Team Teaching in Teacher Education:
General and Special Education
Faculty Experiences and Perspectives

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The 22nd Annual Report to Congress on the Implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (United States Department of Education, 2000) states that increasing the "percentage of children with disabilities served in settings with their nondisabled peers to the maximum extent appropriate by providing needed supports and accommodations" (p. III-1) continues to be a priority objective. Similarly, the recent

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reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (1965), referred to as the *No Child Left Behind Act* (2001), calls for greater involvement of all children, regardless of ability, first language, or other unique learning characteristics in general systems of educational standards, instruction, and accountability. Clearly, today's educators can anticipate increasing diversity in their classrooms and the need for a significantly expanded instructional repertoire. How are teachers learning to teach well in diverse settings? There is an abundance of literature which indicates that general and special educators are not well prepared to teach in such inclusive educational settings, lacking both knowledge and skills, especially related to collaborative practices (Kearney & Durand, 1992; Reiff, Evans & Cass, 1991; Simpson, Whelan & Zabel, 1993; Vaughn, Schumm, Jallad, Slusher & Savnell, 1996; Wenzlaff, Berak, Wieseman, Monroe-Baillargeon, Bacharach, & Bradfield-Kreider, 2001; West & Cannon, 1988; Wigle & Wilcox, 1996; York & Reynolds, 1996).

In K-12 education, collaboration among teachers has long been considered a best practice for teaching groups of diverse K-12 students (Gable, McLaughlin, Sindelar & Kilgore, 1993; Katsiyannis, Conderman & Franks, 1995; McNulty, Connolly, Wilson & Brewer, 1996; Miller & Stayton, 1999; Strawderman & Lindsey, 1995; Swan & Sirvis, 1992). Specific forms of instructional collaboration, such as co-teaching between general and special educators, have been strongly advocated for meeting the learning needs of students who qualify for special education and those considered at risk for failure in the context of general education (Bauwens & Hourcade, 1995; Bauwens, Hourcade, Friend, 1989; Cook & Friend, 1995; Council for Exceptional Children, 1994; Keller & Cravedi-Cheng, 1995; Pugach & Wesson, 1995; Salend, Johansen, Mumper, Chase, Pike, Dorney, 1997; Salend, Gordon & Lopez-Vona, 2002).

In teacher education settings, the extent of collaboration is far less evident than in K-12 education. There is some evidence that suggests, however, that this may be changing. Teaming among higher education faculty has been identified as one way to provide teachers with greater exposure to diverse fields of knowledge and practice, as well as to model Association of Teacher Educator standards (ATE, 1998; Wenzlaff, Berak, Wieseman, Monroe-Baillargeon, Bacharach & Bradfield-Kreider, 2001). Some programs have created a common core of coursework for all education majors (Blanton & Nowacek, 1995). Some ensure that general and special education preservice students work side by side during common training experiences (Buck, Gordon & Wolf, 1995). Some programs have been recreated and labeled as "unified" (Barbus, Tuttle & Prime, 1995) or "inclusive" (Meyers & Biklen, 1992) and promote dual special education-general education licensure programs (Benson, 1995;

Hinders, 1995). Notably absent from the literature and from most programs is mention of collaborative instructional partnerships, such as co-teaching by faculty from different departments. Few preservice programs model this practice (Winn & Messenheimer-Young, 1995).

With various forms of teacher education faculty teaming being forwarded as ways to better prepare teachers for a more diverse world of teaching, questions arise about how faculty engage in such teaming practices. This study describes the experiences and perspectives of six higher education faculty who team-taught courses to preservice general and special education students. Each team included one general education and one special education faculty member. The purpose of this study was to better understand the professional and institutional realities of team teaching by general and special education faculty teams.

Methods

Context

State U (pseudonym) enrolls 14,000 students and is located in a midwestern city of 60,000. Teacher education is a major function of the university, which graduates about 600 teachers each year. An experimental undergraduate preservice teacher education program was established with the aim of preparing students for both elementary and special education licensure. Team teaching between special and general education faculty for selected courses was one key component of this program.

Faculty Participants

All general and special education faculty (N=40) at State U were invited to consider team teaching specific preservice teacher education courses. Of the faculty, 18 were considered to have sufficient background knowledge related to the specific courses being offered in the experimental program. These 18 faculty members were individually contacted to determine their interest. Six of the 18 subsequently volunteered and then formed four teaching teams with one general education and one special education faculty member on each team.

