Developing Collaborative Educator Teams in Full-Day Kindergarten (FDK)

Geneva Mather-Dyer

A research paper submitted in conformity with the requirements
For the degree of Master of Teaching
Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto

Copyright by Geneva Mather-Dyer, April 2017
ABSTRACT

This Master of Teaching Research Project is a qualitative study that examines the professional relationship between early childhood educators and teachers who work in full-day kindergarten classrooms. The qualitative research approach involves a literature review and semi-structured interviews with two educator teams consisting of a registered early childhood educator and an Ontario certified teacher. The existing literature on the relationship between educator team members suggests that both professionals can experience challenges that impact their ability to collaborate effectively. This research study aims to identify factors that lead to a successful, collaborative partnership. Themes of the investigation include the experiences that help prepare educators for collaboration, resources that support collaboration, challenges that teams encounter and how they respond to these challenges, and outcomes of collaboration that participating educators observe for students. These findings have implications for the educational research community including additional support that educators require to promote positive collaboration. I also recommend that these findings be used to inform professional development opportunities for early childhood educators and classroom teachers. Overall, I intend to explore the ideas and strategies for collaboration in full-day kindergarten classrooms so that I can foster cooperative teaching in my own professional practice.

Key Words: Collaboration, Co-Teaching, Educator Team, Full-Day Kindergarten, and Professional Development
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First, I want to acknowledge my research supervisor, Dr. Angela MacDonald-Vemic, for her guidance and support throughout the process of completing the Master of Teaching Research Project. I want to thank her for her dedication and commitment to furthering research within the educational community. I also would like to thank Dr. Sarah Cashmore for her input and feedback throughout the research process. Her insights and resources were greatly appreciated.

Thank you to the members of PJ 251 for consistently encouraging me throughout our journey in the Master of Teaching program. We have shared both laughter and tears, and I am grateful for the kindness and compassion that you have all consistently demonstrated. Through my experience in our cohort, I have discovered that it is crucial to be part of a positive learning community. The members of PJ 251 have influenced my teaching motto of “Belonging, Growing, and Becoming Successful.”

Thank you to my family and friends for their support throughout my educational endeavours. I am grateful for the encouragement from my mom, my dad, and my sister. Each of you has motivated me to persevere and to pursue my passions. Thank you to my feline companion for your therapeutic reassurance in times of stress. I would also like to thank Shannon, Laura, Carol, and Deborah for their participation in this research. You have provided me with insight that will impact my professional practice in full-day kindergarten. I have come to understand what is involved in creating an educator team that promotes successful collaboration.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABLE OF CONTENTS</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHAPTER ONE - INTRODUCTION</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.0 Introduction to the Research Study</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Research Problem</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Purpose of the Study</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Research Questions</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4 Background of the Researcher</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4.1 Belonging.</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4.2 Growing.</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4.3 Successful</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5 Overview</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHAPTER TWO - LITERATURE REVIEW</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.0 Introduction</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 Full-Day Kindergarten Implementation</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.1 Impacts of full-day kindergarten.</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.1.1 Educators.</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.1.2 Students.</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Collaborative Educator Teams</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.1 Challenges.</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.1.1 Professional identity.</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.1.2 Professional development.</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.2 Benefits.</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.2.1 Successful collaboration.</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 Conclusion</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHAPTER THREE - RESEARCH METHODOLOGY</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.0 Introduction</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Research Approach and Procedures</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 Instruments of Data Collection</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 Participants</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3.1. Sampling criteria.</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3.2. Sampling procedures.</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3.3. Participant biographies.</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4 Data Analysis</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5 Ethical Review Procedures</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.6 Methodological Limitations and Strengths</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.7 Conclusion</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHAPTER FOUR - RESEARCH FINDINGS</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.0 Introduction</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.0.1 Themes.
4.1 A Variety of Personal and Professional Experiences Contributed to the Preparation for Collaboration Within Educator Teams in Full-Day Kindergarten Classrooms
4.1.1 Educator team members recognized that their own family roles and relationships influenced their ability to collaborate in the kindergarten classroom.
4.1.2 Educator team members recognized the impact of their education and additional qualifications on their ability to collaborate in the kindergarten classroom.
4.1.3 Educator team members recognized the impact of their previous co-teaching relationships on their ability to collaborate effectively in the kindergarten classroom.
4.2 Educator Team Members Facilitated Successful Collaboration by Sharing Teaching Philosophies, Demonstrating Flexibility, and by Participating in Professional Development
4.2.1 Educator team members articulated proactive approaches to achieve a successful collaboration in the kindergarten classroom.
4.2.2 Educator team members acknowledged that each educator needs to demonstrate a willingness to adapt and to maintain a respectful environment through attentive listening.
4.2.3 Educator team members expressed a need for professional development and support from administration and the school community.
4.3 Educator Team Members Addressed Challenges in Communication and Perception Differences by Supporting One Another and Affirming Each Member’s Professional Identity
4.3.1 Educator team members encountered challenges involving planning and communication between educators and parents.
4.3.2 Educator team members reported that stakeholder perceptions of the team influenced the success of their collaboration within the kindergarten classroom.
4.4 Educator Team Members Indicated That Collaboration Was Related to Significant Outcomes for Kindergarten Students in Terms of Engagement and Emotional Well-Being
4.4.1 Educator team members’ consistent and respectful manner impacted the socialization of students in their classroom.
4.4.2 Educator team members’ successful collaboration allowed them to provide individualized attention to each student in the kindergarten classroom.
4.5 Conclusion

CHAPTER FIVE - DISCUSSION
5.0 Introduction
5.1 Overview of Key Findings and Their Significance
5.2 Implications
5.2.1 The educational research community.
5.2.2 My professional identity and practice.
5.3 Recommendations
5.4 Areas for Further Research
5.5 Concluding Comments

REFERENCES

APPENDICES
Appendix A: Letter of Consent for Interview
Appendix B: Interview Protocol
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction to the Research Study

In Ontario, kindergarten has traditionally been a half-day format. In 2009, the Ministry of Education mandated that a full-day, child-centered, play based program be gradually implemented over the span of 5 years, beginning in 2010-2011 (Tozer, 2012). As part of the implementation process, a new educational team has been created for each full-day kindergarten (FDK) class. This team is called an Early-Learning Team (ELT) and consists of a qualified classroom teacher and a qualified early childhood educator (ECE). The purpose of creating this new team is to create a child-centered, developmentally appropriate, integrated, extended-day program of learning (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2012). Early childhood educators working in FDK classrooms must be registered with the College of Early Childhood Educators. They must have completed at least a 2-year college diploma in Early Childhood Education. Many also hold bachelor’s degrees in child study, psychology, and other fields related to child development (Gibson & Pelletier, 2010). Kindergarten teachers are registered with the Ontario College of Teachers. Primary-Junior certifications enable teachers to teach any grade from junior kindergarten to Grade Six. All teachers must have a minimum of a 3-year post-secondary degree, in addition to a teaching certificate obtained from a faculty of education (Gibson & Pelletier, 2010). This highlights the key differences in education between the two professionals in the educator team.

These two professionals are expected to work collaboratively in the kindergarten classroom. Although co-teaching has existed for decades in various formats, there is limited research about the effectiveness of this service delivery model on positive student outcomes (Peper, 2010). However, some research does suggest that there are positive impacts on student
attitude and achievement in a co-teaching classroom (Lam, 2015). For example, when educator teams collaborate, they can facilitate a positive learning environment for kindergarten students (Fern and Friendly, 2014; Lam, 2015). Researchers determined that students in collaborative kindergarten classrooms also demonstrated independent learning skills, classroom participation, and the ability to work cooperatively with peers (Callaghan, 2012; Peper, 2010; Tozer, 2012). These findings suggest that collaborative educator teams serve as a role model for students and foster cooperative learning in full-day kindergarten classrooms.

1.1 Research Problem

Even though teachers and early childhood educators are trained in two very different fields, they are expected to create a collaborative, effective, and positive working team in the classroom (Tozer, 2012). Research demonstrates that an increased sense of collaboration between ECEs and kindergarten teachers may contribute to greater program quality in FDK classrooms (Gibson & Pelletier, 2010; Goulden, 2012; Shahbazi & Salinitri, 2016). However, there are various barriers that can prevent educator teams from collaborating effectively. Goulden (2012) identifies some of these barriers based on the perspectives of teachers in FDK classrooms. The teachers shared concerns such as an increased workload, handling conflicts, and role clarity (Goulden, 2012).

When professionals from different disciplines collaborate, there is the potential for the professional with greater access to resources (pay and prestige) to dominate the other (Gibson & Pelletier, 2010). When asked about their teaching relationship, half of the ECEs surveyed in the study by Gibson and Pelletier (2010) agreed that they had less of an influence on program decisions relative to their teaching partner, while 17.9% disagreed that their partner discussed changes to the program before implementing them. As well, over half of the kindergarten
teachers agreed that they had more authority than their teaching partners (Gibson & Pelletier, 2010). These results suggest that while hierarchies may not occur in all FDK classrooms, this structure may be occurring in approximately one quarter to one third of these classrooms.

The issue of understanding the roles of other professionals working within integrated staff teams is a significant source of tension (Corter et al., 2007; Wagner & French, 2010). In the initial implementation of FDK, Tozer (2012) reported that teachers and ECEs were not aware of the role of their partner or the support that they could offer to the educator team. Research has identified characteristics that have a significant impact on the co-teaching relationship (Peper, 2010). These characteristics include personality compatibility, shared philosophy of education, willingness, positive attitude, and perception within the literature. The participants in the study by Peper (2010) also identified flexibility, openness, communication, respect or trust, and personality as important factors in the partnership. The ability to work collaboratively in all aspects of the classroom was identified as essential for effective instruction in the co-teaching setting. Currently, there are not sufficient opportunities for professional development to facilitate collaboration within the classroom (Ackerman, 2004; Gibson & Pelletier, 2010; Tozer, 2012). Professional development opportunities need to be created and made available to educator teams.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

Considering this current problem, the goal of my research is to examine the professional relationship between early childhood educators and Ontario certified teachers who work in kindergarten classrooms. The aim of my research is to identify factors that lead to a successful partnership, and to learn from participating educators what outcomes of collaboration they have observed for their students. I aim to share these findings with the educational research
community to further inform the training of early childhood educators and Ontario certified teachers, as well as to further inform their professional development.

1.3 Research Questions

This investigation is guided by the following questions, with the goal of informing the professional practice of the educator team in full-day kindergarten. The main question guiding this study is:

- What factors lead to successful collaborative partnerships for teams of early childhood educators and kindergarten classroom teachers?

These subsidiary questions will also be addressed:

- What experiences helped prepare these educators for their collaborative work?
- What resources support collaboration between members of the educator team?
- What challenges do these educator teams encounter, and how do they respond to these challenges?
- What outcomes of collaboration do these teams observe for their students?

1.4 Background of the Researcher

I completed my undergraduate studies at the University of Guelph in the Child, Youth, and Family Program. This Applied Science degree also certified me as a Registered Early Childhood Educator. As someone who has specific training in both positions as an early childhood educator and as a teacher, I have a unique perspective about the contributions and experience that each educator brings to the partnership. I am familiar with the educational training of both professionals. In my training as an early childhood educator, the emphasis was on supporting child development. However, in my teacher education, the focus was on lesson
planning and assessment. Overall, I felt that this difference in education impacted my perspective of my role in full-day kindergarten.

In my practicum experiences as an early childhood educator, I found that the teacher often held the power to make decisions. I observed tension between teachers and early childhood educators when rather than working cooperatively, both educators had their own agenda and focused on their own independent goals. In this type of environment, there was a lack of communication between members of the educator team. In contrast, I have also observed educator teams that do communicate regularly with each other. From my experience, communication is crucial to support collaboration in the classroom. As I enter the teaching profession my main concern is how to foster collaboration within a new partnership. As well, I am wondering what can be done to support educator teams that are experiencing challenges in collaboration. From this research, I hope to gain insight into how teachers and early childhood educators negotiate their professional partnership.

