Co-teaching and Teacher Candidate Perceived Competence
Allison Bender, Kimberly Charles, Kelsey Jensen, Grant Johnson, Emma Nickerson, Jessica Olson, Meghan Ricci, Amy Werner, and Faculty Laura Dunbar, Janine Fisk, Deb Pattee
Education Studies and Special Education
University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire

Abstract
Recent trends in education have focused on teacher effectiveness including instructional research, which places a strong emphasis on improving teaching by understanding teacher effectiveness in providing high-quality instruction and their ability to learn. Teaching is a complex process, which has been linked to student learning, teaching behavior, and classroom management. This study explored the perceptions of teacher competency among teacher candidates and cooperating teachers using co-teaching models. The specific research questions were as follows:
(a) How are the perceived levels of teacher competency in teacher candidate as they progress through student teaching being used either the replacement model or the co-teaching model?
(b) Are there differences in the perceived teacher competency between the replacement model and the co-teaching model?
(c) Are there differences in the perceived teacher competency between the replacement model and the co-teaching model?
(d) Are there any areas of strength and growth different between the students using the replacement model and those using the co-teaching model?

Operational Definition of Competency
Professional competence can be defined as the skills, knowledge, attitudes, and motivational variables that form the basis for mastery of specific situations (Kieme, Hartig, & Kunter, 2008). Kieme et al. (2007) identified the following educators professional competences: professional knowledge, beliefs related to learning, and motivational and self-regulatory variables. Professional knowledge can be categorized in three types of knowledge that lead to teacher competency: subject-specific content knowledge, the subject specific pedagogical content knowledge, and general teaching pedagogical knowledge.

Beliefs
Pajares (1992) asserted, “beliefs are the conceptions that indicate the impact that individual make throughout their lives” (p. 307), and therefore, a teacher’s beliefs are strongly connected to their lesson plans, instructional practices, and classroom decisions. There is a wide spectrum of beliefs that influence behavior. However, two specific beliefs tend to correlate to teacher behaviors teacher’s sense of efficacy and content specific behavioral beliefs.

Motivation and Self-regulation
Teaching demands high energy, attention, and a tolerance to many frustrations. Teachers must be able to self-regulate to maintain their effectiveness and commitment, which includes reflecting on pedagogical practice.

Research Questions
The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of teacher competency among teacher candidates and cooperating teachers using co-teaching and replacement models during student teaching. The specific research questions were as follows:
(a) What are the perceived levels of teacher competency in teacher candidates as they progress through student teaching using either the replacement model or the co-teaching model?
(b) Are there differences in the perceived teacher competency between the replacement model and the co-teaching model?
(c) Are there differences in the perceived teacher competency between the replacement model and the co-teaching model?
(d) Are there any areas of strength and growth different between the students using the replacement model and those using the co-teaching model?

Selected Results

Pair One: Elementary, Special Education
Professional Knowledge
“…the most important one is that they are able to form a relationship with staff members as well as students, especially...” (TC)
Beliefs
“I have a very large compassion for my students. I see them as these little humans that have this great potential.” (TC) “I think that a competent teacher is someone who is flexible, willing to adjust on the fly...” (CT)
Community
“There are some students that I don’t do very well with, so when it comes to those students I don’t feel as confident.” (CT) “I think just having the energy too; I think kids really do tend to feed off of their teacher’s energy.” (CT)
Motivation/Self-Regulation
“I think that’s so important to build a positive and good relationship with not just parents, but other teachers and students....” (TC)

Pair Two: Elementary, Third Grade
Professional Knowledge
“This week I’m working on different strategies you know with pasture and because I’m doing that I need to be extra...” (TC)
Beliefs
“I think one of the things competent teacher has to be his ability to be flexible and to think on his feet.” (TC)
Community
“I think just having the energy too; I think kids really do tend to feed off of their teacher’s energy.” (CT)
Motivation/Self-Regulation
“...it’s important that the teacher pays a lot of attention to the...” (TC)

Pair Three: Middle School, Music
Professional Knowledge
“I think that’s so important to build a positive and good relationship with not just parents, but other teachers and students....” (TC)
Beliefs
“I think just having the energy too; I think kids really do tend to feed off of their teacher’s energy.” (CT)
Community
“There are some students that I don’t do very well with, so when it comes to those students I don’t feel as confident.” (CT) “I think just having the energy too; I think kids really do tend to feed off of their teacher’s energy.” (CT)
Motivation/Self-Regulation
“For the students that I work with...I'm always at different places with my experience, so my huge goals was really just build rapport with students.” (TC) “I think that’s so important to build a positive and good relationship with not just parents, but other teachers and students....” (TC)

Pair Four: High School, Special Education
Professional Knowledge
“I think just having the energy too; I think kids really do tend to feed off of their teacher’s energy.” (CT)
Beliefs
“I think one of the things competent teacher has to be his ability to be flexible, willing to adjust on the fly...” (CT)
Community
“I think just having the energy too; I think kids really do tend to feed off of their teacher’s energy.” (CT)
Motivation/Self-Regulation
“I think just having the energy too; I think kids really do tend to feed off of their teacher’s energy.” (CT)

Pair Five: Elementary, Second Grade
Professional Knowledge
“I think just having the energy too; I think kids really do tend to feed off of their teacher’s energy.” (CT)
Beliefs
“I think just having the energy too; I think kids really do tend to feed off of their teacher’s energy.” (CT)
Community
“I think just having the energy too; I think kids really do tend to feed off of their teacher’s energy.” (CT)
Motivation/Self-Regulation
“I think just having the energy too; I think kids really do tend to feed off of their teacher’s energy.” (CT)

Emerging Themes:
Consistent with our operational definition of teacher competency, the following themes emerged:

Professional Knowledge
Beliefs
Motivation/Self-Regulation
Community
These themes were consistent throughout the data set from both Teacher Candidates and Cooperating Teachers.

Acknowledgements
This research was funded through a Faculty/Student Research Collaboration Grant provided by the Office of Research and Sponsored Projects at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire. We also wish to thank our participants who were willing to take part in our study.

Methodology
The research utilized a case study framework following the guidelines of Creswell (2007). Creswell (2007) defined case study as a naturalistic system (case) in which multiple sources of data have been collected over time to report a case-description and case-analysis with detailed analysis. Because multiple teacher candidates and their respective cooperating teachers served as participants in this research, the design is considered to be a multiple case study, as described by Stake (1993), as “each case study will be treated as a case of the ‘ideal case’ of benefits of co-teaching ‘but there will be important coordination between the individual studies’” (p. 3-4).

Participants were asked to complete the following tasks during the nine weeks of their experience:
(a) An initial and a final interview each lasting approximately 20-30 minutes during which participants answered questions regarding perceptions of teacher competency
(b) Completion of a bi-weekly survey consisting of a Likert rating of the Teacher Candidate’s perceived competence and a prompt to support the rating
(c) Record a lesson segment at the beginning and the end of the study period
(d) Following the coding process outlined by Emerson, Fritz, and Shaw (1995), open to focused coding was used to analyze the data. Both internal and external codes were used. Excerpt were taken from the initial interviews and coded to generate categories as many ideas, or internal codes, as possible during the open coding process. These internal codes were analyzed to see relationships existed between them. This process helped to define the primary codes for the focused coding process, and any codes not relevant were dropped after further data analysis.

Trustworthiness measures to ensure credibility of data included data triangulation and peer review.

Selected References