ACADEMIC AND SOCIAL OUTCOMES OF CO-TEACHING

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ACADEMIC AND SOCIAL OUTCOMES OF CO-TEACHING

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Abstract

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This paper contains research on co-teaching and the academic and social outcomes for students with disabilities within the co-taught environment. Through action research and review of historical standardized testing data, a study was conducted to see how socialization of students with disabilities changed when they were included in the regular education classroom. The study also examined academic outcomes by comparing pre-co-taught standardized data to formal and informal assessments within the co-taught classroom. There were eight students with learning disabilities included in a classroom of 29 total students. A sociometric assessment was given within the first month of school and then again two months later. A district-wide standardized assessment is given three times per year; data from the 2011 spring testing period was collected to be compared with fall 2011 data.

This is a first attempt at co-teaching for the district; students have not participated in a co-teaching arrangement before fall 2011. English 10 was the selected test-course; it is a district requirement for graduation. Seven of the eight participating students with disabilities were previously self-contained for English instruction. For all [selected] students involved this [class] is their least restrictive environment.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The school district where I teach has a high population of students in need of special education. For the 2010-2011 school year 22% of the entire District's high school students were diagnosed as having a disability (www.dpi.state.wi.us/sig/index.html). Of these students, the majority of them have received remedial English and math instruction within the special education classroom. While this may be the most convenient way to serve these students, it is not the most appropriate setting; the least restrictive environment is the regular education classroom with supports. It is the determination of the district that the most efficient way to accommodate all students and ensure success is to implement co-teaching.

Not only is inclusion desirable for preferred academic instruction, but also for social gains amongst peers. Students with mild disabilities that are in partial or full inclusion situations are accepted by general education classes (Smoot, 2011). With this outcome in mind, co-teaching was implemented for the 2011-2012 school year within the English 10 classroom. The overall goal is social acceptance and involvement as well as enhanced academic outcomes of students with disabilities through exposure to a rich curriculum and participation within a mixed-ability, heterogeneous classroom.

Statement of the Problem

How does co-teaching in an inclusive classroom affect academics and social outcomes for students with disabilities?

Definition of Terms

Full Inclusion: The situation where the student with special needs is provided with all of his or her special education services within the general education classroom (Smoot, 2011).

Partial Inclusion: The situation where some of the time, the student is removed from the general education classroom for special education or related services (Smoot, 2011).

Co-Teaching: An instructional approach in which a general and special educator share responsibility for planning, delivering, and evaluating instruction for a mixed group of students, some of whom have special needs (Arguelles, Hughes, & Schumm, 2000).

Delimitations of Research

There are no delimitations of research.

Method of Approach

A review of literature relating to research and studies of co-teaching within an inclusion classroom and its academic and social impact on students diagnosed with mild disabilities was conducted over a three month period. Action-research was conducted throughout the fall of

2011 taking into account beginning of the year test scores of students in Measure of Academic Progress (MAPs) testing, Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI) testing, and a social survey. These results were summarized and synthesized. The same tests were given at the completion of the semester; these results were again summarized and synthesized, and recommendations were made.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Co-Teaching Movement

As education guidelines continually transform, more emphasis has been placed on high stakes testing and the continuation of No Child Left Behind standards. The focus on testing has caused districts distress when it comes to their student population diagnosed with mild disabilities. Keefe & Moore state:

> The Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) (1997) requires that students with disabilities be placed in the least restrictive environment (LRE). According to IDEA this means: To the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities, including children in public or private institutions or other care facilities, are educated with children who are not disabled, and special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular education environment occurs only when the nature of severity of the disability of a child is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily (Keefe & Moore, 2004).

For many students their LRE is the general education classroom; thus, this movement has a direct effect on classroom diversity. "However, a more diverse classroom has the potential to positively impact the co-teaching movement as our society continues to embrace different cultures" (Dieker & Murawski, 2003).

Although there is the potential for success with co-teaching, there are common themes researchers agree are necessary for successful implementation: common planning time,

flexibility, risk-taking, defined roles and responsibilities, compatibility, communication, and administrative support (Arguelles et al., 2000). Even with all of these strategies in place, not all co-teaching environments are appropriate for students. "When determining inclusion assignments, the match between the learning characteristics of a student and the demands of the classroom setting should be a key consideration" (Hogan, 2005).

With research continuing to present itself in favor of co-teaching, more districts are looking at integrating this framework into its schools. To meet all learner needs, combining special education teachers' skills and general education teachers' knowledge has been the most popular context (Arguelles et al., 2000). By doing this, "students with disabilities [gain] new access to their peers and the general education curriculum" (Eaton, Salmon, & Wischnowski, 2004)

Positive Aspects of Inclusion and Co-Teaching

Including students with mild disabilities in the general education classroom can foster numerous positive outcomes when done so with proper support in the form of co-teaching. The student is exposed to and immersed in discussions with peers that have contrasting views on material and application. All students can benefit from two professional educators in the classroom to instruct and lend support. Gains may be simplistic in nature, as basic as removing the stigma of special education pull-out (Keefe et al., 2004).

Through an experiment conducted by Federico, Herrold, & Venn parents reported a strong appreciation for their children's progress academically, improved attitude towards school, and positive learning climate within the inclusion classroom (Federico, Herrold, & Venn, 2000). Positive outcomes from this particular experiment did not end with the parents; students reported

"shared feelings of joy, pride, mutual respect, and camaraderie" (Federico et al., 2000).

Many students with disabilities struggle not only with skill acquisition but also with social acceptance. Individual social growth and development can be better fostered throughout co-teaching and inclusion, especially when recruiting peers with a high social status to mentor students with mild disabilities. This often results in an increased overall acceptance (Smoot, 2011).

With diverse ranges of abilities being mainstreamed into classrooms, regular education teachers may struggle with daily modifications that are necessary for student achievement. Incorporating a co-teaching approach involves a trained individual being paired with the teacher of record from a specific discipline in that classroom to assist with specific modifications. This strategic application does not restrict benefits to those students identified with disabilities; other students will likely benefit either academically or socially.

Overall, inclusion and co-teaching supply students with various tiers of support within the classroom. There is also increased flexibility when planning for students at various skill levels, utilizing the special education teacher's modification and skill remediation knowledge as well as the general education teacher's content knowledge. With both provisions within the classroom as well as various peer support the needs of all students can be met (Fennick, 2001).

Negative Aspects of Inclusion and Co-Teaching

Although there is sufficient evidence that inclusion and co-teaching is a positive variation on mainstreaming, there is also an opposition. When co-teaching happens without proper planning and training, outcomes will be less than satisfactory. One of the major problems in co-

teaching implementation is allocation of common planning time amongst educators. Budgets are requiring more hours teaching and less planning time. District financial restraints demand special education and general education teachers more teaching assignments and reduce planning time that usually does not coincide for shared planning time. This time is vital for adaptation and modification decisions, as well as roles and responsibilities discussions (Arguelles, 2000).

Another negative aspect of inclusion and co-teaching is the struggle to find compatible general and special educators. Teaching styles and philosophies need to match to create and maintain a successful classroom environment (Arguelle, 2000). Discipline and classroom management are skills that come to individual educators in a variety of ways. When a general education teacher is experienced in the way they run their classroom, problems can occur when an outside source joins the team and alters their customized daily procedures and operations.

