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School-University Collaboration

by

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and

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Introduction

The maxims, "Two heads are better than one" and "The whole is greater than the sum of its parts," support the assumption that collaboration can be a productive means of encouraging quality thinking, problem solving, and effective change. The idea of people from public schools working together with faculty from departments, schools, or colleges of education (hereinafter referred to as colleges of education) is based on that same assumption. The fact that the individuals from these two institutions have common problems and concerns strengthens the position for collaboration.

There are other reasons for public schools and colleges of education to be working together. Recent proposals for reform and restructuring often call for the two to merge forces. Increasing societal problems, combined with dwindling resources, point to the need for new ways of doing business. Heightened public expectations for accountability create pressures for educators from all levels to establish partnerships.

For education to mature as a profession, practice must be based increasingly on research. Public school educators need more interaction with those who conduct, synthesize, and disseminate education research. College of education faculty in teacher education, educational administration, counseling, and related fields have information to share with practitioners. Similarly, those preparing teachers and administrators need input from public school practitioners, who are
directly involved with day-to-day tasks of instruction and administra-
tion and are familiar with the ever-changing needs of students. They
can bring a realistic view to the preparation of teachers and adminis-
trators in colleges of education. Thus the rationale for collaboration
between the public schools and colleges of education is founded on
wisdom, necessity, and perhaps a little anxiety. Improving our schools
will require the best thinking of individuals representing both col-
leges of education and the public schools.

We know that change does not occur through mandates from the
central office. Effective change results from building-level initiatives
by dedicated teachers and administrators, with the support of faculty
from colleges of education. What is needed is a collaborative struc-
ture that brings the research-based knowledge of college of educa-
tion faculty to bear on the problems of the schools, and that brings
the practical experience of school personnel to guide the preparation
of teachers and administrators. Such a structure helps to bridge the
gap between research and practice.

Collaboration between public schools and colleges of education has
existed for a long time with the placement of student teachers in
schools and with a variety of ventures in inservice education. Only
recently, however, has national attention been focused on the idea
of the two institutions working together on an ongoing and equal basis
to solve problems and improve practice in both the schools and at
the university. For example, such influential reports as A Nation Pre-
pared: Teachers for the 21st Century (Carnegie Forum 1986), Tomor-
row’s Teachers: A Report of the Holmes Group (Holmes Group 1986),
and Goodlad’s Teachers for Our Nation’s Schools (1990), all strongly
recommend collaboration between the schools and colleges of edu-
cation. For those who share a common mission of improving educa-
tion, it only makes sense to work together.

The purpose of this fastback is to: 1) outline the parameters for
effective collaboration, 2) describe the benefits and potential outcomes
of collaboration, 3) provide examples of the range and diversity of
collaborative structures and activities, and 4) offer recommendations regarding collaboration. A bibliography is provided for those who wish to explore any of these areas in greater depth.
What Is Collaboration?

Put simply, collaboration is working together, cooperating for some common purpose. There are, however, different ways of working together, some of which are more effective than others. For the purposes here, collaboration is defined as a relationship involving equal partners working on an ongoing basis to achieve mutually beneficial goals.

School-university collaboration is more than a case of institutional friendliness or “You scratch my back, I’ll scratch yours.” Rather, it involves working together to address common concerns with a specific agenda for action. Collaboration builds on the uniqueness of the organizations involved. Although schools and colleges of education have overlapping missions, they are not identical. Goodlad (1991-1992) suggests that an effective collaboration is a symbiotic relationship: “It unites unlike entities rather intimately in mutually beneficial relationships.”

McGowan (1990) identifies nine conditions necessary for an effective collaboration:

1. Time. Developing and sustaining a collaboration takes much time of both the college of education and public school personnel. The willingness to expend the necessary time is indicative of the commitment of each party to the effort. It may take meeting regularly for at least a year to establish a basis for trust and a readiness for risk. That is not to say nothing happens during the year of meetings; there will
be progress, but it will accelerate as the foundations for a healthy relationship are established.

Even so, the group will continue to need nurturing throughout its existence. People have to be willing to attend the meetings and perform the follow-up tasks required by the decisions made at the meetings. Someone has to be responsible to set the agenda, establish the meeting time and place, record and distribute the minutes, and chair the meetings. In order to facilitate attendance at meetings, it may be necessary to provide substitutes for teachers or to adjust the teaching load of college faculty.