Over the course of my education, I have had the opportunity to develop my own personal teaching philosophy. I continue to develop and redefine this philosophy based on practicum experiences. My philosophy shapes the way I view or evaluate the classroom environment and can be summarized with the motto “Belonging, Growing, and Successful.”

1.4.1 Belonging.

Parents and teachers need to work cooperatively to facilitate learning inside and outside of the classroom. It is my responsibility to help create a sense of belonging for both children and their families. Belonging is reinforced because the supportive relationship can create a sense of security for students. I recognize that there is a high level of diversity amongst families in Canada. My philosophy previously focused on our similarities, but that can be a slippery slope
leading to assimilation. Instead, I want to focus on embracing our individual differences. This can lead to the development of community. I demonstrate a sense of belonging in my teaching by intentionally creating modifications to gear an activity towards each child. The result is an increased level of participation which promotes a feeling of belonging.

1.4.2 Growing.

Children need to be given the opportunity to be active participants in their learning environment. Exploration is essential for children to make discoveries. I aim to provide students with a variety of materials and experiences that will promote autonomy. It is important to find a balance between promoting an individual or collective approach to teaching and learning. Education reflects several areas of growth such as social, emotional, cognitive, and physical development (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010). From my experience, there is a progression of stages in each of these areas. I have witnessed how children do not go through these stages at the same rate, but rather show a unique pattern of growth. My strategy as a teacher is to incorporate these areas into activities that promote healthy and holistic development in children. Parents and educators also have a chance to grow in their knowledge or understanding of a child’s development. Educators must work cooperatively with parents to have a positive influence on a child’s growth and development.

1.4.3 Successful.

Part of being successful is setting realistic goals and expectations and then striving to meet those goals. When parents and professionals are unified in goal setting, this leads to the best outcome for children and their development. Often when goals are not met, it is because they were not specific, measurable, achievable, or realistic. One of the challenges of teaching is encouraging students to internalize the motivation to learn. As a teacher, an important aspect of
my role is to encourage students to effectively set goals and celebrate with them in their achievements. I used to feel that the only emotion I should express with children was happiness or “positive” emotion. This assumption could lead me to be inauthentic as a teacher and could be detrimental in terms of social development. I have now come to realize that part of being successful is recognizing a wide range of emotions and how to process them. This can include frustration and disappointment. I can be a role model for students by promoting honest expression of emotions and resiliency when things do not work out as expected. Overall, the goal of my research is to identify strategies that can promote a successful and effective educator team. My experiences in the role of an ECE and a Teaching Candidate, have made me aware of the importance of a collaborative educator team, and how support of this process is sometimes present or absent. This research could potentially inform the professional development of the educator team.

1.5 Overview

In order to respond to the research questions, I conducted a qualitative research study using purposeful sampling to interview two teachers and two early childhood educators about their strategies for effective collaboration as part of an educator team. In Chapter Two, I review the literature in the areas of team teaching and full-day kindergarten. Then in Chapter Three, I elaborate on the research design. In Chapter Four, I report my research findings and discuss their significance considering the existing research literature. Chapter Five will identify the implications of the research findings for my own teacher identity and practice, and for the educational research community more broadly. I also articulate a series of questions raised by the research findings and point to areas for future research.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

In this chapter, I will review the literature pertaining to the full-day kindergarten (FDK) program in Ontario. Specifically, I will explore research about the impacts of FDK on both educators and students. By reviewing a variety of sources, I intend to demonstrate the potential challenges and benefits of collaborative educator teams. These teams consist of two professionals, including an Ontario certified teacher (OCT) and an early childhood educator (ECE). Overall, the goal of reviewing this research is to determine what factors may contribute to the success of collaborative educator teams in full-day kindergarten classrooms.

2.1 Full-Day Kindergarten Implementation

The Liberal party has been the governing party in Ontario since 2003. In 2007, the government began discussing full-day kindergarten and completed the implementation by September of 2015 (Tozer, 2012). FDK is fully funded by the Ontario government. Based on research, former Premier Dalton McGuinty articulated that the motivation for full-day kindergarten was to close the gap in early learning (White & Prentice, 2016). According to Fine (2008), the goal was to provide extended Kindergarten programs to ease the stress for parents who were struggling to find half-day kindergarten spots for their children and to raise the standardized test scores of students in the future.

DeCicca (2007) conducted a longitudinal study to examine the impact of FDK on standardized test scores as children progressed from kindergarten to Grade One. This study found that FDK does substantially raise math and reading achievement scores. However, it is important to recognize that this impact is short-lived as improvements drop dramatically over the course of First Grade (DeCicca, 2007). Findings by DeCicca (2007) are consistent with Tozer
(2012), who also found that the positive impacts from the FDK program faded in Grade One. One factor suggested by DeCicca (2007) is that intervention and teacher involvement is disrupted at the end of the school year and over the summer months. Tozer (2012) also suggested that it could be the change in the teaching structure in the primary classroom. DeCicca (2012) and Tozer (2012) suggest that further investigation is required to determine why the impacts of FDK are not fully realized in Grade One classrooms.

With the change from half-days to full-days, it was decided that there would now be at least one ECE in each classroom. The inclusion of an additional educator in the classroom was intended to further support the individual learning needs of students. Ultimately, the goal of full-day kindergarten has been to prepare young children for academic learning and formal schooling (Tozer, 2012). Research has found that children enrolled in full-day kindergarten are better prepared for Grade One than those who had attended half-day kindergarten (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013). Tozer’s (2012) research also supports this finding in that students in FDK experienced greater growth in the prerequisite skills for reading than those who were previously enrolled in half-day kindergarten.

The Ministry of Education (2013) was asked through a public forum if the government had a clear understanding of an ECE’s role. They responded by saying that it was up to teachers and ECEs to define their own roles (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013). Research by Gibson and Pelletier (2010) explored the roles and responsibilities of both members of the educator team. Both teachers and ECEs indicated that the kindergarten teachers had slightly more responsibility within the classroom (Gibson & Pelletier, 2010). However, Gibson and Pelletier (2010) found that ECEs reported a more even sharing of responsibilities, while kindergarten teachers reported themselves as having more responsibility. Overall, these findings suggest that it
could be beneficial for educators to further explore the complementary role of each educator within the classroom.

2.1.1 Impact of full-day kindergarten.

The Full-Day Kindergarten Extended Day Program curriculum document from the Ontario Ministry of Education (2010) states that the FDK program will focus on age appropriate, developmentally appropriate, and culturally responsive program planning to facilitate learning experiences that promote each individual child’s development and well-being. According to the Ontario Ministry of Education (2010), the purpose of bringing together a teacher and an early childhood educator in a FDK program is to develop a high-quality, intentional, play-based learning environment for the students.

2.1.1.1 Educators. Goulden (2012) conducted a qualitative study that focuses on the reactions and concerns of kindergarten teachers as they begin to implement full-day kindergarten. Semi-structured interviews and classroom observations with five kindergarten teachers provided insight into how educators were initially anxious about their compatibility with their partner prior to collaborating in the classroom. (Goulden, 2012). The Ministry of Education’s Reference Guide for Educators (2010) promotes a partnership between teachers and ECEs in which both professionals bring unique strengths together to form a collaborative and complimentary team. As partners, the Ministry of Education (2010) holds teachers and ECEs equally responsible for planning and delivering daily activities, organizing the learning environment, working with parents, and assisting during daily routines. Even though educators are required to share responsibilities, research participants reported that their roles are not always clearly articulated and differentiated (Gananathan, 2011; Gibson & Pelletier, 2010; Tozer, 2012).
However, regardless of whether these roles are clearly defined or not, teachers and ECEs have a duty to cooperate according to the FDK legislation (Ministry of Education, 2010).

Participation in this type of collaborative educator team is unique to full-day kindergarten classrooms (Goulden, 2012). Teachers often work with others, but do not typically share duties in their own classrooms and generally have the freedom and responsibility to make their own decisions. In the interviews conducted by Goulden (2012), respondents stated that one of their greatest concerns with the FDK program was the new staffing model. Goulden (2012) stated that participants expressed concern over how the partnerships would be formed, and who would be “in-charge” in the full-day kindergarten classroom. This was a theme throughout the interviews and observations that were conducted. Goulden (2012) did agree with Gibson and Pelletier (2010) that these personal reactions did tend to subside over time.

Prior to beginning FDK, the teachers in the study conducted by Goulden (2012) indicated that they worried about the partner they would be placed with and spent a lot of time thinking about the new relationship. Some teachers were uncertain about their own role and how things might change with an ECE partner. For some of the participants, these concerns were immediately dismissed when they met their ECE partner. However, some partnerships faced additional considerations such as increased workload, handling conflicts, role clarity, and working efficiently (Goulden, 2012). A participant in the study by Goulden (2012) described working with an ECE partner as an experience that is like living with someone. It required the educator team to always negotiate and figure out how to successfully work with someone else. One of the biggest challenges was time (Gibson & Pelletier, 2010; Goulden, 2012; Shahbazi, & Salinitri, 2016). Some of the teachers expressed that it was taking a lot of time to support their ECE partners. Participants expressed that if teachers and ECEs continue to be paid differently
(salary versus hourly), time to meet and work together will be an ongoing challenge. Goulden (2012) confirmed the findings of Gibson and Pelletier (2010) that teachers who were already experiencing a big adjustment to a new program, had feelings of insecurity when also having to adapt to a new teaching model. Experienced teachers also found that there was a sharp learning curve, despite all their years of professional practice in kindergarten classrooms (Gananathan, 2011; Goulden, 2012; Tozer, 2012).

2.1.1.2 Students. Positive impacts have been observed for students who attend full-day kindergarten programs (Tozer, 2012). The main purpose of kindergarten is preparing students for learning and entry into the First Grade. According to Tozer (2012) and Fern and Friendly (2014), FDK prepares students by introducing them to the school learning environment. This includes understanding rules and routines, as well as the development of social-emotional skills. These social skills are modelled by educator teams when they collaborate effectively (Lam, 2015; Peper, 2010). In comparison to the half-day kindergarten model, students in FDK demonstrated the ability to reflect, independent learning skills, classroom participation, and the ability to work cooperatively with peers (Tozer, 2012). In terms of achievement, Tozer (2012) reports higher scores among FDK students in reading, science, and math in contrast to students in half-day programs. A factor that has contributed to these positive impacts is that FDK improved students’ attendance in school. (Tozer, 2012). Researchers including Peper (2010) and Tozer (2012) agree that when educators communicate effectively, they can facilitate an enriched learning environment that supports the development of social skills and academic success in students.

2.2 Collaborative Educator Teams

Typically, collaborative teaching has existed in classrooms as a team consisting of a classroom teacher and a teaching assistant or educational assistant. According to Scruggs,
Mastropier, and Kimberly (2007), in a traditional co-teaching team, the Teaching Assistant is not necessarily an ECE. In the Ontario Ministry of Education (2010) FDK documentation for educators, it states that teachers and ECEs must cooperatively plan activities and develop lessons. It is important to recognize that simply putting two different professionals in the same classroom does not guarantee a successful collaborative educator team (Callaghan, 2012). Researchers have identified different factors that have significant implications for the success of an educator team. These factors can include the educators’ perceptions of collaborative teaching, their professional development, the support of school administrators, and a clear definition of roles and responsibilities (Scruggs et al., 2007; Tozer, 2012). Shahbazi and Salinitri (2016) state that principals have increased their support by also becoming a member of the educator team. These researchers suggest that further research is required to determine if educators are accessing available resources and opportunities for professional development.

### 2.2.1 Challenges.

Early childhood educators do have a high level of expertise and should be treated and viewed as an equal teaching partner in a co-teaching relationship (Callaghan, 2013). Callaghan (2013) also noted that the purpose and development of the educator team is meant to bring together two Educators for a unique collaborative partnership. Currently, some educator teams develop a hierarchical relationship, where the early childhood educator (ECE) takes on an assistant role to the classroom teacher (Gibson & Pelletier, 2010). Other research about co-teaching structures has found that in many co-teaching relationships, a hierarchal structure between the Educators does exist (Callaghan, 2012; Scruggs et al., 2007).

