

"Nothing about us without us:" Including people with disabilities as teaching partners In university courses

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This paper was written when Cheryl M. Jorgensen was at the Institute on Disability at the University of New Hampshire. After her retirement from the Institute on Disability, she continues her affiliate faculty status with the Department of Education and is also engaged in inclusive education consulting.

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Abstract

The slogan *Nothing About Us Without Us* has been used by disability rights activists to argue that any activity that affects people with disabilities should involve people with disabilities in leadership roles. At the University of New Hampshire, several graduate and undergraduate courses dealing with disability issues were co-taught by university faculty and individuals with disabilities. These co-teaching arrangements provided benefits to the co-instructors themselves as well as to scholars enrolled in the courses. This paper describes the course content; the roles of each co-instructor, drawing from the literature on co-teaching; some examples of feedback from scholars; challenges; and suggestions for making the teaching partnership successful. Some sections of the paper were written by the university faculty authors from the traditional, academic third person perspective. Other sections of the paper reflect the first-person, verbatim words of the individuals with disabilities.

Key words: co-teaching, disability rights, inclusion

Introduction

James Charleton, author of *Nothing About Us Without Us*, said that he first heard the expression in 1993 from two leaders of an advocacy group called Disabled People South Africa. The slogan has been used by activists from several social justice movements but is particularly identified with the disability rights movement. "The slogan's power derives from its location of the source of many types of (disability) oppression and its simultaneous opposition to such oppression in the context of control and voice" (2000, p. 3). In practical terms, it means that any activity that *affects* people with disabilities – legislation, policy, research, professional preparation, disability services, etc. – should *involve* people with disabilities in leadership roles. This paper describes three courses at the University of New Hampshire (UNH) that were co-taught by university faculty and individuals with disabilities, thus exemplifying the "Nothing About Us Without Us" maxim.

Following a brief discussion of the definition of the co-teaching model, we will present course descriptions and the population of scholars¹ they served, the role of the faculty member and the person with the disability in course design and instruction, feedback from scholars and co-instructors, strategies for making co-teaching successful, and potential challenges.

Drawing from the values and practices of participatory action research (Balcazar, Keys, Kaplan, & Suarez-Balcazar, 1998) and using a process similar to that of Rubin, Biklen, Kasa-Hendrickson, Kluth, Cardinal, and Broderick (2001), this article was constructed by integrating exact quotes from co-teaching partners with the more formal journal writing style of faculty members Jorgensen and Sonnenmeier. The final article represents input from all authors through back and forth editing of five drafts. The exact words of Ms. Bates, Ms. Frechette, and Ms. Curtin are presented in italics (having been edited only for tense and flow).

Co-Teaching

Co-teaching has been described as an extension of traditional team teaching where general and special educators work in partnership to deliver instruction to a heterogeneous group of students with and without disabilities (Cook & Friend, 1995). It involves distribution of responsibility among the co-teachers for planning, instruction, and evaluation of all students. Villa, Thousand, and Nevin (2009) suggested that co-teaching occurs when two or more people agree to (1) coordinate their work to achieve at least one common goal, (2) share a belief system about teaching and learning, (3) demonstrate parity in roles, (4) "use a distributed functions theory of leadership in which the task and relationship functions of the traditional lone teacher are distributed among all members of the teaching team," and (5) "use collaborative processes that include face-to-face interactions, positive interdependence, performance, and monitoring of student learning" (2008, p. 5). Most of the literature on co-teaching addresses the practice in K-12 schools and usually describes a strategy to foster successful inclusion of students with disabilities in general education classrooms.

Co-teaching at the university level has been described as a strategy for interdisciplinary teaching and learning and as a way to expose scholars to faculty with different yet complementary teaching styles. Conderman & McCarty (2003) described a co-taught university course in inclusive secondary education practices where one faculty member came from a

¹ The term scholars will be used to indicate university students. The term students will be used to indicate K-12 learners.

general education tradition and the other from special education. They and other researchers have reported benefits to themselves as well as to their scholars when the co-teaching relationship springs from shared expectations, collaborative responsibility, careful planning, and time for frequent reflection (Nevin, Thousand, & Villa, 2009).

Through personal communication, we are aware of several universities that have included guest speakers or graduate teaching assistants with disabilities, including Syracuse University (W. Harbor, personal communication, February 7, 2011); The University of Maine/Orono (A. Kurtz, personal communication, January 15, 2011); and the University of Massachusetts/Boston (D. Hunt, personal communication, January 20, 2011). The only reference to a full-semester teaching partnership between a university faculty member and a community member with a disability was described by Jorgensen (2006).