2. Benefits. The individuals involved in the collaboration must see benefits for their institution and for themselves. The agenda must address real needs of all institutions involved. For some, simply having the opportunity to interact openly with colleagues from other institutions may be perceived as a benefit. Others will want to realize more direct benefits such as specific program improvements or access to previously untapped resources. However, if institutions acknowledge and reward the time and effort that goes into collaboration, even greater benefits will result.

College of education faculty sometimes feel that their collaborative efforts with public schools are not recognized in the promotion, merit, and tenure structure of the university. They contend that research and publication are the only criteria for a merit raise or promotion, and that providing service or collaborating with others external to the university does not count. Similarly, school administrators or teachers may feel so overwhelmed by their daily responsibilities that they question why they should bother working with university professors. If long-term success is to result from collaboration, it must be structured so that there are “perks” or benefits for all involved.

3. Support from the administration. If collaboration is to have an impact, the formal leadership of the involved institutions must be supportive. These individuals need to understand the issues being studied and encourage their staff to participate. In some cases, the original
idea of the collaboration is due to the efforts of the top administrators. Sometimes a dean, a department chair, a superintendent, or a principal is the initiator of collaborative efforts among different institutions. The important point, though, is that the support of top administration be articulated publicly. Without such support, the collaboration is likely to fail.

4. Core group. A core group responsible for planning and setting priorities is needed to maintain direction and unity. Ideally this group should consist of about seven to nine individuals. Membership of this core group is not necessarily those who are targeted for intervention. For example, a core planning group might be comprised of a principal, a department chair, three classroom teachers, and two college of education faculty, with the group targeted for intervention being an entire high school staff.

5. Collegiality. Mutual respect is essential for those engaged in a successful collaborative activity. All participants need to be open to learning from each other. They need to feel that they are on a level playing field, that their ideas have equal value. If public school teachers feel intimidated working side-by-side with former professors, with a dean, or with their superintendent, they will be hesitant to put forth their ideas. If university faculty assume they have all the answers and are there to help the school people, communication will likely be a one-way street. If public school personnel assume that professors are out of touch with the reality of classroom teaching today and have little to offer that is practical, then fruitful discussion is not likely to occur. For a collaborative to succeed, there must be a sense of collegiality and mutual respect and a feeling that all participants have valuable ideas to contribute.

6. Mission. A collaborative needs to have direction. The members must know why they are there and have a clear sense of what they would like to accomplish. Sometimes the mission may be to implement a specific project. Other times the mission may be more global but nevertheless have an impact on the quality of education.
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7. **Structure.** At some early point in the organization of a collaborative venture, the group needs to set up an operational structure. This structure need not be cast in concrete; but it should at least provide a process for decision making, for involving appropriate personnel, for obtaining proper approvals for action when needed, for necessary follow-up, and so forth. The structure may be as simple as agreeing that “this group will meet for three hours every two weeks, will operate by consensus, and will attempt to solve a specific problem.” Or the structure may be quite complex, requiring an official contract with provisions for expenditures, staffing, assignment of duties, timelines, and external evaluations. Regardless of the form the structure takes, some rules or operating procedures need to be established so that expectations are clear for all involved.

8. **Process models.** The collaborative group should have in mind one or more process models to guide its deliberations. It might be a quality circle/problem-solving model. Or a needs assessment and group development model might be more appropriate. Sometimes a sharing model is a good non-threatening starting point for many groups. The model used would vary, of course, depending on the mission of the group.

It is helpful if members of the collaborative group, especially its leaders, have some training in group dynamics. School administrators and university faculty will likely have had exposure to such training at some point in their careers. Classroom teachers may not have formal training, but more of them are learning these skills on the job as they participate in site-based decision making and restructuring efforts in their own schools.

9. **Flexibility.** A critical condition for successful collaboration is the willingness to be flexible. Participants must try to understand the perspectives of others and be willing to think about new ways of doing things. Decisions tend to be made more quickly in a school system than in a university. The university committee structure may prevent timely coordination or approval of collaborative plans, result-
ing in frustration and discouragement. Public school people must try to be patient, and university personnel may need to "hurry up" a little.