The respective fields are characterized by inequitable differences in pay, working conditions, education, and essentially prestige (Gibson & Pelletier, 2010; Tozer, 2012). This has
caused major concerns in terms of unequal opportunity between these positions. Most significantly, it has made it difficult for ECEs to maintain their professional identity (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010; Gibson & Pelletier, 2010). In addition, a potential lack of cooperation between the teacher and the ECE can result in a stressful classroom environment which may have a negative impact on the students in the classroom. Currently, there is confusion in some kindergarten classrooms because the roles of teachers and ECEs overlap or conflict (Lam, 2015; Ontario Ministry of Education, 2012, Tozer, 2012). Goulden (2012) states that undefined roles can occur when there is a lack of communication between educators. Several researchers have identified communication as a significant challenge for educator teams (Gibson & Pelletier, 2010; Goulden, 2012; Peper, 2010; Tozer, 2012) Peper (2010) also discovered that a lack of communication had a negative impact on educators’ ability to collaborate and support student learning.

2.2.1.1 Professional identity. Early childhood educators are professionals who have focused study of developmental processes of children (Ontario Ministry of Children and Youth Services, 2010). The Early Childhood Educators Act of 2007 introduced the College of Early Childhood Educators (CECE) (College of Early Childhood Education, 2015). The Act includes many requirements ECEs must meet to practise and become members (College of Early Childhood Education, 2015). Applications for membership were accepted beginning in September 2008 (College of Early Childhood Education, 2015). Although becoming members of the CECE allows ECEs to seek employment, it does not necessarily dictate their roles in the classroom.

Callaghan (2012) explored the collaborative structure of educator teams. The findings indicated that the roles of the teacher and ECE overlap in full-day kindergarten and are not
mutually exclusive (Callaghan, 2012). Other researchers agreed that unclear roles could potentially make for a tense or stressful environment (Tozer, 2012; Lam, 2015). Currently, the two professionals are told they have a “duty to cooperate” instead of having clear individual roles (Ministry of Education, 2010). The effective functioning of the educator teams is essential in order for the full-day kindergarten program to be a success. However, when there is a hierarchy in the classroom, this poses a threat to effective collaboration (Gibson & Pelletier, 2010; Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013). When there is a hierarchy in the educator team, researchers suggest that there could be a lack of understanding of the professional identity of each educator in the partnership (Goulden, 2012; Tozer, 2012). Goulden (2012) recommends that educators should be aware of what skills and qualifications their partner can contribute to the educator team.

It is said that the collaboration of ECEs and teachers creates a positive environment for children (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013; Peper, 2010; Tozer, 2012). The ECEs provide more assessment and observation in the classroom than teachers can manage on their own. This allows for adjustments to be made to accommodate all students and create a better learning environment (Gananathan, 2011; Tozer, 2012).

The confusion behind changing professional identities within the integrated educator teams is found to be a source of tension (Gibson & Pelletier, 2010). Researchers suggest that if roles were more distinct and understood, there would be less tension within the classroom (Callaghan, 2012; Gananathan, 2011). The possibility of ECEs losing their professional identity when working in a classroom alongside a teacher increases when responsibilities are unclear and one professional may feel more authority than the other (Gibson & Pelletier, 2010). Research shows that 15.7% of teachers and 25% of ECEs strongly disagreed with the statement that, “ECE
roles are understood as being distinct from a teaching assistant” (Gibson & Pelletier, 2010). This is indicative that further clarification of the ECE role within the school system needs to be addressed.

In full-day kindergarten, each educator has her or his own areas of expertise, which is important to understand in order to create a cohesive and collaborative team (Callaghan, 2013). Nonetheless, early childhood educators have been viewed as less professional and lacking expertise compared to teachers (Gibson & Pelletier, 2010). This is in spite of research that has found that early childhood educators require multi-levels of knowledge, as well as specific skills in child development. These characteristics are vital to being part of a professional team (Fern & Friendly, 2014).

Tozer (2012) reported that FDK ECEs were concerned about the lack of understanding of their role by teachers, principals and system administrators. One key factor that contributed to the lack of understanding of the role of early childhood educators was due to limited direct work with ECEs in the field (Tozer, 2012). Early childhood educators usually work with children in daycare settings, where they work directly with other early childhood educators and not with teachers or administrators (Fern & Friendly, 2014). Teachers and educators who have worked in co-teaching or collaborative teams have reported that it is important for them to understand their roles and responsibilities in the working relationship and in the class (Scruggs et al., 2007; Callaghan, 2012; Gibson & Pelletier, 2010). In the Gibson and Pelletier (2010) study, looking at the working relationship between teachers and ECEs in a FDK class, researchers found that there are misunderstandings of the other professional’s role in the classroom. The study also found that ECEs reported feeling unequal in the classroom because the teachers did not know or understand the training or background of the ECEs. This led to difficulty cooperating, sharing ideas, or
sharing responsibilities. Gibson and Pelletier (2010) suggest that more joint training between both educators is needed to improve mutual understanding and collaboration.

2.2.1.2 Professional development. Although collaborative teams are called “co-teaching”, Scruggs et al (2007) found, in their study of 454 co-teaching participants, that none reported equally shared teaching responsibility for planning or instruction. The teams were working together in the same classroom, but teaching responsibilities were not clearly identified and teaching times were not evenly shared. Teachers in these settings reported that full-class instruction for students being delivered by only one main or lead teacher is still the current practice. (Scruggs et al., 2007).

Research has identified that a key obstacle for a collaborative team is educators’ perceptions of their role in the classroom. If one member of the educator team feels less valued as an Educator in the class, it impacts that person’s role and perception of responsibilities (Gibson & Pelletier, 2010; Scruggs et al., 2007). When two professional educators are placed together to collaborate, their individual expertise needs to be valued in order for the collaborative team to develop in a professional and practical way (Gibson & Pelletier, 2010). Those who reported that they felt like a subordinate to the lead teacher took less opportunity to lead in full class instruction and participated less in group activities, which led to frustration with the co-teaching process (Gibson & Pelletier, 2010; Scruggs et al., 2007). This is because they believed that they were not permitted to lead instruction, but were restricted to working with small groups or individual students.

Austin (2001) found that in co-teaching partnerships, assistant teachers felt that they were doing more work in the class than their Teaching Partners. The assistant teachers reported that the teaching partner felt that the teaching assistants have the expertise to adapt and modify
curriculum on their own. Teaching assistants also reported working in more than one classroom, which increased their workload compared to teachers who stayed in a single classroom (Scruggs et al., 2007).

Teachers in the Scruggs et al., (2007) study suggested that a good way to solve the unequal responsibility in the class was to divide the class into two groups. Even though this may be happening in practice, there can be many limitations in this method (Scruggs et al., 2007). One limitation found by these researchers is that when two teachers are teaching at the same time, also known as parallel teaching, the noise level increases, which can become a distraction to both the students and the educators.

2.2.2 Benefits.

One of the benefits of distinct roles between ECEs and teachers is less tension within the classroom (Gibson & Pelletier, 2010). Research by Tozer (2012) suggested that by implementing a clear distinction between these roles, educators could maximize their planning time to create effective programming. This is especially important in terms of differentiating instruction and meeting the specific needs of individual students (Scruggs et al., 2007; Shahbazi, & Salinitri, 2016). Early childhood educators have unique qualifications such as knowledge of early childhood development, observation and assessment (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010). However, conflict may arise with such distinct roles between educators, where teachers may manipulate their authority and reject the opinions and ideas of the ECE (Goulden, 2012).

The collaboration of shared responsibilities and programming in the classroom for the children’s development could potentially help create a positive atmosphere in the classroom (Callaghan, 2012; Peper, 2010). Callaghan (2012) reported that educators created this atmosphere by demonstrating prosocial behaviour in their collaboration. Consistent, ongoing
training to work in partnership is the most ideal situation to obtain a healthy classroom environment (Gibson & Pelletier, 2010, Tozer, 2012). In addition, this training could provide teachers and ECEs with insight regarding the qualifications of their partner (Callaghan, 2012; Kremenitzer & Myler, 2006). If ECEs are given professional development opportunities to assist them in a more academic setting, their wider knowledge will further help the team to work well together (Gibson & Pelletier, 2010). All of this could diminish any superiority the teacher might impose over ECEs.

Teachers who have participated in collaborative teaching teams have also reported many benefits of working together (Gibson & Pelletier, 2010; Scruggs et al., 2007). When educators work together, they bring together special skills and experience and learn from each other (Gananathan, 2011; Gibson & Pelletier, 2010; Wagner & French, 2010). Research has found that collaboration with a partner, or group of teachers, not only contributes to the professional development of educators, but also has a positive impact on students (DeCesare, 2004; Gibson & Pelletier, 2010; Scruggs et al., 2007). The teachers who taught in a co-teaching classroom reported positive impacts on student attitude and achievement levels (Scruggs et al., 2007). Students displayed higher degree of participation, increased cooperation in the classroom, and tolerance of differences in inclusive classrooms (Scruggs et al., 2007). These positive impacts are the results of a lower teacher-student ratio, providing more attention to each student, and students receiving an earlier response to questions (Peper, 2010; Scruggs et al., 2007).

**2.2.2.1 Successful collaboration.** Research by Gibson and Pelletier (2010) explored the teaching structure taken by early childhood educators and kindergarten teachers and the dynamics of the educator team. It was found that a successful co-teaching relationship within the classroom, with both ECE and teacher sharing classroom responsibilities equally, led to higher
program quality. Another benefit is a more positive attitude towards teaching (Gibson & Pelletier, 2010). Intentional building of the relationship between ECEs and teachers can improve the program quality even further to create a collaborative and supportive environment for children and families (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2012). Along with distinction of roles, there also need to be guidelines for managing an effective working relationship between teachers and ECEs. According to the Ontario Ministry of Education (2012), educators in FDK programs need to cooperate in planning and implementing the program; assessing the progress and development of the children; maintaining a healthy physical, emotional, and social learning environment; and communicating with families. While each FDK educator team is unique, the common factor of all successful partnerships is an atmosphere of mutual respect, trust, and open communication (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2012, Tozer, 2012).

2.3 Conclusion

The model for full-day kindergarten envisions a classroom where teachers and registered early childhood educators collaborate to provide a well-designed learning program in a safe and inclusive environment. The literature that has been examined highlights the complementary skills of the teacher and the ECE in the classroom. According to Fern and Friendly (2014), ECEs have training in observing and supporting early learning that promotes each child’s development. On the other hand, teachers have training in elementary curriculum, assessment, evaluation, and reporting (Fern & Friendly, 2014). The current research examined the educational training and experiences of both professionals. This was done to determine how training and experiences prepare teachers and early childhood educators for collaboration. Researchers recommend that educators be given more opportunity to work together as professionals to provide the best education and care to young children (Fern & Friendly, 2014; Gibson & Pelletier, 2010; Tozer,
This research project encouraged participants to share how they could be supported through additional resources and professional development opportunities. Research has identified communication as a challenge that impacts educators’ ability to collaborate (Gibson & Pelletier, 2010; Tozer, 2012). Participants in this research study were asked to share how they respond to communication challenges in their partnership. Overall, the goal was to determine how educator teams foster a collaborative partnership in full-day kindergarten. The study aimed to explore how educator teams maintain a collaborative partnership, and how this could contribute to the creation of a supportive learning environment for educator teams, children, and their families.
CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

In this chapter, I describe the research methodology. First, I review the research approach, procedures, and the instruments of data collection. After this, I focus specifically on the participants in this study. This includes the sampling procedures and the recruitment process. I explain the process of data analysis, while addressing ethical considerations throughout the interview protocol and the research study. Although there is a range of methodological limitations, I also emphasize the strengths of the methodology. Finally, I conclude the chapter with a brief summary of key methodological decisions and my rationale for these decisions based on the purpose of the study and the research questions.

3.1 Research Approach and Procedures

This research study will be conducted using a qualitative research approach involving a literature review and semi-structured interviews with teachers. Researchers such as Holliday (2002), describe quantitative and qualitative research as two very different ways of thinking. However, other researchers suggest that you should not compare the two in terms of one method being more valid or superior to the other (King & Horrocks, 2010). In fact, researchers should not have to choose one side or the other, but rather should be permitted to choose an approach that will lead to the desired outcome (King & Horrocks, 2010). The qualitative approach to research will be useful in this study, because it will allow the relationship between teachers and early childhood educators to be thoroughly examined and interpreted.