Although the primary purposes of UNH's co-teaching arrangements are neither to foster interdisciplinarity nor to address scholar learning differences, both members of each UNH teaching team have expressed positive benefits and challenges similar to those reported by members of K-12 co-teaching partnerships. Benefits to the teaching partners included (a) expanding their content and pedagogical knowledge and skills; (b) modeling collaborative learning by modeling collaborative teaching (Crow & Smith, 2003); (c) positive feelings related to being in community with another teacher; (d) satisfaction from better meeting the learning needs of scholars; and (e) sharing the work load of teaching (Bess, 2000). Benefits to the enrolled scholars included (a) hearing varied perspectives on the course content, including first-hand accounts by individuals with disabilities (Gillespie & Israel, 2008); (b) enhanced learning because the material was more accessible and easier to grasp, (c) appreciating instructors with different yet complementary instructional styles (Gillespie & Israel, 2008); and (d) having a smaller scholar to teacher ratio.

Course Descriptions

Between 1998 and 2011, several courses were taught collaboratively by UNH faculty and individuals with disabilities; three will be described in this paper including two in the Education Department: *Contemporary Issues in Developmental Disabilities*, and *Facilitating Social Relationships for Students with Developmental Disabilities*; and one in the Communication Sciences and Disorders Department, *Seminar in Autism Spectrum Disorders*. We will present each course description, a discussion of how the faculty member and teaching partner shared instructional responsibilities, feedback from scholars and reflections of the co-instructors, strategies for making the co-teaching partnership successful, and potential challenges.

Contemporary Issues in Developmental Disabilities

This course, taught by Dr. Cheryl Jorgensen and Kathy Bates, explored several essential questions pertaining to individuals who are labeled as having developmental disabilities, including: What are the critical issues facing people with disabilities, parents, and professionals? What are differing views of the definition of developmental disability? What factors influence our view of people with the label of developmental disability? What is an educator's role in supporting quality inclusive educational experiences for students who have a developmental disability label? Topics addressed throughout the 15 week semester included disability paradigms; history of societal treatment of people with disabilities; self-determination; presuming competence (Jorgensen, 2005); community living; the right to communicate;

employment; sexuality; cultural competence; human services versus individualized and natural models of support; and inclusive education. Dr. Jorgensen had over 25 years' experience in the field of inclusive education in the areas of personnel preparation, model demonstration, professional development and technical assistance, research, and policy. In addition to Ms. Bates, who participated in every class and spoke from her experience as a woman with cerebral palsy and a policy activist, other individuals with disabilities presented occasional guest lectures. The primary text for the course was *Disability is Natural: Revolutionary Common Sense for Raising Successful Children with Disabilities* (Snow, 2001), and it was supplemented by journal articles, book chapters, films, and websites. One of the major class projects was to conduct a "Day in the Life" observation (Jorgensen, Schuh, & Nisbet, 2006) of a K-12 student and compare and contrast his or her school day with a list of best practice indicators (Jorgensen, McSheehan, & Sonnenmeier, 2010).

Kathy Bates: When Cheryl asked me to co-teach with her I was really excited and I jumped at the opportunity. She explained to me that when UNH offers a class that has to do with disability issues, a person who experiences a disability or a family member is often asked to help with the instructing of the course. That made perfect sense to me. I was excited for several reasons. I felt I would be able to do well despite the fact that this was a completely new endeavor for me. I had never taught at the college level before. Most of the scholars enrolled in the class were teachers working on their Master's degree in Special Education. However I am not a stranger to the classroom. I have a degree in Elementary Education and I have worked several years in the public school system as a para-professional and tutor assisting students with learning challenges. I also spent a year as a kindergarten teacher working in a private school. I knew I would be able to draw on my life experiences as an active woman with cerebral palsy. I really missed teaching and it was after all a paying job. This is not a common occurrence for many people who have disabilities.

