



# International Conversations of Teacher Educators: Collaborations in Education



Editors: Mary Jane Harkins, Zhanna Barchuk,  
and Rupert Collister

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Faculty of Education  
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## Table of Contents

<b>Chapter 1: Becoming One—Together: The Visible and Non-Visible Nature of Collaboration in Education .....</b>	<b>1</b>
Sam Crowell	
<b>Chapter 2: Worldview Reflection: The Missing Piece of the Education Puzzle .....</b>	<b>14</b>
Four Arrows	
<b>Chapter 3: Reflections on Collaboration: Perspectives on an 18-year Community-based Education Collaboration .....</b>	<b>27</b>
Diana Bailey, Brittany Eliuk & Christina Miladinovic with Rupert Collister	
<b>Chapter 4: University-Community Partnerships: Reflections .....</b>	<b>53</b>
Stephen Jeanetta & LaDoris Payne	
<b>Chapter 5: Igniting Hope in At Risk Youth: A Collaborative Undertaking .....</b>	<b>72</b>
Tom Peterson	
<b>Chapter 6: Police and Student Teachers as Teaching and Learning Partners: A Win-Win Collaboration.....</b>	<b>86</b>
Anna Maria Barsanti & Jan Buley	
<b>Chapter 7: Education for the Anthropocene: The Contribution of Vasily Sukhomlinsky ...</b>	<b>94</b>
Alan Cockerill	
<b>Chapter 8: Collaboration in a Professional Community of Teacher Educators: A Model Writing Project.....</b>	<b>111</b>
Iris Hewitt-Bradshaw & Lynette Tyson-Noel	
<b>Chapter 9: Beyond the Buzz: Investigating a Professional Collaboration in Higher Education Teaching .....</b>	<b>124</b>
Mindy Carter & Sheryl Smith-Gilman	
<b>Chapter 10: Initial Teacher Education: Partnership in Practice.....</b>	<b>137</b>
Sandra Williamson-Leadley & Steven Sexton	
<b>Chapter 11: An Examination of School Speech-Language Pathology and Collaboration..</b>	<b>155</b>
Beth Parker-Godin	
<b>Chapter 12: Enhancing Teaching and Learning through a Global Connection.....</b>	<b>172</b>
Anita Reynolds, Terry Mullins & Greg Neal	

## **Dedication**

I would like to dedicate this book to the many wonderful contributing authors in appreciation of their time, expertise and dedication to collaboration in education. –Mary Jane

To my grandmother Maria (Olynek) Denysik (1928-1990). –Zhanna

I'd like to dedicate this book to my students from whom I'm continually learning. –Rupert

# **Chapter 1: Becoming One—Together: The Visible and Non-Visible Nature of Collaboration in Education**

~Sam Crowell~



The known and unknown, the tangible and intangible are each a part of our experience; the seen and unseen are rooted in each other. Their relationship is a mystery to us, as unknowable and obscure as looking at the dark side of the moon. But the mystery behind the mysteries can be a portal for deep and meaningful living (Tao Te Ching, 1).

Much of my history as a teacher educator has included significant experiences with various types of collaboration. In this chapter, I want to weave anecdotes from my experience into a narrative that explores important questions around this topic—questions that on one hand go beneath the surface to examine the largely non-visible understandings and assumptions essential to collaboration as a concept, and on the other hand, reveal the visible scope and possibility of collaborative approaches in practice. Unifying these aspects will be the larger intention and theme of collaboration as co-creation of diversity and uniqueness within unity—becoming one, together.

## **Personal Musings**

I think for most of my career I have been seeking to understand the implications of a “connected” universe. Not just in some abstract, philosophical way, but I was driven to explore the practical implications of viewing the world as interconnected and relational. I was always put off by the separatist, objectified language of education (and society), the fragmented disciplinary

divisions, the distancing of roles between teachers and students, teachers and administrators, educators and their communities. It seemed like a novel with multiple characters with incomplete stories and no relationship to each other.

I remember the early influence of René Dubos, a microbiologist who wrote a Pulitzer prize-winning book, *So Human an Animal* in 1968. He passionately argued against a machine view of the human experience, and showed convincingly that we are connected to the natural world, to cultures and interwoven relationships of all kinds. As adaptive beings with agency and purpose, we co-create our existence and our future in this world. His book affected me deeply.

Co-creation is more than just an abstract term; it defines a large aspect of who we are. Evan Thompson (2007) builds upon the work of Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela in explaining their enactive theory of cognition. Drawing from neuropsychology, cognitive science and biology, he shows how humans and human cognition are inseparable from the interrelated dynamics of our experience.

Two important assumptions are made that are especially relevant to a discussion of collaboration. First, “cognition is situated, contextual, and active. The individual couples with the environment in continuous patterns of perception and action. And second, the world is mutually co-created as a relational domain (as cited in Crowell and Reid-Marr, 2013, p. 4).” We humans are constantly engaging (collaborating, if you will) with the world. No action or thought is separate unto itself. We are part of the world, and it is part of us at every moment in time.

This is reminiscent not only of René Dubos, but of nearly every wisdom tradition that has informed humankind throughout history. Relationship, relationship, relationship—is the true nature of life, and is inseparable from our natural identity. Throughout our biological history, collaboration has defined the human experience down to the cellular level. It is past time that we move away from a separated, machine view of humanity and learning, and embrace what there is to learn from collaboration.

## **Why Collaboration?**

For a number of years, collaboration has been perceived as a worthy practice in academic and educational circles. It is encouraged even when the culture of many institutions is embedded in contradictory assumptions and practices. Why is this? What is the worldview that is implicitly affirmed or suggested by today’s call for collaboration and collaborative partnerships?



Increasingly, disciplines throughout academia espouse intellectually, if not in practice, a worldview that is inherently connected, related, and dynamically interdependent. Einstein foresaw this when he argued that one of the biggest delusions of our time is that we are separate, self-contained, and self-sufficient entities, unrelated to the rest of the universe (as cited in Nadeau and Kafatos, 2001, p. 179). While our conditioned experience still gives us a sense of existential isolation and separateness, the science and research coming from many different fields confirms Einstein's description of relatedness.

Whereas competition and individualism still characterize much of our thinking and institutional practice, these values are less and less supported given the complexities and non-linear nature of post-20th century society. The interdependence and emergent nature of open systems provides a new perspective for thinking about and participating in collaboration.

An emergent system is one that is continuously exchanging energy and information with its surroundings, thus influencing even as it too is influenced" (Crowell and Reid-Marr, 2013, p. 2). Co-creation is a natural part of a world described more in terms of events than structures. Collaboration is an event-filled process, and is inherently creative, and potentially transformative. While it is generally goal-oriented, it is defined more by process than outcome. And importantly, its outcomes are not limited to a specific activity or product.

Whether it is research or teaching, collaboration offers access to multiple points of view and methodological practices. It expands collaborators' understanding of fields of study, essential questions, and approaches to inquiry. It also is a distinctly human medium where personal relationships that have lasting value can be forged and maintained. Bringing together these multiplicities adds to the richness and texture of possibility, and the co-creative process.

### **Mentoring as Collaboration**

I have been fortunate in my career to have some outstanding mentors. Mentoring may not typically be perceived as collaboration, but it has several characteristics that I would argue are collaborative in nature. Three of these characteristics are listening, independence, and support. These intangible attitudes become essential to all forms of collaboration, and without them the collaborative process can break apart with resentment and contrived territoriality.

When I first started teaching, I came from a background in philosophy and liberal arts; I had never taken an education course. I found a position in a small country school in Appalachia,

in a district that had just implemented a program to recruit liberal arts majors, and mold them into teachers. Mr. Edward May was the principal, and he became my first real mentor.

I encountered typical first year struggles, and he would listen to me talk my way through them, sometimes offering direct suggestions, but more often leading me to find my own solutions. I had an innovative impulse, and wanted to implement philosophical ideas directly into the classroom. Some, I must admit, were foolhardy and barely workable. But he worked patiently with me, giving me the freedom I needed and the support to reflect, modify, and learn.

Mr. May was, in a very real sense, a co-teacher and through his collaborative mentorship it felt like it was a shared success. It is this act of co-creation that separates collaboration from cooperation. In being “cooperative” one may add to or not obstruct, but to be collaborative, there is a sense of shared ownership, of a shared goal or vision. The active mentorship that I experienced with Mr. May took us both into areas of introspection, and opened up deep questions about education, student/teacher relationships, creativity, and learning. In spite of him being my principal with greater wisdom and experience, our interactions were more egalitarian; it felt like we were equal partners.

Listening, independence, and support were also characteristics in other mentoring relationships I have experienced with Joseph Berry, Owen Bowman, and William Doll (by including their names, I want to honor their influence in my life). Listening was almost always accompanied with questions. They pushed me to provide clarity and detail. Counter arguments made me question my thinking and my methodologies. And finally, what we now call debriefing was a gentle “How did it go? Come by and tell me about it.” These processes of active listening, questioning, supporting, seeded within me new ideas and deeper understandings which became implemented in each new project.

What perhaps is most important in this story though, are the invisible qualities I felt from this process. I felt respect. Respect that I had something to offer, and that my ideas were well intentioned and sound. I felt trust. Each of these mentors trusted me to do the right thing, to learn from my mistakes, to reflect honestly. I felt attachment. There was the sense that these individuals genuinely cared about me and “had my back.”

Cozolino (2014) writes that “data from social neuroscience, cultural anthropology, and biochemistry all support the theory that our brains evolved to learn from caring and compassionate teachers who know us well and who are invested in our well-being” (p.11). In my experience, I

have found that respect, trust, and care are three invisible qualities that can be essential to genuine collaboration. These qualities represent the caring that Cozolino wrote about, and through that caring, a feeling of co-creation and unity.

### **Team Teaching as Collaboration**

I have found that these same characteristics of active listening, independence, and support were even more pronounced in team teaching. These are tangible skills and elements that can be learned and refined. Team teaching is a mutually dependent relationship, and these characteristics become embedded in process.

My first real team teaching experience occurred early in my university teaching career. I was fortunate enough to teach at a small college, where I directed and taught in both the elementary teaching and educational administration programs. The director of the counseling program and I, decided to collaborate on a few class sessions between graduate students in counseling and administration, where the content was applicable to both groups. Our initial efforts were very basic—“You do something with this topic and I’ll do something with that one.” His style of teaching was built around group activities and instructional “games.” My interest, just out of graduate school, was to ground experience around theory and research.

At first, we noticed a distinct difference in our reference points and agendas. But we also both felt a deep respect for what the other was doing, and the contribution each of us was making. We used that respect to move into real collaboration, into a process that allowed us to weave a total experience for the class. His tendency to leave the activity hanging without processing it, led to me extending the activity with a group process and a natural exploration of various theoretical understandings. He used this to move other topics forward, and I introduced activities that were further illustrative of fundamental principles.

It was so much fun—for everybody. We laughed often, enjoying the process of learning from one another, pushing our comfort zones, and re-examining our predispositions and biases. We found such value in co-teaching that we created seminars, workshops and full courses where we could continue to co-create new ideas and new experiences for students.

Our willingness to be open to our differences, respect what the other had to offer, and trust that they would be supportive made a huge difference. This developed into one of the most seamless collaborations I have ever had. It became like dance, where we knew what was needed

before it happened. What had started as individual designated time slots became more like a woven tapestry of activity, process, and discussion. Each of us was responsive to one another and to the students as well. The more we succeeded with this, the more improvisational we became. It was like a jazz composition. Collaborative teaching does not always lead to this, but when it does, it feels very, very special.

If you were to ask exactly how and what was implemented in order to replicate this teaching event, there would be no clear answer. There was, however, a shared vision of what we were doing. There was a clear confidence and understanding of our content and methodologies. There was an intense listening and engagement in each other's roles. And there was a distinctly invitational atmosphere among us all to participate authentically. But most of these descriptions are intangible qualities that comprise the actual manifested experience. What was behind, underneath, and within the "doing" was unseen, felt, and intuited. These elements were embedded in our relationship with one another and the students, as well as the process and history that preceded the teaching event. Becoming one—together was an emergent collaboration, that was as invisible as it was visible.

Since that first team-teaching experience, I have co-taught courses with at least 14 other professors, most of them on multiple occasions, even years. We always had differences, and compromise was a necessary component of working together. When there is openness and a generosity of spirit, however, that align with a common purpose and a shared vision, the results can be magical. Student evaluations commented on the "flow" between us, how we "complemented" the other, how the insights and perspectives "built upon" the other, and how the content and experience "connected" into a larger picture, than either of us could have created on our own. Perhaps most importantly, the concepts of relationship and connectedness, of unity within diversity, of process and meaning were given shape and form—modeled through a shared collaborative experience.

### **Cross-disciplinary Collaboration**

In the early 1990s, I brought together 14 university departments, representing the sciences, social sciences, arts and humanities, and education, to create a master's program in integral studies. It operated under the aegis of an all-university program, not housed in any one college or department. Students would take a core of six courses team-taught by professors across disciplines and departments, and then they would create a substantive thematic focus that would go deeply

into an area of concentrated interest. This ideally would include courses from two colleges or at least multiple departments. The focused concentration would be advised and approved by a multidisciplinary team of faculty advisors.

At planning retreats prior to the program, faculty spun their dreams toward an educational experience that would be organized around helping students to become outstanding collaborators, explorers, and integrators, skilled at understanding disciplinary perspectives and methodologies, but not focused upon disciplinary content alone. There was also a genuine desire of faculty, as well, to go beyond disciplinary and methodological boundaries themselves, and learn from one another. There was a sincere respect for what each person and field had to offer.

What emerged as a commonality among us was an interest in (1) open systems perspectives, (2) holism as it related to substantive, complex issues, and (3) the pursuit of problem-solving and creative, out-of-the-box thinking. There was also a fascination with what integrative approaches might look like, and how the arts could be used and incorporated into both ideas and pedagogy. Finally, there was a general agreement that an integrated, cross-disciplinary approach would emphasize personal and intellectual development within a context of an emotionally supportive, collaborative community of learners. There was a sense of openness and discovery that we each felt, which we wanted to inform both the content and the process.

