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A Co-Teaching Model for Developing Future Educators' Teaching Effectiveness

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This article presents a co-teaching model for developing teaching effectiveness, illustrated with a case example portraying the experiences of two doctoral students who co-developed and co-taught an undergraduate course. As future educators, the doctoral students profited from the unique opportunities co-teaching provided for skills and personal development. The model benefitted the institution, enabling it to add a new elective to its offerings informed by the co-teachers' recent professional experiences. Participating in a co-taught course provided special opportunities for enrolled students, such as ongoing modeling of a collaborative professional relationship. The article highlights additional benefits of co-teaching and also explores cautions and lessons learned. Recommendations are discussed for maximizing the benefits of co-teaching for higher education departments, students, and novice educators. Lessons gained from the case example, which occurred in the social work discipline, are applicable to many disciplines but may have special resonance for behavioral sciences and applied social and health sciences.

The Co-Teaching Model

Co-teaching, also called collaborative teaching or team-teaching, is a method of instruction that brings together two teachers of equal status to create a learning community with shared planning, instruction, and student assessment (Bouck, 2007; Crow & Smith, 2005). Although research on the effectiveness of co-teaching in higher education is limited, preliminary investigations suggest that co-teaching can be an effective pedagogical strategy with a number of benefits for faculty and students (Bouck, 2007; Cohen & DeLois, 2001; Crow & Smith, 2003, 2005; Gillespie & Israetel, 2008). Furthermore, Crow and Smith (2005) encourage co-teaching methods in disciplines in the behavioral sciences, where modeling a reflexive process is an important teaching tool for students and for the professional development of faculty. For example, when social work students observe the collaborative processes required for effective co-teaching, such as instructor openness to dialogue and peer feedback, they gain rich opportunities for skill development in areas essential for social work practice, including their own collaborative abilities and openness to feedback.

For educators, the shared experience of co-teaching with a colleague sparks conversations that can illuminate personal values and assumptions about teaching and learning that they may be unaware of (Crow & Smith, 2005; Ghaye & Ghaye, 1998). Furthermore, in the co-teaching relationship, the individual educator's reflection on teaching strengths and weaknesses becomes an open, shared process rather than remaining private and introspective. The relational open process makes it more likely that new skills will be practiced and refined, and it encourages further reflection through collaborative learning.

There are potential challenges to co-teaching. These include the additional planning time required and difficulties related to any power imbalances between the instructors (Ginther, Phillips, & Grinseki, 2007). Harris and Harvey (2000) note that co-teachers' attention to potential pitfalls can provide unique learning opportunities for students, such as open discussion of subtle power and diversity issues as they play out in classroom dynamics. Co-teachers can model risk-taking and different responses to material within a framework of respectful and expansive dialogue. For students, "an implicit value is being lived out in front of them: that differences in perspective are beneficial to learning, acceptable, and encouraged" (Harris & Harvey, 2000, p. 29).

The objective of this article is to present a co-teaching model for future educators and to encourage the exploration of co-teaching for the benefit of students, future educators and university departments. The benefits, challenges and key considerations of the co-teaching model are illuminated through a case study detailing the experience of two doctoral students who co-taught their first course in a university setting.

Developing Teaching Effectiveness for Future University Educators

The co-teaching case example presented here is from the social work field. Similar to other fields, a range of opinions exist in social work on whether developing teaching skills should be a goal of doctoral education, given the emphasis on developing research skills and expertise (Fraser, 1994; Reamer, 1991; Valentine et al., 1998). A 1995 survey of 51 social work doctoral programs found that only 33% required courses in pedagogy and only 39% required a teaching practicum, even though most named teaching

preparation as a program objective (Valentine et al., 1998). The Group for the Advancement of Doctoral Education's (GADE, 2003) Guidelines for Quality in Social Work Doctoral Programs emphasize the autonomy of social work doctoral programs and describe their "main purpose" as preparing "social work scholars and researchers of the highest quality so that they may make significant contributions to social work education as well as to the scientific and professional literature in social work and social welfare" (p. 1). In GADE's (2003) guidelines, developing the pedagogical knowledge and skills of future educators in doctoral programs is not the focus of any section; rather it is mentioned in passing in several sections, stating that: (a) supervising teaching internships can be a responsibility of doctoral program faculty, (b) graduate student English proficiency is important for teaching "as needed" (p. 7), and (c) that teaching assistantships are opportunities for mentoring and skill development (Valentine et al., 1998). Valentine et al. (1998) describe elements of the debate on how much teaching should be emphasized in doctoral education as a false dichotomy between research and teaching preparation, because doctoral preparation can address both objectives, particularly through creative programming efforts. Furthermore, lack of pedagogical training can be detrimental for research productivity of new faculty members if they lack preparation to teach and must devote disproportionate time to gaining skills not acquired in doctoral programs.