There also must be flexibility with regard to operations. For example, a brand new collaborative may limit itself to using just one process model, such as a task force study approach, to guide its decisions. A more established collaborative may use a variety of approaches, such as pursuing grants to fund projects, political lobbying, or joint staff development.

The form of collaboration being proposed here is not likely to be quick and easy. It requires building mutual understandings, establishing trust, creating a structure for implementing decisions, and making a serious commitment over an extended period. However, all collaboratives need not look alike. In fact, variety in mission and structure is essential in order to meet the specific needs of the institutions and individuals involved.

A collaborative is not to be entered into lightly. It is an agreement to overlook differences and work together toward mutual goals - something like a marriage. And like a good marriage, a collaborative requires open communication, trust, honesty, and long-term commitment.
Benefits of School-University Collaboration

Many benefits accrue to schools and to colleges of education through collaboration. The specific benefits will depend on the nature of the collaboration. Some of the more obvious and common benefits for schools are:

- involvement in joint research, evaluation, planning, and inservice efforts;
- unified voice in communicating with community decision makers, parents, and other constituencies;
- better access to latest research findings on effective practices;
- visible response to calls for educational reform;
- improved problem-solving processes;
- strengthened position for attracting outside grants;
- input into the university’s professional preparation programs;
- involvement of school personnel as clinical or adjunct faculty at the university;
- greater efficiency in using educational resources;
- access to the resources of the university;
- assistance in the school improvement process;
- collegial interaction with professionals who may have different perspectives regarding common problems;
- influencing university research efforts to focus on current school problems;
• opportunities for teachers to assume new roles and exhibit leadership;
• ongoing staff-development opportunities.

Many of the above benefits to schools also apply to colleges of education. Additional benefits for the university partners in a collaborative include:

• access to the concerns and needs of students, teachers, and administrators in public schools;
• input from experienced practitioners for improving the college of education’s professional preparation programs;
• chance to apply theory to practice;
• opportunity to recruit promising high school students into teaching and to persuade practicing educators to pursue graduate work;
• more opportunities for research and publication;
• access to the knowledge base of teachers, counselors, coaches, administrators, and others in the schools;
• enhanced image in both the schools and the larger community;
• direct impact on pre-kindergarten through adult education programs at the point of delivery.

With regard to benefits, the bottom line is that collaboration between public schools and colleges of education contributes to the quality of education available in the community and to the improvement of professional preparation programs at both the undergraduate, inservice, and graduate levels.
The Metropolitan Omaha Educational Consortium: A Case Study

To help the reader become acquainted with the various structures and functions of school-university collaboratives, an in-depth case study of one formal ongoing collaborative with which the authors have been closely involved, the Metropolitan Omaha Educational Consortium (MOEC), is offered first. This is followed by briefer accounts of three alternative formal collaboratives. A final section is devoted to descriptions of single-venture collaboratives or projects.

MOEC was founded in August 1988, after approximately a year and a half of planning. The idea for some form of formal collaborative arrangement was initiated by the dean of the College of Education at the University of Nebraska at Omaha (Richard B. Flynn, co-author of this fastback). Although faculty in this college of education had a long history of working cooperatively with the schools, the dean believed a more structured vehicle was needed to facilitate stronger ties between the college and the schools.

After many preliminary discussions with key educational leaders in the community, the dean invited several local superintendents to meet to explore possible collaborative efforts. After further study, discussion, and dialogue with others around the country, MOEC was formalized with a memorandum of understanding between the college of education and five Omaha metropolitan area school districts. Within three years, two additional districts in the area joined, resulting in all the urban/suburban school districts (including one in Iowa)
in the metropolitan Omaha area being involved. Thus MOEC encompasses almost 90,000 students and 5,000 public school educators in 167 school buildings, as well as more than 100 full- and part-time faculty and about 2,500 undergraduate and graduate students in the College of Education, University of Nebraska at Omaha.

MOEC was created to facilitate "the best education possible for the metropolitan Omaha community." To achieve that broad goal, MOEC brings together teachers and administrators from local public school districts with faculty from the college to:

- share resources and expertise,
- conduct joint research and evaluation,
- strengthen communication among member institutions,
- enhance problem-solving capacity,
- address common problems,
- offer joint staff-development opportunities,
- improve the professional preparation of educators,
- improve the education of area youth.