Additionally, there is even greater apprehension when discussing co-teaching at the secondary level. High school places an emphasis on content area knowledge, independent study skills, fast pacing instruction, high stakes testing, competency exams, and content oriented teachers; these characteristics present greater obstacles for co-teachers (Keefe et al., 2004). With these negative views some educators are entering co-teaching relationships without the necessary compromising attitude to accommodate students even when there are large class sizes, or extreme gaps amongst students' knowledge and abilities (Keefe et al., 2004).

Overall, co-teaching is a complex relationship that centers on communication and compatibility (Eaton et al., 2004). Research has focused on the necessity of educators to make this a successful experience for the students. However, there has not been overwhelming research that indicates negative effects on students who participate in a properly conducted co-taught environment.

Social Outcomes

When students are pulled out of the regular education classroom for a remedial class, they are singled out in front of their peers. Not only have they visibly received a label, they also have lost another chance to share something in common with a classmate. By practicing inclusion and using the co-teaching framework, students with disabilities are provided access to not only the general education curriculum, but also their peers without disabilities (Eaton et al., 2004).

Many students with disabilities have Individualized Education Programs (IEP) that focus on goals for their academic and social growth as well as transition development. By placing the student in an inclusion setting, they receive specific instruction focused on their individualized goals in real-life scenarios. Measuring social growth and development is more difficult than academic progress. When a student is placed in a co-taught classroom, the special education teacher can use small-group tasks as well as daily observations to assess skill maintenance (Smoot, 2011).

Past experiences in pull-out programs can testify to the negative effects of self-contained remedial classes. In regards to this, Smoot stated:

> "Most importantly, the opportunities for the student with mild disabilities to learn appropriate social skills are increased greatly in the general education classrooms in inclusion settings. For example, prior to 1997, mainstreamed students with mild disabilities spent such short periods of time in general education classrooms that they were not well known by their classmates. This was true even if they had basic social skills evidenced by successful interactions with friends in their neighborhoods" (Smoot, 2011).

All committed educators must focus on transition preparation for all students. If students with disabilities struggle with social settings focusing around work or play, they will struggle beyond high school and there will be no remediation support for many. Research has indicated that there is a direct correlation between the amount of time a student with a disability spends in the general education classroom and acceptance by their peers (Smoot, 2011).

Positive implications of inclusion through co-teaching stretch beyond direct effects on students with disabilities. Co-teaching allows for more straightforward modeling that is applicable to everyday situations. Students are immersed in appropriate ways to interact with adults as well as with one another. These are skills that are not specific to students with disabilities, but rather many at-risk students are deficient in this as well. By creating a learning environment that fosters constant communication, it has been documented that students in these settings develop appropriate tolerance and respect for others (Frederico et al., 2000).

When evaluating the positive effects of co-teaching and inclusion, it must be noted that not only access to the general education curriculum proves to be beneficial to students, but also that peer access to one another. Social growth and development is a necessity for all students. By diversifying the educational environment, more students are reporting positive changes in behavior, self-esteem, peer relationships, and mutual respect (Frederico et al., 2000).

CHAPTER 3

CLASSROOM DYNAMIC AND METHODS

The fall of 2011 marked the first attempt of co-teaching within my current school district. I conducted a study in a co-taught English 10 classroom; what would be the social and academic effects of an inclusive co-taught classroom? English 10 is a sophomore English course; there were 30 students within the class and eight received services through special education. Of the eight students identified, five were diagnosed with a learning disability in the area of reading and three were diagnosed with emotional/behavioral disabilities. Seven of the eight students previously received English instruction within a self-contained remedial classroom. This class was sixth period, which for sophomores was immediately after lunch. The period was 48 minutes long and data was collected from September through November.

A variety of instructional techniques were employed to address all levels of learners. Diagnostic assessments were given as needed to address students' abilities, from that groups were formed and the assigned English teacher and I took turns working with all levels of students. This way, both high level and low level functioning students received direct instruction from both classroom instructors. There was an assortment of direct, small group, and one-on-one instruction through each week. When group projects were assigned, students were heterogeneously grouped.

During the second week of class, I conducted a social survey. Students were to list the names of four of their friends within the class. This was then repeated during the first week of December to assess socialization patterns throughout the first three months of school and the possible changes due to inclusion.

To compare academic outcomes, I collected MAPs and SRI data from spring of 2011 testing periods. I realize that comparing these scores to fall of 2011 testing results may be skewed due to lack of retention over summer; however, the timelines of this study demanded current data. In order to assess accurately the success of inclusive co-teaching I will continue collecting data throughout the entire 2011-2012 school year.

CHAPTER 4

STUDY RESULTS

The first assessment conducted was the social survey. Students were asked to list the names of four friends within class. They completed this once in the first quarter of school (September) and then again in the second quarter (December). *Figure 1* refers to the whole class results, with emphasis on students without special needs choosing those with or without special needs. With all students listing four names, there were a total of 88 chances that a non-disabled student writes down the name of a student with disabilities. The blue bar data represents the initial results collected in September. Of the 88 chances, a student with disabilities was selected by a peer without disabilities three times. The red bar data displays the collection taken in December. Even with only two months' time, students without disabilities doubled their selection of peers with disabilities.

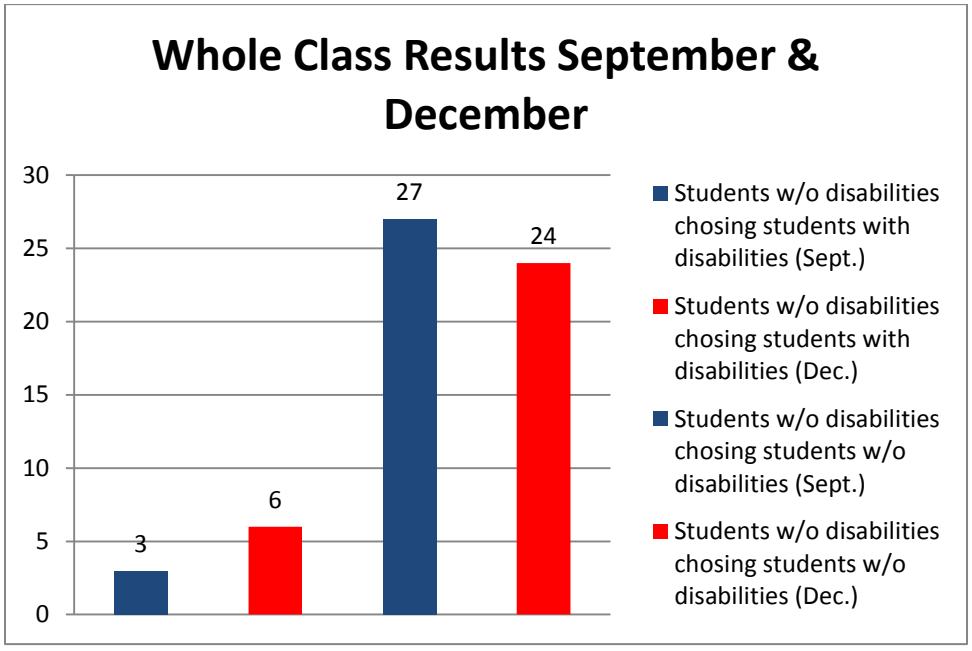

Figure 1. Whole Class Results Social Survey September & December

After collecting data as a whole class, the additional patterns could be examined by breaking down the results via gender. In *Figure 2* the blue bar graphs represent the data collected in September. There were 44 chances that a male without disabilities would write down the name of a male with disabilities, and the initial results concluded that only two males did so. After two months of daily class periods, the results from the December survey only changed by one, increasing the total of males with disabilities that were selected to three. Looking closer at the specific names that were listed, all of the males without disabilities that wrote down peer names with disabilities happened to be members of the same extracurricular athletic teams. Inclusion assists with social development within the classroom, but extracurricular involvement can be a basis for maintenance and growth of these relationships. Of the six males with disabilities, all but one male was recognized by his peers without disabilities.

