EFFECTIVE CLASSROOM PRACTICES THAT MEET THE NEEDS
OF HIGH-POVERTY STUDENTS
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Abstract

The purpose of this paper was to determine the characteristics of effective secondary classroom practices in high-poverty suburban schools. The literature reviewed included studies utilizing support staff, student needs, suburban school needs, and low socioeconomic needs in an educational setting. Study participants ranged from high-poverty students to students in suburban schools to support staff to teachers. Researchers used several methods including interviews, questionnaires, and recorded observations. Results and conclusions from the studies indicated that understanding needs of students living in high-poverty, co-teaching, support staff, dual enrollment, and parental involvement are a few of the effective secondary classroom practices and aids that affect student success. Recommendations for improving the effectiveness of classroom practices on high-poverty students include further research on characteristics of effective teachers on low socioeconomic students, teaching tolerance in the classroom, and employing successful practices such as active learning. Changes that will positively affect students living in poverty include more support staff, co-teaching in the classroom, and dual enrollment for gifted students.
Chapter I - Introduction

School districts in high-poverty areas face many additional difficulties outside of the everyday challenges of teaching and working in a school. Many common challenges teachers face in the 21st century include overcrowded schools, cuts in funding, implementing technology into the classroom effectively, cyber-bullying, excessive testing to meet standards of No Child Left Behind (NCLB), parental involvement (lack of or excessive), and low pay (http://neatoday.org/2010/09/13/top-eight-challenges-teachers-face-this-school-year/). In addition to these challenges, teachers and administers to a high-poverty district have to deal with issues surrounding generational poverty (Blase & Kirby, 2009; Payne, 1996).

Families living in generational poverty are of low socio-economic status with parents that have grown up living in poverty. Living in a high-poverty community negates awareness of poverty, since the surrounding community has similar circumstances. Living in poverty, children learn hidden rules regarding pattern of thought, social interaction, and cognitive strategies. Even a rise out of poverty financially does not often change these rules. However, businesses and schools operate with middle-class norms and hidden rules making it difficult to relate to a high-poverty community (Payne, 1996).

When teachers and staff members are aware of the socioeconomic difficulties and differences that arise in a school that has a low socioeconomic population, classroom practices will be more effective. With a high-poverty school community, children are often lacking necessities such as health care, food, clothing, and even housing at times. The school is expected to compensate for the necessities when possible. One example of the school ameliorating social situations is by offering free or reduced lunch. This is entirely dependent on funding (Campbell & Ramey, 2008; Payne 1996).
Statement of the Problem

The needs of high-poverty students are extreme especially in the education setting. Successful schools need to employ many secondary classroom practices in order to meet the needs of poor communities. Furthermore, students in suburban school settings do not have the same opportunities, accessibilities, and funding as students in an urban setting (Payne, 1996).

Meeting student needs is the responsibility of the public school district. It is the district's responsibility to accommodate to the needs of the community within the classroom. Children living in poverty are raised in households with different characteristics than children in middle- and high-class homes. Therefore, the needs are substantially different for students attending school in high-poverty districts. Schools need to ensure that teachers and staff receive the appropriate and proper training and information to understand these students' backgrounds in able for the students to be successful. Students raised in homes with a low-socioeconomic status are more likely to drop out of high school, have unexpected pregnancies, have no job, or only part-time work, and live off welfare. An education can make a difference for low-socioeconomic students if the approach is appropriate to student’s needs (Campbell & Ramey, 2008; Payne, 1996).

Research Question(s)

What are the characteristics of effective secondary classroom practices for meeting the needs of high-poverty students in suburban school?

Definition of Terms

Co-Teaching occurs when a general education teacher and the special education service provider (either a special education teacher or related service provider) participate in lesson or activity
planning together and work together in the same classroom to instruct both students with and without disabilities.

In education, **dual enrollment** (DE) involves students enrolled in two separate, academically related institutions.

**Generational Poverty** is when persons have been in poverty for two generations or longer.

A researcher generates **inductive coding** by directly examining the data.

**Situational Poverty** is a period of poverty caused by situational factors, such as a death, illness, job loss, etc.

**Socioeconomic** status is based on family income, parental education level, parental occupation, and social status in community.
Chapter II – Review of Literature

Many studies surround the needs of high-poverty students, the needs of suburban school students, and the characteristics of an effective classroom. Although many of these situations vary with culture, location, and tradition, the studies are still relevant as an example of the possibilities and possible outcomes a school district may have upon implementing procedures to serve the community needs of a school district.

Poverty

To begin, Pawlak looked at effective teachers of students living in high-poverty. Pawlak studied seven English and mathematics teachers determined effective through the teachers’ quantitative disaggregated achievement data to determine characteristics of teachers who have positive results with diverse students from high-poverty communities (2009).

The study included 31 participants from two Southern California school districts (three schools total). Researchers first identified effective schoolteachers in mathematics and language arts from low-achieving, high-poverty urban schools. The scores of the CST determined effective teachers (Pawlak, 2009).

Increases and decreases on scores of the English Language Arts section or Mathematics of the California Standards Tests (CST) determined effective teachers Pawlak observed for the study (2009). Pawlak had each teacher observed eight times by two observers and recordable evidence in their language arts or mathematics class period. Pawlak’s study used quantitative disaggregated achievement data to select effective teachers as participants (2009).

Participants were surveyed regarding background and personal beliefs using an open-ended, semi-structured interview process. These interviews were recorded and transcribed in order to facilitate and code. Their students took three-question surveys during class time on their
belief as to what makes an effective teacher and why the selected participant is effective (Pawlak, 2009).

Pawlak surveyed language arts and mathematics students from three schools for two years. Pawlak monitored performance levels from the previous years and coded students as “up” (+), “same” (=), or “down” (-). The researcher assigned each teacher a score according to their students’ performance level during the time they were in that teacher’s class. The researcher then combined teachers’ scores from all classes and identified the teachers with the most (+) and (=) scores as being the most effective in raising student performance. These teachers then qualified for the experiment. Of the ten teachers who qualified, two declined to participate and one was dropped from the study (Pawlak, 2009).