Faculty participants had been at State U between three and 19 years. Five were female and one was male. All were tenured. None of the faculty had participated previously in team teaching a course with faculty from the other department. Each of the faculty participants was asked if s/he would be willing to be interviewed about their respective experiences and perspectives as team teachers. All six agreed. Their responses form the data set from which this manuscript was developed.

Team-Taught Courses and Teams

The six participating faculty members formed four teaching teams that taught a total of five courses. One of the teaching teams taught two courses together. Two of the faculty members were participants on two different teaching teams. Following is a list of the teams, the respective courses taught by each team, student enrollment, and prior faculty experience with each course.

Team 1: Classroom Management. This course enrolled 20 students from the initial cohort in the experimental program. Cohorts included special education and general education preservice teacher education students in the same classes. Neither faculty member in Team 1 had prior experience teaching this course.

Team 2: Classroom Management. This course enrolled 20 students from the second cohort in the experimental program. Both faculty members had taught the course previously. The special education faculty member had taught it once with the general educator in Team 1. The general education faculty member had taught the course previously alone.

Team 3: Learning Disabilities Methods II. This course enrolled 45 special education preservice teacher education students and 27 students from the first cohort of the experimental program. The special education faculty team member had taught the course alone many times and had also taught this same group of students during the prior semester in the course, Learning Disabilities Methods I. The general education faculty team member had no prior experience teaching this course or this particular group of students.

Team 4: Elementary Language Arts Methods. This course enrolled about 20 students from the experimental program cohorts. Both faculty team members had background and experience in this content area. The special education faculty member, however, had not previously taught this course, whereas the general education faculty member had. In addition, it is important to note that the members of Team 4 were centrally involved in the overall design and implementation of the experimental program and so were very positively predisposed to the opportunity for team teaching.

Team 5: Applied Foundations of Special Education. This course enrolled about 20 students from the second experimental cohort. The special education faculty member of this team had a strong background related to the content of this course and also had taught it previously. The general education faculty had neither the content background nor the prior teaching experience but was interested in learning more about the content.

Data Collection and Analysis

In consultation with three of the participating faculty, the first author of this study clarified the specific purposes of the study, which were: to understand the initiating circumstances for the team teaching; to describe the team teaching experience; to reflect on the experience and the perceived outcomes for students, faculty, and the institution; and to discern lessons for the purpose of offering advice for other faculty who might venture forth into team teaching partnerships. Given these purposes, an interview protocol was developed around four areas of inquiry: (1) professional background of each participating faculty member; (2) initiation and implementation of the team teaching partnership; (3) perceived effects or outcomes of the team teaching; and (4) recommendations. The protocol and its accompanying visual map used to guide the actual interview are available upon request from the first author. Also available is a monograph that more fully describes the study, the team teaching aspect of the experimental teacher education program, and the findings.

The first author of this manuscript conducted semi-structured individual interviews with each of the faculty participants after they had engaged in their respective team teaching experiences. She had no prior affiliation with the institution or faculty. Interviews were audio taped. Verbatim transcripts were developed and served as the primary data source for analysis. Each transcript was sent to the respective interviewee for member checking purposes which resulted in no content changes to the transcripts. The interviewer also took notes during and immediately after each interview. Immediately after each interview, the interviewer developed an interview-specific summary of key points and perspectives related to each area of inquiry (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Merriam, 1998; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Tesch, 1990).

Constant comparative analysis was the method of data analysis employed (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Initial comparisons were made at the end of each interview, making notes of response similarities and differences with previous interviews. The immediate summaries also assisted in creating the framework used to analyze the verbatim transcripts. The transcript of each interview was analyzed and coded to determine the processes involved in course initiation (including reasons for participation) and implementation (coded "P" for process), the impact or effects of the team teaching (coded "I" for impact, also sub-coded "IS" for student effects and "IF" for faculty effects), challenges (coded "C") and facilitators (coded "F"), and recommendations for future team teaching (coded "R"). Illustrative quotes were also highlighted for inclusion in the findings to add richness and specificity to data representation. Each transcript was analyzed independently. Comprehensive summary tables were then

created to organize data across all six transcripts (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

The first author created a preliminary summary of the findings based on the data organized in the summary tables. Each of the six participating faculty members was provided with this draft of the findings but not with the tabled data in an effort to maintain some degree of anonymity. All six subsequently indicated that the draft of findings accurately reflected her or his participation and perspectives about the team teaching experiences. Three of the participants chose to participate in a conversation with the first author about the findings and their overall meaning and implications.

