull-out model of instruction toward the more inclusive model of co-teaching in ENL (McClure, 2012) has been advanced by federal legislation such as the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015. ESSA has established mandates for ELL services and has increased states’ accountability for the identification, assessment, and provision of equitable access to language instruction for ELLs (Abedi, 2004; Carnock, 2016; NYSED, 2018; Sanchez, 2015). Various companion documents (Sugarman, 2018; USDOE, 2017) offer sources of guidance and interpretation for state and local education agencies to fulfill the legislative requirements. In New York, state-level guidelines crafted to comply with federal mandates are evident in legislation such as New York State Commissioner’s Regulation Part 154 (NYSED, 2015), which governs the instruction of ELLs.

According to Carnock (2016), New York State has distinguished itself as a forerunner in establishing policy addressing the instructional needs of ELLs and setting the standard for other states to emulate. In the 2015-2016 school year, instructional paradigm shifts were implemented in accordance with approved amendments to Commissioner’s Regulation Part 154, with one of the principal changes addressing the instructional delivery models offered for ELLs (Carnock, 2016). The program models offered in New York State schools include dual language, transitional bilingual education, and English only, as described in Sugarman’s (2018) description of ELL program models. However, the availability of these program models may vary from district to district, based on the demographics of each district’s ELL population and whether the district meets the enrollment criteria established by the New York State Education Department.
(NYSED, 2015). The NYSED has termed English-only models as *English as a New Language* (ENL) programs. While NYSED had identified the transitional bilingual education model as the default instructional program placement for ELLs, districts that do not meet the specific enrollment criteria established by NYSED may choose to support ELLs through integrated instruction provided in ENL programs (NYSED, 2015; NYSED n.d.). One form of delivery for integrated ENL instruction is through co-teaching partnerships consisting of an ESOL certified teacher and a GE or content-area certified teacher.

The district-level implementation of ELL program models is a critical component to its success as a vehicle for the state-prescribed integrated instruction (Carnock, 2016). However, ENL programs and the roles of teachers within those programs often lack adequate definition and direction (Carnock, 2016; McClure & Cahnmann-Taylor, 2010). School culture may also be an influencing factor in how co-teacher roles are perceived, based on the degree to which inclusive student instruction and collaborative teacher practices are embraced (Brown & Stairs, 2012). The existing body of literature suggests that ESOL teachers have historically been marginalized and that the integrated co-teaching approach in ENL classes may continue to reinforce such positionality and lack of parity among partnered teachers (Creese, 2002; Fogel & Moser, 2017; Lee, 2012; Liggett, 2010; Penfield, 1987).

**Theoretical Frameworks**

To gain greater understanding of parity within co-teaching partnerships, I applied the lens of *positioning theory*, an interactionist concept aligned with tenets of discursive psychology. Positioning theory was introduced by Davies and Harré (1990), who explained that “any narrative that we collaboratively unfold with other people thus draws on a knowledge of social structures and the roles that are recognizably allocated to people within those structures” (p. 52).
Similarly, Arkoudis (2006) observed that every interaction or conversation involves people with differing power relations and perceived status who are constructing their view of reality. This co-constructed view of reality creates a storyline that guides the nature of the interaction as well as the perceived rights and duties of each individual involved (Arkoudis, 2006). According to Kayi-Aydar (2015), interactions and positional moves can influence how individuals gain or lose the right to speak and act. In other words, teachers’ ability to exercise agency may be determined by how they are positioned (Kayi-Aydar, 2015). It can be inferred that within the context of a classroom, a co-teacher perceived as having a higher status or position will therefore have greater agency to act on behalf of students, while a teacher positioned with subordinate status would exercise less agency.

While teacher positioning in general education classes has been widely studied, Kayi-Aydar (2019) identified a gap in the literature on teacher positioning and identities in classes supporting language learners. In particular, Kayi-Aydar (2015) previously observed that little is known about the “identity negotiations in relation to their educational contexts and ELLs, and how such negotiations influence their agency, interactions, and practices” (p. 94). Seeking to address this gap in my study, I applied the perspectives offered through positioning theory to explore the dynamics of co-teaching as it influences how GE and ESOL teachers made sense of their roles within instructional partnerships as well as how it impacted the quality and extent of their collaboration.

From the perspective of positioning theory, one can infer that co-teaching relationships may realize greater success if an ESOL teacher is positioned as holding greater esteem, status, and expertise (Liggett, 2010). Such positioning may be reflective of the broader school culture concerning perspectives on inclusive instruction and teacher collaboration (Brown & Stairs,
2012) as well as the existence of teacher hierarchies. Specifically, the positioning of the ESOL teacher may be a factor of how policy-endorsed co-teaching programs are implemented at the district and school building levels, as well as the degree and nature of administrator support of ESOL teachers and programs (Atesoglu Russell, 2012; Murawski & Dieker, 2004). Positioning theory (Davies & Harré, 1990) will be used throughout this study to gain greater understanding of the themes of division of labor, parity, teacher hierarchies, and the influence of administrative support on co-teaching, and to interpret how these themes are evident in co-teachers’ perceptions of their roles in the integrated ENL class.

To expand the understanding of collaborative relationships further, I also applied Fullan’s (1982, 2016) theory of educational change to my analysis of newly formed (less than one school year) and sustained (more than two school years) co-teaching partnerships. Fullan theorized that the educational change process involves a continuum of phases, including initiation, implementation, continuation or routinization, and outcome, and that it may take two to three years to progress through the phases of initiation and implementation (Fullan, 2016). Each phase of change is influenced by a distinct set of factors marking the progression along the continuum. The initiation phase is influenced by advocacy from central administrators and teachers, as well as external change agents. During the implementation phase, change is influenced by external factors such as government agencies and local factors including the community, school board, principals, and teachers. This phase also reflects the characteristics of the change, which may include the perceived need for the change, the clarity of goal articulation, the complexity of implementing the change for those directly responsible, and the perceived quality and practicality of the proposed change. Based on the positive or negative reaction to the implemented change, decisions would be made concerning the continuation phase. Finally, the
outcome phase involves an assessment of whether or not the change has resulted in the enhancement of skills, thinking, and committed actions. I chose to focus primarily on the initiation and implementation phases based on the duration of the co-teaching partnerships included in this study. The comparison of newly formed and sustained co-teaching partnerships through the lens of the initiation and implementation phases of Fullan’s educational change theory provided an additional perspective to this study and a unique and distinct contribution to the existing literature.

Statement of the Problem: Identifying the ENL-phant in the Room

It is evident in existing research that achieving parity within collaborative co-teaching partnerships to support ELLs can be challenging (Pratt, Imbody, Wolf, & Patterson, 2017; Scruggs, Mastropieri, & McDuffie, 2007). Many GE and ESOL co-teachers struggle to identify their own and each other’s instructional roles in supporting the academic and linguistic needs of English learners (Arkoudis, 2006; Norton, 2013). What remained to be explored was the link between positioning and teacher agency within co-teaching partnerships. More specifically, there was a dearth of literature examining how parity in co-teachers’ positioning and perceptions of their collective and individual roles are influenced by their professional interactions and discourse evident in their partnerships, as well as by the hierarchies of perceived teacher power within the broader school context. This absence in the literature was compounded by the question of how co-teaching ELLs is perceived to impact student learning opportunities. Haneda and Nespor (2013) identified a need for an examination of the “differences and relations among factions of the teaching profession” (p. 269) to gain a greater understanding of interactions and positioning among teachers with differing areas of expertise. This study sought to engage in such
an examination, as it related to the positioning of ESOL teachers interacting with elementary GE teachers within the co-taught integrated ENL class.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to analyze how elementary co-teachers in new and established co-teaching partnerships perceived each other’s as well as their own roles, agency, and professional positioning within an elementary co-taught integrated ENL class. For the purposes of this study, the ways in which teachers made sense of their respective roles was generally defined as division of labor and responsibilities, perceived levels of teacher expertise, and co-teacher parity in the co-taught class. Data collected and analyzed included transcribed teacher and administrator interviews, classroom observations, and field notes. Additional data was garnered through archival resources, including digital documentation of school board meeting minutes and presentations, the district’s shared decision-making plan, and district websites. Positioning theory (Davies & Harré, 1990) served as the lens through which data analysis sought to identify themes of division of labor, parity, teacher hierarchies, and teacher agency. These themes provided insight in understanding how co-teachers make sense of their roles. In this way, my study provided a unique and distinct contribution to the existing literature.

**Research Questions**

To further define the focus of my study, I identified the following research questions that guided my dissertation:

1. What is the relationship between observations of parity and hierarchies in the co-taught classroom and the ways in which GE and ESOL co-teachers make sense of their roles?
   a. How are co-teachers’ understandings of their roles reflective of the discourse and interactions within their collaborative partnership?
b. What relationship, if any, is there between the length of a co-teaching partnership and ESOL and GE teachers’ perceptions of their roles?

2. What do co-teachers report as perceived successes and challenges in defining and implementing the collaborative instructional model, given the broader context of the culture and policy of the school or district?

3. In what ways, if any, do GE and ESOL teachers believe co-taught ENL instruction impacts ELLs’ experiences and relationships as compared to stand-alone instruction?

Overview of the Methodology, Research Design, and Data Collection

In pursuing a deeper understanding of teacher perceptions of the co-teaching phenomenon, a positioning lens allowed me to apply my own understanding of co-teaching dynamics to my analysis of the data collected in this study. I employed qualitative and constructivist methodologies to inform my research design, to analyze and interpret themes and patterns in the data, and to theorize the answers to the previously defined research questions. Specifically, I identified the case study approach as the most appropriate design to facilitate my collection of data on teachers’ perceptions of their co-teaching roles and positioning in the integrated ENL class. Merriam (2009) depicted a case study as “an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system” (p. 40). Similar to the bounded nature of a case study, Kayi-Aydar (2019) emphasized that the goal of positioning analysis was not to quantify findings through pattern-seeking but rather to focus on the qualitative observations of unique storylines and positions between individuals. Furthermore, positioning theory and analysis recognizes that certain “storylines and positions may never appear again, but they are extraordinarily unique and powerful in that particular moment” (Kayi-Aydar, 2019, p. 148) in making meaning of how and why individuals are positioned in certain ways. The case study design best facilitated the study of
“how or why some social phenomenon works” (Yin, 2009, p. 4) and provided an opportunity for in-depth exploration and description of such phenomenon.

Therefore, using the case study approach allowed me to examine how co-teachers’ perceptions were formed within the context of the district and the individual school buildings’ culture and teacher hierarchies, and how the school context influenced the implementation of the co-teaching model. In order to establish a comprehensive picture of the implementation and cultivation of both new and well-established co-teaching relationships within the school’s ENL program, the data collection that I employed included class observations of five elementary-level integrated ENL co-teaching partnerships (two sustained partnerships in one school and three newly formed partnerships in another school, within the same district); in-depth, semi-structured interviews with two building principals (one of whom is also the Director of ENL), two ESOL teachers, and four GE teachers; communication with the district superintendent; an in-depth examination of school board presentations and meeting minutes; the district’s shared decision-making plan; electronic communications (texts and emails) with participants; district website main pages and school building pages; and social media text such as posts on district and teacher Twitter accounts. To supplement this data, I also maintained detailed analytic memos throughout the duration of the data collection period.

**Context and Setting of the Study and Participants**

Data collection for this case study was conducted in two elementary schools within the same New York State (NYS) suburban school district, using a purposeful selection of new and established pairs of co-teachers. I was on-site for the data-collection phase from September to June of the 2019-2020 school year. Therefore, all findings of the data analysis were bounded to
the system of ENL classes within the particular NYS suburban district elementary school buildings during the period of data collection.

Multiple factors were considered in identifying this site as the best location for my study. Perhaps the most important factor is that this site had an established integrated ENL co-teaching program, having initiated this instructional model in the 2015-2016 school year. In addition, the two participating elementary schools had steadily increasing populations of English learners; the focal buildings enrolled a combined 40% of the district-wide population of 166 ELLs in 2016-2017 and 43% of the district-wide population of 175 ELLs in 2017-2018. Another factor considered in the site selection was that the ENL program in this district had been implemented with strong administrative support, distinguishing it from many other suburban school districts in the region that are lacking such support. For this reason, interviews with administrators, including the Director of ENL, were used to triangulate the data and further set the context and situate the findings of this case study.

As previously stated, purposeful sampling was used to identify five sets of co-teachers to participate in this study. Specifically, teachers were selected based on the longevity of their co-teaching teams, with two well-established partnerships (more than two years in duration) and three newly formed partnerships (less than one year in duration) that are at the onset of implementing this instructional model. This selection of participants allowed me to apply Fullan’s (1982) proposed implementation timeline while examining a broader variety of perspectives of the phenomenon of understanding co-teaching roles, thereby increasing the trustworthiness of my data.

Data Collection and Analysis
Within this study, a variety of data collection tools were utilized to capture multiple perspectives on the co-teaching instructional model and teachers’ perceptions of their roles in the elementary integrated ENL class. In-depth interviews were conducted and audio-recorded with each of the participating co-teachers. The interview questions were crafted in such a way to allow for open-ended reflection and response, using prompts directly connected to the research questions identified herein. Additional data concerning co-teacher discourse and interactions were collected through classroom observations of the participant co-teachers. Data analysis was ongoing throughout the data-collection phase of this study, which allowed for the early identification of emerging themes that illuminated the findings of this research. These findings were triangulated through additional interviews conducted with school and district administrators, as well as through the analysis of archival resources, including board meeting minutes and presentations, district websites, and the shared decision-making plan.

Limitations and Assumptions of the Study

The findings of this bounded case study provided a snapshot of two elementary school buildings within one NYS suburban school district. These findings were generalized to the framework of positioning theory, as they illustrated the discourse, behaviors, and professional interactions within the co-teaching partnerships. However, there were additional considerations that limited the applicability of the findings to a broader population, set of circumstances, or to a time span outside the duration of the data-collection period. One such consideration recognized the role of the qualitative researcher as the instrument, which prevented the ability to replicate the study. Another consideration was the truthfulness of the participants’ responses. While one might assume participants answered questions truthfully, the sensitive topics or assumptions about the researcher’s expectations may have influenced how participants responded. During the
study, teacher schedules and availability occasionally imposed a limitation to my access to co-teachers for interviews and observations. This was addressed by allowing additional time for rescheduling and by offering one participant the option to be interviewed via Zoom video conferencing.

**Significance of the Study**

Prior to this study, there has been limited existing scholarly research to make sense of how co-teachers’ perceptions of their roles position them in supporting access to learning opportunities and language development for English learners. Kayi-Aydar (2015) noted that an “examination of teacher agency is important to investigate because teachers affect instructional conditions in positive ways only when they demonstrate the will and ability, in other words, when they are positioned as agents” (p. 96). By examining teachers’ perceptions of their co-teaching roles at the elementary ENL level, my study deepened the understanding of cultivating parity in teacher agency and decision making, division of labor, and instructional responsibilities. This understanding will inform the development of co-teacher preparation and professional development opportunities for GE and ESOL co-teachers. The findings of this study also provide data to improve ENL programs and practices at the school and district levels, as well as potentially contribute to district-wide co-teaching policy enhancements. These include establishing collaborative structures to support the co-planning phase of the co-teaching cycle and the provision of professional development opportunities to prepare teachers to enact their co-teaching partnerships in support of ELLs.

**Delimitations**

I have previously established that this study was based on a purposeful selection of co-teachers from two elementary schools in a NYS suburban school district. Accordingly, only
those GE and ESOL teachers engaged in co-teaching partnerships were included in the study. The unit of analysis was the perceptions of the participant teachers. Therefore, the findings of the data collection and analysis in this case study were bounded to the observed ENL classes of the two NYS suburban elementary school buildings during the data-collection period from September to June of the 2019-2020 school year.

**Conclusion**

The remaining five chapters of this dissertation are each dedicated to a distinct purpose and content. Chapter Two will provide a literature review of existing scholarly writing related to the historical context of co-teaching in special education settings and its current emergence in the realm of ENL instruction. In Chapter Three, I describe the research design and structure of the proposed study. Within this chapter, I discuss my rationale for the chosen methodology, the selection of the study site and participants, and data collection and analysis methods. I also reflect upon my role as the researcher in relation to the study. The findings and analysis of the data collected within this study are presented in Chapters Four and Five. Finally, Chapter Six provides a summary and conclusions of the study. I also use this final chapter to discuss implications for future research.

**Definition of Key Terms**

The following key terms are defined as they are used within the context of this study:

1. **Co-teaching**: An instructional model involving two teachers working as a team and pooling their collective and distinct expertise, experience, and instructional approaches within their co-teaching partnerships to differentiate instruction for diverse learners, and to develop English-language proficiency through authentic content-based language acquisition (Bell &
Baecher, 2012; Friend et al., 2008; Friend et al., 1993; McGriff & Protacio, 2015; Santamaria & Thousand, 2004).

2. **Discourse**: Language in use; “language used to do something and mean something, language produced and interpreted in a real-world context” (Cameron, 2001, p. 13).

3. **Discursive psychology**: The branch of psychology that examines the use of language to identify and define an individual’s sense of agency or ability to act intentionally (Harré & van Langenhove, 1999).

4. **English as a New Language (ENL)**: Formerly known as English as a Second Language (ESL), the NYSED currently uses the term ENL to refer to the English-only instructional delivery model in which “students receive English language development instruction taught by a NYS-certified teacher of English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) in order to acquire the English language needed for success in core content areas” (NYSED, n.d., Program Options for English Language Learners, para. 7).

5. **Established co-teaching partnership**: Any co-teaching partnership that has been in existence for at least two school years. This distinction of longevity acknowledges that the implementation of co-teaching must evolve through the three phases of the process of change as identified by Fullan (2016): initiation, implementation, and continuation. Fullan estimated that within the first two or three years following the initiation of a change, there has been sufficient time to put the reform into practice.

6. **Integrated ENL instruction**: “In Integrated ENL classes, students receive core content area and English language development instruction, including the use of the home/primary language as support and appropriate ELL instructional supports to enrich comprehension. Integrated ENL classes are taught by a teacher dually certified in the content area and ENL or
are co-taught by a certified content area teacher and a certified ENL teacher” (NYSED, Integrated English as a New Language Resources, para. 1).

7. **Marginalization:** To relegate to an unimportant, powerless secondary position; to place in a position of lesser importance, influence or power (Merriam-Webster, n.d.).

8. **Newly-formed co-teaching partnership:** Co-teaching partnerships established within the school year in which the study was conducted (2019-2020).

9. **Parity:** Within co-teaching partnerships, parity is defined as the equitable contribution, value, and accountability to the responsibilities and outcomes of the team (Villa, Thousand & Nevin, 2013, p. 6).

10. **Positioning theory:** A relational phenomenon in which individuals’ actions, thoughts, and words inform and mediate the roles they assume when interacting with others, based on the perceived power or lack of power implied by those actions and words. Positioning often limits individuals’ actions, as it establishes a set of perceived rights and duties associated with the individual positioned within a given context and therefore determines what an individual can do, say, or think within that context (Harré, Moghaddam, Cairnie, Rothbart, & Sabat, 2009).

11. **Professional interactions:** The nature of any exchanges or behaviors occurring between co-teachers within spaces of learning; how co-teachers engage with each other in the classroom setting; how teachers interact and work together.

12. **Pull-out instruction:** Terminology formerly used to refer to a form of instructional support in which ELLs are removed from their mainstream classes for a portion of the school day to receive targeted language support in a separate location (see also stand-alone instruction).
13. **School culture:** The overall mindset of an administration and faculty toward inclusive learning opportunities and teacher collaboration. Sustained teacher collaboration has been recognized as a feature of learning-rich schools (Brown & Stairs, 2012).

14. **Stand-alone instruction:** The current terminology used to refer to a form of instructional support in which ELLs are removed from their mainstream classes for a portion of the school day to receive targeted language support in a separate location (see also pull-out instruction).

15. **Teacher agency:** “The capacity of people to act purposefully and reflectively on their world; …drawing on positioning theory, agency is strongly connected to the contextual conditions within which it is achieved and not as merely a capacity or possession of the individual…Just like identity, agency is shaped by social interactions and achieved in particular situations” (Kayi-Aydar, 2015, p. 95). Within education, teacher agency refers to an educator’s ability to make decisions and act on behalf of student learning, based upon teacher expertise and positioning (Negrao Ostorga, 2018).

In addition to clarifying how the aforementioned key terms will be used and understood within the context of this study, it is important to establish a consistent use of terminology to refer to the instructional programs that provide services for English learners. I start by acknowledging that a variety of terms are used nationally and internationally to identify such programs. These include but are not limited to English as an Additional Language (EAL), English Language Development (ELD), English as a Foreign Language (EFL), English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), and English as a Second Language (ESL), depending on the local contexts. For the purpose of consistency within this study, English as a New Language (ENL) shall be used to refer to programs supporting English learners to reflect the context of this study, as this is the current terminology used within the New York State Commissioner’s
Regulation Part 154. Furthermore, it should be understood that within federal policy and guidance documents, the term *English Learner Program* generally incorporates a varied array of program models, including dual-language and transitional bilingual education programs, in addition to English-only programs (Sugarman, 2018; USDOE, 2017). For the purposes of this study, ENL programs are identified within the category of English-only approaches to responding to the language development needs of English learners. Throughout this dissertation proposal, references to other studies may retain the terminology specific to those particular contexts; however, the narrative of this report shall reflect the New York State specific terminology of ENL to describe this program model. English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) shall be the terminology used to refer to teachers in ENL programs, as this terminology aligns with the New York State licensure and certification of these educators.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

“I am a teacher. Whether I stand in front of the room, or to the side, or wherever you want me, I’m a classroom teacher. So, I have to advocate for myself. I have to advocate for my students, where as a classroom teacher, you’re it. And you have kind of the power to do that from in front.”

~ Ms. Ellington

Co-teaching has gained considerable momentum in recent years as an effective instructional model to support English learners through integrated content and language instruction (Honigsfeld & Dove, 2012; Peercy, Ditter, & Destefano, 2017; MacDonald, Nagle, Akerley, & Western, 2012; Peercy & Martin-Beltrán, 2012). Beninghof (2015) defined co-teaching as “a partnering of two teachers with different areas of expertise to provide more comprehensive, effective instruction to students” (p. 12). Proponents of co-teaching to support English learners emphasize the value of combining the expertise of General Education (GE) and English to speakers of other languages (ESOL) teachers (Dove & Honigsfeld, 2010; York-Barr et al., 2007) and increasing opportunities for authentic interaction among English learners and their native English-speaking peers (Gándara, 2010). GE and ESOL co-teachers have also realized increased opportunities for peer mentoring, professional learning, and strengthened collegial partnerships (Giles & Yazan, 2019; Hersi, Horan, & Lewis, 2016; Rytivaara & Kershner, 2012).

However, research has also suggested that integrated ENL classes may give rise to issues of inequitable positioning or marginalization among partnered teachers, with the ESOL teacher often relegated to a subordinate role (Creese, 2002; Fogel & Moser, 2017; Lee, 2012; Liggett, 2010; Penfield, 1987). According to Hazari, Cass, and Beattie (2015), this inequitable positioning can be due to teachers’ agency as it relates to their actions, choices, and words,
which can influence student engagement and opportunities for learning. Studies have shown that co-teaching GE and ESOL teachers can struggle to identify their instructional roles in supporting the academic and linguistic needs of English learners, often with little or no administrative guidance (Arkoudis, 2006; Norton, 2013). The literature discussed herein will explore co-teacher parity as it relates to teachers’ perceptions of each other’s as well as their own roles and professional positioning.

In the 1960s, co-teaching to support students in special education class settings surfaced in U.S. schools and continued to gain momentum in the 1970s. This growth in co-teaching practice was in response to legislated school reforms targeting the instructional needs of an increasingly diverse student population (Friend et al., 1993; Santamaria & Thousand, 2004; Scruggs et al., 2007). Diversity can be attributed to a multitude of student traits and characteristics, including varied racial, cultural, linguistic, and academic differences and abilities (Cartledge & Kourea, 2008; Gay, 2002). The population of students of concern in my study are those representing linguistic diversity. With a continuous influx of linguistically diverse students in the United States (Ruiz Soto, Hooker, & Batalova, 2015), accompanied by legislative changes seeking to establish more inclusive instructional practices for this population of students (NYSED, 2015; 2018), co-teaching to support ELLs has grown in recent years.

In U.S. school systems, student populations continue to reflect growing levels of cultural and linguistic diversity, with increasing numbers of students reporting a language other than English spoken in their homes (Carnock, 2016; New York State Education Department, n.d.; Ruiz Soto et al., 2015). The National Center for Education Statistics reported that public school enrollment of English learners rose from 8.1% in Fall 2000 (3.8 million students) to 9.6% in Fall 2016 (4.9 million students; NCES, 2019). While some of these students may be proficient in
more than one language, many of them lack English proficiency and are identified as English language learners (ELLs), qualifying to receive ENL support services. Some states have experienced a reported 200% growth of ELLs within the past 10 years (Staehr Fenner, 2014). Along with California, Texas, Florida, and Illinois, New York State is reported among the five states with the largest ELL populations in the United States, with 272,292 ELLs enrolled in K-12 public schools during the 2017-2018 school year (New York State Education Department Office of Bilingual Education and World Language, 2018).

In light of the statistics on the growth of the ELL student population, educators are tasked with the challenge of aligning instructional practices to best support students with diverse linguistic and academic needs. Many school districts throughout the United States are responding to this instructional challenge through the implementation of integrated, collaborative practices in the form of co-teaching among GE and ESOL teachers (Abdallah, 2009; Carnock, 2016). Integrated co-taught instruction differed from the traditional pull-out model of instruction that isolated students and language development in a separate location outside of the mainstream classroom and away from their native English-speaking peers (McClure, 2012). The co-teaching instructional model, which has in the past been associated most commonly with special education settings (Friend et al., 2008), has partnered GE teachers and ESOL teachers in mainstream classes (Honigsfeld & Dove, 2008). English learners, along with their native-English speaking peers, are supported by the collaborative efforts of both teachers providing integrated language and content instruction.

The migration toward integrated, co-taught instruction marked a paradigm shift realized in the 2015-2016 school year in accordance with approved amendments to New York State Commissioner’s Regulation Part 154. One of the principal changes addressed the instructional
delivery model for ENL support services (Carnock, 2016), moving away from the historically used pull-out instructional model, in which English learners received intensive small-group language instruction in a location outside their general education class (Carnock, 2016; McClure & Cahnmann-Taylor, 2010) and toward a more inclusive, integrated, instructional approach. Pull-out instruction had been heavily criticized as creating a barrier for many diverse students to gain exposure to the cultural norms, standards, and expectations of the GE class because of the lack of authentic interaction and access to their mainstream peers (Gándara, 2010; McClure & Cahnmann-Taylor, 2010). The intended effect of integrated instruction is to increase ELLs’ opportunities to interact and learn academic content from and with their native English-speaking peers and to promote language acquisition through content instruction rather than in isolation. The degree to which that effect is achieved relies heavily on the positioning of the co-teachers and their ability to successfully navigate their roles and responsibilities within the co-taught class (Arkoudis, 2003; Creese, 2006; Davison, 2006; Hornberger, 2006; Kayi-Aydar, 2019; Kayi-Aydar, Miller, Varghese, & Vitanova, 2019).

Building upon the existing literature on co-teaching in special education (Friend et al., 2010; Pratt, Imbody, Wolf & Patterson, 2017; Walther-Thomas, 1997), my research added a significant perspective to the emerging but less extensive research on co-teaching for ELLs (Atesoglu Russell, 2012; Bell & Baecher, 2012; Beninghof & Leensvaart, 2016; Davison, 2006; Dove & Honigsfeld, 2017). In addition, where much of the current literature on co-teaching for ELLs reports on studies conducted in secondary settings or in school systems outside of the United States (Arkoudis, 2006; Creese, 2006; Davison, 2006; Lee, 2012), I focused on two elementary schools within one NYS suburban school district, an area that Honigsfeld and Dove (2012) pointed out is not adequately represented by data in the existing literature on co-teaching.
in urban school systems. My literature review informed the focus of a qualitative case study exploring GE and ESOL co-teachers’ perceptions of teacher roles and teacher parity in integrated ENL elementary classes in NYS suburban schools.

**Research Questions**

Co-teaching may be reflective of the perceived positions teachers occupy within a school culture. McClure and Cahnmann-Taylor (2010) referred to co-teaching to support English learners as “a complex social act influenced by hierarchical relations of power and status in the school setting” (p. 101). With this in mind, I identified the following research questions that guided my study examining teachers’ perceptions of their roles in integrated ENL classes:

1. What is the relationship between observations of parity and hierarchies in the co-taught classroom and the ways in which GE and ESOL co-teachers make sense of their roles?
   a. How are co-teachers’ understandings of their roles reflective of the discourse and interactions within their collaborative partnership?
   b. What relationship, if any, is there between the length of a co-teaching partnership and ESOL and GE teachers’ perceptions of their roles?

2. What do co-teachers report as perceived successes and challenges in defining and implementing the collaborative instructional model, given the broader context of the culture and policy of the school or district?

3. In what ways, if any, do GE and ESOL teachers believe co-taught ENL instruction impacts ELLs’ experiences and relationships as compared to stand-alone instruction?

Through an exploration of these research questions, I advanced the understanding of the emerging practice of co-teaching in ENL, focusing on the phenomenon of positioning and teachers’ perceptions of roles. Haneda and Nespor (2013) noted the need for an examination of
the “differences and relations among factions of the teaching profession” (p. 269) to gain a
greater understanding of interactions among teachers with differing areas of expertise. My study
provided greater comprehension of such teacher relations by examining the impact of the
paradigm shift to district-level, policy-endorsed ENL co-teaching practices on perceived teacher
roles and their relation to student learning opportunities, as appraised through the theoretical
framework of positioning theory. In addition, my study is of relevance because it was situated
within the context of two elementary schools in a NYS suburban school district, providing a
local perspective that had not been adequately addressed by the existing literature. Through my
research, I identified and addressed gaps in the current understandings of ENL co-teaching roles,
practices and policy at the school building and district levels, and supported the need for new
inquiry guided by the research questions identified above.

**Theoretical Frameworks**

My qualitative case study used positioning theory, an interactionist concept introduced by
Davies and Harré (1990), as a theoretical framework. Positioning served as the lens through
which the literature on integrated ENL co-teaching was examined. Throughout this study, I
applied the theoretical concepts of positioning theory to deepen the understanding of how teacher
parity and agency was influenced by teacher perceptions and the ways in which co-teachers
made sense of their GE and ESOL teacher roles. I also utilized Fullan’s (2016) educational
change theory to acknowledge that co-teaching represented a change of practice for the
participating teachers, which Fullan suggested would progress through various phases of
implementation over a two- to three-year period. Using Fullan’s research, I explored newly
formed (less than one year) and sustained (more than two years) co-teaching partnerships to
garner a broader understanding of how, if at all, the longevity of co-teaching partnerships related
To the implementation of the change of instructional practice. These two theoretical frameworks are discussed within the following sections.

**Positioning Theory**

Van Langenhove and Harré (1999) described positioning as a relational phenomenon in which individuals’ actions, thoughts, and words inform and mediate the roles they assume when interacting with others, based on the perceived power or lack of power implied by those actions and words. Positioning may limit or expand individuals’ actions, as it establishes a set of perceived rights and duties associated with the individual positioned within a given context and therefore determines what an individual can do, say, or think within that context (Harré, Moghaddam, Cairnie, Rothbart, & Sabat, 2009). In this way, *positioning theory* is directly related to *teacher agency*, which Davies (2000) described as:

> A sense of oneself as one who can go beyond the given meaning in any one discourse and forge something new, through a combination of previously unrelated discourses, through the invention of words and concepts that capture a shift in consciousness that is beginning to occur, or through imagining not what is, but what might be. (p. 67)

Kayi-Aydar (2019) offered a simpler definition of *agency* as the ability and capacity a teacher has to make choices regarding teaching practices.

As a social-psychological construct, positioning often involves pre-positioning based on implicit or explicit presuppositions, which may be either positive or negative in nature (Harré et al., 2009). While pre-positioning may occur prior to the occurrence of interactions or discourse between two or more individuals, it may then be influenced by subsequent interactions, which either reinforce or alter the presuppositions. This may result in an individual being repositioned. In this way, positioning is considered to be dynamic (Davies & Harré, 1990).
Through relationships and discourse, individuals position themselves, position others, or are the subject of positioning by someone else’s actions and words, whether the actions and words are intentional behaviors that are shared publicly or kept privately. The phenomenon of positioning oneself is referred to as reflexive positioning and may be the result of either intentional or unintentional behaviors in which an individual identifies his or her role in a particular context or storyline (Moghaddam, 1999). Conversely, interactive positioning refers to the phenomenon occurring when words and actions of one individual result in the positioning of another (Davies & Harré, 1990).

An individual’s positioning is influenced by the discourses of engagement (Kayi-Aydar, 2019). In other words, the language, behaviors, and actions involved in an interaction between two or more individuals contribute to the construction of how those individuals are situated in relation to each other. Davies and Harré (1990) explained that “any narrative that we collaboratively unfold with other people thus draws on a knowledge of social structures and the roles that are recognizably allocated to people within those structures” (p. 52). Every act of engaging in a conversation, as Arkoudis (2006) observed, is a “complex interaction between people with differing power relations” (p. 421) who are constructing their view of reality. However, positioning is dynamic and fluid in nature, meaning that from one context to another, an individual’s position, and its associated rights and duties, may change (Harré & van Langenhove, 1999).

Since positioning is context specific, an individual’s positioning may vary, or repositioning may occur, when interacting in different situations or with different individuals. For this reason, the roles teachers assume within co-teaching relationships may be expanded or restricted, depending on the positioning hierarchy and negotiation that exists within school
cultures and classes, which is created by the perceived status, expertise, and esteem held by GE and ESOL teachers (Hornberger, 2006). Harré and van Langenhove (1999) theorized that if “someone is positioned as incompetent in a certain field of endeavor they will not be accorded the right to contribute to discussions in that field,” (p. 1), whereas someone positioned as powerful is perceived as holding the authority to make demands and issue orders. Applied to co-teaching, if an ESOL teacher is perceived by an administrator or a GE co-teacher as possessing expertise in language development and instruction, the ESOL teacher may be positioned in the class and school building as having a higher status level. Such positioning may result in the ESOL teacher experiencing increased opportunities for shared professional learning among co-teachers and other school community members. The reverse may also be true, as an ESOL teacher perceived as not having specialized knowledge may be positioned in a subordinate or marginalized role and not be accorded the opportunity or right to actively contribute to lesson planning, instruction, and student assessment.

Understanding the phenomenon of teacher positioning is a critical aspect of examining co-teachers’ perceptions of their roles. As Yoon (2008) observed, “whatever the positions teachers take, that positioning guides them in their interactive approaches with students in class settings” (p. 499). The positioning of the ESOL teacher may be a result of interactive positioning; for example, a school’s culture or actions of others within the school community may cultivate a mindset that perceives the ESOL teacher as having either a higher or lesser position and status within a teacher hierarchy. Interactive positioning may also occur on a broader scale. For example, TESOL International Association, a professional ESOL education and research organization, has sought to proactively position ESOL teachers as possessing critical expertise in the support of ELLs. Prior to the implementation of the Common Core State
Standards, this organization published a report summarizing the convening of ESOL teachers, administrators, and education leaders, experts, and researchers, to discuss the pivotal role of ESOL teachers in supporting the implementation of the standards with ELLs (TESOL International Association, 2013).

Alternatively, positioning could be reflexive, whereby the ESOL teacher may be self-positioned as an ELL advocate or expert with specialized knowledge and skills, or as serving in a subordinate role through his or her own words and actions (Arkoudis, 2003; Creese, 2006). Fogel and Moser (2017) offered the example of an ESOL teacher who positioned herself as “an agentive teacher, in negotiations with her principal, who has an orientation toward transforming the school to meet the needs of the English language learner population and making personal changes to meet those goals” (p. 69). Another teacher in this same study positioned herself as a model of bilingualism to cultivate an awareness among her monolingual colleagues of the assets their bilingual students brought to the learning environment (Fogel & Moser, 2017). GE teachers may position themselves as teachers of all students, or as teachers of GE students, thereby impacting the “possibilities for ELL students’ learning” (Yoon, 2008, p. 504) within the GE class. The prospect of repositioning, therefore, is an important aspect of positioning theory as it applies to co-teaching and as it affords teachers opportunities to redefine their positions, which may result in more effective co-teaching practices and enhanced student-learning opportunities.

**Fullan’s Educational Change Theory**

The continuum of education is marked by historical events of reform and change aimed at propelling the quality of education forward. Fullan’s (2016) research on educational change provided a lens with which to examine the characteristics of change and the factors that may influence the implementation of educational change. In his seminal research on educational
change, Fullan (1982) identified three focal points for examining change: namely, the purpose, meaning, and context in which change is implemented. He describes these focal points as follows:

First, in theory, the purpose of educational change is to help schools accomplish their goals more effectively by replacing some programs or practices with better ones....The second main point is that change happens to individuals. Every change has two components: an implicit or explicit *theory of education* (what the change is) and an implicit or explicit *theory of change* (the process being followed to implement it). Individuals must find meaning in both aspects if change is to succeed....The third basic issue is that educational change is context bound. The history, personalities, and socio-political climate within each setting constitute major determinants of change outcomes.

(Fullan, 1982, pp. 4-6)

Within Fullan’s (1982) description of the focal points of change are parallels to the social-psychological constructs of positioning theory, in which individuals are also involved in context-bound meaning making (Davies & Harré, 1990).

One of the tenets of Fullan’s (2001) educational change theory is that “effective change takes time” (p. 109) and that “implementation occurs developmentally” (Fullan, 2016, p. 90). Specifically, Fullan identified a continuum of change involving three distinct phases: namely, initiation, implementation, and continuation. In his research, Fullan described each phase as being influenced by a specific set of factors marking the progression along the continuum.

According to Fullan, the initiation phase is influenced by central administrators and teachers, as well as external change agents, and involves the process surrounding decision making with regard to adopting change. During the implementation phase, which “involves the first
experiences of attempting to put an idea or reform into practice” (Fullan, 2016, p. 55), change is influenced by external factors such as government agencies and local factors including the community, school board, principals, and teachers. The implementation phase also reflects the perceived quality and practicality of the proposed change by those responsible for its implementation, by considering the perceived need for the change, the clarity of articulation of goals, and the complexity of implementing the change. While Fullan suggested that the implementation phase may take two to three years, it is during this time that decisions would be made concerning the continuation phase, based on the perceived reaction to the implemented change. Finally, Fullan described the outcomes of change as occurring concurrently throughout the implementation and continuation phases, and involving an assessment of whether or not the change has resulted in the enhancement of skills, thinking, and committed actions. In describing the continuum of educational change, he suggested that development and capacity building within the first two to three years of implementing an educational change will eventually lead up to routinization or institutionalization of the change (Fullan, 2016).

Similar to the social-psychological origins of the relational phenomenon described in positioning theory by Van Langenhove and Harré (1999), Fullan (2016) identified characteristics about the implementation of change that included the assumption that change “requires individual implementers to work out their own meaning...thus, effective implementation is a process of clarification,” which Fullan stated comes “in large part through reflective practice,” (p. 90). He recognized the challenging nature of change implementation, acknowledging that it typically involves both “potential changes in what people do (using new resources and new teaching approaches) and in what they think (altering one’s beliefs and educational theories; Fullan, 1982, p. 8). In working out their own meaning, Fullan emphasized the critical importance
of creating conditions in which the individual implementers, or in this case co-teachers, have opportunities to “react, to form their own position, to interact with other implementers, to obtain assistance, to develop new capacities, and so on” (p. 90).

Examining educational change in the local context, Fullan identified the school as “the unit or center of change” and emphasized the roles of the principal and teachers in implementing effective change (Fullan, 2016, p. 74). Specifically, he suggested that the level of a principal’s support of a change is the strongest indicator of its success, as “principals’ actions serve to legitimize whether a change is taken seriously and to support teachers both psychologically and with resources” (Fullan, 2016, p. 74). Teachers impact the implementation of change both individually and collectively. Based on factors including teachers’ personalities, past teaching experiences, or their stage of career, Fullan suggested that teachers will be differently predisposed toward implementing change.

My decision to utilize Fullan’s (1982) educational change theory reflected the acknowledgement that the co-teaching instructional model represented a change in practice for the participating teachers as well as for the schools and district in which they co-teach. Fullan’s suggested timeline of two to three years for the implementation of change informed my selection of both newly formed (less than one year) and sustained co-teaching partnerships (more than two years) to acknowledge that co-teaching relationships may evolve throughout extended partnerships and to afford me the opportunity to examine collaborative partnerships at different phases of implementation.

I applied the perspectives offered through positioning theory to explore the dynamics of co-teaching as it influenced how GE and ESOL teachers made sense of their roles within instructional partnerships as well as how it impacted the quality and extent of their collaboration.
I also examined teacher beliefs on whether and how they believed integrated ENL co-teaching influenced student learning. This approach to examining co-teacher perspectives built upon existing research that suggested that when assessing student learning, the model of instructional delivery for ELLs, whether stand-alone or integrated, was secondary to the impact of effective collaboration and ownership of the curriculum between teachers (Fearon, 2008; Martin-Beltrán & Madigan Peercy, 2012). By layering the additional lens of Fullan’s educational change theory, I considered how, if at all, the length of the co-teaching partnerships and the theoretical phases of the implementation of change related to co-teachers’ perceptions of their collaborative partnerships.

Organization of the Literature Review

In the following sections of this chapter, I review the selected literature related to my study, including seminal work and empirical research in the area of co-teaching for ENL. Throughout the literature, ENL may interchangeably be referred to as English as a Second Language (ESL), English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), and English as an Additional Language (EAL), depending upon the time period, context, and location of the author and study. However, for the purpose of consistency within the narrative of this study, I use the term ENL to refer to instructional programs to support ELLs and the term ESOL to identify certified teachers within this area of expertise. My examination of teachers’ perceptions of their co-teaching roles is built upon two primary bodies of literature: co-teaching and teacher attitudes about ENL instruction.

Co-teaching itself is not a new instructional approach, having a long-standing and well-documented history within the realm of special education settings (Cook & Friend, 1995; Friend, 2007; Pratt et al., 2017; Santamaria & Thousand, 2004). An overview of literature on co-teaching
in special education settings includes studies that have examined student benefits, including increased self-confidence and self-esteem, improved academic and social skills performance, enhanced peer relationships, increased teacher attention due to the lower teacher-to-student ratio, and a greater emphasis on cognitive strategies and study skills development (Friend et al., 1993, 2010; Murawski, 2003; Walther-Thomas, 1997). I also examine reported challenges associated with co-teaching, including decisions concerning establishing co-teaching partnerships, division of labor, and teacher roles (Harvey & Teemant, 2012; Kregel, 2014). Although the application of co-teaching in ENL instruction is a paradigm shift that has come into practice in more recent years, similar benefits and challenges have been evidenced in co-taught ENL classes and include authentic content-based language acquisition (Bell & Baecher, 2012; McGriff & Protacio, 2015; York-Barr et al., 2007). Additional literature (Dove & Honigsfeld, 2017; Peercy, Ditter, & DESTEFANO, 2017; Staehr Fenner, 2014) have built upon these findings as well as provide contextual similarities and differences between the special education and ENL settings and study findings.

