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Overcoming Co-Teaching Challenges

Sharon Gerst, *Liberty University*

Lucinda Spaulding, *Liberty University*



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Overcoming Co-teaching Challenges

Sharon Gerst, Doctoral Candidate
Lucinda Spaulding, Ph.D.

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Significance

- General education placement is preferable: Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)

- ***How*** matters more than ***where***

Summarizing a meta-analysis on inclusion
(Kavale & Forness, 2000):

1. The inclusion classroom is generally viewed as “a setting essentially devoid of special education” (p. 283)
2. “Given the magnitude of associated effects, it was evident that placement per se had only a modest influence on outcomes” (p. 282)

Significance

- Necessity of an individualized education

“evidence from inclusive classroom ecologies suggests that individualized instruction for students with disabilities is infrequent and often provides more to accommodate teachers than learners” (Crockett & Kauffman, 1999, p. 148)
- Effective co-teaching is how both LRE and an individualized education can be accomplished.

Think, Pair, Share

- **Think:** List three things that you believe make effective co-teaching teams
- **Pair:** Discuss your list with a partner
- **Share:** Contribute to large group discussion by sharing elements that were the same as your partner's

Purpose of this Presentation

- To present findings from an empirical research study examining how problems in co-teaching relationships are resolved
- To share 6 strategies for resolving co-teaching challenges
- To apply these 6 strategies to “real life” scenarios

Purpose of the Study

- The purpose of this systematic grounded theory study was to explain how problems inherent in co-teaching relationships are resolved by secondary school special education and general education teachers at an urban school district in Eastern Iowa.

“The study of collaboration must keep pace with the increasing demand for its practice” (Friend, 2000, p. 132).

Problems

- Isolation no longer possible (Cook & Friend, 2010; Dufour 2004)
- Not a simple process (Scruggs, Mastropieri, & McDuffie, 2007)
- Merging of two different perspectives (Van Garderen, Scheuermann, Jackson, & Hampton, 2009; Wasburn-Moses & Frager, 2009; Winzer, 1993)
- Little research on overcoming challenges (Leatherman, 2009)
- Need to understand process to support teachers in developing effective co-teaching relationships

Research Questions

- **Central Question:**

How do secondary school co-teachers from an urban Eastern Iowa school district resolve problems inherent with collaboration?

Research Questions

- **Sub-Questions:**

1. How do co-teachers address differences in attitudes towards inclusion?
2. How do co-teachers address differences in philosophical perspectives of general education and special education?
3. How do co-teachers resolve interpersonal conflicts?
4. How do co-teachers address external factors that impede successful collaboration?

Research Design

- **Systematic Grounded Theory** (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1998)
 - Explains process
 - Develops theory grounded in data from natural settings

Setting

- Urban school district in Eastern Iowa
- Secondary schools: 6 middle schools, 4 high schools
- District NCLB status: District in Need of Assistance
- Use inclusive classrooms for students with learning disabilities in secondary schools

Participants

- Effective co-teaching partnerships criteria:
 1. one general education and one special education teacher
 2. co-taught for one year
 3. used effective co-teaching instructional relationships (Scruggs et al., 2007)
- 56 co-teaching teams in the district
- 8 co-teaching teams met the criteria

Participants

- 5 co-teaching teams participated ($N = 10$)
- Maximum Variation
 1. Gender (2 F/F, 1 M/M, 2 M/F)
 2. Teaching Experience (4-27 years)
 3. Co-teaching Experience (2-26 years)
 4. Content Areas (English, Science, Social Studies)
 5. Ethnicity

Data Collection

- 1. **Focus Groups:** with each co-teaching partnership
- 2. **Questionnaire:** as part of focus group
Element B – Interpersonal Behavior (Schutz, 1992)
- 3. **Observations:** minimum of two per partnership
(one announced and one unannounced)
- 4. **Individual Interviews:** with each participant

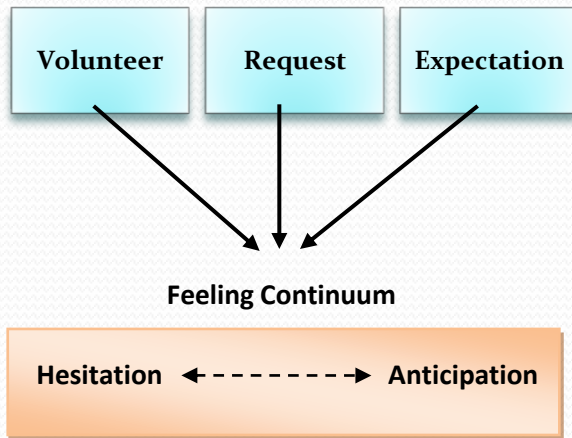
Data Analysis

- **Constant Comparative Method**
 1. Open Coding
 2. Axial Coding
 3. Selective Coding
- **Memoing**
- **Visual Model**