Findings

Reported here are the experiences and findings from the experiences of the three general education and three special education faculty members who formed four teaching teams and taught a total of five courses. The participating faculty members were interested in team teaching primarily for professional reasons, such as the opportunity for professional growth, beliefs about the value of team teaching, and interest or expertise related to courses identified for team instruction. Two faculty members identified pragmatic reasons, including obtaining a course release and receiving assistance with a large class. The primary reason stated by one of the general education faculty members was a desire to support innovation in teacher education.

The courses identified for team teaching were pre-existing required courses. All the teams initiated course planning by working from a previous syllabus. Most then worked together to reshape the syllabus such that contributions and responsibilities for both faculty were included. Instruction generally took the form of each person taking a lead teaching role for designated sessions, with the other person assuming a support role (e.g., adding different perspectives, sharing in the coaching of small group work). In all but one of the courses, both team teachers were present for all class sessions. Three of the four teams viewed their experiences as very worthwhile for students and faculty. One team experienced difficulties from the start and did not view the experience as successful. The contrasting experiences enhanced this study by clarifying facilitators and challenges that might otherwise have gone unnoticed.

Perceived Effects

Faculty perceptions about the effects of their team teaching on students, on themselves, and on the institution are described below and summarized in Table 1.

Table 1
Effects of Team Teaching as Perceived by Participating Faculty

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Perceived effects on preservice teacher education students
◆ Understanding multiple perspectives about teaching and learning
◆ Making child centered decisions about appropriate interventions
◆ Sense of ownership for all K-12 students by prospective general education teachers
◆ Greater variety of examples and applications due to the different backgrounds of faculty
◆ Learning about team teaching by observing it and experiencing it as students
◆ More realistic about the practice of inclusive schooling
◆ Frustration and/or confusion when poor communication among team teaching partners

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Perceived effects on team teaching teacher education faculty
◆ Professional growth and renewal
◆ Increased awareness of perspectives held by the "other discipline"
◆ Heightened desire to increase "other discipline" content into teacher preparation program
◆ Stronger beliefs about the importance of collaboration between general education and special education faculty in teacher preparation
◆ Generally positive views about the cohort model of instruction
◆ Understanding the many negotiations involved in team teaching
◆ Concern about important content being reduced or eliminated due to content overload
◆ Increased workload when class sizes increased significantly to accommodate students

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Effects on the institution
◆ Increased cross-departmental relationships and college-wide communication
◆ Increased understanding of collaborative program design, implementation, and evaluation
◆ Common education foundations requirements that addressed early childhood, elementary, secondary, and special education
◆ Addition of "other discipline" content in teacher preparation programs
◆ Desire for continued cross-department team teaching
◆ Considering use of a cohort instructional model in teacher preparation programs

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Perceived effects on students. Overall, the effects of team teaching on the preservice teacher education students were perceived by the participating faculty to be very positive and included: understanding multiple perspectives, feeling ownership for all K-12 students, learning a greater variety of practical applications given the varied practice backgrounds of the faculty teams, and experiencing and observing team teaching and its potential to enhance instruction. One faculty member expressed,

[There was] extreme value for the students who participated, no question about it... they are gaining multiple perspectives and the true awareness of their roles as educators of all children.

All the faculty stated that learning multiple perspectives was important in preparing students for the real world of teaching. Having an opportunity at the preservice level to learn about different views and to begin the lifelong process of distilling one's own views was considered invaluable. Some faculty were surprised by how well the students understood and engaged in conversation about different perspectives. One faculty member shared,

The first group learned in a very dynamic way. They had a couple of courses that were being team-taught...[One teaching team] blended pretty well...The other had two faculty with very divergent thoughts and philosophies... After about three or four weeks, students came into a [program] meeting and said, "We don't know who to believe. [GE] says one thing, [SE] says another thing. They're going back and forth and it feels like we're in a ping pong game!" They were talking about how frustrated they were and then somebody [a student] said, "Well maybe that's good because it forces us to decide where we are."

Several faculty explained further that "multiple perspectives" usually meant "two perspectives." For example, classroom management was presented from a sociological perspective and from a behavioral perspective. As another example, literacy development was presented from a whole language, social constructivist perspective and from a direct instruction, phonics perspective. Most of the faculty felt that students viewed the perspectives along a continuum, instead of being mutually exclusive, and that individual circumstances (e.g., specific students or contexts) would warrant differentiated use of interventions. One faculty member explained,

In one way we differ philosophically because I think she's much more behavior management, …but that makes sense given the clientele that she's working with. I understand that. I think we respect that of each other and it's not that I would say you never use behavior management, you always have to do this other kind of approach... So I think there was a balance then that we provided students with saying these are the times when this is especially useful and this is why.