Co-teaching presents benefits that may be especially relevant for the professional development of doctoral students preparing for careers as university faculty. Co-teaching can be a supportive but challenging method for doctoral students to increase self-awareness and hone skills. As graduate programs contemplate how to teach effective pedagogy, co-teaching can be a useful strategy for programs to consider. The strategy may also bring benefits to the institution by expanding course offerings, particularly if doctoral students have recent relevant professional expertise to share in the classroom. For example, in social work, doctoral students often enter their programs after obtaining professional practice experience. Students they would be teaching at the bachelor's and master's levels are preparing to enter professional practice.

The co-authors of this article collaborated in the development and co-teaching of a new undergraduate elective course as doctoral students. We thought co-teaching might provide an ideal first teaching experience, and we received institutional support for pioneering a co-teaching model to enhance our skills at the beginning of our careers as social work educators. The following section presents our experience.

Co-Teaching Case Example

Why Co-Teach?

With initial encouragement from the director of our doctoral program, we wrote a proposal to the associate dean, bachelor's program director, and doctoral program director to develop and co-teach an undergraduate elective, Social Work Practice in Schools. We were doctoral students at a large, research-intensive university with social work bachelor's and master's degree programs accredited by the Council on Social Work Education. We initiated the proposal the first semester after completing all required coursework for the doctoral program. While both of us had been employed by faculty as teaching assistants, neither of us had independently taught a course prior to submitting our co-teaching proposal. We were acquaintances prior to doctoral study as master's level social workers employed in the same community and sought to co-teach (rather than teach in the traditional independent model) for two primary reasons: to augment our learning experience as future educators, and to model collaboration for our undergraduate students. Collaborative skills are critical for success in many professional environments, including effective work in school settings where educators, administrators, psychologists, counselors, social workers, nurses, and others partner to educate children and adolescents. At the time we developed our course, a school social work course was not being offered in the program. Our backgrounds as potential co-teachers had areas of similarities and differences, which we anticipated would benefit classroom instruction and our ability to access learning resources for the students (e.g., guest speakers, documents, discussions, readings).

Three additional factors fueled our initial interest in co-teaching. First, we expected co-teaching to be an enjoyable way to begin our careers as educators. Second, we imagined that the workload associated with preparing a new course would be lightened by sharing it with another person. Third, we had completed an innovative pedagogy course together that included two components: (a) the first half of the semester was taught in an interdisciplinary university-wide format by a music professor with expertise in teaching and learning, and (b) the second half focused on social work education and was taught by a professor with expertise in social work pedagogy who had received university-wide recognition for her teaching. Our idea to propose co-teaching was thus also influenced by the rich conceptual foundation provided by the pedagogy course. The course had already sparked numerous conversations between us about varied approaches to teaching and learning, and our personal goals and anxieties as future educators. Notably, we did not

consult literature on co-teaching itself until after the conclusion of the experience; we developed and taught our course based on the concepts from the pedagogy course and our experiences in successful collaborative relationships as social work practitioners.

Logistics

Institutional support. The social work program supported our proposal as doctoral students to co-develop and co-teach the elective. While graduate instructors responsible for their own courses typically hold a 20-hour appointment at the institution, this co-teaching pilot effort was structured as two ten-hour positions. Therefore it did not present a major additional expense for the social work program (although it was a new course offering). The doctoral program was constrained in its ability to meet student demand for independent teaching experiences, because the university only allowed graduate students to teach undergraduate courses. By supporting the co-teaching model, the doctoral program increased the number of slots available for students to gain teaching experience.

Communication and power-sharing negotiation between co-teachers. We agreed from the start that we would share all aspects of the course equally, including text selection, syllabus development, class session planning, instruction, and assessment. Institutional systems, however, were designed for single instructors. Thus one co-teacher was designated as the primary contact for logistical purposes (e.g., departmental and university communication, electronic access to the roster and grade submission system). Her name appeared on the registrar's schedule and she received all campus correspondence regarding the course. Once we understood this arrangement, it did not pose a problem. The instructor serving as primary contact ensured that the other instructor received all information. Otherwise we sought to be and appear equally responsible for all aspects of the course, even alternating whose name appeared first in documents (e.g., the syllabus).