MOEC is directed by an executive steering committee comprised of the superintendents of the seven public school districts and the dean of the college. Task forces are created to work on priority issues common to the member institutions. The MOEC staff includes an executive director, a coordinator, and a secretary, each of whom is assigned part-time to the consortium.

MOEC is funded in part by annual dues ($6,000) paid by each of its member institutions, including the college. In addition, the college provides office space, telephone, office equipment and furniture, and other overhead items. The college also donates faculty time for MOEC research activities and for grants development. As a consequence, considerable external funding has been generated for several special projects. To date the external funds have totalled almost eight times the amount generated by dues.

MOEC has seven task forces: middle-level education, early childhood education, instructional technology, staff development, health
education, personnel, and research. Membership on each task force is comprised of representatives appointed by the superintendents/dean and, in some cases, others interested in the work of a particular task force. For example, the middle-level education task force includes most of the middle-level principals in the area and all interested college faculty; the staff-development task force includes only staff-development personnel from the school districts and selected college faculty.

These task forces were established as a result of an initial needs assessment designed to identify common concerns across the member institutions. As new needs arise, additional task forces are established. The executive committee generally encourages each task force to set its own agenda. However, in some cases the executive committee charges a task force with a specified responsibility. For example, the Personnel Task Force was established specifically to develop an "educator exchange" program within the cooperating districts. Once this program was implemented, members of this task force went on to deal with other mutual concerns.

Following are descriptions of some of the projects emanating from the various task forces.

The Mentor Project. Shortly after its inception, the Staff-Development Task Force decided to work collaboratively in the area of teacher induction. After considering some previous efforts between the college and one of the school districts, the task force decided to focus on the topic of teacher mentoring. At the same time the group was discussing ways to proceed, it became aware of a funding opportunity that appeared to match the interests of the group. A proposal was prepared and submitted, and shortly thereafter a grant was awarded to begin the Mentor Project.

The first activity within the Mentor Project was the development of a graduate course and practicum at the college to train experienced teachers to serve as mentors for first-year teachers. Experienced teachers were then invited to apply for the training. Each district was
assigned a certain number of places in the training program based on the number of new teachers it would be hiring. The districts selected would participate using agreed-on criteria. Once trained, the mentors were matched with new teachers and given released time to work with them. The Staff-Development Task Force members served as an advisory group to the project.

The BUDDY Project. A project of the MOEC Health Task Force, BUDDY is an acronym for Building Universal Drug Deterrents for Youth. This project is externally funded also and serves all of the MOEC members. BUDDY provides a graduate credit course to selected educators from the member school districts. The focus of the course is infusing substance-abuse prevention information throughout the curriculum. After completing the course, participants return to their schools and districts and provide training to their colleagues. Other project activities include the development of a resource center for drug education materials and the publication of a newsletter, which is sent to all teachers in the member districts. The project does not attempt to standardize the drug education curriculum across the districts; rather, the intent is to provide a structure through which the cooperating districts can share resources and ideas.

Educator Exchange Project. Under the auspices of the Personnel Task Force, this project was designed to make it possible for staff from MOEC member institutions to "trade places" temporarily with a counterpart in another MOEC institution. This program serves as a means for professional renewal and for facilitating exchange of program information across member institutions. For example, an elementary counselor from a school serving primarily white, upper-middle-class students might exchange places with a counselor who works with at-risk students in an inner-city school. Or the special education department chairs from two high schools might exchange places in order to experience firsthand the special education program in the other high school.

The length of each exchange is negotiated individually. It may range from a week to a year. The pay and benefits of those exchanging po-
sitions are maintained by their own districts. However, they must agree to work under the daily schedule and calendar of the exchange school and to accept the full responsibilities of the person with whom they are exchanging positions.

Individuals interested in exchanging positions must submit an application indicating the type of exchange desired and secure the approval of their supervisor. Then the personnel directors share information to see if a match is feasible. If it is, the individuals are then interviewed by the supervisors in the institutions where they would like to be placed. If all parties are satisfied with the arrangement, the exchange is implemented.