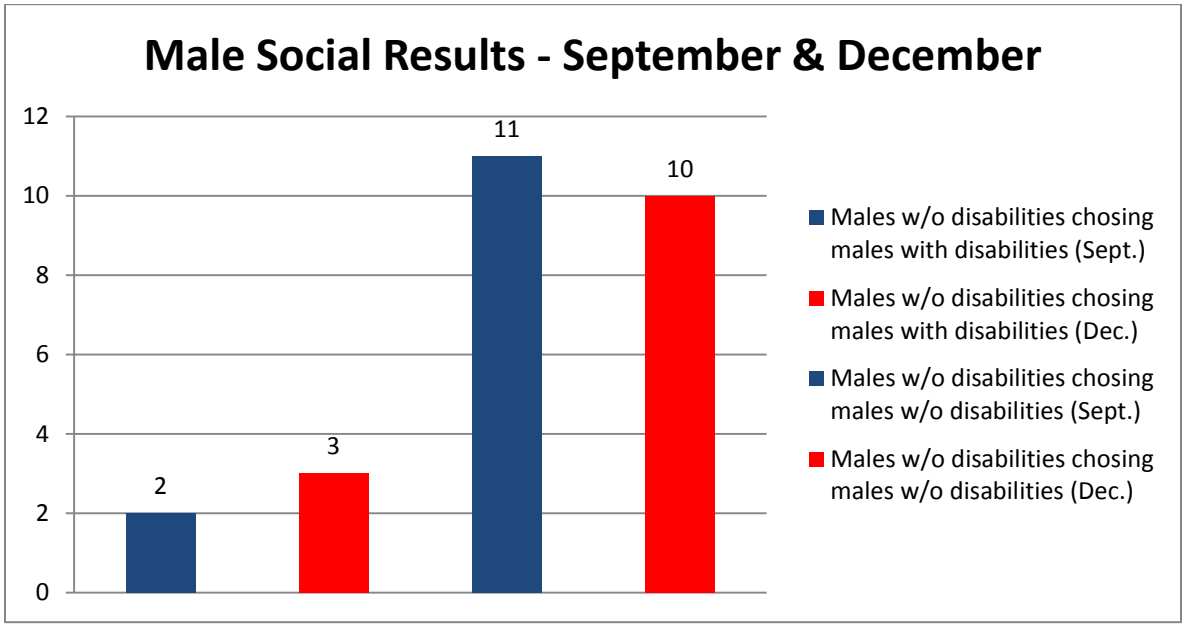

Figure 2. Male Social Survey Results September and December.

In addition to the male social results, there is *Figure 3*, the female social survey results. Again, the blue bar signifies data collected in September. The female results indicate that out of 17 girls and only four names on each list, there was only one female with disabilities that was chosen. On the second data collection period, there were again 60 chances that a female without disabilities write down the name of a female with disabilities, this increased to two. This increase can be accredited to acceptance and social circle development for a new female student. At the time of the first data collection, it was the first week of school within our district for one female without disabilities. Since then, she has increased her group of friends and identifies with the female she listed both in and out of the classroom. An additional note, the two females without disabilities that listed the name of an individual with disabilities, wrote down the name of the same peer. This means that there was one student with disabilities that was not acknowledged at all by her peers without disabilities; there are only two females with disabilities in the co-taught classroom.

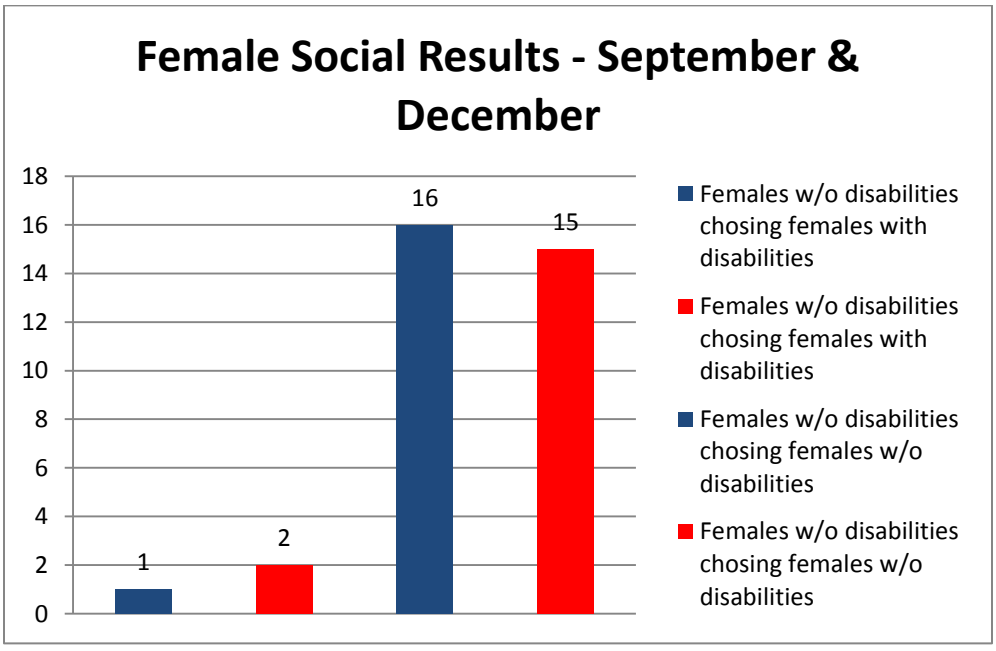

Figure 3. Female Social Survey Results September & December.

Lastly, there is the data comparison of the choices made by students with disabilities. The previous three figures symbolize the low percentages of students without disabilities that acknowledge their peers with disabilities as friends. It is an interesting contrast when looking at the selections made by those individuals with disabilities. *Figure 4* breaks down the 32 options that were available for these students. The blue bar again represents the data collected in September, where students with disabilities chose peers without disabilities 22 times. Surprisingly, when the second assessment was given, the red bar represents the data that changed and fewer students with disabilities selected peers without disabilities, 18 of 32 opportunities.