One faculty member felt less sure about how well students made sense of different views,

I'm afraid they saw it as two kinds of chaos and I probably contributed to that… But, I don't know... I'm sure some of them were able to integrate that information and look at it from a kid point of view.

Three of the faculty believed that exposure to different faculty viewpoints and approaches would assist students with becoming more child-centered when making decisions about instruction. When asked how students might describe their approach to teaching reading, for example, one of the team teachers offered,

> *I think most of [the students] would call themselves an interactionist. They would find themselves in the middle of the continuum and they would say we're familiar with direct instruction but we're also very familiar with children's literature and literature-based reading approaches. Most of them would probably lean toward a more holistic curriculum, but they would say they would use any method that would meet the needs of the students... I think they became very student-centered to make their decisions about what instructional strategy to use.. I think they really would look at the student and the situation. Most of them would start with, I believe, a more holistic kind of perspective but work toward a more structured approach if they needed to.*

Several faculty perceived that an important outcome for students was a sense of ownership for all K-12 students, including those identified as having special education needs. One felt that the preservice teacher education students who were inclined toward a general education teaching position recognized that they would have an important role in the lives of *all* their future students. Specifically mentioned was the general educator's role and responsibilities related to pre-referral interventions.

Another perceived positive effect on students was identified as experiencing and observing team teaching,

> *I think probably the most important piece that they walked away with [from team-taught classes] was the concept of co-teaching itself… That idea of two people being responsible for the curriculum, the students, the assessment… The importance of both the special ed and the general ed teachers' roles was recognized… there are different perspectives but they also have some similarities…*

She went on to explain that with the first cohort of preservice students, the faculty did not explicitly teach about team teaching. But with the

> *…second cohort we were very explicit. We gave articles to read. We talked about it. They understood the different methods of co-teaching... Rather than just being part of it, they actually studied the phenomenon.*

Another benefit of team teaching for students was the different practice backgrounds of the team teaching partners. This resulted in a greater number and variety of examples and applications which enriched the learning experiences for students.

The only mention of potentially adverse effects for students emerged

from the faculty team that struggled from the start. Both members in this team felt that students were, at times, frustrated and impatient because of how the course was team-taught. One of the partners had a great deal of ownership for the course and previously had been an instructor for the same group of students. The other partner struggled to "fit in" to an established set of norms and expectations. She was met with skepticism, resistance, and challenge by the students who had a prior relationship with the lead instructor.

Perceived effects on faculty. All but one of the faculty members were very positive about their team teaching experiences. The most frequently mentioned effects on the faculty were: professional growth, increased understanding of "the other profession" and its value in teacher education, and the realities of negotiations and interpersonal dynamics associated with team teaching.

The participating faculty viewed team teaching as an opportunity for significant professional growth, with comments such as, "*I learned so much from [GE faculty] and I like that."* One special education faculty member was especially enthusiastic about how much she had learned — about her students, about general education, about her own style of teaching, and about creating change within the institution. Following are excerpts from her interview,

> *I learned that students are more than capable of dealing with multiple paradigms. Although I wouldn't have anticipated it would have had that powerful of an impact, and I wouldn't have thought that undergraduate students would be able to handle that.*

> *It made me much more aware of what the view of general ed was and... made [GE] much more aware of what was happening in special ed.*

> *Professionally, what I was trying to do at that point in time was more hands-on kinds of things, so I was moving toward her style of presentation... I will never do things in the same way again because I've had all of these interactions with different kinds of   people. So I think what I have to deliver to students is much stronger than it was in the past...*

> *I learned that it is possible to do something collaborative... and that not everybody has to be on board... even though there is resistance, things like that can still happen.*

This faculty member's team teaching partner also commented on the growth and enthusiasm that emerged from their team teaching experience,

> *When she teaches the reading and language arts course now it is very different than the way she used to teach it. She brings in a lot more literature.*

> *She brings in some of the alternative approaches... Certainly I have added things that I never had before... I don't think you ever teach in the same way again once you've team-taught with someone.*

The team teaching experience was a source of professional renewal, if not inspiration, for one faculty member,