**Sharing Staff-Development Opportunities.** Many of the task forces, particularly the Staff-Development Task Force, have opened up staff-development opportunities offered by individual MOEC institutions to educators in other member institutions. Both the Technology and the Early Childhood Task Force members invite each other to workshops and training opportunities that previously would have been open only to individuals from the sponsoring institution. Administrators from the seven MOEC districts and faculty from the college have been invited to workshops on topics that cross all of the institutions. For example, a half-day session on "Helping Self and Others Effectively Manage Change" was very successful. Additionally, the college regularly invites MOEC school personnel to its Distinguished Lecturer series and other special events.

**Accountability Paper.** The issue of accountability has received increasing attention at the local, state, and national levels in recent years. The MOEC Executive Steering Committee wished to address this issue directly. While not wanting to become involved in lobbying per se, the committee did wish to make its views known. At about that time the college had hired a nationally recognized scholar in education with a long history of working with schools. This individual was invited to work with the MOEC Steering Committee in developing a policy paper on accountability in education. After many meetings
of discussing and reviewing numerous drafts of the paper, a final version was ready for sharing and dissemination.

The above descriptions of some of the MOEC programs and projects tell only part of the metropolitan Omaha collaborative experience. Perhaps more than anything, MOEC has provided a structure that gives public school and college personnel the opportunity to share and exchange ideas on many common concerns. This alone justifies its existence.

Implementation Issues

Some of the issues that had to be addressed as MOEC was being conceptualized, planned, and implemented were:

1. Should the collaborative be between the college and one district or multiple districts? MOEC involves multiple districts.
2. Should the dues be equal for each member district or based on the size of the district? MOEC charges an equal amount for each member district.
3. How should information about the collaborative be shared with various constituencies? MOEC uses multiple approaches:
   • Brochures and other informational materials have been prepared and distributed widely.
   • Board members from the school districts are invited to an annual dinner meeting where an update on progress is provided.
   • Community relations personnel from the member organizations meet periodically.
   • The college newsletter regularly includes information about MOEC activities.
4. Where will the collaborative be physically and administratively housed? Will it be a separate entity? MOEC is located at the university and is part of the college structure.
5. Who will constitute the staff of the collaborative? MOEC employed a highly respected, retired superintendent as its first executive director. This person provided the consortium with instant credibility.

6. Will the collaborative focus on politics or programs? MOEC focuses primarily on programs.

Although these choices, or directions, have proven to be successful for MOEC, there is no single right way to respond to all of these issues. The context in which a school-university collaborative operates will ultimately determine the most effective structure.
In this chapter, brief accounts of three alternative ways of structuring a school-university collaborative are presented. They include the Jefferson County Public Schools/University of Louisville, the League of Professional Schools/University of Georgia, and the School Study Council of Ohio.

Jefferson County Public Schools/University of Louisville

The Jefferson County Public Schools and the University of Louisville have a collaborative arrangement that is structured slightly differently than MOEC. It involves only one school district rather than seven served by MOEC. However, it is a huge system covering the city of Louisville, surrounding suburbs, and even some rural areas. This large county school district is the result of consolidation in the early 1970s to meet court-ordered desegregation mandates. The collaborative is structured so that both the school district and the university have established a unit internally to address issues common to the two organizations. The unit within the school of education is called the Center for the Collaborative Advancement of the Teaching Profession.

Examples of school-oriented collaborative activities emanating from the center include:
• a project involving university faculty and secondary science and social studies teachers focusing on how to motivate students in these subjects;

• an instructional technology project designed to help teachers use the computers, software, and other technology available in the schools, including a week-long institute for graduate credit co-taught by university and school personnel;

• development, piloting, and evaluation of an economic curriculum for seventh- and eighth-graders (Egginton 1989).

Examples of university-oriented collaborative projects include:

• the Early Elementary Experimental Teacher Preparation Program, a 15-month academic and field program for individuals who have completed a bachelor’s degree in an area other than education and want to earn a master’s degree and receive Kentucky teacher certification;

• the Experimental Post-Baccalaureate Secondary Teacher Preparation Program, also designed for persons who have pursued another career and now wish to enter teaching;

• the use of individuals from the Jefferson County Public Schools who are pursuing their Ed.D. degree at the university to serve as clinical instructors for introductory courses in the Early and Middle Childhood and Secondary Education Departments while also working on restructuring efforts within the school district. The university pays part of their salary with the remainder paid by the school district (Center for the Collaborative Advancement of the Teaching Profession 1989a, 1990a and b).