We did not know it at the time, but our thinking was very close to what Basarab Nicolescu, a theoretical physicist, and an interdisciplinary team of researchers described in a 2002 document entitled, the Manifesto of Transdisciplinarity. This provocative essay has since become an influential description and rationale for cross-disciplinary collaboration. As Nicolescu (2005) points out in his in-depth discussion on transdisciplinarity, “Knowledge is neither exterior nor interior: it is simultaneously exterior and interior. The studies of the universe and the human being sustain one another (p. 9).”

From this perspective, the visible and invisible are elements of a singular unity and cannot be divided from each other. Just as educators talk of the manifest and implicit curriculum, there are seen and unseen qualities in collaboration. For our group of professors from colleges and departments throughout the university, beyond the processes of openness and sharing, there was a deep desire to focus students’ educational experience on something other than disciplines and fields of study. When the ideas of “being” were encapsulated in terms of collaborators, explorers,

and integrators, something clicked. There was a focused sense of purpose that fully engaged our experience and our imagination. Dreams became reality.

It is precisely this sense of commonality of purpose that defines collaboration and co-creation. What evolved required a great deal of work and communication. A professor from communicative studies and English, and I, from education, co-taught the first course. From communication studies came fascinating discussions on symbol systems and semiotics, from English came a deep understanding of narrative and place, and I offered a holistic interpretation of learning and transitioning paradigms. We challenged one another to “practice what we preached” and to engage the students as co-learners in substantive and meaningful experiences.

The uncertainty and innovative quality of this work was exhilarating. We learned so much from one another—not just content, but styles and approaches to teaching, experiential activities for students, and perspectives that had been unexplored. This kind of collaborative discourse became the model for this program, even as it changed and evolved into what is today the M.A. in holistic and integrative education.

Importantly, collaboration was built into the organizational culture of this program. So the ideas of co-planning, sharing, including colleagues, and co-creating was present even in those occasions when courses were taught individually. In those cases, pre-course sharing and discussion almost always took place, opportunities to bring in guests, or to be included in an off-campus retreat were open-ended, and interim discussions regarding content or students took place constantly. Subtle changes were made at the conclusion of each course, as we reflected in a way that made each course seem new and re-imagined. In addition, we made the decision to co-direct the program, embedding our commitment to collaboration, and the processes of co-creation. It was like each course was a hologram of the program, and the program was a reflection of each course. The feeling of this was deeply satisfying. I have to acknowledge my collaboration with Bob London for these developments, because I cannot think or speak of the program without using the pronoun we.

### **Inter-Generational, Inter-Cultural, and Cross-National Collaboration**

There is a concept in Chinese that refers to the expansive spirit. Huang and Lynch (1995) interpret this phrase by explaining that the Chinese characters literally refer to that quality of feeling when you first experience the early morning air (p. 14). There is a freshness and purity

about that first taste of air that feels almost visceral. It is as if it encompasses our whole being, immediately affirming that we are part of the day. There is an undeniable honesty and integrity about that experience, that awakens us to yet unknown possibilities. We step forth into the uncertainty of what lies ahead with openness and humility.

This idea of an expansive spirit is an invisible, intangible quality, but I have found it to be an essential characteristic, especially when collaborating across generations, cultures, and national identities. I have been privileged over the years to co-teach with persons one, two, and three decades apart in age, and also with persons of different ethnicities, cultures, and nationalities. I came away from these experiences enriched and humbled, with a great appreciation of not only the individual, but also the larger socio-cultural perspective each represented.

There is an introspective quality that occurs when working in these contexts. One's own age, culture, and national identity are suddenly more visible and apparent. References to symbols, pop culture, terminology and institutional examples, become more tenuous. Informal and formal approaches to instruction are sometimes issues. Language barriers, especially concepts and specific vocabulary not easily translated are other realizations. Ideas and attitudes we take for granted are often exposed as inadequate, and there is a need to be open to a more expansive world beyond our experience and comfort zones.

When collaborating with someone who is much younger, I have experienced a deference that needed to be removed so the younger person can feel comfortable collaborating as an equal. In other cases, there has been an obvious attempt of the individual to prove worthy, by claiming too much and trying to impress. In these instances, sometimes slowing down and patiently refocusing on what is essential helps to recalibrate the collaborative nature of the relationship. Becoming one—together in these contexts, really requires that one be noticeably more present and mindful than in many other situations. Awareness is key to this.

Walser (2013) writes that being fully aware includes a “willingness or openness to experience ... and a sense of self that is conscious of experience (self-as-context)” (as cited in Kashdan and Ciarrochi, p. 74). This idea of self-as-context is really important, especially in these kinds of collaborations. My own practice of mindfulness, or re-collective awareness meditation has been particularly valuable in observing myself in the midst of my experience, and seeing how I am part of the context. Being aware of my feelings and thoughts as I experience them has helped me relax into the evolving, ever-changing experience, and enjoy the journey.

One of the real joys of collaborating across generations is the infusion of new energy, new information, and the awareness of alternative frames of reference. These intangibles are often manifested in expanding one's areas of interest and research, adopting language patterns previously unused, and learning applications of new technology. I have felt greatly enriched and inspired when I have collaborated with younger generations, and when collaborating with older generations. I have felt a distinct aspiration to cultivate qualities those persons seem to possess. I experienced myself as part of the other—I felt the meaning of an expansive spirit.

Realizing that education is not limited to one's national context of issues and concerns is revealing. While this can be done without collaboration, it is essential when collaborating internationally, to reframe relevant issues in terms that are significant to distinctly different contexts. Visibly revealed are the differences in ideas of structure and freedom, of expectation and value, of the processes and mechanisms of change, and the degree to which curriculum is flexible or established.

In countries with limited educational resources, questions of access are more prominent than questions of methodology. Issues of privilege become glaringly apparent. Collaboration in these contexts often begins with an acknowledgement of the limitations of one's experience, and knowledge specific to the context being addressed. Sociological understandings become an important part of this kind of collaborative relationship.

In reflecting on my personal experiences in international contexts, I realize how important it is to connect on a personal level. Of course, this is true for any kind of collaboration, but when cultural or social perspectives create experiential boundaries, finding areas of understanding and acceptance are especially helpful. Stewart and McHugh (2013) suggest that functionally this might be understood as self-as-content, self-as-process, and self-as-context (pp. 121-123). They elaborate by explaining that self-as-content refers to those self-constructions that have been defined by roles and time—our roles as parent, spouse, professional; our passion for sports, arts, nature, hobbies. Whether or not we share the same interests, it is a place for connection and dialogue.

Self-as-process refers more to one's emotional and psychological identity. Discussions around comfort zones, what motivates and drives us, our dispositional attitudes toward self and others opens us to one another's temperament. These conversations take time to develop, but are immensely significant in long-term collaborations.



Self-as-context is more abstract, and is related to the totality of one's life experience, and how this has shaped us. It might also include those themes that have been threaded into the texture of our living that transcends place and situation, such as one's sense of purpose, deep aspirations, and palpable commitments. These are often embedded in a spiritual identity that is more substantive, than philosophical beliefs or orientations.

When these elements are included in the collaborative process, most of the natural barriers in intergenerational, intercultural, and cross-national relationships are diminished, and a space is opened for genuine co-creation to occur. Becoming one—together, is a process by which each person is transformed. In that space, something new is imagined and brought forth into the world.

### **Collaboration Between Teacher and Student**

Occasionally in higher education, there are opportunities to work collaboratively with students. The nature of the collaboration is different in some ways, but some of the basic elements include sharing, conversation and dialogue. I do not dismiss the inherent power inequality that exists in the teacher/student relationship, but there can at least be collaborative moments and intersections.

Working with graduate students, I have found that independent studies can provide opportunities for a semi-collaborative relationship. The joint nature of planning what is to be studied and researched, the questions that intrigue both professor and student, and the one-on-one discussions where sharing and insights can be discussed on equal terms.

Some programs have created learning environments that strip away the often negative impact of authority and role dominance. Recently, when organizing a course for the self-design graduate institute, I worked with a learner who is the director of a private alternative school. We co-constructed the course around his needs and interests, co-determined the kinds of products that would be most useful and relevant to him, and determined what criteria would be most useful for learning and growth.

One of the products was a jointly designed holistic audit of the school's programs in relation to their philosophy, purpose, and evolving vision. We both co-created the focus questions, participated in a faculty conference, and processed the results in order to lay out a strategy for the future. At the end of the "course" we each wrote a narrative assessment of one another, in terms of the expectations and roles we assumed.

Such a collaborative model creates a more authentic relationship, where the background and experience of each individual is honored and respected. The leveling of authority roles did not diminish the natural authority and expertise that each of us brought to the task, and to the discussions and dialogue we shared. It was a growth and learning experience for both of us.

### **Collaboration as an Emergent Process**

My most satisfying collaborations have developed through processes of sharing, conversation, and dialogue. My work with Bob London in co-directing the M.A. in holistic and integrative education invited these kinds of interactions. My collaborative writing and teaching with David Reid-Marr, included years of almost weekly conversations to the extent that we could almost speak for one another. My collaboration with Mirian Vilela at the International Earth Charter in Costa Rica, has been enriched by dialogue and openness to explore alternative pedagogies that speak to the issues of sustainability and peace. In each of these examples where sharing, conversation, and dialogue have been present, trusting the process has been essential.

What emerges from process cannot be predicted, because emergent processes are non-linear and complex. The interactive quality goes in many directions at once, leading to unpredictable outcomes. Over time, however, recursive themes are formed and uniquely developed, so that the outcome or product is entangled, and part of the process itself. Thompson (2007) observes that “strictly speaking, it does not make sense to say that a property emerges, but only that it comes to be realized, instantiated, exemplified in a process or entity that emerges in time” (p. 418).

Collaboration over time creates a space and context where emergence can thrive. It feels more like participating in a jazz performance, rather than playing a cooperative role in an orchestra. There is an adaptive openness that is required in all collaboration, and over time this becomes more and more intuitive. Trust is one of those unseen invisibles that is critical. There is an implicit understanding that the collaborative event is fluid, dependent, and interdependent. So trust extends to many levels, and reduces the fear of uncertainty.

In a global context, a willingness to engage in collaborative processes opens the way for a cultivation of new understandings, and the resolve to co-create possibilities that can make a difference in the world. For connectedness and oneness to transcend abstraction, these ideas must be manifested as concrete models in collaborative contexts. Integrating the invisible and visible

aspects of collaboration will need to engage the hearts and minds of educators, seeking new ways to become one—together.

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## Chapter 2: Worldview Reflection: The Missing Piece of the Education Puzzle

~Four Arrows~



Let us wake up! We're out of time. We must shake our conscience free of the rapacious capitalism, racism and patriarchy that will only assure our own self-destruction. Our Mother Earth—militarized, fenced-in, poisoned, a place where basic rights are systematically violated—demands that we take action (Berta Cáceres, Indigenous Rights activist and winner of Goldman Environmental Prize. Assassinated on March 3, 2016).

“We owe a great debt to our Native Americans. They have taught us the need to respect our environment more than any other people ... to live with Nature and not destroy it” (Bernie Sanders, Seattle speech, March 22, 2016).

International conversations among teacher educators have the potential for transforming teaching and learning in local settings. They can only work optimally, however, when such dialogue partners fully understand and appreciate the importance of and the relationship between, diversity and complementarity at deep levels of consciousness. Unfortunately, such an understanding is unlikely under the uninvestigated shadow of the dominant worldview that guides the great majority of teacher trainers in the world, regardless of cultural diversity. Giving attention to the Western worldview's deep unconscious assumptions about sameness, competition, hierarchy and human-centeredness must be a part of international collaboration. “Bringing home” different cultural teaching tactics and strategies alone will fall short of reforming education, in ways that truly make ultimate contributions to solving the monumental challenges facing our world today.

To optimize international cultural exchanges between teacher education programs and staff, I suggest work that involves comparing our current dominant worldview with the Indigenous worldview. In this chapter, I offer a foundational orientation for such comparative reflection, analysis, and dialogue. This orientation stems from my own study of the two worldviews.<sup>1</sup> From it I propose six suppositions and/or presumptions for worldview reflections that can lead to transformative conversations between international teacher educators:

1. There are only two worldviews.<sup>2</sup> There are only two significant and historically observable worldviews operating today, the “dominant worldview” and the “Indigenous worldview,” and they contrast significantly, with major impact on the world.
2. The Indigenous worldview is not favored in the world-at-large. The Indigenous worldview belongs to everyone, but has been dismissed, ignored, ridiculed, romanticized, and attacked, along with the people from many different cultures who try to live in accord with it. We can no longer afford to do these things.
3. There is a reciprocal relationship between language and worldview. Worldview and language have a vital reciprocal relationship requiring careful attention. We must work hard to communicate in ways that more accurately describe reality. For example, “worldview” is an inadequate word to describe those unconscious beliefs that influence all perceiving, thinking, knowing and doing, especially when describing the Indigenous worldview, which does not emphasize “seeing” as primary, and thus requires more dialogue about its meaning. Working on “language” in communication is crucial.
4. Diversity and complementarity are discouraged in the dominant worldview. The Indigenous worldview strongly emphasizes diversity and the complementarity of most apparent opposites, as a component of universal oneness. The dominant worldview does not, and may be responsible for the relatively empty rhetoric about these ideas in the world today.

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<sup>1</sup> The writings of many dedicated scholars over the years have contributed to my worldview studies, but I will refrain from seeking citations to support my conclusions. So doing seems less important than does “speaking from my heart.” With the phenomenon of the internet at hand, most readers can dig deeper to verify or explore deeper, my assertions about such topics as diversity, complementarity, reciprocity, virtues, Indigenous and dominant worldviews, educational hegemony, etc. (Besides, in protest of APA’s collusion with the CIA’s illegal torture program, I threw away my 6<sup>th</sup> edition of its publication manual.)

<sup>2</sup> I am not the first to propose this idea. The pioneering social anthropologist, Robert Redfield, also promoted this idea in the 1940s and 50s at the University of Chicago, claiming that the Oriental worldview once provided a third, but has been subsumed under Western worldview.

5. Anthropocentrism is a problem in the dominant worldview. Emotional, cognitive, unconscious, spiritual, social, and physical separation from and/or superiority over Nature correlate to a diminished ability to address our ecological crises. The Indigenous worldview may be a prerequisite for implementation of authentic respect for diversity.
6. Trance-based learning is a vital consideration for worldview study. Indigenous cultures experientially understood that alternative states of consciousness produced the deepest learning, and that independent thinking and critical awareness were needed to avoid inadvertent hypnotic influence from others. Most international education is under the spell of hegemony who work to maintain the status quo of the dominant worldview. Early childhood learning while in alpha and theta brainwave frequencies, and subsequent receptivity to the hypnosis of media and authority figures, also help curb independent thinking and maintain the status quo.