Whether in a special education or an integrated ENL setting, the implementation of effective co-teaching partnerships may be influenced by the teachers’ attitudes and perceptions of their own and each other’s roles. My literature review examines studies reporting on administrators’ (Harvey & Teemant, 2012; Murawski & Dieker, 2004) and GE teachers’ attitudes toward ESOL teachers concerning their perceived roles (Avila, 2015; Davison, 2006; English, 2009; Harvey & Teemant, 2012), level of content area expertise (Haneda & Nespors, 2013; McGriff & Protacio, 2015), and emergence as experts and teacher leaders in support of ELLs (Atesoglu Russel, 2012; Dove & Honigsfeld, 2010). I also focus on how these perceptions may either elevate ESOL teachers to positions of esteem or relegate ESOL teachers’ positioning
to a subordinate role in the classroom and school building hierarchy and how either outcome may impact both the co-teaching relationship and student-learning opportunities (Avila, 2015; Esmaeili, 2013; Fearon, 2008; Norton, 2013; Yoon, 2008).

**Co-Teaching**

A climate of progressive education movements in U.S. schools in the 1960s marked the emergence of co-teaching in American schools, a trend that gained momentum through a series of legislative reforms taking place in the 1970s, as well as in response to the need to adequately serve increasingly diverse student populations (Cook & Friend, 1995; Friend et al., 1993; Santamaria & Thousand, 2004). As originally intended and proposed, co-teaching offered benefits to both students and teachers because it served as a vehicle for professional growth and learning for educators. Teachers with varied training backgrounds could pool their collective and distinct expertise, experience, and instructional approaches within their co-teaching partnerships to differentiate instruction for diverse learners (Friend et al., 2008; Friend et al., 1993; Santamaria & Thousand, 2004).

The terms *co-teaching* and *collaboration* are often used interchangeably. However, while co-teaching may be most simply defined as shared instruction, collaboration extends outside the classroom to refer to “how professionals and others interact in a variety of situations, including meetings, teams, and parent conferences” (Friend et al., 2008, p. 15). Collaboration is key to effective co-teaching, as it allows for the evolution of co-teaching into a comprehensive cycle involving co-planning, co-instruction, co-assessing, and co-reflection (Dove & Honigsfeld, 2018). The implementation of an effective collaborative co-teaching model is characterized by a school culture that cultivates parity among partnered teachers sharing common goals, responsibilities, and accountability for student outcomes (Creese, 2005; Friend et al., 2008).
Such a school culture recognizes that co-teaching involves teacher collaboration with regard to the planning, delivery, and evaluation of jointly provided instruction (Dove & Honigsfeld, 2018; Friend et al., 1993) and creates opportunities for the implementation of the full collaborative instruction model. Murawski and Bernhardt (2015) identified five administrative goals to support effective co-teaching: (a) provide professional development on inclusion, collaboration, and co-teaching; (b) establish scheduling strategies; (c) partner the right teachers; (d) supervise and evaluate strategically; and (e) improve, increase, and institutionalize co-teaching practices. Establishing and working toward these goals creates a collaborative school culture conducive to the equitable positioning of co-teachers (Murawski & Bernhardt, 2015). Educational settings cultivating inequitable positioning or marginalization of ESOL teachers have lacked these common goals (Creese, 2002; Fogel & Moser, 2017; Lee, 2012; Liggett, 2010; Penfield, 1987).

As I examined the literature on co-teaching, I used positioning theory to identify how teachers negotiated and defined their roles in the integrated co-taught class.

**Co-Teaching to Support Special Education**

Research has documented the benefits of co-teaching to support the needs of students with disabilities (Friend & Cook, 2010; Santamaria & Thousand, 2004; Villa, Thousand, Nevin, & Malgeri, 1996), as “this instructional model allows schools to address standards for student achievement, provide least restrictive environments, and ensure all students have highly qualified teachers” (Pratt et al., 2017, p. 243), each with a distinct area of expertise (Friend & Cook, 2010). Santamaria and Thousand (2004) reported that co-teaching and teacher collaboration in GE settings have created learning environments in which students with disabilities were effectively educated and realized improvements in academic and social performance. The benefits afforded these students included increased self-confidence and self-esteem and enhanced
peer relationships. GE classmates also experienced benefits from co-taught settings, including increased teacher attention due to the lower teacher-to-student ratio, and a greater emphasis on cognitive strategies and study skills development (Friend et al., 2010; Walther-Thomas, 1997).

In addition to the benefits realized by students, co-teaching also provides distinct benefits for teachers. Rytivaara and Kershner (2012) conducted a case study focusing on the experiences of two co-teachers in an inclusive class setting. Their findings suggested that the teachers credited their collaborative teaching partnership with contributing to their co-constructed and reciprocal professional learning, development of inclusive pedagogical skills, and the cultivation of positive attitudes toward supporting their students’ needs (Rytivaara & Kershner, 2012).

The implementation of co-teaching has also presented challenges, including difficulty in coordinating teaching schedules, the lack of collaborative planning time, and questions concerning the management of shared responsibilities (Friend et al., 1993). One additional challenge, aligned with positioning theory constructs, has been to relegate one of the co-teachers as an assistant or lower-status teacher (Cook & Friend, 1995; Friend et al., 1993). Achieving parity in co-teacher roles requires mediation and negotiation of the rights and duties of each co-teacher, with each actively involved and neither subordinated to a lesser position (Pratt et al., 2017; Scruggs et al., 2007). The challenges presented by co-teaching may be symptoms of “inconsistencies in definitions and implementation, lack of professional preparation, and dilemmas related to situating co-teaching in a supportive, collaborative school culture” (Friend et al., 2008, p. 10), which point to the need for greater exploration of the practice and policies of co-teaching to support special education settings. Despite the issues that present challenges to the implementation of co-teaching, Friend and Cook (1995) argued that the potential benefits justified co-teaching as an instructional practice by increasing “instructional opportunities for all
students, improving program intensity and continuity, reducing stigma for students with special needs, and increasing support for teachers and related service specialists” (p. 4). This rationale in support of the co-teaching model is applicable to the instruction of students with and without disabilities, as all students may benefit from the collaborative use of teacher expertise (Pratt, 2014), including English learners.

**Co-Teaching to Support ELLs**

Aligned with New York state policy, co-teaching has emerged in recent years as an instructional model to support ELLs in mainstream integrated classes as opposed to stand-alone services, also referred to in some contexts as pull-out instruction (Abdallah, 2009; Carnock, 2016; Dove & Honigsfeld, 2010). However, as evidenced by the literature discussed herein, the implementation of co-teaching to support ELLs may lack adequate direction at the district and school building levels as to clearly defining the roles and expectations of ESOL teachers (Carnock, 2016; McClure & Cahnmann-Taylor, 2010). In association with the legislation, co-teaching to support ELLs is typically a policy-endorsed model of instruction in New York State (Carnock, 2016; NYSED, 2015). As a construct, the nature of any policy may potentially contribute to the positioning of an individual or a specific group of individuals governed by the policy in question (Harré & Moghaddam, 2003), such as in this case GE and ESOL teachers. From the perspective of positioning theory, one can infer that co-teaching relationships may realize greater success if an ESOL teacher is positioned, both reflexively and interactively, as holding greater esteem, status, and expertise (Liggett, 2010). Such positioning may be a factor of how district level policy-endorsed co-teaching programs are implemented at the school building level as well as the degree and nature of administrator support of ESOL teachers (Atesoglu
Russell, 2012) and special education teachers (Murawski & Dieker, 2004) within these respective programs.

While empirical data on co-teaching to support ELLs is limited in comparison to the more extensive literature on co-teaching in special education settings, collaboration remains a key component in effectively supporting students through a co-taught instructional model (Atesoglu Russell, 2012; Peercy et al., 2017). As Honigsfeld and Dove (2012) asserted, “any successful education plan for ELLs begins with the skillful implementation of collaborative efforts so that all stakeholders have an opportunity to share their concerns, opinions, and expertise” (p. 317). Cultivating such a collaborative environment often requires a “shift in the school culture so that there is an increase in the equity among stakeholders to assure all school community members are valued” (Honigsfeld & Dove, 2012, p. 317). In other words, successful collaboration and co-teaching relies on equitable positioning of teachers, with equal voice, contribution, and accountability to the co-teaching process.

Another factor in the effective implementation of co-teaching is clear articulation of what collaboration between GE and ESOL teachers should look like. However, since ENL co-teaching is an emerging practice in many New York State school districts, many schools and districts have not yet established their vision and expectations for co-teaching practices and interactions (McGriff & Protacio, 2015). To this point, Dove and Honigsfeld (2018) defined the phases of the collaborative co-teaching instructional model to include collaborative planning, collaborative instructional delivery/co-teaching, collaborative assessment of student learning, and reflection on action and in action. This instructional cycle emphasizes the shared responsibility for student learning and promotes teacher parity through every phase of the instruction and assessment process.
Building on the notion of the importance of collaboration for successful co-teaching, Martin-Beltrán and Madigan Peercy (2012) conducted surveys with 23 elementary co-teachers in 11 schools throughout the Washington, D.C., area. The researchers also included observations and interviews with three pairs of ESOL-GE co-teaching teams as part of their qualitative study of teacher collaboration. The findings of their study, which focused on the use of a common curriculum between ESOL and GE teachers, suggested that collaborative teachers are able to provide a more extensive and enriched delivery of instruction for ELLs than would be accomplished by one teacher (Martin-Beltrán & Madigan Peercy, 2012). However, the path to collaboration can be challenging. Similarly, Arkoudis (2006) examined the policy-endorsed implementation of co-teaching practices in Australian secondary schools in the 1980s and noted that while “policy about mainstreaming of ESL secondary schools has assumed that the ESL teacher has the authority to influence the mainstream teacher in curriculum planning” (p. 428), that in practice, this was impeded by the marginalization of ESOL teachers within the teacher hierarchies of schools.

As with any relationship, co-teaching settings may have inherent challenges. Common complaints reported among co-teachers include lack of common planning time (Friend, 2008), lack of administrator support (Carnock, 2016; Murawski & Dieker, 2004; Peercy et al., 2017; Scruggs et al., 2007), ESOL teachers’ difficulty in supporting multiple grade levels and content areas (Bell & Baecher, 2012), and the marginalization of the ESOL teacher to a subordinate role (Arkoudis, 2006; Creese, 2006). Bell and Baecher (2012) also advised that teacher personalities and dispositions toward collaborating influenced the effectiveness of co-taught instruction. For this reason, care and attention must be given to the establishment of co-teaching teams (Murawski & Bernhardt, 2015), as “the process in which co-teachers are paired by administrators
and teachers is essential to their success because the pairing will affect the interpersonal relationship in the partnerships” (Kregel, 2014, p. 3). This can be especially problematic when co-teaching programs and partnerships are mandated by school or district policy, rather than voluntarily established, which on a professional level has caused some co-teachers to report feeling uncomfortable or threatened within the co-taught class (Davison, 2006). However, similar to Fullan’s (1982) assertions on the implementation of educational change, Davison (2006) noted that there is a continuum of development in co-teaching partnerships that reflects a progression of teacher attitudes toward collaboration. Specifically, Davison (2006) identified five levels of collaboration as follows: “(1) pseudo-compliance or passive resistance; (2) compliance; (3) accommodation; (4) convergence; and (5) creative co-construction” (pp. 467-468). As co-teachers progressed through these levels, they demonstrated decreased resistance to co-teaching and increased effort, investment, and positive attitudes toward collaboration as they became better able to address the challenges they encountered (Davison, 2006).

Bell and Baecher (2012) indicated that while there may be some overlap to the co-teaching challenges common to special education and ENL settings, there are also distinct challenges that characterize the latter. Specifically, Bell and Baecher (2012) found that many of the GE teachers who participated in their study lacked specific expertise about ELLs and ENL concerning knowledge of age- and grade-appropriate language and literacy development and instruction. Coupled with the issue of teacher hierarchies, they observed that “because content teachers and ESL teachers may occupy different positions of power in their schools, lack common technical language for lesson design, and differ in instructional goals, their collaboration may be particularly challenging to enact” (Bell & Baecher, 2012, p. 494). As positioning theory proposed, these perceptions of power may limit the abilities and actions of the
teacher perceived as having a lower status. Perceived levels of teacher power may also contribute to teachers’ attitudes and perceptions toward the co-teaching instructional model and teacher roles within these partnerships (Bell & Baecher, 2012).

Attitudes and Perceptions About Co-Teaching and Teacher Roles

The extant body of literature on the attitudes and perceptions about co-teaching and roles has shown several influencing factors that affect collaborative relationships, including administrative support, parity, mindful pairings, and terminology used to describe instruction (Atesoglu Russell, 2012; Honigsfeld & Dove, 2015; McClure & Cahnmann-Taylor, 2010; Murawski & Kershner, 2015). According to Villa, Thousand, Nevin, and Liston (2005), “administrative support for the [collaborative] practice was the most powerful predictor of a general educators’ positive feelings toward inclusive education” (p. 43), as it influenced the positioning of teachers within co-teaching partnerships. As the research on co-teaching in special education settings has highlighted, parity among the partnered teachers is a critical characteristic of successful co-teaching (Friend, 2008; Pratt et al., 2017). Similarly, the emerging body of literature on ENL co-teaching has suggested that effective co-teaching requires all stakeholders to share in the responsibility for student outcomes but recognized that this has been a difficult ideal to achieve (Abdallah, 2009; Honigsfeld & Dove, 2015; Murawski & Bernhardt, 2015). Harvey and Teemant (2012) suggested that overcoming disparate positioning perceptions of ESOL teachers was no easy task but pointed to the importance of mindful pairings of teachers by administrators when they observed that “it is well established that collaboration between ESL specialists and mainstream teachers is complicated by hierarchical relationships of power, perceptions of status, and differences in the nature of instructional experience in the schools” (p. 35). Carnock (2016) offered that collaborative relationships may even be influenced by the
termiology used to describe instruction, as she described the transition in New York State to using the terms *integrated* and *co-teaching*, rather than the ‘push-in’ terminology, which positioned ENL teachers as outsiders. This intentional shift in terminology used within ENL can be critical in informing teachers’ perceptions of co-teaching roles (Van Langenhove & Harré, 1999).

Within co-teaching relationships, GE and ESOL co-teachers have struggled to determine the roles each would have, particularly with regard to shared responsibility (English, 2009) and the division of labor (Kregel, 2014), often with little to no professional development (Madigan Peercy, Ditter & Destefano, 2017) or administrative guidance (Arkoudis, 2006; Norton, 2013). In a three-year case study on collaborative teaching in urban elementary schools, York-Barr et al. (2007) reported that one of the greatest challenges expressed by participants in their research concerned confusion over shared instructional time and shared responsibilities. When these duties or roles were not clearly defined, the success of the co-teaching team suffered and often resulted in the ESOL teacher being positioned to a subordinate role in the classroom and school building hierarchy (Avila, 2015; Esmaeili, 2013; Fearon, 2008; Norton, 2013; Yoon, 2008). By extension, ELLs may also be subjected to the subordination experienced by their ESOL teachers.

As Lee (2012) observed, “too often, the work of educating English learners is seen as the sole responsibility of the ELL or bilingual staff in a school. This model leaves the ELL staff and their students marginalized and isolated in schools” (p. 69). To be successful, Kregel (2014) proposed that co-teaching requires that partnered teachers need a plan for communication and the execution of individual teachers’ duties” (p. 42). One district created professional development days that focused on exploring and agreeing on ESOL and GE co-teacher roles and responsibilities. This structured approach to professional learning and collaboration incorporated
the expertise of each teacher and allowed for continuous evaluation and renegotiation (Davison, 2006).

**International Research**

On an international scale, the instruction of English learners has been the subject of several studies (Arkoudis, 2003; Creese, 2002; Davison, 2006), the findings of which have revealed a common theme: ESL is perceived in a lower hierarchical position than the mainstream school culture and curriculum with regard to ESL teachers, students, and collaborative efforts. Davison (2006) found that when surveying teachers in Taiwanese elementary schools, the predominantly negative attitude teachers had toward collaboration was the greatest impediment to its success, surpassing the other reported issues of inadequacy of resources and lack of administrative support. As a result, curricular and instructional decision-making power was one sided, with the GE teacher having sole authority, while the expertise of the marginalized ESL teacher was underutilized (Arkoudis, 2006).

In the following sections, I highlight selected literature on attitudes and perceptions of teachers on co-teaching and collaboration. While the sections are categorized under the distinctions of teacher attitudes and administrator attitudes, there is a great deal of overlap in the literature, reflecting the dynamic nature of attitudes and how they influence school culture and co-teaching.

**Attitudes of Teachers Toward Co-Teaching**

The literature evidences mixed findings on teacher attitudes toward co-teaching. Some studies have reported positive experiences and outcomes from this instructional model (Davison, 2006; Fogel & Moser, 2017; Haneda & Nespor, 2013). York-Barr et al. (2007) conducted a three-year study that allowed them to follow the progression of co-teaching implementation and
the development of collaborative partnerships over time within an urban school district. Co-teaching was adopted in response to the focal school’s declining student performance on statewide standardized tests, along with a concern about segregating ELLs within the school. While the implementation of co-teaching was initially met with resistance by some of the participant teachers, the findings of this study included teachers experiencing “…greater shared ownership of student learning;…learning from and with colleagues about students, teaching, and learning; increased collective expertise resulting in greater effectiveness with a variety of students; decreased teacher isolation, increased support and feeling valued by colleagues” (York-Barr et al., 2007, p. 317). While teachers also reported challenges, these were outweighed by data suggesting that linguistically diverse students had increased access to the general education curriculum and benefitted both socially and academically within the co-taught context (York-Barr et al., 2007).

In other studies, teacher attitudes proved to be detrimental to the implementation of the co-teaching model (Avila, 2015; Kregel, 2014; Norton, 2013). Teachers assigned to co-teaching partnerships to support ELLs may have preconceived notions as to the instructional roles of each teacher. As Kregel (2014) observed, attitudes toward co-teaching may revolve around the assumption of responsibility or division of labor involved in ELLs’ instruction. This was the case with Avila’s (2015) qualitative study, which reported data from 12 elementary teachers concerning their perceptions of collaboration to support ELLs. The study revealed teacher perceptions of segmented responsibility for separate aspects of ELLs’ instruction and suggested that GE teachers may perceive a distinct separation of duties or responsibilities as being representative of the co-teaching role of the ESOL teacher (Avila, 2015). Furthermore, Avila reported that classroom teachers indicated that language development was the function of the
ESOL teacher and did not fall under their perceived notion of the role of the GE teacher. Throughout the teacher interactions involved in this study, Avila noted that GE teachers positioned ESOL teachers to a lower status when they referred to them as ELL rather than ELL ‘teachers.’

Avila’s findings were echoed in Whiting’s (2017) study of teachers’ perceptions of push-in instruction in school districts identified as low incidence or as having low populations of ELLs. Whiting suggested that “the mainstream teachers are allowed to feel that the ELL student is ‘taken care of’ and their attention can be directed elsewhere” (p. 14). A respondent in Whiting’s study indicated that mainstream teachers, “feel that the student is the ESOL teacher’s responsibility and they take a less involved role in the ELL’s instruction” (p. 14). Whiting asserted that these findings resulted from a perceived sense of ambiguous responsibilities among mainstream and ESOL teachers. Also, Whiting suggested that the lack of clearly defined roles and responsibilities led many ESOL teachers to experience a loss of autonomy and professional identity, as they often reported being positioned as an assistant in the mainstream classroom.

The notion of subordinate positioning of the ESOL teacher is further supported by Norton (2013), who also examined the impact of perceived co-teacher roles among GE and ESOL teachers on student learning. Norton observed that “perceptions of ESL as a subject area of lower status than other subject areas may also influence how ESL and GE co-teachers view their roles” (p. 48). Norton’s study further offered that although ESL and GE teachers “appear to have a general understanding of one another’s roles, some perceptions diverged with regard to sharing responsibilities and whether the GE teacher was the ‘primary instructor’” (p. v). This lack of clarity and definition not only weakened the co-teaching relationship and effectiveness, but as
Norton suggested, also impacted student learning because the capacity of the ESOL teacher to support ELLs was limited by this subordinate positioning.

During a year-long ethnography, Creese (2006) observed and interviewed co-teachers in secondary bilingual classes in three schools in linguistically diverse, low socioeconomic areas in London. She found that there was a perceived lesser importance of English as an Additional Language (EAL) teaching in each of the schools. Creese’s observations permeated throughout the schools, being noted among administrators, GE teachers, and students, who collectively characterized EAL as “facilitating, accessing, scaffolding and often working with the few, was positioned as support, helping and generic. In many cases it was described as work without skill or particular knowledge base” (Creese, 2006, p. 450). This finding supported the notion of pre-positioning of the EAL teacher based on a perceived lack of expertise (Harré et al., 2009).

In a more positive context, some ESL teachers reported having high expectations for co-teaching and were not resistant to collaborative relationships (Davison, 2006). Research has also revealed the possibility of marginalized ESOL teachers repositioning themselves as agents of change (Fogel & Moser, 2017). Teachers in a Mississippi school district who found themselves “positioned against dominant ideologies and educational policies” (Fogel & Moser, 2017, p. 65) redefined their professional positions and identities to advocate for policy change at the classroom, school building, and community level, to improve the quality of instruction for ELLs, a finding also reported by Hornberger (2006). Participants in this study reported repositioning themselves as educators of their GE colleagues, on providing appropriate accommodations and instructional choices for ELLs (Fogel & Moser, 2017). This finding was echoed in Haneda and Nespor’s (2013) study, in which ESL teachers in an urban Midwestern school district, recognizing that they were outliers in the school culture, repositioned themselves as advisors and
consultants to GE teachers, through reflexively positioning themselves as possessing “expertise based on a discipline-grounded body of technical knowledge” (p. 267). Using discursive interactions in this manner was a strategy that increased the perceived power and authority possessed by the ESL teachers and led to greater collaboration with their GE colleagues (Haneda & Nespor, 2013).

**Attitudes of Administrators Toward Co-Teaching**

Building leaders and administrators play an influential role in establishing the climate and culture in a school community, including the nature of teacher interactions and perceived hierarchies within a school building or district (Atesoglu Russell, 2012; Bell & Baecher, 2012; Honigsfeld & Dove, 2010; Murawski & Dieker, 2004). Co-teaching and collaborative relationships are directly impacted by the school culture, as teachers often adopt the perceived attitudes modeled by building leaders and administrators (Atesoglu Russell, 2012; Harvey & Teemant, 2012). This was illustrated in Harvey and Teemant’s study, in which they examined the perspectives of administrators with regard to the roles of ESOL and GE teachers. Data collected during their qualitative study revealed a perceived lack of credibility of the ESOL teacher, as reported by content-area teachers, which was often perpetuated by administrators (Harvey & Teemant, 2012). Specifically, they observed, “ESL specialists may not be recognized within their school settings as possessing the necessary knowledge, skills, or dispositions to be seen as credible resources for content learning” (Harvey & Teemant, 2012, p. 41). Therefore, in such situations, the expertise and knowledge of language acquisition held by these specialists became unused resources.

Similarly, Atesoglu Russell (2012) examined administrators’ influence when they explored teacher collaboration within a culturally and linguistically diverse U.S. high school,
with particular attention given to the level and nature of support afforded to the facilitator of the ESL department by school administrators. Using communities of practice as a framework, Atesoglu Russell observed interactions among teachers and administrators in the school building to investigate aspects of the school culture, which included the leadership context and collaborative work among teachers. The findings of this study emphasized the need for strong administrative and leadership support of an inclusive instructional model for ELLs, including collaboration between the ELL facilitator and other members of the literacy team (Atesoglu Russell, 2012). Atesoglu Russell indicated that “administrators who are able to establish a school culture with a focus on meeting the needs of ELLs can set the stage for teachers’ collaborative work to meet the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students” (p. 449). Setting the stage for a collaborative school culture is a result of administrators’ implicit and explicit behaviors, which may position ESOL teachers at a higher or lower level of the hierarchy, by how they define, communicate, and support the role of the ESOL teacher to the staff, faculty, and principal. Whether administrators support or constrain the role of the ESOL teacher influences the collaborative culture in a building, which has a trickle-down effect to the classroom level (Atesoglu Russell, 2012).

Perceived Impact of Co-Teaching on Opportunities for Student Learning

Teachers’ attitudes toward co-teaching, toward their perceived roles and responsibilities, and those of their co-teachers, impacts the influence of co-teaching on student learning (Peercy et al., 2017). According to McGriff and Protacio (2015), student learning is influenced by the interrelated dynamic between co-teacher attitudes, perceived positioning in the teacher hierarchy, and their approach to co-teaching. They observed that “positioning moves of each school’s ESL teacher and her content area colleagues impacted ELLs’ access to rigorous content area
instruction” (p. 22) and have either constrained ELLs’ learning or have “significantly benefited ELLs content area language and literacy development” (McGriff & Protacio, 2015, p. 22).

Similarly, Yoon (2008) reported that “positioning theory provided insights for analyzing data as to how the teachers’ approaches were related to the students’ possibilities for their learning” (p. 504) and asserted that teachers who positioned themselves as teachers for all students used culturally relevant pedagogies, addressing ELLs’ diverse needs, and had a broad impact on ELLs’ learning; conversely, teachers who positioned themselves as teachers for GE students used pedagogies described as monolingualism or monoculturalism and had a narrow impact on student learning.

It can be said, then, that the mindset of the GE teacher can be a determining factor in the academic success of ELLs (Esmaeili, 2013). GE teachers who are open to incorporating instructional supports and strategies may send the message that these students are valued members of the learning community. The reverse may also be true and may lead to feelings of isolation, as well as hinder the achievement of this population of students, whose feelings of exclusion may be manifested through withdrawal from the school context. As Yoon (2008) stated, “the main reason for students’ anxiety, silence, and different positioning has much to do with being outsiders in the regular classroom context” (p. 498). Thus, it can be inferred that the phenomenon of positioning of students in ENL programs mirrors that of teachers in ENL programs, both of which may directly impact ELLs’ opportunities to learn.

**Conclusion**

Co-teaching GE and ESOL teachers have been found to continuously negotiate their positioning in teacher hierarchies. Some struggle to identify their instructional roles in supporting the academic and linguistic needs of English learners, particularly with regard to
shared responsibility (English, 2009) and the division of labor (Kregel, 2014). This often occurs with little or no administrative guidance (Arkoudis, 2006; Norton, 2013), resulting in a lack of parity between the GE and ESOL co-teachers.

The existing research has documented findings that collaborative teachers are able to provide a more extensive and enriched delivery of instruction for ELLs than would be accomplished by one teacher (Martin-Beltrán & Madigan Peercy, 2012). However, successful collaboration and co-teaching relies on a shift in school culture toward embracing teacher collaboration to assure equitable positioning of teachers, with equal voice, contribution, and accountability to the co-teaching process (Brown & Stairs, 2012; Honigsfeld & Dove, 2012; Pratt, 2014). Achieving this level of co-teaching may be impacted by teachers’ attitudes toward collaboration, which was reported to be one of the greatest influencers on co-teaching success (Davison, 2006), along with administrative support and direction concerning the implementation of this instructional model (Carnock, 2016; McClure & Cahnmann-Taylor, 2010). Shifting school culture also requires “considerable mediating that teachers can and must do within the constraints of what policy mandates” (Hornberger, 2006, p. 498), to work toward effective co-teaching in school culture hierarchies that position GE and ESOL teachers at vastly different levels of perceived power.

The implications of the theoretical and empirical literature on co-teaching to support English learners point to a need for further qualitative research to explore how teacher parity is impacted by co-teachers’ positioning and perceptions of their and each other’s roles within co-taught elementary ENL classes in suburban school settings. As such, my study examined how and to what extent ESOL teachers proactively positioned themselves within new and established co-teaching partnerships as competent and effective language specialists, to make sense of their
co-teacher roles within integrated ENL classes, and to advocate for supportive policy change and professional learning opportunities. The selection of both new and established partnerships drew from Fullan’s (2016) research on educational change, in which he identified a two- to three-year time period for progressing from the initiation phase through the implementation phase of any educational change. This study significantly contributed to the understanding of the practice of co-teaching in ENL, including implications for changes to program policy and professional development needs for stakeholders, including GE and ESOL teachers, and administrators.
Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodology

“You go into the teacher's classroom and you sort of become, possibly an assistant, possibly a teacher, depending on the teacher's class that you're going into.”

~ Ms. Elmont

Collaboration in a co-taught class is a challenging undertaking. Teachers partnered as co-teachers must cultivate a relationship that will enable them to support the distinct instructional needs of their shared group of students. Co-teaching in ENL programs is an emerging instructional model intended to support the integration of content and language instruction, as well as the integration of students, combining native-English speakers and students identified as ELLs. This instructional model involves GE teachers and ESOL teachers collaborating to co-plan, co-instruct, and co-assess a shared group of students (McClure & Cahnmann-Taylor, 2010). However, achieving parity within these collaborative partnerships can be challenging; many GE and ESOL co-teachers struggle to identify their own and each other’s instructional roles in supporting the academic and linguistic needs of English learners (Arkoudis, 2006; Norton, 2013).

While integrated instruction is intended to increase ELLs’ authentic language use and academic opportunities alongside their native English-speaking peers, the degree to which that effect is achieved relies heavily on the positioning of the co-teachers and on their ability to successfully navigate their roles and responsibilities within the co-taught class (Arkoudis, 2003; Creese, 2006; Davison, 2006; Hornberger, 2006). Administrative guidance and support have been identified as key factors in facilitating the implementation of the co-taught instructional model and communicating the role of teachers (Arkoudis, 2006; Norton, 2013). Some researchers claim the challenge of defining co-teacher roles may give rise to issues of inequitable
positioning or marginalization among partnered teachers, with the ESOL teacher relegated to a subordinate role as an assistant to the GE teacher (Creese, 2002; Fogel & Moser, 2017; Lee, 2012; Liggett, 2010; Penfield, 1987). Others have suggested positive outcomes, such as increased opportunities for teachers to learn from each other’s expertise, and to develop deeper knowledge and understanding of individual student strengths (Madigan Peercy et al., 2017; Rytivaara & Kershner, 2012; York-Barr et al., 2007). The reported impact of co-teaching on students includes the benefit of co-teachers’ more flexible and innovative use of instructional time and a greater shift toward student-centered rather than teach-centered learning environments (Madigan Peercy et al., 2017; York-Barr et al., 2007).

Despite an increased interest in co-teaching in ENL classes, very few studies have focused on teachers’ perceptions of their collaborative partners and the roles that each play within the co-taught classroom (Bell & Baecher, 2012; Davison, 2006; Peercy et al., 2017). Specifically, the gap I identified in the existing literature was an examination of co-teacher positioning in elementary spaces of practice created through discourse and professional interactions and how this positioning was reflective of the overall school culture with regard to inclusive student instruction and collaborative teacher practices.

**Purpose of the Study**

To address the gap in the existing literature and contribute to the understanding of co-teaching, the purpose of this qualitative case study was to analyze how elementary co-teachers in new and established co-teaching partnerships perceived each other’s as well as their own roles, agency, and professional positioning within a co-taught integrated ENL class. For the purposes of this study, the ways in which teachers made sense of their respective roles was generally defined as division of labor and responsibilities, levels of teacher expertise, and co-teacher parity.
in the co-taught class. Data collected and analyzed included transcribed class observations of five co-teaching partnerships (two in one school and three in another school); in-depth, semi-structured interviews with two building principals (one of whom is also the district ENL coordinator), two ESOL teachers, and four GE teachers; field notes from meeting with a district superintendent; school board presentations and meeting minutes; the district’s shared decision-making plan; electronic communications (texts and emails) with participants; district website main pages and school building pages; and social media text such as posts on district and teacher Twitter accounts. Positioning theory (Davies & Harré, 1990) served as the lens through which the data analysis sought to identify themes of division of labor, parity, teacher hierarchies, and teacher agency. These themes provided insight in understanding how co-teachers made sense of their roles. Fullan’s educational change theory provided an additional lens to examine how co-teaching partnerships at different phases of implementation; namely, newly formed partnerships (less than one year in duration) and sustained or established co-teaching partnerships (more than two years in duration). In this way, my study provided a unique and distinct contribution to the existing literature.

**Research Questions**

To further define the focus of my study, I identified the following research questions that guided my research:

1. What is the relationship between observations of parity and hierarchies in the co-taught classroom and the ways in which GE and ESOL co-teachers make sense of their roles?
   a. How are co-teachers’ understandings of their roles reflective of the discourse and interactions within their collaborative partnership?
b. What relationship, if any, is there between the length of a co-teaching partnership and ESOL and GE teachers’ perceptions of their roles?

2. What do co-teachers report as perceived successes and challenges in defining and implementing the collaborative instructional model, given the broader context of the culture and policy of the school or district?

3. In what ways, if any, do GE and ESOL teachers believe co-taught ENL instruction impacts ELLs’ experiences and relationships as compared to stand-alone instruction?

I used qualitative and constructivist methodologies, discussed below, to inform my research design, to analyze and interpret themes and patterns in the data, and to theorize the answers to these research questions. Further perspective was gained through the lens of positioning theory, an interactionist concept introduced by Davies and Harré (1990), who explained that perceived social structures and roles influence collaborative interactions and narratives and the positions that are assigned to individuals within those structures. Arkoudis (2006) expanded on this notion and observed that the act of engaging in a conversation is a “complex interaction between people with differing power relations” (p. 421) who are constructing their view of reality. Using data from teacher interviews and classroom observations, I applied the perspectives offered through positioning theory to analyze the dynamics of co-teaching partnerships, how new and established GE and ESOL co-teacher pairs made sense of their roles within these instructional partnerships, and how positioning influenced parity and teacher agency within co-taught classes.

**Procedures and Rationale for Qualitative Research Design**

Qualitative research involves an exploration of the “meanings, personal narratives, and stories of the internal and experiential life of the actors, their viewpoints, and practices, as well
as people’s perceptions and thoughts, and what they might signify” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2016, p. 4). This research approach utilizes an inductive style of inquiry to make sense of multiple perspectives of a shared phenomenon, through the exploration and interpretation of themes emerging from collected data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). As Fleck (1979) offered,

Whereas an experiment can be interpreted in terms of a simple question and answer, experience must be understood as a complex state of intellectual training based upon the interaction involving the knower, that which he already knows, and that which he has yet to learn. (p. 10)

In other words, qualitative researchers work from the bottom up to build upon patterns and themes identified at the smaller, concrete level of data, to inductively establish more abstract and comprehensive information and themes. Qualitative methodology is reflective of the social contexts and structures in which individuals interact (Merriam, 1988) and seeks to make meaning of the “world in which they live and work” (Creswell, 2014, p. 8). This study aimed to better understand how co-teachers made meaning of their collaborative relationships and the roles each partner served within those relationships. Qualitative methodology provided an appropriate vehicle to explore the social phenomenon within this study.

**Philosophical Worldview of Qualitative Research**

According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), qualitative researchers may approach their studies with a particular philosophical worldview or a basic set of beliefs that influence the research questions asked and how they seek to answer them. Specifically, Creswell and Creswell identified four worldviews: post-positivism, transformative, pragmatism, and constructivism. For the purpose of my study, I espoused a worldview combining constructivist and interpretivist perspectives to theorize my findings. Crotty (1998) described the constructivist philosophy as
being based on the assumptions that individuals construct meaning through social interactions with other individuals while engaging with their shared world and that their meaning making is based on their unique historical and social perspectives. Interpretivism recognizes that, as the researcher, my interpretation of the data I gather during this study will be “shaped by the researcher’s own experiences and background” (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 8). As such, I addressed my role as the researcher in greater depth in a later section of this chapter.

Using a constructivist/interpretivist worldview of qualitative methodology allows for the development of understanding through the exploration of multiple perspectives and realities within a phenomenon (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Typically, this involves the qualitative researcher personally gathering information and data by visiting the context or setting in which the participants experience the phenomenon. This approach was the most suitable for my study, as it sought to explore psycho-social behaviors and perceptions and relied on the analysis of “direct observation of the events being studied and interviews of the persons involved in the events” (Yin, 2009, p. 11). I believe that this approach was the most applicable to the exploration of co-teacher relationships and perceptions of their and each other’s roles within the co-taught class. Direct observations of co-teachers afforded me the opportunity to examine the behaviors and discourse that were representative of their interactions and influenced their perceptions of each other’s roles.

**Qualitative Design**

The specific qualitative design I used to analyze co-teachers’ perceptions of their roles was a case study, which Merriam (2009) defined as “an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system” (p. 40). Yin (2009) further clarified the nature of a bounded system within the case study design, stating that the researcher’s understanding of the phenomenon being studied
was dependent upon contextual conditions. This way of defining a bounded case study implies that the findings and interpretations emerging from this design are applicable only within the boundaries of that specific context: the time, location, participants, and all other circumstances by which the context is defined. Therefore, this study was based on a purposeful selection of co-teachers from two elementary schools in a New York suburban school district that had strong support for co-teaching in ENL classes, with the unit of analysis being the participant teachers. As such, the results from the data analysis in this case study were bounded to the set of ENL classes observed at one New York suburban elementary school from September to January of the 2019-2020 school year.

The case study design allows the researcher to make assertions about the themes emerging from the data through proposed or propositional generalizations, as well as to draw upon his or her own experiences through naturalistic generalizations (Stake, 1995). This design best facilitates the study of “how or why some social phenomenon works” (Yin, 2009, p. 4) and provides an opportunity for in-depth exploration and description of such phenomenon. Utilizing this approach enabled me to examine how co-teachers’ perceptions were formed within the context of the two school buildings’ school cultures and teacher hierarchies, and how this influenced the implementation of the co-teaching model.

**Selecting Sites and Participants**

The participants and units of analysis for this study were GE and ESOL co-teachers. Purposeful selection was used to identify five co-teaching pairs at two elementary schools within the same New York suburban school district: three new partnerships formed within the school year in which the study was conducted; and two established partnerships, with a greater than two years of experience working together. The distinction in longevity between the selected co-
teaching partnerships allowed me to examine the relationships between co-teachers early in the implementation phase as well as in two sustained partnerships that had more time to build their capacity and navigate the co-teaching instructional model. My decision to use this approach to selecting the co-teaching partnerships acknowledged that co-teaching relationships may evolve throughout extended partnerships. This acknowledgement reflects Fullan’s (2001) theory that “effective change takes time” (p. 109), and that within the first 2-3 years of initiating an educational change, there will be a phase of implementation and development eventually leading up to routinization or institutionalization of the change (Fullan, 2016). Each partnership consisted of one GE and one ESOL teacher, working together in a New York suburban elementary school classroom.

The specific schools were selected because they had an established co-teaching program with strong administrative support and a population of English learners that had been continuously increasing in recent years; the district’s data for its K-12 schools, as reflected in NYSED’s Student Information Repository System, evidenced that the percentage of total student enrollment represented by the population of ELLs had increased from 8% in the 2016-2017 school year to 10% in the 2018-2019 school year. The population of ELLs enrolled at the selected elementary school buildings collectively represented 39.8% of the district-wide ELL population in 2016-2017 and 38.3% of the district-wide ELL population in 2018-2019. In addition, students identified as economically disadvantaged represented 960 students or 49% of total enrollment in 2016-2017; and 949 students or 50% of total enrollment in 2018-2019. Tables 3.1 and 3.2 provide a more detailed account of enrollment and demographic data reported at the district and school building levels.
Table 3.1 ELL Enrollment at District and School Building Levels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Year</th>
<th>District Level: ELLs/Total Student Enrollment</th>
<th>Participant School Building Level: ELLs/Total Student Enrollment</th>
<th>Percentage of district ELLs enrolled in the participant schools (combined)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reemer</td>
<td>Iselin</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016-2017</td>
<td>166/1957 = 8%</td>
<td>20/118 = 17%</td>
<td>46/341 = 13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017-2018</td>
<td>175/1886 = 9%</td>
<td>23/129 = 18%</td>
<td>52/324 = 16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018-2019</td>
<td>183/1795 = 10%</td>
<td>21/111 = 19%</td>
<td>49/415 = 12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from NYSED Student Information Repository System, n.d.. Retrieved from data.nysed.gov

Table 3.2 District Enrollment by Ethnicity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Ethnicity</th>
<th>2016-2017 Number/Percentage</th>
<th>2017-2018 Number/Percentage</th>
<th>2018-2019 Number/Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American Indian or Alaska Native</td>
<td>6/0%</td>
<td>6/0%</td>
<td>3/0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American</td>
<td>364/19%</td>
<td>372/20%</td>
<td>361/20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic or Latino</td>
<td>799/41%</td>
<td>806/43%</td>
<td>790/44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian or Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander</td>
<td>137/7%</td>
<td>139/7%</td>
<td>134/7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>588/30%</td>
<td>500/27%</td>
<td>449/25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiracial</td>
<td>63/3%</td>
<td>63/3%</td>
<td>58/3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from NYSED Student Information Repository System, n.d.. Retrieved from data.nysed.gov

Additional consideration in identifying the site selection was based on prior interactions with district personnel and the ease of access to teachers throughout a pre-established schedule of monthly staff development sessions. I had an existing professional relationship with the district’s
ENL coordinator and had the opportunity to meet and work with some of the district’s ESOL teachers during previous professional development sessions. The supportive nature of my involvement as a staff developer, as well as my prior interactions with district personnel, helped me to establish a trusting relationship with the participants and encouraged their comfort and candor in our interactions.

With the assistance of the ENL coordinator, I identified five pairs of teachers who were partnered in co-teaching relationships. Since the ESOL teachers in this school building co-taught with multiple GE partners and on multiple grade levels, I focused on multiple co-teaching partnerships for each of the two ESOL teachers selected for participation; two sustained partnerships for one ESOL teacher and three new partnerships for the second ESOL teacher. Conferring with the ENL coordinator helped me to select the most appropriate pairings, as she conducted formal observations of all the co-teaching teams in the district and therefore was able to provide insight to selecting teachers who met the established criteria for participation.

Teachers who were not involved in co-taught ENL settings were not considered for participation in this study. I compared co-teachers’ perceptions of their roles within two established partnerships that have existed for more than two full school years, within three newer partnerships formed within the school year in which the study took place, and were therefore at the beginning stages of implementing the co-teaching instructional model. I recognized that co-teaching relationships change over time, reflecting both a learning curve in co-instructional practices and the cultivation of a successful collaborative relationship as the partnered teachers gain confidence, comfort, and trust in working with each other. Since data collection commenced within the first quarter of the school year, teachers were still in the beginning phase of their relationships or still settling into the demands of the new school year and population of students
in their classrooms. Identifying five co-teaching partnerships at different levels of longevity enabled me to compare a greater variety of perspectives of the phenomenon of understanding co-teaching roles and thereby increased the trustworthiness of my data.