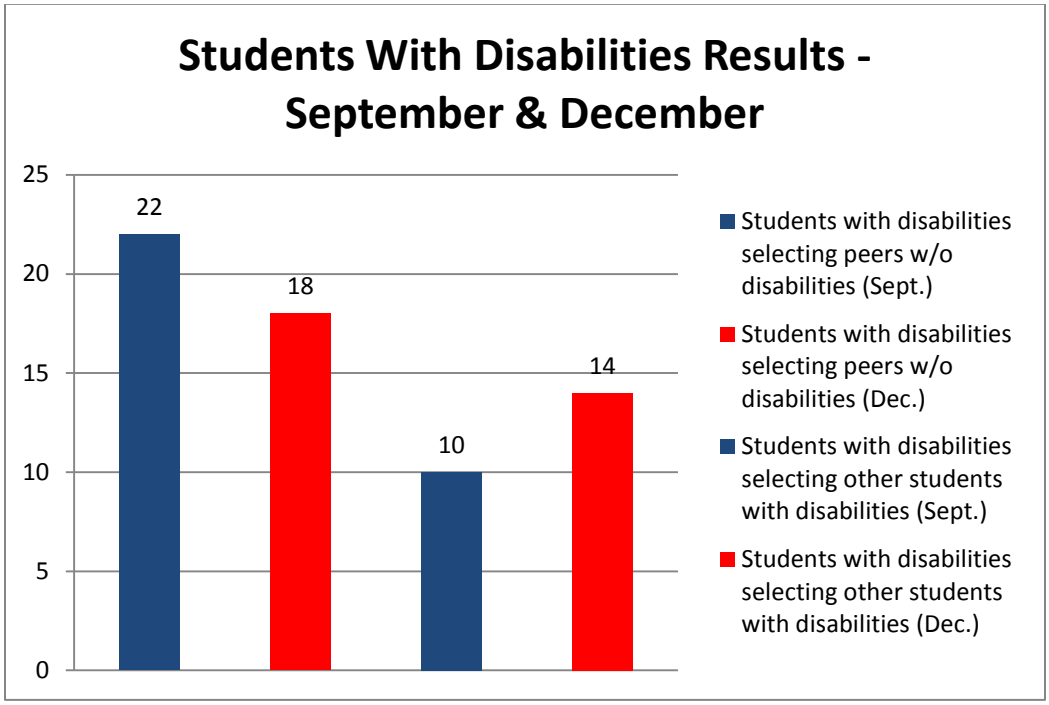

Figure 4. Students with Disabilities Social Survey Results September & December

Moving from social to academic data, each student with disabilities had to be compared to their previous test scores. There is always a chance that data is unreliable with students, based on observations, their test scores have relied heavily on their attitude toward testing the day of

completion. There are two scores in question for each student, first is their Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI) score which identifies a reading lexile based off of questions focused on passage comprehension and vocabulary. The second piece of academic data is their Measures of Academic Progress (MAPs) scores in the areas of reading, language arts, and math. This is also a computerized testing program that varies questions based upon correct and incorrect responses. When completing both of these assessments, all students with disabilities in this inclusive classroom have the option to utilize their accommodations and test in an alternative setting, without distractions.

The first student in question (Student A) is a young man that was diagnosed as having an emotional/behavioral disability. He is notorious for having numerous late and missing assignments in all of his classes and struggles with organization. In reference to the social survey, he was the one male that was not listed by any other male peers without disabilities. Looking at *Figure 5*, it is obvious that he made gains in reading comprehension from the spring to the fall. Comparing his results to the normed data for the SRI test, he is considered proficient for his age and grade. Continuing on to *Figure 6*, the data shows that his MAPs scores are not positively skewed. He ended his freshman year with higher scores than his sophomore year. However, this can be accredited to loss of skill/knowledge retention over the summer. When interpreting his past test scores, he has a trend of decreasing from spring to fall in language arts, but has maintained or increased in reading.

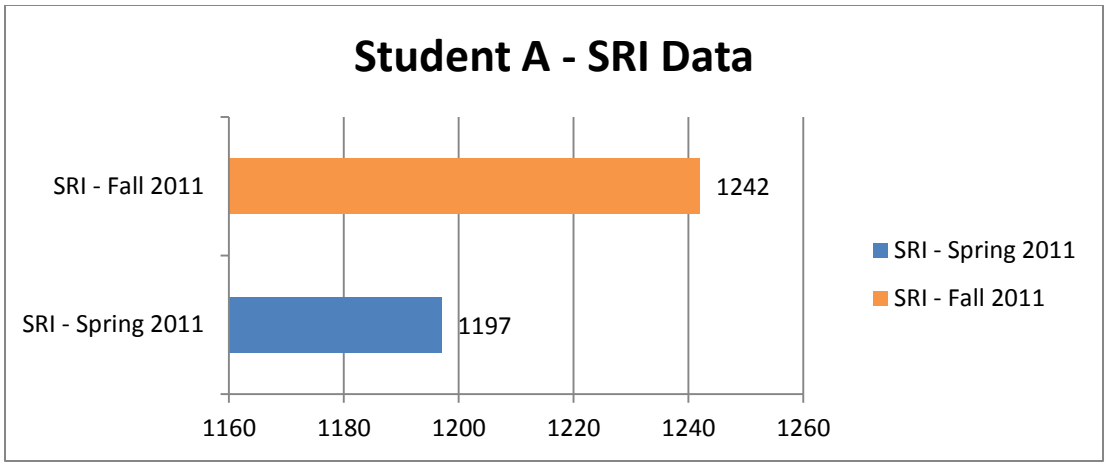

Figure 5. Student A, Male Student Diagnosed with Emotional/Behavioral Disability, SRI Results.

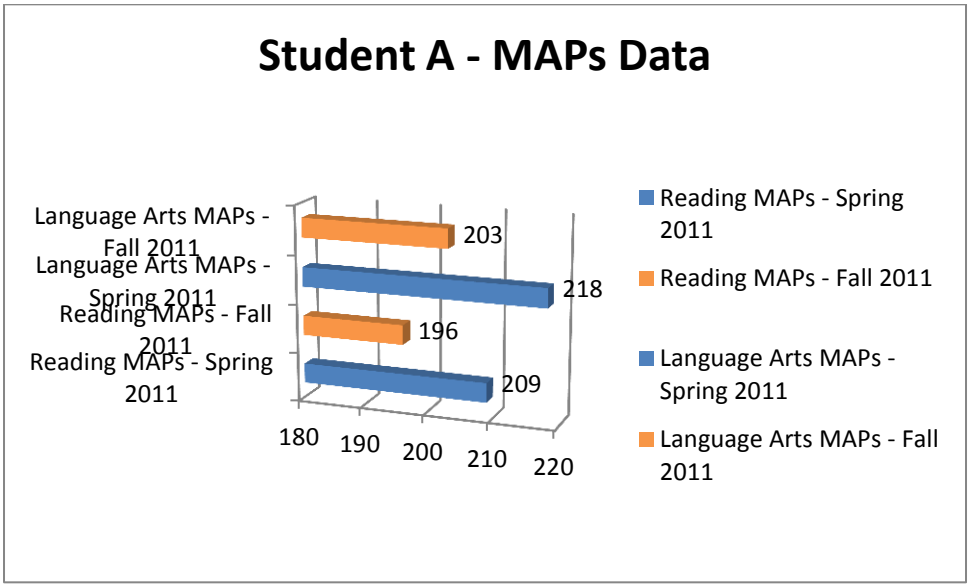

Figure 6. Student A, Male Student Diagnosed with Emotional/Behavioral Disability, MAPs Results.

The next student is another male that was diagnosed as having an emotional/behavioral disability. He has been successful in all of his classes so far in high school. His organization has improved from middle school and he has weaned himself from many of his accommodations. He is active in extra-curricular athletics and was identified in the social survey by peers without disabilities. This particular student did the opposite of Student A. His SRI lexile decreased

when compared to the spring score, in reference to *Figure 7.* Looking at his historical SRI data, he has fluctuated from 763-879 over the last two years. This range of scores falls within the classification of 'basic' and directly supports the notion that scores will reflect the attitude the student brings into the testing session. *Figure 8* illustrates Student B's growth in both reading and language arts from his spring testing to fall. If growth continues throughout the winter and spring testing session of the 2011-2012 school year, it can be assumed that the inclusive co-taught environment is creating the positive outcomes.