### **1. There are only two worldviews.**

Worldview is a different concept from culture, religion, ideology, value, and belief. Each of these are shaped by deeper and often unconscious assumptions about the world. At this point in human history, I contend that essentially all of these are guided by only two worldviews. One we can refer to as the “dominant worldview,” and the other, the “Indigenous worldview.” According to my theory, the dominant worldview is relatively recent and formed less than 10,000 years ago, perhaps when the first agricultural surplus coupled with human potential for greed and hierarchy. From these ingredients emerged a departure from the old ways that spread rapidly, until fewer and fewer societies lived according to our original Nature-based worldview. The verb-based Indigenous languages were replaced with noun-based languages, less descriptive of movement and cycles, and more easily applicable to hierarchy and categories of permanence. Today we can look at the great variety of Indigenous societies, and find in them common threads of the Indigenous worldview, which stand in stark contrast with those that have weaved the dominant worldview that undergirds the great diversity of dominant cultures.

Indigenous worldview is a legacy for all of us. It came about via hundreds of thousands of years of survival, and place-based observations of natural phenomenon. In spite of the many different landscapes, differing languages and cultural practices, the unique and diverse life systems on Earth and in the cosmos, revealed common themes about reality. I briefly offer some of these

themes below and how they contrast with dominant cultural ones. (Note: People in dominant worldview-oriented cultures can still harbor some Indigenous worldviews, and people in Indigenous-dominated cultures may have been conditioned to assume dominant worldviews.)

- Life is a complexity of ever-moving, cyclical interactions and relationships that seek harmony (rather than a linear developmental progression of evolution).
- Individual autonomy is prized for its ability to help assure the greater good (as opposed to prizing individualism over community).
- Kinship systems that include the animal/plant world/spirit world extend into the cosmos, but are essentially place-based around a particular landscape (instead of being unbound to local landscape and exclusively human-oriented).
- Non-human entities including plants, animals, insects, birds, fish, rocks, trees, rivers, celestial bodies, etc., are imbued with spirit/soul/intelligent energy (whereas in dominant culture, these are more likely attributed only to humans).
- Nature is law, teacher and the primary relationship (and not that which is only a complex of utilitarian resources for the use of humans, or a series of forces to fear and avoid).
- Metaphysical understandings about creation, although storied in diverse mythologies, assign the idea of great dynamic mysterious energies that have generously set us on a path of self-discovery, and the challenges of maintaining harmony and interconnectedness (rather than a knowable, personified concept of a single God who has set forth specific rules for behavior and belief).
- A fearless trust in the universe comes from a continual cultivation of courage and generosity, and is grounded in present experience and a continual quest for promoting reciprocity, respect, and responsibility in all relationships (whereas fear, avoidance and a focus on materialistic gain, largely defines the underlying motivations in dominant worldview-oriented cultures).
- Individual health reflects relationships in the world, and balance between the relational, mental, spiritual, physical, and emotional (and is not dependent on external expertise of professionals).
- The highest authority for decision making is personal reflection on lived experience, in the light of a sense of interconnectedness (rather than an external authority figure).

- Complementarity between most apparent opposites is known to define life systems, and is a major philosophical pursuit in the effort to maintain harmony. Bringing offenders back into the community employs this understanding, rather than punishment and an emphasis on difference.
- Language reflects and encourages a focus on motion, transformation, landscape, relationship, subjectivity, and multi-faceted truthfulness (instead of permanence, materialism, objectivity and deception).
- Trance-based learning involving alternative consciousness and brainwave frequencies is fully and continually embraced in concert with, and both keep observation of the physical world and intuitive engagement with the invisible world of spirit, in contrast with a stronger dependence and focus on reason alone.

I propose that if international conversations between teacher educators and teachers themselves incorporated authentic rethinking of the Indigenous worldview in light of metacognitive work about one's own worldview, we might be able to move beyond the rhetoric of school reform, and truly help young people emerge with the tools to transform the world.

## **2. The Indigenous worldview is not favored in the world-at-large.**

The second assumption necessary for effective worldview study relates to realizing the need to be more conscious of how the Indigenous worldview, and the cultures and people still struggling to hold onto it, continue to be dismissed, ignored, ridiculed, romanticized, and attacked in one way or the other, to help assure it is not given serious attention. Such educational and cultural hegemony can get in the way of serious critical investigation of our dominant worldview, as it contrasts with our original one. Although respect for Indigenous knowledge, especially as relates to ecological sustainability has increased during the past decade, it remains a fringe phenomenon, much like social/ecological justice awareness in education. In spite of this growing awareness, mainstream news have made Indigenous issues almost invisible. With important exceptions, academic "scholarship" continues to bias an authentic understanding about life under the Indigenous worldview with inadequate research. For example, Steven Pinker's 2011 text, *The Better Angels of our Nature: Why Violence Has Declined*, uses exaggerated and erroneous stories about Indigenous violence against European colonists, to make the case that we are better off now than in pre-state societies. Even the best-selling 2013 publication, *The Heart of Everything that Is*:



The Untold Story of Red Cloud, by noted historical novelists Bob Drury and Tom Clavin, was praised by book reviewers across the country for fairness and accuracy, in spite of it being riddled with falsities and anti-Indian stereotypes. In referring to the violent, warlike dispositions of the Apache, the Lakota and other tribes in their Red Cloud book, Drury and Clavin had a number of opportunities to describe the deeply held values of the Indians, that would have shown how the violence was a forced diversion from their most cherished ways of being in the world—ways that caused many European invaders in the early days of conquest to desert, in order to live with the Indians. Instead, it is yet another insulting and inaccurate “history” of continual violence and “savagery.”<sup>3</sup>

We are at a time in our world where every life system is at or beyond a tipping point, owing to our misdirected worldview. If we are to study worldviews in preparation for indigenizing mainstream education, it is important to know, it is no coincidence that a worldview that is more about honoring all life systems than money and power, will continue to be a problem for the ruling elite. The last pristine places on Earth, are where primal cultures still occupy and control land. It is equally vital to be aware of the fact that part of corporate and government efforts to dam, mine, and drill in Indigenous lands, is the willful murder of Indigenous activists working to protect the lands, like the March 2, 2016 assassination of Berta Cáceres, the Honduran Indigenous activist, and winner of the Goldman Environmental Prize. There are reasons the Indigenous worldview has long been a foil of Western civilization. Calling attention to these reasons and our complicity with them, will require courageous conversations and a willingness to expose the anti-Indianism and confront it, but it may be a prerequisite for authentic worldview reflection.

### **3. There is a reciprocal relationship between language and worldview.**

In 2011 and 2012, I visited the First People’s Gallery at the Royal B.C. Museum in Victoria, British Columbia, and learned that B.C. has a remarkable diversity of Aboriginal languages, making it the most linguistically diverse region in Canada, in spite of encompassing only about 10 percent of Canada’s total area. In B.C., there are more than 30 Aboriginal languages, a number of different dialects, and eight of the 11 Indigenous language families in all of Canada. I know that British Columbia also has the most diverse landscape, in contrast to other regions in Canada. That

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<sup>3</sup> For a detailed analysis of this book, see my October, 2014 article on Truthout entitled, “The Continuing Saga of Anti-Indianism in America: Critique of a Bestseller and the Reviewers Who Praise It.”

same year, I came across an anthropology course taught by Emiliana Cruz at the University of Massachusetts' Centre for Latin American, Caribbean and Latino Studies. The course was called "Language and Landscape (Land and Local Knowledge in Indigenous Languages of Latin America)." Over the years, I have connected the dots to conclude that the Indigenous languages reflect uniqueness of place, and are therefore very different from the more recent Indo-European language families. Indigenous lexicon and language, because it is directly related to geography and bio-diversity in all of its forms, describes the flux and flow of natural systems. This is why Indigenous languages de-emphasize nouns. The languages are more about describing movement and potentiality, than they are about permanence and categorizing.

Of course, this territory is full of academic disagreement. Some believe there is a strong connection between culture (and therefore environment) and language. The writings of Edward Sapir, Benjamin Whorf, Dan Moonhawk Alford, and Mathew C. Bronson are perhaps the most notable advocates for this position, which sees worldview and language as reciprocally influencing one another. Others believe such influence is minimal. Joseph Greenberg and Noam Chomsky are two of the most notable proponents for the view of language coming from a universal biological structure that is not significantly affected by externalities, such as culture or landscape commonalities, and so for us, worldview is very much influenced by language.

For me, the evidence clearly points to the reciprocal influence theory, and that Indigenous "linguaging" manifests the realities in Nature, especially as it relates to local landscapes studied by one group or another for a long time. Dominant cultural languages like English and French represent a language that focuses on human objectivity, reductionist science, competition and hierarchy. The question then becomes: how do we use this in comparative worldview study? Certainly everyone will not learn an Indigenous language relevant to a local ecosystem. My answer is that we simply begin to use whatever languages we now speak, with more awareness about the truthfulness and accuracy of words. For example:

1. Recognize that life is in motion, and try to use language to represent this idea. In her 1992 book, *Earth is My Mother; Sky is My Father*, Trudy Griffin-Pierce writes about how the Navajo language emphasizes movement for good reason. She writes, "The conception of the universe as a place of motion and process means that no state of being is permanently fixed. Thus, beauty, balance and orderliness are conditions that must be continuously recreated" (p. 25).

2. Be careful about labeling. To call oneself or another a “fat person” is different than saying someone is carrying at this point in time, adipose tissues and fatty cells that may be creating some health issues. Starting a meeting by saying “I am an alcoholic” helps assure addictions continue, especially when spoken during times of stress when spontaneous hypnosis is likely. Try to use more verbs and adverbs, and language that gives potential for transformation and potentiality.
3. Reduce categorizing. When possible, try to describe unique features and particulars. Instead of referring to “a fish” that you just caught, learn about and describe it with as much knowledge as you can find in terms of its sound, color, habitat and habit. Indigenous languages are descriptive of action, rather than permanence. For example, in Lakota, even the names of months are descriptive of movement. February is *Ahumkela Wi* that translates roughly to “moon of half a day storming half a day good weather.”
4. Remember the power of words as vibrational frequencies, and do your best to assure that they stem from “right thinking” that embraces truthfulness, respectfulness and interconnectedness with all.

#### **4. Diversity and complementarity are discouraged in the dominant worldview.**

Both Indigenous and Western sciences have proven that mixed species of plants and animals thrive better in the long run, than when a species is artificially isolated. Short-term profitability has nonetheless resulted in monocultures everywhere. Great and diverse forests have been replanted by single species, and artificial chemicals temporarily help farmers with single crop yields that ultimately destroy both land and sea. Social systems also benefit from diversity, but this also is not a living priority in most settings. An emphasis on competition over cooperation fostered under the dominant worldview, has caused a loss of emphasis on the relational interconnectedness between and among all things. The sense of mutual benefit from apparent opposites has been forgotten. This loss of memory has been sustained for thousands of years via greed, hierarchy, and exploitation. After destroying the land, rivers, and oceans on the European continent, all of this came to North America in the 15th century, and within a few hundred years of operating under a dominant worldview that supported such disrespect for diverse life systems, most land and water has been destroyed or polluted as well.

Under the Indigenous worldview, humans still had an impact on their environment. Humans, like other animals, are part of biodiversity, and like other creatures, we are part of the changing of landscapes to varying degrees. American Plains Indians, for example, used fire to increase graze for buffalo and other animals, that changed the landscape. Many Indigenous Peoples of North America combined agriculture with gathering and hunting, and created new crops like potatoes and corn. However, they remained conscious of maintaining diversity and complementarity, such as growing corn, beans, and squash together. Under a different world view emphasizing “interconnectedness” they had managed to prevent the gross imbalances that destroyed Europe’s trees, fish, and waters.

I often hear people say that it was overpopulation alone that caused the destruction of European rivers, forests, soil, and oceans. I disagree. Consider that the census of 1800, the second one conducted in the United States, showed just over five million people, with almost a million of these being slaves. That same year, the Cuyahoga River, described as pristine by early explorers a hundred years earlier (when Indigenous populations in what is now U.S. territory are estimated by scholars to be between seven and 18 million [Thornton 2000]), became completely polluted with raw sewage from industry<sup>4</sup>.

Raw sewage was a big problem, because it was directly dumped into the Cuyahoga River. Cleveland started to have rapid growth and had about 40,000 people living there at that time. There were many things being dumped in the river such as: gasoline, oil, paint, and metals. The river was called “a rainbow of many different colors.” Before the turn of the century it was thought that “a dirty river was sign of prosperity.” <https://www.grc.nasa.gov/www/k-12/fenlewis/History.html>

Such a difference between this treatment of water, and seeing water as a sacred relative and source of life, is a worldview issue. Seeing “natural resources” as relations, is supported by the mythologies and stories that continue to inform both Western and Indigenous worldviews. Consider, for example, the differences between how twin-hero stories play out in Western cultures, and how they play out in Indigenous cultures. In all of them, one twin seems to represent a solar aspect displayed by directness, aggressiveness, and external strength, and the other represents a lunar aspect demonstrating indirectness, passiveness, and internal strength. In most Roman and

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<sup>4</sup> I grant that the population concentration in the Ohio valley was an obvious factor, but overpopulation can be a product of the misguided assumptions under the dominant worldview, not a cause, in the same way the diseases like smallpox were created as a result of unsanitary conditions, that also were a result of greed and hierarchy, disrespect for animals in the promotion of livestock, and a loss of biodiversity.

Greek stories, however, the solar twin is dominant and winds up doing something to eradicate or reduce the lunar twin. Romulus and Remus, Cain and Abel, Jacob and Esau, Pollux and Castor, Heracles and Iphicles are examples of this. However, in the many Indigenous stories, the twins always wind up as complementary. For example, in the Navajo story, “Where the Two Come to the Father,” Monster Slayer is the solar twin and Child Born of the Water is the lunar twin. When they come upon the monster with the long arms, Monster Slayer quickly draws an arrow to shoot it, when his brother gently cautions him to put the arrow away, suggesting instead that they sing to the monster. Monster Slayer, in respectful collaboration, considers the suggestion, and they give it a try. The monster (symbolic of our own inner monsters), never having been treated this way, lets them pass. Seeking complementarity is the most important way to maintain diversity, and to continue Nature’s complex cycles of survival and balance.