> *The things that were the most important for me were the relationships that I built with colleagues and students. They reaffirmed a basic assumption of mine, which is, teaching is first and foremost human interaction and it's not what you teach or how you teach, it's just the connection of one human being with another... So that, to me, is success. And being able to work with people who will go out and feel good about what they do in their professional lives is very powerful to me...*

The team teaching experiences resulted in an even stronger belief by participating faculty that collaboration between general and special teacher education faculty was necessary in the process of preservice teacher education. Especially emphasized was the importance of general education preservice candidates learning more about special education. The general education faculty asserted this view that to do so could result in a decrease in the amount of general education related instructional time and, potentially, credits. Essentially, they would have to give up some of "their content" to make space for "special education content." The special education faculty felt it would be advantageous for special education preservice candidates to know more about general education, but held differences of opinion about how much "special education content" could be cut to allow more space for "general education content." State licensure requirements and the resulting crowded curriculum were articulated as the reasons for reluctance to add more general education content and experiences. Also mentioned was a desire to continue team teaching and to create new courses that integrate information into shared courses. One faculty member shared,

> *I would really like more of a collaborative model for some of our courses. I think that would be beneficial... I would love to create a course together that would meet the needs of both [general education and special education preservice students]... [with] faculty who have a philosophical view that we have a whole community — that's great. And that will nurture positive behaviors and so on. However, there are some children that don't make it and then what do you do? So I think that to have the two perspectives combined, to have it together and design it truly from the bottom up, instead of trying to fit the pieces together.*

All the faculty instructors talked about the negotiations involved in team teaching. Negotiations involved content, sequence, presence, roles,

instructional design, teaching style, texts, assignments, and grades. The following excerpts from different faculty instructors speak to differences in style that required negotiation,

> *Our styles were very different. She does a lot more hands-on, activity-based learning things and when I teach... I start out the course providing a lot of background information... What is reading? What are the skills? When do you teach it? How do you teach it?...*

> *Our teaching styles are really quite different also. She likes to use a lot of overheads and a lot of lecture. I was just amazed at how many overheads she had!... I tend to be much more experiential. If I'm going to talk about basals, I'll come in and have everybody sit in the front on the carpet and I'll model a lesson and then we'll talk about it... So our difference in teaching styles was real interesting. It was, really in some ways, balanced because sometimes I am afraid I don't give enough information, that I spend more time experiencing than giving discrete information. [SE] is much more by the book in that way... Students also saw these differences and noted strengths in both styles.*

Negotiations regarding content were particularly evident, sometimes because of differing philosophies, sometimes because of pressure to cover content required for licensure, sometimes because of a high degree of ownership for a course or its content. A sense of professional responsibility to ensure adequate preparation for the dual roles of general and special educator added significantly to the struggle over curriculum content coverage, as indicated in the following quotes, each from a different faculty member,

> *The real issue was that I felt responsible because the students would be obtaining a special education license and (other department) had been teaching this course with students who would be obtaining only a general education license so their approach was to use classroom wide models, general kinds of structures and routines. For special educators, I'm responsible for teaching functional assessment which includes direct observation, environmental manipulation... I think both of us felt that there just simply was not enough time... to understand the classroom-wide approach and the other...*

> *Direct instruction... I had never taught this in reading before... but it was important that the students that were being certified for Learning Disabilities get that perspective. [SE] felt it was a really necessary ingredient, so I had to relieve some of the time. And that was hard to do...*

Evaluation of student performance was another area that required explicit attention between team teaching faculty, as well as logistical accommodations.

> *One of the big issues we dealt with up front was assessment. [SE] normally*

had some quizzes and a final and I don't give any tests at all. So we kind of had this discrepancy in how we're going to measure. She wasn't completely satisfied with her system and I wasn't completely satisfied with mine. So, we thought well maybe merging these will really give us the right answer...

One of the things that didn't work out very well was grading— my system and hers. We didn't coordinate on that. So there wasn't a clear way for students to see that this all fit into one grade... We weren't a really good match... I didn't have a lot of input on that... We got caught mostly at the end with the final test that we wrote and evaluating that and coming up with grades. It was just kind of a crunch time and it was exaggerated because now you have two people trying to do this instead of just one person who can do it at 1:00 in the morning the night before.