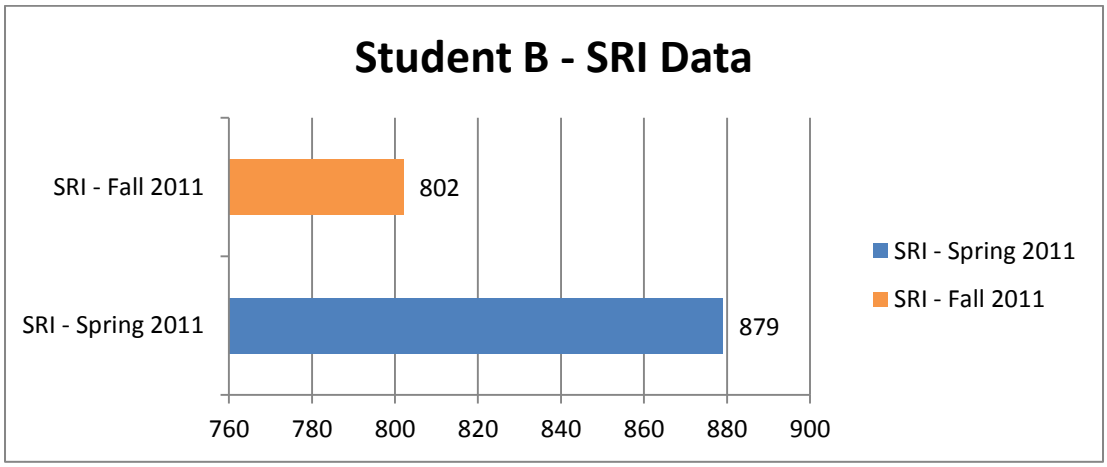

Figure 7. Student B, Male Student Diagnosed with Emotional/Behavioral Disability, SRI Results.

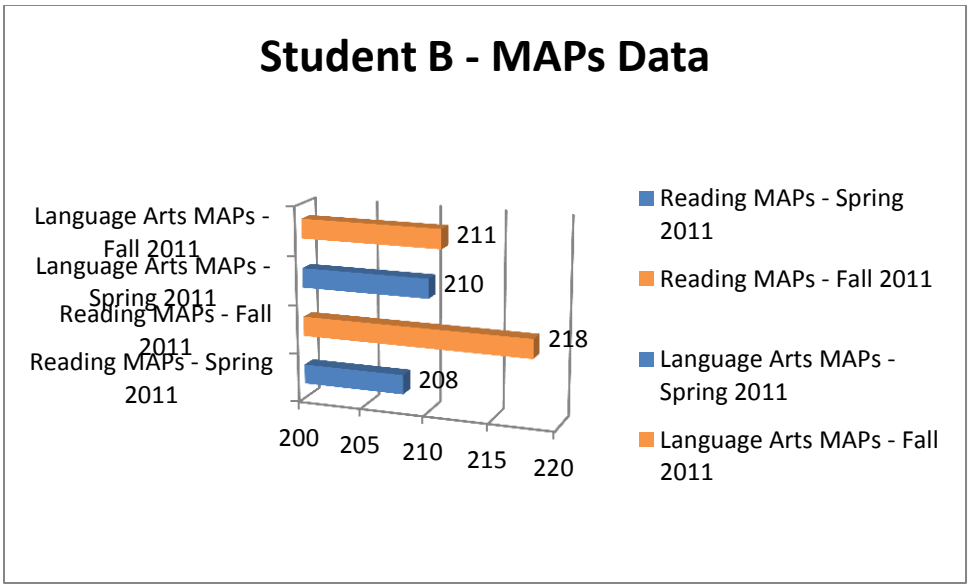

Figure 8. Student B, Male Student Diagnosed with Emotional/Behavioral Disability, MAPs Results.

Student C is a female student that has been diagnosed as having a learning disability in reading and math. She is involved in extra-curricular athletics and was the one female that was identified by her peers without disabilities as being a 'friend within the classroom.' She is organized, uses her assignment notebook, and strives to achieve good grades, A's and B's. As denoted in *Figure 9*, this student made significant SRI lexile gains from spring to fall. However, both of her scores are still within the 'basic' range and below grade level. Student C's MAPs data is split. Looking at *Figure 10*, she dropped from the spring to fall in reading, but went up in language arts. This increase in the area of language arts can be accredited to the implementation of a diagnostic assessment and ensuing small group instruction that was completed to group students for review of parts of speech as well as preparation for statewide testing.

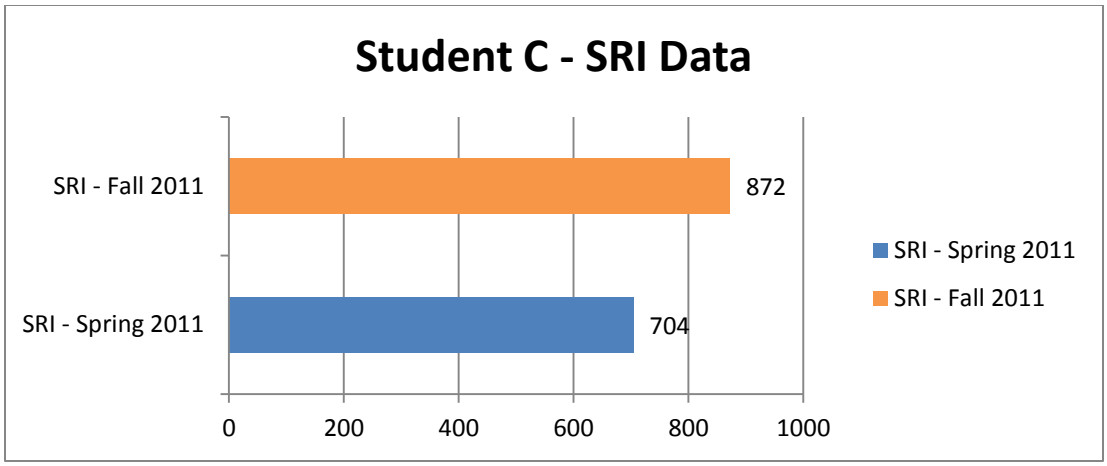

Figure 9. Student C, Female Student Diagnosed with Learning Disability, SRI Results.

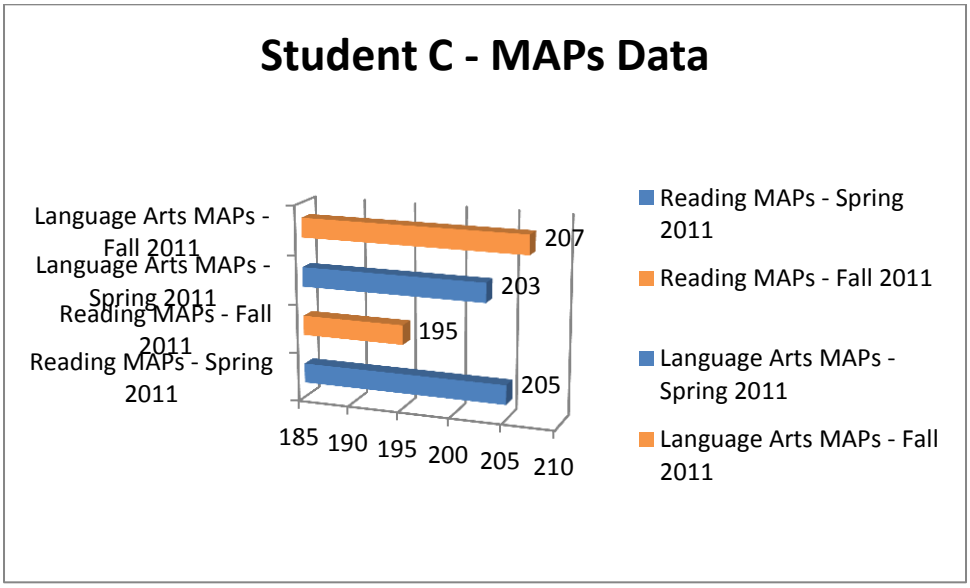

Figure 10. Student C, Female Student Diagnosed with Learning Disability, MAPs Results.