A simple t-chart with observation data noted on the left and observer notes, reflections and connections on the right served as the recording instrument. The researcher recorded participants on different days of the week in the teacher’s classroom (Pawlak, 2009).

Pawlak then used grounded theory, theory developed inductively from a corpus of data (http://www.analytictech.com/mb870/introtogt.htm), to identify the frequency and commonality between participants’ behaviors, attributes, and actions. Pawlak also used grounded theory to identify common classroom characteristics that link to student achievement and may be replicable in other high-poverty, low-achieving settings (2009).

Surveys collected always have the possibility to skew because of human error. Students and/or participants may not have answered honestly or may have over or under exaggerated answers leading to inaccurate data. Small sample size is also a limitation to this study.

The researcher analyzed and coded data from the observations, interviews and surveys in an effort to identify common themes, patterns, and common practices among effective teachers.
The researcher found that the most important factor in achieving student achievement is the teacher. Teachers who invest in their students have students that are more likely to invest in their education (Pawlak, 2009).

Pawlak’s study shows the impact of effective teachers on students learning. This study shows that what happens in the classroom setting, along with teachers’ attitudes and beliefs, have a great effect on students’ achievement in a high-poverty, low-achievement school setting (2009).

Similar to students in Pawlak’s study, Bower & Griffin’s case study involved a high-poverty population. The majority of students at Hawk Elementary (a pseudonym) are African American, Latino, and are high-poverty, low-achievement. Participants of this study included two members of the administrative team and five teachers. Researchers selected participants due to their involvement with standardized testing and due to well-establishment within the school, minimum three years of service, and accurate knowledge of the school’s culture and practices. All participants are minority female. Hawk Elementary is one of the smallest schools in a large urban district in the southeastern United States (Bower & Griffin, 2011).

The Epstein model educated the procedure of this study. Researchers used a microethnography framework for this case study. Microethnography “allows for a single researcher to focus explicitly on one aspect of a larger belief system of a culture” (Bower & Griffin, 2011). Microethnography requires full immersion of the researcher into the community and requires mutual relationships among participants and the researcher (Bower & Griffin, 2011).

Each of the five teachers was given a 45-minute, semi-structured interview at the teachers’ convenience. The two administrator interviews took 60-minutes and took place in their
office. The guiding question was, “How do you communicate with parents and encourage involvement in the school?” (Bower & Griffin, 2011). After the initial questions, the researcher asked probing questions based on participants’ responses. The researcher used a digital voice to record interviews. The researched transcribed the interviews verbatim within 24 hours of the initial interview. Notes regarding non-verbal communication and researcher recorded responses with the interview transcription, along with reflective notes (Bower & Griffin, 2011).

Bower and Griffin also observed for this study at two formal parental involvement opportunities at the school, a Parent Teacher Organization meeting, and an open house for parents to view student projects. The researcher took notes and transcribed these notes within 24 hours with added reflexive comments (Bower & Griffin, 2011). Bower and Griffin used inductive coding to sort the data once collected and transcribed due to its ability to enable emerging concepts and themes to focus the observations and minimize researcher bias or over-reliance on the Epstein Model. Researchers read all transcripts line by line to find themes in reoccurring words. Strategies Employed, Frustration, and Engagement were three themes that emerged. After researchers discovered the initial themes, researchers reread the transcripts to find supportive excerpts. Strategies Employed had Communication & Home Learning Activities as a sub-theme. Frustration had Lack of Reciprocity and Low Attendance as a sub-theme. Last, all transcripts were reread to look for counter-evidence, however, none was found. Upon completion of the coding, the researcher reread data to ensure significance and authenticity to the participants’, not the researcher’s views (Bower & Griffin, 2011).

Bower and Griffin conducted this study in one setting in a school that is in an urban district consisting of 347 students. The school is high-minority and high-poverty, each causing
very specific issues by itself. The researchers did not hold any formal interviews with parents so could not see the true full picture (Bower & Griffin, 2011).

From this data, the researchers concluded that strategies of parental involvement were missing within the school. Relationship building, advocacy, and efficacy could change this. Hawk Elementary believes in traditional parental involvement such as; a weekly note home, the option of that note to be in Spanish, contact via telephone or in person on a regular basis, personal invitations to school events, provision of home learning activities and training, individual conferences, etc. The research suggests that this type of involvement fail to cover parental involvement of low-socioeconomic families and minority families. The researcher suggests building relationships with parents, holding workshops within the school, and empowers the parent group for advocacy.

Bower and Griffin’s case study show that parental involvement is crucial to students’ achievement (2009). High-poverty students with parents involved within the school and have built successful relationships with the school have children who are more likely to have success in school (Brewster & Railsback, 2003). Cross and Hong used Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems framework to highlight the complexity of the participant’s socio-cultural world and myriad of influences that effect growth and development for the study on teachers’ emotions in the school context. This study was a qualitative case study of two elementary school teachers working with a high-poverty, high-minority population (Cross & Hong, 2012).

The participants for this study taught at a low socioeconomic urban school in the Midwestern United States. Over 90% of the students were African-American, as was one of the participants, Ms. Wade. The second participant, Ms. Evans, identified as Latina and had 20 years’ experience working in the high-poverty setting (Cross & Hong, 2012).
Data collected included, individual interviews with each teacher, parents and the principal, paired interviews, classroom observations, email communications, and researcher memos. For the interview data, researchers conducted six individual interviews with each participant, one interview with the principal, two paired interviews, and one interview with a parent focus group. Interview questions were open-ended. The researchers asked probing questions based on the interviewee’s responses. All interviews were between 60 and 90 minutes and were audiotaped and transcribed. The researchers also conducted classroom observations over this three-year study. The first and third year, these observations were monthly, the second year observations occurred three times per week for 45-60 minutes. The researchers videotaped the observations, and segments of the videos that showed emotion were time-stamped and discussed in bimonthly video discussions (Cross & Hong, 2012).