Many comments were made about the interpersonal aspects of the team teaching experience. Even when team teaching partners knew one another or had worked together in other ways, there was an initial tentativeness or uneasiness when teaching together. Exposing one's teaching to a colleague felt professionally risky and vulnerable. As most of the team teaching experiences progressed, the relationships evolved to be at least comfortable, if not synergistic. Following are selected excerpts illustrative of the relational aspects of the team teaching experiences,

The first time we sat down to team teach, or to plan... you're so tentative because you don't know what each of you are bringing to the table. And there's a sense of well, it's a [GE] class and it's one that we do have an NCATE prescribed syllabus for. What is it that special ed is going to bring here? How should we change it and who should do what?... What I found out that first quarter is that [SE] really taught a lot of the same things that I did... So there's a lot of common content but we both had to give and take with what we thought were important pieces that had to be there.

I remember talking about a few things and worrying about terminology, worrying about stepping on toes in terms of philosophical differences. I'm not sure that I said things or handled things in exactly the same way I would have had SE not been there. I was more conscientious about how to say things to make sure that I was doing things correctly...

[SE] and I had previously done work together, but never taught together. We had to find out how we relate to students. What kind of relationship do you have? A casual relationship or is it real strict? Do you open up? Do you tell stories?... I think a lot of it started when one or the other of us would say, 'What do you think?' We realized that we were both open to having each other jump in... We had talked about that being a goal... we really wanted it to blend. So there was a real conscious decision to do that but it didn't happen the first few class periods because we just weren't comfortable with it yet. ... There were never any discrete pieces the second time we taught that class. It was just all a real blending... things just seemed to work.

Perceived effects on the institution. Overall, there was a sense that team teaching had made faculty more aware of "the importance of collaboratively planning, implementing, and evaluating programs." One specific effect after the team teaching experiences was the development of a common education core required of all preservice teacher education students. Specifically, one of the requirements was an Introduction to Education course with content addressing preschool, elementary, secondary, and special education. A cross-scheduling strategy was proposed to allow instructors with different backgrounds to rotate among sections of the course that meet at the same time. A planned opportunity for students to interact with faculty who have different areas of expertise was considered a significant step forward. Still unresolved is how much of the "the *other* department's content" will be included in each department's teacher education program.

A more subtle effect on the institution emerged as faculty renewal. This in itself might validate the importance of the faculty participants' team teaching experiences. Further, there was evidence of sustained cross department relationships among faculty which are important in creating a capacity for continuous improvement of teacher education at the institution. One faculty member shared,

> People get to know each other because you're working together... working together is a learning opportunity. It helps breaks through our isolation. This is how I met people who knew me as only one of those, and I knew them as one of those... [It expands] the means by which you can now approach them about things. You know more or less where we stand and their perspectives, there's disagreement and I respect that. So I think that helps. I don't think you can mandate cross institution [collaboration].

Challenges and Facilitators

During the interviews, numerous facilitators and challenges involved in the cross-department team teaching emerged (see Table 2), some of which stemmed from differences in professional experiences and views of the teaching partners. Most of the faculty viewed differences within the teaching teams as enhancing the instructional experiences for faculty and students. This came as no surprise given that they chose to participate in a team teaching situation that was specifically designed to include faculty with different backgrounds. Three of the teams worked productively with their differences. For example,

> [GE] and I were able to talk about different perspectives because we thought they were on a continuum. We were able to accept movement on that continuum and neither of us was dead sold on the paradigm that we were presenting.

Another faculty member shared,

> *There were problems, but I do not want to discourage the struggle... I don't want to be quiet about the difficulties, but I mean it in the best sense ... if I didn't care, I wouldn't bother...[It's part of] an ongoing issue of how do higher education folks work together... it is so much easier not to engage.*

For the team that experienced difficulty, challenges arose from substantial differences in philosophical and instructional orientation. One explained,

> *Philosophical orientation has been a big one for me. I think they [GE] had more of a child-centered philosophy and mine [SE] is a more teacher-directed one. Then, of course, we are in different populations. [For] the population I am looking at, what they are doing doesn't work. That's why we got [the students], because what they're doing doesn't work.*

> *There are a lot of philosophical things that are at the core here... There's a very strong language component down there [GE] with reading and I am very anti-whole language and am more for direct instruction and I find it very hard to have dialogue.*

Course design and instructional style also were mentioned as challenges, as indicated in the following excerpts from two different faculty members' transcripts,

> *She didn't have a syllabus for students the first night. She didn't have a clear grading system.*

> *It doesn't always work though. I mean, it does have to be someone whose style is at least comfortable. I don't think you have to have the same style, but given my definition of team teaching as you are both there the majority of the time and then you play off of each other to make good use of that, then there does have to be a comfort level with style.*

Given the differences between faculty in each team, the variables that seemed to increase the likelihood of team teaching success were: curricular and instructional flexibility, communication, a desire and time to understand and work with differences. Shared ownership of the courses also was important for success, but too much ownership by one member was problematic. One faculty member shared, "I felt really awkward because it was clearly her course... I played a much more passive role."

