

Review of *Creating School Partnerships That Work: A Guide for Practice and Research*

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The benefits of school–university partnerships are well documented and include opportunities to fulfill resource gaps, support parental involvement strategies, and increase academic achievement in underserved schools and communities (Allington & Cunningham, 2007; Epstein & Sanders, 2006; Guillen & Zeichner, 2018; Richmond, 2016; Warren, 2005; Zeichner et al., 2016; Zeichner & Melnick, 1996). Scholars in the field have recommended myriad iterations of restructuring and collaborative efforts among school personnel, community stakeholders, families, and university partnerships in under-resourced schools toward cultivating successful schools and an empowered school culture (Allington & Cunningham, 2007; Epstein & Sanders, 2006; Guillen & Zeichner, 2018; Warren, 2005; Zeichner et al., 2016; Zeichner & Melnick, 1996). *Creating School Partnerships That Work: A Guide for Practice and Research* (Kochan & Griggs, 2020) is an edited volume that contributes to the body of knowledge surrounding school partnerships with university teacher preparation programs, community stakeholders, and local businesses. The edited volume is a series of cases and documentation of successful school partnerships addressing multiple issues of relevance within school, community, and/or university partnerships across urban, suburban, and rural school contexts. Most partnerships described include teacher preparation coursework and practicum experiences and integrate theory and practice.

Chapter 1

Chapter 1, “Creating Successful School Partnerships: An Overview,” outlines the characteristics of effective school partnerships, in conjunction with research

questions guiding the chapters. The chapters are situated and influenced by public schools and their inception historically as a community partnership and public good. The chapters demonstrate numerous overlapping characteristics of strong school, university, and/or community stakeholder partnerships. They also address overlapping research questions: What were the primary elements/factors that fostered partnership success? What were the primary elements/factors that hindered partnership success? What were the significant lessons learned? Where are the additional research questions/issues that need to be addressed? Characteristics of quality partnerships are thematic in scope, and cases include variations of the following categories: collaborative and shared responsibility, open and regular communication, trust, parental involvement, professional development, resources, and academic achievement. This review will identify key linkages between chapters and evaluate each with applicable overarching research questions and characteristics of quality partnerships.

Chapter 2

“A Case Study of a School–Industry Partnership: Findings, Lessons Learned, and Suggestions for Practice,” a chapter by Griggs, documented a school–industry partnership, a collaborative and shared responsibility in a rural high school in Alabama where professionals from a local, community-partner industry mentored students. Mentors prepared students for two-year or four-year institutions or vocational opportunities to diversify one-size fits all preparation for four-year colleges. A primary element of success was attributed to the collaboration with teachers and leadership of the school, whose work was inspired by the existing structure that inadequately prepared the students for the world of work or postsecondary education. The mentors supported the students’ acquisition of career etiquette skills that transferred to conduct at school, supported by teachers. The partnership cultivated trust that led to increased parental involvement in support of life skills acquired. The excerpts from students and career professionals offer thick description and are a strength of this chapter, as they explicitly demonstrated how the students developed the ability to behave professionally, acquire leadership skills, and develop academically.

This chapter is ideal for educational leadership programs that endeavor to prepare leaders in planning, implementing, and sustaining partnerships. The lesson learned in this chapter encompassed expanding the scope of postsecondary preparation beyond college, which is significant, yet differs from other chapters in this volume that demonstrate lessons learned on the basis of challenges that hindered success during collaborative efforts. However, this chapter is among the few cases where the voices of the participants illuminate the students’ development of intended outcomes.

Chapter 3

“Partnerships in Practice: Developing a Positive School Culture Toward Title I School Success,” by Nava and Nava, documented two Title I urban elementary school sites whose collaborations led to implementing focus area strategies, including increased parental involvement, targeted intervention, data intentionality, focused professional development, and a positive school culture. The bilingual leadership facilitated meetings and workshops in English and Spanish, which increased parental involvement. Both schools incorporated the Response to Intervention problem-solving model, in which teachers identified the problem, analyzed the cause, and developed an action plan, followed by evaluating progress and modifying the action plan as needed. Data intentionality encompassed strategies to increase attendance, reclassify bilingual students, and identify students for placement in gifted and talented programs. Focused professional development was based on a survey that informed ongoing training topics. The administrator collaborated with literacy and math coaches and teachers across topics of interest. All focus areas led to increased overall academic achievement at both schools.