**Role of the Researcher**

According to Stake (1995), “the interpretations of the researcher are likely to be emphasized more than the interpretations of those people studied, but the qualitative case researcher tries to preserve the multiple realities, the different and even contradictory views of what is happening” (p. 12). As a qualitative researcher, I recognized that I brought my own personal values and experiences into this study. My positionality within the context of this study was influenced by having previously served as a New York suburban public school ESOL teacher in co-taught classes. My personal experiences in this capacity included both successful and challenging co-teaching relationships. These experiences contributed to my own perceptions of the roles of each teacher within co-teaching contexts, how these roles are influenced by the school culture, and how they may impact student learning. My perceptions were also shaped by my current role as an ENL Specialist for the Regional Bilingual Education Resource Network, which operates through the NYSED. In this capacity, I educate and support teachers and administrators of ENL programs throughout 125 public school districts and ensure that they are providing state-mandated instruction for English learners in compliance with the requirements of NYS Commissioner’s Regulation Part 154.

In addition to considering how my role and experiences influenced my perceptions, I also considered how my role influenced the participants’ perceptions of me as a researcher. During this study, I interacted with the study participants as a former ESOL co-teacher and as a current staff developer supporting the school district’s ENL program. These two aspects of my identity
may have influenced the participants’ perception of the intentions of my study and therefore how they were inclined to behave, interact, and speak in response to my questions or presence during observations and interviews. In particular, the perception of the Regional Bilingual Education Resource Network as an extension of NYSED required clarification of the nature of my role as being supportive rather than evaluative. In addition, I realized that the duality of my identity may have influenced my interpretations of the data collected within this study, as it positioned me as both an insider and an outsider to this school. My positioning provided the benefit of having deeper knowledge of the school context, while also creating the disadvantage of challenging me to maintain a sense of neutrality throughout the study. With this understanding, I sought to remain objective in order to prevent my biases from influencing the research findings and to ensure, as Stake (1995) stated, that I preserved the multiple realities of the participants of this case study.

**Data Collection Procedures**

Qualitative research positions “the researcher as the key instrument” in data collection (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 181). By this statement, the authors are recognizing that the qualitative researcher is the individual responsible for gathering and interpreting the data within a study, based on their observations of behaviors, their review of documentation and data available at the study site, and responses shared during interviews. Creswell and Creswell also discussed the natural setting in which qualitative researchers tend to conduct their data collection, namely the site at which the participants experience the phenomenon being studied. They suggested that “this up-close information gathered by actually talking directly to people and seeing them behave and act within their context is a major characteristic of qualitative research” (p. 181). In keeping with this methodology, I initiated data collection on-site in Fall
2019. As recommended, data collection occurred over an extended period of time (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) between October and June of the 2019-2020 school year. A variety of data collection methods were used, including class observations of five co-teaching partnerships (two in one school and three in another school); in-depth, semi-structured interviews with two building principals (one of whom is also the district ENL coordinator), two ESOL teachers, and four GE teachers; in-depth communication with the district superintendent; examination of school board presentations and meeting minutes; the district’s shared decision-making plan; electronic communications (texts and emails) with participants; district website main pages and school building pages; and social media text such as posts on district and teacher Twitter accounts. These established a comprehensive picture of the implementation and collaborative relationships within the new and established ENL co-teaching partnerships examined in this case study. The data-collection tools for the class observations and interviews are included within the appendices of this chapter, which are each discussed in greater detail in the following sections.

The in-depth 25-57 minute, audio-recorded interviews took place between October 2019 and June 2020, and comprised open-ended questions, allowing and encouraging the respondents to elaborate on their responses. The interviews enriched the data derived from classroom observations and allowed me to identify consistencies and inconsistencies between co-teachers’ perceptions and actions. The majority of the interviews took place at the school at mutually agreed upon times that did not conflict with teacher duties or other scheduled obligations. The final teacher interview was conducted in June 2020 via a telephone interview, as school closures were in effect in response to the COVID-19 global pandemic. Blumer (1969) observed that “a basic assumption of in-depth interviewing research is that the meaning people make of their experience affects the way they carry out that experience” (p. 2), which makes this a critical
aspect of the data-collection process. The interview protocol (Appendix B) reflected themes related to the research questions I identified to guide my study, including teacher roles and the division of labor, perceived teacher expertise, and co-teaching models used, among others. This data was collected through audio recordings, interview scratch notes, and field notes. I also adapted select questions from the Co-Teacher Rating Scale (Gately & Gately, 2001) to use as the basis for some of the open-ended interview questions. I drew upon phenomenologically based themes during interviewing, to “focus on the experience of the participants and the meaning they make of that experience” (Seidman, 2013, p. 16). This approach recognized that human experiences are strictly bound by time and that what we experience in the present immediately becomes the past. This ideology aligns with the bounded nature of the case study design and allowed the participants to significantly reflect upon and make meaning of their co-teaching roles and experiences as their partnerships have continuously evolved.

Between October 2019 and January 2020, qualitative classroom observations (Appendix C) were conducted to collect data on the teachers implementing the co-teaching instructional model within their natural settings. Observations were scheduled according to co-teaching schedules and included a variety of content areas, including English language arts, math, and social studies, as each was influenced by the perceptions of co-teacher expertise within different subjects. The observation protocol involved the researcher visiting classrooms on multiple occasions for a duration of 40 to 80 minutes per visit. I conducted 2 to 3 classroom observations for each co-teaching partnership, for a total of 12 classroom observations. I recorded data collected while observing, through descriptive and reflexive note taking, capturing such data as demographic information and descriptions of the setting. In addition, I took detailed notes on
verbal and non-verbal exchanges as well as observed behaviors and interactions between teacher to teacher and teacher to student.

Finally, throughout the study, supplemental notes and analytic memos were kept through journaling in a field log, which was completed after each interaction with the participants. This facilitated my interpretations of data and my understandings of the participants’ meanings and sense making of their co-teaching experiences (Creswell & Creswell, 2018), particularly during the transcription and analysis phase of the study. The field log also provided a record in which I organized and accounted for my time on-site and kept detailed notes on my decision-making rationale during the study, as well as my feelings, experiences, and perceptions throughout the research process.

**Data Analysis Procedures**

Qualitative research methodology espouses an inductive approach to data analysis: “building from the particulars to general themes, and with the researcher making interpretations of the meaning of the data” (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 4). For the purposes of this study, data analysis commenced as soon as data collection began and continued throughout the duration of the study. This allowed for the emergence and identification of preliminary themes among the data. As part of the analysis, handwritten field notes, observational scratch notes, and analytic memos were kept in a notebook for each interview and classroom observation. Additional notes were made following related communication with any of the study participants (in-person conversations, texts, emails, phone calls). I reviewed and typed up the handwritten notes to add them to the drive. Audio-recorded teacher interviews were transcribed using the Rev software application. I reviewed and edited each transcript to correct errors and substitute pseudonyms for actual participant names. This process allowed me to revisit and further reflect upon each datum,
including the interviews, observations, field notes and memos, and allowed me to enhance the precision and level of detail captured in these notes. The corrected transcripts were converted to PDF files, uploaded to a secure drive, and then to the Dedoose software application.

Data analysis was conducted through the use of hand coding and Dedoose analytical review. Additional analysis was conducted through reflective and analytic memoing of the transcribed interviews and observation field notes. Open coding and in-vivo coding was applied during the initial analysis to establish broad categorical identifiers, based on labels applied to categories of textual content and actual words of the participants (Saldana, 2016). These codes were then combined into themed or related groups through axial coding. The codes included areas such as teacher expertise, division of labor, instructional parity, and co-planning, among others. Themes emerging from these codes included the disconnect between the district’s vision and schools’ enactment of co-taught integrated ENL, social-emotional experiences of teachers and ELLs, and parents as stakeholder in the enactment of co-taught integrated ENL.

This coding process enabled me to strengthen my analysis by using the identified themes to understand and make propositional assertions about how the data relates to the research questions of the study. To ensure trustworthiness, the analysis also included a purposeful examination of alternative perspectives garnered through in-depth interviews with school building principals, the ENL coordinator, and the district superintendent. The narrative structure for the final study and report of the findings reflects a flexible format and structure.

**Strategies for Validating Findings**

To increase the credibility of the data collected during this study, I scheduled multiple visits to the site over a four-month period. To triangulate the data and establish trustworthiness, I looked for consistencies and contradictions between participants’ responses and behaviors during
interviews and observations, as well as compared this data to other artifacts and sources of data available at the site and through digital sources. I included disconfirming evidence identified during the data collection and analysis, to ensure that multiple perspectives were represented in my findings. The study was well documented through the creation of an audit trail including detailed memoing, timelines, and rationales for suggested findings. Finally, study participants engaged in member checks to review the emerging findings for accuracy and had an opportunity to provide feedback.

**Narrative Structure of the Study**

Qualitative methodology employs a naturalistic approach to the study of a phenomenon. The results and findings are most appropriately reported in a descriptive, narrative format, as opposed to a scientific report typical of quantitative methodology. In writing the qualitative dissertation for this study, I used a flexible format, allowing me to “report the descriptions and themes from the data, to present these descriptions and themes that convey multiple perspectives from participants and detailed descriptions of the setting or individuals” (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 203). I also included (a) quoted text from participant interview transcriptions; (b) excerpts of dialogue occurring during classroom observations that reflected the school culture and nature of discourse and interactions between the participants; and (c) interwoven descriptions and interpretations of the researcher.

**Anticipated Ethical Issues**

Prior to commencing this study, I anticipated potential ethical issues that may have arisen throughout the process and how they might be addressed. I sought and received approval from the Institutional Review Board in September 2019 (Appendix A) to conduct my study. This entailed providing a complete disclosure of my research proposal to ensure that the study
participants were protected and that the research was conducted with integrity and within ethical standards. As part of this process, I sought and received consent from key personnel and participants, including the district superintendent, ENL coordinator, building principals, and teachers at the proposed site to gain access during the study, and made sure that all participants had a clear understanding of the purpose and intentions of my research and how the collected data would be utilized. Punch (2014) suggested that identifying a research problem that will benefit the individuals being studied may alleviate some ethical concerns and create a meaningful experience for both the researcher and the participants.

During the time I spent on-site, I was respectful of the school and participants and caused as little disruption as possible, particularly during classroom observations. To avoid collecting information that may have been harmful to the participants, I adhered to questions stated in the interview protocol and ensured that participants had an opportunity to review interview transcripts for accuracy prior to the data analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). While I could not promise the participants anonymity, I strived to protect their confidentiality in reporting and sharing data. An additional caution I employed to avoid potential ethical issues was to avoid taking a subjective stance, or siding with the perspectives of the participants, which I accomplished by reporting multiple perspectives in my findings.

**Impact and Significance of the Study**

The impact that this study had is that it addressed the deficiency in the existing literature by exploring co-teacher positioning in spaces of practice. There was limited existing scholarly research with the purpose of examining co-teacher discourse and interactions and how co-teacher positioning may be reflective of the overall school culture. This study propelled the understanding of co-teachers’ perceptions of their roles, teacher agency, and parity in supporting
the language development of English learners. My research at the elementary ENL level facilitated an improvement of our understanding of co-teaching practices with regard to cultivating parity in decision making and division of labor and instructional responsibilities. It served in identifying co-teacher preparation and professional development needs for GE and ESOL co-teachers. Finally, this study provided data to support changes to policy to improve practices at the school building and school district levels. In this way, my study provided unique and distinct contributions to the existing literature on co-teaching in elementary ENL settings.

**Limitations of the Study**

From a practical standpoint, my access to teachers and administrators for interviews and observations was restricted by their schedules, availability, and willingness to participate. For this reason, I initiated the data collection in October to maximize my time on site and to allow time for rescheduling observations or interviews as needed. From a design standpoint, the inherent nature of a case study is defined as an in-depth study of a bounded system, implying that the findings are not intended to be generalized to a broader population. It is with this understanding that I recognize the limits of my findings. This study took place in two elementary school buildings in one New York suburban district. The participant sample size was small, which limited the diversity of findings. The findings of this study furthered the understanding of the phenomenon of co-teaching occurring within a particular context. While the findings are not generalizable beyond those boundaries, they contributed to positioning theory and identified the need for further related research.
Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Context of the Study

“People are afraid to have a co-teacher in their room. So we talked through all of her fears. I promised her that she would love it, and she took the leap with me. It was really helpful for her just to confirm that whatever she was afraid of, it wasn't the reality. And the reality of working with the ELLs and working with the co-teacher, she actually loves it!”

~ Ms. Kindell

This qualitative study focused on the positioning of elementary level ESOL and GE co-teachers within the contexts of the integrated ENL classroom, school building, and school district community, based on their perceived experiences, observed professional interactions, and discourse. The enactment of co-teaching as an instructional model involves two teachers working collaboratively to support a shared group of students with diverse learning needs, including students with disabilities (Friend et al., 2008) and English learners (Atesoglu Russell, 2012; Bell & Baecher, 2012; Honigsfeld & Dove, 2010; Nunan, 1992). Several factors can influence the implementation and effectiveness of a co-teaching partnership; namely, the participating teachers’ attitudes and perceptions of their own and each other’s expertise, strengths, roles, and duties (Avila, 2015; Friend et al., 1993; Pratt et al., 2017). These perceived identity-defining attributes position co-teachers within the instructional partnership (Avila, 2014; Kregel, 2014; Norton, 2013) and may influence individual and collective teacher agency and parity both in and out of the classroom.

In New York State, co-teaching has emerged as an instructional model to support the increasing populations of ELLs in public school districts (New York State Association of School Business Officials, 2017; NYSED, 2016; Ruiz Soto, Hooker, & Batalova, 2015) through integrated content and language instruction (Atesoglu Russell, 2012; Bell & Baecher, 2012;
Beninghof & Leensvaart, 2016). The increased prevalence of this instructional model coincided with the 2015 implementation of amendments to Commissioner’s Regulation Part 154, with one of the principal changes addressing the instructional delivery models offered for ELLs (Carnock, 2016). Current co-teaching literature suggests that well-implemented co-teaching partnerships may advance the professional growth and learning of the participating teachers (Pratt, 2014; Rytivaara & Kershner, 2012), while students in co-taught classes reap the benefits of the pooled expertise, experience, and distinctive instructional approaches of the collaborating teachers (Dove & Honigsfeld, 2010; Giles & Yazan, 2019; Pratt, 2014; York-Barr et al., 2007).

Conversely, co-teachers may struggle to achieve parity and to effectively identify their own and each other’s instructional roles in supporting the academic and linguistic needs of English learners (Arkoudis, 2006; Norton, 2013). What has not been explored is the link between positioning and teacher agency within co-teaching partnerships. This dissertation study fills the gap in the literature by providing a qualitative perspective examining how parity in co-teachers’ positioning and perceptions of their collective and individual roles are related to the professional interactions and discourse evident in their partnerships as well as to district culture and hierarchies of perceived teacher power within the broader school context.

The significance of this qualitative case study was to learn about co-teacher positioning in spaces of practice, as garnered through in-depth teacher interviews and classroom observations. The interviews and observations with five co-teaching pairs across two elementary schools in the same district yielded data that offers a comparison of newly formed and continuing co-teaching partnerships and propels the understanding of co-teachers’ perceptions of their roles, teacher agency, and parity in supporting ELLs. The purposeful selection of collaborative partnerships with the aforementioned duration acknowledged that implementing
the co-teaching instructional model and the collaborative partnerships by which it was delivered represented a change to past instructional practices for the participating teachers. My analysis incorporated Fullan’s (1982) assertion that educational change occurs along a continuum involving three phases, each characterized by distinct elements of resistance and acceptance: initiation, implementation, and continuation. Fullan’s theory of educational change provided a lens to explore co-teaching partnerships at different points along his identified continuum of the implementation of change. This enabled me to explore how, if at all, the duration of a co-teaching partnership related to co-teachers’ perceptions of their roles and positioning. The study also considered inconsistencies in how administrators articulate and foster school culture, with conflicting internal and external messages that influence the implementation of co-teaching. In this way, the findings of this study provide unique and distinct contributions to the existing literature on co-teaching in elementary ENL settings. Furthermore, this study provides data to assist teachers and administrators in improving policies and practices at the school building and school district levels.

Within this study, the enactment of co-teaching was analyzed and compared across two elementary schools located in the same school district. Participants included three new co-teacher partnerships at Iselin Elementary with less than one year in duration and two sustained co-teacher partnerships with a duration of more than two years at Reemer Elementary School. Moreover, I explored the collaborative climate from both top-down and bottom-up perspectives by interviewing the district superintendent, the building administrators, and the six teachers, as they are situated within the context of each unique school community within the same district.

1 Pseudonyms were used in place of actual names to protect the confidentiality of the town, district, school buildings, and all participants involved in this study.
The culture of collaboration informed my understanding of how co-teaching is implemented within the district and how co-teachers formed their perceptions of parity and teacher agency, as well as ESOL and GE teachers’ perceptions of the impact of integrated ENL on ELLs’ relationships and learning opportunities. This approach enabled me to consider the data in relation to the research questions outlined below.

**Research Questions**

The following research questions guided this study, which sought greater understanding of the complexities of co-teaching partnerships and how ESOL and GE teachers make sense of these collaborative relationships:

1. What is the relationship between observations of parity and hierarchies in the co-taught classroom and the ways in which GE and ESOL co-teachers make sense of their roles?
   a. How are co-teachers’ understandings of their roles reflective of the discourse and interactions within their collaborative partnership?
   b. What relationship, if any, is there between the length of a co-teaching partnership and ESOL and GE teachers’ perceptions of their roles?

2. What do co-teachers report as perceived successes and challenges in defining and implementing the collaborative instructional model, given the broader context of the culture and policy of the school or district?

3. In what ways, if any, do GE and ESOL teachers believe co-taught ENL instruction impacts ELLs’ experiences and relationships as compared to stand-alone instruction?

In responding to these research questions, I considered my role as the instrument in this qualitative study. In this chapter, I describe my positionality as the researcher and identify how this may have influenced the ways in which some of the participants responded to or interacted
with me during the study. I then provide the Data Analysis section that describes the identification of initial data codes and the themes which emerged from these codes, through a narrative account and a graphic depiction of this phase of data analysis. I discuss how these themes were derived and interpreted from the data and how I used them to make sense of and respond to the research questions posed in this study. Within the data analysis section, I also describe how the framework of positioning theory guided the data analysis and illuminated the findings, as it enabled me to interpret the relational phenomenon of role mediation stemming from individuals’ interactions with others (Harré & van Langenhove, 1999). I applied the focal constructs of discourse and interactions, as described through positioning theory, to the data collected through interviews and observations with ESOL and GE teachers. This lens afforded me a vantage point from which to explore co-teachers’ attitudes and perceptions of their parity and agency within their collaborative partnerships as well as how this related to student experiences within co-taught classes. I have depicted this theoretical application in Figure 4.1.

Figure 4.1 Positioning Theory as a Lens for Co-Teaching Data Analysis
The application of this theoretical lens yielded rich and abundant data. For this reason, the presentation of the data and findings related to this study have been broken down into Chapters Four and Five, which focus on the context and the teachers, respectively.

Following the Data Analysis, the chapter is divided into two sections. Part One provides a summary of the overarching findings for the district context in relation to the administrator interviews. Part Two further explores the district culture within the context of the broader community and considers inconsistencies in the ways in which administrators articulate and cultivate that culture. In Part Two, I include data collected through meetings and interviews with the district superintendent and the school building administrators at each of the two schools included in this study: Reemer Elementary and Iselin Elementary. Administrator interviews helped me gain a deeper understanding of the school and district cultures of co-teaching as well as to triangulate the data collected during teacher interviews and classroom observations presented in Chapter Five. Chapter Four closes with concluding remarks and a preview of Chapter Five. Before discussing the data analysis process, I describe my positionality as the researcher in this study in the following section.

**Researcher Positionality**

Foote and Bartell (2011) suggested that “The positionality that researchers bring to their work, and the personal experiences through which positionality is shaped, may influence what researchers may bring to research encounters, their choice of processes, and their interpretation of outcomes” (p. 46). As a former elementary ESOL co-teacher, my positionality is reflective of my personal experiences in this capacity, which included both successful and challenging co-teaching partnerships. My experiences shaped my perceptions of teacher roles and responsibilities within co-teaching contexts and how these roles are influenced by the school
culture and administrators. For this reason, it is important for me to recognize my own personal values and experiences that I brought into this study as a qualitative researcher.

My current role as an ENL Specialist for the NYSED Regional Bilingual Education Resource Network also informs my positionality in relation to the district administrators and teachers I support. I acknowledge that my positionality may have influenced how some participants responded to my questions or presence. Specifically, my role in providing professional development and regulatory guidance in support of ELLs may have influenced the participants’ perceptions of me as a researcher or how they interacted with and responded to me during interviews and observations. I realized that my positionality as the researcher may have influenced my interpretations of the data collected within this study, as it positioned me as both an insider and an outsider to the school. Throughout the study, I sought to remain objective in order to prevent my biases from influencing the research findings and to ensure that I preserved the multiple realities of the participants of this case study (Stake, 1995).

**Data Analysis**

In this section, I depict the data analysis journey from codes to themes to findings through narrative and graphic representation. Using the framework of positioning theory helped me to conceptualize a hierarchical set of themes, or a code frame, which I used in coding the qualitative data. Specifically, I utilized the theoretical concepts of storylines, actions, discourse, and values and identities to conduct the initial coding process. Data analysis commenced early in the data collection phase. I uploaded the observation and interview data to the Dedoose coding web application, where I had created and conceptualized the initial codes. Hand coding was also utilized during this phase to facilitate comparisons across data and to identify emerging themes. The data analysis progression evolved from initial coding, to categorizing codes to identify
emerging themes, refining codes, and finalizing themes by identifying connections between the various themes.

Storylines was the broadest code, as it theoretically encompassed the “history, background, and ongoing interactions of the participants. The concept of storyline can be described as a compendium of the ongoing social episode” (Hirvonen, 2016, p. 2). For this reason, and based on the preliminary interview coding process, I decided to add the sub-codes of policy, collaborative structures, advocacy, and relationships under the parent code of storylines. Advocacy was also used as a sub-code to actions, as it spoke to teacher roles and duties. This additional clarification of codes enabled me to examine how each of these elements related to the district and school contexts in which co-teachers made sense of their collaborative partnerships.

In Figure 4.2, I provide a visual representation of the codes and themes.

**Figure 4.2 Visual Representation of Data Codes and Themes**
As depicted in Figure 2, the main themes derived from the data analysis focused on how administrators and teachers value integrated instruction, the apparent disconnect between the district’s vision and schools’ enactment of the co-teaching model of instruction, and the nature of parent engagement as stakeholders in the district’s implementation of co-taught integrated ENL classes. These themes, which will be described in greater detail in the discussion of the findings presented in Part One, helped clarify my understanding of the contextual relationship between co-teaching at the building and district levels, in which co-teachers reflexively and interactively negotiate their positions. Furthermore, the application of these themes propelled the data analysis forward, enabling me to interpret and identify the findings of the study. While findings related to co-teacher interviews and observations will be provided in Chapter Five, Part One of this chapter focuses on those findings associated with the district administrators’ interview data. These data revealed the district and school messaging and stance about co-teaching, which set the context of the co-teaching ENL culture in each school and furthered my understanding of the teacher observation and interview data presented in Chapter Five.

**Part One: Thematic Summary of Findings**

The continuous coding and exploration of themes during the data analysis process guided my identification of findings pertaining to the context of this study, which was largely shaped by district administrators. The administrators interviewed for this study included the District Superintendent Mr. Sapir and the building administrators from the two participant schools: Ms. Kendall from Reemer Elementary and Ms. Knightly from Iselin Elementary. Participants’ demographic information is provided in Table 1 later in this chapter.

In the following sections, I discuss the major themes that were identified during the data analysis process and the findings associated with each. These themes are the value of integration,
disconnect between district vision and school enactment of integrated ENL co-teaching, and parent engagement in co-taught integrated ENL instruction. The interwoven nature of these themes is such that the findings evidence the relationships between each. The theme of value of integration was defined to encompass the multiple meanings of integration in relation to the support of ELLs: integration of language and content instruction, integration of students’ home and target language linguistic repertoire, integration of ELLs and English proficient students, and integration of ESOL and GE methodology and expertise. The theme of disconnect between district vision and school enactment of integrated ENL co-teaching included inconsistencies between internal and external messaging, policies, practices, and decision making within the contexts in which co-teaching has been implemented and enacted—namely, the district, schools, and classrooms. Parents’ engagement as stakeholders in co-taught integrated ENL classes was conceptualized as comprising aspects of the school-home connection, including parent outreach and communication, disclosure of information pertaining to instruction and class placement, as well as the manner in which administrators addressed parent concerns surrounding integrated ENL. The findings related to these themes are summarized below.

**Value of Integration**

Throughout the study, participants’ discourse and interactions revealed their stance on co-taught integrated instruction, and namely, whether or not they valued integration. At the district level, integrated ENL instruction was implemented in compliance with New York State regulatory changes mandating this instructional initiative in support of ELLs. For this reason, it was difficult to discern whether integration was genuinely valued at the district level or simply initiated in adherence to NYSED requirements, although statements supporting integration were included in the district’s digital profile, including the vision and mission statements.
At the school building level, it was easier to assess building administrators’ stance on integration, based on their discourse and decision making with regard to ENL programming. I found that there was an immense disparity in how the building administrators valued integration, with a greater value being placed on integration at Reemer Elementary as compared to Iselin Elementary. Building-level class placement policy and decision making at Reemer Elementary was based on Ms. Kindell’s belief that children benefit when students of all different language abilities are grouped together, rather than being placed in clusters by proficiency levels into separate classes. I found that Ms. Kindell’s conviction in regard to heterogeneous class placement was rooted in her knowledge of language acquisition and an understanding of the value of integrated language and content instruction for ELLs and all students. Ms. Kindell also made the decision to increase opportunities for integrated ENL instruction by placing ELLs into fewer class sections so that ESOL and GE co-teachers could co-teach together for multiple class periods, rather than having the ESOL teacher spend one period co-teaching in several sections. This scheduling decision was based on Ms. Kindell’s valuing of the pooled expertise of the ESOL and GE teacher delivered through co-taught instruction. Not only did this decision increase co-taught integrated instruction, but it also resulted in the school exceeding the minimum level of ENL services mandated by NYSED.

Conversely, the findings at Iselin Elementary revealed a more data-driven culture in which administrative leadership placed less value on integration and more value on GE curricular initiatives and assessments. I found that Ms. Knightly lacked the knowledge of language acquisition possessed by Ms. Kindell, and in turn, lacked an appreciation of how integrated co-taught instruction benefited ELLs. During the interview, Ms. Knightly spoke of student performance data, making a point to state she was unable to attribute ELLs’ academic
progress or achievement to co-taught integrated instruction. Ms. Knightly never made reference to the combined expertise of the ESOL and GE co-teachers in support of ELLs. These contrasts in how building administrators valued integration fed into the following theme, identifying a disconnect between the district’s vision of co-taught integrated instruction and the enactment of co-teaching at the school building level.

**Disconnect Between District Vision and Schools’ Enactment of Co-teaching**

Co-teaching in ENL classes is a district-wide policy endorsed instructional model within Glen Village, which serves as the vehicle to deliver integrated language and content instruction to ELLs. As such, its enactment relates directly to the value placed on integration by administrators and teachers. Interviews with the district superintendent and building administrators at Reemer and Iselin Elementary schools revealed a distinct contrast between the two schools’ culture around co-teaching, as set forth by the building administrators. Furthermore, I found at Iselin Elementary that administrator messaging to teachers and parents concerning co-taught integrated instruction was vastly different from external messaging from the district concerning collaborative integrated instruction.

At the district level, iterations of the vision and enactment of co-teaching originated from multiple sources, including administrator interviews, school board presentations, published reports of district initiatives and meetings, as well as the digital presence of the district and individual schools. Each of these sources revealed the interactions between philosophies, policies, and implementation of co-teaching within the cultural contexts of the district-embedded schools. In applying the theme of *disconnect between district vision and school enactment of co-teaching*, I took a top-down approach, attempting to connect the dots and trace the path of the implementation of co-teaching, as well as the origin and implications of inconsistencies in its
enactment. The disconnect evident between the district’s messaging and articulation of co-teaching expectations versus the enactment of co-teaching at the school building level served as a key theme in answering each of the aforementioned research questions guiding this study, as it created the storyline in which co-teaching was enacted and provided insight to the professional and relational positioning of co-teachers.

A critical finding was the contrast between how administrators positioned ESOL teachers through their internal messaging. I found that Ms. Kindell sought out opportunities to capitalize on the expertise of ESOL teachers. By ensuring the involvement of ESOL teachers in curriculum writing throughout K-12 instructional levels, Ms. Kindell created a discourse of expertise and positioned ESOL teachers with parity among their GE and content area colleagues. She also utilized them to build the capacity of their GE colleagues in the area of language acquisition, and in doing so, further heightened their status within the perceived teacher hierarchy.

In contrast, Ms. Knightly created an inequitable teacher hierarchy at Iselin by failing to recognize and acknowledge the language acquisition expertise possessed by ESOL teachers and by articulating their role as reading and writing support teachers. In addition to this portrayal of the role of ESOL teachers, Ms. Knightly also avoided identifying co-taught integrated ENL classes as such, referring to them instead as “classes that the ENL teacher pushes into.” I found that Ms. Knightly attributed struggling co-teaching partnerships to a lack of teacher ability and that she articulated her expectations of the ESOL teacher to address problems within the ENL instructional program, including the performance of GE co-teachers and colleagues. The contrasting ways in which these two administrators positioned ESOL teachers and articulated their roles at the building level was directly related to the perceived professional identity of ESOL teachers, which is described as a sub-theme in Chapter Five.
Another overarching finding between the two schools concerning the enactment of co-teaching was that a strong relationship between partnered teachers, while important, was just one element of an effective co-teaching partnership. To achieve genuine collaboration, a co-teaching partnership must adhere to all phases of the co-teaching cycle, including co-planning, co-instruction, co-assessment, and co-reflection. However, this illuminated another important finding related to the disconnect in messaging and enactment. Specifically, I found that despite consistent references within the district vision and mission statements to a district-wide collaborative culture, the contract for district teachers did not include the provision of co-planning time for co-teachers, nor planning time in general for any teachers. Superintendent Sapir made statements in support of the co-teaching model, echoing the district vision and mission statements. Ms. Kindell and Ms. Knightly each spoke of the role that teacher collaboration played in supporting instruction. However, this lack of established policy-endorsed collaborative structures within teacher contracts revealed a major discrepancy in my findings, as co-planning is an essential component of the co-teaching cycle of instruction (Cook & Friend, 1995).

At the school building level, the lack of collaborative structures for scheduled co-planning time was addressed in different ways, which directly related to the previous theme of how administrators valued integrated instruction. At Reemer Elementary, Ms. Kindell made building-level decisions concerning co-teacher scheduling to create opportunities for teachers to have common free time. This included scheduling co-teachers with the same lunch period and having the ESOL teacher create a schedule at the beginning of the school year, which included at least one free period with each of her GE co-teachers. At Iselin Elementary, scheduling common time for co-teachers was not prioritized. Ms. Knightly created grade-level professional periods
for GE teachers, which did not always coincide with the ESOL teacher’s schedule. While teachers could choose to use these professional periods for planning, they were also commonly used for meetings or professional development, which superseded planning and did not include the ESOL teacher. Since the ESOL teacher at Iselin supported two different grade levels, it was difficult for her to find common free time with her co-teachers, as each grade had different lunch periods.

Finally, another important finding at Iselin was that the building administrator’s internal and external messaging concerning ENL classes contributed to inequitable teacher hierarchies that marginalized the role of the ESOL teacher. When interviewed, Ms. Knightly never referred to ENL instruction or to integrated ENL classes as such, but rather as classes in which ELLs are placed, or classes in which the ESOL teacher “pushes in” to provide reading or writing support. Based on Iselin teacher interviews discussed in Chapter Five, Ms. Knightly’s messaging to teachers and parents was that there were no ENL classes at Iselin. This messaging is discussed further in the following section concerning parent engagement.

**Parents’ engagement as stakeholders in co-taught integrated ENL classes**

Establishing strong school-family-community partnerships is critical to cultivating effective learning environments. The theme of *parents’ engagement as stakeholders in co-taught integrated ENL classes* was identified to capture the distinct parental concerns and interactions within the district as described by teachers and administrators, as well as their implications on the enactment of integrated co-taught ENL classes. This theme provided insight to answering research questions two and three, which concerned the cultural context of the district and community, and students’ relationships and experiences with integrated co-taught ENL,
respectively. There was a distinct contrast between the nature of parent engagement and communication at each of the two participating schools.

At Reemer Elementary, Ms. Kindell re-envisioned and extended the view of integration through parent engagement. I found that Ms. Kindell strengthened the home-school connection and forged partnerships with ELL families as stakeholders in the academic and linguistic development of their children. Through increased outreach and communication efforts, Ms. Kindell focused on building community, supporting families of ELLs, and promoting ELL family engagement in district events. Her communication and outreach efforts also extended to cultivating an awareness of language development for parents of English-proficient students. Many parents expressed concerns about placement in co-taught integrated ENL classes, which may have related to the current prevalence of an anti-immigrant sentiment and demographic changes resulting in increased diversity in the district. Ms. Kindell addressed these concerns by educating all Reemer parents about the benefits of integrated language and content instruction as well as the value of co-teaching between ESOL and GE specialists for all children in integrated classes.

I found that Ms. Knightly’s external messaging and her response to parents’ concerns regarding class placement of English proficient students was quite different. Ms. Knightly’s language about integrated co-taught classes often directly contradicted the district’s stated mission of empowering a diverse population of students. As referenced in the previous section, messaging to parents of Iselin Elementary students hid the fact that they have integrated ENL classes at the school. Ms. Knightly also appeared to downplay the linguistic diversity of Iselin elementary students in a school board presentation in which she referred to the provision of “differentiated targeted instruction inclusive of a common language,” which I perceived to refer
to English. Furthermore, a comparison of the websites for the two schools revealed that Reemer’s staff directory page included the name of the ESOL teacher with the team of grade-level teachers, while Iselin’s staff directory reflected the ESOL teachers among support area teachers at the bottom of the webpage. Other than the NYS mandated ELL parent orientation, Ms. Knightly did not initiate parent outreach concerning the ENL program to families of ELLs, nor did she promote awareness of integrated instruction to parents of English-proficient students. This external messaging concerning co-taught integrated ENL contributed to the inequitable positioning of the ESOL teacher within the school. The findings garnered through the administrator interviews are further illuminated in Part Two of this chapter, which provides an overview of the context of this study.

**Part Two: The View From the Top**

In Part Two, I examine the district culture within the broader context of the Glen Village community and consider inconsistencies in how administrators articulate and cultivate the culture of co-teaching. I begin with an overview of the district, including enrollment and demographic data, as well as pertinent elements of the district vision, mission, and shared decision-making report as shared in the district’s digital profile. Data collection included semi-structured interviews along with unstructured interviews and informal conversations with three district administrators. These administrators included the District Superintendent Mr. Sapir and the building administrators of the two participating schools, Ms. Kindell and Ms. Knightly, representing Reemer Elementary and Iselin Elementary, respectively. See Table 4.1 for detailed participant and data collection information regarding the district administrators.

**Table 4.1 Data Collection Table: Administrators**
**Glen Village Community and District**

This study was conducted in the Glen Village School district, which had an ELL enrollment of 183 students in the 2018-2019 school year, representing 10% of the district enrollment of 1,795 students in kindergarten through 12th grade in its five schools. With the guidance of the district’s Director of ENL, Ms. Kindell, I selected Reemer Elementary and Iselin Elementary as the two schools to be included in my study of elementary-level integrated ENL co-teachers. The rationale for selecting these two schools was that they met the study criteria defining the duration of the co-teaching partnerships to be considered for inclusion: Reemer Elementary had two co-teaching partnerships with a duration of more than two years, and Iselin Elementary had three co-teaching partnerships with a duration of less than one year.

Proportionately, each of these schools had ELL populations that exceeded the 10% district-wide ELL population; in the 2018-2019 school year, Reemer reported an enrollment of 21 ELLs, representing 19% of its 111 students; Iselin reported an enrollment of 49 ELLs, representing 15% of its 324 students (NYSED, 2018-2019).

As previously noted, the public school district comprises five school buildings that were recently restructured as of the 2018-2019 school year to group students by grade level rather than by neighborhood. As such, Reemer Elementary serves all kindergarten students in the district, grades 1-3 attend Hill Elementary, Iselin Elementary houses grades 4-6, and Glen Village Middle School and High School serve grades 7-8 and 9-12, respectively. In a 2018 notice to
residents informing them of the restructuring plans, the district provided the following justification for its decision:

- Increased opportunities for whole-grade collaboration and development among our teachers, greater consistency in classroom practices and resources, and comprehensive programs in each elementary school. These include continuity in the enrichment opportunities and special education programs offered to students, as well as programs and services offered for English as a New Language Learners. (Glen Village District correspondence, 2018)

In this discourse with the community, the district emphasized its objectives of cultivating a collaborative culture among teachers, as well as improving ENL programming in support of ELLs. Both of these sentiments echo the district’s mission statement, which refers to its commitment to the “intellectual, personal, and professional growth of its students, faculty, and staff,” as well as to empowering “a diverse population of students to succeed at the highest standards of excellence in education” (Glen Village School District, n.d.). The district’s website further supports these collaborative and ENL programming objectives, offering resources and information that reiterate this discourse and are easily accessible in multiple languages.

The district’s digital profile included additional documentation of collaborative efforts, such as the District Plan for Shared Decision Making. In reviewing this document, I noticed that the district’s Shared Decision-Making Team represented stakeholders in each of the five schools from the district subgroups of parents, teachers, school nurses, and building administrators. Ms. Kindell was listed as a member of the District Coordinating Committee as the building principal at Reemer Elementary. While she also serves as the district’s Director of ENL, this title was not reflected on the committee roster. I also noted the exclusion of ESOL teachers from the District
Advisory Team roster. Ms. Kindell’s participation in this committee suggested that she also represented the concerns of the ENL department, but having her Director of ENL title reflected on the roster or having ESOL teachers participating on this committee would have served as a powerful message to the community that ELLs were represented in the Shared Decision-Making Team.

These external messages collectively contributed to my initial assessment of the district culture and the context in which co-teaching had been implemented. The Glen Village School District appeared to be responding to the shifting demographics, increased linguistic diversity, and changing needs of the community, with an emphasis on establishing a collaborative culture of instructional support for the growing population of English learners. The restructuring of the district’s schools was articulated to the community as a vehicle for increasing the quality and consistency of academic and linguistic support for all learners. However, there was still evidence of opportunities for the increased representation and contribution of ESOL teachers to the collaborative efforts of the district.

Based on this initial perception, I continued my exploration of the district at the administrative level to gain a deeper understanding of the culture and context of co-teaching in the district and schools. In the following sections, I discuss my meeting with the district superintendent and then the findings from my interviews with the building administrators of the two schools included in this study.

**Mr. Sapir: District Superintendent**

On a crisp fall morning in September 2019, I arrived at the Central Administration building of the Glen Village School District to meet with the District Superintendent, Mr. Sapir. A welcoming office staff greeted me and quickly informed the superintendent of my arrival.
Although I had arrived prior to school hours, Mr. Sapir was already engaged on a conference call, so I waited in the reception office. The conversation and exchanges between the office staff impressed me as being both professional and relaxed; everyone was conversing while busily performing their duties, and the environment suggested a culture of trust and empowerment. Eventually Mr. Sapir called me into his office for an introductory conversation. Mr. Sapir’s educational career has spanned over two decades, as both a classroom teacher and an administrator in New York suburban public schools. In addition to his hands-on approach to oversight of the district’s five school buildings, Mr. Sapir reported that he maintained strong relationships with the administrators of the three private schools located within the district parameters.

Mr. Sapir’s high level of involvement was evident when he requested to meet with me prior to the commencement of my on-site classroom observations that were scheduled for September 2019 through February 2020. While I arrived at the meeting prepared to answer questions about this study and the details of data collection, Mr. Sapir’s agenda was to promote the co-teaching efforts taking place in the district. His message was clear; “I love co-teaching,” he told me as he expressed his support of the study and shared his view of co-taught instruction as a critical element in facilitating student achievement. He shared the district’s history of co-teaching success in support of students with disabilities and the district’s more recent experience in supporting ELLs through integrated co-taught instruction. He emphasized the importance of the latter when considering the demographic shifts in the community in the past decade, along with regulatory changes outlined in the 2015 amendments to CR Part 154. Mr. Sapir approved and welcomed my presence within the district to conduct this study and assured me that this message would be shared with building-level administrators and teachers in each of the district’s
five schools. Our meeting concluded with Mr. Sapir expressing his confidence in the district’s ENL program and lauding the leadership of the Director of ENL, Ms. Kindell. Superintendent Sapir said, “She knows her stuff, and she’s doing great things. We know how lucky we are to have her.”

During my meeting with Superintendent Sapir, he consistently positioned himself as a strong proponent of co-teaching as an instructional model in general but more specifically as a critical practice in supporting the district’s growing population of ELLs. His assertions echoed the district’s mission and vision statements with a consistent narrative describing a collaborative culture conducive to the policy-driven co-teaching practice that had been implemented throughout the five district schools. As the district leader, Mr. Sapir’s conviction in supporting co-teaching as an instructional policy set a powerful tone for the enactment of this policy at the school level.

With Mr. Sapir’s approval, the next phase of my study afforded me the opportunity to take a closer look at how co-teaching in integrated ENL classes was implemented and supported by administrators at the school building level. Through in-depth interviews with the principals at the two schools included in this study, the data collected provided insight to the school culture of co-teaching at Reemer and Iselin and also served to triangulate the findings from teacher interviews and observations. The interviews with Ms. Kindell and Ms. Knightly are presented within the next sections.

**Ms. Kindell: Reemer Elementary Building Administrator**

I met Ms. Kindell at the entrance of Reemer Elementary, where she served as the building administrator for the past four years. She also serves as the district’s Director of ENL. As we walked together to her office, she greeted arriving students by name and interacted
warmly with faculty we encountered in the hall. We passed through the main office, and the nature of interactions with the office staff were much the same, with an observable level of authenticity, which suggested a true culture of community throughout the building. These observations speak to the environment she has cultivated as a building leader. Ms. Kindell, having consented to being interviewed for this study, shared with me her experiences as an educator and administrator. Prior to holding her current administrator role, Ms. Kindell taught for 12 years, first as a middle school teacher, and later in ENL and dual-language programs in almost every grade from pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade, with the exception of fourth and eighth grade.