The only other female with special needs within the classroom is significantly lower functioning than all other students with disabilities in the same environment. Student D is a female student diagnosed as having a learning disability in the area of reading and math. She requires more modifications than peers; however, the co-taught inclusive classroom is definitely her least restrictive environment. She has been active in extra-curricular athletics for the past

two years; nevertheless, her name was not listed in the social survey by any of her peers without disabilities. *Figure 11* illustrates her lexile gains from the spring to fall. It is a fairly significant gain, but still leaves her far below grade level and identified as, 'below basic.' When reading aloud grade level text within the classroom, she always volunteers to read. Her pace is slower than peers, fluency is lacking, and when sounding out words syllables are inappropriately combined. She is a prime reason for why inclusion and co-teaching is necessary. Her fluency and decoding are only going to improve as she hears peers correctly phrase and decipher words when reading aloud. Her ability to read grade level text is not measured by the SRI, but rather her ability to comprehend it. Dually noted, inclusion will empower her comprehension when she is able to participate in heterogeneous small group literacy circles. *Figure 12* further supports the claim for inclusion. Student D's language arts MAPs scores from spring to fall were maintained and her reading increased. Again, if this trend continues throughout the remainder of the school year, these advances can be considered reliable considering her history of fluctuating scores throughout a school year when receiving instruction in a remedial pull-out class.

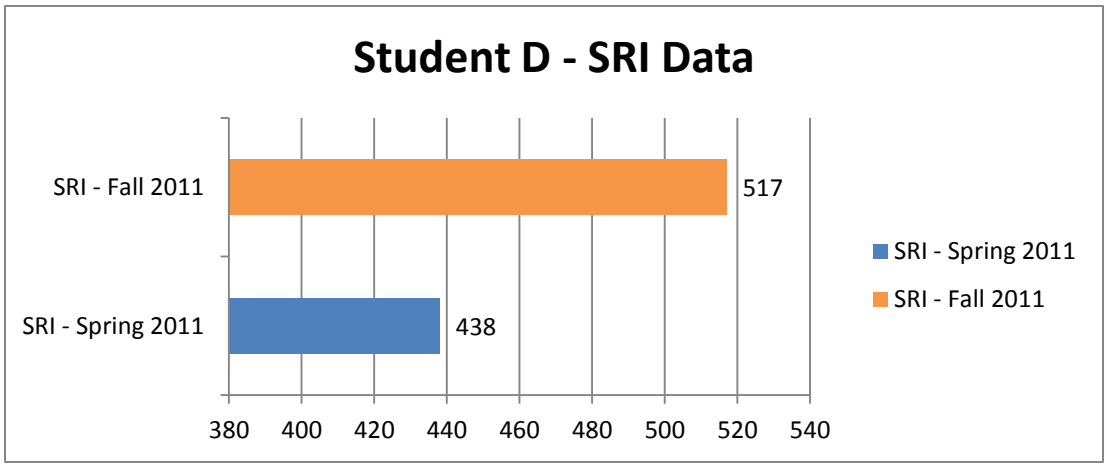

Figure 11. Student D, Female Student Diagnosed with Learning Disability, SRI Results.

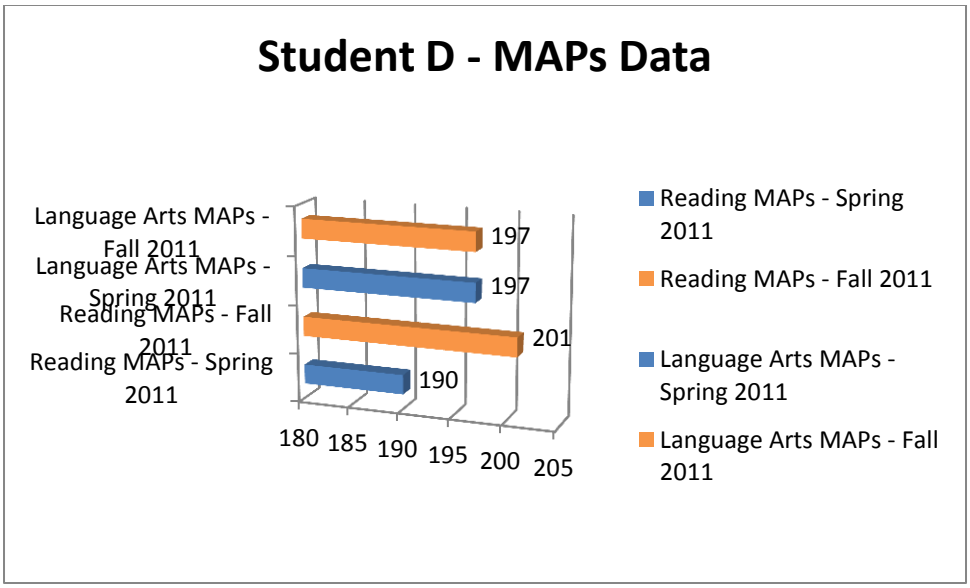

Figure 12. Student D, Female Student Diagnosed with Learning Disability, MAPs Results.

Student E is a male student that was diagnosed as having a learning disability in Reading and Math. He is involved in extracurricular athletic teams and was listed on peer social surveys by students with and without disabilities. His mother is in constant contact with me regarding his grades and he regularly stays after school to get homework assistance. When looking at *Figure 13*, you can see that his SRI lexile score did increase from 753 to 759. This score is below his same age peers and considered within the 'basic' range. When reading grade level text within the inclusive classroom, he occasionally volunteers to read aloud and makes mistakes with decoding unknown words. He is inconsistent at making corrections when mispronouncing words, not always recognizing that what he has read doesn't make sense; however, his listening comprehension is stronger. *Figure 14* shows that his MAPs scores increased in each area as well. This could be in part to his placement within the regular education classroom; exposing him to a richer and more complex text and use of language.

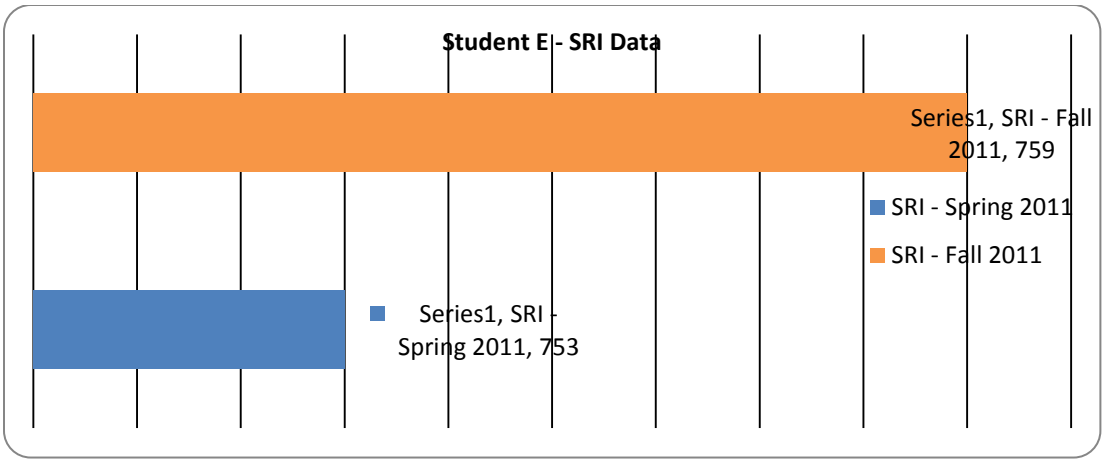

Figure 13. Student E, Male Student Diagnosed with Learning Disability, SRI Results.