Once researchers transcribed all video observations and audio-recorded interviews verbatim and coded, the researchers went through data for themes. Once the themes were established, the findings were compiled, summarized, and reported (Cross & Hong, 2012).

Findings showed that teachers’ daily lives involved interaction with four groups (students, parents, colleagues, and administrative staff). The teachers worked to have supportive and positive relationships with their students, tend to have stressful and frustrating relationships with parents, feel relationships with colleagues to be difficult, and describe their principal as a strong source of support with an identifiable vision (Cross & Hong, 2012).

Teachers are the most essential part of student achievement in the classroom (Pawlak, 2009). It is of the utmost importance that students are in environments that have supportive teachers so that they are able to feel safe, cared for, and be able to focus on their education (Green, 2010).
Support Staff

Chopra et al. researched paraprofessionals in the classroom. Of the participants, two had a PhD, two had a Master’s of Arts degree, nine had a Bachelor of Arts degree, nine had an Associate’s degree, sixteen had some college education but no degree, ten had a high school diploma or GED, and one chose not to respond (Chopra et al., 2004). Of these forty-nine participants, twenty-four were non-bilingual, twenty-two were English/Spanish bilingual, one was English/German bilingual, one was English/Russian Bilingual, and one was English/Sign Language bilingual (Chopra et al., 2004).

Of these participants, eight had worked as a Para-educator for at least one year, twenty-four had worked two to six years, ten had worked seven to twelve years, two had worked twelve to twenty years, three had worked twenty-one or more years, and two declined to respond (Chopra et al., 2004). Focus-group interviews took place to determine paraprofessional participant’s attitudes, perceptions, and experiences. The protocol for the focus groups included questions based on the two themes: 1) relationships among paraprofessionals and students and their families, and 2) paraprofessional roles in representing the community to the school and vice versa. Five focus-group interviews took place on two different dates within a month (Chopra et al., 2004).

Two investigators (one moderator, one assistant moderator) conducted ninety minutes focus group sessions. The moderator asked questions and probed for additional detail while monitoring group discussion. The assistant moderator operated an audiocassette recorder, kept time, and took notes (Chopra et al., 2004). On completion of the focus groups, the researchers transcribed the audiotapes. The researchers read the transcriptions individually to view themes, and noted these themes in the margin. Researchers then obtained a consensus on themes. The
team then sorted each statement into the appropriate theme to measure the reoccurrence of each theme (Chopra et al., 2004).

This study confirmed that paraprofessionals saw themselves as bridges or connectors between the school and community. Participants felt they were bridges from teachers to students and from teachers to parents. Paraprofessionals also concluded that they felt a lack of respect, had insufficient training, and often had unclear roles (Chopra et al., 2004). Outside of teachers, paraprofessionals are the most important educator in the classroom. While teachers are required to teach the group, paraprofessionals are able to focus on certain students that are struggling. Paraprofessionals are secondary classroom aids and are detrimental to the success of a school (Chopra et al., 2004).

Griffin-Shirley and Matlock had a similar study with paraprofessionals. Researchers developed a survey for input regarding covered demographics, job titles and responsibilities, and the level of training acquired, needed, or desired. Researchers sent this initial survey to teachers of children with visual impairments and to administrator of agencies serving persons with visual impairments. Researchers then revised the survey and placed it on the website for the Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AER) (Griffin-Shirley & Matlock, 2004). AER members, who worked with paraprofessionals, were encouraged to forward the survey to their employees. This included classroom assistants, orientation and mobility assistants, low vision assistants, interveners, secretaries, rehabilitation teacher assistants, house parents, Braillists, etc. Ninety-seven people completed the survey (Griffin-Shirley & Matlock, 2004).

Researchers received responses from twenty-one states. The largest responding states were Maryland with thirty percent and Arizona with twenty-five percent. Sixty-two percent
reported working thirty-two hours weekly and earning $20,000 annually. The respondents reported their job titles as classroom assistants, Braillist, low vision assistant, blind rehabilitation specialists, paraprofessionals, support personnel, and teacher assistants (Griffin-Shirley & Matlock, 2004).

Researchers found that seventy-one percent of participants reported receiving in-service training. Sixty-one percent reported receiving one-on-one training from a professional and training at workshops. The top four areas in which participants acknowledged a need for more training were in adaptive technology, Braille, tactile graphics, and low vision training (Griffin-Shirley & Matlock, 2004). Shirley and Matlock found that paraprofessionals and other support staff that work with visually impaired students, feel that they need more training so they are able to meet the needs of the students they are serving. Researchers also found that paraprofessionals, teacher assistants and support personnel are a valuable asset to the school classroom due to the desire for better training in order to better serve the students (2004).

Yonezawa, Jones, and Singer conducted a case study of six educators who had at least 25 years’ experience in an urban, high-poverty school district. Researchers selected participants for the sample connected to the National Writing Project (NWP). Researchers sought to highlight how teachers maintain resiliency while examining their connections to this project (Yonezawa et al., 2011).

This study took place over the 2005-2006 year. Researchers examined how the NWP influenced the resiliency of teachers in the field and its ultimate impact on difficult urban schools. The concept behind NWP is that teachers teach teachers. The organization also offers “summer institutes” that serve as teacher-to-teacher workshops (Yonezawa et al., 2011).
Researchers took interview questions for the six participants from an earlier qualitative study that consisted of two-hour interviews with 160 teachers from across the country. The first role of researchers was to analyze the data from the first study to determine qualified candidates for the latter study. Researchers looked for participants that had many years of experience working in urban schools and who suggested that they had gone through a resiliency process. Researchers examined teachers’ comments, teachers’ reasons for leaving areas, and significant work or influences (Yonezawa et al., 2011).