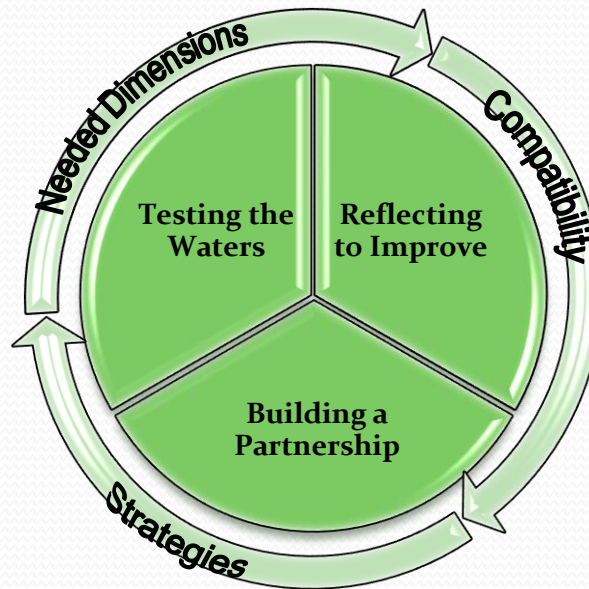
(Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss, 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1998)

Achieving Symbiosis

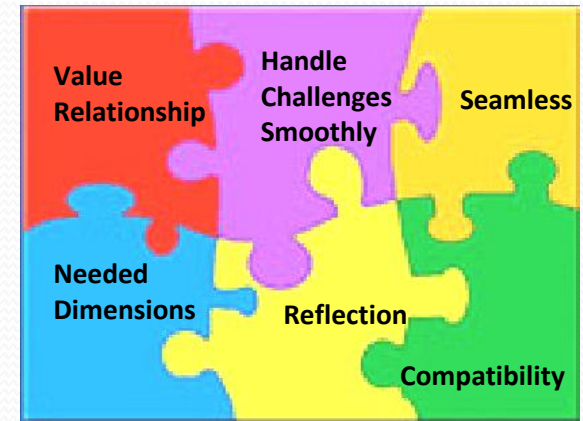
1. Initiation



2. The Symbiosis Spin

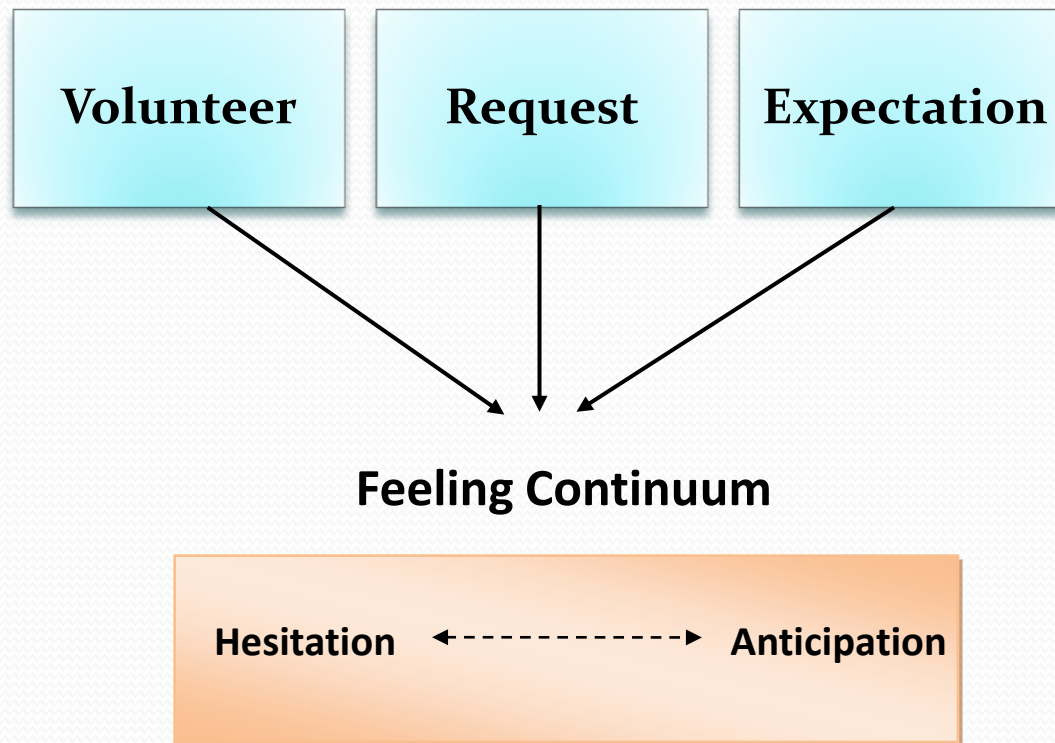