This chapter is an ideal source for administrators and coaches who endeavor to address problems of practice, as it detailed myriad strategies for restructuring, toward a positive school culture. This chapter is additionally ideal for under resourced schools seeking to develop school improvement plans, enrichment opportunities for English Learners, and increase parental involvement. While the re-structuring efforts are well documented and pivot around problems of practice, the collaboration of numerous personnel across two schools do not include a discussion of trust that is a hallmark of many of the chapters.

Chapter 4

In “Key Elements of a Successful Higher Education and Elementary Partnership,” Walker, Conner, and Pelham documented a longstanding school–university partnership that was sought by a public school in a rural context. The school served as a placement site for preservice teachers and aimed to build teacher leadership, address problems of practice, assume a reflective stance, support a collaborative school culture, and improve student outcomes. This chapter explicitly detailed the university partner’s enactment of a vertical planning framework, which called for a collaboration between common grade teachers with teachers of preceding grade levels. Collaborations and observations across grade level teachers were an endeavor to examine strengths and weaknesses related to Common Core State Standards and to establish a deeper understanding of the influence of standards on practice grade by grade. The authors captured a collaborative teacher-led model of inquiry that transitioned

the school culture from working in isolation to working collectively. Teachers managed a demanding workload with the support of professional development that centered around trust. Although significant gains were made, the authors reported lessons learned from structural challenges that initially hindered the success of the partnership, particularly initial pushback from a formerly hostile school culture where teachers were fearful of punitive actions for not following the pacing guide with fidelity. Assurance from the principal who supported teacher autonomy led to a deeply reflective staff and collegial bonds. Additional challenges included planning meetings around university course loads and committee responsibilities.

This chapter is an ideal resource for inspiring the ongoing work of administrators and colleges of education, as trust was integral to transforming the initially hostile school culture, while detailing the realities of structural challenges that may be anticipated for school and university entities. Overcoming challenges that hinder success aligns with other cases that informed about lessons learned from collaborative efforts. The thick description of the vertical planning framework and challenges surrounding trust and scheduling provides a comprehensive overview and reality of what productive and transformative school–university partnerships look like.

Chapter 5

“Collaborating on Problems of Practice” by Anderson and Korach detailed a longstanding school–university partnership that was grounded in leadership preparation. The collaboration centered around intentionally aligned university content and curriculum with the expectations and needs identified by the school district’s leaders. The high needs of 12 schools qualified for a turn-around leadership development program to support two problems of practice: improvement strategies and innovation with disciplined inquiry. A notable characteristic and hallmark of the partnership was the university’s partnership to the district’s needs, embedded in deep reflection and collaborative processes on behalf of a variety of leadership personnel, including a university project lead and a school district lead, whose collaboration was centered around trust and authenticity. Other notable features include shared beliefs about turn-around that centered around a differentiated approach for school supports and willingness to make adjustments toward a shared vision. These innovations were supported by a university course on disciplined inquiry, embedded in its leadership curriculum.

The alignment with university content and curriculum in conjunction with school districts is especially timely and relevant for colleges of education in the process of restructuring programming to align with grade band requirements

in a manner that is tailored to the needs of partnering school districts. Similar to Case 3 in Chapter 4, this chapter is useful for school and university entities desiring to sustain longstanding partnerships. The responsiveness to district needs and iterative, feedback-driven structure of design supporting learning culture are eloquently documented within the realm of an existing, well-established partnership.

Chapter 6

“Collaborating to Make a Difference: A Middle School and College of Education Partnership,” authored by Kent and Billingsley, is another case of a longstanding partnership grounded in shared goals between both entities and related to the pursuit of knowledge, intellectual curiosity, and preparing students to be active and productive citizens. The collaboration was led by the college’s Diversity Council and its endeavor of expanding the cultural competence of faculty and college students to make a difference in the lives of K–12 students, families, teachers, and the surrounding urban community. This chapter documented a series of meetings over the duration of five years, which yielded and necessitated trust among stakeholders due to teachers who were initially skeptical and fearful of criticism from faculty. Teachers’ initial skepticism established a foundation for asset mapping and became the source of lessons learned. Documentation of the first year included asset mapping and laying the groundwork between school and college administrators and community stakeholders, which included better preparing preservice teachers for work in challenging environments among a culturally dissimilar African American student body. Year two detailed collaborative efforts that supported teachers’ success, including teacher appreciation initiatives that acknowledged teachers’ hard work. The Diversity Council contributed a variety of resources that contributed to student achievement, a salient factor that fostered success, which is especially well documented in the chapter. Resources were numerous, including initiating literacy center tutoring and math teacher professional development. Year three yielded transformative impact, particularly the expansion of the literacy center tutoring that included the preparation of preservice teachers who negotiated instructional techniques and materials. Another salient feature of the partnership was the university’s early recruitment efforts from the partnership school, in conjunction with expanding to the high school on the same site. Moreover, many of the teachers at the school were graduates of the teacher preparation program.