Course conceptualization. The conceptualization for the co-taught class emerged naturally through conversations during the first two years of our doctoral program regarding ideal training for school social work practice, based on our experiences as practitioners and our growing familiarity with current scholarly literature on school social work. When the time came to develop the focus for our course, we had these prior discussions as a foundation. For example, it was clear that students would need to apply an ecological framework to understand school social work, and would need to learn about culturally responsive approaches for positive interactions with diverse students. We had also often talked about the relational skills necessary for interprofessional collaboration. We believed knowledge and critical thinking about the multitude of forces influencing provision of social services in schools (e.g., legislation and court rulings, special student circumstances such as poverty or child maltreatment) were essential objectives.

Our discussions regarding course conceptualization were shorter and more focused than they might have been without the foundation of these prior conversations and the shared pedagogy course. We quickly found ourselves in agreement on course objectives. During the conceptualization process, we learned that our program already had a written course description approved by the curriculum committee for a school social work elective offered in earlier years. We found these to be in agreement with our ideas. We reviewed several textbooks, as well as a Council on Social Work Education publication containing model syllabi (Torres & Patton, 2000) to determine the best match of text and assignments for our course objectives.

Initial planning. We reviewed the calendar for the semester and divided the class sessions in half with each one taking the lead role for planning half of the class sessions. The lead planner would outline plans for a particular session and share them with the co-teacher in advance. This included asking the co-teacher to perform certain roles during that session so that both instructors would be actively involved, supporting our goal to model collaboration. Our varied practice and research backgrounds allowed each of us to bring her strengths into the classroom. For example, one co-teacher's research interests center on school reform and practice models, while the other's research interests focus more on direct practice interventions. In our backgrounds as social work practitioners, one of us had worked in high schools while the other had worked in middle schools. We had a mix of rural and urban practice experience. In dividing planning responsibilities for class sessions, it was clear for several sessions that one co-teacher would be more suited than the other for developing the learning activities for that class meeting. After collaborative determination of the lead planning role for sessions based on expertise, the co-teachers divided primary responsibility for the remaining sessions based on scheduling considerations to alternate the workload.

Developments During the Semester

The course achieved maximum enrollment and drew from several majors across campus. During syllabus review on the first day of class, we introduced the co-teaching model to our students, explained how it would be implemented, and answered their questions. We expressed that collaborative and interprofessional

practice was a key reason we both had enjoyed being social workers in school settings, and explicitly told them that we had identified the collaborative approach to teaching as an ideal way to enact content we would be covering in class. We continued to make the link between classroom processes and course content explicit throughout the semester. We used varied teaching methods, including interactive lectures, directed and open discussions, collaborative learning activities with dyads and small groups, case studies, and an educational policy debate.

Both of us attended every class session of the semester. Initially we thought it may help our overall workload as doctoral students for one or the other of us to occasionally miss a class meeting, but as the semester unfolded it was clear that synergy developed among the undergraduate students and both teachers, and neither of us ever wanted to miss a session. Relationships among students were collegial and cooperative. We interpreted some of their interactions as implicit indicators of the collaborative learning environment we had hoped to create, such as discussions initiated by respectful student questions of one another across disciplines regarding how one discipline may view a school-related issue differently from another. Occasionally, students made explicit comments on the value of having two teachers, particularly at times when we as teachers and former practitioners shared differing perspectives on a particular topic. Thus, the students seemed to respond positively to the co-teaching model.

We both committed from the outset to attending weekly office hours. Visits from undergraduate students to the office hours were rare, and this reserved time became our weekly opportunity for debriefing, reflection, brainstorming, and planning. Initially our co-teaching relationship was based on trust and a willingness to be vulnerable in front of a colleague as a novice teacher. This trust deepened as the semester proceeded, as we shared experiences of class meetings that did not unfold as planned, or unexpected successes and insights. Our supportive partnership created a foundation for experimenting with new approaches and stretching beyond what each of us considered her natural teaching strengths. For example, one of us tended to facilitate long classroom discussions. Through supportive debriefing, she learned to better recognize when some students were tuning out and curtail discussions at an optimal time, while the other co-teacher used the observation, debriefing, and practice opportunities to increase her comfort with incorporating more open-ended dialogue with students during lectures.

The bachelor's program director was available for mentoring throughout the semester. At an initial meeting, she emphasized the importance of co-teachers presenting a "united front" to the undergraduate students for grading and course management. Because of our strong mutual support, however, we found that we only needed to seek the director's guidance one time towards the end of the semester for specific help regarding appropriate response to one student's special needs.