Next, Yonezawa et al. (2011) examined interviewees’ responses in regards to the environment the school was (high-minority, high-poverty, low socioeconomic, etc.) The researchers also looked for respondents with an urban local writing project site for the National Writing Project. Yonezawa et al. chose six respondents to study more in-depth. Of the six participants, five were white, one was African American, and five were female, while one was male. Cities participants had experience in included: Oakland, Los Angeles, Chicago, Philadelphia, and Boston. Three of the teachers were currently in the Pre-K-12 system, while three were retired. Two of the teachers had taught K-8, while four had taught primarily in high schools. Two participants had earned a doctorate degree in education. Researchers chose these participants because of their experience in hard-to-staff schools, their connection to the NWP, and their resiliency. Researchers conducted interviews over the telephone that took from ninety-minutes to two hours per person (Yonezawa et al., 2011).

Researchers found that association with NWP helps shape teachers’ professional development and experience as an educator. NWP provided teachers with the provision of technical support in their classroom, specifically for teaching writing. NWP helped raise teachers use and understanding of technology thus creating growth with students and higher success.
NWP is also responsible for cultural support and development of individual agency and leadership within the participants (Yonezawa et al., 2011). This study relates to the research question in that it supports the NWP as a secondary classroom aid that has shown success in high-poverty, low socioeconomic, urban school districts.

**Suburban Schools**

Evans (2007) conducted a descriptive, explanatory multisite case study that examined the phenomenon of demographic change in suburban schools. Schools selected were those that had gone through a demographic change, meaning the minority of students had risen significantly. Evans identified proper schools by researching the data from the 1990 and 2000 censuses. Evans identified communities with a 20% increase in the African American population at that time. After establishing communities, Evans looked into the school in this district to assess the increase in minority groups in the high schools. The researcher found data that identified three high schools that met the criteria with an African American increase of at least 24%.

The participants that supplied data included at least eight faculty members per each school who had been working at the school from at least 1990. Evans conducted ninety-minute, face-to-face interviews with the participants. All but one of the interviewees had worked in their school at least thirteen years, and one principal spent the previous ten years in the district. Thirty percent of interviewees were African American, thirty percent were administrators, and sixty percent were women. The researcher audiotaped and later transcribed each interview (Evans, 2007).

Evans also reviewed documents from the school from the late 1980s to 2000. These included each school’s report card, school board meeting minutes, attendance and discipline reports, student and teacher handbooks, school improvement plans, and other school and
program reports in order to gauge the school’s change during the rise of minority groups in the classroom (Evans, 2007).

Evans declared several categories to analyze data. These include curriculum and instruction, professional development, discipline, school restructuring, staffing, student support services, student placement, and other. The researcher then reviewed the transcribed interviews, recorded materials, found the actions, changes, and modifications in programs, policies, and practices, and categorized each within the predetermined categories. Evans cross-site analysis determined themes throughout the schools that affected school beliefs, behavior, and decision-making (Evans, 2007).

Evans found in one school, pseudo named Kelly High, respondents indicated that the school has been a historically and culturally White, working-class school controlled by a network that barred organizational learning and change with the change in the population. The community felt that the school network, teachers, administrators, board members, etc. received blame for the lack of accommodations to the changing demographic (Evans, 2007).

Evans found in another school, pseudo named Johnson High; school officials took a proactive stand towards the change in the demographic. The district hired 11% to 21% minority faculty during the 1990s. The district Johnson High was in formed a multicultural committee with the task to determine the professional development needs of the racially changing school district. A great amount of growth in discipline referrals occurred during the 1990s. Johnson High responded by rearranging its school day by introducing a block schedule. This allowed more time for students to be sociable, and an immediate drop occurred in discipline referrals and suspensions (Evans, 2007).
Parker High, the school in this study, saw a rise in minority in the 1960s when integration placed many African American students into schools that were considered “all-white.” In the 1980s, the school district considered Parker High a “college-prep” school as it offered honors and advanced placement courses, a comprehensive curriculum, and many extracurricular clubs and activities. A rapid decrease in White enrollment occurred in the 1980s and by the 1990s; the school had 75% African American population. Strategies Parker High included thwarting their image as a “ghetto” school included minority-hiring initiatives, which resulted in 20% minority faculty and majority of African American administrators. Parker High faculty held the opinion, in regards to discipline, that it was not their job to contact parents, while administration believed teachers to be the gatekeepers to parents. Many conflicts between staff and administration occurred during the 1990s leading to increased referrals for inappropriate minor infractions in an attempt of faculty to frustrate the administration. This turmoil resulted in the decrease of Parker High’s academic achievement and their public image (Evans, 2007).

Evans research indicated the needs that schools have when they face a socioeconomic change. Schools need to adapt with the times or they will collapse, as shown with Parker High. Staff and administrators need to work together for the good of the school, as shown at Johnson High. This study affects my research as it shows that in order for staff to be successful in high-risk schools, they must work together towards the common needs of their students (Evans, 2007).

Wood and Kaszubowski studied the career development needs of rural elementary students. For this study, researchers studied participants from two elementary schools in rural districts. Researchers selected six fourth-grade classrooms. These elementary schools were in two rural districts in the same rural county, both located several hours from any large city. The first school provided eighty-seven fourth-grade students out of eighty-eight for the study. The
second school provided sixty-three students for the study. The first school had 638 students enrolled in K-6. The second school had 256 students enrolled and was one of five elementary schools in a district of over 3000 from K-12. Total participants were forty-six percent male and fifty-four percent female. Seventeen percent of students from both schools received free/reduced-price lunch (Wood & Kaszubowski, 2008).

To determine student progress in the nine dimensions of Super’s growth stage of career development, researchers employed the Childhood Career Development Scale (CCDS) on participants. Researchers scored participants on the fifty-two items of the Childhood Development Scale using the Likert scale along with eight sub scales. Sub scales included; information, curiosity/exploration, interests, locus of control, key figures, time perspective, planning, and self-concept. Scores of the CCDS range from .61 to .84, as they are Cronbach alpha scores. Researchers also asked participants to create lists of probable careers, in addition to the administration of the CCDS. Researchers quantified career lists to obtain a total number and entered this information into the student database (Wood & Kaszubowski, 2008).