How might things be different if mythology were taught with such worldview considerations in mind, when studying Greek and Roman culture? Students might also learn ideas that have sustained a worldview that separates us from Nature and its diversity. For example, in one of Plato’s dialogues, Phaedrus asks Socrates, ostensibly a holistic educator and considered to be the father of Western philosophy, why he never ventures into the countryside. Socrates replies that nature has nothing to teach him, and only in town from other people can he learn things of importance. So many social and ecological justice issues could be solved with a deeper understanding of the natural world.<sup>5</sup>

Whenever I talk about the importance of seeking complementarity between duality systems, I think it important to mention the apparent contradiction of my own polarizing work that pits the Indigenous worldview against the dominant one. If seeking complementarity is so important, why have I not spent more time in my research and writing doing this? For example, I could be studying how the remarkable advances in technology that have resulted from the dominant worldview with its objectivity, categorizing language and reductive science, can find harmony with the Indigenous worldview’s subjectivity, its manifesting languages and holistic science. I feel, however, that most readers are so fully immersed into the dominant worldview, and so much energy has gone into denigrating the Indigenous one, my job description is to critically point out the strengths of the latter and the weaknesses of the former.

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<sup>5</sup> For example, research and consider the evidence relating to animal homosexuality and its prevalence in many diverse species of creatures, and how even this science has been suppressed by homophobia.

Although I understand the risk of backfire and defensiveness, the dominant worldview has more than enough advocates. I assume that the two worldviews by necessity will ultimately have to merge. A number of Indigenous cultures have prophecies about this. For example, the Kogis of South America believe the white race, whom they refer to as Younger Brother, is causing the world to end. Their wise elders, called Mamas, say Younger Brother must stop desecrating the planet and start working together with Older Brother, to put the world back in harmony. Nonetheless, my critical work assumes that without awareness of the worldview differences, fundamental changes in the one that has proven itself as dangerous to life systems, and an awareness of one proven to have maintained harmony with them, symbiosis is unlikely.<sup>6</sup>

## **5. Anthropocentrism is a problem in education.**

An aspect of the dominant worldview that is woven throughout formal education (and most informal education throughout the world) is the degree of human-centeredness. Beyond the science, common sense, and rhetoric in favor of embracing diversity, the dominant worldview stifles it in favor of individualism, specialization and competition. The humans-on-top hierarchy harbors a deeper message that sees sameness and claims of superiority of one group or person over another, as being more important descriptors of reality. This sets the stage for our collective inability to unify differences, and to understand how they can strengthen and vitalize life, and help assure respect for the sacred significance of all life. If we look down on any non-human creature that is different from us, it is not a large step to looking down on fellow humans who appear different from us.

Even the well-intended avoidance of a one size fits all schooling that results in such approaches “student-centered,” ‘child-centered,’ or ‘learner-centered’ is problematic. Certainly it is important to focus on student needs, abilities, interests and learning styles, while engaging students more actively and experientially in the learning process. However, without a stronger commitment to learning about relationships with other than human life, I suggest this form of education leads to or maintains the dangers of anthropocentrism. Therefore, even this well-

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<sup>6</sup> It is also possible that worldview is such a deep concept that makes it a possibility, that how the world works is “what it is” with its ever-changing dynamics, and that there may be no compromise about certain “truths” no matter how complex or difficult to articulate they may be. For example, if it is not true that only humans have intrinsic value and everything else exists for human benefit, then finding complementarity could only occur at levels of cultural or religious beliefs and actions, but not at the fundamental worldview level.

intended human-centered alternative to authoritarian-based education, although less oppressive of humans, is nonetheless harmful to eco-systems and thus, ourselves.

As long as teacher education emphasizes respect for diversity only in terms of recognizing students' individual and unique abilities, interests, ideas, needs, and cultural identities, it is not truly diversity that is being practiced. We need something akin to a "life-centered curriculum" that makes all of life the mantra for human education, rather than seeing education as solely for just human benefit. According to Indigenous cultures, all "people" are sacred, but these traditional cultures define "people" as including, trees, birds, mammals, fish, plants, humans, etc. "Grandfathers," whether rocks, or frogs, or cardinal directions, all teach us how to live in balance.

## **6. Trance-based learning is a vital consideration for worldview study.**

Across the great diversity of Indigenous cultures around the world, among the common beliefs shared are those that relate to the use of trance-inducing ceremonies or activities to deeply embed important teachings, whether relating to the manifestation of virtues such as courage, preparing to hunt with the highest skills, or healing an illness. Methods for trance-induction include chanting, dancing, purification ceremonies, rites of passage, fasting, ceremonial ordeals like the Plains Sun Dance, or even hallucinogenic plants. Today, even with modern science proving the efficacy of hypnosis for psychological and physical enhancements, the dominant worldview tends to dismiss or demonize it as they continue to do the same to Indigenous ways of understanding the world. Learning or re-learning the power of self-hypnosis or trance-based learning is possible for all people and, like meditation, which is also a form of trance-based learning that many cultures still practice, can help move people to higher levels of consciousness and convictions.

Another important reason for educators to study trance-based learning (other than it being the best way to learn—a fairly good reason), is that it is also the best way to avoid being misdirected. Kipling said that words are mankind's most potent drug, and under a worldview where words are no longer sacred and deception is widespread, it is easy for us to become "hypnotized" by the words of perceived authority figures when we are in spontaneous trance-states which naturally occur during times of stress. Hypnotic programs from early youth, when such hypnotic states are most common, continue to plague adults for the rest of their lives until they can be overshadowed with new "believed-in images" that are constructed intentionally during light trance states that can be easily self-induced. Awareness of our natural inclination toward hyper-

suggestibility can make us less prone to negative beliefs and actions like those that surround us, being done by people who operate according to such programmed mindsets. Under the Indigenous worldview, such critical awareness, often taught through trickster stories, combines with a worldview principle relating to self-authorship, whereby the highest authority is honest reflection on lived experience in the light of knowing that everything is interconnected. Advice from others is respectfully considered, but both the awareness of hypnotic influence and the importance of independent judgment, work to prevent the kinds of misdirection passed on in education today.



## Chapter 3: Reflections on Collaboration: Perspectives and Practices

~Diana Bailey, Brittany Eliuk & Christina Miladinovic with Rupert Collister~



### Introduction

Given that the title of this book is, *International Conversations with Teacher Educators: Collaborations in Education*, it seemed that not only should the voice of the “teacher<sup>1</sup> educator” be heard, but also the voice of the ‘teacher candidate’ or ‘aspirational teacher.’ As such, this chapter was initiated by Dr. Rupert Collister<sup>2</sup> as a dialogue or “collaborative conversation”<sup>3</sup> between himself and three of his former students—teacher candidates, Diana Bailey, Brittany Eliuk, and Christina Miladinovic. These women were all enrolled in the combined bachelor of arts/bachelor of education program at the University of Winnipeg at the time of writing. As you will see, they come from diverse backgrounds, and have equally diverse experiences of the teaching and learning relationship, and of collaboration—experiences which have informed their contributions to this dialogue.

We have taken this approach following Palmer (2000), who said “the story of my journey is no more or less important than anyone else’s. It is simply the best source of data I have on a

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<sup>1</sup> In this paper the word “teacher” will be used to inclusively describe kindergarten or school teachers, professors, instructors, trainers, tutors, teaching assistants, etc. unless another specific term is appropriate.

<sup>2</sup> Independent writer and researcher, and currently sessional professor at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto, Brock University, and the University of New Brunswick.

<sup>3</sup> For more information regarding “collaborative conversation” as a research approach, see Collister (2010). For “collaborative conversation” as part of the teaching and learning relationship, see Dencev & Collister (2010). For “collaborative conversation” as part of professional development experience, see Nelson (2014).

We have taken this approach following Palmer (2000), who said “the story of my journey is no more or less important than anyone else’s. It is simply the best source of data I have on a subject where generalizations often fail, but truth may be found in the details” (p. 19); and following Heron (1996), who said “propositions about human experience that are the outcome of [...] research are of questionable validity if they are not grounded in the researchers’ experience” (p. 20).

In order to maintain the integrity of the “collaborative conversation” concept, we have kept the conversational format of the dialogue as much as possible, although a certain amount of post-dialogue editing has taken place in order to maintain the flow of the narrative. We hope that this provides you, the reader, with the best of both worlds, and brings you into our conversation.

### **Collaborative Conversation**

[RC] In order to set the tone for this conversation, I’d like to invite each of us to describe what collaboration looks and feels like, in relation to our philosophies.

[DB] I explain my teaching philosophy through the metaphor of a tree. I use the tree because it is a representation of learning as an evolutionary process, and because we are all on an individual and collective journey of growth. The shape the tree eventually takes, is ultimately the result of the ecosystem that the tree is immersed in. A tree in an overcrowded ecosystem may never spread its branches, or a tree exposed to a harsh climate may be withered or tangled. While the growth potential of other trees may never [be] fully reached at all. Just as trees may experience periods of particularly rich or harsh conditions, both the students and the teacher may also experience such richness or harshness, depending on the nature of the ecosystem they are embedded in. Ram Dass (2012) said:

When you go out into the woods and you look at trees, you see all these different trees. And some of them are bent, and some of them are straight, and some of them are evergreens, and some [of] them are whatever. And you look at the tree and you allow it. You see why it is the way it is. You sort of understand that it didn’t get enough light, and so it turned that way. And you don’t get all emotional about it. You just allow it. You appreciate the tree. The minute you get near humans, you lose all that. And you are constantly saying “You’re too this, or I’m too this.” That judging mind comes in. And so, I practice turning people into trees. Which means appreciating them just the way they are.

I understand this to mean that we must embrace and respect the mutuality, reciprocity, and diversity an ecosystem naturally relies on. In the teaching and learning relationship this mutuality, reciprocity, and diversity is represented by collaboration.

So, according to my philosophy, collaboration in the teaching and learning relationship looks like a diverse ecosystem with a strong sense of community, where everyone, regardless of their role or the contexts they are embedded in, have an opportunity to feel valued, and respected. As an educator, I feel that it is important to provide diverse opportunities for students to explore, and delve deeper into their ideas, and to help students understand themselves and their individual purposes in life. I also feel it is important to aid the students in understanding what they want and need to take away from their own educational experiences. Given this, collaborative classrooms are places where students feel confident to express themselves. The environment feels exciting. The classroom presents challenges where students desire to work hard, persist, and are intrinsically motivated. Students leave the classroom wanting to take action, and share their ideas and experiences.

[BE] For me, collaboration is students, teachers, and others working and coming together meaningfully. It looks like respectful interacting, learning, listening, and encouraging each other to strive further and deeper as they explore challenging concepts. It feels positive because each person is exploring questions, and being eased out of their usual way of thinking into exploring other perspectives.

My personal philosophy consists of a combination of existentialism, progressivism and social reconstructionism, and is based around the metaphor of a tightrope. Through the eyes of my experience, the tightrope is a path upon which both the student and teacher have embarked, working together to maintain balance. In undertaking, and hopefully completing the walk along this tightrope, there are obstacles and challenges which are analogous to the obstacles and challenges experienced in any learning journey. However, there are also tools, aids or other supports which any particular student may, or may not, use in order to complete their journey. This is similar to the tightrope walker using a free hand, umbrella, pole, or fans to complete their own walk. It is also similar to supports the teacher may provide as they prepare the student for, and guide them through, their learning journey, as necessary. When both the student and teacher have completed their particular shared journey, they are achieving a balance in the teaching and learning relationship.

I choose this metaphor for my philosophy because this is how I see education, based on my experiences. I personally learnt and remembered the most important knowledge and life skills from teachers who took the time to develop close connections with me. I expect that I will discover how to achieve this same balance with my own students through meaningful communication and collaboration, while still working within the curriculum. I believe that through collaboration, learners are provided with the opportunities to open their minds to new and diverse perspectives, and to become more critical and conscious thinkers.

[CM] In order to address the importance of collaboration, I will also explore my personal philosophy of education through a metaphor. My philosophy of education is represented by a planting pot. The clay pot is a vessel used to support the growth of flowers, plants and vegetables. It can be seen as the educative environment, specifically the classroom context, which encompasses the immediate teaching and learning experience. The variety of seeds being planted within a vessel represents the students. The teacher is positioned independent of the pot, but within the broader context providing influence on the learning environment itself, as well as the learning experience of each individual student. The curriculum is represented by the processes undertaken to maintain the flower or plant growth. The gardener attends to the success of the seed—just as teachers attend to the success of the individual students through reciprocated agency, encouragement, exploration, and promotion of critical thinking, by use of expression and connection. The endless variety of seeds reflects the diversity and ever-changing student community that teachers will experience throughout their career. I strongly believe it is our duty as future educators to nurture our students, to encourage the growth of their knowledge, and to allow for guided discovery within a safe environment.

Collaboration between students and teachers helps the teaching and learning relationship move beyond static, trans-missive learning to dynamic, transformative learning experiences. Through this process, students are encouraged to express their personal interests and ideas, which shape the classroom community as knowledge becomes shared, and needs become addressed. Within the classroom, positive interaction between students and teachers can additionally address disengagement, and provide purpose for students struggling to grasp the content portion of learning. Through collaboration, students control aspects of their own learning, because they are able to freely communicate to their teachers what is important to them, why it is important, and how they would like to engage in it. Collaboration gives purpose to students' learning, because

their opinions are taken into account. The relationships between students and teachers are strengthened, as both parties come to a shared conclusion that benefits the learning and teaching experience on each side.

After collaborative relationships are established within the classroom, partnerships can be built beyond the walls of the classroom, to explore diverse perspectives, community influence, and shared teacher understandings, all combining to promote a harmonious school/community environment. When collaboration becomes a part of the classroom dynamics, students are able to take on projects that nurture the wellbeing of each individual student, as well as the school community. Collaboration beyond the confines of the classroom promotes action learning, real world initiatives, and place-based experience, which combine the efforts of students, teachers, parents, administration, and community members to achieve a shared goal. Therefore, to me, collaboration looks and feels like a balanced exchange between students and teachers in order to achieve a successful teaching and learning experience that facilitates the positive interaction, individuality, and purpose that is often disregarded within education.