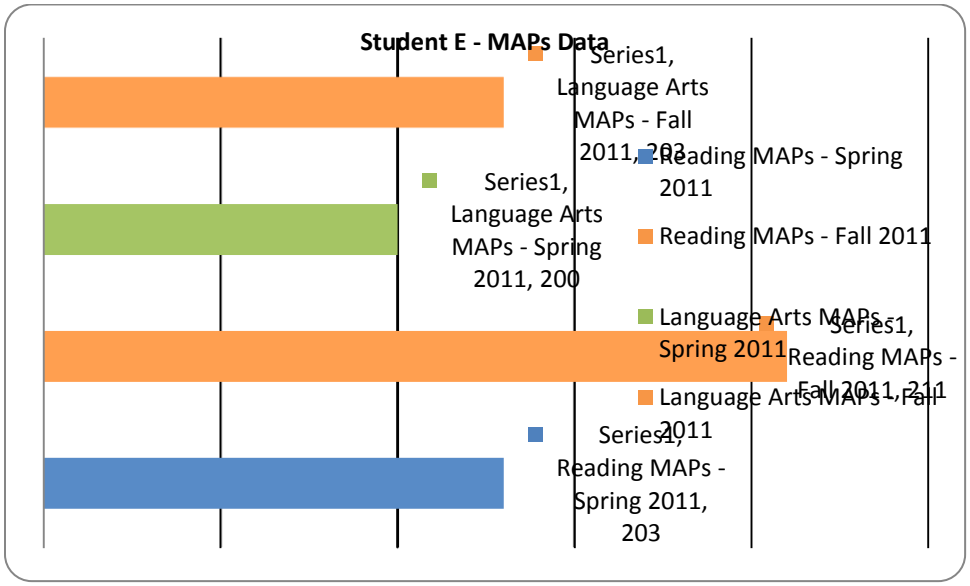

Figure 14. Student E, Male Student Diagnosed with Learning Disability, MAPs Results.

The next student in question (Student F) is a male diagnosed with a learning disability in Reading. He is generally a B average student and has been successful in all of his high school courses. He is involved in extracurricular athletic teams and was listed in the social survey by peers with and without disabilities. *Figure 15* shows his growth in reading comprehension from the spring of 2011 to the fall of 2011. These scores are both below his same age peers and

considered ‘basic.’ However, looking further back at his scores, the fall of 2010, his scores were normed to be ‘below basic.’ He has made steady gains since entering high school. The inclusive classroom may jump start additional growth. *Figure 16* supports the growth that has occurred since high school. Looking further back at MAPs results shows a variety of peaks and valleys with scores fluctuating throughout the middle school years. Since entering high school he has made, although small, consistent growth. With this new learning environment, it can be anticipated that his scores will continue to increase, possibly at a faster rate.

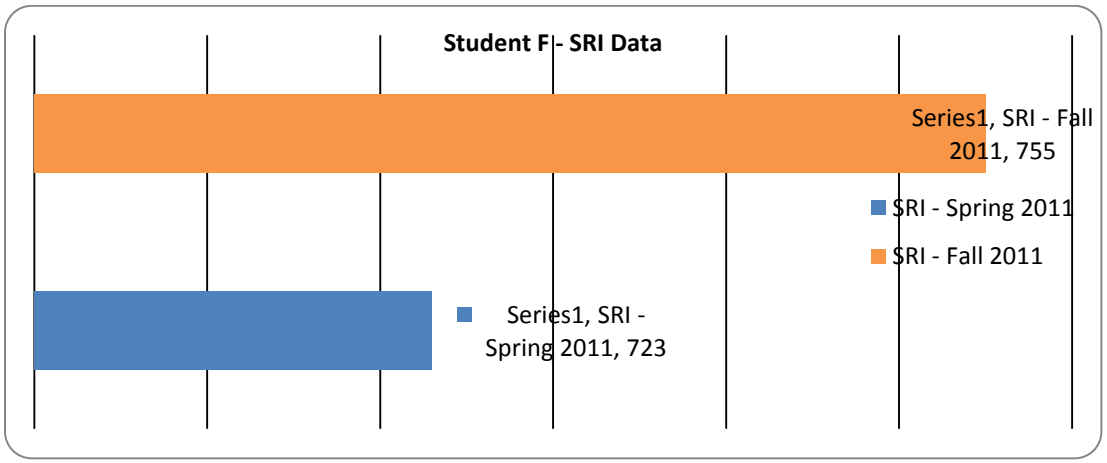

Figure 15. Student F, Male Student Diagnosed with Learning Disability, SRI Results.

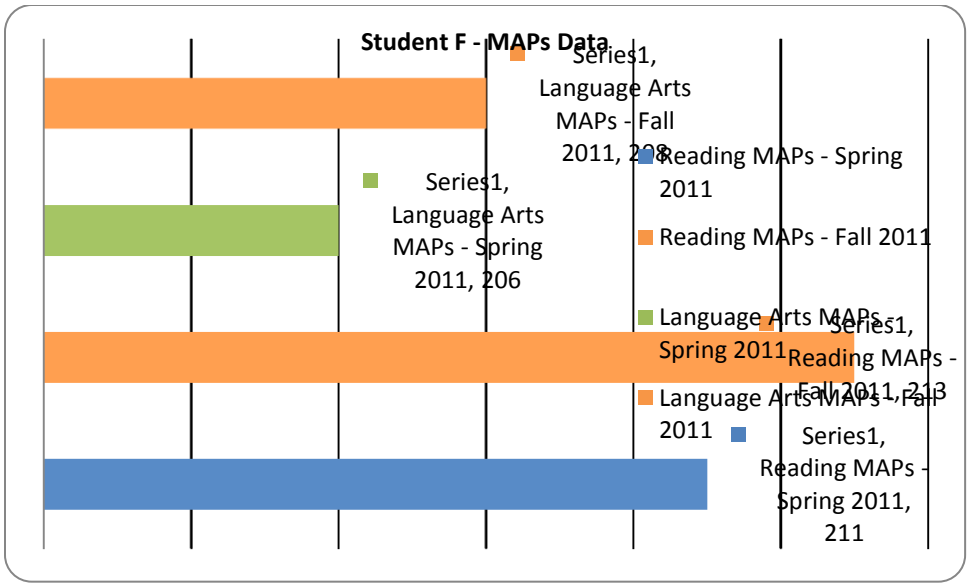

Figure 16. Student E, Male Student Diagnosed with Learning Disability, MAPs Results.