Researchers had teachers administer the CCDS in middle of the academic school year. Researchers collected, calculated individually, and entered results into the database. Researchers calculated the average scores on each of the eight predetermined subscales. Researchers did not calculate Cronbach alpha scores due to the schools having entered the total scale scores for the CCDS subscales and individual students CCDS item responses. Researchers segregated answers based on gender and recipients of free/reduced-price lunch, for the purpose to conduct F-tests on group differences (Wood & Kaszubowski, 2008).

Researchers identified the subscales curiosity, information, key figures, and planning to be the highest career development needs. Researchers found that students with low
socioeconomic status (SES) were considering thirty percent fewer careers then participants with higher SES. Researchers found when comparing students by gender that boys had lower curiosity scores than female participants (Wood & Kaszubowski, 2008).

Wood and Kaszubowski found that students lacked certain aspects in the classroom that encouraged curiosity in students. Classroom aids such as paraprofessionals serve students in individual ways and can focus students on careers that consist of their interests and capabilities (Wood & Kaszubowski, 2008).

**Student Needs**

The study by Hang and Rabren had two objectives 1) to determine the perspective of teachers and students with disabilities regarding co-teaching, and 2) to determine the effectiveness of co-teaching on students academically and behaviorally. Participants for this study were located in the southeastern United States. The schools selected included four elementary schools, one middle school, one junior high school, and one high school. Researchers selected forty-five participants from these schools. Thirteen of the forty-five were special education teachers while the remaining consisted of general education teachers. Participants consisted of 7 males and 38 females. Twenty-four taught first- to fifth-grade, eight taught sixth/seventh-grade, nine taught eighth/ninth-grade, and the remaining four taught tenth- to twelfth-grade. All teachers were implementing their first year of co-teaching (Hang & Rabren, 2009).

Student participants included fifty-eight students with disabilities that represented 52% of all students with disabilities within the seven schools selected. Student participants all attended at least one co-taught class. Of these participants, twenty-two were Caucasian, and thirty-six were African American. Disabilities of students ranged, but included; 1) developmental
delay, 2) emotional disturbance, 3) hearing impairment, 4) mental retardation, 5) orthopedic impairment, 6) specific learning disabilities, 7) speech and language impairment, and 8) other health impairments. The majority of student participants (twenty-four) had a specific learning disability; the second highest student participants (fourteen) had other health impairments (Hang & Rabren, 2009).

Researchers developed perspective surveys for teachers and students based on information found in previous co-teaching literature. Researchers formed surveys using a 5-point Likert-type scale. The teacher’s perspective survey focused on four domains. These included components of co-teaching, teachers’ roles and responsibilities, teachers’ expectations, and planning schedule. Student perspective surveys consisted of four different domains. These domains included difference between resource classroom and co-taught classroom, students’ expectations, challenges, and advantages/disadvantages (Hang & Rabren, 2009).

Once developed, five experts and nine co-teaching research team members reviewed drafts of the surveys to determine validity, clarity, and relevance of the survey questions throughout five separate developmental meetings (Hang & Rabren, 2009).

For observations, researchers divided five co-teaching models into three dimensions: teaching roles, student group distribution, and teachers’ locations. Observers concentrated on leader and assistant, simultaneous teaching, and alternating teaching in regards to teaching roles. Observers concentrated on two equal-size groups, large group with individuals, one bigger group and one smaller group, and one group when observing student group distribution. In regards to teachers’ location, observers focused on the changes between groups, when teacher remains with the same group, and the times when not applicable—a single group (Hang & Rabren, 2009).
Teachers’ perspective surveys were distributed and returned to researchers with the teachers’ pre-determined alphanumeric code. Researchers also assigned student participants an alphanumeric code. Teachers distributed and collected surveys from students. Researchers assigned random observers from the co-teaching research team to take observations of co-teachers. Researchers also looked at pre co-teaching and post co-teaching students’ SAT scores, discipline referrals and tardy/absence count by student alphanumeric code. Researchers analyzed all data through SPSS 11.5 for Windows with a .05 significance level (Hang & Rabren, 2009).

Researchers found that academically, students performed better in reading and math when co-taught then in classrooms without co-teaching. Hang and Rabren also found negative statistically significant differences behaviorally between co-taught students and those that were not co-taught. Increases in student participants’ absence, tardy, and discipline referral records occurred upon co-teaching’s introduction (Hang & Rabren, 2009). Hang and Rabren suggested that while co-teaching can be relevant academically, it has adverse effects behaviorally. Co-teaching is an effective secondary classroom practice that will affect the academics of students positively.

Austin (2001) selected participants from nine New Jersey school districts. Austin selected one hundred and thirty-nine teachers who taught K-12 to participate in the study. The researcher chose districts that the researcher had pre-identified to have the inclusion model established. Teacher participants were current public school employees serving as general K-12 teachers and special education teachers. The districts were middle income and the average class sizes ranged from 27-31. A majority of participants taught at the secondary level (6-12) and taught sciences or social studies. The majority of general education teachers had a master’s degree or higher which was a larger percent then special education teachers. The majority of
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participants had taught longer if they were general education teacher, women and only fifty-four percent of all teachers volunteered for inclusive classroom teaching assignments (Austin, 2001).

Researchers used a survey instrument known as The Perceptions of Co-Teaching Survey (PCTS) to assess participants. The PCTS consisted of two major components. Part I regarded demographic information while Part II solicited information relevant to the four specific categories that are applicable to the teachers perceptions of collaboration. These four categories included; co-teacher perceptions of current experience, recommended collaborative practices, teacher preparation for collaborative teaching, and school-based supports that facilitate collaborative teaching (Austin, 2001).

Researchers submitted the survey to nine experts for review, prior to the release to study participants, to ensure validity, clarity, and relevance. Sets of questions on the survey began with the initial question designed for “yes” or “no” answers while the remaining set of questions probed into reasoning for the response. The researcher posed all questions the same way to all participants to ensure consistency and reliability. The researcher gave participants the survey along with an explanatory cover letter describing the purpose, expectations, and informed the participants of their right to decline participation. Surveys were completed and collected the next day. The researcher randomly selected an equal number of general education and special education co-teachers from the survey respondents. Researchers recorded interviews through audiotapes (Austin, 2001).