According to King and Horrocks (2010), interviewing is the most common method of data collection in qualitative research. This is an advantage when recruiting participants for qualitative research, because they are familiar with the process of being interviewed. However,
there is also the risk that the expectations of the researcher and the participant will not be aligned with a qualitative research interview (King & Horrocks, 2010). Considerations that need to be made include the style of questioning, and the power dynamics. The methodological decisions surrounding the interview will be discussed in the next section.

### 3.2 Instruments of Data Collection

The primary instrument for data collection used in this study is the semi-structured interview protocol. Semi-structured interviews are a valuable tool, because they provide the opportunity to hear about a participant’s lived experiences (Creswell, 2013). The semi-structured format allows for the interviewer to design and plan an interview that addresses their research focus and questions, while leaving room for participants to elaborate and even re-direct attention to areas the interviewer did not anticipate. The interview protocol (Appendix B) contains open-ended questions in order to conduct an interview that is both structured, but also flexible. Creswell (2013) states that an informal interview style allows participants to freely answer questions and give responses from their own perspectives.

In a study by Lam (2015), educator teams were interviewed together. This means that the teacher and early childhood educator were part of one interview. The purpose of the study was to look for strategies that contributed positively to the team’s relationship. One of the advantages of interviewing the team together was that they were able to collaborate and provide responses with mutual agreement. The participants were able to contribute information collectively and this provided insight into how they communicated with each other (Lam, 2015). However, there are also limitations to interviewing the members of the educator team together. Participants may feel restricted about what they can share when they are with their colleague. This could pose a risk if participants feel uncomfortable sharing about conflicts or issues within the educator team (Lam,
2015). In response to this limitation, this current study conducted separate interviews with both members of the educator team. The advantage to this is that it provided multiple perspectives and promoted honest expression of emotions and experiences.

3.3 Participants

In this section I review the sampling criteria I established for participant recruitment. I also describe the sampling procedures and consider the benefits and limitations of convenience sampling. Finally, I include a brief introduction to each of the participants in this study.

3.3.1 Sampling criteria.

For this research, I sampled two educator teams that each consisted of an early childhood educator and an Ontario certified teacher. This resulted in four participants in total. The following sampling criteria were used when recruiting participants for this study.

1. Educators need to have worked together for at least one year in a full-day kindergarten class.

2. Educators must demonstrate a commitment to collaborative teaching by participating in professional development or by accessing resources that support successful collaboration.

3. Educators must have additional co-teaching experience prior to their partnership in full-day kindergarten.

The rationale behind the criteria was to achieve the goal of developing helpful strategies that foster collaboration in full-day kindergarten, as well as to identify potential areas for professional development. By selecting educator teams who have worked together for at least one school year, it was possible to gain insight into how they negotiated their professional relationship. To discover how educator teams develop this relationship, it was important to
include participants that demonstrated a commitment to collaborative teaching. It was essential for participants to be able to reflect on any additional training or resources that informed their professional practice. The reasoning for the third criterion is that it allowed participants to make comparisons between other co-teaching experiences and their current collaborative partnership. This helped to ensure that educators were familiar with strategies to promote collaboration, as well as potential challenges that impact co-teaching teams.

### 3.3.2 Sampling procedures.

I relied on convenience sampling to recruit my participants. It is important to understand that one of the limitations of convenience sampling is that when selection completely relies on this method, it may not produce an information-rich case (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). However, Creswell (2013) explains that one of the benefits of convenience sampling is that researchers can select a sample based on time, location, and the availability of participants. By using convenience sampling, I was able to select participants in close proximity. At OISE, I am surrounded by a community of teachers and early childhood educators. Through colleagues and mentors, I have a wide range of contacts and networks. I provided my information directly to potential participants, rather than asking individuals or organizations to distribute my information. This helped to ensure that participation is voluntary, rather than teachers or early childhood educators feeling obligated to participate in the study.

I also used purposeful sampling by choosing participants that met the sampling criteria that I created prior to recruiting participants. Rather than a process of random selection, I only interviewed educator teams that I knew fit the sampling criteria that I established. Merriam and Tisdell (2015) explain that purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that researchers want to discover, understand, and gain insight. One of the benefits of purposeful sampling is that it
allows researchers to select a sample from which the most can be learned (Holliday, 2002; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). One criterion required for this study was that the participants were currently working together as an educator team. Referrals from my colleagues were helpful because they had experiences with current educator teams in their practicum placements. From my practicum experiences, I also determined potential educator teams that met the sampling criteria.

3.3.3 Participant biographies.

Two educator teams that each consisted of a teacher and an early childhood educator participated in this study. To protect the anonymity of all participants, each individual will be referenced using a pseudonym. One educator team included Carol, the classroom teacher, and Deborah, the early childhood educator. A teacher named Laura and an early childhood educator named Shannon were a second educator team that participated in this research.

Carol

At the time of her interview, Carol had taught in a full-day kindergarten classroom for six years. She first became familiar with the kindergarten program when she volunteered in her youngest child’s classroom. Her experiences as a parent gave her familiarity with early childhood development. When the class needed an educational assistant, Carol fulfilled that role. She also gained experience co-teaching in a special education program. At this point, Carol returned to school and obtained her Bachelor of Education degree. Although Carol had not initially seen herself as a primary teacher, she discovered that she loved co-teaching in full-day kindergarten. Carol’s experience in different roles in a co-teaching environment contributed to the development of strategies for sharing responsibilities in the kindergarten classroom.
Deborah

Deborah demonstrated her commitment to early learning and child development through her significant experience in a full-day kindergarten classroom. She had worked in the same kindergarten classroom for 28 years. During that time, Deborah established positive connections with families in the school community. When full-day kindergarten was implemented, she needed to be flexible to adapt to the changes in the program. Deborah was initially an educational assistant. In 2012, she attended school while continuing in her role as an educational assistant. After completing a two-year program, Deborah became certified as a registered early childhood educator. Overall, she gave insight into how educational training and classroom experience prepares educator teams for collaboration.

Laura

At the time of this research, Laura was a teacher with experience in various co-teaching partnerships. As part of her educational pathway, she completed a Child and Youth Studies degree and then obtained her teaching qualifications within the primary-junior division. After this, Laura worked in a before and after school program and gained volunteer experience in elementary schools. Her first teaching contract as a learning resource teacher gave her insight into collaborative teaching environments. The collaborative educator team that Laura formed with Shannon was her first experience co-teaching in full-day kindergarten. From this experience, Laura shared her perspective about the development of a successful educator team.

Shannon

Shannon expressed that she knew for a long time that she wanted to work with children and support their learning. She completed a two-year program that certified her as a registered early childhood educator. During this time, she completed placements in different early
childhood settings such as preschool, daycare, and full-day kindergarten. This allowed Shannon to observe and implement a variety of strategies that fostered community. Shannon consistently provided a positive learning environment for children by promoting play-based education. She had worked in full-day kindergarten educator teams for three years. Shannon applied insight from her previous experiences to support her team member and promote successful collaboration in full-day kindergarten.

3.4 Data Analysis

Even though data analysis is an involved process, it is essential to be thorough and to have a consistent method for organizing the information. The two sets of interviews conducted were recorded using a personal laptop with the consent of the participants. Audio recordings were beneficial because they ensured that everything said was preserved for analysis (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The recordings were uploaded onto a transcription application designed to assist in the transcription of audio recording. One of the benefits of transcribing interviews is that it increases researcher familiarity with the data (King & Horrocks, 2010; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). I was also able to record memos while engaging in the process of transcription.

After the interviews were transcribed, they were reread numerous times searching for similar themes, patterns, connections to literature, and relevance to the research questions. This ensured that I gained new insight by reviewing the material. I highlighted different themes and used these themes to categorize the data. The process of organizing and coding data is significant because it makes comparisons and data analysis possible (Creswell, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). I also took null data into consideration. This means that when I analyzed the interviews I also looked at topics or ideas that the participants did not address. This can also produce significant results (Holliday, 2002). After coding and reorganizing the themes according to their
relevance to my research, I consolidated the themes into main findings. The key findings will be discussed in detail in Chapter Four.

3.5 Ethical Review Procedures

It is essential to ensure that appropriate ethical review procedures are followed throughout the research process. In my research, all participants were assigned a pseudonym and were notified of their right to withdraw from participation in the study at any stage of the research study. The identity of the participants will remain confidential, and any identifying features, such as schools or students, have been excluded. Participants signed a consent letter (Appendix A) giving their consent to be both interviewed and audio-recorded. Participants were also given a copy of the consent letter for their own records. The letter provided an overview of the study, addressed ethical implications and expectations such as participating in one semi-structured interview lasting 45-60 minutes. The data and audio recordings will be stored on my password protected laptop and will be destroyed after five years.

There are no known risks associated with participation in this study. I reminded participants in the consent letter and in the interview that they have the right to refrain from answering a question, or to withdraw their participation. I ensured the participants had the opportunity to review the transcripts before I conducted data analysis so that they had an opportunity to clarify their responses.

The interviews were conducted at a time and in an environment that was convenient for the participant. The goal was to ensure that there was sufficient time to conduct the interview without other commitments or responsibilities.
3.6 Methodological Limitations and Strengths

The main limitation in this research is the small sample size with two educator teams as participants. Valuable insights and strategies can be gained from this data, but a larger sample could allow for further exploration of collaborative teaching. The findings from this study are not generalizable to the broader population of FDK teams. Another limitation of this study is that only the perspectives of the educators are included. Based on the methodological parameters of this study, I was unable to collect data from parents or students. The study could have been strengthened through observation within the classroom. This would have allowed me to witness interactions between educators.

One of the strengths of this study is that the interviews for the educator teams were conducted individually. This allowed both teacher and early childhood educator participants to speak freely. Another strength is the semi-structured interview. This permitted data to be collected that focused on the research questions, but also provided the flexibility for participants to actively engage in the research process.

3.7 Conclusion

In this chapter I have described the research methodology. The semi-structured interview process was beneficial to this study because it allowed participants to have the flexibility to share their own ideas and experiences. As well, it permitted me as the researcher to adapt questions during the learning process (Creswell, 2013). The qualitative research is valuable because it provides data about the professional relationship between early childhood educators and Ontario certified teachers who work in kindergarten classrooms. The decision to conduct four separate interviews helped to ensure that participants could be honest without being influenced by the presence of their partner in the educator team. Participants were recruited using purposeful
sampling. Each participant was selected because they met the specific sampling criteria. After this, I reviewed the ethical considerations of the research including how confidentiality was maintained. Finally, I reported the strengths and limitations of the research study. Overall, the methodological decisions support the goal of identifying factors that contribute to a successful partnership, as well as making a significant impact on professional development opportunities. Next, in Chapter Four, I report the research findings.
CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.0 Introduction

In this chapter, findings are presented based on data collected from four semi-structured interviews with individual educator team members who have first-hand experience in full-day kindergarten classrooms. Two educator teams from full-day kindergarten classrooms were interviewed. Educator teams consist of one Ontario-certified teacher and one registered early childhood educator (ECE). One educator team included Carol, the classroom teacher, and Deborah, the ECE. A teacher named Laura and an ECE named Shannon were a second educator team that participated in this research study. The purpose of this study is to address the following research question: What factors lead to successful collaborative partnerships for teams of early childhood educators and kindergarten classroom teachers? The goal of this research is to identify resources that lead to a successful partnership, explore challenges and strategies that are implemented to address them, and to learn from participating educators what outcomes of collaboration they have observed for their students. This knowledge is shared with the intention of providing insights into how to foster a successful educator team through collaboration and to inform the training and professional development of educator teams in full-day kindergarten.

4.0.1 Themes.

Four themes and various subthemes emerged from educator responses about their experiences and perspectives of collaboration in full-day kindergarten including:

4.1 A Variety of Personal and Professional Experiences Contributed to the Preparation for Collaboration Within Educator Teams in Full-Day Kindergarten Classrooms

4.1.1 Educator team members recognized that their own family roles and relationships influenced their ability to collaborate in the kindergarten classroom.
4.1.2 Educator team members recognized the impact of their education and additional qualifications on their ability to collaborate in the kindergarten classroom.