One of the groups within the Center for the Collaborative Advancement of the Teaching Profession is the Jefferson County Public Schools/University of Louisville Coordinating Committee. Established in 1983, the committee’s primary function is to offer seed money for collaborative research and projects. Each year both the school of education and the school district contribute $20,000 to a fund for that
purpose. A request for proposals is issued to all school district employees and to university faculty. The proposals must show how the activity will be carried out in a collaborative fashion. The committee reviews the proposals and selects the ones to be funded. More than 100 projects have been funded to date involving 63 university faculty and 92 school personnel in 59 different school sites. Many of the projects have become much larger in scope and have received external funding (Center for the Collaborative Advancement of the Teaching Profession 1989b).

Within the school district, the unit responsible for staff-development collaborative activities is the Gheens Professional Development Center. The Gheens Center also directs the development of several professional-development schools in the Jefferson County system (Eggington 1988). The mission of the professional-development schools is to develop models of exemplary teaching and administrative practice, using proven methods combined with promising innovative strategies. These schools also serve as professional training and induction sites for education students, student teachers, intern teachers, and new administrators (Center for the Collaborative Advancement of the Teaching Profession 1988).

**League of Professional Schools/University of Georgia**

The Program for School Improvement in the University of Georgia's College of Education has spearheaded a collaborative group called the League of Professional Schools. Validated by the U.S. Department of Education's National Diffusion Network in 1991, the league focuses on the individual school site and promotes the idea of “the school as a professional workplace – a place where shared governance and collective decision-making are used to plan and implement instructional improvement initiatives” (Program for School Improvement 1990).

The league includes more than 40 schools, each of which sends a team consisting of teachers, administrators, and central office per-
sonnel to an initial training workshop sponsored by the Program for School Improvement. This workshop prepares the teams in the principles of shared governance, with the expectation that the teams will return to their schools ready to work with the staff in identifying instructional goals and developing action plans for implementation. The university provides follow-up sessions, access to an information retrieval system, a newsletter, consultation services for data collection and analysis, an annual school conference, and an on-site visit.

Schools wishing to participate in the league must submit an application that verifies a commitment by administrators to the principles of shared governance and a willingness by at least 80% of the faculty to contribute to school improvement efforts. Each school determines its own agenda for change and improvement. Some have set goals in a specific curriculum area. Others have been interested in improving student self-esteem. One school has focused on helping students to take greater responsibility for their behavior and learning. Many are working to improve student achievement.

In addition to the costs of the initial training workshop, participating schools pay a fee for belonging to the league based on a dues structure established by the League Congress. The League Congress is comprised of one representative from each of the league schools and one faculty member from the Program for School Improvement. This governance group determines the league’s budget and the scope of its services, as well as serving in an oversight capacity. The Program for School Improvement also has received funding from the University of Georgia and grants from external sources.

School Study Council of Ohio

The School Study Council of Ohio (SSCO) is one of a number of school study councils that exist throughout the United States. Established in 1965 by three school administrators, it was incorporated as a non-profit entity, originally called the Central Ohio Research Council. Although its offices are located at Ohio State University's Col-
lege of Education and it maintains a close working relationship with the university, it is independently administered and controlled by its member school districts. In 1975 it changed its name to the School Study Council of Ohio to reflect more accurately its statewide mission.

The purpose of SSCO and its services are described in its information literature as follows:

The purpose of the council is to bring about the improvement of education through the cooperative study of common educational problems, the diffusion of effective educational practices, the stimulation of active participation of all individuals interested in educational planning and activity, and the enhancement of mutually supportive relationships between schools and school districts. The council pursues this aim in cooperation with local school districts through:

*Monthly awareness sessions* — which are designed to disseminate information on the latest trends and advancements on a particular topic by exposing participants to new ideas and making people aware of current happenings.

*Curriculum updates* — which are intended to provide a forum for sharing the latest curriculum, research and program developments with central Ohio teachers and administrators.

*Workshops* — which go beyond the function of an awareness session and curriculum update in that they are designed to enhance skill development and training in the practical application of theory, methodology, and techniques.

*Special events* — which includes service such as the co-sponsorship of speakers and activities with other educational organizations in order to lend financial and/or communications assistance which in turn provides our members with additional education opportunities.