As mentioned previously, challenges were experienced with trying to cover all the material considered necessary for licensure requirements in both general and special education. Instead of requiring students to take all the courses required in each licensure program, some courses were identified as opportunities to combine content from two existing courses into one merged course. This created a "curriculum crunch" and

Table 2
Perceived Facilitators and Challenges of Team Teaching

Facilitators	Challenges
◆ Desire to team teach for the benefit of students	◆ Desire to team teach to decrease load
◆ Desire to team teach for professional growth	◆ Different philosophical views, if the difference is substantial and the views are strongly held
◆ Recognition and valuing of different perspectives	◆ Too much ownership of content by one partner
◆ Shared interest and expertise in content area	◆ Different instructional styles, if rigidly held
◆ Commitment to mutual partnership, shared instructional responsibilities	◆ Curriculum coverage pressure, especially related to licensure requirements
◆ Presence at all class sessions by both partners	◆ Time required to collaboratively plan, instruct, reflect, and evaluate
◆ Flexibility	
◆ Workload accommodations, such as course release	

coverage problem that was uncomfortable for some of the faculty. One explained,

> *You feel like you only have so much time to teach the content that's absolutely needed for a knowledge base and then if we're adding on content from other fields…, then where do we find that time? And we can't punish students and add more to their program. Now there's a real push to get students out in four years.*

When asked about challenges for continuing or expanding cross-department team teaching, responses focused on institutional barriers, such as the departmental structure and current resource allocation or recovery procedures. One shared,

> *Realistically the only way [team teaching] can be done, at least in this [fiscal] environment, is without extra support. They are not going to have two people [present for one course]… There are not avenues for doing that and I think it's probably one of the most professionally rewarding things you can do, is to collaborate with people and I know our dean now is extremely supportive of that.*

Because of grant support, the team teaching faculty members were given a stipend and were released from another course. It was a temporary fix, however, with no long term financial support available. Several faculty talked about the institutional challenge of structural barriers and also tried to generate potential solutions. One reflected,

> *I think it's the structure, the departmental structure. I think there has to be some way to equitably deal with FTEs so that you can do things across departments. When resources are aligned only with departments and there's no central resource availability, it makes it much more difficult. It makes it much harder for people not to fight for their own space and their own territory… When you consider that we might lose [specific SE faculty member] if we do this, it makes it difficult.*

When asked to consider if there would still be barriers or issues if the problems of FTEs, load, and planning time were addressed, one participant responded,

> *I think there is also a personal thing. I enjoy team teaching, but I also like being in there by myself. There's a sense of ownership and a sense of just my relationship with my students that does get lost when it now becomes our relationship with these students… I have total control over the aspects of teaching… I can make a lot of decisions on the spur of the moment… I can't do that if I am partnered with somebody… you suddenly have to always think about that other person… you're not alone anymore and so that's wonderful, [but there] probably needs to be a balance.*

Facilitators for effective cross-department team teaching included a desire to team teach for the benefit of students, viewing differences as positive resources, shared interest in the content, commitment to a partnership, flexibility, and workload accommodations. Especially emphasized was the need for both teaching partners to be present at all the sessions. Two faculty members explained,

> *… physical presence is probably one of the most essential parts of getting the most out of team teaching situation from a student's perspective.*

> *It helps to know what the other person it actually saying and you don't know that if you're not there. You lose those chances to make connections immediately for students… you can't play off each other if you're not both there.*

Implications

Beyond personal learning and insight, analysis of the collective perspectives of the team teaching faculty revealed important considerations for others venturing forth with cross-department and other forms of team teaching partnerships in higher education, and perhaps specifically between general and special teacher education faculty. These implications, however, must be carefully considered given the small number of individuals involved in this study, the exclusive reliance on perceptual data, and the post hoc nature of data collection. Another cautionary note is warranted due to the almost universal positive predisposition of the faculty participants to the concept and practice of team teaching.