[RC] My philosophy can be summed up in six quotes, three sentences, and a metaphor. The quotes are:

I am firmly convinced that the human personality is inexhaustible; each may become a creator, leaving behind a trace upon the Earth [...] There should not be any nobodies—specks of dust cast upon the wind. Each one must shine, just as billions upon billions of galaxies shine in the heavens (Sukhomlinsky, 1987, p. 116).

No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of a continent, a part of the main; [...] any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind; and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee (Donne, p. 1624).

If you are here unfaithfully with us/you're causing terrible damage (Rumi, 1989, p. 56)

In the beginner's mind there are many possibilities, but in the expert's there are few (Master Suzuki Roshi cited in Chödrön, 2002, p. 1).

A man who says he knows is already dead. But the man who thinks "I do not know," who is discovering, finding out, who is not seeking an end, not thinking in terms of arriving or becoming—such a man is living and that living is truth (Krishnamurti, 2000, p. 8).

[...] curriculum, [any curriculum], is not something to cover, but rather [is] a catalyst for discovery (Four Arrows, 2013, p. 65).

I believe in the transformative power of learning, and that it is the context within which that learning occurs, which determines whether the transformation is positive or not. I believe it is the role of those who support learning in any context, to create learning environments that facilitate such a positive transformation. Finally, I believe the systems and processes which underpin teaching and learning (including technology) should be transparent and should simply be the catalyst for building communities of learning, praxis<sup>4</sup>, and discourse. My metaphor for the teaching and learning relationship is the conversation. Conversation can occur anywhere, any time. A conversation can be internal, within ourselves, or it can engage single or multiple others. A conversation can be a one-off or ongoing. It can occur between a person or people, and the contexts they inhabit through their emotions, senses, feelings, memories, and reflections through their spiritual practices, or through their physical engagement. Last, but not least, a conversation can occur between a person or group of people and a text.<sup>5</sup> Necessarily then, in a conversation, teaching and learning is a reciprocal and holistic relationship.

According to my philosophy, collaboration looks and feels like a collegial, collaborative conversation in a supportive context that recognizes the social, cultural, vocational, educational, emotional, and spiritual experiences of the participants.

[RC] Okay, so now that we have explored collaboration in terms of our philosophy, it will be interesting to see what collaboration looks and feels like in relation to our experience.

[DB] In my experience in university, collaboration has not been all that positive. I feel as though many times groups are formed, and one or two individuals will bear the majority of the load, while others remain in the shadows. While the collaborative intent may have been present, oftentimes it isn't the experience or the outcome. Oftentimes these scenarios can breed frustration amongst participants. I've found myself in the shoes of the load bearer in university classes, and feel as though it degraded the possibility for collaboration. I found myself frustrated, tense, withdrawn, and oftentimes psychologically cold, while paradoxically also remaining

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<sup>4</sup> Although a number of differing definitions can be found for this term, in this chapter, "praxis" is defined as the ongoing cycle of practice and reflection.

<sup>5</sup> The use of the word "texts" throughout this chapter should be understood to potentially include written, oral, and visual sources including, but not limited to: paintings, drawings, cartoons, music, dance, poetry, song, photos, photo essays, video, audio, blogs, wikis, and other digital media and archives, as well as books, articles, and other written forms.

physiologically “hot” or ‘steamed.’ Conversely, through my experiences as a mentee while pursuing my educational certification, I’ve been afforded the luxury of being able to have the freedom to run with my ideas, while maintaining the trust of my cooperating teachers. They remain open to my young ideas, yet nudge me in the “right” direction by offering insight gained through years of their personal experiences as educators. The process becomes reflective of both my ideas and their experiences. This to me, is what collaboration really looks and feels like.

We often seek that perfectly cohesive collaborative team. That team where everyone is motivated to be there, every individual is passionate about the topic at hand, constructive criticism is present, ideas are being freely shared in an unashamed tone, and everyone leaves with a feeling of empowerment. These types of group efforts may even have the effect of breeding a sense of motivation to work harder, after seeing the effort put forth by peers. My experience as a mentee this year in my elementary practicum placement, is the closest I’ve been to this sort of environment. The perfect setting would be collaboration of this sort between colleagues at a professional level.

I have also felt collaboration through my university community of praxis. I am close with four girls; we all have common interests in health, wellness, and education. The four of us have similar training, yet we are so unique, which makes us a strong unit. We learn from one another, continually sharing our experiences and knowledge with one another. We exchange questions and ponder answers. This small group has helped me develop as a person.

[BE] I feel the process of collaboration taking place when I have given, shared, gained, and furthered my understanding on a topic. For example, I have interacted amongst fellow university classmates, local educators, students, and community members to bring discussion, questions, and ideas into consideration. I have formed and been amongst peer groups to discuss and debate current educational issues such as inclusion, inequality, instructional strategies, and classroom management methods, through the process of collaboration. Additionally, I have worked and communicated with co-operating teachers, school staff, and colleagues to extend the ways to which our methods positively influence our practices. Learning through a collaborative way of being is accomplished by continually aligning with other aspiring teachers, current educators, and other supports, which continually allow me to gain further knowledge and ideas about different teaching and learning contexts, and the teaching and learning relationship.

[CM] Through work experience, I know that collaboration is a crucial factor in establishing relationships with the youth in care, as it builds trust and communication between us. I am there

to help them with whatever their immediate needs are, not to make their situations worse. Therefore, I believe this experience has positively affected the way I support and actively use collaboration in areas of my life.

As teacher candidates, the classroom atmosphere is already established when we enter, and there can be difficulty changing such an environment. My way of incorporating collaboration into the inner-city classroom is, after each lesson, we gather as a classroom community to discuss what was learned and how we learned it. More importantly, I ask the students their likes and dislikes regarding the activity. I believe students struggle with engagement. This concluding discussion allows me to assess if their needs were met, and how I can improve or adapt future activities. I collaborate with the students on their approval and disapproval of the lesson, in order to better their learning experience. This process also allows me to be critically reflective (Brookfield, 1995).

Much of my collaborative experience has been gained from my university practice. Working alongside my peers and instructors presents open-ended dialogue, communicative relationships, and differing perspectives; all of which have deepened my understanding and expanded my knowledge. I believe collaboration allows us to learn from one another and build knowledge from community, rather than knowledge strictly from the curriculum and delivered singularly. Being able to work cooperatively with peers on an inquiry-based praxis, or towards a shared goal, becomes a community process where each individual offers their strength to the team, and differing insight is explored.

[RC] Unfortunately, in my experience in both administration and as a teacher in range of contexts, “collaboration” in practice rarely comes close to the ‘collaboration’ of my philosophy. The closest experience I have had of such collaboration, in a formal teaching and learning relationship, was in a graduate course that I taught in theories of educational administration, at the University of Western Ontario. The course had only 15 participants, all from the same school board, and all on the “leadership track.” I had been given a virtual free rein to design the course as I wanted. This freedom led me to design a course that was built around these concepts of contemplation, reflection and journaling, and collaborative conversation. This course and its associated pedagogy have been discussed at length elsewhere (Dencev & Collister, 2010). In recent years, I have been attempting to recreate this pedagogy in the online environment, and in larger undergraduate classrooms, or at least to try and create a context where such collaboration is possible, with mixed success. In less formal contexts, I have experienced this kind of collaboration



a number of times in communion with nature, and once in a life changing encounter with two Aboriginal healers and a Reiki therapist. These encounters have also been discussed at length elsewhere (Collister, 2010). I strongly suspect that it is not possible to guarantee such a level of collaboration as I described earlier, but I do believe it is possible to create the conditions where the potential for such collaboration exists.

[RC] Okay. So it seems that our experience of collaboration in practice often differs from our philosophical and ideological approach to praxis. I wonder then, if it is possible for us to identify a person or people who exemplify our philosophical and experiential views of collaboration, and if so, then why?

[DB] Someone who has been influential to me is Paulo Freire. I've learned much about critical pedagogy from his work. This man taught me to challenge the status quo, to foster curiosity in the classroom in order to ensure exposure to multiple perspectives, and as an educator, to not feel hopeless. For example, sometimes I feel like, "What can I, this little teacher, do about these big problems?" Paulo Freire is the person who gave me the inner power to stand up, and to not feel hopeless. He taught me to find the strength to do the small things, and to never become jaded by the heavy weight of societal issues being felt throughout, not only the educational community alone, but that are present on the world stage as a whole. To me, being an educator isn't about the end goal (student graduating), but rather, it's about the challenges overcome and meaningful experiences within the classroom. Being an educator is about the enhancement of my students. To me, this process isn't about creating a societal automaton. Instead, it's about me helping these young minds to find and understand the tools they need in order to succeed in their world. Freire believes that both teachers and students possess the ability to be transformative. I feel as though transformative collaboration is a useful practice in the classroom, that will inevitably lead to progression and advancement outside of the classroom.

[BE] My examples of collaboration come from my engagement with other peers, educators, authors, and researchers whom I have talked to, read, or heard through my experiences. Any opportunities to gain other perspectives are of essential importance in furthering my experiences. Whether I am engaging with someone who has different views or someone who has similar views, engaging in collaborative and respectful learning experiences is always mutually beneficial.

An author who currently exemplifies my view of collaboration is Dr. Sonia Nieto<sup>6</sup>. In her chapter, *Culture and Education* (1999), she discusses learning, culture, and social interactions as active collaborations. She says: “Culture, then, is not a passive legacy, but an active operation that takes place through contact and interactions with others [...] it cannot exist outside of social contact and collaboration” (Nieto, 1999, p.137). I also believe that as learners and teachers, we are actively constructing ourselves through our ability to engage meaningfully with other people. Each individual has something to give and gain from every person they interact with. Consequently, collaboration should be taught to students through role modeling, group work, and experiential practice, as a beneficial social interaction where all learners are involved in, and a part of the process. I believe that anybody I meet who can challenge, question, and have a meaningful discussion with me, exemplifies my view of collaboration. Collaboration is not limited to people who think exactly the same, but is strengthened when we come together on similar interests, and provide opportunities for critical thinking.

[CM] At this point in my educative journey, I am unable to pinpoint one particular person to exemplify my ideas of collaboration in education, however, interaction between peers, educators, guest lecturers, and research and discussion, can all present common attributes of collaboration. During a recent critical literacy course,<sup>7</sup> we were encouraged to undertake a curriculum ideology inventory, to determine what ideology best reflected our philosophy of teaching and learning. The Curriculum Ideologies Inventory, created by Michael Schiro (2013), supports my philosophical and experiential views of collaboration in education, as it indicated my affinity for the learner-centered ideology. My personal stance on collaboration within the classroom was validated because learner-centered practices are focused on individual growth and agency, achieved by a communicative relationship between teacher and student. John Dewey further exemplifies my view of collaboration within his works of, *The Child and the Curriculum* (2011 [first published in 1902]) and, *Experience and Education* (1938). He ultimately advocated for a balanced educational experience that provided students with the opportunity of both exploration and knowledge-based delivery, through collaborative teacher and student relationships—relationships which moved beyond the standardized curriculum experience.

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<sup>6</sup> Professor emerita of language, literacy and culture at the School of Education, University of Massachusetts Amherst.

<sup>7</sup> EDUC 4600-151 at the University of Winnipeg, fall, 2014.

[RC] It's very difficult for me to identify a person, or group of people, who exemplify my philosophical and experiential approach to collaboration. However, I suspect many people have moments where they may facilitate or experience this kind of collaboration. Such a moment might encapsulate what I have called elsewhere, an "instance of wholeness" (Collister, 2010). That is, shifts of consciousness, the so-called a-ha moments, peak experiences, or moments of clarity—the moments when we become aware of the interconnected nature of the universe, and our part in that existence. I call these moments instances of wholeness, because they are invariably relatively brief, and because they act like portals to an existence beyond the context created by the worldview we inhabit. In the same way that we, as Heraclitus noted, can never step in the same river twice, because between the first time we step into the river, and the second time, both we, and the river, have changed, we cannot recreate an instance of wholeness, that we have already experienced. However, it is possible to create the conditions where the experience of an instance of wholeness is possible (collaborative conversation with London, 2007). In a general sense, instances of wholeness allow us to gain:

- A deep understanding of the self (oneness).
- A deep understanding of our connection with and place in our community (common oneness).
- A deep understanding of our connection with and place in our immediate and wider context (common oneness).
- A deep understanding of our connection with and place in the great mystery of the known universe and beyond (universal oneness) (Collister, 2010, p. 77).

However, I would say that my colleagues Dr. Tobin Hart<sup>8</sup> and Dr. Sam Crowell<sup>9</sup> have exhibited the ability to engage in this kind of collaboration, on more than one occasion in my presence, by virtue of their authentic way of being. In addition, I should say, they were both able to mentor me, through their particular approach to authentic presence and collaboration, whilst we lived on opposite sides of the world, to each other for many years. In my view, "presence" doesn't

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<sup>8</sup> Dr. Tobin Hart is a father, university professor, author, psychologist, and consultant. He is co-founder and chair of the board of directors of Child Spirit Institute, a non-profit educational and research hub dedicated to understanding and nurturing the spiritual world of children. He currently serves as professor of psychology at the University of West Georgia.

<sup>9</sup> Dr. Sam Crowell is professor emeritus of education at California State University-San Bernardino and founder and co-director of the MA program Holistic and Integrative Education and the Center for Holistic and Integrative Learning. He is actively involved in the program Education for Sustainable Development and the Earth Charter.

necessarily mean co-location, and neither does collaboration, or for that matter, collaborative conversation.

## **Perspectives**

[RC] It's clear that we all have diverse experiences and expectations of collaboration. Despite this diversity, there is a certain amount of unity within that diversity (collaborative conversation with Cajete, 2006) which allows us to articulate certain consistent perspectives of collaboration, that we see emerging from these experiences and expectations. I'd like to take a moment to summarize that unity in diversity, as I see it.

