

# Professor and Clinician Collaboration: A Dynamic Classroom Environment

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## Background

The terms collaborative teaching, co-teaching, and team-teaching have been used interchangeably throughout the literature<sup>1,2</sup>

- Some collaborative teaching models emphasize the role of two or more instructors planning the same course but teaching different students<sup>3</sup>
- Other models include multiple instructors teaching all or some of the same students different or similar content<sup>2</sup>
- Roles of the instructors vary in different models

Occupational therapists working in an academic environment have numerous opportunities to engage in professional development activities related to teaching, but often limited time to continue with clinical practice

Occupational therapists working in a clinical environment typically have opportunities for professional development related to clinical work; however formal skills in teaching may be limited

Merging the two professionals in a classroom through collaborative teaching appears to offer numerous advantages for both students and instructors

## Collaborative Teaching Format

Courses co-taught by the same professor and clinician:

- Cohort of 49 students
- Weekly class format:
  - one 2-hour class (all students)
  - three 3-hour application sessions (16 to 17 students per session)
- Two courses over two semesters

This model of collaborative teaching emphasizes:

- Real life, current case studies offering authentic answers to student questions and follow-up information as available
- Both academic and clinical perspectives on current practice
- Small student to faculty ratio

## Program Evaluation Outcomes: Student Perspective

### Major themes identified

#### Different perspectives available

- “It was useful having two professors with various clinical/academic backgrounds, from which they can draw knowledge...that contributes to my learning.”
- “Having both perspectives is so useful as is just having multiple avenues for questions and general interactions.”

#### Strong collaboration/communication

- “[The instructors] worked so well as a team that their varying knowledge was absolutely beneficial. I think in general, however, the idea of 2 professors only works when they are compatible.”
- “...it’s clear that communication is solid between instructors, so the class seems cohesive.”

#### Enthusiasm/passion for teaching

- “It’s clear that [the instructors] both have a genuine passion for the subject matter and desire to help us learn.”
- “Both of [the instructors] have such enthusiasm for teaching and it always makes me excited to learn.”

## Instructor Perspective

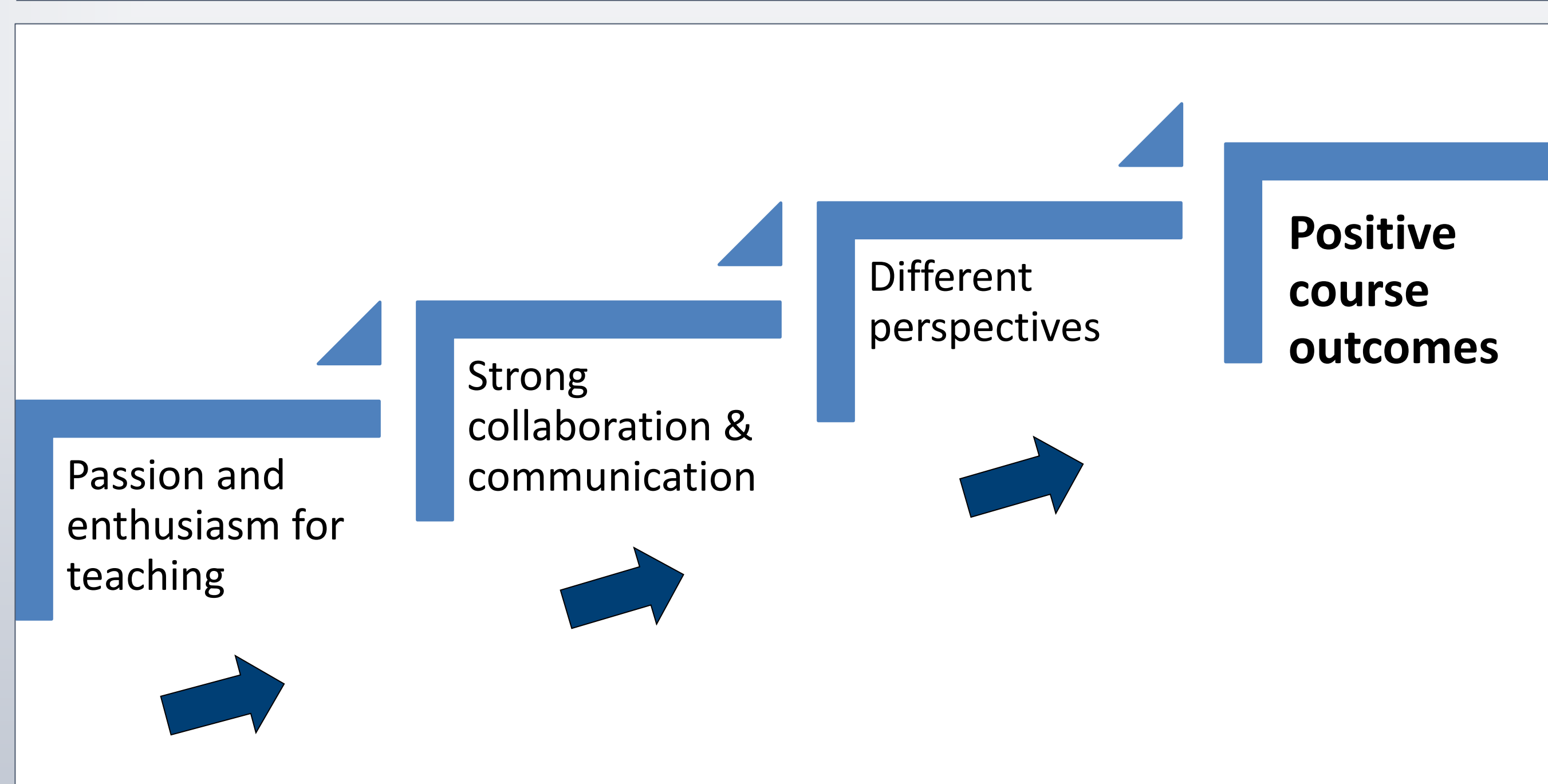
### Benefits

- Opportunity to brainstorm and share ideas for teaching
- Shared grading and overall support for each other
- For professor: perspective on current practice
- For clinician: mentoring from educator; strengthening teaching skills

### Challenges

- Increased time for collaboration (meeting and preparing)
- Resource intensive
- For professor: relinquishing some control over the course
- For clinician: demand of two different jobs, supervisors, schedules

## Teaching Model



## References

1. Cushner, K. H., McClelland, A., & Safford, P. (2009). *Human diversity in education: An integrative approach* (4th ed.). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.
2. Thousand, J. S., Villa, R. A., & Nevin, A. I. (2006). The many faces of collaborative planning and teaching. *Theory Into Practice, 45*, 239–248.
3. Carter, I., Barrett, B., & Wansoo, P. (2011). Improving collaborative teaching in large introductory BSW classes. *Journal of teaching in social work, 31*(5), 569-578.

## Conclusions

Students found the collaborative teaching model of professor and clinician beneficial to their learning and understanding of material.

Key factors that allow for this model to work include:

- Strong communication and a collaborative approach
- Varied professional backgrounds providing different perspectives
- Mutual respect among collaborators
- Willingness to take time for meeting/planning

**Overall, the benefits to student learning far outweigh the challenges to a collaborative teaching model.**