4.1.3 Educator team members recognized the impact of their previous co-teaching relationships on their ability to collaborate effectively in the kindergarten classroom.

4.2 Educator Team Members Facilitated Successful Collaboration by Sharing Teaching Philosophies, Demonstrating Flexibility, and by Participating in Professional Development

4.2.1 Educator team members articulated proactive approaches to achieve a successful collaboration in the kindergarten classroom.

4.2.2 Educator team members acknowledged that each educator needs to demonstrate a willingness to adapt and to maintain a respectful environment through attentive listening.

4.2.3 Educator team members expressed a need for professional development and support from administration and the school community.

4.3 Educator Team Members Addressed Challenges in Communication and Perception Differences by Supporting One Another and Affirming Each Member’s Professional Identity

4.3.1 Educator team members encountered challenges involving planning and communication between educators and parents.

4.3.2 Educator team members reported that stakeholder perceptions of the team influenced the success of their collaboration within the kindergarten classroom.

4.4 Educator Team Members Indicated That Collaboration Was Related to Significant Outcomes for Kindergarten Students in Terms of Engagement and Emotional Well-Being

4.4.1 Educator team members’ consistent and respectful manner impacted the socialization of students in their classroom.
4.4.2 Educator team members’ successful collaboration allowed them to provide individualized attention to each student in the kindergarten classroom.

4.1 A Variety of Personal and Professional Experiences Contributed to the Preparation for Collaboration Within Educator Teams in Full-Day Kindergarten Classrooms

Educator team members had a diverse range of experiences that led them to their current positions in full-day kindergarten. Some educators shared similar experiences such as their involvement in kindergarten as parent volunteers, or professional experiences in special education classrooms. One educator team has only worked in the current model of full-day kindergarten, while the other team has experienced changes in the program over many years. The educational pathways are different for teachers and early childhood educators, but research shows that successful collaboration relies on an awareness of the professional identity of the other team member (Gibson & Pelletier, 2010). Educator team members compared their relationship to other partnerships including marriage and friendship. Both teachers and early childhood educators believed that their personal and professional relationships and experiences equipped them with tools and strategies for effectively collaborating in full-day kindergarten.

4.1.1 Educator team members recognized that their own family roles and relationships influenced their ability to collaborate in the kindergarten classroom.

In the kindergarten classroom, educators must establish rapport, not only with each other, but also with the students. Educator team members agreed that rapport develops over time when there is consistent effort in nurturing these relationships. In kindergarten, students and educators spend a significant amount of time together, which also strengthens the connections between educators and students, as well as between the teacher and the early childhood educator. Laura stated that, “You almost became like a little family, so like they were our kids, and we got to
share in their successes.” Carol and Deborah both shared how their experiences as parents had a significant impact on their desire to establish a positive and collaborative relationship as an educator team. Carol always loved children, but only became familiar with the kindergarten classroom as a parent volunteer in her youngest son’s class. She explains,

“Okay, well I never actually deliberately set out to be a teacher. When my youngest was in kindergarten, I was able to volunteer in his classroom for the first time because I had always had someone younger at home. So I was going in there every Thursday morning with him and then when they lost their educational assistant, they asked me if I could come in every morning because I knew the kids and I knew the program, until they replaced that educational assistant.

Deborah stated that prior to full-day kindergarten, her experiences working with children ages three to six consisted solely of her experiences with her own children. She believes that her knowledge of child development from her experiences as a parent has informed her professional practice as an early childhood educator. She and Carol want to provide a nurturing and supportive environment within the full-day kindergarten classroom.

When they described their partnership, members of the educator team compared their relationship to a friendship or even a marriage. Laura asserted that in order to work together, it was essential to be able to find personal connections with one’s team member. She and Shannon recalled how the students thought the two of them were sisters who lived together. Laura thinks the students had this misconception because it was evident that they enjoyed being in each other’s company. Carol compared the partnership to a marriage saying that both individuals must see themselves as being equal. She emphasized that, like marriage, if one member feels like she has all the power, or tries to assert control, the educator team relationship is doomed to fail. She
explored this comparison, concluding, “It's like developing any good marriage, you have to make time for the couple to develop the relationship so that everybody is on the same page and so that there aren't tensions because children pick up on tensions.” The literature extends this concept to describe the relationship between teachers and ECEs as an arranged marriage because team members do not have input in the process of creating the educator teams (Lam, 2015). The idea of an arranged marriage that is described in research was also reflected in the experiences of these two educator teams. In both partnerships, the teachers and ECEs did not have any input into the formation of the educator teams. No information was collected beforehand to inform the process of building an educator team and placing a teacher and an ECE into a collaborative partnership. Carol, Deborah, Laura, and Shannon all confirmed that they feel lucky and fortunate that, even though their team was established through a process of random selection, they were compatible and able to work effectively with their team member.

4.1.2 Educator team members recognized the impact of their education and additional qualifications on their ability to collaborate in the kindergarten classroom.

The education path is different for teachers than it is for early childhood educators. This means that each educator has a different set of skills and experiences. Shannon and Laura recognized that each of them had different strengths and approached the program differently. Laura, the teacher, was mainly focused on meeting curriculum expectations, while Shannon, the ECE, infused a play-based approach to learning. By realizing the value and necessity for both curriculum and play, Shannon and Laura were able to make unique contributions to their collaboration in the educator team.

Prior to working in her educator team, Deborah was an Educational Assistant in kindergarten for 25 years. When the structure of kindergarten changed, Deborah returned to
Developing Collaborative Educator Teams in FDK

When Deborah was doing the schoolwork, and working here full-time it gave her a whole lot of new insights into education and sort of the curriculum and how everything interacts and interrelates. When she first started, kindergarten was just the socialization aspect of things, and it's moved so much beyond that at this point. So that gave us more of a sort of equal footing academically, I would say, which was a helpful thing.

This demonstrates how the current kindergarten program integrates the skills and experiences of both teachers and ECEs. Research by Gibson and Pelletier (2010) revealed that the two educator roles in full-day kindergarten are both distinct and complementary. This supports the ability to interpret the integrated roles of both educator team members. The participants described how collaboration ensured that educator teams could fulfill the comprehensive responsibilities within full-day kindergarten. In this partnership, it is crucial for educator teams to be familiar with both individual roles and the role of teaching partners.

4.1.3 Educator team members recognized the impact of their previous co-teaching relationships on their ability to collaborate effectively in the kindergarten classroom.

Educator team members had experience in previous co-teaching relationships prior to their current partnership in full-day kindergarten. This prior experience was generally positive. Both teachers and early childhood educators stated that they believe that this practical experience prepared them for their collaborative work in full-day kindergarten. There were also skills that educators developed in other co-teaching partnerships, that prepared them for collaboration in full-day kindergarten. An example of a previous co-teaching relationship was when Carol and
Laura had the opportunity to collaborate in co-teaching partnerships in special education classrooms prior to working in full-day kindergarten classrooms. In this case, the collaboration occurred between a special education teacher and educational assistants. This differed from an inclusive model of special education where the classroom teacher collaborates with an educational assistant within the general education classroom. Carol had been in both roles, first as an educational assistant, and then later as a special education teacher. When her son’s class was caught without an educational assistant at the beginning of September, Carol was approached by the principal who asked, “You know most of these kids, and you know something about the program. Will you come in?” Carol held this position for a year, and then decided that she was under-employed. She had a desire to teach, and at age 52 she returned to school to obtain her Bachelor of Education. She then had a position in a special education class in which she coordinated a program with a team of three educational assistants. Carol describes how this leadership role gave her a lot of insight into what is involved in organizing co-educators and promoting teamwork within a group. Carol discovered that her organizational abilities and flexibility were both skills that would be beneficial in future collaborative partnerships. Although she initially didn’t see herself as a primary-junior teacher, Carol says that the principal recognized that her organization and collaboration skills in special education could also be helpful in a kindergarten educator team. These skills were transferable from one co-teaching model to another. Carol noted that these organizational skills and flexibility are strengths that she brings to the kindergarten educator team.

Laura also described how her previous experience in a co-teaching relationship in a special education classroom gave her insight into what is required to facilitate a successful collaboration. In this instance, she needed to be able to collaborate with various professionals as
part of a multi-disciplinary team. She explained, “I worked alongside speech and language pathologists and the school social worker. I also worked with classroom teachers creating IEPs, and setting learning goals for students who were in that special education framework.” When Laura reflected on her previous co-teaching experiences, she believed that they achieved successful collaboration by recognizing how each team member offers a unique perspective. At the same time, it is important for educators to be united in their expectations and to be working towards a common goal. Research by Austin (2001) examined teachers’ beliefs about co-teaching. The findings revealed that teachers believed it was important for co-educators to have distinct and clearly defined roles in the classroom. Laura felt that her experience as a collaborative educator gave her insight into how it is the responsibility of each team to define the roles within their partnership. Although there are some differences in terms of areas of expertise and approaches, it is essential for educators to share the same goals. Laura’s experiences in co-teaching relationships taught her that there can be overlap between roles. This requires educators to integrate their responsibilities in order to achieve a successful collaboration. She considered both roles within the educator team stating,

They are similar because we're still teaching at the end of the day. We're still hoping that these students will absorb everything that we're throwing at them and we're letting them explore. So we're both teachers in the classroom and we've always called each other teaching partners. At the same time, they are different because of our approaches to them.

Overall, the responsibility for collaborating effectively is shared between the teacher and the early childhood educator. The interviews suggested it is crucial for educator team members to have an awareness of how their roles are integrated within the kindergarten program. Carol and
Laura both recognized how their previous co-teaching experiences equipped them and fostered a willingness to collaborate in kindergarten.

In the case of both educator teams, the early childhood educators had prior experience in full-day kindergarten before the teachers joined the educator team. Shannon and Deborah were familiar with the program and had already developed teaching preferences and strategies within other educator teams. When Laura and Shannon began co-teaching, Laura remembered how she initially relied on Shannon to facilitate their collaboration. Laura recalled, “Because I was so new to the kindergarten curriculum, Shannon helped me out a little bit in terms of pairing the curriculum with how it looks through play, which was great.” Shannon felt that she could incorporate her knowledge from previous experiences in kindergarten into the current classroom environment. When the strengths and unique qualifications of early childhood educators are recognized, this promotes collaboration and even facilitates leadership opportunities (Tozer, 2012). In research by Tozer (2012), findings showed that because of differences in responsibilities and prestige, teachers were in a position of authority over ECEs. However, in these educator teams, Shannon and Deborah both described how they were relied upon and seen as experts based on the experience that they had in kindergarten classrooms. This impacted the involvement of each educator team member in the collaboration.

4.2 Educator Team Members Facilitated Successful Collaboration by Sharing Teaching Philosophies, Demonstrating Flexibility, and by Participating in Professional Development

Educator team members acknowledged that there are certain components and resources that promote collaboration in full-day kindergarten. First, educators need to openly share their personal teaching philosophies. By openly discussing their perspectives, educators can develop proactive strategies for the kindergarten classroom. Educator teams also facilitate successful
collaboration by setting goals together. Collaboration did not appear to necessarily require educators to always agree with each other. However, what did appear vital was for educators to be flexible and willing to adapt to different approaches and teaching styles. Flexibility was also required when changes need to be made within the program. Professional development workshops that facilitate collaboration are available to educator teams through the school board. This has been in response to research literature pointing to a need for additional preparation and support for the educator team (Callaghan, 2012; Goulden, 2012). There are also valuable learning opportunities for educator teams through the full-day kindergarten team within the school community.

4.2.1 Educator team members articulated proactive approaches to achieve a successful collaboration in the kindergarten classroom.