Student G is another male student that was diagnosed with a learning disability in Reading and Math. This student was not listed by any of his peers without disabilities on the social survey; however, he was selected by other students with disabilities. He enjoys reading science-fiction text and usually brings a self-selected reading book to classes with him. He habitually uses his assignment notebook and manages to keep himself on-task throughout his classes. Student G regularly checks his grades and makes sure he has all assignments turned in. When looking at *Figure 17* it is not apparent that he enjoys reading since he is still reading at a level below his peers, 'basic.' However, he has made significant gains from a 793 to a 994; over a 200 point increase from spring to fall. His SRI scores may not demonstrate his true comprehension level; when he is able to verbally summarize a text he does an above average job. Some of his struggles seem to occur with comprehending what the question is asking. His assessment growth did not only occur on the SRI test, but also on MAPs testing. For example, in

Figure 18 you can see that he made a significant increase from spring of his 9th grade year to fall of his 10th grade year in Reading. Language Arts also was an increase, but only minimally.

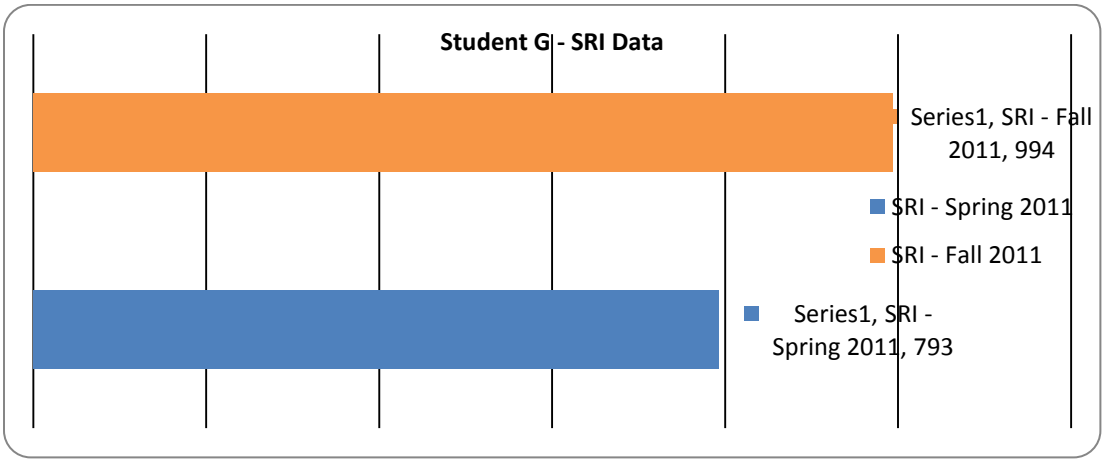

Figure 17. Student G, Male Student Diagnosed with Learning Disability, SRI Results.

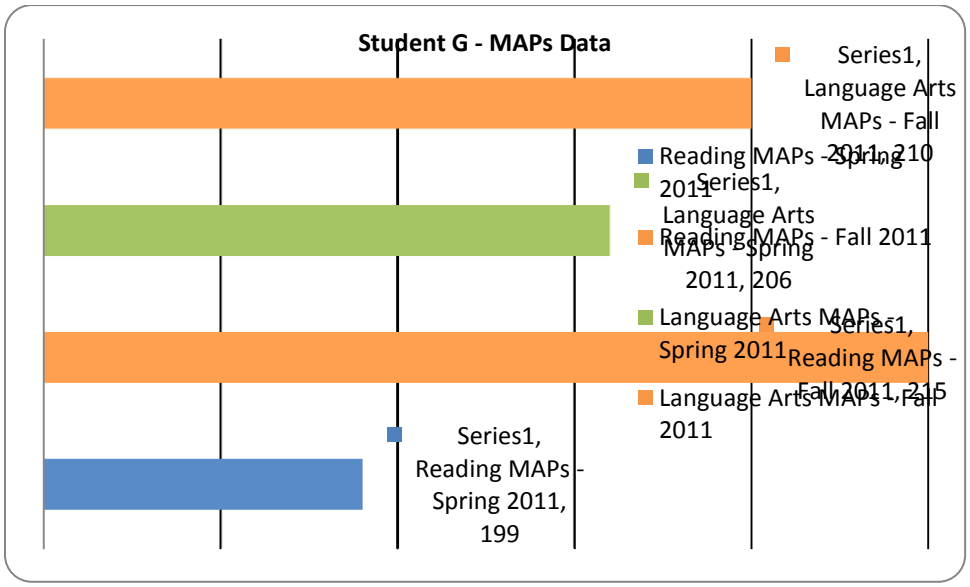

Figure 18. Student G, Male Student Diagnosed with Learning Disability, MAPs Results.

The last student in question, Student H, is a new student in our district. He enrolled during the first weeks of school and had been previously diagnosed as having an

emotional/behavioral disability. He was enrolled into this English 10 class to have access to the additional assistance available with co-teaching and to have his skills better assessed. His age puts him in the junior class; however, he is credit deficient and in need of numerous English graduation requirements. He was present for the social survey; he was not selected by any peers during the first assessment due to his being a new student. In the second assessment he was selected by another peer that has a disability. He has developed a group of friends and socializes with them outside of classes. Within classes he is very quiet and completes his work but would rather do so on his own. He participated in the fall SRI evaluation, scoring a 1032. This ranks him in the 'basic' range, below his 11th grade peers. We have no additional SRI data for him, nor did he enroll in time to complete MAPs testing. Data will be collected for both of these assessment tools in the January, winter testing period.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Educational laws and goals are constantly changing. As these change, the 'best practice' instructional strategies to achieve each of these objectives must adapt as well. Inclusion and co-teaching have recently been a topic of interest within my current district. After reviewing existing literature and conducting an action research project, the following conclusions can be drawn.

Inclusive co-taught settings benefit students when implemented appropriately. IDEA mandates that all students with disabilities be educated within their least restrictive environment (LRE). For students with mild disabilities, this is usually the regular education classroom. Students with disabilities benefit from the exposure and involvement in a rich curriculum. They also participate within a learning environment that provides them opportunities to experience authentic social exchanges.

Continued emphasis is being placed on NCLB and the requirement that all students be proficient in reading and math. A pull-out remedial curriculum does not prepare students with disabilities the opportunity to be successful on high stakes testing. When students with disabilities participate in a co-taught inclusive setting they gain the knowledge presented from two experienced educators who are modeling cooperation while also reaping the benefits of their accommodations and modifications. Students that are at-risk benefit from this scenario as well. With two professional educators within the same classroom instruction can be further differentiated to ensure skill retention.

Based upon research, the most important aspect of co-teaching is proper implementation. If this strategy is conducted appropriately, all student outcomes are positive. Educators need to

have common planning time to prepare for their lessons and compatible styles of teaching and classroom management. When these standards are met, co-teaching is the most appropriate way to include students with disabilities within the regular education classroom.

Action research data (specifically SRI and MAPs) supports that inclusive co-teaching increases test scores. However, with the short length of this particular research project, it is noted that results may be more reliable after an entire year of data collection. The affect of inclusion on social skill development is difficult to monitor, but can be observed throughout daily interactions both in and out of the classroom setting.

It is my recommendation that districts utilize inclusive co-teaching when possible. All students benefit from the various instructional techniques that are available, along with positive growth in both academic skill development and social skill attainment. Inclusive co-teaching generates a classroom environment that promotes student success from all levels, students with disabilities, at-risk students, and those that are gifted and talented. It is the job of educators to prepare students for life beyond 'school.' By increasing the diversity within the classroom as well as the support systems that are available, we expose our students to possible experiences that occur within real-life settings, and thus are setting them up for success.

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