As the building administrator at Reemer, Ms. Kindell shared that her goal for kindergarten ENL students is to graduate them to first grade achieving a commanding level of English proficiency on the NYSESLAT exam and thereby exiting them from the ENL program. Statistically, she acknowledged that this is an ambitious but feasible goal. At the building level, ELLs represent 19% of the 110 kindergarten students enrolled at Reemer Elementary, which is proportionately higher than the 10% ELL population at the district level (NYSED, 2018-2019). She reported that in her third year as principal, 50% of ELLs enrolled in kindergarten at Reemer achieved this goal of scoring at the commanding level of proficiency based on their performance on the 2018 NYSESLAT, which was a considerable increase from 10% in 2017. Ms. Kindell attributed this success at the kindergarten level to the coordinated efforts in her roles as building administrator and the Director of ENL.

Throughout the interview, Ms. Kindell described an evolving ENL program, designed with intentional decision making to promote ELL learning and achievement in ways that exceed merely complying with the regulatory requirements. Ms. Kindell discussed changes she
implemented as the Director of ENL to increase the involvement and contributions of ESOL teachers in developing the curriculum at all grade levels. She stated:

Something that started last year was that all curriculum writing projects now that happen in the district have to include an ENL teacher. So that was something that I fought for because I realized that the content area teachers or the grade-level teachers were writing curriculum and not including ENL, and then it was becoming more of a reactionary approach to the curriculum, whereas if we’re writing this curriculum, then we should incorporate scaffolds and strategies from the ground level up.

Ensuring the involvement of ESOL teachers in curriculum writing throughout K-12 instructional levels created a discourse of expertise and positioned ESOL teachers with parity among their GE and content area colleagues.

Another way in which Ms. Kindell had built the expertise of ESOL teachers was by maintaining consistency in their grade level or content area assignments from year to year. The district’s prior policy had ESOL teachers co-teaching over a span of several grade levels, which often varied from one school year to the next. By keeping teacher assignments stationary, Ms. Kindell ensured that ESOL teachers attended all the district-offered content and curriculum related professional development opportunities available, enabling them to master the curriculum that they co-teach.

According to Ms. Kindell, the co-teaching model of instruction can be credited with facilitating the effective implementation of the integrated curriculum offered throughout the district. In a November 2019 presentation to the District School Board focused on Reemer Elementary, Ms. Kindell addressed how achieving grade-level literacy expectations for Reemer Elementary students was accomplished through collaboration and co-teaching, stating, “a critical
component of students’ success is the collaboration between educators in Reemer Elementary. We offer integrated co-teaching classes in which teachers work together to plan and implement scaffolded lessons that meet individual learners’ needs.” During our interview, Ms. Kindell also discussed the changes she has made to strengthen the ENL program through scheduling and student placement for the 2019-2020 school year. Specifically, when she reflected on past years’ scheduling, she made the decision to collapse three sections of ENL into two, to allow the kindergarten ESOL teacher to co-teach for additional periods in each section. She explained, “To me, it was more beneficial to have her in the classroom more. I moved into two so that she could spend twice as much time in those two rooms because I think that’s the most important place for her to be in.” By doing so, Ms. Kindell stated that they were able to exceed ELLs’ minimum ENL units of study as required by NYSED. She also sought to increase the level and nature of student integration and made the decision to shift away from the homogeneous student groupings that the school had employed in the past. She referred to her previous practice of clustering entering and emerging English proficiency level students in one class and students with transitioning and expanding English proficiency levels in another class. She noted that this practice had often led to misconceptions and assumptions being made by GE and content area teachers concerning ELLs’ abilities. Specifically, she stated, 

I find number one, the teacher who has all of the entering and emerging kids defaults to ‘they can’t because…’ or ‘well, the other class is doing better because they don’t have the beginners.’ I know that it’s frustrating to have all the beginners in your class. It’s such a jump to have half your class be beginner ELLs and have your class be proficient English speakers.
This observation speaks to some teachers’ perceptions of ELLs reflecting a deficit mindset, and it informed her decision to change the district’s placement policy. When placing students district-wide for the 2019-2020 school years, she intentionally mixed groups with varying proficiency levels to “allow for more language models and more diversity of experience with the language.” She acknowledged that this change in placement policy resulted in an increase in class sizes and made scheduling more challenging. However, she anticipated that creating opportunities for ELLs to develop language skills in heterogeneous classes would allow teachers to gain a deeper understanding of language acquisition as well as the assets and abilities that students of all proficiency levels brought to the classroom.

During her tenure, Ms. Kindell has implemented scheduling and placement changes, which demonstrate a great deal of reflection and consideration of maximizing the quality of instruction and language experiences for students while also striking a balance with the feedback received from families of students. Achieving this balance has proven to be no small undertaking, as parents and teachers have vocalized their opinions concerning how the changing demographics of the community have been manifested in class placements. In fact, Ms. Kindell shared that the opinions and perceptions of parents have posed a challenge to the implementation of co-taught integrated ENL classes, as several Glen Village parents have been opposed to having their English-proficient children placed in integrated classes:

I’m going to be honest; there are parents in the district who say, ‘I don’t want my child in that class because there are ELLs in that class.’ That’s happened to me. But I leave the child in that class. I’ve never moved a child when a parent has made a request like that, never. I explained to them every single child is a language learner. They all are. They’re all learning language. Everyone is learning language.
Parents’ concerns about integrated ENL classes have been compounded by their assertions about the perceived social-emotional impact on their English-proficient children, as relayed by Ms. Kindell, “I know they worry about socialization. I know a parent had to express to me like, ‘Well, a lot of the girls in the class only speak Spanish and my daughter doesn’t speak Spanish. She can’t make friends.’ Now, we’re tapping into the SEL side of it.” Community feedback of this nature has been an influencing factor in policy and decision making with regard to student placement and has added to the challenging task of balancing the linguistic, academic, and social environments in each integrated class.

As a district administrator, Ms. Kindell recognized that families are vital stakeholders in the district community. As such, she strove to meet the needs of English learners while also respecting the feedback of vocal parents. She explained how heterogeneous student grouping has helped her achieve this goal: “So I think mixing them up gives them an opportunity to have more diverse experiences, and it’s also probably a little bit more appealing to the general public.” I found this need to appeal to the general public to be a critical factor in administrators’ messaging and implementation of integrated ENL co-teaching classes, and in turn, the positioning of ESOL teachers at the individual school level. In Ms. Kindell’s case, her actions and discourse were aligned with the district vision, when she advocated for equitable positioning by defending student placement.

The reflection process is ongoing, as Ms. Kindell noted when she commented further on the heterogeneous ELL placement policy she implemented for the 2019-2020 school year, “I want to see how that goes by the end of the year. I want to see how the students do. I want to see how the teachers do and the teams do.” It was evident from Ms. Kindell’s statements at the time of this interview that she was confident in her decisions, “So far, I haven’t really heard any
complaints about it, but I think it’s a better way. I think all different language abilities should be in one room instead of clustering them.”

In each decision-making process Ms. Kindell described, it was evident that she consistently sought feedback from other stakeholders to inform her choices. Selecting co-teachers for integrated ENL classes was no exception, as Ms. Kindell recounted the conversations that led up to GE teacher Ms. Katz partnering with ESOL teacher Ms. Elmont to co-teach an integrated ENL Kindergarten class at Reemer. Having started her administrative tenure at Reemer in 2015, Ms. Kindell spent time getting to know the teachers in the building, and in doing so, identified Ms. Katz as someone she thought would be a strong candidate for co-teaching integrated ENL. As Ms. Kindell described, her conversations with Ms. Katz spanned over two years before Ms. Katz agreed to take on the role of a co-teacher: “I invited her last year to be an ENL teacher. I had asked her the year before as well and she said no, and then I asked her again at the end of that year. I sat down with her and I had a conversation with her and kind of just addressed her fears because she was afraid and didn’t know what to expect.” Ms. Kindell respected Ms. Katz’ hesitations, which stemmed from never having collaborated with a co-teacher nor having ELLs in her class. She recalled, “We talked through all of her fears. I promised her that she would love it and she took the leap with me. And she absolutely loved it, and would come downstairs every other day and tell me, ‘Ms. Kindell, this has been my best year ever.’” This experience demonstrated Ms. Kindell’s supportive nature as an administrator and how this leadership approach cultivated an effective co-teaching partnership, which she and the co-teachers have successfully sustained. She reported that the collaborative partnership between Ms. Katz and Ms. Elmont continued to thrive, stating,
So, it was really helpful for her just to confirm whatever she was afraid of, that it wasn’t reality; and the reality of working with the ELLs and working with the co-teacher, she actually loves it. So, there was no question in her mind that this year, she would be an ENL co-teacher again. And again, she comes to me all the time and tells me like, ‘I have to pinch myself. I can’t believe this is real.’ So, that’s been really awesome.

Conversely, Ms. Kindell has reflected on the other ENL co-teaching partnership at Reemer, which pre-dated her tenure as the building principal, as Ms. Elmont and Ms. Krisch had volunteered to co-teach together since 2014. Despite their willingness to be partners, Ms. Kindell expressed, “I have had reservations about putting them back together again because I don’t necessarily know that it’s the best co-teaching for the students. They get along famously. I just don’t know if academically the kids are being challenged at a level that they could be challenged at.” It was clear that Ms. Kindell recognized that a strong relationship, while important, was only one element of an effective partnership, and that as an administrator, her decisions must ultimately be with the best interests of students and instruction in mind.

The concerns Ms. Kindell expressed about the quality of co-teaching between Ms. Krisch and Ms. Elmont led to a discussion concerning co-teacher roles, and what, if any guidance Ms. Kindell provides in identifying teacher roles. The decisions she made in this regard again stemmed from her reflection on how best to support teachers in taking ownership of their collaborative efforts. She concluded that, rather than being told by an administrator what co-teacher roles should be, a more effective approach would be having teams build that understanding together. To support this endeavor, Ms. Kindell has brought in a co-teaching coach for the past three years to work with each co-teaching team district-wide, whether it was a new partnership or one that had been sustained over time, assisting them with co-planning
lessons and co-instruction to meet the needs of ELLs. Admitting that the implementation and maintenance of co-teaching partnerships is an evolving and on-going process, Ms. Kindell shared,

I will say that the coach did set a good foundation for the teams to have a sense of what it should look like. Of course, every year, across the district, teams change; different people wind up together. I advocate constantly for keeping good teams together. And then a lot of it is just through conversations, grade-level meetings, and meetings with the teachers, and during the observation process, and just constant check-ins.

When asked to elaborate on the conversations and check-ins, Ms. Kindell described an innovative way she has been able to create opportunities for discussion, despite contractual restrictions. She has scheduled regular Reemer chats during the professional period at the end of the school day as a forum for teachers to engage in informal professional conversations, or for her to have one-on-one conversations with different teachers. “Sometimes I pull together Reemer chats just to kind of talk about what’s going on. That’s where I’m able to get both GE teachers and the ENL teachers in the same space together to talk about how it’s going with their planning and their instruction and things like that.” Another way that Ms. Kindell cultivates collaborative discussions is through intentionally planned professional development, which engages ESOL teachers and their GE and content area co-teachers in well-aligned training. Even when co-teachers are not attending professional development together, Ms. Kindell reported, “I always try to make sure that the PD supports one another, that whatever the ENL teachers are learning in-depth, that their counterparts are getting a taste of it so that they can have that conversation.”

These collaborative conversations are critical to the co-teaching process, particularly in light of the district’s teacher contract, which does not provide for collaborative structures such as
scheduled co-planning time. The omission of such collaborative structures is a blatant contradiction to the school policy that uses the co-teaching instructional model in each of its five school buildings. As a result of this contractual restriction, administrators, including Ms. Kindell, are prohibited from requiring teachers to use their free period for co-planning. She explained,

So, I can’t say, ‘Well, you are free on Tuesdays third period and you’re free and that’s your common planning time.’ I can’t do that. What I do have is the professional period and that is the time that I’m allowed to say, ‘Use this time to do X, Y, Z.’ The problem is, the professional period is also used for extra help twice a week, IST meetings, site-based team meetings. All those other mandatory meetings that I have to have happen during that time. But I do say within that time, now is the time that we’re going to all get together and talk.

Intentional scheduling also comes into play to address the lack of common co-planning time and represents another policy change implemented by Ms. Kindell during her tenure. She shared how she has guided Reemer ESOL teacher Ms. Elmont to create her own schedule at the beginning of each school year, “I tell her, when you make your schedule, I want you to line up a minimum of one free with your co-teachers. So at least, one free in the six-day cycle with Ms. Krisch, at least one free in the six-day cycle with Ms. Katz.” Even with this scheduling practice in place, and with her expectations clearly articulated, Ms. Kindell relies on co-teachers to make use of this time for co-planning, as she cannot enforce them to do so. She has even made a practice of intentionally giving GE and ENL co-teachers the same lunch period together: “I know that a lot of conversations happen around the lunch table. And maybe sometimes even more conversations about work and curriculum actually happened during lunch than the times that it’s allotted for, because I think it’s more of an organic conversation that people have.” Within the context of
Reemer Elementary, where integrated ENL teams comprise one ESOL teacher partnered with two different GE co-teachers, Ms. Kindell was satisfied with the level of collaboration occurring despite the lack of district-level policy on collaborative structures.

Beyond Reemer Elementary, Ms. Kindell’s role as the district Director of ENL has involved her in programming and policy decision making district-wide. Ms. Kindell presented an ENL Program update to the Board of Education in February 2020, in which she outlined the distinct ways in which she has structured co-teaching to support ELLs at the K-6 and 7-12 grade levels. She informed board members that ESOL teachers co-teach with GE and content area teachers in grades K-6 during literacy and math instruction. At the secondary level, she has expanded the reach of ENL co-teachers by integrating instruction in Social Studies, Algebra, Business Math, Living Environment, Global and US History courses, beyond the commonplace integrated ELA courses that meet the minimum regulatory requirements mandated by NYSED (2015).

In addition to the student- and curriculum-centered initiatives, Ms. Kindell reported to the board on the outreach efforts of the ENL program, which have included connecting with teachers from neighboring districts to support their ENL programs by modeling co-teaching and sharing best practices. However, the primary focus of the ENL program outreach has been centered on building community and supporting families of ELLs by increasing ELL family communication and engagement in district events. It has been through these actions that Ms. Kindell stated she has strengthened the home-school connection and forged partnerships with ELL families as stakeholders in the academic and linguistic development of their children. Ms. Kindell shared with me:
I send out regular newsletters with strategies for parents to use; we have workshops and ask parents, ‘Would you like to attend this workshop in English or Spanish?’ They bring their children with them and they work with the parents in whichever language it was because we also stress to the parents, ‘Reading in your own language, having conversations and reading to your child in your own language is what you need to do.’ And it’s totally great and acceptable.

Cultivating the home-school connection for families of ELLs is a far-reaching endeavor, requiring the support of building administrators throughout the district. Similarly, ENL program restructuring and policy changes, including increased implementation of the co-teaching instructional model, rely heavily on buy-in from upper administration as well as Ms. Kindell’s fellow building leaders. By all accounts, her experience with and support from upper administration have proven to be the impetus for her continued efforts in working with her building-level peers, as Ms. Kindell expressed,

Truthfully, I would not have been able to do any of the things that I do here had I not had carte blanche, and I have. I’ve had amazing support from the superintendent and the assistant superintendent. They respect me as a professional. They respect my knowledge base. They ask me questions all the time, which is awesome. They always want to know more. When I say we need this, we need this person for PD, we need this book, we need this time to have this conversation, I get it. So it’s huge.

As Ms. Kindell described the level of support she has received from the district’s central administrators, it was evident that her agency as an administrator and district Director of ENL has afforded her the ability to advocate for and implement meaningful policy changes to enhance the implementation of the co-teaching model of instruction and the overall program support for
ELLs. The actions and decisions she made during her tenure have proactively sought to position ENL co-teachers as experts and equals in curricular and instructional matters.

Garnering the support of her administrative colleagues in furthering the implementation of ENL program changes has posed greater challenges for Ms. Kindell. Since she is both a building principal and the Director of ENL, she cannot always be physically present in other buildings to observe and support the co-taught instruction happening within those integrated settings. Ms. Kindell shared that her next objective is building the capacity of her administrative colleagues in understanding the co-teaching models, and knowing what they should be looking for when observing co-taught ENL instruction. Specifically, she spoke about supporting her colleagues in creating dialogues with co-teachers and addressing questions such as, “When you go in the room, what should you or could you expect to see? Why would the teachers have made that decision? If you’re not sure, ask them and if they’re not sure; well, then we’ve got to get to the root of what is going into this process.” Although she expressed with certainty that her administrative peers have good intentions in supporting the integrated ENL co-teaching model, she also acknowledged that this has often become a subordinate priority in relation to other building-level initiatives and that ENL can “fall off the radar” of building principals unless a problem presents itself:

I know that they all want to help. They all want to support the mission and the cause. They do. They tell me and they try. I think what happens, because we’re all running buildings, we have these good intentions of I’m going to focus on this, I’m going to give all of my support here, I’m going to give more attention to this team or whatever. But then all these other things happened and that sort of falls to the wayside. Thankfully, most of the teams function well. They’re doing enough, or they’re doing great, and then
we wind up getting called on to the scene when it’s not going well. I feel badly, but I think that’s just life in general; it’s the squeaky wheel. Instead of us giving more support to the good teams to push them to get better, we’re instead doing more damage control on the teams that wind up not doing well.

Ms. Kindell’s perception of her administrative colleagues’ implementation of integrated ENL co-teaching in their respective buildings presented an honest reflection and acknowledgement of her limitations as the Director of ENL. Despite the district-level support for implementing co-teaching provided by Ms. Kindell and central administrators, including the superintendent, the building-level enactment of ENL co-teaching was unique to each school context, reflecting the administrative support and culture of each individual school building. As Ms. Kindell had observed, building-level implementation of co-teaching often lacked priority unless administrators became aware of problems. For this reason, I found that co-teaching primarily took shape at the classroom level and varied from one classroom context to the next, as I will show in Chapter Five, which focuses on co-teachers and observations in co-taught classes.

My notes from Ms. Kindell’s interview provided perspective on the direction in which she has taken the ENL program at the building level as the principal of Reemer and at the district level as the Director of ENL. She described a proactive approach to strengthening home-school connections with ELL families and to equitably positioning ESOL teachers as experts in language acquisition as well as building their capacity in academic curriculum as co-teachers in integrated ENL classes. However, she also acknowledged the reliance on her administrative colleagues to support the implementation of integrated co-teaching within their buildings and the challenges presented by this task.
The following section provides a profile of Ms. Knightly, who served as the principal of Iselin Elementary. The interview with Ms. Knightly allowed me to further examine the dynamic shared between Ms. Kindell and one of her fellow building leaders, and to gain a deeper understanding of that administrator’s view of the co-teaching instructional model in support of ELLs.

**Ms. Knightly: Iselin Elementary Principal**

The second school building selected for this study was Iselin Elementary, where Ms. Knightly serves as the building principal. Ms. Knightly has been an administrator in the Glen Village School District for 10 years, with 20 prior years’ experience as a GE teacher at the elementary level. When she began her tenure at Iselin Elementary, the building housed grades one through six. However, at the time of this study, Iselin Elementary served as the district-wide school for the 324 students enrolled in grades four through six. I included this building in the study because of the proportionately large population of ELLs. Of the 324 students enrolled, 49 students representing 15% of the student population are identified as ELLs and receive NYS mandated ENL instruction. An additional 8% of students receive ENL support as Former ELLs (FELLs), having just achieved “Commanding level English Proficiency” within the two prior school years (NYSED, 2018). Subgroups of the ELL population at Iselin Elementary include Hispanic students representing 82% of ELLs, economically disadvantaged students representing 96% of ELLs, and students with disabilities representing 33% of ELLs enrolled at this building.

I first visited Iselin Elementary on the morning of December 10, 2019. I arrived early for the appointment I had scheduled weeks in advance with the building principal, Ms. Knightly, and was instructed to have a seat on a hall bench near the reception monitor. Bells rang to announce the start of the day, and eventually, Ms. Knightly approached the bench to greet me. I followed
her down the hallway. As we walked to the main office, we passed the classroom of Mr. Simmons, the sixth-grade co-teacher I later observed for this study. Ms. Knightly stopped in the doorway to check in with Mr. Simmons. My impression was that this was a common practice, as his classroom was directly next door to the main office. Ms. Knightly rolled her eyes when she spoke to me about Mr. Simmons and commented to me that she had spoken to this individual “numerous times” about changes she wanted to see in his classroom, which she reported had yet to occur. Ms. Knightly expressed to me that she was hoping the ESOL co-teacher Ms. Ellington would help Mr. Simmons “shape up.” Ms. Knightly’s statement conveyed unrealistic expectations, as she expressed her perception of the responsibilities of the ESOL co-teacher as including the task of addressing problems within the ENL instructional program, even if those problems were identified as the performance of her GE co-teachers and colleagues.

When we entered the main office, Ms. Knightly directed a secretary to call Ms. Ellington’s room to let her know I had arrived. Ms. Knightly had an edgy presence, which appeared to set the tone for the atmosphere in the main office. My perception was that the office staff responded to her demeanor: The atmosphere and exchanges between Ms. Knightly and the office staff, while cordial, conveyed a collective tension. I reminded Ms. Knightly that we had scheduled a meeting for this morning for an interview she had previously consented to provide. She informed me she did not have a lot of time but reluctantly invited me to follow her into her office.

As we sat down for the interview, I reiterated the purpose and intent of the study was to gain a deeper understanding of co-teaching partnerships within integrated ENL classes. However, I first wanted to establish what Ms. Knightly’s perceptions were of the ENL program and the instructional needs of ELLs attending Iselin Elementary School. She summed up her
expectations stating, “We take a look at student data. We are building skill deficits. We are honing in on this skill and student. Whether this student is an ENL learner, or is not an ENL learner but needs that gap instruction, then we’re doing that, although we try to hold our expectations the same and bridge the gaps for our kids.” I asked Ms. Knightly to speak more about the specific experiences of ELLs in grades four through six at Iselin. She expanded upon her earlier response sharing that,

Our ELLs make all different kinds of progress. We’ve had a very high rate of ELLs going out of the program, which is a wonderful thing. But we do see our ELLs struggling in the area of literacy. They’re behind their English native-speaking peers in many areas. When they are learning and thinking about learning a language and being bilingual, that’s sometimes expected. So our data’s showing that they still need extra support and especially in the area of explaining and thinking and reading and writing. So that’s really what we’re aiming to do: more small group gap instruction based on formative assessments.

Ms. Knightly’s response provided a natural segue to continue with the interview protocol, which transitioned the discussion to an exploration of how the co-teaching model of instruction was implemented to support ELLs in integrated ENL classes at Iselin Elementary. Unlike Ms. Kindell’s description of co-teacher selection at Reemer Elementary, Ms. Knightly explained that with few exceptions, GE teachers at Iselin Elementary are assigned to co-teach with ESOL teachers, rather than being asked or volunteering to do so. On rare occasions, these assignments have been reconsidered, “Sometimes they tell me ‘It didn't work last year. I’d rather not do that.’ I try to honor that. I mean, if somebody is totally against it, I don’t think it’s best for kids. Sometimes partnerships don’t work, and if they’ve been asked to for different partnerships, I try
to honor that.” However, with the growing population of ELLs and staffing limitations at Iselin Elementary, it has not always been feasible to reassign co-teachers, “Sometimes because we only have two ENL teachers or ELA teachers on a grade level, everybody’s co-teaching, whether it be special education in an ICT classroom or ENL, so it’s not optional at that point because that’s what you’re teaching in that school.” The co-teaching partnerships at the fourth and sixth grade levels that were involved in this study were all new to the 2019-2020 school year and had all been assigned by Ms. Knightly.

Ms. Knightly used the commonly used analogy, likening co-teaching to a marriage:

“We’re pushing in for the marriage. However, we try to make sure that we’re doing the best for kids and I have to say the staff has been respectful, though it is a marriage and some work better than others.” I noticed that she also used outdated terminology referring to *pushing in* as opposed to the preferred terminology *integrated instruction*, which does not carry the negative and intrusive connotation of the former term. In addition, the term *push in* does not reflect the blending of content and language instruction that is the hallmark of integrated instruction, nor does it suggest that instruction is co-taught by a pairing of ESOL and GE certified teachers. As I continued to interview Ms. Knightly, she described her perspective of the co-teaching model of instruction: “I think everybody has different experiences with co-teaching, so it looks vastly different in each room. Sometimes they work, sometimes they need some nurturing, sometimes we need some counseling.”

Honing in on Ms. Knightly’s comment that co-teaching looks vastly different in each classroom, I probed further and inquired how she articulated her expectations of the co-teaching instructional model to teachers, at which time she stated, “I think in general, they are aware of my expectations. I give very fair, in my mind, fair and honest feedback regularly to them. So, I
think that they kind of understand their role. Everybody’s under rolling expectations.” I found Ms. Knightly’s description of her communication to co-teachers to be vague. Furthermore, the specific expectations that Ms. Knightly identified for integrated ENL co-teachers seemed focused on justifying the assignment of two teachers to one instructional space: “I want to see the teachers being utilized in the best capacity, and they’re both educators. So, seeing one standing observing isn’t really the optimal use of human resources.” Noticeably absent from Ms. Knightly’s comments to this point was any mention of the combined expertise of the ESOL and GE co-teachers in support of ELLs. I interpreted this as a lack of endorsement of the value of integrated ENL co-teaching.

Ms. Knightly continued to share her perspectives on co-teaching and reflected further on the co-teaching partnerships at Iselin Elementary. She shared, “For some of our teachers, it is very fluid; they are comfortable with each other. And some, they’re not for many different reasons. I think sometimes it’s just being in control. It depends. It really does depend.” As Ms. Knightly continued describing what she perceived to be the dynamics of the co-teaching partnerships at Iselin, she gestured several times with her head and hands, from which I interpreted that she was directing her comments at Mr. Simmons’ classroom:

There are groups that I am meeting with. Groups that we tend to kind of establish times for co-teaching that weren’t happening on their own. So we had to put them on the calendar. I do a lot of walk-ins and I see…you could see what’s working, what’s not working, make suggestions to all teachers. As I do that, I ask for their feedback about how were things going. We try to solve it in a non-threatening manner, but there were some times where they need a little bit more help and more guidance.
I wanted to better understand the nature of guidance to which Ms. Knightly had referred, so I continued to probe, asking about the role she plays as an administrator in supporting co-teaching partnerships. Ms. Knightly reported that she used informal “pop-ins” and observations as an opportunity to question the instructional decisions co-teachers were making, to determine if what she had observed were typical practices, and to assess whether instructional decision making was happening collaboratively. “If their answer to me is ‘our partnership isn’t working and this decision was made unilaterally and we’re struggling,’ then I pull together a meeting and help guide them through that conversation.” Ms. Knightly continued to gesture in the direction of Mr. Simmons’ classroom, which prompted me to inquire if she intervened frequently in that particular co-teaching partnership. “Sometimes I ask them first, do they feel comfortable handling it? Do they need more assistance? And sometimes I leave it up to them; they’re professionals. And if I realize that it’s not working leaving it up to them, then I need to interject myself.” This depiction supported Ms. Kindell’s assertion that ENL was of low priority to building administrators unless they became aware of a problem. However, Ms. Knightly’s description of her intervention efforts as “putting them on the calendar” and trying to address issues “in a non-threatening manner” carried negative connotations, which I perceived to be of a punitive nature. Furthermore, her earlier statement that she hoped the ESOL co-teacher would help Mr. Simmons “shape up” created a storyline that impeded the development of relational trust between the two co-teachers and positioned the ESOL teacher as an unwelcome presence in the classroom.

As Ms. Knightly transitioned her focus to examining the possible causes behind struggling co-teaching partnerships, she first offered lack of co-planning time and professional development, but quickly changed her narrative to focus on teacher ability:
Sometimes it’s lack of planning, although they have a lot of time to plan now. Our contract has changed. They will have common planning time. We also have had a lot of professional development. They’re all signed up jointly, so they’re all hearing the same message from the professional developers in the area of literacy, so that has helped. Really, you can have two teachers in the room or you can have one teacher in the room, but it depends on the strength of each individual teacher.

This was the first and only time I heard any mention of a contractual change to which Ms. Knightly referred, and which she stated would now provide co-teachers with common planning time. In fact, her statement directly contradicted Ms. Kindell’s assertion that district teachers had a contractually scheduled free period in lieu of a prep period and that administrators were prohibited from requiring teachers to utilize their free period for planning. Ms. Knightly’s response also shifted the accountability for effective co-teaching implementation from the school or district to the teachers, by attributing struggling co-teaching partnerships to teacher ability rather than to a lack of policy-endorsed co-planning time. Ms. Knightly had made an earlier reference to common planning time, without mentioning contractual provisions, in her January 2019 presentation to the district’s Board of Education stating that, “Ongoing collaborative planning has been at the heart of planning differentiated targeted instruction inclusive of a common language and strategies for our young learners.” In addition to the contradictory representation of common planning time, I also perceived the phrase, “instruction inclusive of a common language” to refer to English as the common language, which opposed the district’s mission statement reference to empowering the academically and linguistically “diverse group of students” comprising the district.
I noticed throughout the interview that Ms. Knightly’s depiction of co-teaching in integrated ENL classes lacked any sense of endorsement of co-teaching as an effective instructional model to support the academic and linguistic needs of ELLs. When asked what she perceived to be the benefits of co-teaching for ELLs, Ms. Knightly expressed, “I think that I like the fact that there was co-teaching instead of pulling children out of classrooms. I think that children become more upset with that. There's more time wasted when children have to transition out of the classroom.” When I rephrased my question to clarify that I was asking specifically if data on student performance suggested that co-teaching had an impact on student learning, Ms. Knightly explained, “Well, the children come up needing co-teaching, so we don't have data without it. They usually by fourth, fifth and sixth grade have been in that co-teaching model for a while, so I wouldn't have data without the model. So, I'm not really sure what the question is.” I waited quietly after this response, and Ms. Knightly continued:

Listen, I think there's a lot of research in support of small group size. I think it goes back to the quality of the instructor as well. You can have two teachers in the room, or you can have one teacher in the room, it depends on the strength of each individual teacher and what are we doing each moment to support our students? How well do we know our students? How well are we selecting our resources? What are the lesson plans we're asking and tasks we're asking our children to do? Are they quality? I think all of that affects our students so it would be hard for me to say ‘no, it's because of this one reason, because of co-teaching.’

I found Ms. Knightly's response had confirmed my perception that she did not genuinely support the co-teaching model of instruction in integrated ENL classes, nor did she appear to be comfortable speaking about the program. Throughout the interview, Ms. Knightly seemed
guarded in providing her responses. As I was nearing the conclusion of the interview protocol, I asked if there was anything additional that I had not inquired about which she would like to share, or which may further my understanding of the school culture and co-teaching. Ms. Knightly gestured toward my mobile phone which had been recording our discussion through the Rev recording app, and responded, “No. Thank you for your time. Can I ask you to turn that off?” She then informed me that she needed to conclude our discussion because she had a busy schedule. This final exchange was indicative of the overall tone of my interactions with Ms. Knightly, and of my observations of Ms. Knightly’s interactions with Iselin teachers and staff.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter, I presented the context for my qualitative study of co-teachers in integrated ENL classes, as garnered through interviews with the district superintendent and building administrators of the two participating schools. Data collected during the administrator interviews revealed the district and school messaging and stance about co-teaching which set the context of the co-teaching ENL culture in each school: Reemer Elementary had a strong collaborative culture which valued integrated instruction, while the culture at Iselin was more data-driven and punitive in nature. In section one, I used a graphic depiction to support a narrative account of the identification of codes and themes used to analyze and interpret the data. I presented a thematic summary of the findings, describing how the themes of valuing of integration, disconnect between district vision and schools’ enactment of co-teaching, and parent engagement as stakeholders in enactment of integrated ENL co-teaching, were employed to gain an understanding of the district and school building culture in which co-teaching was enacted. In part two, I continued to paint the portrait of the context of the study by providing the perspectives of district level and building level administrators, and examining inconsistencies
between policy, messaging and implementation of the co-teaching instructional model. In Chapter Five, I continue to explore the aforementioned themes, presenting additional findings pertaining to ESOL and GE co-teacher interview and observation data analysis.
Chapter Five: Co-teacher Findings

“She’s not a one-on-one, she’s a teacher. She’s as equal to me as anybody else. So it should be shared, what we’re teaching. But I trust her, which is good.”

~ Ms. Finn

This qualitative case study examined how elementary level ESOL and GE co-teachers in Integrated ENL classes made sense of their professional identities, roles and duties through their experiences, professional interactions and discourse within the contexts of the classroom. It also looked at how the implementation of co-teaching relates to the culture of the school building, school district, and greater community. These aspects of co-teaching were analyzed and compared across two elementary schools located in the same school district, with three new co-teacher partnerships at Iselin Elementary with less than one year in duration, and two sustained co-teacher partnerships with a duration of greater than two years in duration at Reemer Elementary School.

In Chapter Four, I described the data analysis process and discussed findings from interviews with administrators, including the District Superintendent, Director of ENL and building leaders. I also provided the context of the study, as garnered through the administrator interviews. At Reemer Elementary, there was a strong collaborative culture cultivated by administrative support in the form of prioritized scheduling for co-taught classes and co-teachers, communication and teacher input in the co-teacher selection process, and intentional positioning of ESOL teachers in curriculum writing and instruction. ELLs’ class placement at Reemer was inspired by the administrator’s belief that language development was facilitated by students

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2 Pseudonyms were used in place of actual names to protect the confidentiality of the town, district, school buildings, and all participants involved in this study.
working in heterogeneous groups with mixed proficiency levels. Iselin Elementary had a more
data-driven and punitive culture, with less evidence of support for the ENL program or
collaborative opportunities. Decision making was top-down, with administrators assigning co-
teachers, and clustering small groups of ELLs in separate classes by proficiency level. Building
my knowledge of the context of the study facilitated my understanding of the data collected
through teacher interviews and observations, and enabled me to answer the following research
questions guiding this study.

Research Questions

1. What is the relationship between observations of parity and hierarchies in the co-taught
classroom and the ways in which GE and ESOL co-teachers make sense of their roles?
   a. How are co-teachers’ understandings of their roles reflective of the discourse and
      interactions within their collaborative partnership?
   b. What relationship, if any, is there between the length of a co-teaching partnership
      and ESOL and GE teachers’ perceptions of their roles?

2. What do co-teachers report as perceived successes and challenges in defining and
   implementing the collaborative instructional model, given the broader context of the
   culture and policy of the school or district?

3. In what ways, if any, do GE and ESOL teachers believe co-taught ENL instruction
   impacts ELLs’ experiences and relationships as compared to stand-alone instruction?

Chapter Five is organized into three sections, with Part One presenting the main findings
from the teacher observations and interviews in response to the aforementioned research
questions. In Part Two, I provide profiles of the two schools, as well as profiles of each co-
teaching partnership comprising interview and observational data. Part Three provides a cross-
case analysis comparing and contrasting the findings specific to each school across the themes of value of integration, disconnect between district vision and school enactment of co-teaching, and parent engagement as stakeholders in integrated ENL at the school and classroom-levels across the observations and interviews at each school. The sections of this chapter collectively paint a portrait of the collaborative culture and experiences that position co-teachers and inform how they make sense of their roles in co-taught integrated ENL classes. I end Chapter Five with a summary of the chapter and concluding remarks.

**Part One: Major Findings**

The interview and observational data from two sustained co-teaching partnerships at Reemer Elementary and three newly established co-teaching partnerships at Iselin Elementary were considered within the contexts of the district and individual school buildings, as discussed in Chapter Four. The major findings from the co-teacher data presented throughout this chapter include the following:

(a) ESOL teachers’ belief that they were equals in the co-taught classroom were contradicted by the discourse and interactions observed that placed them in a subordinate position to the GE teacher and compromised their professional identities.

(b) Shared teaching dispositions and the fidelity with which co-teachers implemented the full collaborative instructional cycle cultivated parity and clearly defined co-teacher roles and were a stronger determinant of the success of co-teaching than the length of the partnerships.

(c) School building leadership and administrator accessibility trickles down to the classroom, cultivating a culture of collaboration, teacher equity, and agency.

(d) The collaborative culture at both schools was compromised by the lack of policy-endorsed co-planning time, which marginalized the ESOL co-teachers’ role in integrated instruction.
(e) The ambiguity of administrators’ messaging concerning ENL classes devalued integration, challenged GE and ESOL teachers to make sense of their roles in supporting ELLs, and contributed to an inequitable teacher hierarchy in which GE teachers were able to dictate the subordinate role of the ESOL teacher.

(f) ELLs in the co-taught integrated classroom experienced increased opportunities to cultivate a sense of community and relationships with peers but had fewer opportunities to build ESOL teacher-student relationships and to develop language skills in the low-risk environment of stand-alone classes.

These findings from teacher observation and interview data are discussed in greater detail throughout the remainder of this chapter.

**Part Two: A Tale of Two Schools**

This study examined how co-teachers across two elementary schools in the same district made sense of their collaborative roles and partnerships. In this section, I describe co-teaching within the contexts of Reemer and Iselin elementary schools. In each of the two buildings involved in the study, there was one ESOL teacher engaged in collaborative partnerships with multiple co-teachers, allowing for a unique comparison of relational dynamics. Seven teachers in five partnerships were observed in the co-taught integrated ENL classes for one to two periods a day on multiple days over the course of the study. They were also observed working together in and out of the classroom during embedded coaching sessions in which they learned and then implemented scaffolding strategies. Six of these teachers also participated in semi-structured interviews, while one declined to be interviewed. A detailed account of this information is captured in Table 5.1 below.

**Table 5.1 Data Collection Table: Co-Teachers**
In the following sections, I provide a brief profile of Reemer Elementary and Iselin Elementary, the two school buildings in which the participating teachers co-teach.

**Reemer Elementary**

Reemer Elementary School is nestled in a residential area surrounded by modest and well-kept single-family homes. As I entered the building, I felt the welcoming environment of this elementary learning community. My focus at Reemer Elementary was on ESOL and GE co-teachers at the kindergarten level. ELLs represented 19% or 21 of the 110 kindergarten students enrolled at Reemer Elementary, which is proportionately higher than the 10% ELL population at the district level (NYSED, 2018-2019). The building administrator Ms. Kindell had shared that 50% of ELLs enrolled in kindergarten at Reemer during the 2017-2018 school year had scored at the commanding level of proficiency based on their performance on the 2018 NYSESLAT, which was a considerable increase from 10% in 2017. Ms. Kindell attributed this achievement to co-taught integrated ENL instruction. The participating teachers at Reemer Elementary included ESOL teacher Ms. Elmont, who was partnered with two GE kindergarten teachers, Ms. Krisch and Ms. Katz. The co-teaching partnerships at Reemer had been established and sustained for multiple years. At the time this study took place, Ms. Elmont was in her fifth year co-teaching with Ms. Krisch, and her third year co-teaching with Ms. Katz.
Iselin Elementary

I arrived at Iselin Elementary on a bitter cold morning. Upon entering the school building, I enjoyed observing the hectic bustling in the bright, clean halls as students and teachers arrived and hurried to their classrooms or the main office. Iselin Elementary had an enrollment of 415 students, with 12% or 49 students identified as ELLs (NYSED, 2018-2019). An additional 29 students were identified as former ELLs, or FELLs, who are mandated by NY State regulation to receive two years of continued support and accommodations following their achieving commanding proficiency level on the NYSESLAT examination. This study focused on co-teaching in grades four and six in this building, in which ESOL teacher Ms. Ellington is assigned to co-teach with three GE teachers at Iselin. At the fourth-grade level, ELLs represented 35% or 17 students, who are divided among the two GE classes of Ms. Fort and Ms. Finn. Mr. Simmons co-teaches with Ms. Ellington at the sixth-grade level, in which ELLs represent 16% or 8 students. In the year in which the study took place, each of the three GE teachers was newly assigned to co-teaching integrated ENL classes by the building principal, Ms. Knightly. For this reason, at the time of the interviews and observations, the duration of each co-teaching partnership at Iselin was just a few months.

Co-Teacher Profiles and Observations

Aligned with the theoretical framework of positioning theory, this study focused on how the discourse and interactions between co-teachers related to the collaborative culture and perceptions of teacher roles, agency, and parity in co-taught classes. Data collected through teacher interviews and observations provided the window through which to access and gain deeper understanding of the relational phenomenon of co-teaching. The following sections
profile each of the participating ESOL and GE teachers from Reemer and Iselin, and describe the findings from interviews and observations in co-taught integrated ENL classes.

**Ms. Elmont: Reemer Elementary Kindergarten ESOL Teacher**

Ms. Elmont is a White, native English-speaking female between the ages of 50-55 years. She began teaching at Reemer 15 years earlier, as the sole classroom teacher in what would have been described at the time as pull-out English as a Second Language classes. She recalled the 2015 shift in instructional models, when the district first implemented co-teaching, “In the beginning when I first started, it was all pull-out, it was all stand-alone. And then when the regulations changed, that’s when my program started to change. This year, I have one stand-alone class and the rest are co-teaching integrated.” When I met with Ms. Elmont, she was in her fifth year of integrated co-taught ENL, and I asked her to describe her perception of this model of instruction. After some reflection, she responded,

That’s a hard question. I’m not going to lie. It was difficult in the beginning all of a sudden being in a classroom with 20 kids. You go into the teacher’s classroom and you sort of become, possibly an assistant, possibly a teacher, depending on the teacher’s class that you’re going into. It’s hard. Coming from just being, you know, having stand-alone to going into a co-teaching and integrated class. It was difficult in the beginning. They were both, you know, welcoming and you know, again, didn’t treat me like an assistant or anything like that. But again, from my point of view, it’s hard because when I went to school and got my degree and when I started teaching, that’s not how it was. And then all of a sudden, it totally changed.

Listening to Ms. Elmont’s response, I found that she described her role in the co-taught classroom as resulting from interactive positioning by her co-teachers, rather than defining her
own role through reflexive positioning. I also noted that she consistently referred to the co-taught classes as belonging to her co-teachers, which carried the connotation that she was a visitor in their instructional spaces. In fact, her comments revealed that Ms. Elmont had actively defined her professional identity through her role in stand-alone ENL instruction, and conversely, she now passively allowed her role to be identified by her co-teachers. Ms. Elmont continued to describe her co-teaching experience:

It’s a little easier now because I’m working with them for a few years. So I know their routines now. I know how that class operates. Most of the classroom management is done by the classroom teacher only because I’m not there all the time. So, like those routines and everything are established by the classroom teacher. So, it’s hard. It’s hard going into different teachers, different personalities, different routines. One might be different from another teacher, and I have to learn the routines also with the kids.

Noticeably absent from Ms. Elmont’s description was any reference to the language acquisition expertise she brought to the classroom as the ESOL teacher. Rather, her focus emphasized learning routines already established by her co-teachers and finding a way to blend in with their environments.