In collaboration, educator teams found it helpful to try to eliminate surprises and possible misconceptions within the kindergarten classroom. In order to set themselves up for success, educator team members discussed their personal philosophies around teaching and their instructional strategies. In both teams, the teachers and early childhood educators believed in the importance of a student-centered approach to teaching and learning. They saw themselves as guides who facilitated learning opportunities based on the interests of the students in their classrooms. Shannon also emphasized that her philosophy for kindergarten was to provide an environment that focused on play-based learning. Although this concept was previously unfamiliar to Laura, she was excited to observe the implementation of play-based practices and to find ways to integrate it into her own teaching practices. By having this discussion prior to entering the classroom, teachers and early childhood educators had a greater understanding of one another. They also felt equipped with several agreed-upon strategies. Shannon explained,
I think some of those would be deciding how you two want to approach things differently in the classroom. So say a student's having behavioural issues, how did Laura want to approach something like that, and how did I want to approach something like that? So, I think realizing if we ran into a problem or an issue, how would you deal with it, and how would I deal with it? And we talked about those things like think of things that might happen where we might disagree so we could come together with an idea where we're going to do this. So it's not trying to choose or come up with ideas when something happens.

Shannon and Laura demonstrated how they are proactive in their approach to collaboration. By creating classroom routines prior to the beginning of the school year, participants exhibited a proactive approach to collaboration. This approach is supported by Gibson and Pelletier (2010) who determined that educators should develop proactive strategies, rather than reactive when collaborating in the classroom. Both educator teams were able to agree on classroom routines by openly discussing their personal teaching philosophies with each other. This discussion led the teams to be able to negotiate classroom routines and ultimately supported their collaboration.

4.2.2 Educator team members acknowledged that it is essential for each educator to demonstrate a willingness to adapt and to maintain a respectful environment through attentive listening.

Educator team members asserted that one of the most important ingredients in effective collaboration is flexibility. Both teachers and early childhood educators are required to be flexible in their teaching plans and strategies, as well as in the implementation of the kindergarten program. When two educators are involved in the design and delivery of material, it does not work for one person to make all the decisions. Such a dynamic can lead to resentment
DEVELOPING COLLABORATIVE EDUCATOR TEAMS IN FDK

and have a negative impact on the team’s collaboration. Deborah stressed the importance of flexibility, stating, “Most of all, most importantly, you have to be flexible and work together. You need to have a good working relationship with the teacher, because without that you will be miserable.” When Carol and Deborah collaborate, they both make a conscious effort to be open and receptive to the ideas and feedback of their teaching partner. Carol expressed that there is flexibility within their roles. She provided an example based on who organizes snack. “I don’t drive, so generally Deborah does the shopping for the snack supplies and gets the snack ready. But if she's busy doing something else and it is time to get snack out, then I'll do it.” This example highlights how there is typically a division of responsibility within kindergarten classrooms. However, there is also flexibility in who covers each responsibility. In order for this kind of collaboration to be successful, and to ensure that all responsibilities are met, educators are engaged in ongoing communication.

Shannon and Laura had only been teaching together for one year at the time of the interview. This meant that they were still creating and defining their educator team and co-constructing how they would collaborate and work together. The main strategy that they infused into this process was attentive listening. This involved listening, and really being open to hear the perspective of one's teaching partner. Laura described this strategy in detail,

I think it's just listening to each other, like actively listening to each other. It doesn’t matter if the idea fails, or it doesn’t work out as perfectly. The point of collaboration is having everyone on the same page and everyone trying it together, and then everyone kind of adding their opinions and ideas about how we can change it for the better or change it in another direction. To me, collaborating is actively listening to the people that
you are working with and then having the respect for them to implement their suggestions and maybe reflect on them after too.

Shannon agreed that it was important to listen to each other with an open mind. She also mentioned that both teaching partners need to be receptive to new ideas. Shannon elaborated, “You have to be willing to try new things. You can't be set on this is how we’ll do it and there’s no other way. It's really trial and error, having an open mind, and letting your teacher partner in.”

When referring to methods of trial and error, educator team members suggested that there is not one approach or formula for successful collaboration. Instead, it is a combination of strategies that develop over time through practical experience. The flexibility and attentive listening that these educators describe is consistent with some of the collaborative strategies discussed in the research literature (Tozer, 2012). These strategies are foundational in building and maintaining a respectful teaching and learning environment.

4.2.3 Educator team members expressed a need for professional development and support from administration and the school community.

Educator team members used a variety of resources to support their collaboration within kindergarten classrooms. Carol and Deborah emphasized the importance of receiving support from the principal, as well as the full-day kindergarten team within the school. Through consultation, they received insight into their own collaboration and participated in sharing strategies that promote and enhance collaboration. Research conducted by the Ontario Ministry of Education (2013) investigated the implementation of full-day kindergarten during the first two years. When this research was conducted, educator teams requested more opportunities to engage in professional development. Research had previously highlighted that professional development opportunities for early childhood professionals were very limited (Ackerman, 2004). Both
educator teams confirmed that professional development workshops are currently being offered and facilitated for both members of the educator team. This indicates that the Ontario Ministry of Education has created opportunities for professional development in response to the feedback they collected from educator team members. Shannon described the various supports that are in place including workshops, the curriculum document, and the full-day kindergarten team,

We did do some professional development from the board of education. I think they're important because it is based off of the full-day kindergarten curriculum document. So there we get to collaborate together with other schools. I think that helps us build some more skills to take back to our classroom. I think the kindergarten program document is really helpful. We both read the beginning section, and used that to guide our work. And even I would say PA days when we share ideas with the FDK team.

Both educator teams stated that these supports should continue to be made available to new and experienced educator teams. This is critical in creating and maintaining a successful collaboration. Kremenitzer and Myler (2006) conducted an action research study that explored the role of collaboration in professional learning communities. The study found that when educators were given the opportunity to share ideas and collaborate with other teams, this had a positive impact on the educator’s professional practice (Kremenitzer & Myler, 2006). This supports the importance of facilitating professional development opportunities in which educator teams can participate together and gain both strategies and resources that support collaboration in full-day kindergarten.
4.3 Educator Team Members Addressed Challenges in Communication and Perception

Differences by Supporting One Another and Affirming Each Member’s Professional Identity

There were a variety of challenges that were identified by the two educator teams. Many of these challenges can be classified as either communication challenges, or challenges based on perceptions of the educator team. One of the barriers to communication is insufficient planning time scheduled throughout the day. Teachers have a designated period for planning and preparation, but there is not time scheduled when both members of the educator team are available. This means that educator teams must often schedule planning time before or after school, or outside of school hours (Tozer, 2012). Another communication challenge is engaging and building relationships with parents. Along with communication challenges, educators identified perceptions of the team and the individual members as a substantial influence on their collaboration. There were challenges surrounding the team members’ perceptions of one another, as well as the perceptions of the educators that were held by parents and other professionals within the school community. To address these challenges, educators developed strategies to support one another and to recognize the professional identities of both members of the educator team. Goulden (2012) asserts that it is imperative for educators to have clearly defined roles, and for team members to also be familiar with the role of their teaching partners. Educator teams revealed that the roles were determined through a trial and error approach, as well as through ongoing discussion between the educators.
4.3.1 Educator team members encountered challenges involving planning and communication between educators and parents.

Educator team members identified communication as one of the most significant challenges in collaborative education. At the same time, these educators also emphasized that effective communication is an essential component of successful collaboration. One of the factors that affected communication was the lack of planning time available to both members of the educator team. While teachers have a scheduled period for planning and preparation, early childhood educators are involved in teaching and supervising students throughout the day. This also includes subjects with rotary teachers such as physical education or library. Shannon and Laura found that to address this challenge, they needed to ensure that they were checking in with each other daily. There was more planning involved beyond the instructional lesson plans. For example, Shannon and Laura also discussed how their daily plans were designed to limit the number of transitions for students. Shannon and Laura believed it was important for students to move seamlessly from one activity to the next. To make this possible, it required both educators to be involved in the co-creation and implementation of a daily schedule. Laura was especially grateful for how they co-constructed a morning routine. They had a list of what needed to be accomplished. Rather than always completing the same jobs, Laura and Shannon alternated and tackled a different item on the list until all the jobs were done. This was a different strategy for the division of roles within the kindergarten classroom in comparison to the strategy discussed by Lam (2015) in a study of the collaboration of educator teams. In this study, participants typically had a more static division of roles and responsibilities (Lam, 2015). This highlights the importance of considering how different approaches or flexible arrangements can still ultimately lead to successful collaboration within educator teams. Carol and Deborah also established
routines and long-range plans in the classroom. One of the challenges they encountered was when individual plans did not mesh well when they attempted to put them together. Deborah explained how this is a time when flexibility is essential,

> You have to sit down and plan so that you can collaborate. You need to be familiar with all the information, because she will come up with some information and I will come up with mine. Then we put them together to see how it works. Sometimes it does, and sometimes it doesn't, but when that happens, we just come up with something else.

Both educator teams engaged in planning outside school hours. They established routines to ease the planning process. Both educators had preferences and strengths in certain areas of expertise. However, what made their collaboration successful was their ability to be flexible in taking on different roles and curriculum areas.

The second challenge within communication involved communication between parents and educators. Both educator teams were still working towards meeting goals they had created for communication with parents. Carol and Laura both highlighted the importance of parents being able to communicate with both members of the educator team. During the morning, Shannon and Laura reported that parents would have conversations with both of them, depending on who was available. This was a challenge, because one educator might receive information from a parent that was important for both educators to be aware of and to understand. When only one educator was available, it also limited the opportunity for the team to build rapport with the parents. To address this challenge, Shannon and Laura would establish consistent communication and keep one another updated regularly. When one of them had a conversation with a parent, she would share this information with her teaching partner. Deborah and Carol also identified challenges in communicating with parents. Deborah stated, “Working in
kindergarten you'll find some difficult parents, but you have to rise above it.” Both Carol and Deborah stressed the importance of avoiding confrontation by communicating with parents before issues arise, and by making themselves available to parents for consultation and conversation. When they communicate with parents, Carol shared her strategy of reaching out to parents prior to school starting in September. Shannon and Deborah, as Early Childhood Educators, also participated in parent-teacher interviews. Although this is not a requirement, research by Tozer (2012) supports that ECE participation in parent conferences is beneficial in facilitating collaboration between parents and both members of the educator team. As well, it increases opportunities for questions and feedback.

4.3.2 Educator team members reported that stakeholder perceptions of the team influenced the success of their collaboration within the kindergarten classroom.

In the educator teams, both teachers and early childhood educators were aware of how perceptions of the team and the individual members influenced their ability to collaborate. Laura commented that she saw quite a contrast between her educator team and another educator team within the school. Although Shannon and Laura both felt respected by each other, they observed a different dynamic between the other educator team, as it appeared that power and authority was unbalanced in that educator team. As the teachers, Laura and Carol both saw how the different job title and increased responsibilities in terms of curriculum and assessment could result in an abuse of power within the team dynamic. In response to this, Shannon shared how the new curriculum documents have changes to ensure that both educators are involved in the process of assessment (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016). Report cards will now include comments from both educators. Educator team members felt that these were important changes to
kindergarten policies because they were already taking steps to collaborate on both instruction and assessment.

Another challenge that educator teams had to overcome was how their team may be perceived by parents and other educators or professionals within the school community. All educator team members emphasized how the misconceptions of others can have a negative impact on their collaboration. Laura and Carol noted that initially, some parents saw the ECEs as helpers in the classroom, without recognizing the extent of their involvement. The educator teams addressed this by both educators being available and engaging in communication with the parents. The idea of an ECE being a helper was reinforced among other staff and colleagues. Laura described a prevalent tendency in the staff room,

What I found challenging was the labels of teacher and ECE and the pay differences. I just felt that her as a person, and as an ECE, was a lot more undervalued as an educator. In the conversations of people in the staff room, they would always ask me about my ECE or my helper. There was definitely stigma around it and I always tried to correct it, but I found that was the biggest challenge, not necessarily between us, but between other people looking in, and people thinking that the teacher has all the credit for what's happening in the classroom when it's really both of you. I found for our class I was getting a lot of the credit because I was the teacher.