Austin used SPSS 9.0 for Windows with .05 statistical significance to analyze the survey responses. Austin coded the audiotaped interviews to facilitate the identification of trends (2001). Austin found from this study that teacher participants who co-taught, taught a greater amount of classes than teachers who did not co-teach. Austin also found that those teachers who
co-taught felt more confident in their teaching capabilities and believed the strategies they used to be effective in educating all students. Austin’s findings are important to consider, as co-teaching can be an effective secondary classroom practice (2001).

Ganzert (2012) selected a sample of students from the North Carolina Community College system database which contained the students enrolled in community colleges throughout the state that had graduated high school in 2003 and enrolled in college the same year. Seventy-nine percent of the over 15,000 students had no records of dual enrollment and seven percent had one or more dual enrolled courses. Fourteen percent had one or more Huskins Bill courses, which is a program designated by North Carolina as a program of dual enrollment with courses that take place at a secondary facility or one that can be facilitated to multiple dual enrolled students together on the college campus (Ganzert, 2012).

Ganzert (2012) obtained GPA from the sample after the first year of college to determine overall student success. Ganzert divided the sample into three comparison groups in order to perform causal-comparative analysis. Students who took at least one dual enrollment and students who took a Huskins Bill course while in high school made up for the first two groups. The third group consisted of students who had not taken any dual enrollment course. The researcher then used ANOVA to determine statistical significance. Ganzert used SPSS 17.0 statistical software to calculate student success (based on GPA and graduation rate) and further compared the three group’s success rates (Ganzert, 2012).

The study showed that female students in the dual enrolled groups and in the non-dual enrolled groups had better GPA than males in all groups. Ganzert also found that students who had dual enrolled had higher GPA than students who had never dual enrolled. This study shows how dual enrollment during secondary education allows students to branch out and become
better students more likely to succeed in post-secondary education. Dual enrollment is a successful secondary classroom aid when gifted students are not able to receive extra attention due to lower achieving student needs in the classroom (Ganzert, 2012).

Patterson (2012) studied the case for culturally responsive teaching in physical education. Participants for this study included 140 high school students from an urban public school located in California. Participants ranged in age from fourteen to eighteen. Ninety-five males and forty-five females participated in this study. The majority of students were Caucasian with the remaining minority being African American, Asian American, Hispanic, or Native American. The researcher used three ninth-grade classes and one tenth-grade class for this study. Students and parents gave consent prior to the administration of the questionnaire (Patterson, 2012).

The instrument used to collect information was a twenty-seven item 5-point Likert questionnaire. Twenty-one of the questions from the Multicultural Sensitivity Scale (MSS) were included. The researcher ensured validity of the questionnaire with additional questions and edited MSS questions by reviewing with the creators of MSS and by two professors (Patterson, 2012).

Patterson administered the questionnaire during the student’s physical education period. The researcher instructed students not to discuss the survey and to turn it in face down for confidentiality. The researcher then combined the answers to determine common themes. The themes that were strongly felt in response to other ethnic groups included; the need to avoid encounters, feel threatened, feel tense and uptight, and not enjoyable working or associating with (Patterson, 2012).
Patterson found that students could feel untrusting of students with different culture backgrounds. This could affect students working together for class projects and assignments. This may also affect the atmosphere of the classroom. This shows that teachers need to be open and model culturally tolerant behavior for students as teachers are role models in the classroom and in the school setting. Providing understanding and acceptance of all cultures is an appropriate secondary classroom practice that will lead to student success (Patterson, 2012).

Pepper, Blackwell, Monroe and Coskey (2012) investigated the active learning approach in oppose to traditional lecture. Active learning consists of cooperative learning groups, problem-centered learning, group presentations, and other peer-learning aspects. To determine candidates’ perceptions of active learning instructional strategies, researchers used both quasi-experimental and descriptive survey research designs in three phases. For Phase I, researchers distributed a questionnaire to teacher candidates in an introductory foundation college course that incorporated active learning strategies. These questionnaires gathered candidates’ perceptions on active learning strategies. Fifty-four volunteers completed the anonymous survey over two semesters. The questionnaire consisted of twelve questions with “yes” or “no” answers, but also left space for a response or explanation of an answer. Researchers analyzed Phase I data by quantifying yes/no answers and coding explanations into categories based on patterns and themes (Pepper et al., 2012).

Participants for Phase I were students in the teacher education program at University of Mississippi. These students were in their first semester and were taking the foundations course. Ninety-five percent of overall Phase I candidates were Caucasian and the remaining were African American. The majority of candidates were female; candidates mean age was 22 years (Pepper et al., 2012).
For Phase II, researchers compared teacher candidates whose introductory foundations course included active learning strategies to teacher candidates whose foundations course utilized a traditional lecture approach. Researchers compared the Praxis II-Principles of Teaching and Learning (PLT) score, both overall and subset scores, of both groups. Researchers used a quasi-experimental nonequivalent posttest design to determine results. Roughly ninety-eight percent of Phase I participants took part in Phase II of the study (Pepper et al., 2012).

Pepper et al. employed descriptive survey research for Phase III of the study. In Phase III, researchers administered a survey to teacher education graduates from Phase II post-graduation after participants had been teaching for two to three years. This survey was to determine teachers’ perceptions of active learning strategies in the classroom. The survey used was a Likert-style with a five-point grading scale. Forty-two percent of teacher candidates in the active learning course returned the survey while twenty-three percent from the traditional lecture course responded out of the Phase II candidates (Pepper et al., 2012).

Pepper et al. found the average scores on Praxis II PLT for active learning groups to be 173.77 for group one (first semester) and 175.66 for group two (second semester) while the traditional lecture students scored 169.46 in group one and 169.11 in group two. This makes for a difference of 4.31 for group one and 6.55 for group two (Pepper et al., 2012).