3. Fulfillment



(Gerst, 2012)

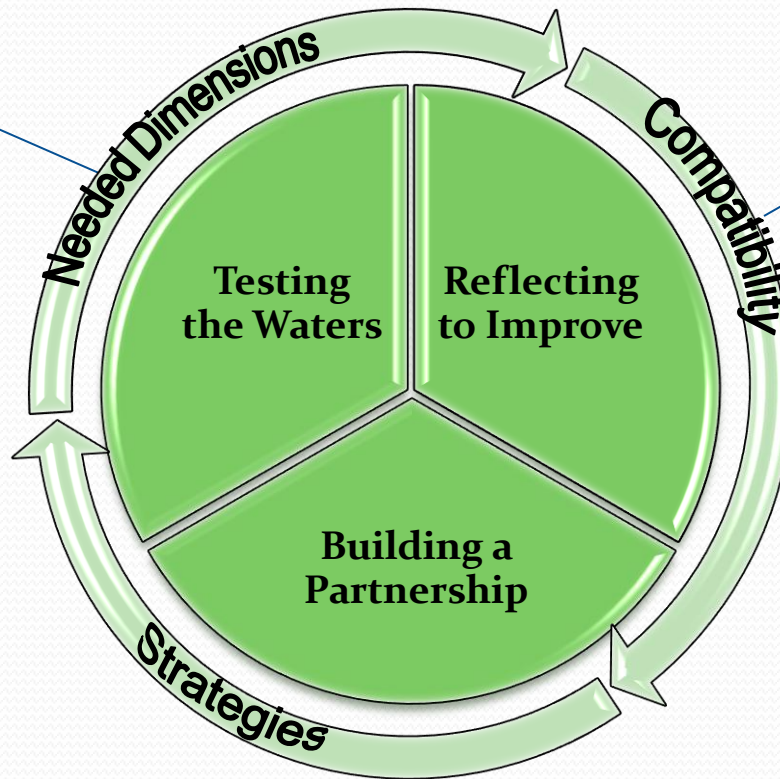
1. Initiation



(Gerst, 2012)

2. Symbiosis Spin

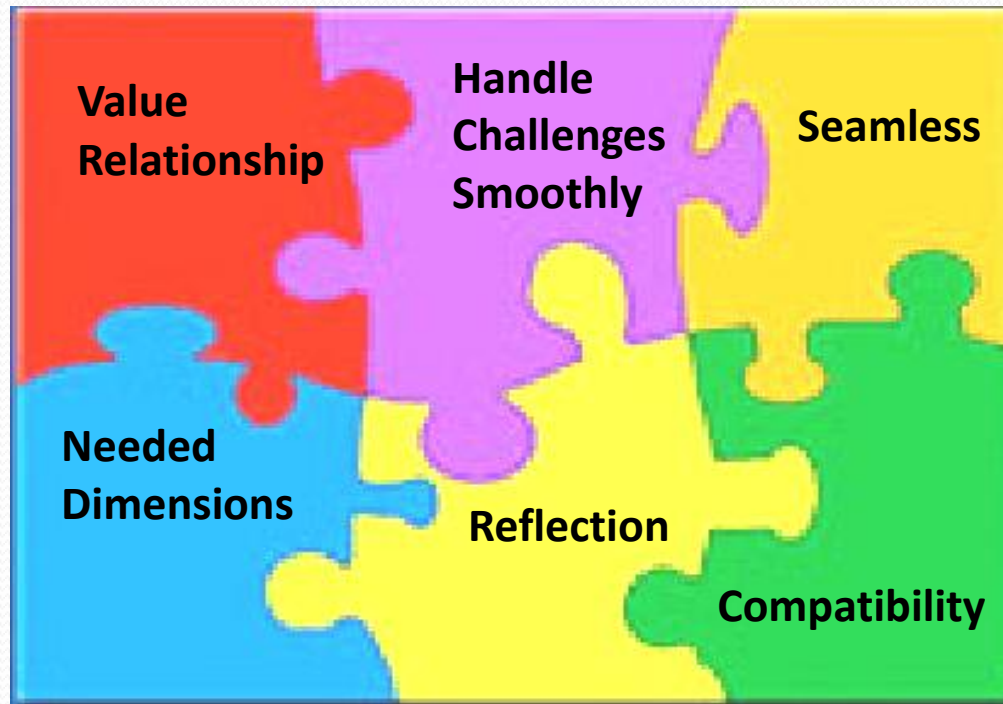
- Parity
- Respect
- Trust
- Care for Partner as a Person
- Professional Development
- Co-planning Time
- Administrative Support