Facilitating Social Relationships for Students with Developmental Disabilities

This course, taught by Dr. Cheryl Jorgensen and Jocelyn and Marlyn Curtin, focused on the supports students with developmental disabilities need in order to have a wide variety of satisfying social relationships. Scholars enrolled in the course learned to identify and facilitate the factors essential to the development of friendships for children preschool through age 21 such as: full inclusion; valued membership and belonging; shared experiences; an effective means of communication understood by everyone; and access to typical school, extracurricular, and community environments and activities. Additionally, scholars learned to identify and mitigate the barriers to friendships, such as: low expectations; devaluing of differences; age-inappropriate experiences; and educational practices such as pull-out and separate special education programs. Jocelyn Curtin spoke from her experience as a 30 year old woman with Rett Syndrome. Marlyn Curtin spoke from her experience as Jocelyn's mother and primary friendship facilitator during Jocelyn's school years. The course text was *Seeing the Charade: What We Need to Do and Undo to Make Friendships Happen* (Tashie, Shapiro-Barnard, & Rossetti, 2006). It was also supplemented with journal articles, book chapters, films, and websites. The capstone assignment for this class was to develop and implement a plan to get a student involved in a typical, inclusive social activity or academic class.

Jocelyn Curtin: [My college teaching career began when] I met Dr. Karen Erickson at a conference in South Carolina during the summer of 1998. She was scheduled to begin teaching

at UNH that fall and challenged me to try college again [after a previous unsuccessful experience]. She said that if I took her class, she guaranteed it would be the best class I'd ever taken. I did and she was right. I took classes with her for three semesters, each one with less and less support, so that by the last one I was supported totally by another student. Karen did expect me to learn and to work with the class. She knew how difficult this was for me, yet she still gave me the courage and support to do my best. I learned a lot about myself and what I was capable of during that time.

After Karen left UNH, another professor, Susan Shapiro, asked if I would be interested in co-teaching the class I had most recently taken with Karen, an "Introduction to Exceptionality" course. At first I was stunned. I had just gotten used to being a college student and now I was being offered a teaching position. I taught with Susan for several years and since she left UNH I have now worked with Dr. Cheryl Jorgensen for several years and have loved it. The funny thing is, after I graduated from high school, I went to Vocational Rehabilitation with my mom to see if they could help support me in any way. When they asked my mom what kind of job she saw me doing, she said that I was a great teacher. She didn't necessarily see me as a conventional teacher but thought I had done a great job in my life so far teaching people about themselves, about acceptance, and about perseverance. They responded that teaching was an unrealistic goal for me, one they would not be able to help me achieve.

Seminar in Autism Spectrum Disorders

This seminar, taught by Dr. Rae Sonnenmeier and Amy H. Frechette, provided an overview of autism from the perspective of individuals who experience an autism spectrum disorder and their families. Participants in the seminar became acquainted with the diagnosis and etiology of autism spectrum disorders, including an overview of medical considerations and cultural perspectives. Evidence-based practices in assessment, early intervention, learning, play, communication, sensory-motor, and positive behavior supports were critically reviewed. Teaming approaches, including transdisciplinary and interdisciplinary practices, were presented. Families' perspectives, first-hand accounts, considerations for supports across the age-span, culturally competent practices, and critical analysis provided the foundation for learning about various topics. Dr. Sonnenmeier had over 30 years' experience as a speech-language pathologist; as member of interdisciplinary clinical evaluation teams; and as a researcher and consultant in the fields of augmentative communication, autism spectrum disorders, and inclusive education. Ms. Frechette spoke from her perspective as a woman with Asperger's Syndrome. The primary text for the course was *A Practical Guide to Autism: What Every Parent, Family Member, and Teacher Needs to Know* (Volkmar & Wiesner, 2009). The text was supplemented with journal articles, book chapters, films, and websites. One class assignment involved critiquing the research on a specific intervention approach and then translating that research into a practice that could be implemented with a child. The practice was summarized in a family-friendly format such as a brochure or poster.

Amy H. Frechette: Four years ago I entered into a new career unexpectedly, teaching a graduate course in Autism Spectrum Disorders at UNH. Prior to my new career, I had been unemployed for the past five years, living with my parents off Social Security disability income. I tell our scholars my new career with the IOD found me. I got a phone call from my colleague Rae Sonnenmeier, who asked me if I wanted to teach a graduate class with her at UNH. Previously, I had met Rae at the New Hampshire Leadership Series, NH's Partners in

Policymaking program that teaches self-advocacy and community organizing skills to individuals with disabilities and parents. A year prior to teaching I was diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome, a very late diagnosis no doubt. This is why I got the job in the first place; I had the non-neurotypical brain that everyone (employers) wanted.

Teaching provides me an opportunity to share my personal experiences with my scholars the way I see it. I am borrowing Temple Grandin's, Ph.D. title for her newest book The Way I See It, A Personal Look at Autism and Asperger's (2008). I honestly feel the same way Temple does; those who support individuals with an ASD will never truly know what it is like to live with an ASD unless they have an ASD themselves. I feel that by offering my viewpoint to the scholars, it will help them to better appreciate what it's like to live with an ASD every day. I want to better equip professionals and upcoming professionals in the field of ASD with an understanding of how ASD makes us think or act differently and what they can do to help us achieve to our fullest potential and beyond.