*Technical assistance to member districts* — which provides assistance in needs assessment, program development, system change, and mediation services.

*Assistance in the development of special staff-development programs* — which provides member school districts desiring this service with special assistance in developing and offering local in-house programs in response to locally identified needs.
Superintendents’ luncheons – which are held approximately four times during the year. Superintendents and their guests are invited to attend a luncheon and informational session which will focus on areas of concern to them. (School Study Council of Ohio 1991)

Participation in the SSCO is open to any public or private school district recognized by the state department of education, any post-secondary institution with a state-approved teacher preparation program, and any other education agency that is approved by the SSCO Executive Committee.

Membership fees for school districts, based on student enrollment, range from $200 to $3,500. Membership fees for postsecondary institutions are based on the number of faculty. However, in-kind services by faculty and/or use of facilities may offset charges to post-secondary institutions.

For governance purposes, each member institution in SSCO has one vote. Representatives from the member institutions meet at least nine times per year. Officers are elected from the member representatives. These officers plus nine elected at-large representatives constitute the Executive Committee of SSCO. The Executive Committee, which meets monthly, plans and oversees all SSCO activities, provides reports to the membership, and prepares an annual budget. The SSCO is staffed by an executive director, an associate director, two graduate assistants, and an administrative assistant.

The SSCO has temporary interest groups or commissions, which are organized to address specific needs of member institutions. In 1991 commissions were working in the following areas: middle schools, preschool education, school secretaries, gifted and talented education, school/family relationships, reading instruction, library personnel, and research and evaluation.

During a typical year the SSCO sponsors 18 full-day workshops, 9 half-day workshops, 3 awareness sessions, and 3 special events, serving more than 1,500 individuals (School Study Council of Ohio 1991).
In addition to the ongoing school-university collaborative structures described in the previous chapters, there are other, less formal structures organized to carry out a single project. Examples of three such collaborative projects are described here.

School/University/Community Partnership Approach

This project involved the collaboration of an urban school district, its surrounding community, and a rural university, all located in Pennsylvania. It was designed to raise the achievement level of the urban youth, many of whom were considered to be at risk; to strengthen the university's teacher education program; and to increase parent and community involvement in the schools (Austin and Austin 1991-92).

The idea for this collaboration grew out of discussions initiated by an African-American community group, which was concerned about the lack of achievement among urban youth and their low enrollment in postsecondary education. The group invited the superintendent of the urban district and representatives from the university to the first meeting. Subsequent meetings followed with a wider representation from the community. The university representatives acted as group facilitators at these meetings and served as liaison between the school district and the community. The group identified and prioritized needs and then generated possible solutions.
One of the solutions was a districtwide tutoring program designed to help at-risk students stay in school, achieve their potential, and enter postsecondary institutions. Teacher education students served as tutors, receiving one hour of credit for their participation. In addition, parents and community volunteers received training to serve as tutors.

The university benefited by being able to provide a multicultural field site for its predominantly all-white student teachers. The school district benefited by receiving the help it needed to raise student achievement. And the community benefited through the involvement of its members in helping to design and implement strategies that addressed their concerns.

**Partners in Education/University of Colorado Project**

This single-venture collaborative project involved three school districts and the University of Colorado. Called Partners in Education (PIE), the project is based on a model developed at the University of New Mexico; a similar model is also in place in Rochester, Minnesota (Molner and Killion 1989).

Through PIE, personnel from the three participating school districts and the university identified a common concern on which they agreed to work collaboratively. This was to improve the educational and professional growth opportunities for experienced, inexperienced, and preservice teachers.

In this project, 17 newly certified teachers work full time as PIE teachers in the three participating districts at a reduced salary, while simultaneously working on their master's degree at the university. The districts pay the teachers a reduced salary and their tuition at the university. These beginning teachers are visited weekly by experienced mentor teachers from their districts; they also receive some graduate credit for their classroom experiences.

Eight experienced teachers serve as mentors in the project. They are released from their regular classroom assignments for two years
to work with the 17 PIE teachers, as well as performing other responsibilities. Eight of the 17 PIE teachers are assigned to the mentor teachers' classrooms. The remaining PIE teachers are assigned to classrooms in which an experienced teacher, who would ordinarily receive a substantially higher salary, would need to be hired. The eight mentor teachers also serve as clinical professors at the university, where they teach in the undergraduate teacher education program, serve as research assistants, or supervise student teachers. They also provide staff-development services to their home districts.