From the Phase III survey result, Pepper et al. concluded that sixty-nine percent of the traditional lecture group used active learning nine or more times during a grading period, while the active learning group incorporated these strategies forty-seven percent. Pepper et al. found that over fifty percent of the active learning group used the problem-based learning and group presentations compared to sixty to eighty percent of the traditional lecture group. Almost one hundred percent from both groups used cooperative group strategies (Pepper et al., 2012).
Results show that active learning strategies when used can lead to higher grades. Researchers also found that the active learning group tended to be more understanding of their students and the psychology behind the reasons students behave in certain ways. Using active learning strategies in the classroom, such as peer-assignments, group work, etc., are an example of characteristics of an effective secondary classroom practice (Pepper et al., 2012).

Krebs and Torrez selected participants that were completing a semester of student teaching. Researchers established 174 participants. All participants taught at the elementary level and attended a four-year, public university in the southwest area of the United States. Researchers asked cooperating teachers supervising the student teachers to participate as well. Researchers surveyed all participants on their perceptions on the characteristics of successful pre-service teachers (Krebs & Torrez, 2011).

Participation in the survey was anonymous and voluntary. Researchers presented the survey to all participants at the end of the semester. Researchers made two open-ended survey instruments to collect data. The first survey was for pre-service teachers and the second was for cooperating teacher supervisors. A cooperating teacher distributed and collected the survey to students and other cooperating teachers. Seventy-eight percent of pre-service teachers and sixty-four percent of cooperating teachers returned the surveys (Krebs & Torrez, 2011).

Researchers coded the data, looked for patterns and themes, and developed categories. Common themes included motivation/initiative, professionalism, teacher dispositions, personal characteristics, and knowledge. Once researchers established and coded themes, a review of each survey to locate and assign word codes by category. Researchers entered codes into a statistical analysis program (SPSS) for analysis (Krebs & Torrez, 2011).
Thirty-eight percent of pre-service teachers responded that motivation/initiative were the prime characteristics of an effective teacher. Motivation/initiative as a response had the highest frequency. Professionalism as a characteristic was twenty-six percent frequent. The remaining frequency of characteristics included teacher dispositions, personal characteristics, and knowledge (Krebs & Torrez, 2011).

Teachers and staff must be motivated in order to be successful. Professionalism, disposition, and knowledge are important characteristics of an effective classroom. Teachers’ personal disposition will set the mood for the classroom (Krebs & Torrez, 2011). Haymore Sandholtz researched written documents from students enrolled in a southern California public university in a combined teacher credential and master’s degree program. Of the 290 students, eighty-seven percent were females. The entire group consisted of fifty-nine percent Caucasians, twenty-three percent Chicano/Latino, fifteen percent Asian-Pacific Islander, and two percent African American. Seventy-six percent planned on teaching at the elementary level, with the remaining going into the secondary level for teaching (Haymore Sandholtz, 2011).

The school program was a twelve-month program with a goal to provide opportunities for candidates to link theory and practice. The researcher developed an assignment for students in the program that asked them to “describe a teaching experience that you would handle the same way again and one you would handle differently” (Haymore Sandholtz, 2011). The researcher designed the assignment to require reasoning and as a research tool to provide a window for concerns and conceptions of effectiveness while avoiding the terms effective and ineffective (Haymore Sandholtz, 2011).

The researcher examined responses for patterns of meaning in the pre-service teachers’ descriptions of experiences. The researcher examined responses through a social constructive
research paradigm. The researcher examined the documents on three levels. For the first level, the researcher coded student descriptions with a pre-specified primary code as either classroom management or instruction. The researcher defined class management as the “actions and strategies teachers use to solve the problem of order in classrooms” (Haymore Sandholtz, 2011).

For the second level, the researcher identified sub-codes within the two primary codes developed in the first level. Policies or procedures, teacher actions, student incident, class incident, and master teacher intervention were all sub-codes for classroom management. Planning and preparation, instructional strategies, standards and objectives, restructured lessons, student participation, student understanding, knowledge of students, subject matter knowledge and time pressures included the sub-codes under instruction (Haymore Sandholtz, 2011).

The researcher looked across all categories for examples for ineffective and effective examples of codes for the third level. The researcher investigated patterns related to the group and framework. The researcher found that seventy-seven percent of participants linked student participation to an effective lesson. Thirty percent of participants found student understanding to be an indicator of an effective lesson. Participants also identified restructure lessons, and standards and objectives, as indicators of an effective lesson. Fifty-three percent of participants found poor instructional strategies associated with ineffective instruction. Seventeen percent of participants found (lack of) planning and preparation caused a lesson to be ineffective. Participants identified time pressures and (lack of) subject matter knowledge as characteristics of an ineffective lesson (Haymore Sandholtz, 2011).

The researcher recognized that pre-service teachers felt most effective when students understood and participate in a lesson. An engaged student is more likely to learn the lesson taught than an uninterested student. The researcher recognized that an ineffective lesson included
poor instructional strategies and lack of planning and preparation along with time pressures. When teachers are allowed sufficient time to deliver and prepare a lesson, the student is more likely to absorb the information then if a lesson that is rushed (Haymore Sandholtz, 2011).

The researcher found important characteristics of an effective and ineffective teacher. These characteristics are applicable to all staff that has contact with students. These characteristics indicate the actions taken in a classroom, which effectively determine successful and unsuccessful secondary classroom practices (Haymore Sandholtz, 2011).

This research has indicated educational needs of students living in a high-poverty community, needs of students attending suburban schools, and effective characteristics of teachers and support staff.
Chapter III – Results and Analysis Relative to Problem

Demographics play a large role on schools approach to educating students. Above all student needs must be clear in order to be met. Students from low socioeconomic backgrounds see less of a future for themselves then students with a higher socioeconomic background. This is due to the mindset that comes with generational poverty that gears students to believe they are not going to succeed, which defers in mindset with persons in situational poverty and of higher socioeconomic status. Educators must be clear on the needs and beliefs of this specific population in order to educate them successfully (Payne, 1996; Woods & Kaszubowski, 2008).

A large amount of schools serving high-poverty communities has high-minorities. ISLLC Standard 3 requires that a school administrator promote student success by ensuring a safe learning environment, however, research found that students felt uncomfortable around groups outside of their culture (Green, 2010; Patterson, 2012). Researchers found that it is extremely important to teach and demonstrate tolerance of all cultures because when students feel safe in their surrounds their learning will be more effective. One study showed schools fail because of refusal to meet demographic needs (Evans, 2007).