Scholar Population

The Contemporary Issues and Social Relationships classes were taken by some upper level undergraduate and graduate scholars but the majority were full time special education teachers enrolled in an advanced certification option in Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities that prepared them for the role of Inclusion Facilitator (Jorgensen, 2006). The Seminar in Autism Spectrum Disorders was a graduate course that enrolled scholars primarily from communication sciences and disorders, as this course was required for scholars who were preparing to work as speech language pathologists in early childhood settings. The course was open to other disciplines, including general and special education and occupational therapy, as well as professionals seeking to learn more about ASD, some of whom were enrolled in UNH's Graduate Certificate in Autism Spectrum Disorders.

Collaboration in Course Design and Instruction

Prior to the first time that these courses were taught in a collaborative manner, the faculty member and teaching partner met several times to develop the course syllabus. The courses addressed specific competencies (i.e., dispositions, knowledge, and skills) in the teacher education program in Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, the Communication Sciences and Disorders program, and the Graduate Certificate in Autism Spectrum Disorders and those competencies served as the basis for developing the course objectives, the topical outline, the course readings, and the course requirements.

Kathy Bates: From the beginning my opinion was always sought and respected. I remember the first time Cheryl and I sat down to plan the course, we were brainstorming topics such as housing and employment, when I blurted out "What about sex? Sex is definitely a contemporary issue." I held my breath wondering what she would say. She said, "Oh my gosh, you're right, I forgot about sex!" I was relieved.

Amy H. Frechette: Before the semester began Rae and I decided on what content we wanted to focus on during the semester as well as what materials were needed. We delivered lectures using Microsoft Office Power Point 2007, which we both loved. Rae's role during this phase was to type all the text [for the slides]. I also prepared slides on content if it was an area in which I knew a lot. My other task involved using my attention to detail trait to check for spelling, grammar, or clarification of material. Afterwards, I went back through the presentation

and added visual supports [to some slides] using Boardmaker™ (Peake, 2005), clip art, or Google Images. Sometimes I made charts or other illustrations to supplement the text.

Each class meeting in all three courses followed a similar format: presentation and discussion of assignments; a lecture, usually accompanied by a PowerPoint presentation; discussion of the lecture material; viewing film clips that illustrated the topic at hand; practicing specific skills through cooperative activities; and finally, reminders about the next week's readings and assignments. All three courses had frequent guest presenters representing individuals with disabilities, families of children with disabilities, or practicing professionals. Each instructor's role in the class varied according to the focus topic of the week and his or her interest and expertise.

The co-teaching approaches used by the faculty and their teaching partners at UNH included "one teach, one observe" where each member of the teaching team switched back and forth throughout the class period from being a teacher to being an observer; parallel teaching, where both members of the teaching team taught the same information to small groups of scholars; and team teaching, where both instructors taught the lesson in a "tag team" format (Friend, 2005). The particular approach used for each class was decided during a lesson planning meeting held on a weekly or bi-weekly basis throughout the semester.

Kathy Bates: Right from the start I presented on people-first language, and the effects of labeling, complete with PowerPoint slides and a small group activity. It didn't take long for the scholars to understand that I could teach. My presentation also helped to set the tone for what is expected in the class. I wanted the scholars to realize that I am not just teaching this course because it is politically correct but because I can and I should.

[I was also responsible for inviting several guest speakers with disabilities to speak to the class.] One such presenter was a college bound high school senior who used a power wheelchair to get around and a communication device to speak. He talked about his experiences in school and gave teachers and other professionals some really good advice. The scholars benefitted from hearing different stories and the presenters felt valued because they knew their stories were appreciated. Who better to teach a class about contemporary issues and developmental disabilities than someone with a developmental disability?

During the week in which presuming competence was the topic of focus in the Contemporary Issues in Developmental Disabilities class, Ms. Bates told a story about going out to dinner with a group of colleagues where the server asked her dining companion what Ms. Bates would like to order, rather than speaking directly to Ms. Bates. This story provoked heated large class discussion. Following this discussion, Dr. Jorgensen gave a PowerPoint presentation on the topic of the least dangerous assumption of presuming competence (Jorgensen, 2005). Ms. Bates interjected her ideas and opinions freely throughout Dr. Jorgensen's presentation. The scholars then did a small group activity where they identified examples of high and low expectations for their students in the areas of IEP goals, students' level of participation in class discussions, the vocabulary on students' augmentative communication devices, and the like. Dr. Jorgensen and Ms. Bates circulated from group to group offering feedback and asking probing questions. For all three courses, the roles of both co-teachers varied within each class meeting period and across the whole semester.