Both Carol and Laura recognized the unique strengths that their teaching partners brought to the team. However, they were aware that others may undervalue or misunderstand the role of the early childhood educator. Gibson and Pelletier (2010) investigated how the perceptions of others have an impact on the educator team. The early childhood educator participants in the study expressed concerns regarding a potential hierarchy and the discrepancy in status between
members of the educator team (Gibson & Pelletier, 2010). This structure could be perpetuated by parents and team members, as well as other professionals in the school community. Carol, Deborah, Laura, and Shannon were all aware of the different views and perceptions that others held about their partnerships and individual contributions to their educator teams. They all described how these perceptions impacted their ability to collaborate and influenced the level of support that each individual member experienced. While research has revealed the impact of perceptions on educator teams, there is limited research providing strategies for educators to respond to these perceptions. This current research study adds to existing literature because it demonstrates how educators respond to others by advocating for their teaching partners. In this way, members of the educator team are involved in promoting the co-teaching model in kindergarten classrooms, as well as supporting each other by valuing each educator’s professional identity.

4.4 Educator Team Members Indicated That Collaboration Was Related to Significant Outcomes for Kindergarten Students in Terms of Engagement and Emotional Well-Being

Through observation and experience, educator team members determined that there were benefits to collaboration that had a positive influence on students in the classroom. These benefits included increased engagement and an impact on emotional well-being. Educator teams noted that when they adopted a student-centered approach and made this the focus of their collaboration, students became more actively engaged in the classroom. Part of the educators’ responsibility was to involve students in the process of setting goals and working towards achieving these goals. When there is a successful collaborative relationship between the teacher and the early childhood educator, students are presented with an example of how people treat each other with respect and relate to one another. Another significant outcome of collaboration
between educators was the consistency in their approaches to interacting with the students. When educators communicated with each other about classroom management strategies and student responsibilities, this contributed to a positive learning environment. Students also recognized when teachers and early childhood educators shared the same expectations and if each educator supported the authority of her teaching partner. This influenced how students responded to instruction and feedback from each member of the educator team. In addition to impacting socialization and promoting consistency, successful collaboration also resulted in more individualized attention for students. In the kindergarten classroom, educators had the opportunity to be role models who provide an example of prosocial behaviour and positive communication.

4.4.1 Educator team members’ consistent and respectful manner impacted the socialization of students in their classroom.

Educator team members discovered that their co-teaching relationship influenced the social development of the students in the classroom. The Kindergarten Program (2016) states that children’s social development is supported when cooperation with others is modelled and promoted. The educator teams determined that when they displayed respectful communication and effective collaboration, this influenced the students’ interactions with peers and educators. Carol noted that when these social skills were modelled and encouraged, students could further develop these strategies and practice them independently. She explained this progression towards greater autonomy, “Then you want them interacting with each other without a lot of interference and building social skills. After that, it’s more a question of moderating social situations and giving them the tools and the language to deal with it appropriately.” Deborah affirmed that the
educator relationship and collaboration was helpful in promoting positive social relations within the classroom community.

According to these educator teams, a healthy collaboration is characterized by happy educators and happy students. When educators can work together and support each other, this provides a positive example of cooperative learning for students. As well, collaboration between educators is a model that influences social interactions between students. Carol reported, “By setting an example of a positive role model, you hope that they will see adults speaking to each other respectfully.” Deborah and Carol were also intentional about avoiding speaking to each other sarcastically because they wanted to model the communication expectations they have for their students. Shannon and Laura also observed how they could set the tone in the classroom through their collaboration. Laura compared their experience to what she observed in another kindergarten classroom in the school, “The tone in the other classroom was different, it was a lot darker. Our classroom was always cheery, and we were both on the same page. I think it was really apparent in our students' attitudes as well.” This observation led Laura and Shannon to conclude that they could facilitate a positive learning environment by being role models and working together in the classroom.

Consistency is vital in the context of the early learning environment. If the teacher and the early childhood educator are not united in the classroom, students will pick up on these tensions. Students may even test the educator team’s consistency by asking the other educator if they do not receive the desired response from one educator. Carol confirmed, “Sometimes a child tries something out on me, I'll say no, then they'll go ask Deborah the same thing. Since we're on the same page, we’re unlikely to say, ‘Go ahead,’ so the kids get a consistent message.” This was a common experience in both educator teams. All the educators recognized the importance of
consistency and backing up the decisions of their teaching partners. Laura and Shannon found that without consistency, students experienced confusion and could be misdirected. Shannon described how consistency is necessary within collaboration:

> If you have a huge divide where one teaching partner is going this direction, and the other teaching partner is going this direction, that's going to confuse your students. It's almost like rather than having two educators that are working together, you have two educators that are on two totally different streets. The students will obviously see that. They'll feed off that. They'll see that maybe you're not talking in the classroom, and maybe one teacher wants us to do this, but one teacher lets us do that.

In order to achieve this consistency, the Ontario Ministry of Education (2012) states that educators need to be willing to collaborate by co-creating an atmosphere of mutual respect, trust, and open communication. The educator teams determined that this was an essential component within their collaborative partnership, because it also had a direct impact on their students.

### 4.4.2 Educator team members’ successful collaboration allowed them to provide individualized attention to each student in the kindergarten classroom.

Educator team members saw a variety of benefits of collaboration for the students in the class. One of the main benefits they identified was the individualized attention that could be provided to students. Laura described how it was essential to engage in ongoing communication and reflection to ensure that the team was meeting the needs of the students. She explained,

> In kindergarten, you have like 30 bodies moving around, and two adults. It’s important to get to know the kids even with a large group. But collaborating, for us anyway, wasn't just planning and then doing something. It was planning and doing something, reflecting, and then sharing that experience as well.
Participants in this research study also discussed how the learning environment can be catered to the individual needs of students. Educators stated that they believe it is easier to differentiate instruction when there is more than one educator in the classroom. Carol shared how the structure of the educator team provides beneficial outcomes for students, “Since there's two of us, it allows us to focus on individual needs a little more than just having one person with a whole bunch of kids. Then it's harder to differentiate and target needs.” Both educator teams recognized the need for two educators based on the number of students enrolled in full-day kindergarten classrooms. Research by Shahbazi and Salinitri (2016) also emphasized the necessity for two educators and how each of these individuals can be a positive role model for students. In this way, the research literature supports the participants’ belief that both educators are required to provide differentiated learning in classes with many students. When both educators collaborated effectively, they met the individual needs of their students.

4.5 Conclusion

In conclusion, this study found that personal and professional experiences of teachers and early childhood educators impact their preparation for collaboration in full-day kindergarten. Based on these experiences, educators develop strategies that promote successful collaboration in the planning and implementation of the kindergarten program. These strategies include setting goals, demonstrating flexibility, and participating in professional development. The most significant challenges that teachers and early childhood educators face are barriers to communication and perceptions of the members of the educator team. When educator teams achieve successful collaboration, they can overcome these challenges by supporting one another, and affirming each team member’s professional identity. Finally, this research found that educators observed significant outcomes of successful educator collaboration among students.
Participants reported that their consistent and respectful manner had a positive impact on the social development of students. When educators collaborated successfully, it allowed students to receive individualized attention. These findings add to existing literature because they highlight the importance of flexibility in collaboration. As well, these findings suggest that educators should have an awareness and understanding of the integrated roles in full-day kindergarten. Next in Chapter Five, the implications of these findings will be explored and discussed. This analysis will also provide recommendations and identify potential areas of concentration for future research.
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

5.0 Introduction

In this chapter, I highlight the implications of the research findings and discuss the significance of the study. First, I provide an overview of the key findings about what factors facilitate successful collaboration between teachers and early childhood educators in full-day kindergarten. Next, I consider what the implications of these findings are for both the educational research community and for my own professional identity and practice as a new teacher-researcher. After considering the implications, I propose recommendations that can be implemented by members of the educational community including professionals such as teachers, early childhood educators, school administrators, school board officials, and faculties of education. Finally, I identify areas of concentration and make suggestions for further research and investigation.

5.1 Overview of Key Findings and Their Significance

As discussed in Chapter Four, there are various factors that impact the collaboration that occurs within educator teams. Teachers and early childhood educators identified a variety of personal and professional experiences that contributed to their preparation to work collaboratively within an educator team in full-day kindergarten. For example, the educators described how their own relationships within their families gave insight into how to work cooperatively with others. In addition to family relationships and educational training, participants emphasized how previous experience in co-teaching relationships prepared them to collaborate successfully in their current educator teams. While Tozer (2012) found that teachers were often in a position of authority over early childhood educators, this study discovered that the early childhood educators in these teams had more co-teaching experience within full-day
kindergarten. This is significant because it highlights a need to consider how educators with different levels of co-teaching experience can be adequately prepared to collaborate in full-day kindergarten.

In this study, participants described several resources that facilitated their successful collaboration in full-day kindergarten. Teachers and early childhood educators believed that it was important for both members of the educator team to have a shared teaching philosophy. This ensured that they were united in their approach in the classroom, and allowed them to establish consistent routines. At the same time, another essential aspect of their collaborative partnership was flexibility. Teachers and early childhood educators described a need to adapt and to negotiate expectations within the classroom. In research literature, there have been recommendations for educator teams to participate in professional development intended to promote collaboration (Gibson & Pelletier, 2010; Goulden, 2012; Tozer, 2012). The participants in this study discussed their involvement in ongoing professional development that is currently offered to them. This finding is significant, because it demonstrates how the Ontario Ministry of Education has responded to recommendations by implementing professional development for educator team members. Educator teams believed that participating in professional development equipped them with information and strategies that would support their ability to collaborate.

Both members of the educator team encountered significant challenges in collaboration. The first challenge that participants identified was communication. One of the barriers to communication that educators experienced was insufficient planning time scheduled throughout the day. In order to respond to this challenge, the educator teams in this research study committed to plan together outside of school hours. They would also use notebooks and technology to promote ongoing communication. The other communication challenge that
impacted collaboration was engaging in communication with parents. The participants believed that parents also had a key role in collaboration. These educator teams highlighted the importance of parents being able to communicate with both members of the educator team. The findings surrounding communication challenges are significant because both educators described how they were proactive in establishing positive communication with each other and with parents. Both teachers and early childhood educators participated in parent-teacher interviews which created an opportunity for questions and feedback.

Educators identified perceptions of the team and the individual members as another challenge in their collaboration. Research by Goulden (2012) found that educators need to have clearly defined roles, and to also be familiar with the role of their teaching partners. The findings of this current study are significant because they revealed that educators determined their roles through a trial and error approach. They were able to collaborate successfully when both team members demonstrated flexibility by taking on different roles. While research has revealed the impact of perceptions on educator teams, there is limited research about how educators respond to these perceptions. This current research study adds to existing literature because it demonstrates how educators respond to others by advocating for their teaching partners.

Educator team members indicated that there were benefits to collaboration that had a positive influence on students in the classroom. Collaboration between educators had a positive impact on student socialization. Educators served as role models of prosocial behaviour and positive communication in their collaboration. This was significant because students were presented with an example of how people treat each other with respect. Another significant outcome of collaboration between educators was the consistency in their approaches to interacting with the students. When educators communicated with each other about classroom
management strategies and student responsibilities, this contributed to a positive learning environment. In addition to impacting socialization and promoting consistency, successful collaboration also resulted in more individualized attention for students.

5.2 Implications

In this section, I outline the implications of this research study for members of the educational research community, as well as implications for my own professional practice and identity as both a teacher and an early childhood educator.

5.2.1 The educational research community.

The findings of this research are significant for various members of the educational research community. This study demonstrates the value of co-teaching experience and other relationships, and how this influences an educator’s ability to collaborate. The strategies that participants identified could inform collaboration in other co-teaching partnerships and classrooms. It will be important for educators to be aware of the resources that are accessible to them to support collaboration. This includes other members of the educational research community including principals and school board officials. Overall, this study highlights how educator teams, parents, and principals all have a role in fostering a collaborative community in full-day kindergarten.

The participants in this study described some of the challenges that impacted their ability to collaborate in full-day kindergarten. Two significant challenges were communication and perceptions of the educator team. This included the perceptions held by teaching partners as well as other staff, parents, and members of the school community. To respond to these challenges, participants emphasized a need for scheduled time to engage in program planning and ongoing correspondence. In terms of team perceptions, educators felt it was crucial to affirm the
professional identity of their teaching partner. Participants also recognized the individual strengths and abilities of their team member. This is significant for the educational research community, because it promotes educators supporting each other and advocating for their team.