Course assignments included a mid-term, final exam, two paper assignments (i.e., one research paper and one reflective paper linking each student's own school experiences with course content), and a group presentation linked to the research paper. We developed exam questions together. We both graded all papers and group presentations, although this approach was time-consuming. We developed grading rubrics together for both paper assignments. For the first paper, the reflective assignment, we each independently graded every student's paper and met to compare results. For the majority of papers, our assigned grades were remarkably similar, typically within three percentage points. We achieved consensus on the final grade through in-depth discussion for those few papers where our grade assignments were further apart.

This process akin to examining our inter-rater reliability for grading decisions was invaluable to us as novice educators, particularly with the reflective paper assignment. For example, we refined our skills through the process of discussing the nuances of providing supportive but critical feedback for students who had self-disclosed personal information with inadequate integration of course concepts as required for the assignment. For the later research paper assignment, we divided submissions and each of us was lead grader for one-half of the papers. Again, we both read all papers, but only one of us had primary grading responsibility for each one. We then met and reviewed all grade assignments, with each of us reviewing whether the lead grader's assessment matched our own evaluation of the same paper. While the primary goal of this labor-intensive process was fairness and consistency for the students, we achieved several important goals in terms of our own development as educators. Our confidence increased, and we increased competence in providing evaluative feedback beyond the skill level we had previously attained through grading in teaching assistant roles.

The undergraduate students enrolled in the course provided overwhelmingly positive feedback on the course and the co-teaching. On the end of semester course evaluations, (N = 24), which used a 5-point scale, the item "Genuinely interested in teaching the course" received a mean 5.0 rating. The average rating for each of these items was 4.9: course was well organized, communicated information effectively, showed interest in student progress, instructor well-prepared, and student freedom of expression.

Benefits of Co-Teaching

As illustrated in our case example, co-teaching provided a meaningful teaching and learning experience with benefits for us, the social work program, and students. We valued the experience, and the feedback provided by all parties was positive, including the undergraduate students in the course and the bachelor and doctoral program directors. As a result, the co-teaching model was replicated in a subsequent semester for a different elective course co-taught by two doctoral students with recent professional practice experience in that area. In the following section, we discuss specific examples of the benefits of co-teaching for social work programs and students, followed by discussion of benefits for novice educators seeking to develop teaching skills.

Benefits for Social Work Programs and Students

The undergraduate bachelor and doctoral programs benefited in several ways from allowing doctoral students to co-teach a new elective. The undergraduate program was able to offer an elective not currently available, with appeal and potential to recruit new majors or future graduate students. The Social Work Practice in Schools course reached the full course enrollment of 25 students and proved to have interdisciplinary draw from across the university. Approximately half of the students enrolled were social work majors with other student majors including education, government, Spanish, psychology, and sociology.

Doctoral students may have a wide, untapped range of experience prior to doctoral study that could be used in the development of further electives for undergraduates and thus expand course offerings considerably. Teaching an elective that draws on prior professional experience may be especially appealing for beginning educators as a bridge between the two professional roles, and offering this opportunity may thus serve as a recruitment vehicle for doctoral programs. Some doctoral programs have limited teaching positions available for future educators, with demand exceeding supply. Co-teaching can increase the number of slots. Finally, co-teaching can be cost-effective for social work departments as doctoral student instructors tend to be less expensive to employ. The bachelor's and doctoral program directors recognized these benefits and verbally reported a positive assessment of the co-teaching approach.

Undergraduate students enrolled in the class reported positive outcomes on course evaluations. Certainly it is a benefit to departments to have a well attended course with interdisciplinary appeal and high student evaluation outcomes. We believe the co-teaching process contributed to our positive evaluation results. For example, one student wrote on the evaluation, "This was a great class. I loved being a part of it. It helped encourage me to do social work in graduate school. I really like having two instructors working together." We concluded from this and other similar comments that we achieved our goal of modeling successful collaboration.

Benefits for Future Educators

Co-teaching presented advantages as a learning model for us as novice instructors in the early stages of shifting careers from roles as helping professionals to educator roles. We perceived benefits in two areas: personal development and increased teaching competence and skills. Personal development will be discussed first in this section, followed by discussion of professional teaching skills development as novice educators.