Amy H. Frechette: We broke up the lecture in the classroom: I did one half and Rae did the other. I got to say which sections of the lecture I wanted to cover, which is easier for me to do if I know the topic well. I often provided excellent examples by using metaphors based on classical music. For example The Carnival of Venice by Jean-Baptiste Arban is a solo piece

written for the cornet and orchestra. The beginning of the song is the theme followed by four different variations. By using the previous analogy one can apply the same principle to autism. The example would be as follows: autism would be the theme and its variations would be the three different diagnoses which make up the autism spectrum. It's a way for me to bridge the gap of abstract material to material which is concrete.

Dr. Sonnenmeier presented the results of research studies and clinical practice and connected them to the scholars' everyday roles as speech-language pathologists, teachers, or occupational therapists. Because Dr. Sonnenmeier was a clinician in the University's Seacoast Child Development Clinic that conducted interdisciplinary evaluations for young children suspected of having an autism spectrum disorder, she was also able to enrich the course with specific child and family examples. Ms. Frechette shared her own public school and college experiences as a woman with Asperger's Syndrome.

Amy H. Frechette: I had done a lot of researching a few years before my diagnosis to familiarize myself with the language and also to gain insight into my disability. Growing up I was not told I had a disability nor did I feel any different than my typically developing peers. Now that I am an adult, I look back to my K-12 years in public education and I do see some uniqueness. For example, I remember being scared of thunder storms, only liking certain foods, and wearing certain clothing.

In all three courses, both co-teachers provided formative feedback to scholars' assignments but the faculty instructor assigned grades and addressed issues related to academic performance, plagiarism, or attendance problems.

Scholar and Co-Teacher Feedback

Scholar feedback about the collaborative nature of the course instruction has been highly positive. Representative laudatory comments from the scholars, gleaned from end-of-the semester-course evaluations, included:

"I really enjoyed getting to know both of you as individuals."

"This is a valuable course and anyone hoping to teach should take [it]."

"My biggest 'ah-ha' was insight into the daily lives of adults living with disabilities."

"I liked the way that Kathy and Cheryl alternated."

"The least dangerous assumption and having Jocelyn as an instructor has changed the way I view my kids."

"Amazing class. Learned far more than I ever expected and served as a reminder to always have high expectations."

"Every bloody week on the way home I had a 'mini-breakdown' and had to regroup to think about what I should be doing differently in school."

Critical feedback from the scholars was limited to their wish that both instructors were present every week, as there were the occasional weeks where one or the other was not in attendance. As a result of this feedback, both instructors were present at every class the next time the course was taught.

The co-teachers also reflected on the benefits of teaching a university class.

Kathy Bates: I've been co-teaching this course for three years now. I truly enjoy the experience. I know that most of the scholars have appreciated my contributions to the class. I really liked reading and commenting on the scholars' assignments. This course encouraged them to examine the way in which they engage students, parents, and colleagues. There may be a few

more challenges to educating students who experience disabilities, but my hope is that I helped teachers remember that disability or not, we are more alike than we are different. I hope that my presence in the classroom as an instructor emphasized the importance of presuming competence. High expectations and the focus on a student's gifts and talents are extremely important not only to their success in the classroom but their success in life.

Amy H. Frechette: There were two important lessons I wanted the scholars to learn from me. The first is "we are all individuals, who happen to have very diverse abilities, dreams, needs, and wants." One of the most intriguing parts of the autism spectrum is the fact that one must not chose the same method of support for all the individuals he/she works with. [Having a student with autism in the class] forces the teacher to think outside-of-the-box. I also wanted our scholars to understand the Least Dangerous Assumption concept; that is, one should always presume someone's competence, even though some individuals with ASD do not communicate in traditional ways.

Strategies for Successful Collaborative Teaching

The literature on K-12 and post-secondary co-teaching described numerous strategies for making the partnership successful including scheduling regular planning and de-briefing sessions, and having a clear division of responsibilities (Conderman & McCarty, 2003; Crow & Smith, 2003; Gillespie & Israel, 2008). When a university faculty member co-teaches with a person with a disability, we have discovered three additional strategies that promote a successful co-teaching partnership.