Overall, Ms. Elmont summarized her co-teaching experience as being positive because of the teachers with whom she has been partnered. Echoing Ms. Kindell’s description of how co-teachers were identified, Ms. Elmont shared that she definitely felt that she and her colleagues had input in the decision making. She believed that GE teachers completed a survey each year in which they could express whether or not they were interested in co-teaching an integrated ENL class. She confirmed that she and Ms. Krisch had volunteered as partners and had been co-teaching for over four years, which predated Ms. Kindell’s tenure in the building and represented
the longest duration of any ENL co-teaching partnership in the district. Her comments revealed that their desire to co-teach stemmed from their personal friendship, as opposed to academic or professional interactions. I will introduce Ms. Krisch’s background before summarizing my observations of this co-teaching partnership.

**Ms. Krisch: Reemer Elementary Kindergarten GE Teacher**

Ms. Krisch is a White native English-speaking female between the ages of 50-55 years. After starting her career as a Special Education teacher in both New York City public and private schools, Ms. Krisch has spent the past 18 years as a kindergarten teacher at Reemer Elementary. She has volunteered to co-teach the integrated ENL class with Ms. Elmont since this program was first implemented at the school in September 2015. Prior to that, she had spent the majority of her tenure at Reemer independently teaching mainstream classes, although she did have prior experience co-teaching in special education inclusion classes during her early years. She described the challenges of co-teaching posed by differences in personalities, teaching styles, and organization, and stated that her first experiences “pushing in as the special ed co-teacher” were not positive: “I found when I first started teaching inclusion here, ICT as it’s called now, it did not work well. I mean I was the first-year teacher here and I made it work. It’s like a marriage. First you have to understand the person, feel them out.”

In her depiction of co-teaching with Ms. Elmont, Ms. Krisch consistently identified herself as the lead teacher and shared that, “Each person is different. So, Ms. Elmont and I have been working together for four years and it’s very comfortable.” Ms. Krisch consistently referenced the “extra set of hands” that Ms. Elmont offered in the co-taught class. She went on to describe co-teaching as a dance in which the two teachers have to figure out who leads and understanding that “sometimes you give over to the other person when they’re doing something
that they know more or that they’re better at.” This last statement confirmed what I saw when I observed Ms. Krisch and Ms. Elmont, and found that Ms. Krisch was typically the one taking the lead.

While I observed their co-teaching multiple times, I will describe the details of one 80-minute visit to Ms. Krisch and Ms. Elmont’s co-taught class. The majority of this visit involved a math lesson, as Ms. Elmont had informed me that she had been trained in the new math curriculum that had been implemented this school year.

An Observation of Co-Teaching: Ms. Elmont and Ms. Krisch

In their co-taught class, Ms. Krisch and Ms. Elmont shared 20 students, 10 of whom had been identified as ELLs. The home language breakdown for the ELLs was 9 native-Spanish speakers and 1 Chinese/Mandarin speaker. Inside the classroom, my eyes soaked in the joyful celebration of colors. Yellow, green, red, and blue round wooden tables, with matching wooden chairs, would easily have satisfied Goldilocks’ criteria of being too small, but for the 17 kindergarten students present on this day (8 boys and 9 girls), they were just right. The walls and carpeted areas were equally colorful and inviting, and the students appeared to share a comfortable sense of ownership of this space.

At the front of the classroom, the morning meeting was taking place on the main carpet area, where GE teacher Ms. Krisch was describing the expectations of the small group activities in which they were about to participate. During this time, ESOL teacher Ms. Elmont stood quietly to the side of the carpet, assuming a passive role in the interaction and instruction taking place. Ms. Krisch dismissed the students to their assigned tables, where they quickly became engaged in the lesson activities. The two teachers worked independently of each other and remained primarily apart or at opposite sides of the room, with no observed interaction. Ms.
Krisch circulated the room, ensuring students were staying on task, asking questions, and providing further assistance and explanation as needed.

During this time, Ms. Elmont sat at a single desk on the periphery of the room near the rear closet, working one on one with ELL students she called over to join her. Ms. Elmont provided task clarification as needed and informally assessed students’ completion of the station activities. She maintained a quiet presence in the room, which might best be described as a hybrid between co-teaching model 1, described as one lead teacher, one teaching on purpose, and model 3, in which one teaches, one assesses (Dove & Honigsfeld, 2018). When I later inquired about her work station in Ms. Krisch’s classroom, she told me, “I don’t expect a desk in their room. I don’t, you know. I just put my things on the windowsill or you know, so that I’m not like that into their classes. But that’s why I have my space here,” referring to her stand-alone ENL classroom. Based on my observation, I perceived that Ms. Elmont identified herself as a visitor and tried to be as unobtrusive as possible. Furthermore, I believed that the students also perceived Ms. Elmont as a visitor or assistant in Ms. Krisch’s class.

Throughout this classroom observation, I noted Ms. Elmont did not share an instructional role but rather served in a supportive role as an assistant to the many moving pieces of the center-related activity. During this observation, only Ms. Krisch addressed the whole class, orchestrating the progression of activities. Ms. Elmont was observed acting as a timekeeper, turning off the lights and turning on quiet music when directed to by Ms. Krisch, and assisting with cleaning up at the end of the activities while Ms. Krisch took her seat on the carpet at the front of the room with the students. I did not hear Ms. Elmont’s voice much, which means the students did not hear her voice much either. I noticed a trend in the type of assistance the students sought from each teacher: questions about the tasks or content were primarily directed
POSITIONING CO-TEACHER ROLES IN ENL

to Ms. Kirsch; requests for assistance (getting manipulatives/supplies, shoe tying, interpretation) were directed to Ms. Elmont. It appeared that the students distinguished between the roles and responsibilities of the two teachers in this way. In regard to physical positioning in the classroom, Ms. Elmont’s work station seemed to be her home base, from which she rarely strayed during my observations. Conversely, Ms. Krisch seemed to dominate the main classroom space as well as the interactions with students. There was minimal interaction between the two teachers, so no real co-teaching was observed. As Ms. Krisch had shared, Ms. Elmont appeared to be an appreciated extra set of hands in the room. Ms. Krisch did not seek out Ms. Elmont for guidance on language support during instruction. I observed a minimal level of input from Ms. Elmont in the planning, instruction, and assessment, as well the extent to which her language acquisition expertise was being utilized in this partnership in support of ELLs.

When asked specifically about how the decision had been made that she would co-teach during math instruction, Ms. Elmont had shared, “It’s a new program. I never supported math before at all. So, we decided that I would push in during that time and see how that goes. And honestly, they really would not be able to do it alone because it’s a lot.” She stated that GE teachers could not implement the math curriculum alone but did not reflexively position her role as the ESOL teacher or define how her expertise in language acquisition was integrated into instruction. Furthermore, it was not evident from observing their interactions that there was instructional parity between Ms. Krisch and Ms. Elmont, nor was Ms. Elmont observed to enact her agency as a co-teacher in this class. The few times Ms. Elmont addressed the class seemed only to be when the opportunity was granted by Ms. Krisch, more as a courtesy than as a right or responsibility. But even then, Ms. Krisch consistently intervened to expand upon Ms. Elmont’s statements, which were perceived as corrections, rather than collaboration. In this way, Ms.
Krisch marginalized Ms. Elmont’s role in instruction, positioning her to a lower status in the class. Ms. Krisch commented on Ms. Elmont’s involvement in instruction stating, “A lot of the times I’ll be teaching and she kind of interjects and steps in and says something that will assist them better as a whole group.” Ms. Krisch had acknowledged that Ms. Elmont’s contributions assisted students. However, phrases such as “I’ll be teaching” and “she kind of interjects or steps in,” suggested a hierarchy in which Ms. Krisch positioned herself as the lead teacher and in which she perceived Ms. Elmont’s contributions as interruptions to her instruction.

I also noticed that Ms. Elmont consistently used the term *push in* when referring to co-teaching and only occasionally corrected herself to add the current terminology of *integrated*. Beyond referring to the integration of content and language instruction, the shift to using the term *integrated* also implies the integration of ELLs and English-proficient students in instructional settings and the integration of the distinct areas of expertise the GE and ESOL teachers bring to co-taught instruction. Ms. Elmont’s use of the term *push in* did seem to more accurately reflect the instruction I observed, which could be described more as shared space than integrated co-teaching. This conflicted with how Ms. Elmont had tentatively described her perception of her professional identity and agency as a co-teacher, “Non-negotiables would be, I am not an assistant, I’m not sitting in the back. I’m not working one on one with just one kid. And I want to be heard.” These co-existing and conflicting narratives revealed cognitive dissonance between Ms. Elmont’s beliefs and her behaviors; the variance between what was said and what was observed demonstrated that Ms. Elmont was struggling with the challenge of making sense of her role as a co-teacher.

As noted, there was limited interaction between the co-teachers during their observed lessons. Furthermore, there was little interaction between ELLs and English-proficient students.
or between the GE teacher and ELLs. In my interview with Ms. Krisch, she confirmed that this type of homogeneous and segregated student grouping is typical of their co-taught periods of instruction and alluded to the possibility of moving the group of ELLs out of the classroom:

“She’s (Ms. Elmont) there to support those students. But going forward, I believe those might also be times when she pulls her students.” When I followed up on this comment with Ms. Elmont, she confirmed that she and Ms. Krisch had discussed the possibility of having Ms. Elmont bring ELLs to her stand-alone classroom during their scheduled co-taught periods. Ms. Elmont became emotional when discussing this topic because she perceived Ms. Krisch made this request out of frustration with the students. She expanded on her conversation with Ms. Krisch, explaining “I just tried to say, ‘They learn; don’t get frustrated. It just takes time.’ I think that’s the hardest part, is when you have the ELLs in your room that it can be frustrating; but you know, don’t take it out on them. Just let it run its course because they will learn.”

This interaction reminded me of the concern Ms. Kindell had shared that, although these two teachers “got along famously,” she was not sure that this co-teaching partnership best supported ELLs. I agreed with Ms. Kindell’s assessment that the friendship had surpassed the academic value of this particular partnership and that Ms. Elmont’s language acquisition expertise was underutilized in supporting integrated instruction for ELLs in this context.

During my interview with Ms. Elmont, I probed further to ascertain the nature of co-planning discussions that typically led up to co-teaching with Ms. Krisch, and in particular, how decisions were made concerning the division of labor. Ms. Elmont’s response depicted an ongoing challenge, despite the longevity of her co-teaching partnership with Ms. Krisch. In reflecting on their co-planning process, Ms. Elmont pointed out that there is no scheduled co-planning time and then stated,
Sometimes I’ll say, ‘You know, okay; I'll do that. Or you know you could do this, or whatever, but sometimes it’s not like that. Sometimes we’ll just see where it goes, you know? That’s what I wanted to say because sometimes if I feel a little overpowered, I’ll just try and jump in a little more. I just don’t want to be sitting there not saying or doing anything. And sometimes it’s hard to get in there.

This honest assessment by Ms. Elmont was reinforced by the interactions and discourse I had observed between Ms. Elmont and Ms. Krisch, which depicted no evidence of teacher parity or of Ms. Elmont having a well-defined position of agency in this classroom. Ms. Elmont amended her response to say that Ms. Kindell had tried to create more common time for co-teachers, including their shared lunch period, but added, “Are we really going to plan during that time, or maybe you have something else to do or something. So, a lot of times, like in the morning, I’ll run up there and ask, ‘You know we’re going to do this; what are we going to do? Let’s map it out.’” I made this same inquiry about co-planning in my interview with Ms. Krisch, and she described planning and instruction more as independent activities in which the teachers engaged:

Most of the time, I do a lot of the other things. She has taken on that role, which is incredibly helpful to me this year, to do the math planning. So she takes that on and that is so helpful. But for the most part, anything else like ELA planning, I usually do that. She does come in with the reading teacher, three days out of the six-day cycle. They push in and we do literacy centers. She does her thing, she prepares her thing, the reading teacher prepares her thing, and then I do mine. So, in that respect, we kind of do our own thing.

I surmised from Ms. Krisch’s comments that, as with the co-teaching I observed in this classroom, there was little collaboration involved in daily planning. This represented a
disconnect between the collaborative culture described by the principal and the GE teacher’s enactment of co-teaching within that culture.

As the math lesson came to a close, the co-teachers’ instructional roles continued in the same independent manner as they transitioned into a writer’s workshop lesson. It was not until the final moments of their co-teaching block that I observed a brief interaction between the two teachers. At the conclusion of the writer’s workshop, Ms. Krisch invited Ms. Elmont to join the class on the carpet as she recapped the students’ writing activities and then dismissed the students back to their seats. At this time, the two teachers came together on the carpet to share and discuss their observations and assessments of students. This conversation was brief and mainly involved Ms. Elmont debriefing Ms. Krisch on how the ELLs had engaged in the math and writer’s workshop activities.

Applying Fullan’s (1982) theorized timeline of the implementation of educational change, this fifth-year co-teaching partnership was not observed to have realized the implementation outcomes typically achieved within two to three years of the initiated change. As described by Fullan, implementation outcomes involve the “changes in what people do and think in relation to their educational practices” and are evident in how they implement “new resources, new teaching approaches, and in...altering one’s beliefs and educational theories” (1982, p. 8).

With regard to the implementation of co-teaching, Fullan’s theory would imply that within the two to three years since initiating this instructional practice, the co-teachers would have achieved the parity and equity in agency intended by the co-teaching model. However, that was not observed to be true of this partnership. Indeed, subsequent observations of Ms. Elmont and Ms. Krisch consistently depicted the same dynamic and positioning of the two co-teachers, with Ms. Elmont taking a subordinate role to Ms. Krisch.
I had the advantage of observing Ms. Elmont co-teaching the same lessons with Ms. Katz. These observations will be described in the next section, following an introduction of GE teacher Ms. Katz.

**Ms. Katz: Reemer Elementary Kindergarten GE Teacher**

Ms. Katz, a White native English-speaking female in the 40-45 year age range, has spent the entirety of her 20-year career teaching kindergarten at Reemer Elementary. In addition to GE, she also held certification in special education and co-taught inclusion for a few years. Her classes have always “had a mix of ELL students,” but more so during the past three years, that she has been co-teaching integrated ENL with Ms. Elmont. Reflecting on the changes she has seen during her 20 years in the Glen Village district, Ms. Katz reported that every year has been different with respect to the students, district and school policies and initiatives, and most recently in her collaborative partnership co-teaching with Ms. Elmont. She associated her co-teaching partnership with the demographic changes during her time in the district:

> It was always a diverse community. When I started, it was diverse. All races, nationalities, things like that. As the years have gone on, I would say that the Hispanic population grew the most. And in the beginning, when they hired Ms. Elmont as the ESOL teacher 10 plus years ago, whatever it was. But the ENL class was a switch in a way. Having a diverse class and everything, it definitely switched it, changed things up for me. We had a very large number of, let’s say, non-English-speaking students. That group. There was always the need for the ENL teacher, but I don’t think that there were as many non-English kindergartners, so that has grown a little bit and that has changed.

I noted a lack of inclusivity in Ms. Katz’s discourse, in her subtle use of the phrase “that group” to refer to the non-English-speaking students. Even though the interactions I observed in her co-
taught class demonstrated inclusive practices, the phrasing and terminology used by Ms. Katz and all the observed GE teachers consistently distinguished ELLs from English-proficient students as two distinct groups of students in the district.

As Ms. Kindell had described, the opportunity to co-teach the integrated ENL class with Ms. Elmont had been presented to Ms. Katz as an option. Ms. Katz recalled her conversations with Ms. Kindell, sharing,

I was asked. The year before I did it, I think Ms. Kindell kept saying, ‘I’m telling you, think about doing an ENL class. It’s so rewarding, so rewarding. They’re great.’ So, by the end of that school year, she’s like, ‘What do you think?’ I’m like, ‘I would totally do it.’ So, it was offered to me. ‘Would you be willing to? I think you’ll really enjoy it. I think you’ll be good at it. I think that you work well with ELLs.’

Ms. Katz went on to add that she had made the right decision, even though the co-teachers were initially left to “figure it out on their own,” without being provided professional development on co-teaching or working with ELLs prior to her first year in the integrated ENL class. Although she reported that she has been well supported since that time, she recalled the direction she had received in preparing for her first year, “Ms. Kindell said, ‘They’re your students. They’re no different than anybody else. You’re the GE teacher; you do what you’ve got to do for all the students. This is how much time Ms. Elmont needs to spend in your class.’ We just made up the schedule the best we saw fit, and then Ms. Elmont showed it to Ms. Kindell, and that’s pretty much it.” At this point, Ms. Katz thought she would benefit more from professional development on ENL instructional strategies rather than on co-teaching, stating, “I’d like to see additional opportunities in more the ENL than the co-teaching because Ms. Elmont and I work well. We’ve
got that, but I think that learning more about the ENL, whether it be strategies or how to change to the best way. I definitely would like more of that.”

When asked to describe co-teaching, Ms. Katz reported that the two teachers plan together and Ms. Elmont will “put in her advice as to what she thinks that her ENL students need more of. More visuals, more small groups, more vocabulary, whatever it might be.” When they co-teach, Ms. Katz stated that they “bounce off each other. It just happens naturally for us.” She described the division of labor and responsibilities in all aspects of co-teaching with Ms. Elmont to be a “50/50 split” and stated that Ms. Elmont “spends a lot of time prepping for my class and Ms. Krisch’s class. A lot to help us out.”

This assessment of their co-teaching mirrored the instruction I observed in their co-taught class, in which Ms. Elmont and Ms. Katz maintained a seamless balance in their instructional interactions and support of all learners in the class. At the time of this study, Ms. Katz and Ms. Elmont were in their third year as co-teaching partners in the integrated ENL class. Ms. Katz’s comments and demeanor throughout the interview revealed that she was happy with her decision to accept Ms. Kindell’s offer to co-teach. Similarly, the interactions observed between the two co-teachers, which are described in the following section, suggested a strong and effective collaborative partnership between Ms. Katz and Ms. Elmont.

An Observation of Co-Teaching: Ms. Elmont and Ms. Katz

The second kindergarten classroom I visited at Reemer Elementary was just down the hall from the first, where Ms. Elmont has co-taught for over two years with Ms. Katz. This class included 20 students; 11 girls and 9 boys. Eleven of these students had been identified as English learners, with 10 native Spanish-speakers, and one student whose home language was Urdu.
As I entered this room, I recognized many similarities in the classroom set-up but found that an important distinction was that while Ms. Elmont had a designated workspace in this classroom, too, in this classroom, it was at the front of the room, alongside the main carpet area. Her physical positioning in this classroom created a powerful visual for students and teachers that Ms. Elmont was an equal in this class.

Ms. Elmont immediately joined Ms. Katz at the front of the room, where the two teachers conferred together discussing and fine-tuning the details of the impending lesson. After clarifying their objectives and expectations, they began arranging the room together. Ms. Elmont invited the students to join the two teachers on the carpet. The interaction that ensued was a balanced delivery of instruction by the two teachers. Ms. Katz and Ms. Elmont shared the space at the front of the room where they fell into a natural, rhythmic turn taking of leading the discussion and questioning, both reflecting the inclusive language and “we” statements, which appeared to accurately reflect this collaborative partnership.

Ms. Elmont and Ms. Katz took turns dismissing students from the carpet to their work stations. As students arrived at the centers, both Ms. Katz and Ms. Elmont circulated to all the tables to help students get set up and started. Their interaction continued throughout, allowing all students to hear both teachers directing the class activities. The exchanges between the teachers and students implied that the details of this lesson had been discussed during co-planning. While the students were working on center activities, Ms. Katz and Ms. Elmont alternated responsibilities for either checking on students at centers to assist and clarify directions or assessing students. The two teachers also conferred multiple times to make sure they were each conducting the assessment the same way or to co-reflect and share observations they had made about improving the process. Throughout this time, I observed a high level of interaction
between all members of the classroom: student to student, teacher to teacher, and students to both teachers. Additionally, there was no distinction in the nature of interaction or support that students sought from the two teachers. The co-teachers acted with parity and agency in supporting all the learners in the room.

As the center activities and assessments came to a conclusion, Ms. Katz invited students who had finished back to the carpet, where she began recapping the activities. Ms. Elmont remained at one table finishing up with a small heterogeneous group of ELLs and English-proficient students requiring extra time and support. They soon joined the rest of the class on the carpet. Ms. Elmont introduced the next writing workshop activity, and the two teachers modeled the expectations for the activity. Ms. Elmont used sentence strips to cover key words and steps on the chart while she elicited information from students. Ms. Katz observed Ms. Elmont’s action and realized she should have done this, too, stating, “Oh, Ms. Elmont! I should have covered this step! What would I do without you?”

ESOL teacher Ms. Elmont took the lead and continued instructing students on the directions and expectations of the next activity, while GE teacher Ms. Katz assumed an assistive role and began to set up supplies on the students’ tables. When students returned to their seats, they were in different locations and working in different heterogeneous student groupings than they had been for the previous math activity. This again was a function of student’s familiarity with the co-teachers’ established classroom routines and organization. Students appeared to know that they worked with different groups for different activities, which facilitated the type of support teachers were able to provide within each heterogeneous group.

I inferred from these observations of Ms. Elmont and Ms. Katz that, unlike Ms. Krisch’s class, a great deal of co-planning and preparation had facilitated the execution of effective co-
instruction and a high level of student engagement and support. Furthermore, the parity observed between the two co-teachers in all aspects of their instructional delivery and interactions implied that Ms. Elmont and Ms. Katz adhered to the full cycle of the collaborative instructional model, with both teachers equally invested in the co-planning, co-teaching, co-assessment, and co-reflection in support of all students in their shared class. I found that this partnership in its third year of implementation supported Fullan’s (1982, 2016) theorized timeline for achieving the successful routinization of the enactment of co-teaching. However, this was perceived to be more a factor of the co-teachers’ fidelity in implementing the collaborative instructional model rather than the duration of their partnership.

As students worked on their drafts, I again observed the two teachers conferring on their next steps and tweaking their plans on the spot. Both teachers circulated to assist students. As an observer, I found that I was unable to determine who the ESOL teacher was and who was the GE teacher; each teacher acted with agency and parity in the instruction of the lesson. As Ms. Elmont explained, “It depends on the teacher, because it was pretty simple with Ms. Katz. She’s very structured; I’m very structured. So, the routines were easy. Going in there was easier, you know, planning is easier. So it’s good.” The strong collaborative culture established in this classroom gave clarity to Ms. Elmont’s role and professional identity in this class and positioned Ms. Elmont with parallel stature to Ms. Katz.

I asked Ms. Elmont if she saw any distinctions between her role in Ms. Katz’s class and her role in Ms. Krisch’s class, to which she responded, “I think basically it’s the same. I think that I play the same role in both classes. I don’t feel that I’m lesser in one than the other. I might feel I’m more in one than the other.” I observed that Ms. Elmont’s role was more prominent and defined in her partnership with Ms. Katz. However, her self-assessment as not feeling lesser in
her partnerships with Ms. Krisch was not supported by the discourse and actions revealed through observation and interview data, in which there was little evidence of parity or equitable agency between the co-teachers. Ms. Elmont was consistently observed to be interactively positioned to a subordinate role through her discourse and interactions with Ms. Krisch, which relegated her to back-table instruction with a group of ELLs separated from the rest of the class. Furthermore, Ms. Elmont reflexively reinforced this marginalized positioning in Ms. Krisch’s class through her lack of agency and compliance with the GE teacher’s instructional routines that did not utilize her language-acquisition expertise.

The next sections focus on the teacher interview profiles and observations of the Iselin Elementary co-teachers: ESOL teacher Ms. Ellington, fourth-grade GE teachers Ms. Finn and Ms. Fort, and sixth-grade GE teacher Mr. Simmons.

Ms. Ellington: Iselin Elementary Fourth/Sixth-Grade ESOL Teacher

Ms. Ellington had earned her TESOL certification 15 years earlier, but she had just returned to teaching three years ago after an extended maternity leave. Her first year teaching in Glen Village was as a dual-certified ENL and GE teacher in the integrated ENL kindergarten class at Reemer. The following year, she worked as a leave replacement teaching ENL at Glen Village Middle School. At the time of this interview, Ms. Ellington was three months into her position as the ESOL teacher at Iselin Elementary and her co-teaching partnerships with GE teachers Ms. Fort, Ms. Finn, and Mr. Simmons.

We sat together in her classroom for a few minutes discussing the ENL program, teachers and administrators in this school building, and more specifically the co-teaching model of instruction, which Ms. Ellington described as:
Two teachers who co-plan lessons to deliver together to their class. One of the teachers could be ENL and they would modify and use different strategies to deliver that lesson to meet the needs of the students in that classroom. So it’s mostly where the teachers plan together what the students need, what strategies to use, or modification for the students to deliver the lesson. And both teachers are teaching, using whatever model is best for that lesson, for that day, for that class. I think that’s what co-teaching is. It’s not one teacher does all the work and the other one is an assistant.

Ms. Ellington shared that she had only a few months of experience teaching with her three co-teachers but that she had known them prior to starting at Iselin, “I knew those teachers and I already had great relationships with them, just not in their room.” Reflecting on how these professional relationships had transitioned since she began co-teaching, she shared, “I think teachers try their best and some things work, some things don’t, and it really takes time. Co-teaching, to work really well, I think takes years. It’s not going to happen in three months.” Ms. Ellington went on to describe how she perceived administrators’ expectations of co-teaching, as both teachers teaching and being visibly engaged with all the students in the room.

In addition to four co-taught periods, Ms. Ellington also teaches two stand-alone periods each day for sixth-grade ELLs with entering and emerging levels of English proficiency. Ms. Ellington was very forthcoming with information and became visibly emotional at several points during this conversation, as she spoke of the challenges of co-teaching and the stress that this created for her. She also shared that she felt tremendous pressure and responsibility to ensure the success of these co-teaching partnerships and to build the capacity of one particular co-teacher in creating a classroom culture more conducive to supporting English learners. She stated that this co-teaching partnership was marked by a great deal of resistance, unlike her other two co-
teaching partnerships, in which she felt a greater level of confidence and success. Her whole demeanor brightened as she began to speak of these other more positive partnerships and what co-teaching looked like in these classes:

Usually in fourth grade, it’s really pretty fluid and easy. We start together, discussing or teaching the mini lesson. We’ve figured out ways where I can have a small group on the floor and Ms. Finn or Ms. Fort can take a small group. And that’s when I make sure I see my ENL students. Sometimes I have a GE student as well, or special ed, because it’s appropriate for that group, whether it be reading or writing, because we’re working on the same skill. So, that’s usually how we run it in fourth grade. Sixth grade is more challenging, it’s more teacher directed and individual work.

During the interview, I probed further to ascertain the nature of the co-teaching assignments, and Ms. Ellington shared that she believed teachers had the opportunity to express interest in co-teaching the ENL classes. She went on to report, “This year, I know one teacher did express interest. Ms. Finn hadn’t done ENL last year but said, ‘Yeah, I would do it,’ when approached by the principal. The sixth-grade teacher was given the ENL class and, as far as I know, it was not discussed prior to. So that was a relationship that was given to me and to the other teacher. But he didn’t necessarily volunteer for it.”

Reflecting on this method of assigning co-teachers for the integrated ENL classes, Ms. Ellington stated, “I think finding co-teachers that have a love and passion for teaching would be most important. Because if you start off with that, the knowledge can come after that. But without that in place, it’s very, very difficult for the partnership to be successful.” The comments made by Ms. Ellington depicting the challenges of co-teaching in the sixth-grade class related back to Ms. Knightly’s comments regarding her concerns about Mr. Simmons’ class and were
evident during the observations of that class. Furthermore, it was apparent from her depiction of the interactions with her building administrator that Ms. Ellington perceived herself to be responsible for the success of this challenging co-teaching partnership. Ms. Ellington also expressed that she was motivated to enact her agency in advocating for herself and her students in Mr. Simmons’ class. She shared the example of having to repeatedly ask to see student work to better inform her instruction and support of ELLs, stating, “I found myself recently, because we were working on writing for so long, that I was wanting to follow all the way through, but I didn’t get to see the end result of the writing. And so I do have to ask, ‘Can I see? Can you share?’ And my two fourth-grade co-teachers have shared, but sixth grade is more challenging.” Ms. Ellington again questioned the method of selecting co-teachers, specifically pondering how students would benefit from an ineffective co-teaching partnership. The first Iselin GE teacher interviewed was Ms. Fort, whose profile follows.

**Ms. Fort: Iselin Elementary Fourth-Grade GE Teacher**

Spending the entirety of her 30-year teaching career in Glen Village, Ms. Fort has taught kindergarten through fourth grade. Her first experience with co-teaching was the year in which this study was conducted, co-teaching with Ms. Ellington. While she was reluctant to have someone she “didn’t know” in the room with her, after so many years of teaching alone, she reported that things seemed to be working well so far this year.

Ms. Fort explained her understanding of co-teaching, stating, “It’s a really important partnership that has to take time to form. It’s two teachers working collaboratively within the classroom context to do what’s best for all of the students. But the co-teacher may have a specialty in a specific area so they can give even more support to those students that need it in that area while I’m working with the general ed population.” I found it interesting that she
equated co-teaching with the separate student groupings she described, indicating that she would be working with the “general ed population.” Upon further discussion, I attributed her perception of co-teaching to the articulation of the expectations of integrated ENL at the building level, which appeared to conflict with the district’s vision and messaging.

This co-teaching assignment was communicated to Ms. Fort by Ms. Knightly in June of the prior school year, when she learned that she would “be kind of the ENL teacher. So she was going to put more students in my room and said, ‘So I'll give you support by having someone co-teach with you.’ I’ve never been asked ‘Do you want to do this? Are you comfortable doing this?’” I wanted to clarify the nature of her conversation with Ms. Knightly, and Ms. Fort stated, “I wouldn’t say there was actually a conversation. It was, ‘This is what you’re doing. There will be ENL students in your room, but it’s not an ENL classroom.’ But yet everywhere around the building, it says Fort/Ellington ENL.” Ms. Fort also shared how Ms. Ellington’s role was described to her, stating, “Her administrator, the ELL coordinator, said ‘you’re going to go during ELA.’ So, it’s basically her supporting my reader’s workshop or writer’s workshop.” Ms. Fort reiterated that Ms. Knightly had been clear in her direction that the class was not to be referred to as an ENL class and described her conflicted response to receiving this message:

I don’t like that. If a parent asked me, ‘Is this an ENL class?’ ‘No, we don’t have that here.’ But yet, they did put a certain amount in my room of students that are labeled or identified as ENL. It’s like saying an ICT class doesn’t have special ed students in their room. But they do. But yet, I get pulled for ENL training. I get called to go to ENL meetings, but I don’t teach it? We don’t have ENL, but I have an ENL teacher that pushes in my room.
I made connections between this revelation and Ms. Kindell’s statement that the district tried to appeal to the general community. However, Ms. Kindell’s approach to this task involved placement policy changes to create heterogeneous student groupings and addressing parents’ concerns by defending the benefits of these placements.

According to Ms. Fort, Ms. Knightly’s approach to appealing to the general community involved denying the existence of integrated ENL classes. In Ms. Fort’s perception, this messaging originated from upper district-level administrators not recognizing the demographic shifts in the community, “I’m going to say five years ago, you couldn’t even say we had that; upper, upper admin would say, ‘Oh no, we don’t have that here; we don’t have that population here.’ And it was coming.” Ms. Fort clarified that this was prior to Mr. Sapir assuming the role of district superintendent, and that while she has seen a change in district messaging under his leadership, this has been slow in reaching the building level:

It slowly was like, ‘Oh we need support because not only are our test scores changing, but they’re also changing because there’s another population here that we need to look into.’ So they slowly said, ‘Okay, we’ll get someone called an ENL teacher in the building,’ and we have one for all the grades now. I think there’s two here for four, five, and six.

I redirected the conversation from the district level to Ms. Fort’s experience with co-taught integrated ENL at the school building level. She reiterated that she wished she had been asked rather than told about her assignment as an ENL co-teacher, but shared that she thought Ms. Knightly had selected her based on her personality: “I think she knows that I love children, community, I’m a people person. I wouldn’t complain, I’m not judgmental, I am not racist in any way. I’ve always been just a wonderful, outgoing person.” Ms. Fort’s assessment was that other
teachers in the building would have opposed being assigned to the co-taught integrated ENL class.

When asked about her preparation for co-teaching ENL, Ms. Fort stated that she thought there was never enough training or support. Based on her comments, it was not evident that she had received any professional development on working with ELLs, “I'm not sure of the laws of ENL. I might need more experience in that as well. What the rules are. How many students in the room, how many minutes, right? Ms. Ellington’s more experienced in that.” Ms. Fort shared that she was unsure of how many ELLs were in her class and was not aware of their proficiency levels or even what the names of the proficiency levels were: “I think we’re at four ELLs right now. They’re okay. I don’t have any that just moved. I forget what that word is. I think I have emerging and transitioning. I think the assumption is they’re never, what’s that lowest one? I had the low ones in the past, which is really difficult.” I found that Ms. Fort’s comments consistently revealed that she perceived Ms. Ellington to be solely responsible and accountable for the ELLs in their shared class. My interpretation of Ms. Fort’s discourse was further supported by the observations made in her co-taught class with Ms. Ellington.

**An Observation of Co-Teaching: Ms. Ellington and Ms. Fort - Grade 4**

Ms. Ellington co-teaches with Ms. Fort for one period each day. The classroom was set up with three large student tables, where a total of 17 students sat. Five of these students were identified as English learners; one in her first year at the commanding proficiency level and three at the transitioning proficiency level, based on their most recent NYSESLAT scores. Each of these students spoke Spanish as their home language.

As I entered the room with Ms. Ellington, the students were sitting as a whole group on one of the carpet areas, finishing a morning meeting check-in with Ms. Fort, who was seated in a
rocking chair. Ms. Ellington stood alongside the carpet where the students were seated. After introducing a writer’s workshop lesson, Ms. Fort turned and said, “Ms. Ellington, your turn!” At this point, Ms. Ellington took over to review strategies the students could use during self-editing. Ms. Ellington and Ms. Fort continued to go back and forth reviewing strategies for staying focused during the Writer’s Workshop lesson. Both teachers shared equally in introducing and explaining the expectations of the workshop lesson.

Students returned to their desks and began working independently on their chromebooks. Ms. Fort and Ms. Ellington stationed themselves at desks at opposite corners of the room to work one on one with students. Ms. Fort announced, “I’m going to start with Claire (English-proficient student). Ms. Ellington will be working with Marco (ELL).” I observed some interaction between the two teachers: sharing checklists and student work samples to use for conferencing with students. Ms. Fort finished her one-on-one student conference and began circulating the room, checking in on students working at the tables. She then made her way over to check in with Ms. Ellington, who was still conferencing with a student.

Ms. Fort then returned to the front of the room to confer with another English-proficient student. I noticed that Ms. Fort spent less one-on-one time conferencing with each student, while Ms. Ellington spent more time providing one-on-one support to the ELLs she conferred with. For this reason, only Ms. Fort circulated the room and interacted with students working independently at their tables, while Ms. Ellington’s interactions were only with ELLs while providing one-on-one support. At one point, an English-proficient student approached the table where Ms. Ellington was working one on one with an ELL, seeking help with his editing. Ms. Ellington reviewed the work of the English-proficient student and invited him to sit at the table,
where she advised him on a step in the editing process he was struggling with. This led to a three-way discussion between Ms. Ellington and the two students.

During this time, Ms. Fort addressed the whole group, rounding up students to finish their independent editing work, providing directions to the whole group to transition to the next phase of the Writer’s Workshop, and directing students to return to the carpet area at the front of the room for a closing activity in which they would be sharing their edited work. Ms. Ellington joined the circle, sitting across from Ms. Fort. As I analyzed the data from this observation, I realized that even though there were many “we” statements, Ms. Fort was doing most of the talking and typically leading the discussion and progression through the lesson. In the initial Writer’s Workshop mini lesson, there was a back-and-forth flow of turn taking between the two teachers, similar to co-teaching model two, or teaming, which promotes parity between the two co-teachers. However, beyond that point, Ms. Ellington assumed more of a supportive or subordinate role aligned with co-teaching model one (one lead, one teach on purpose) and model three (one lead, one assess). This was even true of the closing circle activity, during which Ms. Ellington was whispering to two students as Ms. Fort led the whole group discussion. I also observed that Ms. Fort came to check on Ms. Ellington as she conferenced with a student, which I perceived as asserting her higher positioning in the classroom. In my perception, this appeared to extend to the ELLs as well. Ms. Fort addressed Ms. Ellington, asking her to share the work of Marco, the ELL she had been assisting.

I observed that Ms. Fort asked Ms. Ellington, and not the student, to share what they had found in his writing. It felt like this action took away Marco’s voice, his opportunity to share for himself, to build his confidence, and to experience pride in his achievement. As a “transitioning
proficiency-level student,” he should have been capable and encouraged to share his own work as the other students had. This action marginalized Marco’s positioning among his classmates.

As I was becoming more aware of this subtle but powerful dynamic, I began to recognize it in more of the exchanges and interactions, including Ms. Fort’s final statement: “Ms. Ellington has to go to another class now. Everyone, say thank you to Ms. Ellington.” Initially, this just sounded like a request for students to show their appreciation to Ms. Ellington. After considering it in conjunction with my observations of the dynamics between the two teachers, I began to see it as identifying Ms. Ellington as a visitor, who she was dismissing to return to the normal classroom routine. I perceived that Ms. Fort had not allowed Ms. Ellington to speak for herself, similar to how she did not invite ELL student Marco to speak for himself.

Ms. Finn: Iselin Elementary Fourth-Grade GE Teacher

Ms. Ellington’s other fourth grade co-teacher is Ms. Finn, who has taught at Iselin Elementary for over 20 years but had never co-taught or worked with ELLs prior to the school year in which this study was conducted. Ms. Finn learned of her co-teaching assignment when Ms. Knightly approached her in June of the preceding school year. When Ms. Finn was informed that Ms. Ellington would be her co-teacher, she was concerned because she had never met or worked with her before. Ms. Knightly addressed her concerns by stating that Ms. Ellington would be supporting her reading and writing workshops.

Similar to Ms. Fort’s account, Ms. Finn shared that she was told that “Technically, it wasn’t the ENL class. So, we didn’t technically have an ENL section.” Once again, Ms. Knightly’s reluctance to identify the class as an ENL class created confusing messaging that did not align with the district’s articulated vision of co-taught integrated ENL. Adding to the confusion over her new assignment was the fact that Ms. Finn did not receive any training or
professional development to prepare for co-teaching or for working with ELLs prior to the beginning of the school year. She happily shared that she and Ms. Ellington “meshed immediately” and that their co-teaching experience thus far had been positive, with both teachers working well together. Ms. Finn explained her understanding of the co-teaching model of instruction:

I think it’s a great thing. I mean, you’re splitting the teaching basically, which is lightening the load. To me, we’re both equal in the classroom. We’re both teachers. We’re both teaching the same content. I mean, if we had more planning time, I would say we could really sit and work out, ‘You’ll teach the mini lesson and I’ll teach this part.’ But now we’re just…it’s just kind of thrown in. But I mean, we’re both active within the teaching process. We both should be active. One of us shouldn’t be sitting down and the other one teaching. It’s not a support. It should run with a mini lesson, breakout—you take a group, I take a group, come back together. That’s how I believe it should be taught.

Ms. Finn recalled that Ms. Ellington spent the first few weeks just observing her instruction and perceived that she was hesitant to take an active role in content instruction. She shared, “She said to me at the beginning of the year, ‘I’m not trained. I haven’t been trained in how to do this.’ So like next year, if we’re together next year, she’ll have seen it. She’ll have seen the lessons all the way through and the units all the way through. And you know that it’s just going to keep evolving. It’s brand new.” After those initial weeks, Ms. Finn reported that they soon fell into a natural flow of co-teaching and collaboration, which Ms. Finn attributed to their open and frequent communication:

Ms. Ellington has access to my plan book. It’s all digital. It’s all online so she can see what she’s coming into. But like normally, we will have spoken. She knows what’s going
on; she doesn’t need to look on my plan book. We’re texting throughout the day and every night just because I feel like when she walks in, I don’t want her to be like, ‘What are we doing?’

Commenting on the success of their co-teaching partnership, Ms. Finn stated, “I almost wish it was not just one period a day because the ELLs are still ELLs when you’re doing math or science and you’re still doing everything.” However, she reported that Ms. Ellington leaves her with strategies to support ELLs in these content areas, even when she is not in the classroom. In observing Ms. Ellington and Ms. Finn co-teaching together, the level of communication, collaboration, and trust described by Ms. Finn was evident in their professional interactions and discourse in the classroom.

An Observation of Co-Teaching: Ms. Ellington and Ms. Finn - Grade 4

Ms. Ellington and I entered Ms. Finn’s fourth-grade classroom, which had a similar setup to Ms. Fort’s room. The 18 students in this class included four students who were identified as ELLs, all at the “expanding level of English proficiency.” When Ms. Ellington spoke about the students in Ms. Finn’s class, she spoke with a sense of investment and ownership that I had not sensed when she spoke of Ms. Fort’s class; these were her students, just as much as they were Ms. Finn’s. Her presence in the classroom was much the same as her discourse in demonstrating parity between the co-teachers. Physically, she was center stage with Ms. Finn the entire time.

As we walked into the class, Ms. Finn was asking students to come sit on the carpet at the front of the room, where she was sitting in a rocking chair in front of the whiteboard. Ms. Ellington also moved to the carpet area and sat on the floor among the students, also near the whiteboard. The two teachers introduced the Writer’s Workshop lesson by engaging the students with a series of questions. The way they spoke to each other and to the students reflected that
thorough co-planning and communication concerning assessment and instruction had taken place before the lesson, and seemingly on a regular basis. Ms. Finn and Ms. Ellington both stood at the front of the room on either side of the whiteboard. The two teachers were very much in sync with each other. It was their space.

Both teachers discussed the plans for the next steps. As Ms. Ellington scribed directions on the board, Ms. Finn repeatedly referred to their co-teaching team to demonstrate to students how they each have different roles and responsibilities when they work together. Watching the two of them leading the class together, it was not evident who the ESOL teacher was and who was the GE teacher. In fact, although each teacher worked with small heterogeneous student groups, the majority of instruction used co-teaching model two, in which the two teachers teach the same content to the whole group of students. This co-teaching model is often referred to as teaming and promotes an increased level of parity between co-teachers. Similarly, the students appeared to recognize the two teachers as a team, and all students interacted with both of them equally. Ms. Ellington was more confident and assertive in this classroom than she had appeared in Ms. Fort’s class.

There was a great deal of mutual respect evident between the two teachers. It also seemed that within their brief time co-teaching, they had already built each other’s capacity in individual areas of expertise, as they both displayed a great deal of comfort in supporting all students with the academic and linguistic demands of the lesson. Despite its brief duration at the time of this study, this two-month-old partnership between Ms. Ellington and Ms. Finn demonstrated a mutual commitment to the implementation of the full collaborative cycle of instruction. I observed that Ms. Ellington and Ms. Finn’s approach to implementing co-teaching cultivated equity in teacher agency, clarity in roles and responsibilities, and parity between the two
teachers. For these reasons, I found that the development of this collaborative partnership surpassed that of the other two new Iselin partnerships, which were still at earlier and perhaps more typical stages of adapting their mindsets and practices (Fullan, 1982).