Personal development as novice teachers. As co-teachers, we had each other to consult while designing the course, and to provide ongoing supportive feedback based on direct observation before, during and after each class and throughout the semester. Thus, co-teaching with a valued peer provided a safe environment for each of us to explore her natural teaching style. It offered a readily accessible supportive process for reviewing strategies that worked in the classroom and those that did not. We each learned about our strengths and weaknesses through our own reflective processes, augmented by peer feedback. As peers we provided both positive and critical feedback and held each other accountable for trying new approaches to increase our teaching effectiveness. Ongoing direct observation of the peer's teaching in action provided each of us with a regular model of possible approaches and contributed to our own comfort experimenting with new methods.

Co-teaching provided a unique avenue for us to navigate relationships, particularly the shift from acting as a helping professional with social service clients to acting as a social work educator with students. Our shared reflective process generated important case specific discussions about developing productive relationships with students in light of instructor versus practitioner roles, setting appropriate boundaries as instructor, and issues of student responsibility versus instructor responsibility. Our discussions were similar in format to clinical case consultations we were familiar with as former clinicians, but were specifically focused on the parameters of the role that was new to us, the instructor role. We provided peer support to one another in keeping the difference between the instructor/student relationship and the social worker/client relationship in the foreground of our discussions in instances requiring review of individual

student concerns (e.g., personal crises affecting academics).

In the end, the co-teaching process allowed us as novice instructors to develop our own sense of how to be authentic in the classroom, while also being responsible for teaching course content. Each of us increased in confidence and sense of self-efficacy as educators. We both have subsequently taught several courses as individual instructors with positive results. We view our co-teaching experience with its ongoing peer observation, in-depth feedback and debriefing as a strong positive influence in our personal development as educators.

Development of teaching effectiveness. In addition to the personal growth enabled by the co-teaching approach, the experience fostered several specific teaching skills. Because we developed the elective, we learned together and from one another how best to conceptualize and structure a course. Having two of us helped with schedule management and mastery of the content. Clerical tasks like photocopying, managing the course website, and entering grades were shared, allowing us to learn the number of such tasks required before taking on sole responsibility for a course. Also, we could brainstorm ideas for student learning activities, assignments and projects which increased the value of the course for students.

Since each instructor took turns acting as the lead planner for a class session, we each needed to be able to articulate the plan for a session to the other which led to significant forethought and intentionality for each class and instructional method used. Each instructor felt accountable for designing a quality session not only to the students in the class, but also to the other co-teacher. The weekly debriefing contributed to the ongoing evaluation and refinement of skills in planning and instruction. Co-teaching helped us develop competence with grading and providing appropriate feedback to students in our efforts to balance constructive critique and encouragement.

In terms of our teaching effectiveness as novice educators, co-teaching enhanced our skills development through the elements of added accountability and intentionality in planning, instruction, and assessment, together with the in-depth peer debriefing with supportive yet critical feedback. These opportunities to develop personally and professionally as new teachers lead us to consider our co-teaching experience the foundation we continue to build on in our development as educators.

Recommendations for Successful Implementation of a Co-Teaching Model to Develop Teaching Effectiveness

Co-teaching can be a powerful approach for students and instructors, but also has potential pitfalls requiring consideration. Based on our experience, we propose seven recommendations for successful co-teaching. These include: discussion and resolution of specific issues at the outset of the partnership, assessing one's comfort with close observation and feedback, ongoing debriefing during the semester, communicating explicitly with students about co-teaching goals and methods, garnering full support from the institution, awareness of the additional time co-teaching requires, and caution regarding imposing co-teaching on a reluctant instructor or pairing instructors of unequal status.

First, it is important at the outset to address these issues: power sharing, communication, roles, appropriate matching of co-teachers, methods for exchanging feedback, responsibility sharing, and scheduling. We recommend a broad discussion between potential co-teachers of their beliefs about teaching and learning, and a discussion of time management styles. These initial conversations can facilitate development of trust and a non-judgmental attitude between co-teachers that could help with the sense of vulnerability that may arise under close peer observation in the classroom.

As a second recommendation, we suggest that novice educators considering co-teaching assess their comfort level with sharing their learning process with another person. Each of us had experiences in the classroom when our performance as an instructor fell far short of the mark we considered effective. At times it seemed natural to feel vulnerable in light of constant peer observation, especially during these most challenging moments. Those considering entering a co-teaching partnership should be comfortable with this level of observation and with taking risks in front of a peer. Otherwise it might be difficult to take the types of risks necessary to stretch and grow in terms of personal and professional skill development.