Involve People with Disability Who Have Expertise in the Topic

Simply having a disability does not qualify someone to be an effective course instructor. We have found that it is essential for both instructors to have credibility in the course topic. If Ms. Bates did not have experience as a teacher, she would not have been able to offer believable suggestions for how to accommodate student differences in a general education classroom. She had also served as a mentor to young adults with disabilities. Likewise, if Ms. Curtin had not had first-hand experience in building and sustaining her own social relationships she would not have been able to share effective strategies in the Facilitating Social Relationships class. Ms. Frechette not only had her own personal experiences to share as a woman with Asperger's Syndrome, but was involved in state-level policy committees, and a Family-Centered Transition project in which she served as a peer mentor to adolescents with ASD to support their transition to post-secondary education or employment.

Co-Plan and Co-Teach to Build Joint Ownership

During Dr. Jorgensen and Dr. Sonnenmeier's first years of teaching their courses with their partner instructors, they took primary responsibility for developing the syllabi, selecting reading assignments, planning each class, and designing assignments. After the first semester of co-teaching it became clear that a true collaborative teaching arrangement that valued both people's input would need to begin with co-designing the course right from the beginning. Co-teachers with disabilities who had a college degree were familiar with the structures of syllabi and had many models for both effective and in-effective teaching. If they had not had a personal

post-secondary education experience, they benefitted from coaching and mentoring by their faculty partner regarding university policies, norms of college classroom discourse, providing both warm and cool feedback to scholars' writing, and so forth.

It was also beneficial for the co-teachers with disabilities to have a role in providing feedback on scholars' assignments. This supported the scholars' view of the co-teachers as sharing responsibility for the course. Although it was university policy that the assignment of grades needed to be done by the university instructor of record, the co-teachers provided input to the scholars' grades.

Model and Provide Natural Supports to One Another

All members of the teaching partnerships provided supports to one another, depending on the situation and each other's needs. It was not always the case that the teaching partner with the disability needed any extraordinary support. For example, once Ms. Bates was dropped off at class by her driver and personal care assistant, she did not need any physical support from her teaching partners.

One area in which explicit supports were needed by the teaching partner with the disability was with respect to Ms. Curtin's communication in the Social Relationships class. Despite over 30 years of communication evaluations and services, Ms. Curtin did not have an effective way to communicate about specific topics.

Jocelyn Curtin: As you can see I cannot speak using words. I also have very little control of my hands and have not been successful with typing, pointing, facilitated communication, etc. My best communication comes from my eyes and facial expressions. I do understand, but have a very difficult time expressing my thoughts using only these gifts. I am able to use a yes/no prompt pretty well most of the time, and will try to use this method to answer any questions you may have. Bear with me though as sometimes it takes me quite a while to process and respond due to severe apraxia. I know what I want to do, but successfully willing my body to make the necessary movements can be difficult and time consuming most of the time. As far as my presentation, I want you to understand; I have not yet found a way to communicate with much detail, grammar, spelling, sentence structure etc. My mom types my presentations, they are her words, but they are my thoughts and experiences. We work together on these and I approve (or not) the topics and stories she shares as well as the final result. I have been known to ask her to do it over if it is not what I want to say.

When a conversational partner (either the faculty co-instructor or a scholar) presented two dichotomous options (usually by holding up both hands and saying "Joce, look at this hand if you agree with this statement or look at my other hand if you disagree") Ms. Curtin used eye gaze to make a selection. Although this was an effective way of responding to yes/no questions or choosing among two options, it was more challenging to use this method to construct class lectures. Mrs. and Ms. Curtin developed a method that they felt represented Ms. Curtin's authorship of the message. Mrs. Curtin used a series of yes/no questions about a particular topic to support Ms. Curtin to "tell" her story. For example, during the first week of the Social Relationships class, Ms. Curtin introduced herself and talked about her early inclusive educational experiences. The statement "When I was in 7th grade, my social relationships really began to expand" was constructed jointly by Mrs. and Ms. Curtin prior to the class meeting, using the following general method.

Marlyn Curtin: "Joce, let's talk a little bit about when you were in junior high school, OK? Look at this hand if that's what you want to talk about next, or look at this hand if you want to talk about something else."

Jocelyn Curtin eye gazed to the hand that indicated she wanted to talk about junior high school.

Marlyn Curtin: "Should we talk about that pizza party and sleep over when the girls told me that we needed to re-decorate your room in a more age appropriate way?"

Jocelyn Curtin eye gazed to the hand that indicated NO.

Marlyn Curtin: "OK, what about the 8th grade dance? Would that be a good place to start?"