A number of terms could be used to express elements of our discussion so far. Terms such as, but probably not limited to, experiential learning, place-based learning, even transformative learning. We might also apply such terms as: deep and/or critical reflection, shifting consciousness, process or system thinking, inquiry, relationships, and/or praxis. However, given my philosophy and background, I tend to think of our discussion so far as representing elements of "holistic ways of knowing, and ways of being." We might also call them "authentic ways of knowing and ways of being" (see Dencev and Collister, 2010). To that end, I believe the overwhelming perspective that is being represented is one that I would describe as holism. In its 20th century incarnation, it was Jan Christiaan Smuts, the ex-South African Prime Minister, who actually coined the term holism in his seminal book, *Holism and Evolution* (1999 [first published in 1926]). He said:

Th[e] character of "wholeness" meets us everywhere and points to something fundamental in the universe. Holism [...] is the term here coined for this fundamental factor operative towards the creation of wholes in the universe. [...] wholes are not mere artificial constructs of thought. They point to something real in the universe (1999, pp. 94-96).

Arthur Koestler also explored the concept of wholeness through his inquiry of psychology and evolution in his book, *The Ghost in the Machine* (1967). Although it is not clear whether Koestler was aware of Smuts' work, there are distinct synergies between the two, not least in the naming. Smuts apparently derived the term Holism from the Greek word, *holos* meaning "whole" and *ism* meaning a system or practice, while Koestler described the concept of an entity that is itself a whole, and simultaneously a part of some other whole. He named these entities, *holons*, also from the Greek *holos*, adding the suffix *on*, to suggest a particle or part. However, this could

simply be an indication of the “scholar academic” tendency in Western academia to refer to its Greek origins, even when describing something new. The underlying principle of holism is that:

[...] everything exists in relationship; in a context of connection and meaning—and that any change or event causes realignment, however, slight, throughout the entire pattern. [It] means that the whole is comprised of a *pattern of relationships* that are not contained by the parts but ultimately defines them [emphasis mine] (Miller, 2000, p. 21).

This principle essentially means that in order to gain greater understanding of the world and our existence within it, any single entity, relationship, experience, or phenomenon should be considered in the broadest and deepest, and most interconnected and interrelated context possible, including the context of time. When we apply this principle to the teaching and learning relationship, we understand that all teaching and learning experiences exist within a complexity of contexts which continually impact those experiences, and their participants, in a myriad of observable and unobservable ways.

## **Practices**

[DB] Currently, our society does not seem to truly embrace collaboration. Our North American culture is increasingly reflective of a system in which everyone is for themselves. While we may be encouraged to work in groups in school and in the workplace, this remains a challenge for individuals who have been raised in a society which has encouraged what Dr. Ed O’Sullivan calls “self-encapsulation” (1999). Oftentimes, even when working in groups, individuals tend to be more concerned with what they can do in order to receive the best individual mark, rather than concerning themselves with ways to help the group as a whole. I feel that the most valuable things a teacher can do in creating collaborative classrooms, is to include many team projects on real world topics, encouraging students to take a stand on certain issues in order to create real world, heartfelt solutions. I feel as though an essential part of collaboration is to promote an environment in which participants value the thoughts/opinions of everyone else, regardless of whether or not they are in agreement.

[RC] Okay, so that brings us nicely to the next part of the conversation. We have explored the perspectives that have emerged from our discussion, so now I think we should explore some of the specific practices of collaboration. What are the tangible things that teachers can take away from this chapter to try in their own classrooms?

We should note that this list of practices emerged over a couple of long lunchtime conversations. No doubt there are others, and some of these may seem similar, but readers should feel free to contact us for clarification. Some of these practices can be used in conjunction with others, but many are able to be used on their own. However, they all foster collaboration.

- **Appreciative Inquiry** (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005): Appreciative inquiry “is a process for engaging all relevant and interested people in positive change” (Cooperrider, Whitney, & Stavros, 2008, p. 101). It explores the “exceptional best of “what is” [...] to help ignite the imagination of what ‘might be’ (Cooperrider et al., 2008, p. 5). The aim is to generate new knowledge of a collectively desired future.” At the heart of appreciative inquiry are deep reflection, dialogue, visioning, and co-construction. Appreciative inquiry can be used at the classroom, discipline, institutional, or community level.<sup>10</sup>
- **“Circles of Trust”**: There are many kinds of circles; the one Rupert has used extensively is based on the “circle of trust” described by Palmer (2004) and is inspired by the work of Crowell, Caine and Caine (1998). It is rooted in the notion that, as Palmer (2004) says, “we all have an inner teacher whose guidance is more reliable than anything we can get from doctrine, ideology, collective belief system, institution, or leader” and “[...] we all need other people to invite, amplify and help us discern the inner teacher’s voice” (pp. 24-25). The purpose of the circle is to allow each member of the classroom community to provide a thought, statement, idea, or reflection that is based on their experience within their educational or personal contexts that makes, or reinforces, connections, not only with their understandings of the course content, but also to one or more of the following statements of holistic thinking:
  - everything is separate and connected,
  - whatever is, is always in process,
  - the whole is greater than the sum of its parts,
  - the whole is present in the part,
  - order is present everywhere,
  - everything comes in layers,
  - there is always more than meets the eye, and
  - inside and outside reflect each other (Crowell et al., 1998, pp. 186-187).

Each person’s contribution is typically followed by a short period of silence, to allow everyone to reflect on what had been said. Discussion, judgment, or reference to what previous speakers had said is not permitted. Initially, the introduction of silence into the classroom can be confronting to some students, but as the course progresses, many students typically find it nourishing, and seek to include silence in their daily lives. Thomas Merton would describe these periods as being periods of “creative silence,” which, he notes, are equally as important as “talking and doing” (Bochen, 2008, p. 72).

- **Collaborative Conversations**: This concept, which Rupert used in his doctoral study, is similar to the essence of the circle process. It is based on the understanding that no single

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<sup>10</sup> See <http://appreciativeinquiry.case.edu/> for more information on AI projects and research.

“person can set themselves up as an external authority who defines the nature of internal authority for other people” (Heron, 1996, p. 50). Collaborative conversations are examples of “holistic inquiry” since they are ‘grounded in [the ...] participative knowing [and] interplay within the co-inquirers [...] thought[s] and experience[s]’ (Heron, 1996, p. 16). Rupert has utilized collaborative conversations in class sessions, in order to co-create a deeper understanding of theories, practices, and reflections through the act, and experience of collaboration. For more information regarding “collaborative conversation” as a research approach, see Collister (2010), for ‘collaborative conversation’ as part of the teaching and learning relationship, see Dencev and Collister (2010), and for ‘collaborative conversation’ as part of professional development experience, see Nelson (2014).

- **Community Commons:** The commons is a very old idea that certain aspects of life belong to us all, and should be protected for the benefit of us all.<sup>11</sup> This idea runs counter to the notion of such things as the earth, plants, trees, animals, fish, water, air, soil, resources, cultures, language, people, DNA, space, the moon or other planets, or even ideas, just to name a few, as commodities that can be bought, sold, traded, valued, undervalued, and devalued. The notion of the commons runs counter to the relativistic value that is inherent in the Western worldview. The community commons provide a platform for members of a cohort to openly discuss and share common issues, concerns, cause and certainties in a nonthreatening manner to better the teaching and learning experience of all parties. Fostering a culture of the commons within the teaching and learning worldview benefits students, teachers and communities alike. This can be done through any of the collaborative practices noted here.
- **Communities of Praxis:** “community of praxis” is a term Rupert has adopted throughout his own teaching and research. It is based on the understanding that: [...] ours is not the only act in town. Not only are there other acts out there, but some of them are even better than ours, at least occasionally! We learn that we need not carry the whole load, but can share it with others, liberating us and empowering them. We learn that sometimes we are free to lay the load down altogether. The great community asks us to do only what we are able and trust the rest to other hands (Palmer, 2000, p. 89).

The understanding that: [...] a person is being truly educated only when they pass their knowledge, experience and mastery on to someone else. [...] one only begins to sense one’s creative powers and abilities, when one enters into moral relations with another person, becomes concerned with about increasing their spiritual wealth (Sukhomlinsky, 1979-1980, pp. 358-359).

The understanding that: [...] every person must be an educator available at a moment’s notice to share knowledge, wisdom, skills and perceptions with those in need [...] This requires that we come to appreciate teaching as something every person does for everyone else, and then ultimately what every person accomplishes for themselves (Rose, 2000, p. 293).

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<sup>11</sup> For more information see <http://www.kosmosjournal.org/featured-topics/the-commons/> or <http://www.onthecommons.org/about-commons>.

As has been noted earlier, although a number of differing definitions of “praxis” can be found, in Rupert’s work and in this document it is taken to mean the ongoing cycle of practice and reflection. Given this, “communities of praxis” is a significant descriptor of a specific kind of classroom community that helps the members to focus on the true nature of the community, through ongoing individual and collective practice and reflection.

- **Connection Building:** Although this concept and practice relates to collaborative conversations, communities of praxis, dialogue, and engagement with texts, this particular approach to connection building involves presenting a “text”<sup>12</sup> and asking students to build connections between it (the text) and their readings, experiences, and/or philosophy. A more advanced version would be to have students also connect to one or more of the “statements of holistic thinking” (see above). This practice fosters mindful engagement, reflection, and meaningful learning, even when connections may not be immediately apparent.
- **Dialogue:** Although there are a number of definitions of dialogue, the experience many of us have of dialogue is not always collaborative as outlined here. For dialogue to be collaborative, it needs to be undertaken along the lines of the “circles of trust” and /or ‘collaborative conversation’ described previously. We all exist simultaneously within a complexity of context, and it is the context that determines the nature of the dialogue. Done well, a dialogue encourages the student’s independence of thought, and does not privilege the teacher’s experience over that of the student.
- **Deep Reflection and Journaling:** Rupert employs reflection and journaling in all his courses, as many other teachers do. However, given that the core of his pedagogy requires that he and his students, individually and collectively, continually explore who they are, how they exist in the world, and the effects that their attitudes, behaviours, actions, decisions, and values have on that world<sup>13</sup>, reflection and journaling are key components in assisting students to go deeper. Going deeper can be achieved through the exploration of emotions, feelings, and senses, rather than just thoughts, in conjunction with experiences and/or engagement with texts. Going deeper can also be achieved by taking an ‘inside out’ approach rather than an ‘outside in’ approach to experiences and/or engagement with texts. These reflections typically occur in relation to the course content, the context in which Rupert and his students are currently embedded (or his students’ aspirational context, if they aren’t currently in a place to engage with the content experientially), as well as their past experiences, individual and collective. This all occurs within what he calls ‘a holistic approach to praxis’ (see Hamilton and Collister, 2014).
- **Engagement in Contemplative Practice** (both within the classroom and in the student’s daily lives): For the duration of a course, students are asked to engage in some form of contemplative practice for at least 15 minutes per day, and to write a reflective journal describing the experience and effects (or lack thereof) of this practice on their daily lives.

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<sup>12</sup> Again, “texts” in this chapter includes, but is not limited to: paintings, drawings, cartoons, music, dance, poetry, song, photos, photo essays, video, audio, blogs, wikis, and other digital media and archives, as well as books, articles, and other written forms.

<sup>13</sup> Again, this pedagogy was explored in depth elsewhere (Dencev & Collister, 2010).



The purpose of this activity is also specifically to allow the students to explore who they are, how they exist in the world, and the effects of their beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors on the relationships and contexts within which they are situated. The type of practice they choose is not prescriptive<sup>14</sup>. Classes can begin with a short vipassana meditation (focused on the breath). James (1992) notes the aim of vipassana meditation is “[...] clarity and total action in each moment” (p. 4) and Miller (1994) says “deeply focused attention is the mode where we function most effectively in our work” (p. 5). This can be followed by a “loving-kindness” meditation, which centers the class, focuses attention, brings the class together as a whole community, and reconnects each person to the interconnected and interrelated nature of life. Rupert has used two different loving-kindness meditations previously. The first focused on giving loving-kindness by moving outward from the individual geographically (the individual, people in the room, in the building, in the town, in the province, in the country, everywhere) (based on Miller, 1994, p. 83). The second focused on giving loving-kindness to actual people who are progressively more emotionally distant from the individual (the individual, their beloved, their friend, someone they feel neutral about, someone they have difficulty with; everyone) (based on Chödrön, 2002, p. 130). Participation in contemplative practice would typically not be compulsory, although full participation is encouraged, and a standard reflective journal would be used for those not participating. The purpose of this activity is twofold. First, to allow the students to practice contemplation in a supportive community, and second, to foster a calmness and focus at the beginning of the classroom session.

- **Engagement in/with Nature:** Immersion in nature, whether short or long term, can bring peace and attainable personal challenges, often in an environment without the pressures of a typical classroom. It can also connect the learner to the broader context we exist within. Crowell (2002) says “living our lives in harmony with Nature also means to live life in harmony with our True Nature” and that this has implications for our health, the way we act in the world, and how we maintain the “dynamic balance of our lives” (p. 19). This relationship between nature, activity, learning, and health is also a feature of many progressive educators’ work. (For examples of this in action, see Crowell and Reid-Marr, 2012, London et al., 2004, and Cockerill, 1999, amongst others.) These kinds of deep connections with nature ensure, on the one hand, deep respect for the power of nature, and on the other, self-assurance, much as described by others who have experienced similar connections (Brown Jr. & Watkins, 1978).
- **Engagement in Texts:** from traditional, modern, and “pioneer” sources from both within and without of the Western worldview. In this practice, it is important to note that the use of the word “texts” should again be understood to potentially include paintings, drawings, cartoons, music, dance, poetry, song, photos, photo essays, video, audio, blogs, wikis, and other digital media and archives, as well as books, articles, and other written forms. Engaging with texts can be used as part of many of the practices listed here. However, it is important to engage with texts from differing worldviews, and to engage with all texts meaningfully, deeply, and critically. Engaging with texts does not mean reverting to a

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<sup>14</sup> Practices to be as diverse as vipassana meditation, Christian praying (of various denominations), quiet contemplation by a river, playing the piano, working with and riding horses, and a myriad of others have been undertaken before.

scholarly academic approach of privileging texts from within certain disciplines, or to a perennialist approach rooted in the so-called “great books.” It is simply to acknowledge the wisdom, insight, and praxis that is contained in the collective “texts” of humankind, and that we can all learn from such collective wisdom, insight, and praxis.