**An Observation of Co-Teaching: Ms. Ellington and Mr. Simmons - Grade 6**

It should be noted that while Mr. Simmons consented to participating in the study, he declined to be interviewed. Nonetheless, data collected during observations of the co-taught class of Mr. Simmons and Ms. Ellington serves to support my overall understanding of the collaborative culture and enactment of co-teaching at Iselin Elementary. My first encounter with Mr. Simmons had been when Ms. Knightly stopped to check in with him on our way to Ms. Knightly’s office. On the date of this first observation, I returned to Mr. Simmons’ classroom with Ms. Ellington for a double-period of integrated ENL and English Language Arts with the 6th-grade class. Upon entering this classroom, I was visually struck by the configuration of student desks, which were arranged in three long rows in which the 25 students sat in groups of 8 to 9 students spanning the width of the classroom, with all students facing forward. This class of students included 8 ELLs with varying proficiency levels, who shared the common home language of Spanish.

The classroom was crowded and cluttered, with little space to circulate the room. I wondered how or if students were able to collaborate or work together in small student groups, or if the teachers were able to circulate the room to work individually with students, to provide support or assess student progress during instruction. It appeared that the configuration was most conducive to the teachers stationed at the front of the room, providing lecture-style instruction.

The students were in the process of clearing off their desks and taking out their reading books. Mr. Simmons looked at Ms. Ellington and me as we entered the room, but there were no
verbal acknowledgements or greetings exchanged between the two teachers. Mr. Simmons commented to Ms. Ellington, “I figured we’d do guided reading now. You can take a group.” He then addressed the class, “Okay, we’re going to work in small reading groups, so I’ll call some students who will read with me and Ms. Ellington will take a group, too. The rest of you will continue reading your books independently at your desks.” Ms. Ellington called out a few student names and told them to meet her near the mailboxes with their books. Ms. Ellington’s group consisted of 5 entering proficiency-level ELLs; Mr. Simmons worked with a group of 4 English-proficient students. All students were reading the book Bud, not Buddy. Mr. Simmons projected a Do Now message on the whiteboard, and Ms. Ellington quickly ran over to the computer to add a Spanish translation of the task directions. Clearly, she had not co-planned or provided input prior to this class.

Although this was their designated block of co-taught periods, I did not observe co-instruction or interactions between the two co-teachers for the majority of time. If I tried to align my observations with the co-teaching models of instruction, the only similarities might be found with model one, in which one teacher leads and the other teaches on purpose; or model three in which one leads and one assesses students. Each of these co-teaching models positions one teacher in a subordinate role and therefore should not be used with the frequency observed in this class.

Ms. Ellington continued to work with her small reading group of ELLs. She used her laptop to scaffold for the students by showing them visuals and examples for some of the new vocabulary. In this corner of the room where she was working, there was a small chart hung up with the only home language support visible in the room. Ms. Ellington later told me she had made the chart and “snuck” it into the room to provide translations for key vocabulary.
Mr. Simmons worked with his small group of students on the opposite side of the room, using a parallel reading group structure, with students taking turns reading aloud. There was no interaction at all between the two teachers during this time. Ms. Ellington was not utilized for an instructional period, only for the guided reading group. She did not interact with the whole group, only with the small group of five ELLs in her reading group. Mr. Simmons did not interact at all with the ELLs or with the students who were doing independent reading. The only student-teacher interaction that occurred was within the guided reading groups. A few students who were reading independently raised their hands for assistance during this period, but they were not acknowledged by either teacher. I heard many of these students using their home language (Spanish) to ask each other questions and support each other.

After 40 minutes of guided reading, Mr. Simmons disbursed his small group, sending the students back to their desks. I observed him looking up at the clock, which showed the time was 2:05 p.m., the time he had told Ms. Ellington they would end this activity. He appeared to be displeased that Ms. Ellington was still working with the students in her small group. She continued for a few more minutes until there was a natural point for her to stop. She complimented the students on their reading and participation in the group discussion and told them she was proud of their hard work.

Mr. Simmons stood behind his desk at the front of the room, bringing up a new presentation slide on his computer to project onto the whiteboard. Ms. Ellington approached the whiteboard and added some additional notations and translations to clarify for ELLs. She later commented to me that it had taken a lot of work to get to this point of enacting her agency and that although she felt restricted, she knew she had to advocate for her students. Mr. Simmons
remained behind his desk at the computer, from which location he led the discussion, reading text excerpts and questions from the projected worksheet.

At one point, Mr. Simmons asked Ms. Ellington if she wanted to read one of the excerpts. Ms. Ellington read the next excerpt and then Mr. Simmons resumed asking the questions. Ms. Ellington called on one of the ELLs from her small group to contribute to the discussion and stated, “I’m going to share that Claudia (ENL student) told me something. I had translated ‘left’ as ‘izquierdo,’ but the book translator used ‘zurdo’ for left. I did not know that. Claudia taught me something new. I would have used his name ‘Lefty.’” In this action, Ms. Ellington gave voice and access to this student, while also positioning the student among her peers as a valuable contributor to the class discussion. Without commenting on Ms. Ellington’s statement, Mr. Simmons continued reading the next text excerpt and questions until the bell rang again. Ms. Ellington quietly made her way back over to the left side of the room, gathered her belongings, and motioned to two ELLs to come with her for the next period, which was their scheduled stand-alone instructional period. Again, there were no final words or acknowledgement between the two teachers. I observed this to be a clear example of shared space and not co-teaching. There was no indication that any prior communication or co-planning had taken place between the two teachers. I perceived Mr. Simmons to be annoyed by the disruption of Ms. Ellington being in his classroom during his lesson.

Similar to the dynamic I observed between Mr. Simmons and Ms. Ellington, I did not observe any interactions between Mr. Simmons and any of the ELLs. It was as if he resented their presence because it put him into this undesired co-teaching situation and brought with it undesired attention from the principal, as I had witnessed earlier. Other than opportunities created by Ms. Ellington, I did not observe ELLs being engaged or participating in class
discussions. Many students were speaking to each other in Spanish, asking and answering questions, and supporting each other’s understanding.

My perception of Mr. Simmons was that he seemed very set in his ways and not open to collaborating with another teacher or having a co-teacher come in to share this space and instructional time with him. There was no observable evidence of the enactment of integrated instruction or co-teaching in this class. This visible dynamic between the teachers interactively positioned Ms. Ellington to a subordinated role; she appeared to make herself as unobtrusive as possible, almost apologetic for her presence. This was definitely a push in and not an integrated model of instruction, in which both Ms. Ellington and the ELLs appeared to be marginalized in the class.

I also had the opportunity to observe a co-planning conversation between Ms. Ellington and Mr. Simmons. The discourse in this conversation involved Mr. Simmons telling Ms. Ellington what he was going to do during an upcoming instructional period later that day and what she should do during that time—namely, for her to work with the ELLs: “You know, the way you took your kids?” Mr. Simmons’ focus then shifted to planning for his absence the following day. He advised Ms. Ellington, “Actually, I left sub plans. Part of the plans were...would you run the guided reading with your kids like you did last class? And we’ll have the sub to work with the rest of the class.” Ms. Ellington agreed to the plans presented to her by Mr. Simmons. She advised Mr. Simmons that she needed to work with one student in particular, which she planned to do outside of class time. This enactment of agency created an opportunity for Ms. Ellington to engage in her professional pedagogical responsibilities outside of the context of the co-taught class. My perception of this professional interaction between the two co-teachers connected to Ms. Knightly’s assertion that instructional decisions in some co-taught classes were
made unilaterally, creating inequity and lack of parity between the teachers. Ms. Ellington’s contributions were marginalized before she even entered the integrated co-taught class. Even the substitute plans that Mr. Simmons had unilaterally created positioned Ms. Ellington in a subordinate role, working exclusively with the ELLs, while the substitute worked with the remainder of the students in the class.

The interviews and observations conducted with the teachers at Reemer and Iselin Elementary schools helped me gain additional insight of their perceptions of the integrated co-teaching instructional model. The interviews afforded co-teachers the opportunity to express how they identified themselves and each other as professionals in co-taught contexts and how they perceived building and district-level administrators articulated and implemented collaborative structures in support of integrated co-teaching aligned with the district’s mission. The observations allowed me to identify inconsistencies between teachers’ discourse and behaviors in the co-taught class. In Part Three, I will provide a cross-case comparison of the findings at each school as they relate to the themes of value of integration, disconnect between district vision and school enactment of co-teaching, and parent engagement as stakeholders in integrated ENL classes.

**Part Three: Cross-Case Analysis**

In this section I provide a thematic presentation of the findings, comparing and contrasting the collaborative culture of each building to highlight similarities and differences in the enactment of co-teaching in the two school contexts. I begin with an overview of the collaborative culture in each building and then thematically summarize those cultures. Applying the same themes identified in Chapter Four, I provide findings specific to co-teachers’ perceptions of the value of integration, the disconnect between the district’s vision and schools’
enactment of co-teaching, and parent engagement as stakeholders in the enactment of integrated ENL across the two schools. Within the theme of value of integration, the findings were further clarified through the application of sub-themes pertaining to teachers’ perceived professional identities as well as their perceptions of student and teacher relationships in integrated versus stand-alone instructional contexts. The theme of disconnect between district vision and school enactment of co-teaching was also further defined to include a sub-theme of administrator support of co-taught integrated ENL.

Collaborative Culture Overview

The enactment of co-teaching at the school building level strongly reflects the collaborative culture cultivated by the building administrator and perpetuated by its teachers. As stated in the introduction to this chapter, the findings in Chapter Four described a strong collaborative culture at Reemer Elementary, which contrasted sharply with a more data-driven culture at Iselin Elementary. The findings specific to each school are discussed in the following sections.

Reemer Elementary’s Collaborative Culture

Collaboration at Reemer was cultivated by administrative support in the form of prioritized scheduling for co-taught classes and co-teachers, and teacher input in the co-teacher selection process. Ms. Kindell’s leadership and accessibility as an administrator trickled down to the classroom level, cultivating teacher equity and agency among co-teachers. Many of the teachers at Reemer Elementary have taught together in this same building for 10 years or more, including the three co-teachers involved in this study. Ms. Elmont, Ms. Krisch, and Ms. Katz all described a school culture that afforded teachers multiple opportunities for informal collaboration. However, I found that this occurred in the absence of formal collaborative
structures such as policy-endorsed common planning time, which they each identified as the biggest challenge to co-teaching.

According to Ms. Krisch, the longevity of the faculty created a sense of family, which was conducive to communication and collaboration:

We’re always talking about things. Whether you call each other on the phone in the car on the way here, whether you talk in the afternoon after we dismiss, or whether we have a formalized meeting, we’re always collaborating and always discussing and always trying to plan or figure out what’s going on and what we need to do and what’s the best course of action.

Addressing the ENL co-teacher partnerships specifically, Ms. Krisch added, “We are a pretty close-knit group. The three of us are a team. We understand; we get the idea.” Ms. Elmont echoed similar sentiments, emphasizing the importance of relationships, “It’s different for me because I’ve known these teachers for 13-14 years, where I’m sure in a school where there’s more teachers that you work with, you’re not going to have those relationships as like I have here.” Ms. Katz shared, “We’ve always all been pretty easy to work with. We’ve all worked together for so long. Everybody who teaches there has only ever taught in that school. All the teachers have been raised in this same culture.”

Another facet of Reemer’s collaborative culture specific to co-teachers was the longevity of the co-teaching partnerships between Ms. Elmont and Ms. Katz, and Ms. Elmont and Ms. Krisch, who were in their third and fifth years, respectively. Ms. Katz described the benefit of sustained partnerships:

We worked together last year. It worked well, and we just know how each other are and what we need and what the kids need, so the planning didn’t have to be as
intense and as long, because we’re experienced working with each other now. I think that’s key, too. When you’re constantly having to co-teach with somebody new, it’s hard. Are your personalities going to match? Are you going to mesh well? Can you bounce off each other? Do you have the same ideas on how the classroom should go or whatever it may be? Where I just feel like Ms. Elmont and I, it just fits. We got really lucky.

As discussed in Chapter Four, Ms. Kindell changed the schedule for lunch periods, giving co-teachers the same lunch period together. This common time seemed to create opportunities for informal collaborative conversations to take place, even if teachers did not outwardly recognize it as planning time, as inferred by Ms. Katz, “This year, it seemed to be easier. I don’t know why. It’s not like Ms. Kindell gave us planning time, but I think we just found the time.”

**Iselin Elementary’s Collaborative Culture**

Under Ms. Knightly’s administrative leadership, each grade level has a common professional period scheduled for 20 minutes once a week. In addition, teachers at each grade level share a common lunch period. Again, the Glen Village teacher contract prohibits administrators from requiring teachers to use scheduled free periods for planning, so the 20-minute professional period once a week is the only official time grade-level teachers meet.

The ESOL teacher’s schedule was not intentionally planned to create common free periods with the grade-level teachers she supported. Ms. Ellington did share the same lunch period with the fourth-grade teachers but did not have any scheduled free or lunch periods with her sixth-grade co-teacher. Each of the participating teachers reported that this lack of scheduled co-planning time was the greatest impediment to collaboration.
Despite these scheduling challenges, teachers sought out opportunities to collaborate on their own. According to Ms. Finn, fourth-grade level teachers work closely together: “We try to really work as a team in the grade level, which is nice because we’re the only grade in the building that we’re all teaching all major subjects, whereas the other grades, you have two math teachers and two ELA teachers. So we kind of have to bounce ideas off of each other.” Ms. Finn also shared that in the absence of scheduled planning time, the teachers communicate primarily through texting. However, as Ms. Fort stated, this still is not sufficient: “We find ourselves sometimes taking 5 to 10 minutes of class time when they’re doing independent work to just make sure, ‘So tomorrow we’re doing this again.’ And it’s neither of our faults. I think they need to put that planning period in our schedule and never take it away from us.” Ms. Finn echoed these sentiments stating, “If we don’t have time together, then how are we supposed to work collaboratively? We don’t have time to communicate.” The perspectives shared by Ms. Finn and Ms. Fort highlighted the lack of collaborative structures in place to support the enactment of co-teaching at the school level.

From Ms. Ellington’s perspective, she tries to take advantage of the grade-level meetings to confer with her fourth- and sixth-grade co-teachers, but this can be challenging. From Ms. Finn’s perspective, Ms. Ellington attended grade-level meetings as a passive listener rather than as an active participant: “She’s able to squeeze in there and listen to what the whole grade is planning.” Since the professional period is so short and teachers are focused on collaborating with their grade-level colleagues, Ms. Ellington uses the time to gain a better understanding of the curriculum for the grades she co-teaches:

Friday mornings, I usually sit in with fourth grade, the whole grade, and I’ll get to see a bigger picture of what they’re doing. I’ve gone to sixth grade, but it can be a little
overwhelming and I kind of feel that I’m a little bit in the way because they want to have their discussions about their plans and it’s hard for me to be included. So I haven’t had much success there. But again, that would be every other week. So right now, it has been successful going to fourth grade.

In addition to feeling overwhelmed and in the way at the sixth-grade meetings, Ms. Ellington reported that this professional period is not a protected period and is therefore often used for other purposes, such as scheduling other building or district meetings. For Ms. Ellington, this has further hindered her ability to collaborate with her sixth-grade co-teacher, Mr. Simmons:

The sixth-grade teacher, I do not have a common planning time with. We try to plan Monday mornings and I’ve found that there’s many meetings, other meetings, on Monday mornings. Sometimes it’s ELA meetings, today was an RTI meeting, district meetings, building meetings that are necessary. So that has been interrupted many, many times, which makes it very difficult. So we find ourselves having a two-minute conversation before class starts and it can be very stressful. I am trying to switch my free and lunch so that I can plan with him one or two days a cycle. So I just discussed that with him and I’m hoping to make that change and then we can have common planning time at least once or twice a week.

Conversely, Ms. Ellington reported a more positive experience collaborating with her fourth-grade co-teachers. With Ms. Finn and Ms. Fort, Ms. Ellington has been able to carve out time to meet with these two co-teachers on a more regular basis:

We co-plan Tuesday mornings for fourth-grade ENL. And then we have lunch together, with fourth grade. So, many times, we can have conversations there. We do not have common free time, so that’s been difficult, but we are really good about texting and
phone calls and having quick conversations to be on the same page. So I do feel we do a
good job of communicating, finding ways to communicate.

However, Ms. Fort continued to justify the need for scheduled co-planning time, stating, “If there
wasn’t a cell phone with text messaging, if there wasn’t email, if there wasn’t lunch, which you
know…I believe in taking my lunch break. I don’t always want to talk shop at lunch.”

Despite their efforts, Ms. Ellington and her fourth-grade co-teachers still identified a need
for additional time to collaborate, not just in the form of scheduled co-planning time, but also
with respect to other areas of instruction such as assessment, grading, and participation in student
progress data meetings, in which Ms. Ellington was not included. Ms. Fort asserted that she
would benefit from having Ms. Ellington’s input:

When I’m doing progress reports or report cards, I’d like to be able to ask her
opinions, like on grading. I don’t think it’s because she wouldn’t; I just think we
haven’t had the opportunity or the time. I don’t have time in school to do it, so
I’m sitting in my house on a Sunday night doing it and I’m not going to bother her
on her Sunday.

For these teachers in the early phase of implementing their co-teaching practices, the data
revealed opportunities for continued development of their collaborative partnerships. However,
for Ms. Ellington and her fourth-grade co-teachers, it appeared that the relational trust in their
partnerships allowed them to establish a collaborative culture at the classroom level, despite the
building-level circumstances, practices, and enactment of co-teaching.

Value of Integration

As with the building administrators, I found that the value placed on integration as
opposed to stand-alone ENL instruction varied among the participant teachers and that their
perceptions of integration extended to their professional identities and relationships, as perceived by GE and ESOL teachers. An overarching finding between the two schools was that true integration of instruction must consider all students as a whole classroom community, rather than separate ELL and English-proficient student groups with separate teachers. In regard to this finding, both ESOL teachers and two of the five GE co-teachers acknowledged that co-teaching afforded them the benefit of working with students in heterogeneous groupings in the integrated classroom. The remaining three GE teachers primarily structured student groupings homogeneously by language proficiency and interactively positioned the ESOL teacher and ELLs as a separate group in the classroom. This observed segregation of students did not afford ELLs the same opportunities to interact with English-proficient peers; nor did it allow for instructional interaction and integration of expertise between co-teachers. In these classrooms, the role of the ESOL teacher was marginalized, resulting in a perceived loss of professional identity.

During the initial coding phase, I identified the sub-code of *missing out*, based on in vivo coding of co-teacher interviews, in which ESOL and GE teachers shared their perceptions of student learning opportunities as well as of social interactions between ELLs and English-proficient students, between GE teachers and ELLs, and between ESOL teachers and ELLs. I conceptualized *missing out* as a teacher’s perception of student experiences and outcomes in relation to a particular instructional model. Teachers expressed these perceptions as they reflected on comparisons between integrated instruction and stand-alone instruction, which many of the teachers still referred to as *pull-out* instruction, a term no longer used in New York State because of its inherently negative connotation.

*Value of Integration at Reemer Elementary*
In this section, I provide an account of how co-teachers at Reemer Elementary valued integration, as it related to their perceptions of their professional identities, relationships between teachers and students, and how ELLs benefitted from integrated ENL. There was a general consensus among the ENL and GE co-teachers at Reemer that ELLs in integrated co-taught classes benefited from increased opportunities for individualized or small group instruction afforded by having two teachers in the room. Ms. Elmont reported that ELLs can more easily engage in center-based instruction when she is in the room and that she can also pull students aside when she identifies a need for more guidance and review. Referring back to one of the math lessons I had observed in her class, Ms. Krisch stated that she doubted she could reach students at each table to accomplish all aspects of the new math curriculum. Ms. Krisch also commented that ELLs’ language development benefitted from “being immersed in the environment, and having that extra person there working together to get the children to where they need to go, it’s a huge impact.”

Adding her thoughts on how ELLs benefitted, Ms. Katz said she believed that “So many kindergartners can benefit from tweaks that she (Ms. Elmont) might make in the lesson for the ENL students, whether it be wait time, a visual, making sure they speak in a full sentence. All those things, at this point for kindergarten, is important for all of them, whether they speak two languages or not.” She went on to share, “They get two different voices from us. Two different angles on things. I can see that they like having both of us to bounce off of, or they like making us both happy, or to have two of us read a story, get silly with each other, or whatever it may be. It just makes the classroom more fun.”

When comparing integrated versus stand-alone instruction, teachers commonly referenced the notion of students *missing out.* However, the teachers’ perspectives of what ELLs
were missing out on differed between GE and ESOL teachers. Ms. Katz and Ms. Krisch focused on what ELLs were no longer missing out on from an academic perspective, as they reflected on lost instructional time and class events that ELLs had missed out on in the past when they only received ENL instruction in the pull-out or stand-alone model. However, Ms. Elmont shared a different perspective. She acknowledged, “I think small groups are better. Yes, they aren’t missing as much as they would if they stayed in the classroom the whole time. I get that part, that point,” but she continued with her response reflecting on what she believed to be a hindrance to ELLs’ language development:

I feel a lot of the language part and vocabulary part and themes are missing from it now because I’m in the classroom so much. I used to concentrate on weather and the days and the seasons and really get into those themes. They’re just being brushed upon in their morning meeting now, where I could spend a whole chunk of time on winter, spring. So I feel that that part is missing now because I just don’t have every day a stand-alone with a small group.

As Ms. Elmont continued, she shared that she associated the decrease in stand-alone instruction with being an impediment to ELLs’ language development. She believed that ELLs were reluctant to take chances with their language in the mainstream classroom, sharing that GE teachers have said, “‘They’re not talking in my class; why aren’t they talking in my class?’ I’m like, ‘What are you talking about? They talk here (in stand-alone) all the time because they feel comfortable.’ And I feel like that relationship is missing from them being in the classroom all the time.” She said she was saddened to sense the anxiety her students were experiencing in the GE class: “I know that when I do go into the classroom, that I see a little relief on their faces that they know that there’s somebody else there that will be helping them.” Ms. Elmont stated that,
since the shift to co-teaching, ELLs now spent less time practicing English in the safety and security of the stand-alone ENL classroom. She perceived that ELLs were intimidated by being in the co-taught integrated class and were therefore reluctant to engage in academic or social interactions.

**Value of Integration at Iselin Elementary**

Similar to my discussions with the GE teachers at Reemer Elementary, Ms. Fort and Ms. Finn at Iselin Elementary focused on how co-taught integrated ENL prevented ELLs from missing out, both socially and academically. They each spoke of past experiences having to reteach content that ELLs had missed when they were pulled out of the classroom for ENL instruction. As Ms. Finn noted:

> Years ago, the ENL teacher used to just pull out, do her own thing. And it might not have been related to what we were doing in the classroom. Now everything is connected. The kids are not missing anything in the room and they’re getting what’s being taught. They’re not learning something completely different than what’s happening in the room. So I happen to like the co-teaching model only for that reason that the kids aren’t in and out and missing out on things. Everybody’s being taught the same thing, no matter how it’s being taught. You’re all getting the same content in one way or the other.

Ms. Finn pointed out that the students who missed out were those who would have benefitted from having a lesson reinforced for them, rather than learning it for the first time after the rest of the class had learned the content. She also spoke directly to the social-emotional aspect of how ELLs missed out, stating, “I’ve had students in the past that say I’m leaving again. I don’t want to go at all. I want to stay in my class. With my friends.” She reiterated that for these reasons, she
saw co-taught integrated ENL as having a positive impact on students’ social-emotional experiences.

Sharing her perspective, Ms. Ellington agreed that there were some benefits to being with ELLs in the GE class for integrated instruction, such as the opportunities she had to facilitate ELLs’ inclusion in a lesson that they may otherwise have had difficulty engaging in on their own. However, she also believed that an undesired effect of facilitating those connections for ELLs was the impression that her GE co-teachers did not have to do so:

There’s a negative to my building that relationship early on, because it’s seen as only my job to deal with them. I’m seen as the only one who has to do it, and that is not my intention. So I’m trying to change that. But it’s taking a long time. I really wish I could wave a wand and fix that because it’s very sad for me when that happens.

Another concern Ms. Ellington shared was missing out on opportunities to properly assess and support ELLs because of the shift from stand-alone to co-taught integrated instruction. While she believed she had made progress in this area with her fourth-grade co-teachers, she reported:

My sixth grade is much more challenging. When I’m doing a stand-alone or one-on-one conference is when I really am able to see what they need help with. I need to have a conversation with them. I need to hear them talk. We’re missing out on that, so that’s been a challenge for me. And the classroom teacher isn’t even able to really have those conferences with every student either. So, there are some misconceptions there about ELLs, and so that’s a challenge.
Although Ms. Ellington stated that she preferred working with ELLs in stand-alone instruction, she acknowledged that her presence in the GE classroom made a difference for her students:

I think they feel supported and successful, which helps their confidence and helps them to speak, read, write, listen, and be engaged. Knowing I’m there as a support and an advocate for them helps them to be more involved, which then fosters their learning. They’re not afraid to try. And with that, that’s how they’ll learn. Without it, they might not. Or it will be a slower process.

Ms. Finn, on the other hand, pointed out the benefit of being able to address different learning styles during co-taught integrated instruction: “We have so many different students that learn so many different ways, that me teaching one way may not work for them.” She expanded upon her response to speak not only about the different expertise the co-teachers each brought to the class but also the different perspectives, sharing, “The teachers coming from two different points of view, two different people. I think the kids should have that. They shouldn’t have to listen to one person all day long. If I can present it one way, she can present it another way, different.” She also identified the social-emotional benefit of building students’ self-confidence through their interactions in the GE class: “They’re capable. If they’re in a regular, gen ed class, then let them be in a gen ed class. And you bring the support in for them instead of pulling them out.” Ms. Finn’s comments revealed a deeper understanding of how students’ experiences in class related to the dynamic between the co-teachers and how they collaboratively supported students.

*Professional Identity*
The sub-theme of professional identities spoke directly to the first research question that examined co-teachers’ perceptions of their respective roles through the lens of positioning theory. I found that when interviewed, ESOL teachers expressed their belief that they were equals in the co-taught classroom. However, this was contradicted by the discourse and interactions observed in three of the five co-taught classes, which placed them in a subordinate position to the GE teacher. I found that the contrast between ESOL teachers’ expressed beliefs and observed behaviors revealed cognitive dissonance in their perceptions of their roles in integrated ENL classes. In the remaining two partnerships, ESOL and GE teachers were observed to have parity. In these classes, the ESOL teachers acted agentively and expressed greater confidence in their professional identities.

**Professional Identity of Reemer Teachers.** Navigating the instructional space of a co-taught class relies on co-teachers collectively and individually defining their professional identities and agency, while also considering how their enactment of agency relates to students’ perceptions of co-teacher roles and positions in the co-taught class. Ms. Katz described how she perceived Ms. Elmont distinguished between their roles, stating,

> You know, I would say that she respects that at the end of the day, my name is under those kids as their teacher. So, things always come back to me. ‘Ms. Katz’ class, Ms. Katz’ class.’ I just felt like she was very respectful of me being the teacher. She’s very good at knowing I’m the general ed teacher. At the end of the day, I’m the one that’s going to get the complaints made to me, or the praise, whatever it may be to whoever.

This comment revealed a glimpse of the perceived teacher hierarchies relating to GE versus ESOL teachers, although I found it to be more of an assessment of what Ms. Katz viewed as a building perception, rather than her own personal beliefs.
In discussing perceptions of teacher expertise, Ms. Elmont and Ms. Katz both shared that they seek each other out to build each other’s capacity through professional learning. Ms. Elmont said of her co-teachers, “I think they both do ask my opinion, which is good. Like at the beginning of the year, I had a meeting with both of them and I gave them some suggestions for when I’m not in the classroom what they can do.” As a GE teacher, Ms. Katz spoke of how she and Ms. Elmont “bounce ideas off each other and she adds her ENL expertise to tweak” their lessons. She went on to describe the benefit of having Ms. Elmont co-teaching in the integrated class with her, as it created the opportunity for Ms. Elmont to model strategies and let Ms. Katz “see her in action” to better understand how to support the ELLs in the class. Furthermore, Ms. Katz shared her openness to professional learning: “Just because I’ve been teaching kindergarten forever doesn’t mean I’m an expert at it or know everything about teaching kindergartners. I definitely don’t know everything about teaching ENL kindergartners.” She reflected, “Now that she pushes in, I can learn from her and see, ‘Oh okay. All right. This is how I should phrase it,’ or, ‘This is what I should do,’ or ‘That’s a great idea.’” Thinking back over their collaborative partnership, Ms. Katz acknowledged what she had learned from Ms. Elmont concerning instructional support for ELLs:

She’s taught me a lot in the past two years. She made me more aware; I’ve learned a lot from her...how to rephrase it to make them understand or the connections that she might make to get them to understand the concept or the vocab term or whatever it is has helped me. That’s how she’s helped me become a better teacher. I guess, definitely the questioning techniques and the way she phrases things for them, I definitely have learned that from her.
As far as how they identified themselves, Ms. Elmont described her realization of how her role had evolved and expanded through her experience as an integrated ENL co-teacher: “I’ve learned that I’m a teacher of all and I’ve also learned that I’m a math teacher now, too, which I never was. So, I do; I help all of them. I don’t just help the ELLs. I try to concentrate a little more on the ELLs. But again, you know, I work with all of them.” This description of her role had been evident when I observed Ms. Elmont co-teaching with Ms. Katz.

Expressing similar sentiments to Ms. Elmont’s response, Ms. Katz shared how she and Ms. Elmont respect each other’s titles. She recognizes Ms. Elmont as the “ENL expert,” and as such, “will totally respect her opinions and her advice and try to support English learners.” However, Ms. Katz also recognized her own evolving professional identity, commenting:

I do consider myself an ELL teacher. I find myself saying to people, ‘Oh, I co-teach now. I teach an ENL class.’ That’s what I say. I do consider myself that because she’s in the classroom for an hour, but I’m with them the rest of the day, so I still need to meet their needs when she’s not there. So in a way, I kind of do consider myself that. It’s really under her, but there are definitely things that I have to tweak for them throughout the day when she’s not around.

I found that the collaborative partnership between Ms. Elmont and Ms. Katz, while still evolving, reflected genuine growth and blending of professional expertise in support of ELLs and all students in their shared class, which related positively to each teacher’s professional identity and agency in the co-taught class.

**Professional Identity of Iselin Teachers.** With less than three months into their assigned co-teaching partnerships, Ms. Ellington and her two fourth-grade co-teachers were actively navigating their day-to-day interactions to establish each teacher’s positioning and professional
identity with regard to decision making, expertise, agency, division of labor, and responsibilities.

Ms. Fort described the division of labor in her co-teaching partnership with Ms. Ellington:

We decide together on the topic, the objectives, what we want to use. Then she can research on her own and say, ‘I came up with this idea, what do you think?’ I’m like, ‘That’s great, and I have these resources and books; I’ll pull that.’ So we’ve kind of been good about taking equal ownership of the actual lesson planning for that period.

Ms. Fort concluded her statement by noting her perception of Ms. Ellington’s role in class: “I think she’s getting much more considered an equal, the same as a support teacher.” Her assessment demonstrated Ms. Fort’s perception of a teacher hierarchy in which she clearly identified Ms. Ellington as having a subordinate position to that of a GE teacher. Ms. Ellington shared that in her co-taught class, “Ms. Finn does a great job of sharing the responsibilities, but you can see she has the content, and I am more of a support during that small, whole class instruction.” These were two clear examples of how Ms. Ellington was positioned both interactively and reflexively to a lower status in the co-taught class.

I found that Ms. Ellington often referred to herself as playing a supportive role, so I questioned her directly on how she identified her role in the co-taught class. As she had before, Ms. Ellington became emotional when describing how she perceived her colleagues defined her role:

In my own class that I’m in, I’m the teacher. But as the ESOL teacher, I think some people consider me support staff. I do think sometimes teachers think that support staff have it easy. So that is frustrating. Because I am a teacher. And I’m a classroom teacher. Whether I stand in front of the room, or to the side, or wherever you want me, I’m a
classroom teacher. So being that I was a classroom teacher, it feels very different to wear the label I have now. It’s a very different place to be. So I have to advocate for myself. I have to advocate for my students, whereas as a classroom teacher, you’re it. And you have, kind of, the power to do that from in front. And again, not in all classes.

In this way, Ms. Ellington expressed how she struggled with her professional identity at the classroom and school building levels. However, Ms. Ellington more easily defined her identity and role in relation to the district’s mission:

The district really has been trying to implement co-teaching and make it a priority. I think I’m essential to the mission. I know they’re really trying to support all the students in the school, in whatever way necessary to help them be successful. So I feel I can be that common ground, to help teachers understand that it’s okay to modify and change and we don’t always have to worry about the end result of the data and the testing. It’s all about the growth. And so I think I am, and people like me are essential to help the teachers see that and help the administration see that, and they’ve been very supportive of recognizing that we are important and that we’re here to help all the students learn and grow.

Ms. Ellington’s reflection demonstrated the challenge she faced in reconciling the conflicting perceptions of co-teaching, revealing the overlap with the theme of disconnect between the district’s vision and schools’ enactment of co-teaching. Ms. Ellington readily connected her professional identity with the district’s mission but still struggled with how her position and value were perceived at the building level: “I do wish classroom teachers could stand in my shoes for a little while and just really feel that it’s heavy; it’s a lot. It’s an important job.”
In light of this perceived subordinate positioning of the ESOL teacher in the co-taught class, I examined the co-teachers’ perceptions of their own and each other’s expertise. Ms. Ellington expanded on her previous response, sharing:

I am more of a support where I can then break down the content and help deliver it in a way that helps the students to be successful. I also find myself helping teachers to understand that we can take things out that aren’t necessary and find the things that are most important to teach within the content. So my job is to break it down for the students and sometimes for the teacher. They’re very receptive and respectful. And it’s a nice, easy conversation where our ideas are respected.

Both Ms. Fort and Ms. Finn described their expertise as needing to know the GE curriculum and grade-level expectations for fourth grade, in which they both had several years of experience. In describing her perception of Ms. Ellington’s expertise, Ms. Fort first shared that Ms. Ellington simply provided “just another person, another body in there to circulate, pull them, offer them a website that’s more their ability level. Explain it in different wording than I might use.” After giving it more thought, Ms. Fort shared:

They usually have training, so like if they’re an ENL specialist, they know more about how students with foreign-language backgrounds can pick up language and can pick up English. But they can come with that expertise and then say to me, ‘Listen, you may need to add pictures. You may need to add more context clues. You may need to slow down. You may need to repeat directions. You may need to do smaller groups.’

In responding to this same inquiry, Ms. Finn shared a different understanding, “She’s the expert in that area of ENL. I’m not the expert in that area. So together, I have the curriculum and she has this whole background of what an ENL child should be doing, and so together, it should
work.” She then described how she has often sought out Ms. Ellington’s advice about reading and writing because she considers her the expert in that area with ELLs, stating, “I said, ‘Ms. Ellington, what am I doing? Like help me out.’ And she sat with me and she showed me. And then I’ve watched Ms. Ellington work with ELLs within the classroom. It’s all about the language.”

Building each other’s capacity through shared expertise is a benefit of co-teaching. However, Ms. Ellington shared that she perceived this was not always viewed favorably:

I think it has to be okay for a teacher to ask for help and not to be looked down on because they forgot to do something or they’re not sure how to do something. I think it has to be less of a stigma and more of, ‘Yeah, I do need help. This is all new to me.’ I mean, I ask for help all the time because I don’t teach every single thing. I don’t teach all this content, I never have. So I find myself learning and I ask for help. I say, ‘I don’t know how to do this; can you please help me and show me? And I’ll show you how I would teach it.’”

The ways in which the three teachers described their perceptions of expertise related to their professional identities as co-teachers in the integrated ENL class. From Ms. Finn’s perspective, she viewed Ms. Ellington’s position as having the same status as the GE teacher: “She’s not a one on one. She’s a teacher. She’s as equal to me as anybody else, so teaching should be shared. But I trust her, which is good.” Ms. Ellington struggled more to define her professional identity as a co-teacher at Iselin Elementary.

In addition to sharing how they perceived their own and each other’s roles and professional identities, the three fourth-grade co-teachers discussed how they perceived students understood the roles of each of the teachers in the co-taught classroom. Ms. Finn spoke of the
direction she has given her students: “She’s their teacher. I tell them all the time, ‘Ms. Ellington is your teacher; even if we’re both in here, she’s your teacher.’ And I think they’ve adapted to that nicely. They’ll go to her with questions if we’re both in here; they’ll come to me with questions. It’s not like they’ll come to me first and then I’ll say, ‘Go speak to Ms. Ellington.’” In Ms. Fort’s class, she perceived, “Students have no idea that she is here for anything but a great time, to help when we have reading and writing time. I think when they get pulled for a reading pullout or a speech pull out, they know, ‘Oh, something’s different with me.’ But they think she’s here for everybody.” Comparing her experiences with her fourth- and sixth-grade co-teachers, Ms. Ellington reflected on how she believed students perceived her role:

I have worked very hard to not make students feel that I’m there just for them. I am support for all the students, and the fourth-grade teachers have done a great job of letting me do that and really welcomed me into their rooms. So in both the fourth-grade classes, the students see me as another teacher who comes to support them during reading and writing. So I love that they see me that way. In the sixth-grade class, I don’t know if the students can see that as well. And it can be frustrating. I would be curious to see what their response is as to what my role is in the room. So, I can’t really speak to that without asking them.

Her honest assessment of students’ perceptions of her role appeared to be an extension of her own perceptions of her professional identity and the roles she played in each co-taught class.

**Relationships of Students and Teachers**

Teachers’ perceptions of relationships served as a key sub-theme in understanding the complex dynamics of co-teaching and how teachers valued integrated ENL. However, the application of this theme was not limited to co-teachers alone. Rather, my understanding of co-
teaching involved an exploration of administrator and teacher perceptions of relationships at the following levels: administrator to administrator, administrators to teachers, administrators to parents, teachers to teachers, teachers to students, and students to students. Each of these varied relationships contributed to how co-teachers made sense of their roles within the co-taught classroom and within the culture and hierarchies of their schools and district. Applying this relational theme to co-teachers’ accounts of their interactions provided deeper understanding of their perceived professional identities within the context of the co-taught ENL class, which directly responds to the first research question. Overall, I found that all four of the GE teachers interviewed perceived that co-taught integrated ENL afforded ELLs increased opportunities for building community with their classmates and prevented them from missing out on classroom instruction with their peers. The two ESOL teachers agreed that students were better able to develop peer relationships in integrated settings. However, they perceived that they had better opportunities to develop teacher-student relationships in stand-alone settings compared to the integrated classroom.

The theme of relationships of students and teachers was also critical to understanding ESOL and GE teachers’ perceptions of ELLs’ experiences as they related to integrated ENL co-teaching, which aligns directly with the third research question guiding this study. The application of this sub-theme of relationships captured both shared and conflicting viewpoints when applied to academic and social aspects of ELLs’ experiences, as ESOL and GE teachers often had opposing perspectives on the advantages and disadvantages of each of the two instructional models. In this way, the theme added an additional dimension to understanding how teachers perceived and valued integration.
Relationships at Reemer. The co-teachers at Reemer perceived that student-to-student relationships were enhanced by integrated instruction. The incorporation of heterogeneous student groupings was a practice observed when Ms. Elmont co-taught with Ms. Katz, but not when she co-taught with Ms. Krisch. I found that heterogeneous groupings increased interactions between ELLs and English-proficient students, between the GE teacher and ELLs, and between the co-teachers who conferred more often during instruction. As a result, both the ESOL teacher and ELL students had increased engagement with the class community and were positioned with greater equity. Both GE teachers spoke of what they perceived to be greater opportunities for ELLs to interact with their peers. In this way, the two GE teachers agreed that integrated ENL co-teaching had been an improvement for ELLs’ social-emotional experiences by preventing ELLs from missing out on social interactions.

In regard to teacher-student relationships, Reemer co-teachers Ms. Katz, Ms. Elmont, and Ms. Krisch each identified the amount of time teachers spent in the classroom as a factor in how students related to teachers and perceived their roles. Optimistically, Ms. Elmont shared,

I think they see us both as the teacher. I mean, they do know that the classroom teacher is the classroom teacher only because they’re with them the whole day. But I think they just see me not as an assistant but as a teacher because they do ask for my help.

Ms. Krisch’s assessment aligned with her statements that she identified as the lead teacher but acknowledged that students recognized both teachers: “Since she’s not there the whole time, I do think they realize that I’m the teacher. Most of the time when we’re together, they’re looking for both of us. So it’s like they see us in an equal way.” Although Ms. Katz referred to time in the classroom, she also spoke of how student groupings influenced students’ perceptions.
These kids know I’m there all the time and Ms. Elmont’s only there half the time, but when she’s there, they go to her just as much as they come to me for whatever it may be, whether they are an ENL student or not. They treat her just like their teacher. The students don’t distinguish a difference. We rotate around so much, and none of the kindergarten students really know, ‘Well, she’s there just to teach those kids.’ Everybody considers her their teacher because when we break up to do groups, sometimes she’ll take only her students, but sometimes we mix it up if we have to work on something small group.

ESOL teacher Ms. Elmont perceived that integrated instruction impeded the development of student-teacher relationships with ELLs:

I’ll tell you my opinion with the whole integrated and stand-alone. I think they like that time when they were pulled out and they enjoyed that time with just me. From my point of view, I feel like they’re missing out on that. I feel like I had a better relationship with my ELLs when they came to me in a small group every day like that. I feel that some of them are missing out by me not having the individual time with them every day in a small group.

As she started to become emotional, Ms. Elmont described how the stand-alone ENL class provided more than just academic support for ELLs, because it provided ELLs with acceptance and nurturing that they did not always receive from their GE teachers. She expressed that she has been propelled to advocate for her students, who she believed often had negative social-emotional experiences in the GE class because of teacher frustration and lack of patience with ELLs’ language acquisition:
It’s just a different feeling in your heart for these ENL kids. I think that they can feel that when I walk in the room. It’s not really something specific. My biggest thing for my students is to feel wanted and loved and to know that we’ll just take our time but they will come out knowing the language. I’m starting to cry because I want my co-teachers to feel the same way, but I don’t know if they ever will have the same feeling as me. I think some of the teachers have come a long way, but I don’t think they’ll ever have the feeling that I do.

I found that Ms. Elmont’s response not only revealed her perceptions of ELLs’ experiences but also her own experience struggling to establish her professional identity in the co-taught class. I perceived that she, too, was missing out on the relationships and connections forged in her stand-alone class.