Jocelyn Curtin eye gazed to the hand that indicated YES.

As each sentence in the story was confirmed, Mrs. Curtin typed it using a word processing application. During class the entire lecture text was displayed using an LCD projector and read aloud using text to speech software.

Supporting Ms. Curtin's communication was most effective when she had a long history with her communication partner, when that partner was skilled at using a "20 Questions" approach to find an acceptable topic and construct a coherent story, and when her partner was committed to discovering Ms. Curtin's communicative intent. Dr. Jorgensen and the participating scholars used same method to engage Ms. Curtin in class discussions. For many of the scholars in the class, this was the first time they had conversed with someone who did not use natural speech to communicate and their traditional assumptions about the competence of non-speaking people with disabilities were challenged.

Ms. Frechette and Dr. Sonnenmeier provided a variety of supports for one another.

Amy H. Frechette: Rae and I used the framework "Learn the Signs, Act Early, and Make a Plan" to support me to be a successful instructor. For example, my first year teaching with Rae was going as planned. Then one day in November she had to go away to a national meeting. To help ease my anxiety level, Rae wrote a social story talking about that week's class activities and that there would be substitute instructor in her place. I am glad she wrote this because I did not know anybody at the Institute on Disability yet and was uncertain of how class would go without Rae. Now that I am well adjusted to teaching this class with Rae, she doesn't write social stories anymore. Rather Rae and I will start to discuss some major event (such as her going away for a meeting) a month or even a week before. I also reminded Rae during the course of the lecture if we were missing any details to our presentation. [I can make this contribution because] we have been teaching this class together for the past four years and I have the attention to detail sort of mind that can remember even the smallest detail which Rae inadvertently left out.

At the end of each class we discussed what went well, what we would do differently, and if we had any "ah ha's." If a class did not go well one night, then we changed something for the next class. We thought about how we could tie one class to the next. Sometimes Rae re-directed the conversation if I got a bit off track, as sometimes I have been known to take the long way around to get to the point. I try to make it a point to remember "theory of mind" when talking about people or situations to our scholars. I remember one occasion where I was talking about "Michelle and how she had just finalized our trip arrangements." Then Rae reminded me the scholars did not know anything about Michelle or the trip. I then had to start my story over from the beginning explaining who Michelle was and what trip we were going on. Rae oftentimes acted as an interrupter between me and the rest of the class.

Ms. Frechette had an autism service dog who provided support to her in work and social situations.

Amy H. Frechette: During the first three and a half years of my teaching career, I had an autism service dog working by my side. His name was Storybook's Garden of Eden, a Black-Parti Pomeranian (Pom). My original plan for Eden was to become another member of my family which at the time included his big brother Amos, also a Pom, and me. Eden transformed into my service dog quite by accident. One day while out hiking with Amos and Eden, Eden was about 1,000 feet from the car and he trotted off rather quickly towards it. Once he got there he just sat down and waited patiently for Amos and me to arrive. It was as if Eden was saying, "Mom I found the car, here it is." Dogs are a fabulous gift from God, as they have a very unique way of understanding humans which others do not. Eden was happiest when he was teaching class with me or doing other work-related activities such as attending a New Hampshire Council on ASD meeting. I have very poor visual-spatial skills, making remembering where a parked car is located difficult and often times provoking unwanted anxiety. Add Eden to this same situation and I have gone from looking for the car for ten minutes (by myself) to one minute with Eden by my side. Eden was able to remember where we parked the car as it was something he had taught himself when he was still young. I have found a service dog works great for me, because of the special intimate relationship we have shared over 8 and half years. When teaching class, I was more focused, had a better attention span, and was calmer.

Challenges

Any collaborative teaching partnership presents challenges. We found several that were, perhaps, unique to the co-teaching partnership between a university faculty member and a person with a disability.

Transportation

Both Ms. Bates and Ms. Curtin needed someone to drive them to class each week. Ms. Bates' personal care assistant and Ms. Curtin's mother have provided that support. If someone did not have these resources, the faculty instructor and teaching partner might car pool, the teaching partner might take public transportation if it is available and accessible, or the cost of a taxi might be shared by the co-instructors. Additionally, use of web-based conferencing tools (such as Skype and WebEx) could support co-teaching in the future.