- **Games:** Games are used extensively in education, but not all games foster collaboration. In fact, many foster competition and devalue any forms of collaboration that may be developed in other contexts. The important thing to remember about employing games in the curriculum are that whatever the activity is that is being undertaken, it should be undertaken in a mindful way that engages the individual with their community, their traditions, and with the widest context within which they exist. In Indigenous communities, games are typically used for the enhancement of skills useful in life in general (Cajete, 2005; Kulchyski et al., 1999; Peat, 1994). However, in many North American Indigenous cultures, any appearance of competition does not represent competition in the Western sense. Competition is used to provide added incentive for the enhancement of a person’s skills, rather than as competition for its own sake or for personal glory or prestige.
- **Group Action Learning Projects:** This practice includes any group projects where students have the ability to take action and guide their own learning projects. An example of this practice is seen with Genius Hour. The teacher sets up guidelines and the students explore in depth any areas of interest. Acting on learning occurs on three levels: about, through and from, wherein students collectively apply what they have learned in their communities of praxis to enhance their natural and built environment, and the learning experience itself (Kozak & Elliot, 2014).
- **Inquiry:** Use of the word “inquiry” rather than ‘research’ suggests a ‘relational process’ where the inquirers are in relation or community to each other, the subject of the inquiry, and the context within which it, and they, exist. Some examples of such “relational inquiry” would be action inquiry (Torbert, 2006), narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2001), co-operative inquiry (Heron, 1996), and appreciative inquiry (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005). Inquiry is a practice of problem-based learning that is fueled by questions, concerns, an hypothesis or a challenge presented by a group of individuals as they work towards an end goal for authentic purposes, in turn developing critical thinking and problem solving skills, independence, meaningful experiences and lifelong learning (Kozak & Elliot, 2014).
- **Learner Choice:** Allowing choice within the classroom is part of differentiated instruction that gives students opportunity to take control of their own learning, as teachers offer outcomes accessible to individual students. This idea places learners in a participating role, if not as the driving force, in deciding what ideas they want to explore and engage with in the classroom. The learner as both student and teacher investigates options and choices which they can look into further. The selections to choose from for students could include: picking their inquiry or essay topic, selecting which math exercise to do, or creating their own idea for a science experiment.
- **Online Reflections/postings:** Typically, this form of collaboration is undertaken on a weekly basis as a way for individuals or groups to consolidate their understanding and

learning from that week, by describing the connections that emerged from them. These reflections, whether they be in audio, video, or written format, are posted online for their peers and professor to reflect on and contribute to. This form of asynchronous collaboration takes the “pressure to perform” away from the collaborative endeavour. Creating an ongoing online conversation can lead to expression of thoughts, questions, and stem new ideas. Through this action, the collaborative community is also co-constructing new texts rooted in their experiences and shared understanding of the course content.

- **Peer Support:** Peer support is grounded in the work of Vygotsky and others, and is a mainstay of progressive educators the world over. V.A. Sukhomlinsky (1979-1980) says:

A person is being truly educated only when they pass their knowledge, experience and mastery on to someone else [...] one only begins to sense one’s creative powers and abilities when one enters into moral relations with another person, becomes concerned with about increasing their spiritual wealth (pp. 358-359).

Peer support takes this statement and applies it in the mainstream teaching and learning relationship, moving that relationship to a place where we are all teachers and we are all learners. When done badly, peer support is an excuse for teachers to abrogate their responsibilities. When done well, however, peer support can be a powerful learning tool. Also, as Sukhomlinsky infers, such a relationship is not simply a cognitive one; it is an epistemological (way of knowing), ontological (way of being), axiological (nature of values and value judgments), rhetorical (way of expressing), methodological (way of doing), emotional, and spiritual one.

- **Professional Learning Communities:** Professional learning communities take various forms. Rupert typically encourages his students to develop their own personal professional networks, and provides opportunities for his students to engage with writers, thinkers, and practitioners from across the progressive education community. Some excellent work has been done on professional learning communities by Geoffrey and Renate Caine (2010)<sup>15</sup>. On some occasions, Rupert also asks certain students or colleagues to join his own professional learning community, which might include participating in writing such as this chapter. (For others see Dencev and Collister, 2010, and Hamilton and Collister, 2014.)
- **Real World Relevant Connections:** Having real world relevant experiences, drawing from actual events, experiences, and situations makes collaboration meaningful. Students learn from situations beyond the school walls. Experiencing real world scenarios, making a real impact, and seeing real results in relation to issues of actual interest to that individual, leads to meaningful growth.
- **Reflective Questioning:** This is an activity that requires students to answer six to 10 reflective questions. These questions require that they reflect deeply on themselves, their

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<sup>15</sup> Or see <http://www.cainelearning.com/process-learning-circles/>.

way of being, and their experiences within their educational context. The purpose of this activity is to encourage them to explore and reveal (to themselves) who they are, how they exist in the world, and the effects of their beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors on the relationships and contexts within which they are situated. This deep reflection occurs in relation to the themes explored in the topic of the week. The answers are not shared or submitted for marking, although they could be used as a basis for subsequent assignments. As the course progresses, it typically becomes clearer that the students who engaged fully in this activity are better equipped to undertake the assessment tasks, and subsequently tend to report experiencing some shift in their consciousness, or at least an expansion of their awareness.

- **Seminars/small Group Classes:** Another mainstay of progressive educators, small classes or seminars allow for more intimate and reflective encounters between the teacher and students, between the students and each other, between the teacher, students and the course content, and between the teacher, student, content and the complexity of contexts they are embedded in. When done well, small classes or seminars can employ any of the practices listed here without issues related to scaling up that plague larger classes<sup>16</sup>. Teachers can put students into peer groups, giving each pair within the group a specific topic. Each pair then researches their topic, and teaches the rest of their group about it. Students tend put more effort into this type of project, as they respect the opinions their peers have of them, and they each feel a need to do their part. By placing the students into pairs, it eliminates the possibility of certain students bearing the brunt of the workload, as well as other students hiding in the shadows. Once each of the pairs has presented their piece, they are to come up with a number of discussion points/questions for the group on their topics. This ends up being a collaborative conversation, as it promotes independent thinking within the group, allowing individuals to see things from multiple perspectives. The desired end state is that some or all of the students come to new realizations on topics, which they have already formed independent opinions on.
- **Take a Stand:** The teacher explains to students they will take a stand on an important issue. The facilitator creates an introduction to the situation, and then reads the two dichotomous views. Following this, students are asked to come up to the front of the room, and stand beside the poster that describes how they feel about the views (strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree). Students standing at the strongly agree poster and strongly disagree poster will be encouraged to voice their opinion to the class. After listening to the following opinions, students can change their view and stand in front of a different poster. Then, students will work together with their poster group to prepare a written statement explaining their position. One member from each group will read their position to the class. The teacher can conclude the lesson with a final discussion.
- **Town Hall Meeting:** This activity prompts students to step into other people's shoes, and examine alternative perspectives. It encourages students to consider all possibilities before making decisions. The teacher creates a scenario that involves a town or community. The

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<sup>16</sup> Not to say these practices cannot be scaled up, but rather that scaling up often requires compromise that is not always productive.

teacher then uses newspaper clippings to support differing views on people's perspectives on the issue. Students are put into groups and asked to research and prepare a persuasive speech they would give at the Town Hall meeting about the issue. The groups present their view at the Town Hall gathering. To conclude the meeting, students can vote on the issue.

## Conclusion

Holism, and holistic ways of knowing, bring together the knower and the known as one. There is no separation between the self and the experience, and of course there is no separation between the self and the contexts they exist within, so there is no so-called objectivity (Heron, 1998; Palmer, 1993; Skolimowski, 1994). In this way, for any person, experience, relationship, or phenomenon that is engaged with, such an engagement is grounded in multiple layers of social, cultural, vocational, educational, physical, emotional, spiritual, temporal, and dimensional contexts. This engagement naturally represents the "hidden wholeness" within which all life is immersed, and upon which all life depends (Palmer, 1993, 2004). Ultimately engaging in holistic, transformative ways of knowing is to engage in, what Skolimowski calls, a "Yoga of Transformation" that is to:

1. Become aware of your *conditioning*.
2. Become aware of *deep assumptions* which you are subconsciously upholding.
3. Become aware of the most important *values* that underlie the basic structure of your being and of your thinking.
4. Become aware of *how these assumptions and values guide and manipulate your behaviour, action, thinking*.
5. Become aware *which of these assumptions and values are undesirable...*
6. *Watch and observe the instances of your actions and behaviour...*
7. *Articulate alternative assumptions and values* by which you would like to be guided and inspired.
8. *Imagine forms of behaviour, actions and thinking* that would follow from the alternative assumptions/values.
9. *Deliberately try to bring about the forms of behaviour, thinking and actions* expressing the new assumptions. Implement your new assumptions in your daily life. Watch the process, repeat the process. Practice is important.

10. *Restructure your being* in the image of those assumptions ... [author's emphasis] (1994, pp. 240-241).

This type of process, which is necessarily rooted in self-examination and deep reflection, allows the individual or group to co-create an epistemological, ontological, axiological, methodological, rhetorical, emotional, and spiritual context that they exist within. It is our belief that collaboration, when done well, fosters such an experience and, potentially, such a transformation. The learning of the individual becomes the learning of the family, the community, the society, and the culture. Hence, an experience that transforms the ways of knowing for the individual inevitably becomes an experience that transforms the ways of knowing for the family, the community, the society, and the culture.

If “reality’s ultimate structure is that of an organic, interrelated, mutually responsive community of being, [then] relationships [and collaboration]—not facts and reasons—are the key to reality; as we enter those relationships, knowledge of reality is unlocked” (Palmer, 1993, p. 53) [addition and emphasis mine]. As our insight deepens, our experience of reality also deepens, and we are able to participate more fully in this ultimate community and collaboration, and share in the wisdom, insight, and praxis therein.

We hope that this conversation, rooted in the diverse backgrounds of the participants, and their equally diverse experiences of the teaching and learning relationship and of collaboration, has proved to be a useful addition to the ongoing international conversation with teacher educators that this book and its predecessor represent. We also hope that it has served to deepen the discussion around collaboration, even a little. Finally, we hope that the practices we have listed above are useful to you, the reader. Please feel free to join our conversation.

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## **Chapter 4: University-Community Partnerships: Reflections on an 18-year Community-based Education Collaboration**

~Stephen Jeanetta & LaDoris Payne~



Collaboration is hard work! It is not easy for people from one organization to collaborate with those from another. Even when people trust and respect each other, and agree that they can have a broader impact by working together, it is still difficult. The management of resources, protection of organizational integrity and identity, shared decision making, development of the program, and evaluation of the results are challenging within the context of a single organization, but increase in complexity when collaborating with one or more collaborators on a program or project. However, it is becoming increasingly difficult for a single group to put together all of the resources necessary to successfully implement a program or project that will have a positive impact in their community, without collaborating with others to do it. In addition, the complex nature of the issues community leaders need to understand and address, are often multifaceted and require framing from different perspectives. David Mathews (2002) of the Kettering Foundation has said, “unless there is mutual understanding of different perspectives, people are not likely to work together as a community” (p.8). Thus, the very nature of understanding issues and developing appropriate responses is dependent on the collaboration of people who sometimes hold very different perspectives, normative values and viewpoints. This is true whether organizations are trying to work together to bring their different perspectives to a problem, or whether individuals

are looking for ways to bridge their differences to engage around complex issues that affect everyone.

Universities are increasingly looking to engage with community organizations regarding scholarship, and community organizations are looking to collaborate more with universities as a means of achieving their social aims (Strier, 2013). Collaboration between universities and community organizations is attractive when both have something to gain by the process, and when they share similar aims with their collaborators around issues of social justice and the changes they want to address (Marullo & Edwards, 2000). Developing effective collaborations with people across institutions is increasing in importance, but can also be very difficult to facilitate, particularly when there are differences in size, scope, decision-making styles and resources between a university and its potential collaborators (Peachy and Cohen, 2016). Additional issues can include differences in culture, approaches to work, relative power, and the degree to which each of the parties is committed to the change they are working to achieve. (Dewar and Isaac, 1998). As collaborations between universities and community partners evolve over time, there will likely be periods of conflict and periods where collaboration is possible and happens (Strier, 2011). Another factor affecting collaboration is the need to invest for the long term. We know resources are important, and universities need to understand that they must be willing to invest resources in their community collaborators (Maurrasse, 2002). This is a challenge, because many universities are experiencing resource constraints themselves. However, resources can take many forms such as: space, technical assistance, materials, students, and other things that will help the community collaborators in their work.

Our focus so far, has been on the importance of institutional relationships, however these relationships are negotiated, implemented, and maintained by individuals, and the connections they develop through their work together. How someone from the university represents themselves and their institution while engaging with another organization is important. Key factors for university representatives to consider when embarking on this path include, seeking to learn before seeking to help, practicing with a measure of humility, and identifying community guides or collaborators (Domahidy, 2003). Institutional representatives have to appropriately represent the interests of their organizations, unravel the complexities of working with another organization, and create an effective means of working together given that the aims of the collaborators may not be the same. We are going to explore the complexity and nature of the relationship between the

people representing their institutions in a collaboration over time, by reflecting on collaboration between the University of Missouri Extension Community Development Program and the Imani Family Center, as represented by the authors over an 18-year period from 1998 through 2015.

The University of Missouri is a land-grant university with a cooperative extension service. Cooperative extension began in 1914, through the Smith-Lever Act “providing federal support for land-grant institutions to offer educational programs to enhance the application of useful and practical information beyond their campuses through cooperative extension efforts with states and local communities” (APLGU, 2012). Initial efforts were in agriculture and engineering, and over the years, the program has added efforts in human, youth, family, business, and community development, among others. I, Stephen, have worked in the community development program at the University of Missouri for the past 24 years, engaging in programs focused on building inclusive communities, developing community leadership, designing and facilitating planning and engagement processes, and creating resources to increase the organizational capacity of small community-based organizations. The first seven years were spent working as a regional community development specialist in communities in east central Missouri. The past 17 years have been spent on the campus of the University of Missouri as a state specialist in community development, and extension associate professor in rural sociology. One of the main challenges of this work, is bringing people together to explore and address complex community issues. It has become more complex in recent years, as communities become more diverse.

The Imani Family Center provided public space for women located in the City of Jennings in North St. Louis County, which is part of metropolitan St. Louis, Missouri. Jennings was a community that had faced much stress over the past 40 years. During our time there, the majority of the population was African-American, as many of the white, working class residents of the 1950s through the 1970s, moved out to suburbs further from the city. Many of those left behind were unable to make the move themselves, and those who came behind were primarily people of color and people with fewer resources.