This chapter is an ideal resource for university and school administrators who would like to develop more robust opportunities for cultivating culturally competent teachers, supporting career pathways with partnering schools, and

providing community-based resources. Lessons learned align well with other chapters that manage challenges that hinder success. Trust is additionally underscored in this case as a lesson learned, within the realms of challenges that include immediately handling issues that compromise trust and continuing to build trust in order to move forward with the partnership. The most challenging lesson authors acknowledged that distinguishes this chapter from the others is the aspect of patience, as it explicitly outlined the reality of the slow and steady pace of the process.

Chapter 7

“Learn, Serve, and Lead: Examining a Model for Strengthening Community Partnerships and Student Learning Through a Service-Leadership Internship,” by Sigler and Moffa, documented a service leadership internship model as part of a school–university partnership. The internship model was guided by pre-service teachers’ community-based experiences in a teacher education program in a rural context. The chapter detailed four core components of the partnership: leadership, rigor, service, and diversity, which characterized the teacher education program. These components fostered success and were embedded in collaborating to plan effective and appropriate curriculum, motivating students and teachers to achieve at high levels, manage classrooms, and cultivating agency and change in their schools and communities. The partnership aimed to be mutually beneficial, as leadership opportunities provided by the teacher education program and content toward understanding K–12 school organization provided literacy programs, school events, and mentoring for the partner school. The benefits of the teacher licensure and education policy program included grant writing opportunities to support 21st Century School Grants for afterschool programs and enrichment opportunities. Unlike other chapters, authors documented myriad collaborations between the work–study office, office of community-based learning, faculty, and elementary school personnel. School personnel assessed the needs of the schools and their grant eligibility. Rising seniors were identified to pass on leadership and continue volunteerism. Volunteer recruitment was supported by disseminating fliers and applications, embedded as figures in the text. Student interns’ participation in triad meetings with the university supervisor and the school principal were documented, which established expectations for recruiting volunteers for a variety of school programs identified by the principal, including family literacy night and staffing for afterschool programs.

This chapter is ideal for colleges of education that aim to collaborate across campus offices to support a community-based volunteer and service-learning framework. The challenges that hindered success are consistent with other cases

around conflicting schedules between volunteers and school leadership. However, the volunteer excerpts made this chapter stand out as they punctuated the challenges in compelling ways. Also significant is the acknowledgement of a lack of critically minded service learning, which limited the potential for students in this study to work toward social change. The acknowledgement of future research tasks toward examining power differences is significant, particularly for colleges of education in the process of conceptualizing service that empowers populations they aim to serve.

Chapter 8

In “Preparing School Leaders to Meet the Needs of Alternative Certification Teachers Through a Collaborative Partnership” Parfitt and Rose detailed a program that supported alternative certification teachers’ development of deeper pedagogy in urban, rural, and suburban neighboring school districts, instead of the common convention of concentrating on day-to-day tasks and survival functions. Each teacher was surveyed to determine their coursework and administrative support needs related to pedagogy, assessment, development theory, the teaching of reading, and content areas, specified by Florida’s teacher certification examination. Thus, the purpose of the partnership was to positively influence the preparation and retention of alternative certification teachers. Responses to the surveys were triangulated with central office and school leader respondents and were largely consistent, related to the identified needs. Thus, administrators became more aware of the unique issues faced by alternative certification teachers to inform a collaborative approach to supporting their needs in the areas of practice, management, and teaching diverse populations. These factors fostered success and were found to support retention efforts. Moreover, the authors detailed how school leaders and administrators acknowledged the difficulty with curricular changes, a factor that hindered success, but yielded the offering of seminars, internship hours, and other strategies. The graduate students in a variety of specialist positions had a positive impact on alternative certification colleagues and a greater understanding of challenges to be faced when they become leaders.