Access to Technology

All three teaching partners who had disabilities benefited from access to technology and instruction in its use to enable them to be equitable teaching partners. This support has been provided in various forms:

- Drs. Jorgensen and Sonnenmeier taught their partners how to use various Microsoft Word tools to edit and provide comments to scholars' papers.
- Dr. Sonnenmeier taught Ms. Frechette to use the University library's databases to locate research articles for their class.
- The Institute on Disability purchased software upgrades for Ms. Bates computer and a headset for Ms. Curtin to enable her to participate in the occasional class that was taught using distance learning technology.

- Dr. Sonnenmeier gave Ms. Frechette use of a laptop computer and an I-Pod to enable her to have access to email and to engage the use of Blackboard (an on-line course instruction platform).
- Support staff from the Institute on Disability created digital copies of research papers and book chapters so that Ms. Bates could enlarge them to facilitate easier reading.
- Ms. Curtin utilized benefits from the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation to purchase an augmentative communication device.

Several of these supports required no resources other than the University faculty member's time. Some supports, such as the purchase of software upgrades and Ms. Curtin's headset, were funded by federal (U.S.) grants awarded to Drs. Sonnenmeier and Jorgensen. Universities that wish to establish co-teaching partnerships between their faculty and individuals with disabilities in the community might access resources available to the individuals with disabilities through vocational rehabilitation or developmental service systems or by applying for small grants from organizations like U.S. Developmental Disabilities Councils or Independent Living Centers. Requests to these organizations or agencies can be rationalized by documenting how the technology will help the person with the disability to become more physically or financially independent.

Financial Compensation

Since people with disabilities began teaching in the University of New Hampshire teacher certification program in Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, they have been paid by the Institute on Disability rather than by the UNH Department of Education. In some cases, the faculty instructor shared her per-course supplemental pay with the teaching partner or the Institute on Disability provided extra funds for this purpose. Faculty instructors have historically received two to three times the compensation as the person with the disability, reflecting their greater responsibilities for grading and their university status.

At universities without resources from a disability research center, a financial compensation arrangement might be negotiated with the academic department offering the course, dividing the tuition revenue equitably between both co-instructors.

Appropriate Roles of Support Personnel

It is vitally important that support providers (such as personal care assistants) clearly understand their role in supporting the teaching partner who has a disability. They must recognize that their presence in the class is not to offer their own opinions but instead to provide support to the instructor with the disability. Even more desirable is when the faculty partner provides natural supports to her co-instructor, so that the paid support person is not even present in the room. Examples of natural supports include teaching the co-instructor how to use the university's email system, meeting with the co-instructor prior to each class to discuss interactive teaching techniques, teaching scholars how to talk to someone who uses an augmentative communication device, and providing physical supports to navigate the classroom or campus environment. Assistance with personal hygiene would typically be provided by a personal care assistant.

Likewise, the co-teacher with the disability may offer support to the faculty member, demonstrating equity between the partners (Van der Klift & Kunc, 1994). Co-instructors with disabilities might share with their university partners reading material related to the person's disability, personal experiences that have shaped the person's life philosophy, instruction in using their augmentative communication device or other assistive technology, or emotional support that occurs naturally when colleagues develop a friendship.

University Policies

The University's Department of Education requires that a certain percentage of courses be taught by tenured or research faculty who have doctoral degrees and adjunct faculty must possess at least a master's degree. Since neither Ms. Bates nor Ms. Curtin met the requirements for adjunct faculty, they were not designated as official course instructors. Their title of record is "frequent guest lecturer." Even though Ms. Frechette has a two-year college degree, she was recently appointed as adjunct faculty in the College of Health and Human Services and is considered a co-instructor. All teaching partners provided formative feedback on student assignments but did not participate in grading, as required by the university's policy that only tenured, research, or adjunct faculty with the appropriate terminal degree may give student grades.

We feel that Universities should create official teaching positions for individuals with disabilities who do not meet regular degree requirements but who do have valuable experiences and knowledge to share with scholars in various programs.

Summary

In summary, involving people with disabilities as teaching partners in university courses has resulted in many positive outcomes. Scholars developed a new respect for the perspectives and contributions of the teaching partners who experienced disabilities. They learned first-hand about the person's life experience. The scholars learned the difference between relating to a person with a disability as a client or recipient of services and viewing them in an authoritative position. The teaching partners with disabilities have benefited as well by having a context through which to influence future education and human service professionals. Adding university teaching to their resumes has also had a positive impact on their ability to get other paying jobs. The university faculty members benefitted by having a teaching partner to share instructional responsibilities. Each week that they co-taught with a partner who had a disability, they were reminded that the mission of their professions was first and foremost to work *with* individuals with disabilities to make the world more accommodating and respectful *of* people with disabilities.

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