- Views of Inclusion
- Philosophical Perspectives
- Use of Expertise
- Interpersonal Factors :
 1. Background
 2. Life Stage
 3. Gender
 4. Personality
 5. Communication Style
 6. Conflict Style

(Gerst, 2012)

3. Fulfillment



(Gerst, 2012)

Reflection

- Review your list of three components for an effective co-teaching relationship.
- Discuss with a partner comparisons to Achieving Symbiosis model
 - Similarities
 - New concepts

Strategies

- 1. Being open-minded
- 2. Using open communication
- 3. Finding common ground
- 4. Using humor
- 5. Being selfless
- 6. Asking to help

Strategy 1: Being Open Minded

- Listen to one another
- Be willing to change
- Have some “give and take”

Strategy 2: Using Open Communication

- Have difficult conversations: address the elephant in the room
- Be honest with each other
- Use reflection

Strategy 3: Finding Common Ground

- Building a bridge versus walls
- Talk openly until reach an agreement
- Honor and respect both people's preferences and philosophies



Strategy 4: Using Humor

- Laugh about personality differences/teaching preferences
- Joke with students
- Model peer collaboration

Strategy 5: Being Selfless

- Do not take things personally
- Focus on the students
- Be considerate of teaching partner

Strategy 6: Offering to Help

- Share the workload
- Notice when to offer assistance
- Support teaching partner during instruction

Application

- Co-teaching scenarios in handout
- Divide into small groups of 4-5 people
- Apply the strategies for co-teaching relationships to assigned scenario
- Be prepared to present a summary of the strategies the co-teachers could use to overcome their challenges

Scenario 1

Mr. Thomas and Mrs. Wright co-teach 7th grade science. Mrs. Wright is the general education teacher and Mr. Thomas is the special education teacher. Mr. Thomas feels as though he is often in the position of a paraprofessional in the classroom. A student is having difficulty complying with classroom expectations and Mr. Thomas is attempting to address the situation. The student is arguing with Mr. Thomas and in the process tells him, “you are not the real teacher anyway.”

Scenario 2

Ms. Berg and Ms. Hedgeman co-teach US History. Ms. Berg is the general education teacher and Ms. Hedgeman is the special education teacher. They each take some essay tests to grade. Ms. Berg takes the tests belonging to students with IEPs and Ms. Hedgeman scores the rest. The next day when they hand out the tests, the students notice that those from Ms. Berg are scored higher than those from Ms. Hedgeman.

Scenario 3

Mr. Gomez and Mr. Pinelli co-teach Algebra. Mr. Gomez is the general education teacher and Mr. Pinelli is the special education teacher. Mr. Gomez feels as though he does most of the planning for lessons and assessments. However, it is easier for him to do it alone because Mr. Pinelli is always busy during their co-planning time. He is afraid if he addresses the problem, he will ruin their friendship outside of school.

Scenario 4

Ms. Buckley and Mr. Smith co-teach 10th grade English. Mr. Smith is the general education teacher and Ms. Buckley is the special education teacher. Ms. Buckley feels as though there are invisible walls in the classroom of which students she can support. Mr. Smith has told her she cannot help “his kids” and she can only work with “her kids.” One day during individual writing time, she attempts to help a student who has raised his hand. However, Mr. Smith comes up and tells her to go help “her kids” while he works with “his student.”

Reflection and Feedback

- **3-2-1 in handout**

3 things learned about effective co-teaching teams

2 ways could apply information

1 question or suggestion for presenters

(use sticky note and leave on feedback poster)

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Contact Information

- Sharon Gerst, Doctoral Candidate - sgerst@liberty.edu
- Lucinda Spaulding, Ph.D. - lsspaulding@liberty.edu