Emphasize Purpose

Why team teach? In this study, team teaching was more successful when partners chose to participate given the desire to grow professionally and to enhance instruction for preservice students so that they might be better prepared for the realities of teaching of diverse students. A compelling purpose provides the energy required to overcome inevitable obstacles along the way. One faculty revealed,

> *The personal growth that faculty undergo when they team teach with someone is part of it and that's a real big piece... The other big piece is the model that we present, the realities of the classroom. We're not [modeling] it when we sit in our little cubicles... the only way we can prepare our teachers for the realities is to model it in higher ed. And if we're not modeling collaboration... we've missed the boat, totally missed the boat... We're just way, way, way behind on preparing people for the realities of the work place.*

Carefully Consider Course and Partner Selection

Team teaching is a resource intensive instructional option — for the faculty involved and for their academic programs. Courses and partners must be carefully identified to realize the greatest instructional benefit for students and to weigh the pros and cons of merging content. Some courses, such as classroom management and assessment, might be significantly enhanced by faculty who contribute varied experiences and perspectives. Courses might also be enhanced by a team of faculty who bring varied instructional styles so that the varied learning styles of students are well supported. Widely discrepant educational and instructional philosophies, however, may threaten the effectiveness of the team teaching partnerships.

Encourage, Invite, But Don't Force Participation

About this recommendation, participating faculty were unanimous, "Faculty must be willing to do it, can't be forced." Team teaching exposes the personal craft of teaching and can be felt as not only an intrusion, but a threat. Fortunately, not every course is well-suited for team teaching and not all faculty need to team teach. In the words of one participant, "You don't need the entire system to change."

Nurture the Partnership and Collaborative Course Development

A critical factor in the success of team teaching is development of the instructional partnership. Conversation about course purpose, content, instructional design, assignments, and evaluation, as well as about instructional styles and roles, builds the relationship between the partners and leads to a common understanding of one another's back-

ground, perspectives and contributions to the course. A team-taught course is best created together. Partners might also explore together a variety of team teaching options before deciding which approach they think might work best for their situation. This requires time for the partners to have the conversations, to create the course together, and to continually reflect on the course throughout implementation so that adjustments can be made as needed.

Remove Institutional Barriers and Provide Institutional Support

Institutional structures that inhibit cross-department team teaching must be removed. For example, if tuition revenue and position allocations are put in jeopardy because of cross-department team teaching, such efforts will not be sustained. Tangible institutional support through release time or compensation is necessary to support the development of the teaching partnerships. Perhaps as important as the tangible institutional supports is knowing that "the institution," specifically lead people in the institution (e.g., program chairpersons, deans), are aware of, value, and perhaps even bring attention to innovative instructional designs. Team teaching is a valuable form of professional development and contribution. Institutional support and recognition, combined with compelling professional purpose, can result in a highly motivated faculty and increased institutional loyalty. Conversely, lack of support, appreciation, or recognition can result in disengagement and disillusionment with the institution.

Closing

Negotiating the territory of cross-department and cross-discipline team teaching in teacher education holds great potential for improvement, as well as considerable challenge to the individuals and institutions involved. Strategically identified and carefully designed general and special education faculty team teaching experiences could improve teacher education by offering preservice students the opportunity to learn from faculty with varied backgrounds and to experience a form of collaboration that strikes at the core of instructional practice as a professional educator. Undoubtedly such forms of collaboration will be increasingly necessary as the elementary and secondary student population becomes more varied in culture, language, ability, and need.

Given the dearth of literature on team teaching in higher education, directions for research are limitless. Initial targets might focus on the individual, interpersonal, instructional, and institutional factors that support and hinder such team teaching. The literature on co-teaching by K-12 general and special educators could ground such research questions,

designs, and methods (see, for example, Bauwens & Hourcade, 1995; Cook & Friend, 1995; Pugach & Wesson, 1995; Salend et al., 1997). Importantly, future research should investigate the merits of team teaching with an emphasis on the short term and long term effects on the educational practices of the teacher education graduates and, ultimately, on the learning of students in K-12 settings, especially students with unique learning needs.

In closing, we offer the perspective shared by one of the faculty participants after reviewing the findings of this study. His words capture both the potential and the challenges of team teaching,

> *The story of this effort to link faculty and students engaged with special and general education could be reduced to a list of pros and cons. The evidence presented favors the pros. The cons, however, are likely to bear more weight because, as the faculty… suggested, this experiment took place within the confines of an institutional setting given more to boundary maintenance than to multiple perspectives. This descriptive analysis, then, is the beginning of a longer conversation about ways to share ideas across boundaries. As with all good teaching, the learning continues and sometimes only begins after the bell is rung.*

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