Researchers found that simple actions meet the needs of a demographically changing schools and school with students in low-socioeconomic status. A study showed a school’s amount of behavioral referrals decrease dramatically after simply changing the order of the day to allow more time for socialization between students (Evans, 2007). Schools need to accept and adapt to the community in which they serve.

Correct training and effective preparation are vital before entering the field of education. This is true not only for teacher, but for all staff members working in schools. Training throughout staffs time in an education setting are sought by paraprofessionals and
teaching staff alike. Educators are more effective with students when they participate in life-long training (Griffin-Shirley & Matlock, 2004). Researchers found that professional development throughout an educators career helped promote resilience, especially in school that are high-minority, low-achievement. Professional development also led to more student success in the classroom (Yonezawa, Jones & Robb Singer, 2011).

Researchers showed that in schools in which staff did not feel supported by administration or staff and administration were in constant disagreement, behavioral referrals increased dramatically (Evans, 2007). Educators that work together are more likely to run effective schools that allow for student achievement. ISLLC Standard 2 requires administrators to foster a successful school environment by sustaining a positive school culture (Green, 2010).

Researchers found that paraprofessional were often the best communicators between the teacher and students, but also between teachers and parents. Researchers found that paraprofessionals were able to increase student achievement due to their ability to focus in on students having trouble (Chopra et al., 2004). Paraprofessionals serve as an effective link between parents and schools because they are not as compelled as teacher and often have more time and less restraints (Moore, Gallagher, & Bagin, 2012).

Researchers found a characteristic of an effective teacher included having a positive relationship with parents. One study showed that when teachers did not believe in reaching out to parents, holding workshops, and inviting parents into the classroom, but only relied on historical communications such as newsletters home, and biyearly conferences, students behavior referrals rose and parental involvement decreased (Evans, 2007). Students whose parents are more involved in their education are more likely to succeed then those with uninvolved parents (Brewster & Railsback, 2003).
Researchers also found that teachers with a better relationship with their students were often more effective and students were higher achievers. Teachers who employed Active Learning techniques in their classrooms, classrooms that involved small work groups, group presentations, etc., had better relationships with their students and in turn their students learned lessons more effectively (Pepper, Blackwell, Moore & Coskey, 2012).

Researchers determined that the most successful teachers all had on common characteristic. The most effective educators were teachers that were invested in their students’ educations. Researchers found students achieved higher on standardized test with teachers whose beliefs and attitudes showed students that the teachers cared (Pawlak, 2009). Researchers showed that teachers that were supportive of students and motivated towards student success were the most effective in ensuring student achievement (Cross & Hong, 2012; Krebs & Torrez, 2011).

Researchers identified several classroom practices that were effective in student learning. In various studies, researchers identified that student participation promoted student learning and is a characteristic of a successful classroom (Haymore Sandholtz, 2011).

Researchers also found that the act of co-teaching was highly effective academically, but caused adverse effects behaviorally (Hang & Rabren, 2009). Although, co-teaching can raise grades, participants should take into consideration their population. Researcher found that teachers who partake in co-teaching are more confident in their lessons (Austin, 2001).

Researchers also found dual enrollment effective as a way to address the needs of gifted students in a low achieving school district. Researchers found that dual enrolled students had higher Grade Point Averages (GPA) and a higher graduation rate than students who had never dual enrolled in a course (Ganzert, 2012).
Through many studies, researchers have been able to gain valuable information on the needs of students in high-poverty communities, find secondary classroom practices that aid in student success, and define key characteristics of a successful educator.
Chapter IV - Recommendations and Conclusion

Recommendation

Meeting the needs of students living in high-poverty can be difficult for many teachers. The majority of teacher pre-service education focuses on foundations, methods, and core content with little, if any, focus on student needs based on socioeconomic status. This paper is a professional development tool that offers a basic outline of the needs of students living in high-poverty and provides examples of effective practices from successful teachers of high-poverty students.

Staff members should be educated to the needs of these students. This should be done by the school district and can be done through a Professional Development seminar on the needs of students of low socioeconomic status. If this is not possible due to time and resources, districts can educate educators through various informational PowerPoint presentations available online.

Staff members should also be educated on teaching tolerance and encouraging students to participate in daily activities. This could be done through professional development seminars or through reviewing the exhibiting handbook, again dependent on time and funding.

Areas for Further Research

“Beat the Odds” is a program that exemplifies and rewards schools that overcome adversity, demonstrated academic excellence, and have given back to the community. Although, the program is only in California, Washington, D. C., Texas, Minnesota, New York and Ohio, other states have adapted similar programs. “Beat the Odds” schools would contain staff that would be particularly good participants to select for a study on characteristics of effective teachers in high-poverty populations. Participants should have documented success with students dependent on the students’ socioeconomic status and student success. The control group to
compare with should have a similar socioeconomic status and not be a “Beat the Odds” school. This study would be more effective if researchers used several schools of each within the study.

A qualitative study would be most beneficial as it measures the quality rather than quantity. Several observations of teaching periods, that are audiotaped and then coded by common words and phrases, would be an effective way to establish themes and patterns. Once coded, the data should be put into an SPSS with a statistical significance of 0.05 and compared to the control group scores.

**Summary and Conclusion**

Conclusions made from the studies reviewed within this paper indicate many effective practices for success with students in a low-socioeconomic status. Recommendations for professional development to instruct educators on multicultural tolerance, needs of high-poverty students, and effective approaches to teach low socioeconomic status students should be of the utmost importance to the school district.
References


Appendix

Reaching New Heights with High-Performing, High-Poverty Schools

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Director

February 2006

Administered by Learning Point Associates in partnership with Southwest Educational Laboratory (SEDL), the Education Development Center (EDC), and WestEd, and in collaboration with the Academy for Educational Development (AED), under contract with the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education of the U.S. Department of Education.
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