**Relationships at Iselin.** Relationships, personalities, communication, and trust were the most commonly mentioned attributes of the co-teachers’ collaborative partnerships among Iselin co-teachers. As Ms. Ellington offered, “Developing relationships can take time or it can be instant. That’s just human nature. You don’t even have to love each other; you do have to respect each other and find ways to work with each other. So it’s a challenge. But everybody’s human.” As she reflected further, Ms. Ellington added, “Some relationships go really well, and I think that’s very much based on personality and their teaching style. And if you have similar teaching styles or teaching philosophies, it tends to work really well, quicker.” Ms. Finn agreed that, in addition to having fun and laughing together, personality was key to initiating a collaborative relationship:

I thought it went easily at the beginning. I guess personality wise, we got along and that seems to help. I’m very easygoing in my classroom. Like whatever you need to do. Like I
say to parents all the time, everybody gets what they need. If he needs this, then he gets that. If she needs this, she gets that. It’s like I’m open to anything in here. Anything that’s going to work, anything that’s going to help the students; I’m all about that.

Ms. Fort shared a similar observation noting, “You want a true co-teaching model? Personality is everything. There are a lot of people I could never work with. You come in here with ‘I’m just going to sit back and just let me know when you want help.’ I don’t like that. Or you come in and say, ‘You can go sit down; I got it for the next 40 minutes.’ That’s not good either.”

The fourth-grade team of Ms. Ellington, Ms. Fort, and Ms. Finn each reiterated the importance of compatible personalities in making their partnerships successful. Co-teaching with Mr. Simmons at the sixth-grade level provided a different perspective, which Ms. Ellington shared:

Sixth grade is more challenging. For many reasons. So personality gets in the way. Sometimes teachers have their way and they can be very structured, so it’s hard for them to be off of that road. So my co-teacher has admitted that, and we are working on it and we’re trying new things, but it’s a slow process. So that’s a more difficult conversation, where sometimes it gets halted. And changes are not made, so that can be frustrating. Then the conversation ends, and unfortunately, it doesn’t usually pick back up. Or if it does, it ends up with the same result.

Ms. Finn also recognized that not all of Ms. Ellington’s co-teaching relationships had such an easy beginning. In acknowledging this, Ms. Finn revealed the relational trust she and Ms. Ellington had already established, as it was clear that Ms. Ellington regularly confided in her concerning the challenges she faced with other co-teachers. Ms. Finn recalled how she often comforted Ms. Ellington in this regard, stating:
I just feel bad because she’ll come in here from sixth grade and she’s like upset because she’s dealing with other aspects. I was like, ‘But, you’re here. Let’s be happy. You’re in here.’ She’ll say, ‘Can I just stay here?’ I’m like, ‘Let’s just stay in here.’ I know in here, at least she knows that she can just talk. Like I’m like, you just jump in, do whatever you need to do.

In considering the teacher-student relationships and experiences of ELLs in the co-taught integrated ENL class, Ms. Ellington shared, “I really, really love these kids and I want them to feel just healthy and happy and like they belong here.” Ms. Ellington also emphasized the importance of teacher education and training to be able to provide social-emotional support for the unique needs of ELLs. She stressed, “We have to make sure that future teachers embrace every student in their room and really show respect. And do what’s right for all the students in the classroom.” According to Ms. Ellington, not all of her integrated ENL classes provided this type of social-emotional support for ELLs, which has propelled her to advocate on behalf of her students:

I find myself advocating daily, mostly with my co-teachers. Not all of them. I think most of the time, it’s not an issue. But yes, I do have to advocate for many different reasons, and it could be student needs, work, it could be parent involvement, it could be strategies, teaching styles, but I do advocate every day.

She shared that advocacy had not been an easy task, but she considered it necessary to speak up for her ELLs. Reflecting on her co-teachers’ responses, she stated, “It’s not so well received with one and very well with the two others.”

For GE teachers Ms. Fort and Ms. Finn, who were new to co-teaching and new to teaching ELLs, they each reported that they were still discovering the ways in which students
developed relationships with teachers and peers in the co-taught integrated ENL class. Ms. Fort offered her assessment of students’ relationships with ESOL teacher Ms. Ellington, “She really doesn’t let the labeled ones know who they are. When she comes in, they’re like, ‘Oh, Ms. Ellington is here.’ And it’s very upbeat; it’s very positive. They almost can’t wait for that time to have her.”

Ms. Ellington expressed that she was concerned about ELLs’ teacher-student relationships in the GE classroom when she was not there to advocate and support them, “It’s really important for me to, for students to feel supported. And especially since you don’t speak English yet, it can be scary. So I’ve put in the extra time to really be there for them.” Ms. Ellington’s concern went beyond ensuring that ELLs were supported academically or linguistically, as she acknowledged the difficult lives and experiences many of her students had. She said the one of the greatest challenges was, “Your GE teacher needs to have empathy and love for ENL students. And it can be really frustrating as an ENL teacher, to walk in and have someone not understand or be frustrated with ENL students. So that is definitely a negative.” She expanded on her response, “I think it’s frustrating when some teachers aren’t fully welcoming the ENL students and assume things about students.” Ms. Ellington attributed such occurrences to some teachers’ lack of multicultural awareness, or even implicit bias against ELLs, which prevented them from supporting ELLs’ social-emotional needs.

However, Ms. Ellington also recognized positives, such as her ELLs seeking out her assistance to support their social-emotional needs, even when she was not in the class. She shared the stories of two specific entering proficiency level students in her co-taught sixth-grade class:
One student refused to do work in math class and was very sad and upset and told another student she didn’t want to be here. So I left the class I was in and I had a conversation with her and spoke to the teacher; together we spoke to her. And her whole attitude changed. And for her to have me there to advocate for her and help translate what the teacher was saying, to see the teacher’s body language and smile, really changed everything.

Similarly, Ms. Ellington recounted the experience of another entering-level sixth-grade student who was also struggling in Mr. Simmons’ class:

I have another student who really was very sad, sometimes would shut down, and the teacher perceived it as an attitude. So again, I stepped in; I made sure to have a conversation, and I brought the teacher in. Because for me to talk to the student and then go to the teacher and say, ‘Oh, she said, he said,’ is not the same as them seeing each other and hearing. It doesn’t matter if they’re speaking English or Spanish or Urdu. But they can feel their reaction. And that made a big difference.

Ms. Ellington expressed that in this respect, ELLs missed out on developing relationships with their GE teacher because she was seen as the one responsible for dealing with them, which then lessened ELLs’ engagement when Ms. Ellington was not in the class with them.

Although Ms. Ellington saw these entering-level students in a stand-alone setting in addition to the co-taught integrated ENL class, she still believed that it was the stand-alone time that enabled her to develop supportive relationships with them:

This year with my entering students in stand-alone, helping them acclimate to school as soon as they arrived…we just got to know each other and made a connection immediately, and that was seen as every week went by. So I feel very strongly that I’ve
made a positive impact on their life and transitioning to the United States. It’s very difficult. And they had difficult situations even at home. I’ve been privy to those conversations. They’ve shared things with me, and the relationships I built with the four new students have been phenomenal.

In Ms. Ellington’s opinion, both she and her students were missing out on further developing their relationships and enhancing their social-emotional experiences outside of the stand-alone ENL class.

**Disconnect Between District Vision and Schools’ Enactment of Co-Teaching**

The data in this study consistently revealed inconsistencies between the articulation of policies and expectations of co-teaching at the district level and the implementation of co-teaching at the school and classroom levels. One of the main discrepancies in the findings of this study was that the lack of policy-endorsed co-planning time contradicted the district’s mission and messaging in support of integrated instruction for the diverse population of learners. Co-teaching, as a policy-endorsed instructional model, relies on a subset of policies at the district and building levels to ensure its effective enactment. A prime example of this would be establishing formal collaborative structures, such as scheduled co-planning time for co-teachers. However, as revealed through administrator and teacher interviews, the stipulations of the Glen Village teacher contract required that teachers had scheduled free periods, which administrators could not require teachers to use for co-planning. This was found to be one of the primary impediments to the enactment of co-teaching. I also found that the language administrators used to articulate co-teaching often directly contradicted the district’s messaging and created inequitable positioning of ESOL teachers. Examining teachers’ perceptions of district and building-level policies such as this enabled me to interpret the theme of disconnect between
district vision and schools’ enactment of co-teaching. Furthermore, this examination illuminated how co-teachers made sense of executing their professional pedagogical responsibilities in the integrated ENL classroom.

**Disconnect at Reemer Elementary**

As stated earlier, the data revealed that a strong collaborative culture had been cultivated at Reemer Elementary. Despite this, the finding concerning the lack of policy-endorsed collaborative structures, such as common planning time for co-teachers, presented a tremendous obstacle to co-teachers in implementing the full cycle of co-teaching with fidelity. At Reemer, Ms. Krisch noted:

> My biggest issue would be our common planning time. It would be fabulous if we had a set time during the day or even after that we could have to co-plan. We have to sort of find the time to do it. And sometimes the three of us—myself, Ms. Katz, and Ms. Elmont—will find the time. But it gets harder and harder and there’s meetings all the time and stuff like that. So as a district, I find that sometimes we could use a little extra support with the planning and organization. You know, we do voice it to Ms. Kindell, but her hands are tied, too.

Despite Ms. Krisch’s perception of Ms. Kindell’s limitations, the Reemer co-teachers also recognized her influence on the ENL program, crediting her with the high level of support received from upper administrators such as from the district superintendent in enacting co-teaching in the integrated ENL program. Ms. Katz shared that “when she took over the role of the Director of ENL, it really, really changed. She’s helped open the eyes of the upper administrators as to what we might need.” Ms. Katz added that Ms. Kindell’s influence has improved the Glen Village district’s ENL program each year. She recognized the policy changes
and improvements Ms. Kindell has fought to make, stating that, “Having her come from the high school as the ENL teacher to now in kindergarten, she really sees both sides and is a good advocate to get what we need to support ELLs.” Expanding upon her assessment of Ms. Kindell’s impact on advancing awareness among upper administration, Ms. Katz stated:

I think the district needs to see that, like, ‘This is how it is. This is how it has to be. You have to have more ENL,’ because it’s not fair for the teacher or any of the students in the classroom. Considering our high ELL population in the Glen Village community and that new ELLs can come in at any grade, but especially being in kindergarten because it’s their first school experience, it’s fantastic to have her (Ms. Kindell) opening their eyes.

The district has been very good at doing whatever they need to let the students have the best academic experience they can have. That’s just an example of how I think every year, the district is opening their eyes more and more to the needs. The needs of the teachers and the students.

Although the district failed to establish collaborative structures to support the enactment of co-teaching, within the context of Reemer Elementary, the data suggested a strong alignment between the district’s messaging and co-teachers’ perceptions of the support they received for their co-teaching practices. Reflecting on the perceived administrative support at the school building level, changes to scheduling policies reflected just one way that Ms. Kindell supported co-teachers in the ENL program. All three co-teachers expressed what they perceived to be the benefits of having Ms. Kindell, not only as a building principal with knowledge of language acquisition and instruction but also as the Director of ENL supporting their integrated ENL program at Reemer. As Ms. Krisch commented, Ms. Kindell’s presence in the building gave the co-teachers greater access to her and “makes a huge difference for us here in this building
because she is the head of the ENL department. So any kind of assistance or support, we can always go to her with anything.” Ms. Kindell’s accessibility also cultivates teacher equity and agency.

**Disconnect at Iselin Elementary**

As I questioned the co-teachers at Iselin Elementary about their perceptions of the district-level versus school-level articulation and enactment of co-teaching in integrated ENL classes, the most apparent disconnect was found in the contradictory language and messaging the building administrator used to articulate the instruction of ELLs. At the classroom level, the enactment of co-teaching in Ms. Ellington’s partnerships with Mr. Simmons and Ms. Fort was challenged by Ms. Knightly’s lack of advocacy for integrated instruction as well as her lack of clarity in articulating the goals and expectations of co-taught instruction, which Fullan (1982, 2016) describes as key factors that may influence the implementation of educational change. Within the school, Ms. Knightly’s stance created a disconnect from the district’s mission and challenged teachers in making sense of their roles in supporting ELLs. It also influenced the home-school connection in communication with students’ families. During interviews, Ms. Fort, Ms. Finn, and Ms. Ellington each referenced Ms. Knightly’s messaging to teachers concerning how classes were or were not identified and how class placement was articulated to parents. They reported receiving a clear directive that “We don’t have ENL here.” Ms. Finn shared that she responded, “But we do because the ENL teacher is pushing in. That’s the ENL class. But she said, ‘No, but we’re not labeling them the ENL class.’” The administrator’s ambiguous language concerning the presence of co-taught integrated ENL classes impacted her support of the program and ultimately how GE teachers were able to dictate the subordinate role of the ENL teacher. Iselin teachers believed Ms. Knightly’s stance was a reaction to parents’ opposition to
the placement of English-proficient students in integrated ENL classes. Ms. Finn stated, “I think it’s for parents. I think that they don’t want to say, ‘Okay, this is our ENL class.’” According to Ms. Finn, the mindset expressed through this messaging resulted in inefficient class placement for ELLs. Rather than placing the small group of eight fourth-grade ELLs together in one class where the ENL co-teacher could then co-teach with one GE teacher for two periods, the ELLs were split between two classes, with the ESOL teacher co-teaching with two GE teachers for one period each. Ms. Finn believed this class placement served the purpose of creating smaller groups of ELLs in each class, which would be more acceptable to parents of English-proficient students. In addition to reflecting the nature of administrative support for integrated ENL, this relates to the theme of disconnect between the district vision and school enactment of co-taught integrated ENL instruction.

With regard to district initiatives, Ms. Ellington highlighted a positive action the district had taken with regard to professional development:

They do provide lots of PD for co-teaching, even ENL PD. So, every teacher is encouraged to do that, which helps me as an ENL teacher. So, they have an understanding of how to teach ENL: what does it mean to teach ENL students, what changes can they make to their teaching, because I’m not in every class. So the district does provide that PD and support for the whole district, which is good. I think that that could be done even more often. I think that would be really helpful, especially in the beginning of a co-teaching relationship.

As Ms. Ellington had noted, every district teacher was encouraged to take advantage of these professional development opportunities, but they were not required by either district- or
building-level administrators. In fact, of Ms. Ellington’s three co-teachers at Iselin, only Ms. Finn had attended professional development sessions on co-teaching integrated ENL.

In questioning further, the co-teachers unanimously identified their primary concern as the lack of co-planning time to adequately support collaborative co-teaching practices in the schools. As previously stated, this is a district-wide concern, as the Glen Village teacher contract provides teachers with free periods rather than planning periods. As Ms. Ellington observed, “It can be challenging at times, when starting a new unit or starting something new that I’ve never seen before and they’ve never seen before. So we do wish we had some more time.” Since co-teachers are expected to plan instruction collaboratively, time was the commodity they each agreed was needed for successful co-teaching to occur. Ms. Finn shared, “I could say, ‘I have a great idea. Let’s talk about it.’ When are we going to talk about it? A week from Thursday? There’s so much that we could really be doing together, but we don’t just have that time. I think that’s the biggest problem.” The issue of lack of time extended beyond co-planning, to co-instruction concerns, as Ms. Finn noted:

I wish we had more time to work together in the classroom. Because it’s like Ms. Ellington walks in and then she walks out. Like writer’s workshop is an hour, but she’s only here for 40 minutes. So I try to schedule it so she’s here at least for the mini lesson, but the last 20 minutes she’s gone. I wish we had more time because it’s to reach the needs of the students; you can’t just do it in 40 minutes.

Discussion arose once again concerning the district’s response to the shifting demographics of Glen Village. Ms. Finn and Ms. Fort, who had each taught in the district for extensive portions of their careers, shared the changes they have observed and those they believe are still needed. Ms. Finn stated:
I’m here 20 years, and when I started here, there was no good co-teaching. There was no ICT; there was no anything. And in the time that I’m here, it seems like they’re pushing towards the co-teaching model more and more. Which makes sense. I mean, why isolate children if they don’t have to be isolated? In the 20 years I’ve been here, the ENL population has grown substantially. It’s a completely different district from when I started here. I think that this district, in the way we’re moving with the population of students that are coming in here, we need more ENL support. I think that we should have an ENL teacher per grade or per two classes.

Ms. Ellington also recognized the district’s shift toward supporting the co-teaching model of instruction and expressed that the district was clear in articulating its expectations to the schools: “They really encourage us to co-teach. So I do think it’s expected; there are expectations there and they really encourage us to do that within the buildings. So I think the district really is trying to support us to help the co-teaching model succeed.”

At the same time, Ms. Ellington acknowledged the unresolved challenges of enacting co-teaching at the building level, which included building leaders’ careful selection of effective co-teachers and transparent communication with teachers and parents concerning the integrated ENL program. She also expressed uncertainty over the conflicting expectations concerning the models of co-teaching:

I know my administrator looks for a lot of small group and the teachers both teaching in separate groups. But I do think that she would respect to see that we’re co-teaching, both together, in front of the room, for short periods of time. So she hasn’t really been able to see that yet, just because of lack of time.
Ms. Ellington’s understanding was that Ms. Knightly only wished to see parallel teaching and not the team teaching that she described. While parallel teaching can be an effective co-teaching model for heterogeneous student groupings, Ms. Ellington’s understanding of Ms. Knightly’s direction was that she was expected to exclusively teach a separate small homogeneous group of ELLs while her co-teachers taught the English-proficient students. Again, this building-level enactment of co-teaching conflicted with the district-level vision of co-taught integrated ENL.

Upon reflecting further on the level of administrative support received at the school building level, Ms. Ellington perceived that both Ms. Knightly and her ENL director, Ms. Kindell, were aware of the challenges of trying to collaborate with three co-teachers without scheduled co-planning time. She stated that she anticipated Ms. Knightly would “be supportive as we try to make things better or make changes.” The hope that Ms. Ellington expressed concerning her administrators’ support was that they considered the challenges of co-teaching while assessing its effectiveness:

You also have to be realistic and know that co-teaching doesn’t happen easily. It takes a lot of work. Everyone is human; teachers are humans, so I think it’s important to provide support, and that could be by way of planning time, professional development, finding people who will help support those co-teachers, so that it is not all on their shoulders. Because it’s not something that can easily happen. So I think administrators need to keep that in mind and not think, ‘Oh, this isn’t working’ or ‘This person’s not doing their job.’

The most critical change Ms. Ellington hoped to see involved a proposal she and her fourth-grade co-teachers had made to Ms. Knightly requesting additional co-planning time, which she justified explaining, “We always say we would love a full day to just plan for the month. I think
that would make us feel much more prepared and successful as a team.” Thinking of the co-teaching expectations that have been articulated to her by Ms. Knightly, Ms. Ellington shared,

My principal wants to see me actively engaged, doing small group instruction; that’s been said many times. And I agree with that. I also think that as a teacher, I can also do some large group. So I do think, at times, she wants only small group instruction, so I want to make sure that she understands that sometimes I can deliver large group, 5, 10 minutes, depending on the lesson.

When asked what she would do to support co-teaching if she was an administrator, Ms. Ellington expressed:

Administrators should support co-teachers in trying to have respect for each other, respect for all the students in the room, and finding the best way to reach all the learners in that classroom together. So as an administrator, I would want to feel that when I walk in a room. And that can be seen by the way that students interact with both teachers and the way the teachers behave or teach within the classroom. And if that’s not there, as an administrator, I would hopefully find ways to help them get to that point.

I found that, despite expressing that they felt supported, the Iselin teachers perceived administrative support of ELLs and the ENL co-teaching program as lacking in regard to an understanding of supporting ELLs’ linguistic and academic needs. In particular, Ms. Finn posed an example of what she perceived to be an unfair comparison between the progress of her integrated ENL class and other non-ENL classes, stating, “We’ll get from administration, ‘One class is sending home this for homework and one class is sending home something completely different; how come she’s five lessons ahead of you in math?’” Ms. Finn also observed the reliance on assessments, such as the NYSESLAT score, for decision and policy making, rather
than actual student need, which may extend beyond a student achieving a commanding proficiency level on the exam. She noted, “I think sometimes administration thinks that, ‘Okay, they’ve passed that NYSESLAT or whatever; they’re done.’ But they’re not done. That’s just the test.” Ms. Fort shared another example of the type of administrative support she would like to see concerning Ms. Ellington’s inclusion in student progress monitoring data meetings, “I would like it if when they call me down for ISTs and meetings to make sure they’re always including her. They’re not always getting her coverage to come. So that I would like to see.” Excluding Ms. Ellington from such meetings concerning ELLs spoke to the storyline of the building administrator’s perception of the ENL program and marginalized the value she associated with including Ms. Ellington’s expertise at these meetings.

**Parents’ engagement as stakeholders in co-taught integrated ENL classes**

As with all district initiatives, the implementation of educational changes such as co-taught integrated ENL concerns all stakeholders in the district, including parents of both ELLs and English-proficient students. While policy concerning instructional initiatives may originate at the district level, the home-school relationship with students’ families is most prevalent at the building level. For this reason, the interactions and messaging between building administrators, teachers, and parents are critical to supporting such issues. In this section, I compare the parent engagement and messaging concerning co-taught integrated ENL at Reemer and Iselin.

**Parent Engagement at Reemer**

During my interview with Ms. Kindell at Reemer Elementary, she had spoken of outreach efforts to strengthen connections with parents and families of ELLs. She also described interactions with parents of English-proficient students who had voiced concerns regarding English-proficient students’ class placement in co-taught integrated ENL classes at Reemer
because of perceived barriers to communication and formation of social connections and friendships. As the building leader, Ms. Kindell explained that she defended such class placements primarily by acknowledging that all students were language learners but also recognized the need to appease parents’ concerns. None of the three co-teachers in integrated ENL classes reported direct communication with parents regarding this concern.

In discussing the issue of parent feedback with Reemer GE teacher Ms. Katz, she shared how parents typically learn of their child’s class placement, “They figure it out at back-to-school night when I introduce Ms. Elmont and say, ‘She comes in, she works with our students who are English language learners. She pushes in, but she really works with everybody.’” In her experience, Ms. Katz had not dealt directly with parents voicing concerns or requesting a change of class placement. She believed that parents recognized that classes reflected the demographics of the community, stating:

If you live in Glen Village, you know you live in a diverse community. So I hate to say it that way, but it shouldn’t be a shock that there’s a diverse class. The ENL class is a little different, but I just have never experienced anything. Parents came in with whatever they were thinking. I guess my opinion when they come in and see, that you wouldn’t even really know it is an ENL class. It just looks and runs like a regular kindergarten class, no matter who’s in the room.

Ms. Katz also shared that she makes sure that all correspondence sent home from her class reflects both her name and Ms. Elmont’s name to ensure that parents recognize Ms. Elmont’s role in the class.

*Parent Engagement at Iselin*
At Iselin, I found that throughout the teacher observations and interviews, a recurring statement made by the participating teachers referred to the administrative message that there was no ENL class at Iselin Elementary. GE and ESOL co-teachers perceived that building-level messages denying the existence of ENL classes were made in response to parents’ opposition to the placement of their English-proficient children in integrated ENL classes. Ms. Fort shared, “There was a parent last year who asked me at back-to-school night, ‘Why is my daughter in a class with all people who have this certain type of last name? Did you just put her in here because she has that last name? Because she’s not this.’” This created a conflict for Ms. Fort, as she stated, “Throughout the year, the parents saw what was happening and saw pictures, and it made me uncomfortable because I was kind of made to lie.” Although a similar concern had been revealed at Reemer Elementary, Ms. Kindell shared that she had addressed parents’ concerns directly by defending the benefits of co-taught instruction and by pointing out to parents that all students were developing their language skills.

In Ms. Knightly’s interview, she never referenced integrated ENL classes but rather only stated that the ESOL teacher co-taught in the classes that had ELLs. This semantic observation was reinforced by the statements made by teachers during their interviews, in which they shared that they were directly told that there were no ENL classes at Iselin. Instead, they reported that they had been instructed to tell parents there would be a teacher pushing in to the class for extra support but not to identify the teacher as an ESOL teacher. Ms. Fort stated, “It bothers me. And when parents went to the principal, the principal said, ‘No, we don’t have an ENL class. There’ll be a teacher that goes in, like a reading teacher or a math teacher to give some children extra support. But we don’t have that here.’” In response to these conflicting messages, Ms. Fort made the decision to address the situation in her own way, because she believed parents had the right
to know how the class was structured. She recalled, “This year at back-to-school night, I had Ms. Ellington come in and I introduced her, and I said, ‘This is Ms. Ellington, and she’ll be coming in one or two periods each day to give some support to students that need it, and we’ll co-teach together and come up with ideas together to make this the best class possible this year.’”

Although she had introduced Ms. Ellington, I asked if she was introduced as the ESOL teacher or as a support teacher, and Ms. Fort could not recall.

In light of the demographic shifts toward a more diverse community within the Glen Village district, and with more families reporting languages other than English spoken in the home, Ms. Finn and Ms. Fort suggested that most students would benefit from the support of the ESOL teacher. As Ms. Fort observed:

The population in the neighborhood has changed since I’m here, very quickly. I’m going to say almost every room is probably truly ENL whether the students are identified or not, because they go home to homes that only speak another language. So they really do need more in-class support and time to use English, because when they go home, they’re not using that. So I can’t figure out why they wouldn’t just say we have ENL.

After further reflection, Ms. Fort shared her perception of why she thought the enactment of co-teaching in integrated ENL classes had not been more clearly communicated to parents. Specifically, she suggested, “I think it’s very new to the district in the last three years. I think maybe they’re still trying to figure out—what’s the best way to make this work—because I don’t know if this co-teaching is the most successful way.” In offering this possible reason for not identifying integrated ENL classes to parents, Ms. Fort revealed her own doubts about the co-teaching model of instruction. I found that this was a more honest depiction than she had shared
previously during her interview and that it aligned with observational and discourse data examined during the study.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter, I presented the findings of my qualitative study of co-teachers in integrated ENL classes. I included an analysis of the co-teaching relationships, making comparisons between partnerships that were newly formed (less than one year) and continuing (more than two years), finding that the fidelity with which co-teachers implemented the collaborative instructional model phases of co-planning, co-teaching, co-assessment, and co-reflection was a greater determinant of the successful implementation than the duration of the partnership. The chapter was divided into three sections, each with a distinct focal point. Part One presented the findings based on an analysis of co-teacher interview and observation data in response to the research questions. Part Two of this chapter focused on co-teaching in the two schools included in this study: Reemer Elementary and Iselin Elementary. Finally, in Part Three, I presented a cross-case comparison of the findings in the two schools.

The findings of this study illuminated the contextual dynamic in which co-teachers strive to make sense of their positioning, roles, and identities in relation to co-taught integrated ENL classes. Specifically, the nesting of the class within the school within the district created layered cultures of collaboration in which co-teachers sought to enact their professional pedagogical responsibilities and agency. Within these layered contexts, co-teachers were challenged by co-teaching policies and messaging that were often characterized by inconsistencies at the district level versus the building level. For some ESOL teachers, these conflicting iterations of co-teaching along with subordinated interactive positioning by GE co-teachers often manifested as a loss of professional identity. Some ESOL teachers also perceived decreased stand-alone group
interactions with ELLs as cultivating negative social-emotional experiences for them. Additional findings related to social-emotional interactions originated from opposition to integrated ENL class placement by parents of English-proficient students, which also related to school messaging and enactment of ENL co-teaching.

In Chapter Six, the next and final chapter, conclusions drawn from these results discussed within Chapters Four and Five will be presented along with a discussion of implications for action and recommendations for further research related to the positioning of co-teachers in integrated ENL classes.
Chapter 6: Conclusion

“You have to be realistic and know that co-teaching doesn’t happen easily. It takes a lot of work...I think it’s important to provide support, and that could be by way of planning time, professional development, finding people who will help support those co-teachers, so that it is not all on their shoulders. Because it’s not something that can easily happen.”

~ Ms. Ellington

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to make sense of how elementary co-teachers perceived their roles, agency, and professional positioning within co-taught elementary integrated ENL classes. In this final chapter, I present a comprehensive overview of this study, including the problem and purpose statements, the research methodology and design, the research questions that guided the study, and important conclusions drawn from the data presented in Chapters Four and Five.

The discussion of the findings provide an explanation of how the findings build upon the conceptual framework of positioning theory (Davies & Harré, 1990) and Fullan’s (1982, 2016) educational change theory. Following this, I situate the findings in relation to the extant literature on the co-teaching model of instruction and examine the ways in which this study corresponds with, contradicts, and deepens the interpretations of the existing literature. I also identify unexpected outcomes from the study in this regard. Based on this study’s findings, I propose possible implications for decision making at the district and school building level regarding policy and practice concerning the implementation of co-teaching. I then identify the limitations of this study and offer potential topics for future research to further the understanding of teacher
roles within the co-teaching model of instruction. This is followed by concluding remarks to summarize and close the chapter.

**Summary of the Study**

In this dissertation study, I explored how teachers in collaborative partnerships across two schools in one suburban New York school district made sense of their roles and positioning as co-teachers in elementary integrated ENL classes. Chapter One investigated the problem of how co-teachers struggled with their positioning to achieve parity and to identify their own as well as each other’s professional identities and roles in the co-taught integrated ENL class. This study of this problem was grounded in the literature reviewed in Chapter Two on the co-teaching model of instruction, including its historical application in the realm of special education, and its more recent emergence in support of English-language learners, as well as the extant literature on teacher perceptions and attitudes about ENL instruction. In Chapter Three, I described how I designed and conducted a qualitative case study involving two schools within the same school district: one in which co-teaching partnerships had been newly formed within the two months prior to the commencement of the study and one in which the co-teaching partnerships had been sustained over more than two years. The methodology and design of the study incorporated the conceptual framework of positioning theory (Davies & Harré, 1990) and Fullan’s (1982, 2016) educational change theory. This study considered teachers’ perceptions of administrative support and articulation of the expectations and enactment of co-teaching, as well as how the implementation of co-teaching related to the collaborative culture existing at both the building and district levels. In the next sections, I reiterate the problem, purpose, methodology, and findings of this dissertation study.

**Problem**
In New York State, the 2015-2016 school year marked an instructional paradigm shift in support of ELLs, in accordance with the implementation of amendments to Commissioner’s Regulation Part 154. Among the principal changes enacted through these amendments were the instructional delivery models offered for ELLs, which included integrated ENL instruction through co-teaching partnerships (Carnock, 2016). These co-teaching partnerships comprise an ESOL-certified teacher and a GE or content-area certified teacher collaboratively delivering content and language instruction to a shared group of learners, including both ELLs and non-ELL students.

As Carnock (2016) noted, the district-level implementation of ELL program models, including co-taught integrated ENL, is a critical component to its success as a vehicle for the state-prescribed instructional mandates. However, the enactment of co-taught integrated ENL instruction may be influenced by several factors, including inadequate definition of teacher roles and program expectations (Carnock, 2016; McClure & Cahnmann-Taylor, 2010) and the district and school culture of collaboration and instructional inclusivity (Brown & Stairs, 2012). In regard to these factors, the extant literature pointed to the historical marginalization of ESOL teachers and suggested that the integrated co-teaching approach in ENL classes may continue to reinforce this subordinate positioning among partnered teachers (Creese, 2002; Fogel & Moser, 2017; Lee, 2012; Liggett, 2010; Penfield, 1987).

Achieving parity in co-teacher roles, responsibilities, and agency, as Kayi-Aydar (2019) asserted, is often adversely influenced by inequitable positioning, resulting in restrictions to a teacher’s “ability, capacity, or intentional effort to make choices” (p. 88) in support of student learning, which was found in three of the five participating co-teaching partnerships. For this reason, this dissertation sought to examine and compare the messaging and culture of co-taught
integrated ENL within the contexts of the district, the two school buildings, and the five classrooms involved in the study, as well as the underlying causes of discrepancies between them.

**Methodology and Research Questions**

This dissertation study incorporated the methodology of an inquiry-based research design that embraced a constructivist worldview, which was presented in detail within Chapter Three. To implement this design, I conducted class observations of five elementary-level integrated ENL co-teaching partnerships (two partnerships in one school building and three partnerships in another school) and in-depth, semi-structured interviews with two ESOL teachers and four GE teachers. The semi-structured interviews enriched the data derived from classroom observations and illuminated consistencies and inconsistencies between co-teachers’ perceptions and actions. To triangulate the data collected through teacher observations and interviews, I also conducted interviews with the two building administrators, one of whom is also the district ENL coordinator, and communicated at length with the district superintendent.

The data collection for this study spanned from October 2019 to June 2020, and included an in-depth examination of archival records such as school board presentations and meeting minutes; the district’s shared decision-making plan; electronic communications (texts and emails) with participants; district website main pages and school building pages; and social media text such as posts on district and teacher Twitter accounts. Reviewing these records enabled me to “obtain the language and words of participants,” (Creswell & Creswell, 2009, p. 188), allowing me to triangulate and validate the statements made during interviews by the administrators and teachers. Transcribing and coding of interviews, meeting notes, and observational data occurred from November 2019 to September 2020. Member-checking was
conducted by inviting participants to review and provide feedback on transcriptions. The transcripts were reviewed by the researcher multiple times throughout the data coding and analysis phases to ensure consistency between the data and identified themes. The themes emerging from the transcription and coding phase were then analyzed to determine the major findings in response to the following research questions:

1. What is the relationship between observations of parity and hierarchies in the co-taught classroom and the ways in which GE and ESOL co-teachers make sense of their roles?
   a. How are co-teachers’ understandings of their roles reflective of the discourse and interactions within their collaborative partnership?
   b. What relationship, if any, is there between the length of a co-teaching partnership and ESOL and GE teachers’ perceptions of their roles?

2. What do co-teachers report as perceived successes and challenges in defining and implementing the collaborative instructional model, given the broader context of the culture and policy of the school or district?

3. In what ways, if any, do GE and ESOL teachers believe co-taught ENL instruction impacts ELLs’ experiences and relationships as compared to stand-alone instruction?

   In the next section, I discuss in greater detail the findings in relation to these research questions, which include the following:
   
   (a) ESOL teachers’ perceptions of their professional identities were conflicted by a dissonance between their beliefs that they were equals in the co-taught classroom and the observed discourse and interactions that placed them in a subordinate position to the GE teacher.
   
   (b) Shared teaching dispositions and the fidelity with which co-teachers implemented the full collaborative instructional cycle, cultivated parity in partnerships, and were a stronger
determinant of their success as an educational change than the length of the co-teaching partnership.

(c) ESOL teachers’ involvement in curriculum writing at the district level created a discourse of expertise and positioned them with parity among their GE and content area colleagues.

(d) The collaborative culture at both schools was compromised by the lack of policy-endorsed co-planning time, which marginalized the ESOL co-teachers’ role in integrated instruction.

(e) The ambiguity of administrators’ messaging to teachers and parents concerning the presence of ENL classes devalued integration, challenged GE and ESOL teachers to make sense of their roles in supporting ELLs, and contributed to an inequitable teacher hierarchy in which GE teachers were able to dictate the subordinate role of the ESOL teacher.

(f) Co-taught integrated instruction increased opportunities for ELLs to cultivate a sense of community and relationships with peers, but ESOL teachers perceived that it decreased ELLs’ opportunities for building teacher-student relationships and language development in the low-risk environment of stand-alone classes.

Discussion of the Findings

Roberts (2010) emphasized the importance of reflecting on the findings of a dissertation study to “put it in perspective and gain deeper insights” (p. 177) as to interpreting the implications of the research. As such, I have spent a great deal of time reviewing, analyzing, and reflecting on the findings of the data to garner an understanding of the complexity of co-teaching relationships, and how the teachers in these partnerships made sense of their roles, positioning, and agency in supporting ELLs in integrated ENL classes. In this section, I provide a discussion of the findings in relation to each of the research questions stated above.

Professional Identity
As suggested in the existing literature, an inadequate definition of teacher roles and program expectations (Carnock, 2016; McClure & Cahnmann-Taylor, 2010) often results in uncertain professional identities and positioning of co-teachers. I found that within integrated ENL classes, ESOL teachers who lacked parity with their GE co-teachers attributed co-teaching with a loss of their professional identity, as their language acquisition expertise and experience were underutilized in comparison to the stand-alone ENL class. ESOL co-teachers were often interactively positioned by their colleagues as support staff, based on the school culture and perceptions of both building administrators and GE co-teachers, which often lacked recognition of the language acquisition and linguistic expertise of the ESOL teacher. In fact, Iselin’s administrator Ms. Knightly identified ESOL teachers as “reading and writing support teachers,” without acknowledging the distinct certified area of pedagogical expertise possessed by the ESOL teacher.

In regard to the first research question, the observational data in this study supported the disparity in agency and parity between GE and ESOL co-teachers as evidenced by their interactions and discourse in the integrated classroom. In three of the five partnerships observed, GE teachers Ms. Krisch, Ms. Fort, and Mr. Simmons positioned the ESOL teacher as an assistant through their actions and discourse. The extant literature pointed to the historical marginalization of ESOL teachers and suggested that the integrated co-teaching approach in ENL classes may continue to reinforce this subordinate positioning among partnered teachers (Creese, 2002; Fogel & Moser, 2017; Lee, 2012; Liggett, 2010; Penfield, 1987). While the nature of discursive and interactive positioning ranged from subtle to blatant, specific examples included Ms. Fort asking students to thank Ms. Ellington for her assistance in the classroom; Ms. Krisch and Mr. Simmons not giving a designated work space in the classroom to ESOL teachers Ms. Elmont and Ms.
Ellington, respectively; and Mr. Simmons and Ms. Fort telling ESOL teacher Ms. Ellington what to do when she arrived in the classroom, which demonstrated that they were not co-planning together prior to instruction.

I found the opposite to be true in the remaining two partnerships. The collaborative relationships between Reemer co-teachers Ms. Elmont and Ms. Katz, and Iselin co-teachers Ms. Ellington and Ms. Finn, were marked by parity and equitable positioning. The distinction in these two partnerships that set them apart from the others was a greater level of communication both inside and outside the classroom. Co-planning was evident in the observed instruction, as was co-reflection and co-assessment during instruction. Adhering to the full co-teaching cycle of instruction capitalized on the expertise of each teacher and validated their professional identities.

The interview data contradicted the observational data. All four of the GE teachers interviewed expressed their perceptions that ESOL teachers were positioned with parity in the co-taught class. ESOL teachers, on the other hand, evidenced cognitive dissonance in expressing perceptions of their professional identities and positioning that conflicted with their observed actions as co-teachers. During interviews, ESOL teachers shared that they perceived themselves as equals in the co-taught classroom and recounted their past teaching experiences, credentials, or training to reflexively position themselves with greater agency than they were typically observed enacting in the co-taught classes. However, ESOL teachers also presented a conflicting perception of themselves as serving a subordinated or supportive role in three of the five integrated GE classrooms, reflecting a perceived teacher hierarchy. In the two classes where ESOL teachers were observed to act with greater parity and agency, they were more confident in their instructional roles and did not express feeling that their professional identities were lost.

Successes and Challenges
The second research question explored co-teachers’ perceptions of the successes and challenges of the implementation of co-teaching. One of the greatest challenges in defining and implementing the co-teaching model of collaborative instruction was the lack of common planning time. The district’s vision of enacting co-teaching practices was not supported in the provisions of teacher contracts, as demonstrated by the absence of collaborative structures to support co-planning, a critical phase of the co-teaching instructional cycle. Although ESOL teachers perceived their roles as critical to the district’s vision of collaborative practices in support of ELLs, this omission of scheduled co-planning contributed to the marginalization of the role of ESOL co-teachers in integrated instruction, as planning often occurred unilaterally by the GE teacher.

In the successful collaborative partnerships between ESOL teacher Ms. Elmont and GE teacher Ms. Katz, as well as between ESOL teacher Ms. Ellington and GE teacher Ms. Finn, the co-teachers expressed greater perceived parity, which was supported by observational data. These partnerships, representing two out of the five observed, were characterized by inclusive discourse and interactions, relational trust, and shared teaching dispositions. ESOL and GE co-teachers acted with greater agency and sought out each other’s expertise for professional learning and building each other’s capacity in supporting the community of students as a whole, as opposed to segregated groups of ELLs and English-proficient students consistently working with separate teachers. Furthermore, within these collaborative partnerships, ESOL teachers did not express feeling a loss of their professional identities. This collaborative culture extended to students, as co-teachers with greater perceived parity and equity in the class frequently interacted with heterogeneous student groupings comprising both ELLs and English-proficient students.
This afforded ELLs increased opportunities to interact with their native-English speaking peers as well as have greater access to the mainstream curriculum.

In consideration of the third research question, both ENL and GE co-teachers attributed the benefits of small group instruction, as well as the increased ability to differentiate for and support individualized student needs, to the success of the co-taught instructional model. However, GE teachers Ms. Krisch and Ms. Fort often acknowledged this benefit by referring to the ESOL teacher as an “extra set of hands.” This reflected the challenges of a perceived teacher hierarchy, the marginalization of ESOL teacher expertise, and positioning ESOL teachers as serving in a supportive role.

From a relationship perspective, ESOL and GE teachers expressed different points of view on how the shift to integrated ENL instruction had impacted ELLs’ experiences. ESOL teachers expressed a loss of teacher-student relationships, which they perceived were afforded through stand-alone instructional time. They also perceived that the shift to integrated instruction resulted in a loss of ELLs’ opportunities and willingness to take linguistic risks in the safety of the stand-alone class. While the ESOL teachers identified these perceived challenges concerning what ELLs were missing out on during integrated ENL, GE teachers identified a success, focusing on what ELLs no longer missed out on, as they were now “pulled out” of the class with less frequency. In this respect, GE teachers perceived that the co-taught integrated ENL model afforded ELLs increased opportunities for building community with their classmates and prevented them from missing out on engaging in classroom instruction with their peers.

Another success was realized in relation to Fullan’s (1982) theory of educational change, addressing the first research question comparing newly formed co-teaching partnerships with less than a year in duration to sustained co-teaching partnerships with greater than two years in
duration. The data did support Fullan’s notion that the implementation of change occurred in developmental phases. However, the findings also revealed that the successful enactment of co-teaching was not merely achieved in relation to the duration of a partnership. Indeed, the data expanded upon Fullan’s theory, demonstrating that one successful co-teaching partnership was developed in a very short span of three months. This successful collaborative partnership between Ms. Ellington and Ms. Finn at Iselin was achieved because of their shared teaching philosophies and dispositions, a high level of communication, and a commitment on the part of both co-teachers to implement the full co-teaching cycle of instruction with fidelity, including co-planning, co-teaching, co-assessment, and co-reflection. These were the same attributes observed in the successful sustained partnership between Ms. Elmont and Ms. Katz at Reemer, demonstrating that the quality and nature of the implementation of an educational change was a stronger determinant of its success than time.