The university provides a program coordinator and offers resources at no cost to the three participating school districts. These resources include the services of professors and graduate students in such areas as research and program evaluation, trends in teaching, instructional methodology, curriculum design, and bilingual and multicultural education.

This program offers many benefits to all the institutions and individuals involved. The university's teacher education program benefits from the practical experience of the clinical professors. The school districts benefit by having both their beginning and experienced teachers receive useful skills and research-based knowledge from university staff. The PIE teachers benefit by receiving one-on-one mentoring from experienced practitioners and their master's degree. The clinical professors benefit from a renewing professional experience and the opportunity to work in a supervisory/leadership role.

Institute for Research on Teaching/ Michigan State University Program

This collaborative program between a university research institute and the public schools has been in operation for more than 15 years. Experienced public school teachers selected to participate in this program continue to teach half time in their schools but also take on a new role as teacher collaborators in research being conducted by faculty in the Institute for Research on Teaching (IRT) at Michigan
State University. IRT pays the school district a portion of each teacher's salary and benefits. There are usually four classroom teachers on the IRT staff at any one time, and they typically work there for a three-year period (Porter 1987).

IRT faculty consider the teacher collaborators' contributions to the design, conduct, analysis, and reporting of research to be most helpful, since it keeps the focus of the research enterprise on important problems of practice. The teacher collaborators report that their involvement in research helps them to grow as teachers. Overall, participants from both the university and the public schools are positive about this approach to integrating research and practice. And at the same time, it is developing a cadre of teacher-researchers.
Conclusions and Recommendations

Collaboration between schools or districts and a college of education offers no "quick fix" solutions to problems in either institution. Nevertheless, it has the potential for improving programs and practices in all cooperating institutions. Because the group processes used in most collaboratives are quite time-intensive, those involved in planning and implementing a collaborative can expect progress to be slow — at least initially. Only with a long-range commitment can the potential of collaboration be realized.

Initiators of a collaborative should be aware of the needs in their respective institutions that a collaborative can best serve, as well as the strengths they can bring to the partnership. The collaborative will not work for long if one partner is always giving and the other partner is always receiving. Neither will it endure if one partner is always perceived as the purveyor of wisdom and the other partner as recipient of that wisdom. The partnership must be equal and reciprocal if there is to be a healthy, long-term relationship. The goal should be a win-win type of collaboration.

A second factor critical to the success of the collaborative is a clarity of mission for all involved. If all parties understand what the collaborative can and cannot do, then the proposed programs and projects will more likely be successful and beneficial. So the first step is identifying a mission that overlaps both institutions. Cuban (1991) points out that the prevailing focus of a university at large is the advance-
ment of scholarship, the prevailing focus of a college or department of education is the preparation of practitioners, and the prevailing focus of a school or school district is delivery of instruction to children and youth. Those involved in collaboration must transcend these different foci and work on the commonalities they share. In the case of school-university collaboration, the commonality is ensuring the highest quality of education for children and youth through excellence in the professional preparation programs for teachers and administrators.

A third factor critical to the success of a collaborative is a trusting relationship. This means that an individual or institution can be counted on to act in a manner consistent with expectations and their espoused values without malice. A trusting relationship also means a willingness to consider other points of view. Public schools and universities are different kinds of institutions, even though they are both in the business of education. Their missions are different, and they have different norms and operating styles. Those involved in collaboration must accept these differences in their respective institutions, yet be willing to work within and around such constraints.

Although the above factors are essential to the success of a collaborative relationship, there are many models for structuring effective school-university collaboratives. They can range from highly structured models with complex governance arrangements and varied programs serving multiple institutions to a single informal project between one school and one department within a college of education. In fact, collaboration can take place between a school district and an entire university, perhaps with the college of education serving as a liaison to the total university. In this way, for example, English and science professors from the college of arts and science might work with English and science teachers in the school district.

Collaboration is hard work and sometimes frustrating. However, it is an exciting and productive way of working, with positive outcomes that could not be achieved by working alone. But perhaps the
greatest benefit is the opportunity to exchange ideas and develop action programs with those who share a commitment to improving education.
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