This chapter is useful to school districts who depend on hiring alternative certified teachers as a response to shortages of traditionally certified teachers. Specifically, the authors offer how a university partner can raise awareness of the issues that may arise related to quality, preparedness, and retention, which pose a negative impact on student achievement. The chapter differs from others, as authors did not specify how faculty supported teachers and administrators. Instead, the authors documented how they surveyed respondents through a school district and university collaboration. This chapter may also

serve as a resource for informing the process of administering surveys to identify problems and to conceptualize support in conjunction with school leaders and administrators. Thus, this chapter illuminates the significance of proctoring surveys that yield needed information to support and retain teachers.

Chapter 9

“Distant Neighbors: Building a P–20 Community of Practice” by Feirson and Van Vlerah documented a collaboration between high school counselors and college advisors to overcome institutional boundaries and support college readiness. Its origins were situated in a counselor–advisor community of practice, a collaboration between college presidents and school district superintendents (S-CPP). This chapter outlined the outcomes of three college and school district administrator workgroups which fostered success and aligned with the college readiness components of the model. Components included an analysis of quantitative data, a literature review and survey of local practices at the high school and college levels, and qualitative, social/emotional factors to facilitate successful college entry. The quantitative workgroup was informed by patterns in data associated with academic achievement in college and progress toward completion, including enrollment patterns in remediated math and reading courses. The literature review and replication workgroup established an evidence-based foundation for the college readiness study, focused on establishing a catalog of existing practices intended to facilitate successful college transition, and provided a summary of research related to personal and institutional factors that yield student success in college coursework. The qualitative workgroup centered around the key behaviors and attitudes component for college readiness. These workgroups established an ongoing collaboration between high school counselors and college advisors for ensuring first year college students’ college transition success.

Similar to Case 6 in Chapter 7, excerpts captured the authenticity and voice of collaborative processes. In this case, excerpts punctuated the interpersonal nature of advising and a common ground between university and school district stakeholders. The authors documented challenges that hindered success associated with practical issues, differences in organizational culture, and dissimilar schedules. However, the honest documentation and clear overview of collaborative groups makes this chapter a useful resource for supporting counselor–advisor communities of practice. Thus, this chapter is ideal for school counselors and college advisors who are considering the possibility of collaborating in the endeavor of cultivating a more seamless transition between high school and college.

Chapter 10

In “O Grows and the Contextual and Interactive Model of Community–University Collaborations,” authors Forbes and Andrzejewski describe a school–university partnership with the nonprofit “O Grows,” guided by the goal of providing food security within the realm of a school garden initiative. The partnership was initiated by a university faculty member and primary school principal. Preservice teachers facilitated the gardening initiative in conjunction with the afterschool program and also utilizing the last 30 minutes of instruction each Friday. The chapter details a thorough description of factors that fostered success, evidenced by how the school adjusted its structure to accommodate the school garden, embedded it in a service-learning project and aiming to involve parents and other community volunteers in the process. Also significant are the strong connections between gardening and related math and language arts activities, with supporting details and examples given. A project that began at one school inspired a succession of school garden initiatives at other schools in the district. Thus, a university partnership influenced gardening and service-learning initiatives one school at a time. Lessons learned center around acknowledging the school and community context from a nuanced perspective and sustaining trust. The ongoing partnership includes prioritizing relationship-building and establishing trust with partners who were able to provide access.

This chapter is useful for schools across the nation who cultivate school gardens to promote food security and endeavor to enhance the purpose and authenticity of the process. Particularly useful are its purposeful linkages with service learning initiatives, strong connections across the curriculum, community sustainability, and its role in supporting the development of preservice teachers in the process.

In conclusion, each case in *Creating School Partnerships That Work* is relevant to teacher preparation programs in the process of restructuring programmatic goals toward teaching for social justice, facilitating critical service learning initiatives and deeper pedagogical knowledge. The multiple contexts are nuanced and relatable to multiple audiences aiming to improve programmatic efforts. The cases are multifaceted in scope; explicitly detail their step-by-step restructuring efforts; reflect on key player roles across district, university, and community contexts and outcomes; and acknowledge the significance of revisiting their goals for revising strategies toward promoting long-term sustainability. Thus, these cases are ideal resources for programs endeavoring to restructure practicum and coursework requirements in preparation for work in diverse educational contexts and in conjunction with community stakeholders. These cases are also ideal for community stakeholders who endeavor

to facilitate partnerships with local schools and for administrators who would like to develop partnerships with universities and/or community stakeholders to fill resource and opportunity gaps for underserved populations. Each case is connected through organizational/relational elements, including trust, lessons learned, shared leadership, factors that fostered school success, and overcoming factors that hindered school success. These elements are thematically connected in the final chapter.

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