5.2.2 My professional identity and practice.

I have always seen collaboration as an essential component of any co-teaching model. After researching factors that contribute to successful collaboration in full-day kindergarten educator teams, I believe that I have gained understanding about how each member contributes to the partnership. In my professional practice, I want to implement the specific strategies of these educator teams, and consider the impact of collaboration for students. My goal is to promote collaboration in order to foster a positive learning environment.

My personal philosophy of teaching is based on the motto “Belonging, Growing, Successful.” I am committed to integrating the knowledge I have obtained from this research into my professional identity and practice in order to support these three goals in my teaching philosophy. Belonging involves creating a sense of security and community for students. One of the challenges that educator teams faced was communication with parents. The strategies that they used involved being proactive by sending messages to parents and being available for questions from parents. Collaboration allows educators, parents, and students to be involved and engaged in the learning environment. I will also support collaboration by advocating for my teaching partner. I have had practical experience in the role of an early childhood educator and a teacher candidate. My familiarity with both positions will allow me to have a greater understanding of the strengths and professionalism of each educator. This research has demonstrated the significance of educator team perceptions and how these perceptions impact collaboration.
I also want to facilitate learning and growth for educator teams. This research indicated the importance of participating in professional development. It is an opportunity for educator teams to receive further training and resources that support collaboration. From this research, it is evident that successful collaboration requires educators to be flexible and to listen attentively to each other. Although there are different roles in the classroom, it is essential for educators to recognize how their roles complement each other. My previous experiences in co-teaching relationships will also inform my professional practice in an educator team. The participants in this study highlighted for me the importance of consistency in approach in the classroom. To make this possible, I will communicate my teaching philosophy with my team member, and be willing to adapt our approach by making decisions cooperatively.

When educator teams collaborate, this leads to students and educators achieving success. Part of being successful is setting realistic goals and expectations and then striving to meet those goals. One of my goals in my professional practice is to support students achieving their full potential. When educators collaborate effectively, they can be a role model for students of what it means to treat others with respect. Collaboration will also allow me to provide individualized attention to students in the classroom. Overall, this research demonstrated how I can be proactive in order to collaborate successfully in my professional practice.

5.3 Recommendations

One recommendation from this research is for school boards to create a process for selecting and forming educator teams in full-day kindergarten. Currently, there is not a process in place to ensure that early childhood educators and teachers will be compatible and able to work effectively within an educator team. Although this is a professional responsibility, consideration should be given to forming matches in which the two educators share values and can support
each other effectively within the classroom. By creating a process that takes individual skills and strengths into account, this will promote educator teams building a positive learning community in full-day kindergarten classrooms.

Another recommendation is to infuse knowledge of both roles into preservice teacher education and programs for early childhood educators. It is important for educators to have awareness of the training and strengths of their teaching partner. In addition to initial education programs, I recommend that school boards and administration provide ongoing training and support to educator teams. The principal is another member in the early learning team. If educators are struggling to collaborate or facing challenges, it is important that they receive the necessary resources to address these challenges. This research suggests that communication and perception of educators are two key challenges. To address these challenges, it could be beneficial to connect newly formed educator teams with experienced educator teams. This is a rich learning opportunity and promotes collaboration among multiple educator teams. Experienced educators can act as mentors and support the development of successful collaboration among their colleagues.

A third recommendation is for educator teams to establish routines and create an opportunity for regular planning time. Consistency is important so that students receive the same message and recognize that educators are united in the classroom. In order to achieve consistency, educators need to be engaged in ongoing communication with each other. Participants in this research also emphasized the importance of flexibility and attentive listening. It is essential for educator teams to incorporate these communication skills into their professional practice. Establishing patterns of effective communication will allow educators to develop a collaborative educator team built on trust and respect. When educators demonstrate trust and
respect in their team, it affirms the professional identity of their team member. To facilitate successful collaboration, it is important for educators to feel validated and supported. Educators can advocate for their teaching partner and the educator team in full-day kindergarten.

5.4 Areas for Further Research

This study provides some insight into how teachers and early childhood educators develop a collaborative partnership in full-day kindergarten. This includes some of the experiences and resources that support their collaboration. Although there is research on the academic outcomes of full-day kindergarten, there is limited research about the impact of collaboration on students in the kindergarten classroom. DeCicca (2007) and DeCesare (2004) conducted research about how the academic benefits of full-day kindergarten fade in Grade One. The findings of this current research study suggest that collaboration provides a model of respectful communication and can lead to individualized attention for students. Further research is required to determine the long-term effects of collaboration for students.

Research has also focused on some of the challenges that educator teams face in their co-teaching relationship. This current study has identified a lack of communication and negative perceptions of the educator team as potential barriers to collaboration. An area that requires further investigation is the response of educators to these challenges. It will be important to explore how to develop collaboration in educator teams that are struggling to work cooperatively. It could be helpful to consider how collaborative educator teams can share their strategies with the educational community.

5.5 Concluding Comments

In this chapter, I provided a summary of the findings as outlined in Chapter Four. Educator team members identified various experiences and resources that contribute to their
successful collaboration in full-day kindergarten classrooms. Experiences included relationships in families as well as other co-teaching partnerships. Flexibility and attentive listening were consistently emphasized as essential components of a collaborative educator team. Educators also established routines and discussed strategies for the classroom prior to implementation. This proactive approach ensured that educators were consistent and showed respect for each other.

Next, I discussed the implications of this research for the educational research community. This research recognized communication and educator team perceptions as key challenges that need to be addressed. This finding is significant for the educational research community, because it suggests areas for further professional development and support. The findings also highlight that educator teams, parents, and principals all have a role in fostering a collaborative community in full-day kindergarten.

After discussing the implications for the educational community, I considered the implications of this research for my own professional identity and practice. I integrated the knowledge I gained from this research into my teaching philosophy which is represented by the motto “Belonging, Growing, Successful.” I discovered that my dual role as both an early childhood educator and a teacher gives me a unique perspective about what each member can contribute to the educator team. As well, the findings of this study are significant for me, because they have equipped me with additional resources and strategies that I can implement in my professional practice. In response to the research, I outlined recommendations including developing a process for forming educator teams in full-day kindergarten. I suggest that experienced educators be paired with new educator teams to act as mentors and to provide additional support to educator teams as they negotiate their professional partnership.
Finally, I suggested possible areas for further research in terms of collaboration in full-day kindergarten. This included investigation into the long-term impact of collaboration on students. As well, I think it would be worthwhile to determine how to best support educator teams that are struggling to collaborate. I believe that it would be beneficial to gain insight into conflict resolution strategies that can support educator teams. As educators, it is important to recognize the potential to be engaged in life-long learning. It is our responsibility to create inclusive classroom communities and positive learning environments. Ultimately, I believe that this research study has the opportunity to provide insight into strategies and resources that promote the development of collaborative educator teams in full-day kindergarten classrooms.
References


Callaghan, L. (2012). *Examining the collaborative structure in full day kindergarten educator teams*. Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses. (4794)


Goulden, W. (2012). Teacher reactions to the implementation of full day kindergarten.

University of Toronto.


Tozer, C. (2012). *The development of team relationships in teacher and early childhood educator (ECE) integrated staff teaching teams in full day, every day kindergarten*. Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses. (9017129)


Appendix A: Letter of Consent

Date:

Dear Participant,

My Name is Geneva Mather-Dyer and I am a student in the Master of Teaching program at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto (OISE/UT). A component of this degree program involves conducting a small-scale qualitative research study. My research will focus on learning what factors lead to successful collaborative partnerships for teams of early childhood educators and kindergarten classroom teachers, and what outcomes of collaboration these teams observe for their students. I am interested in interviewing teachers and early childhood educators who self-report being part of a successful collaborative FDK educator team. I think that your knowledge and experience will provide insights into this topic.

Your participation in this research will involve one interview (45-60 minutes), which will be transcribed and audio-recorded. I would be grateful if you would allow me to interview you at a place and time convenient for you, outside of school time. The contents of this interview will be used for my research project, which will include a final paper, as well as informal presentations to my classmates. I may also present my research findings via conference presentations and/or through publication. You will be assigned a pseudonym to maintain your anonymity and I will not use your name or any other content that might identify you in my written work, oral presentations, or publications. This information will remain confidential. Any information that identifies your school or students will also be excluded. The interview data will be stored on my password-protected computer and the only person who will have access to the research data will be my course instructor Angela MacDonald-Vemic. You are free to change your mind about your participation at any time, and to withdraw even after you have consented to participate. You may also choose to decline to answer any specific question during the interview. I will destroy the audio recording after the paper has been presented and/or published, which may take up to a maximum of five years after the data has been collected. There are no known risks to participation, and I will share a copy of the transcript with you shortly after the interview to ensure accuracy.

Please sign this consent form, if you agree to be interviewed. The second copy is for your records. I am very grateful for your participation.

Sincerely,

Geneva Mather-Dyer

Geneva Mather-Dyer
Course Instructor’s Name: Dr. Angela MacDonald-Vemic
Contact Information: angela.macdonald@utoronto.ca

Consent Form

I acknowledge that the topic of this interview has been explained to me and that any questions that I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I can withdraw from this research study at any time without penalty.

I have read the letter provided to me by Geneva Mather-Dyer and agree to participate in an interview for the purposes described. I agree to have the interview audio-recorded.

Signature: ___________________________

Name: (printed) ____________________________

Date: ____________________________
Appendix B: Interview Protocol

Introductory Script: Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research study, and for making time to be interviewed today. This research study aims to determine what factors lead to successful collaborative partnerships for teams of early childhood educators and kindergarten classroom teachers, and what outcomes of collaboration these teams observe for their students. This interview will last approximately 45-60 minutes, and I will ask you a series of questions focused on your experiences with collaborative teaching. I want to remind you that you may refrain from answering any question, and you have the right to withdraw your participation from the study at any time. As I explained in the consent letter, this interview will be audio-recorded. Do you have any questions before we begin?

Background Information
1. What is your current position, and how long have you held this position?
2. Can you please tell me more about your educational pathway and the experiences that led you to your current position?
3. How many years have you been employed as an educator? (teacher/ECE)
4. How many years have you worked in a full-day kindergarten classroom?
5. What additional qualifications/specializations/experiences do you have with the 3 to 6 years’ age group?
6. Have you had other co-teaching experiences? (In FDK or in a different setting)

Teacher Perspectives
7. In your view, what components are essential for establishing an effective FDK educator team?
8. In your view, what is the role of collaboration in building a successful FDK educator team?
9. What does collaboration mean to you, generally speaking?
10. What does it mean to you in the context of the FDK classroom setting?
11. What are some key elements that make for strong collaboration, in your view?
12. What key elements make your collaboration successful? In what ways is your collaboration successful? What indicators of this do you see?
13. How would you describe your role within the FDK classroom?
14. What is the role of your team member?
15. How are these roles similar or different? How were they decided or assigned?
16. When you began teaching in FDK, did you feel prepared to work as part of an educator team?
   - What concerns, if any, did you have? How were those concerns alleviated?

Teacher Practices
17. Can you describe for me what collaboration looks like in your FDK team?
   - In what ways do you collaborate?
   - Can you provide me with some examples?
   - In what areas do you not collaborate?
18. Does your team take turns with responsibilities, or divide the responsibilities in the classroom?
19. Do you prepare lessons together? If not, how, if at all, do you coordinate plans?
20. Who is responsible for assessment and evaluation? Is this a collaborative responsibility?
21. To what extent is communication with parents a collaborative endeavour?
22. How do you perceive the impact of collaborative teaching on students and their learning in your class?

**Supports and Challenges**
23. How did you and your teaching partner learn to collaborate the way you do?
24. What resources and factors have supported you in developing a successful collaboration?
25. What are some of the key challenges that you confront working in collaboration in an FDK classroom?
26. How do you respond to these challenges?
27. How might the education system help you further respond to these challenges?
28. How do you and your teaching partner resolve conflicts when they arise?
29. Are there other factors or resources that contribute to the success of your educator team? Explain.

**Next Steps**
30. What goals do you have for your educator team, and how do you plan to achieve them?
31. What are some suggestions or strategies you would offer to a new educator team or a struggling team when it comes to collaboration in FDK classrooms?

Thank you for your participation in this research study.