Third, in our experience ongoing debriefing and shared reflection were essential. We recommend scheduling regular discussions between co-teachers. One benefit of our ongoing meetings was problem-solving on how to handle rough patches during class sessions, and how we might signal to one another in situations when we hoped to be "rescued" versus situations when we wanted to muddle through without co-teacher intervention.

Fourth, we recommend explicit discussion about the co-teaching model with students in the course at the beginning of the semester. Discussion should include details of how the co-teaching partnership was conceptualized, its goals in terms of supporting course objectives and student learning, and how it will be implemented.

The fact that we were paid for only half of the work we did may be an obstacle for some considering

the co-teaching approach, which leads to our fifth and sixth recommendations. When we started the semester, we did not know how much more time-consuming collaborative teaching is. Comments from faculty, administrators, and other doctoral students over the course of the semester implied a general perception that the workload of a co-teacher is less than that of an independent teacher. Ideally, programs with available resources would commit to fully supporting doctoral students financially in this valuable learning opportunity. We suggest that those considering a co-teaching model educate others about the time needed for effective collaboration (which we would have known about if we had consulted the literature beforehand) and advocate for appropriate support. Furthermore, doctoral students entering co-teaching partnerships should be cognizant of the additional time required, and thus arrange their other responsibilities accordingly.

While every course topic may not be suitable for co-teaching, many content areas in diverse fields include material encouraging interprofessional collaboration or interdisciplinary approaches (e.g., research), leading us to conclude that students in many disciplines will benefit from modeled collaboration. We speculate that instructor motivation to model a cooperative partnership may be an important element for successful co-teaching, thus we strongly caution against imposing a co-teaching relationship on someone who does not see benefits to the approach. Finally, since co-teaching is by definition a method involving instructors of equal status (Bouck, 2007; Crow & Smith, 2005), we must again emphasize that we describe a model where teaching effectiveness was increased in unique ways because the co-teachers were peers learning together, rather than in a mentoring or apprentice-expert relationship.

Conclusion

Most expectations we had of co-teaching were met and even surpassed. The experience enhanced our teaching effectiveness as future faculty. Student feedback suggested success in our efforts to model collaboration. As expected, we enjoyed the experience and it served as a bridge in our development from practitioner to educator roles. We found the ongoing exchange of ideas with one another and the opportunity to act on them to be intellectually stimulating. Our expectation of a reduced workload due to shared responsibility, however, was not met. We found that the level of collaboration we sought to model and truly enact required our full energies and attention more than may have been the case with an independently taught course. On balance, however, we believe we gained far more from the experience than we sacrificed in terms of workload, because of the in-depth, unique learning opportunities.

The expectations of our social work program were met. The undergraduate program was able to increase course offerings. The doctoral program leveraged the recent "real-world" experience of doctoral students for mutual benefit of doctoral students and undergraduates. The doctoral program increased the number of opportunities available for future faculty to develop skills by allowing one teaching position to be shared by two instructors. The class itself was richer because it drew on two sets of ideas on an ongoing basis, constantly influencing course content, structure, pacing, interactions, and resources.

Students who registered for our course did not know until the first day of class that they would have co-teachers. Although their evaluation surveys completed on the last day indicated high levels of satisfaction with the course and instructors, it is not possible to know how much of a role co-teaching played in their overall experiences. Students' occasional comments in class and written comments on evaluation surveys suggest that for some of them co-teaching was a meaningful aspect of their experience. Our experience and the scarce literature on co-teaching indicate that further exploration is needed of whether and how co-teaching influences student learning, to guide instructors and programs in implementing this approach. For example, Ginther et al. (2007) received student feedback after a co-taught theory course that at times some students found the experience confusing. It is unknown whether certain courses may fit better with a co-teaching approach, or if some of the previously discussed factors related to how it is implemented are more influential than course content itself. It is possible that our experience was more enjoyable because we developed an elective in a professional practice area we were enthusiastic about, which in turn may have influenced student perceptions.

We encourage others to explore opportunities for implementing a co-teaching model to develop teaching effectiveness of future faculty, with careful consideration of factors that may help or hinder its success. We also recommend empirical study of outcomes for students, future faculty and programs. For example, have doctoral students whose first teaching experience was collaborative mastered certain teaching skills more effectively than those who first taught independently? Is their sense of teaching self-efficacy stronger? Student perspectives on co-teaching and data comparing educational outcomes for classes taught independently versus classes that are co-taught are lacking. Research is warranted to study elements that increase the likelihood of successful co-teaching partnerships, and whether certain course topics are

more suited for co-teaching than others. In our own experience, the strategy was highly successful for all parties involved.

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