A challenge identified by co-teachers was inadequate professional development and preparation for co-taught integrated instruction. While district-provided content and program-specific professional development positioned ESOL co-teachers with increased curricular knowledge and confidence in the integrated ENL class, co-teachers were not provided adequate professional development in the co-teaching models of collaborative instruction prior to enacting their co-teaching practices in the integrated ENL class. Co-teachers in the newly established partnerships at Iselin recognized a need for support with the various co-teaching models of instruction. Reemer co-teachers in established partnerships believed they had achieved successful levels of co-teaching but identified a need for additional training for ESOL teachers to build their capacity in content area instruction and for GE teachers to build their capacity in scaffolding and supporting ELLs’ language acquisition.
Administrator Messaging to Teachers and Parents

An additional challenge to the implementation of the collaborative model of instruction was the product of conflicting messaging at the district and school building levels. Administrators’ internal and external messaging concerning the expectations, preparation, and enactment of the co-teaching instructional model in integrated ENL classes contributed to uncertainty regarding the district and school culture of collaboration and instructional inclusivity (Brown & Stairs, 2012). While Ms. Kindell’s messaging to teachers and parents at Reemer aligned with the district’s mission of empowering a diverse population of students through inclusive, collaborative instruction, this was not the case at Iselin. Ms. Knightly’s language challenged co-teachers to achieve parity at the classroom level. I found that the enactment of co-teaching at Iselin aligned more closely with the administrative vision, context, and culture at the school building level, independent of the expectations articulated by the district’s central administration and director of ENL. At Iselin, administrator messages such as “We don’t have ENL classes here” challenged both GE and ESOL teachers to make sense of their roles in supporting ELLs and contributed to an inequitable teacher hierarchy and school culture. The ambiguity of Ms. Knightly’s language surrounding the presence of co-taught integrated ENL classes with both teachers and parents impacted her support of the program and ultimately how GE teachers were able to dictate the subordinate role of the ESOL teacher.

Co-teachers associated conflicting building-level messages and representation of integrated ENL classes—namely, denying the existence of ENL classes—with parents’ opposition to placement of their non-ELL children in these classes. This perception of parents’ opposition is supported by recent research that suggests that “ELs’ educational experiences are also largely influenced by societal attitudes toward immigrants” (Callahan, Gautsch, Hopkins, &
Unda, 2020), which are characterized by a prevalent anti-immigrant sentiment. The administrator’s messaging identified the influential role of parents as stakeholders in the enactment of co-taught integrated ENL classes at the school building level.

**Contributions to Theory**

The findings of this study were also considered in relation to the primary framework provided through the conceptual constructs of positioning theory (Harré & Davies, 1990), which were utilized to understand the dynamic nature of storylines, discourse, and interactions between individuals in making sense of co-teacher roles, parity, and agency. To a lesser extent, Fullan’s (1982, 2016) theory of educational change was also applied to understand the continuum in which educational change, such as the implementation of co-teaching as an instructional model, occurs developmentally in distinct phases and to analyze how the duration of co-teaching partnerships related to teacher positioning. Within the following sections, I provide an overview of these theories and explain the ways in which they were utilized to make sense of the data and identify the findings and implications of this research.

**Positioning Theory**

The tenets of positioning theory, which provide insight to examining co-teachers’ perceptions of their roles, were well supported by the findings of this study. Applying this theoretical framework helped define the implications of this research. As Yoon (2008) observed, “Whatever the positions teachers take, that positioning guides them in their interactive approaches with students in class settings” (p. 499). The dynamic nature of positioning (Davies & Harré, 1990) was illuminated by the selection of participants, which allowed me to observe one ESOL teacher in each of the participating school buildings interacting in multiple co-teaching partnerships.
With regard to the first research question, the interview and observational data revealed that co-teacher positioning is discursively constructed through conversations and interactions occurring between each co-teacher and their partner, their building colleagues, and their administrators. GE and ESOL co-teachers made sense of their roles based on these discourses, which were dynamic and context specific. From one classroom to the next, the observational data of discourse and interactions revealed the continuous negotiation of each teacher’s roles, rights, and duties in the co-taught class. Ms. Elmont, who co-taught with Ms. Katz at Reemer Elementary for more than two years, and with Ms. Krisch for more than four years, reconstructed her role in each of these contexts (Harré & van Langenhove, 1999). Aligned with Davies’ (2000) assertion of the powerful link between positioning and agency, Ms. Elmont enacted greater agency when co-teaching with Ms. Katz, where she was observed to be more equitably positioned in planning for, delivering, and supporting instruction for all students. Upon reflecting on her positioning in the two GE teacher’s classes, Ms. Elmont reported that while she did not perceive her role to be “lesser in one, it may be greater in one.” Indeed, in Ms. Katz’s GE class, Ms. Elmont was observed to have a greater role in instruction, decision making, assessment, and interaction with all students, not just ELLs. By comparison, Ms. Elmont’s role in Ms. Krisch’s GE class was restricted to working with a small group of ELLs, not engaging in the instruction or support of non-ELLs. This supports Hornberger’s (2006) assertion that co-teacher roles may be expanded or restricted in relation to the positioning hierarchy and negotiation that exists within classes, based on the perceived status, expertise, and esteem held by GE and ESOL teachers (Harré, Moghaddam, Cairnie, Rothbart, & Sabat, 2009).

Ms. Elmont’s varying levels of agency, as observed in the greater role she assumed in Ms. Katz’s class, also demonstrated Kayi-Aydar’s (2019) depiction of the relationship between
positioning and agency, in which agency was described as the ability and capacity a teacher has to make choices and decisions regarding their teaching practices. The discourse between Ms. Elmont and Ms. Katz while co-teaching evidenced Ms. Elmont’s decision making during instruction and also referenced her contributions during co-planning prior to instruction. Conversely, GE teacher Ms. Krisch had the power to dictate Ms. Elmont’s role and position in the classroom, and Ms. Elmont did not appear to have the agency to change this dynamic.

Similar evidence of positioning was observed in fledgling co-teaching relationships. Ms. Ellington’s collaborative partnerships with Ms. Finn, Ms. Fort, and Mr. Simmons represented the inclusion of newly implemented co-teacher pairings. I found that interviews and observations of these new co-teaching partners supported the notion of pre-positioning based on implicit or explicit presuppositions (Harré et al., 2009). For example, GE teachers Ms. Finn and Ms. Fort both described their apprehensions about their assignment to implement the co-teaching model of instruction and more specifically their presuppositions about having an ENL co-teacher. Their perceptions of the ESOL teacher Ms. Ellington were constructed without awareness of her experience or expertise in language acquisition and therefore pre-positioned her prior to the occurrence of actual interactions or discourse.

I found that this marginalized pre-positioning was further cultivated by the manner in which integrated ENL co-teaching was articulated by the building administrator at Iselin, in which teachers did not choose but were assigned to be co-teachers. As such, a storyline was cultivated that positioned ESOL teachers as support staff. This was most apparent in observational data of the interactions between Ms. Ellington and Mr. Simmons. Planning and instruction were observed to be unilateral, with Mr. Simmons leading the class while Ms. Ellington’s role was restricted to working with a small group of ELLs; in effect, an in-class pull-
out group. It also contributed to the perceptions that GE teachers held concerning the role of ESOL teachers, particularly in making sense of reported administrator statements identifying the ESOL teacher as a “reading or writing support teacher,” or asserting that “we don’t have ENL here.”

Although ESOL teacher Ms. Ellington reported that building-level colleagues sought out her expertise for supporting ELLs in their classes, she also shared that she did not have formal opportunities to contribute to building the professional capacity of other teachers. Harré and van Langenhove (1999) theorized that if an ESOL teacher is perceived by an administrator or a GE co-teacher as possessing expertise in language development and instruction, it may elevate the ESOL teacher’s positioning and create opportunities for shared professional learning among co-teachers and other school community members.

Despite this pre-positioning, the dynamic nature of positioning and the possibility of repositioning through subsequent interactions (Davies & Harré, 1990) were also evident, particularly in the collaborative partnership between Ms. Ellington and Ms. Finn. The interactions and discourse between these co-teachers revealed that within just a few months of implementing their partnership, they had developed relational trust in each other’s expertise and teaching philosophies resulting in co-teacher parity, shared responsibilities, and equitable enactment of teacher agency. In turn, ELLs in this class were also equitably positioned with greater opportunities for interaction in heterogeneous student groupings. This aligned with the work of McGriff and Protacio (2015), who asserted that the “positioning moves of each school’s ESL teacher and her content area colleagues impacted ELLs’ access to rigorous content area instruction” (p. 22), thereby making teacher positioning a critical element in student outcomes.
Another critical aspect of positioning theory supported by the findings of this study concerned the perceptions held by GE teachers regarding their role in supporting the academic and linguistic needs of ELLs. Yoon (2008) asserted that GE teachers may position themselves as teachers of all students, or as teachers of *regular* students, thereby impacting the “possibilities for ELL students’ learning” (p. 504) within the GE class. Discursive data collected through observational and interview interactions revealed that GE teachers often perceived that the ESOL teacher was “here for those students.” During observations of co-taught classes, there were equal instances of integrated instruction for heterogeneous groups of students interacting with both the GE and ESOL teacher, as there were instances of segregated homogeneous student grouping in which little interaction was observed between the GE teacher and ELLs, or between the GE and ESOL teachers. In the segregated homogeneous groupings, ELLs had limited opportunities to interact with their native English-speaking peers and to access fully integrated instruction.

**Fullan’s Educational Change Theory**

While the findings of this study supported many aspects of Fullan’s (1982, 2016) multi-faceted theory of educational change, I found that within each of the two school contexts, there were co-teaching partnerships that either aligned with or expanded upon his suggested timeline for the implementation phases of educational change. In his research, Fullan (2001) suggested that “effective change takes time” (p. 109) and that there will be a phase of implementation and development within the first two to three years of initiating an educational change, potentially leading up to the routinization or institutionalization of the change (Fullan, 2016). Glen Village’s district-wide policy to enact co-teaching as an instructional model to support ELLs had been initiated in 2015. However, the implementation of this policy was realized through each of the
individual co-teaching partnerships established since 2015, and therefore, each partnership was at a different phase of implementation.

Guided by this implementation time frame aspect of Fullan’s (2016) research on educational change, I intentionally selected participant teachers representing three newly formed co-teaching partnerships at Iselin and two sustained partnerships at Reemer, acknowledging that co-teaching relationships may evolve throughout extended partnerships. This selection created the opportunity to examine partnerships at different points in their implementation in relation to Fullan’s (1982) assertion that implementation occurs in developmental phases, which may include changes in curriculum and classroom behaviors such as “new skills and teaching behaviors in relation to the change, and alterations in beliefs, theories or assumptions associated with the change” (p. 7). According to Fullan, implementing these changes may extend beyond two years, as described in the following sections.

Ms. Ellington was the ESOL teacher newly assigned to co-teaching partnerships with Ms. Finn, Ms. Fort, and Mr. Simmons. Ms. Fort and Ms. Finn had each expressed their initial apprehension about changing their instructional practices to include a co-teacher and acknowledged they were still actively figuring things out. The co-teachers in these newly established relationships often made reference to how they anticipated things would be much easier in subsequent years when they would be able to draw upon their current experiences.

In analyzing the interview and observational data, each of the three new partnerships at Iselin appeared to be progressing through the initial implementation phase at a different pace. The enactment of co-teaching in Ms. Ellington’s partnerships with Mr. Simmons and Ms. Fort was challenged by Ms. Knightly’s lack of advocacy for co-taught integrated instruction as well as her lack of clarity in articulating the goals and expectations of co-taught instruction, which
Fullan (1982, 2016) described as key factors that may influence the implementation of educational change. However, the partnership between Ms. Ellington and Ms. Finn, while only two months into its existence, demonstrated both a high level of relational trust and a commitment on the part of both teachers to implement the full collaborative cycle of instruction with fidelity. Their collaborative approach to implementing co-teaching cultivated equity in teacher agency, clarity in roles and responsibilities, and parity between the two teachers. For these reasons, I found that the development of this collaborative partnership surpassed that of the other two new Iselin partnerships, which were still at earlier and perhaps more typical stages of adapting their mindsets and practices (Fullan, 1982). Furthermore, the successful enactment of co-teaching between Ms. Ellington and Ms. Finn added a new dimension to Fullan’s theory, focusing on the nature and quality of the implementation of change as a critical aspect of its progression toward routinization.

Co-teachers in established partnerships at Reemer included ESOL teacher Ms. Elmont and her two GE co-teachers Ms. Katz and Ms. Krisch. These three teachers also spoke of the initial challenges and concerns about initiating the change in their instructional practices to implement the co-teaching model. However, when reflecting upon the evolution and development of their collaborative partnerships over time, each described the advantages of their sustained pairings that include knowledge of each other’s expertise and familiarity with curriculum and classroom routines, which increased their ability to co-plan more efficiently in limited time. Ms. Elmont attributed her professional growth to her classroom experiences co-teaching with Ms. Katz for more than two years and with Ms. Krisch for more than four years. Similarly, Ms. Katz and Ms. Krisch reported how Ms. Elmont had built their capacity in supporting ELLs, and for this reason, each perceived that their own instructional practices had
been enhanced through their extended co-teaching experiences. This supports Fullan’s assertion that implementing change requires conditions that create “capacity building and problem-solving opportunities,” and allow individuals to “form their own position, to interact with other implementers, to obtain assistance” while developing those new capacities (Fullan, 2016, p. 90).

Despite this perceived professional growth, not all of the sustained co-teaching partnerships at Reemer were observed to be progressing toward successful routinization. In particular, the fifth-year co-teaching partnership between Ms. Elmont and Ms. Krisch was not observed to have realized the implementation outcomes Fullan theorized were typically achieved within two to three years of an initiated educational change. As described by Fullan (1982), implementation outcomes involve the “changes in what people do and think in relation to their educational practices” and are evident in how they implement “new resources, new teaching approaches, and in...altering one’s beliefs and educational theories” (p. 8). This would imply that within two to three years of the enactment of co-teaching practice, partnered teachers would have achieved the parity and equity in agency intended by the co-teaching model. However, that was not observed to be true of this partnership, in which Ms. Elmont’s role as the ESOL teacher was consistently subordinated by GE teacher Ms. Krisch. This again demonstrates how the quality and nature of the implementation of educational change is a critical factor in determining its effectiveness.

**Consideration of Findings in View of the Existing Research**

In this section, I identify the contributions of this study to the existing literature on co-teacher positioning in integrated ENL classes. Chapter Two of this dissertation report provided a review of the literature used to identify the context of the problem studied herein, as well as the gaps that highlighted a need for additional research. In particular, there was a deficit of
information in the existing literature concerning how teacher positioning related to the negotiation of professional identities, interactions, and agency in classes supporting language learners.

**Professional Relationships and Teaching Philosophies**

The findings of this study highlighted the importance of teacher relationships in cultivating a collaborative partnership. This builds upon the findings of Bell and Baecher (2012), who also advised that teacher personalities and dispositions toward collaborating influenced the effectiveness of co-taught instruction. Co-teachers in this study reported that their relationships, whether newly formed or sustained over multiple years, were enhanced when partnered teachers shared similar personalities and teaching philosophies. These assertions were confirmed through interview and observational data involving the interactions and discourse between the participating co-teachers. In the partnership between Ms. Ellington and Ms. Finn in particular, the relational trust established between the two teachers in a relatively short period of time allowed them to forge a collaborative culture at the classroom level, exceeding what was observed at the school building level. Their instruction and professional interactions evidenced a high level of parity, shared agency, and collaboration achieved through co-planning and co-teaching. This demonstrated that while relationships are important, the co-teachers also need to commit to enacting co-teaching effectively by co-planning, co-teaching, and co-assessing their shared students. Conversely, Ms. Ellington reported that she had not yet successfully developed a professional relationship with Mr. Simmons. It was observed that her role and professional identity in this classroom were marginalized; she was restricted in enacting agency and had few opportunities to collaborate or contribute to instruction with Mr. Simmons. By extension, the
ELLs in this class were not observed to be fully integrated with their peers nor with the whole-group instruction taking place in this class.

**Mindful Pairings of Co-Teachers**

My findings on how relationships contribute to effective co-teaching further the findings of previous studies that stress the importance of administrators establishing a practice of selecting co-teachers based on mindful pairings in response to teachers’ dispositions and expression of interest in co-teaching rather than random assignment (Murawski & Bernhardt, 2015). Similarly, the interview and observational data supported Kregel’s (2014) assertion that “the process in which co-teachers are paired by administrators and teachers is essential to their success because the pairing will affect the interpersonal relationship in the partnerships” (p. 3).

Ms. Katz and Ms. Krisch in Reemer Elementary shared that they had been given the choice by their administrators about whether or not they had an interest in co-teaching the integrated ENL classes. Ms. Katz recalled that when she initially expressed hesitations about co-teaching, her administrator respectfully supported her decision not to co-teach. However, after additional consideration, Ms. Katz made the decision to co-teach with Ms. Elmont. The partnership between Ms. Elmont and Ms. Katz was observed to have a high level of collaboration in each phase of the co-teaching cycle: co-planning, co-instruction, co-assessment, and co-reflection.

By contrast, two of the three co-teaching partnerships at Iselin supported Davis’ (2006) finding that partnerships mandated by school or district policy, rather than voluntarily established, often bred inequity and unsure professional positioning and identity among co-teachers. Aside from the classroom space shared by Ms. Ellington’s and Mr. Simmons for two periods a day, there was little evidence of a professional relationship, co-teaching, or collaboration occurring between the two teachers. It should be noted that Ms. Finn and Ms. Fort
also reported that they were assigned to co-teaching without choice, yet to different extents, their partnerships with Ms. Ellington had each achieved a level of efficacy exceeding that of her partnership with Mr. Simmons. Ms. Fort and Ms. Ellington were observed to have established a cordial relationship and did share to a limited extent in co-instruction. The friendly rapport between the two teachers made it somewhat less obvious that Ms. Ellington’s language acquisition expertise was still underutilized in this class. Only in the partnership with Ms. Finn did Ms. Ellington assert agency and act with parity to her GE co-teacher. Within this partnership, the co-teachers reported a high level of relational trust, sought out each other’s expertise, and placed a high value on integrated instruction.

**Co-Constructed Professional Learning**

During interviews, Ms. Katz and Ms. Finn made several references to seeking out the expertise of their ENL co-teachers, Ms. Elmont and Ms. Ellington, respectively. Ms. Katz shared about Ms. Elmont, “Now that she pushed in, I can learn from her and see, ‘Oh, okay, alright. This is how I should phrase this,’ or “This is what I should do. She’s taught me a lot in the past two years.” Similarly, Ms. Finn said of Ms. Ellington, “She’s the expert in that area of ENL. I’m not the expert in that area. So together, I have the curriculum and she has this whole background of what an ENL child should be doing.” She added that she has “watched Ms. Ellington work with ELLs within the classroom” to build her own capacity. These sentiments were reciprocated by Ms. Elmont and Ms. Ellington, who both stated that interactions with their co-teachers gave them opportunities to gain familiarity and confidence in teaching the content in addition to supporting the linguistic demands of the curriculum. This built upon findings of previous studies in which teachers credited their interactions in collaborative teaching partnerships with contributing to their co-constructed and reciprocal professional learning, development of
inclusive pedagogical skills, and the cultivation of positive attitudes toward supporting their students’ needs (Rytivaara & Kershner, 2012). These co-constructed professional learning experiences also elevated the perceived expertise and status of Ms. Elmont and Ms. Ellington, pro-actively positioning the ESOL teacher with greater parity (Harré et al., 2009) and thereby increasing their agency in co-taught classes.

**Enriched Instruction Through Shared Curriculum**

Ms. Katz and Ms. Krisch each reported the critical role Ms. Elmont played in implementing the new math curriculum. They believed co-teaching with Ms. Elmont enabled them to successfully and effectively achieve the objectives of the new math curriculum for all students, including ELLs, despite the complexity of the program and their novice use of the program during that school year. This example supported the findings of a previous study that suggested that collaborative teachers are able to provide a more extensive and enriched delivery of instruction for ELLs than would be accomplished by one teacher when focusing on the use of a common curriculum shared by the ESOL and GE teachers (Martin-Beltrán & Madigan Peercy, 2012). Ms. Katz and Ms. Elmont in particular were able to do extensive co-planning in limited time because each had been trained in and had access to the new curriculum and related resources. As a result, their use of time in their co-taught class periods was maximized. Their co-instruction was fluid; balanced a variety of student groupings and teacher contributions; and demonstrated the use of shared terminology and familiarity with the math curriculum, manipulatives, and other supporting instructional materials.

**Administrator Support**

Co-teaching in integrated ENL was a district-wide policy initiated in response to NYSED regulations. The enactment of this instructional model in Glen Village aligned with a clear
district mission statement and strong support at the central administrative level, including the district superintendent Mr. Sapir. The district’s mission and administrative support are critical factors in establishing a collaborative culture that may influence the implementation of co-teaching at the building and classroom levels (Atesoglu Russel, 2012; Bell & Baecher, 2012; Harvey & Teemant, 2012; Murawski & Dieker, 2004).

As the director of ENL, Ms. Kindell espoused the district’s mission of “empowering a diverse population of students” through the collaborative pairings of co-teachers in integrated ENL classes, intentional class placement and scheduling of students and teachers, the provision of professional development opportunities to build the capacity of co-teachers in supporting students’ academic and linguistic development, and through her administrative practices that sought to position ESOL teachers as experts in language acquisition. However, as Atesoglu Russell (2012) found, the effectiveness of teacher actions and practices relied on school building administrators’ support and implementation efforts in enacting ENL co-teaching at the building level.

As Ms. Kindell had described, building administrators often subordinated co-teaching in integrated ENL as a low-status priority in relation to other building-level initiatives, unless they became aware of problems requiring their intervention. This finding supported existing literature suggesting that GE and ESOL teachers often receive little or no administrative guidance in implementing co-teaching and that they struggle to identify their instructional roles in supporting the academic and linguistic needs of ELLs (Arkoudis, 2006; Norton, 2013). Ms. Knightly’s statement, “I think in general they are aware of my expectations,” revealed a lack of clear guidance provided to ENL and GE co-teachers. As Friend et al. (2008) observed, this ambiguity can contribute to the challenges of co-teaching, as it cultivates “inconsistencies in definitions and
implementation” (p. 10). This finding was further demonstrated by Ms. Knightly’s depiction of intervention efforts with co-teaching teams in her building. She shared, “There are groups that I am meeting with. Groups that we tend to kind of establish times for co-teaching that weren’t happening on their own...We try to solve it in a non-threatening manner, but there were some times where they need a little bit more help and guidance.” Again, this depiction supports the literature suggesting that a “lack of professional preparation, and dilemmas related to situating co-teaching in a supportive, collaborative school culture” (Friend et al., 2008, p. 10) can result from inadequate administrator support.

**Student Opportunities for Learning**

Based on observational data, the findings of this study supported the extant literature suggesting that the mindset of the GE teacher can be a determining factor in the implementation of the co-teaching model (Avila, 2015; Kregel, 2014; Norton, 2013) and the academic success of ELLs (Esmaeili, 2013). Of specific note were the utilization of small homogeneous student groupings observed in Ms. Elmont’s co-taught class with Ms. Krisch and in Ms. Ellington’s co-taught class with Mr. Simmons and, to a lesser extent, with Ms. Fort. These instructional groupings restricted ELLs’ interactions with native English-speaking peers as well as in integrated whole-group instruction with the GE teacher. In the context of these classrooms, the interactions and discourse between the ESOL teachers and their GE co-teachers revealed a storyline of assumptions surrounding the division of labor and responsibility for the instruction of ELLs. As suggested in the extant literature, teachers assigned to co-teaching partnerships to support ELLs may have preconceived notions as to the instructional roles of each teacher, including GE teachers’ perception of a distinct separation of duties or responsibilities in which
language development was the function of the ESOL teacher and did not fall under their perceived notion of the role of the GE teachers (Avila, 2015; Kregel, 2014).

**Agents of Change: Advocacy and Shifting Mindsets**

Research has also revealed the possibility of marginalized ESOL teachers repositioning themselves as agents of change (Fogel & Moser, 2017). This was demonstrated in the case of Mr. Simmons, whose mindset toward ENL as a program and toward Ms. Ellington as a co-teacher extended toward the ELLs in his GE class. According to Yoon (2008), GE teachers who are not open to incorporating instructional supports and strategies may send the message that these students are not valued members of the learning community. Ms. Ellington found herself “positioned against dominant ideologies and educational policies” (Fogel & Moser, 2017, p. 65) and enacted her agency to advocate for her students.

She spoke of two ELLs in particular who had both shut down within the classroom, withdrawing from any interaction with their peers. In both instances, the students’ behaviors were perceived by the GE teacher “as an attitude,” until Ms. Ellington stepped in to speak with and advocate for each of the students. Her advocacy improved the students’ experiences in the GE classroom. Ms. Ellington’s students were experiencing feelings of isolation and exclusion, which manifested through withdrawal from the school context, building upon Yoon’s (2008) findings that “the main reason for students’ anxiety, silence, and different positioning has much to do with being outsiders in the regular classroom context” (p. 498). These examples also illuminated Yoon’s (2008) assertion that the positioning of students in ENL programs mirrors that of teachers in ENL programs, both of which may directly impact ELLs’ opportunities to learn. While Ms. Ellington reported that her efforts to effect change were ongoing, she positioned herself as an advocate for ELLs’ equitable learning opportunities.
Unanticipated Outcomes

When selecting the site for my research and data collection, I intentionally sought out a district in which I knew not only had the co-teaching model of instruction implemented in support of ELLs but also one in which the ENL program had the support of the district superintendent and the director of ENL. The selected district met both of these criteria. The data revealed that the enactment of co-teaching within each individual partnership was a greater reflection of the personalities and relationship between the partnering teachers than it was a reflection of the district vision and support of implementing this instructional model. This was surprising because at Iselin Elementary, it demonstrated that a co-teaching partnership could flourish, even without strong building administrator support. Conversely, at Reemer, a co-teacher could be subordinated and underutilized because of an inequitable power relationship between co-teachers despite having strong administrative support.

Another unanticipated finding was that GE and ESOL teachers, when interviewed, believed they were equals in the classroom, but the discourse and interactions observed typically situated the ESOL teacher in a subordinate position to the GE teacher. This was surprising for a few reasons. First, GE teachers, when identifying the ESOL teacher as an equal, simultaneously described the ESOL teacher as “an extra body to circulate” or “an extra set of hands,” without referring to the ESOL teachers’ expertise and contribution to ELLs’ language development. Furthermore, ESOL teachers identified themselves as equals, yet were relegated to back-table instruction with a segregated group of ELLs in three out of five classrooms.

Implications for Policy and Practice

The findings of this study illuminate implications for policy and practice for participants in the study setting and beyond. The first two such recommendations are relatively low-
complexity initiatives that could be implemented fairly easily. The third implication involves the current contractual provisions for teachers, which would involve a greater degree of complexity to address. Each of these implications are discussed in this section.

ESOL teachers who participated in this study perceived their roles as being critical to the district’s vision for collaboratively supporting ELLs. Despite this strong perceived connection to the district vision, the two ESOL teachers each perceived their roles to be marginalized within specific classroom contexts—specifically, Ms. Elmont’s role in Ms. Krisch’s class and Ms. Ellington’s role in Mr. Simmons’ class. A change in practice to capitalize on their language acquisition expertise as well as their perceived connection to the district vision would be to utilize ESOL teachers as professional developers to build their colleagues’ capacity in language acquisition and linguistic support. Both Ms. Elmont and Ms. Ellington had reported that building colleagues sought them out for their expertise, but when asked if either of them conducted training or professional development within their school or district, both responded that they had not. ENL faculty-led professional development could extend not just to GE and content area co-teachers but to be inclusive of other department personnel as well as building administrators. Utilizing the ESOL teachers in this way may proactively position ESOL teachers as experts and thereby cultivate more equitable positioning at the school building and classroom level.

To effectively enact co-teaching in integrated ENL classes, all stakeholders of the program need to be considered, including the students placed in these classes in each school building and their families. Creating a parent orientation for parents of non-ELLs, similar to that mandated by NYSED for parents of newly identified ELLs, may serve as an opportunity to educate and promote parent awareness of the research-based benefits of co-teaching for all learners. By raising parents’ awareness of this model of instruction, and the increased student
support afforded through integrated instruction, parents of non-ELLs may be more accepting of their child’s placement in co-taught integrated ENL classes. In turn, administrators messaging and support of ENL co-teaching may shift the storylines and positioning of ESOL teachers.

Finally, the current teacher contract does not provide for teacher preparation or planning periods within the scheduled school day. Enacting a policy change to establish collaborative structures such as scheduled planning time, or in the case of co-teachers co-planning time, would enable co-teachers to more effectively implement the co-teaching cycle of instruction with greater fidelity. According to the research (Friend et al., 1993; Honigsfeld & Dove, 2015), the co-planning phase is critical to the successful implementation of the co-teaching model of instruction, as it cultivates shared ownership, parity, agency, and accountability for instruction and assessment of all shared students between the partnered co-teachers. Furthermore, research has suggested that the impact of this type of effective collaboration and ownership of the curriculum between teachers positively impacts student outcomes (Fearon, 2008; Martin-Beltrán & Madigan Peercy, 2012). Therefore, a policy change to establish district-wide collaborative structures by including scheduled planning periods in teacher contracts would cultivate equitable co-teaching partnerships and support the progression of the implementation of co-teaching along the continuum of educational change to a point of institutionalization (Fullan, 1982, 2016).

Limitations

Qualitative research involving case studies is intrinsically limited, as the data is bound to the specific context and time in which it was collected. For this reason, the findings were not intended to be generalized to the broader population but rather generalized to the theory to garner deeper understanding of the perspectives of the participants with regard to how they make sense of their roles as co-teachers in elementary integrated ENL. While the participants met the criteria
established for the purposeful selection of newly formed and sustained co-teaching partnerships, the sample size was small, and observing the progression of these partnerships was limited by the restriction of time spent on site. Based on the findings of this case study, readers may discern what applies to their specific district or school context.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

The findings of this study suggest the need for continued research in the area of co-teaching in integrated ENL classes. Considering the limitations discussed in the previous section, one idea for future research would be conducting a sustained study over the course of multiple years to observe co-teaching partnerships at different phases of implementation, as aligned with Fullan’s (1982, 2016) theory of educational change. Co-teaching partnerships progress along a continuum of development that reflects a progression of teacher attitudes toward collaboration (Davison, 2006). Conducting observations over an extended span of time would help gain greater understanding of the development of collaborative partnerships.

With regard to the research design and data-collection methods, another consideration for future research would be to use a phenomenological approach to interviewing, to afford participants multiple opportunities to reflect on experiences at different points in time during their co-teaching partnerships. In this way, participants’ endeavors to make sense of their roles as co-teachers in integrated ENL classes may be inclusive of the evolution of their professional identities and positioning at various points on the developmental continuum of their co-teaching partnerships.

Another consideration for future research stems from the surprising finding of parents’ opposition to placement of their non-ELL children in integrated ENL classes. A qualitative study seeking out the perceptions of parents and community members within the district may yield
further insight into how the implementation of co-teaching has been received by stakeholders outside the school buildings. Such research may also identify ways in which parent outreach and educational efforts may promote awareness and support of the co-teaching model of instruction in integrated ENL classes.

A final suggestion for future research would be to include a quantitative study of the impact of co-teaching on student learning. This qualitative study sought co-teachers’ perceptions of how ELLs’ outcomes related to integrated co-taught ENL. However, a quantitative study of ELLs’ language development, as assessed both formatively and summatively, may provide deeper insight as to the effectiveness of the co-teaching instructional model in support of ELLs in integrated ENL classes. Coupling findings from future qualitative and quantitative research will not only continue to build upon the understanding garnered from the extant research but may also drive decision-making and policy change for the instruction of ELLs.

**Concluding Remarks**

Co-teaching has emerged as a prominent instructional delivery model to support ELLs in New York State public schools since the implementation of changes to the Commissioner’s Regulation Part 154 in 2015. Since this time, co-teachers in integrated ENL classes have grappled with the challenges of making sense of their positions, roles, and teacher agency. These concerns echo those that have historically plagued the implementation of co-teaching within special education contexts and support McClure and Cahnmann-Taylor’s (2010) assertion that co-teaching to support English learners is “a complex social act influenced by hierarchical relations of power and status in the school setting” (p. 101). The findings of this study revealed that the nested contexts of classroom, school building, and school district each inform the
enactment and articulation of co-teaching as well as the positioning of ESOL teachers who co-teach in GE elementary classes.

Through this study, I have come to understand that, while the contexts of the school building and the school district in which co-teaching is enacted contribute to the storylines and pre-positioning of teachers, it is within the relationship between co-teaching partners at the classroom level that a continuous negotiation of responsibilities, rights, and duties occurs. Furthermore, even with a strong district vision and policy supported by upper administration to enact co-teaching in integrated ENL classes, how co-teaching takes shape is bound to the dynamic interactions and discourse between partnered teachers at a given time and in a given context.

As with any district-level initiative, the implementation of co-teaching in integrated ENL classes is subject to the scrutiny and acceptance or opposition by all stakeholders, including parents of non-ELLS, as well as building-level administrators and teachers. Consideration of the concerns of all stakeholders, as well as consistent articulation and transparency in sharing information regarding the enactment of integrated co-taught ENL, is critical to its successful implementation as well as the equitable positioning of its co-teachers.

Mindful pairings of co-teachers by administrators position collaborative partnerships to be effective and successful. Teachers who have compatible personalities and share common teaching dispositions and philosophies are able to develop the relational trust required to support their collaborative efforts. In addition, selecting teachers based on an expression of interest in collaborative co-teaching, rather than by mandated assignment, may eliminate a potential obstacle to the successful implementation of co-teaching partnerships.
The ESOL teachers who participated in this study reported conflicting perceptions of their professional identities. On one hand, each of the ESOL teachers experienced a diminished sense of professional identity in the co-taught integrated ENL class, stemming from the underutilization or lack of recognition of their experience and expertise as language acquisition specialists. This was particularly true when ESOL teachers had not yet mastered the academic curriculum they were assigned to support. Conversely, those who had gained confidence and familiarity in the curricular demands manifested a newly acquired sense of professional identity as a teacher of that particular content area. For this reason, professional development and training in the curricular and academic demands of the GE classroom are critical to positioning ESOL teachers with parity and agency in co-taught classes. Equally important is the provision of prerequisite professional development to prepare GE teachers to support ELLs through integrated co-taught instruction. Professional identity was also enhanced through co-constructed professional learning opportunities in which the ESOL teachers could pro-actively and reflexively position themselves as experts in supporting ELLs’ language development.

The interactions and discourse between teachers in collaborative co-teaching partnerships both reflect and contribute to their professional identities and inform how they make sense of their roles, responsibilities, and agency in supporting ELLs in the integrated ENL class. This study illuminated the significance of co-teacher positioning as it relates to ELL students’ equitable opportunities for learning.
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Appendix A: Institutional Review Board Approval Letter

From: Patricia Eckardt, Ph.D., RN, FAAN
Chair, Molloy College Institutional Review Board

SUBJECT: MOLLOY IRB REVIEW AND DETERMINATION OF EXPEDITED STATUS

Study Title: Positioning Co-Teachers in an Integrated English as a New Language Class: Making Sense of Teaching Roles

Approved: September 17, 2019

Approval No: 11031518-0917

Dear Ms. Cordeiro,

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Molloy College has reviewed the above-mentioned research proposal and determined that this proposal is approved.

It is considered an EXPEDITED category 45 CFR 46.110 (6) (7) per the requirements of Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) regulations for the protection of human subjects underwent review to determine if the 45 CFR 46.111 criteria were met.

45 CFR 46.115(b) and 21 CFR 56.115(b) require that all IRB records be retained for at least 3 years, and records relating to research which is conducted be retained for at least 3 years after completion of the research.

Please note that as Principal Investigator (PI), it is your responsibility to be CITI Certified in both the Responsible Conduct of Research and Human Subjects Research and to submit the evidence in order to conduct your research.

Remember, all consents and recruitment flyers for any research protocol need to have Molloy IRB dated stamps of approval. To obtain the official stamp, please contact Ms. Gina Nedelka (gnedelka@molloy.edu) to arrange a time to meet with her in her office in Kellenberg-Room 009. You will bring one clean consent (of each consent and/or assent) and any recruitment flyers to the meeting with Ms. Nedelka for IRB dated stamp of approval. You then make copies of stamped materials and use those copies for recruiting and consenting.
You may proceed with your research. Please submit an annual report (continuing review form on the IRB webpage) each year your protocol is open and a protocol closure report (form on the IRB webpage) to the committee.

**This approval is for the duration of the protocol- unless there is a change to the protocol.**
It is the responsibility of the Principal Investigator to inform the Molloy College IRB of any requested changes to this research (amendment to approved protocol form is on the IRB webpage). A change in the research may change the project from EXPEDITED status and requires communication with the IRB.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Patricia Eckardt, Ph.D., RN
Appendix B: Interview Protocol/Questions:

“Positioning Co-Teachers in an Integrated English as a New Language Class: Making Sense of Teaching Roles” - K-5 GE and ESOL Teachers

For all respondents: The study will be explained to the subject by the researcher, and the subject’s questions will be answered. The researcher will explain that the interview is confidential and that the information gathered during the interview will be used for educational purposes only. The interview will take about 30 minutes of their time. The subject will give verbal assent to participate in the study and be audio/video-recorded.

Brief Project Description: The purpose of this qualitative study is to examine how K-5 GE and ESOL co-teachers perceive their and each other’s collaborative instructional roles in the co-taught ENL class.

I. Introduction

1. Can you start by stating your name, current job position, and overall teaching experience?
   --Probe: What professional certifications or licenses do you hold?
   --Probe: Total years teaching? In this school?
2. How long have you been co-teaching, and what has been your general experience?
   --Probe: With the same teacher? With different teachers? Grades/content areas?

Research Question 1: What is the relationship between positioning theory in the co-taught class and the ways in which GE and ESOL co-teachers make sense of their roles?

   · How do GE and ESOL co-teachers’ perceptions of their roles differ between established and newly-formed co-teaching partnerships?
   · How are co-teachers’ understandings of their roles reflective of the discourse and professional interactions within their collaborative partnership?

II. Perceptions of Personal Role and Role of Co-Teacher in Supporting ELLs

3. How would you explain co-teaching to someone who isn’t aware of this type of instruction?

4. What do you consider to be your area(s) of expertise? That of your co-teacher?
   --Probe: In what ways do you and your co-teacher utilize and share your expertise in support of ELLs?

5. Do you consider yourself a teacher of ELLs? Explain.
   --Probe: How do you define/identify your role in supporting ELLs/non-ELLs?
--Probe: How do you define the role of your co-teacher in supporting ELLs/non-ELLs?
---Probe: How would you describe how your students view the roles of two teachers in the room?
---Probe: job description, school’s mission, prior personal or job experience, view of the community, identity?

6. Describe your relationship with your co-teacher.
---Probe: Tell me how you perceive the dynamic in your professional partnership.
---Probe: How would you describe your typical interactions? Discourse, behaviors, etc.

7. How would you describe the division of labor between you and your co-teacher?
---Probe: Describe the typical decision-making process.
---Probe: What expertise do you bring to the co-taught class? Your co-teacher?

8. Suppose I was an administrator in this school, how would I define the role that you play in the instruction and language development of ELLs?
---Probe: How do others in the school see your role?
---Probe: Is there a hierarchy at the school? Where do you fit within the hierarchy?
---Probe: Do you feel that the work that you do is valued or appreciated? Why/why not?

9. If I walked into your classroom unannounced, or during a specific time of day, what would I see?
---Probe: What is the classroom layout?
---Probe: Where would the teachers be and what would they be doing?
---Probe: Where would the students be and what would they be doing?

---Research Question 2: According to GE and ESOL co-teachers, what are the successes and challenges of an integrated class, given the broader context of the school culture and policies of the school/district? How do these perceptions of the challenges and successes differ between established co-teaching partnerships and newly formed co-teaching partnerships?

III. Impact of school/district culture and polices on implementation of co-teaching

10. How would you describe the school/district mindset toward inclusive instruction for diverse students?
---Probe: More specifically, in support of ELLs?

11. How would you describe the collaborative culture of the school/district?
---Probe: What does collaboration look like in your co-teaching partnership?
---Probe: In what ways is a collaborative culture encouraged or cultivated within the school/district? Specifically in support of ELLs?

12. What type of guidance or support do you receive from administrators concerning co-teaching?
--Probe: How are teachers selected/assigned to co-teaching?
--Probe: How are the roles of co-teachers for ENL established, and by whom?
How is this communicated to other faculty/administrators?

13. Tell me about your teacher preparation background, specifically related to co-teaching.
   --Probe: What professional development or other training have you received to prepare you for co-teaching?
   --Probe: What, if any, professional development or other training have you received to prepare you for working with ELLs in supporting language development/acquisition?
   --Probe: What would you identify as areas in which you would like to have additional training or professional development?

14. What do you identify as the critical components or non-negotiables of co-teaching?
   --Probe: Tell me about what is involved in a typical class lesson (planning, instruction, assessment, reflection)

15. What are the biggest challenges you face in implementing the integrated co-teaching instructional model?
   --Probe: Describe the amount of time you have for co-planning.
   --Probe: How does scheduling influence co-teaching? (time for co-planning, number of co-teachers/grades, etc.)
   --Probe: What would you change to make your job easier or more effective? Explain.

**Research Question 3:** In what ways, if any, do GE and ESOL teachers believe co-taught ENL instruction impacts ELL learning as compared to other instructional delivery models (i.e. stand-alone instruction)?

**IV. Co-teaching impact on student learning**

16. What has been your students’ response to co-taught instruction?
   --Probe: How do you believe co-teachers are perceived by students?
   --Probe: Do students identify one teacher as a lead teacher over the other?

17. In what ways do you believe co-teaching influences student learning?
   --Probe: Do you have experience with other instructional models for ELLs? How are they similar/different in their impact on student learning?

18. How does co-teaching influence how you approach instruction and assessment?
   Specifically for ELLs?

19. How do you use data to monitor student progress and inform instruction?
20. What are the most important goals that you have set for your students in this class? Explain.

**Grand Tour Question:** Tell me a story about the most important experience you have had in your role as a co-teacher in an ENL class

--Probe: Can you explain what gives you the most satisfaction in your job?

Are there any questions that I should have asked that I didn’t ask? Is there anything else about your school, district, or your own ELL practices, that you believe is important to mention? Is there anything else you want to add?

Thank you for sharing your thoughts with us today! You have each been extremely valuable in helping us understand more about your school.
### Appendix C: Observation Field Note Form

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observations</th>
<th>Reflections/Write-Up</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Person(s) Present:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Context/Larger Community</strong> (Neighborhood characteristics, surrounding businesses/churches, safety, cleanliness, green space, playgrounds, etc.)</td>
<td>Reflections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Space</strong> (Describe the inside of the school, classrooms, physical arrangement of classroom/student seating, environmental text and language supports, educational posters or student artwork on walls, hallways, cleanliness, security, etc.)</td>
<td>Reflections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>People</strong> (Teacher/Student Demographics, Dress, Language, Eye Contact, Body Language, etc.)</td>
<td>Reflections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Actions and Interactions</strong> (Discourse and Behaviors: GE Teacher to ESOL teacher, GE teacher to non-ENL student, GE teacher to ENL student, ESOL teacher to non-ENL student, ESOL teacher to ENL student)</td>
<td>Reflections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Instruction:</strong> (GE/ESOL teacher Familiarity with curriculum, Curriculum goals/modification, Instructional planning, Instructional presentation, Classroom management, Assessment)</td>
<td>Reflections</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>