The role of the Imani Family Center was to serve as a public space for women in a community with few public spaces of any kind. The Imani Family Center opened in 1993, and served as a place where people (primarily women) would meet and explore the issues important to them and their community. They were helping themselves and their community. The calling card of the Imani Family Center was the Circles of Hope, a process they developed to engage women

in their own development, and a means by which they facilitated discussions and organized their work. The three principle components of the process were personal support, education for action, and organizing for change. They formed circles around many issues affecting the women at the Center, including economic empowerment, transportation, and health care access. Every time a circle was formed to address an issue, the focus was on meeting the needs of the people in that circle. Sometimes a circle might form for a short period with a few meetings to address a very local or personal set of issues; other times the circles were larger and included collaborators from other parts of the community, that went on for years. The process was simple, effective, and sought after by others in the community who wanted to empower their own groups to become actively engaged as agents of change in their communities. I, Stephen, often asked LaDoris Payne, founder and director of the Imani Family Center, if they felt like they were agents of change, and she would say, “We change people and people change communities.” The Circles of Hope was the process they used to guide that work. The Imani Family Center closed its doors in 2014, because the women had gotten older and could no longer take care of the place. The work of the organization still goes on through the Circles of Hope process, and the women and groups that have made the process their own.

Our relationship began in 1997, when LaDoris was included as a presenter at a community development course offered by the University of Missouri, called, Creating Capacity for Dynamic Communities. She did a workshop on helping communities become “un-poor” using the ‘Circles of Hope’ leadership support process. At that time, she had recently worked in rural Mississippi empowering African-American women, using the same process. A couple of my colleagues were familiar with that work, and invited her to be a presenter. I was intrigued by her description of the process and wanted to learn more about how the Circles of Hope process worked. I was particularly interested in the relationship between the process and community change. I wanted to learn more, and she was interested in exploring a stronger relationship with our program that could lead to more support for the work they were doing. Thus began a long-term collaboration between a small, grassroots community-based education and support organization, and a community development program at a large mid-western American university.

There are many ways to characterize collaboration, but Barbara Gray (1989) effectively describes the nature of the collaborative relationship between our organizations as: “a process through which parties who see different aspects of a problem can constructively explore their

differences, and search for solutions that go beyond their own limited vision of what is possible” (p. 5). Over the years, we have collaborated on training programs, hosting international visitors, conference presentations, development projects, grant projects, and evaluation projects primarily focused on documenting the impact of the Circles of Hope process. In each of those projects, we brought different perspectives that were both a source of strength, but also a potential source of conflict. We learned a lot along the way that we think can help others, as they look for ways to collaborate with other organizations on education programs.

## **Approach**

The collaboration was explored using the personal support process of the Circles of Hope. The personal support process is a series of three questions used during a circle to help people evaluate how things are going, and to reflect on how things could be different. The questions in their basic format are: (1) What is going well? (2) What is challenging? (3) What support might make a difference? A variation of these questions will be used to explore our collaboration. They will be: (1) What went well in our work together? (2) What was challenging about our work together? (3) What would we do differently if we had it to do over again? I, Stephen, started by answering these questions myself, and writing out my perspective. Once I was comfortable with what I had written, I interviewed LaDoris Payne. I then summarized the perspectives, incorporating quotes from the interview. The responses to the questions are summarized individually.

### **What went well in our work together?**

Stephen Jeanetta

**Cultivating a Relationship.** One of the things I realized early on in this collaboration, was that in order to gain the trust that I needed to be of any help to the Imani Family Center, I was going to have to invest a lot of time earning their trust. I met with LaDoris two or three times monthly. The initial project was to develop a plan for the Imani Family Center. They wanted to set goals, and work towards specific objectives in a purposeful way. We spent about six months working on this plan. That time was valuable to the development of our collaboration; we had long discussions where we learned more about each other’s work, and began to see different ways that we could collaborate on projects. What I learned about her work and that of the Imani Family Center, helped me better understand the role I could play in supporting their work over time. It

also provided them an opportunity to get to know me, and better assess the types of things I could do in my position with the university that might benefit their work. Planning is a great place to start a collaboration, because it is not a high risk project. It allowed us the opportunity to explore each other's capabilities without committing much, except for our time. It was a low risk, potentially high reward situation for both of us.

**Opening Doors.** We were able to open doors for each other, and learn how to be supportive of the other. As an applied sociologist, I understand the importance of social networking as a means of increasing access to resources and opportunities. My relationship with LaDoris brought me into a rather large network of women in community development, that opened up a whole world of opportunities to work with people that otherwise would never have been possible. She was my bridge to the women in her organization, the people who participated in her programs, and the other groups and organizations that were part of her network. I was her bridge to resources at my university and other universities, resource agencies, and people from my professional network.

There were times we were able to do projects both of us wanted to do, that would have been difficult without the other. For example, the Imani Family Center had an ongoing relationship with the Stuttgart German Mothers Center in Stuttgart, Germany. They had several peer exchanges where they hosted some of leaders of the German Mothers Centers, and LaDoris, and a few of the women at Imani had visited Germany. I once made the trip myself with LaDoris, to facilitate some training programs in the Circles of Hope process, and to facilitate a larger community dialogue for the Stuttgart Mothers Center. These small trips led to a larger youth exchange. The city of Stuttgart was hosting a large international youth leadership program, and they wanted the Imani Family Center to send a delegation of youth to that program. We worked with a variety of people to make it possible for some of the youth at Imani to participate. A year later, Stuttgart sent a group of youth to St. Louis to visit the Imani Family Center. It was a big undertaking for a small community-based organization. We were able to tap into resources through the community development and youth programs at the University of Missouri to support part of the project, and help develop an excellent program for the youth that participated.

**Organizational Support.** One role I played often was what LaDoris would call administrative, but what I refer to as the role of planner, researcher, evaluator, and documenter. These are skills that can often be a challenge for a small non-profits to access, and they really appreciate it when they can. In addition, many of the important accomplishments of small non-



profits go unrecognized and undocumented. If programs are documented, they are rarely done so in a format that is accessible to others outside their network. As a result, the wonderful work and accomplishments of some amazing people are often lost once they stop their work. This became apparent to us several years ago, when some people at Smith College in Northampton, Massachusetts were putting together a collection recognizing the contributions of women in grassroots programs. They wanted to include the work of LaDoris and the Imani Family Center in that collection. We scrambled to put together materials that would tell their story. The challenge was not because they did not have records—they never threw anything away. The challenge was deciding what was important, and putting it in a form that others could access. We tried to pull together resources others could use, to replicate the successes of Imani and avoid the failures. I realized through that process, that an important academic contribution is helping to document, and tell the stories of these small organizations.

**Personal & Professional Support.** We often provided each other personal and professional support. LaDoris and I are very different from each other. She has said that we are opposites. When we were working together, I was an over-educated white man. She was a self-educated, African-American woman. I worked at a large university with lots of resources. She worked in a small organization with few resources. I got paid pretty well to do my job. She worked full-time, but rarely had an income. I had a house and car. She lived upstairs at the Imani Family Center, and rarely drove until she was close to retirement. The differences were easy to spot, and in some ways may have made it easier for us to support each other. While we were different, we also found ways to use our differences to complement each other, and create synergies that were effective in sustaining our work together. Shared values and principles were important, and made it possible for us see each other differently than we may have otherwise, and helped us better understand ways we could support each other, first professionally and, over time, personally.

**Principled Partnerships.** LaDoris introduced me to the concept of a principled partnership. This is a collaboration where the basis for working together is linked to the shared values and principles of the collaborating organizations. Principled partnerships were important to Imani because they did not have the resources to invest in collaborations with groups that did not have similar or complementary values and principles. They could not always control what the outcome of an effort would be, but they could pick and choose with whom they worked to ensure the experience was healthy for them, whether or not the outcomes were achieved. They preferred to

work with people that would respect their values and principles. When I first started working with LaDoris, we spent a lot of time exploring those shared principles. It was harder for me because I work for an institution that has a published set of principles, and because it is a big organization its principles are quite broad. The community development program at the university also had its own set of principles that were more helpful in terms of offering a base from which to negotiate a principled partnership. This was very important to our collaboration, because it gave us a means of evaluating and monitoring the success of our relationship over time. Over the years, it became apparent to me how important these types of negotiated relationships can be, as I saw collaborations fail—sometimes very large efforts—often because they had no means of assessing the value of the collaborative relationship.

LaDoris Payne

Connection to a Larger Picture. Many times the work of the Imani Family Center was very focused on the needs of the women, and the groups they worked with locally. LaDoris placed a high value on being connected to what was happening around the community, the country, and the world that might affect her work and their community. She was very well connected to networks of other organizations engaged in the development of women. When we worked together, it gave her the opportunity to explore those relationships, and what they meant for her work broadly. Our work together, particularly the planning work, helped her articulate the contribution of Imani and the Circles of Hope to a broader development agenda. We spent a lot of time conceptualizing what they did as a Center.

You gave me an outside voice to talk to. Most of the people at the Center were pretty caught up in the day-to-day running of the Center, and the work that we did with individuals. You helped me voice a broader overview of what we were trying to do, and how we fit into the world of ideas and projects.

I have conducted research with some of the women who have participated in the Circles of Hope process, and the idea of connecting to a broader world of women in community development was very important to them. Hosting, traveling, and interacting with other women who were engaged in changing their communities, helped the women in the Circles develop a greater sense of personal power and confidence needed to meet challenges, and change their communities.

Administrative support. This primarily took the form of goal setting, defining outcomes, organizational development, and project and event planning. I helped them access these capacities, but also helped them move past the administrative details of running an organization, and focus on

the work of the organization, and exploring the ideas and issues they wanted to address. One of my roles was to help them put their ideas into a context, that connected them to other similar ideas and perspectives.

You helped me name ideas I had. I had thoughts and ideas, but I didn't know there were official names for them ... and you taught me some of those names. That helped me when I would travel or go abroad to talk about things ... you helped me understand some of the theoretical frameworks in a way that was useful to my daily work.

A good example, is the Circles of Hope process itself. It is an engagement process that helps people set agendas they can manage, as they work to improve their lives and their communities. The process has much in common with appreciative inquiry, as the principles of appreciative inquiry and the Circles of Hope are compatible. Linking the Circles of Hope to appreciative inquiry made it possible to link their work to an established development process, that in some ways, helped validate the Circles of Hope process, and locate their work in the field of community and leadership development. When LaDoris and others are at a conference or forum, having this type of link makes it easier to help connect their process to processes, others may already know or understand.

Friendship. The work as the director of a small community-based non-profit can be isolating. We often built time into our agenda to reflect, to think big, and dream of the possibilities. It was through these conversations, that we learned a lot about what motivated each of us. It was also a lot of fun. I do not think either of us were expecting to become good friends because of our work together, but it happened, and as a result, it made it possible for us to take on projects that we otherwise would not have seen ourselves doing together.

It was good just to have a friend. It was hard work, and most of the people I was working with were people I was helping. So it was good to have ... an equal, a friend to talk about things with, and to laugh at times with, and to dream with.

Partnering on projects. We worked on a lot of projects together and our differences complemented our work together.

We were opposites really, and it created a nice balance for the work ... for people to see us talking about the same thing from different perspectives ... it provided a balance that I needed, and some of those things I would not have been able to accomplish alone.

A good example of this, was during the trip we took together to Stuttgart, Germany. We were there as part of a peer exchange. Our role was to facilitate a larger community dialogue, hosted by the German Mothers Center. In addition, we visited some of the other German Mothers Centers in that

area, to conduct workshops on the Circles of Hope. The process was intended to be training, but discussions inevitably gravitated towards the issues they were concerned about. They wanted to better understand what life was like for poor people in the United States, as many of the women had the perspective that whatever was happening to poor people in the United States was likely to happen at some point to poor people in Germany. During one conversation about housing, people asked whether it was hard to buy a house in the United States. LaDoris talked about how hard it was in her community to get a loan for housing. It was expensive to even get an application reviewed. Once they were able to get a bank to even conduct a review, it sometimes took weeks for a person to find out if they qualified for a loan. After the time, expense and stress they were put through in the application process, they were often rejected. Then I talked about my experience buying a house, which was very different. I talked to three banks over the phone. They gave me estimates on interest rates and subsequent payment amounts, and let me know I was pre-approved up to a certain level. I didn't pay for anything until the house closed, which took place a couple of weeks later. I was able to do the entire application process over the phone in a single morning. My experience was in contrast to the experiences LaDoris knew in her community, and it gave the women in Germany a better sense of how race, education, income, and where you live, can make a difference in terms of how a person accesses resources in the United States.

### **What was challenging about our work together?**

Stephen Jeanetta

Understanding Organizational Needs. The participants at the Imani Family Center were primarily low-income, African-American women who volunteered their time and energy to the programs. It was very difficult to direct resources to their work, because they had limited capacity for fiscal oversight. Governing structures were looser than most funders liked to support, and they were more interested in sharing resources across the organization than investing in one or two staff positions. Most funders do not know how to support them. For example, one time we were able to get a grant from an area foundation to develop a project. The university was willing to provide the fiscal oversight. However, the funder required that the staff dollars be concentrated in one position. Most of the women in the organization had low or fixed incomes. They could use the support, but to take a salary would have disqualified them from the support services they needed for their families. The salary was temporary (two years) and was not high enough to warrant the risk associated with taking the position, and risk losing their benefits. They preferred to share the

resource across the organization to support more of the people who were doing the work, but not so much that it could cause them problems with their public support. As a result, they gave the grant back, as they were not in a position to manage the grant the way the funder preferred.

**Sense of Time.** We operated in very different time realities. I had very different ideas about time, agendas and priorities than they did at Imani, largely because of our differing values and cultural expectations. For example, I would sometimes get stressed because there were times I had to do reports, and had little to report on my work with Imani, because there were times things went very slowly. When Imani was conducting a Circle or implementing a program or project, they were very good at managing time, developing an agenda, and sticking to it. In fact, that was an area they focused on, as many of the women in their Circles had issues with time management. However, in the day-to-day work of the organization in between the Circles and projects, it was hard to do.

Many of the people who were part of Imani programs were experiencing many different stresses, and would call or stop by without appointments. There were many times that we would sit down to work on a project or proposal, and not get much done because of the phone calls, people dropping in, and other things that would happen there. We tried scheduling meetings in other places to make it easier for us to get our work done together, but this was only effective if we were operating on a deadline. Otherwise, it was hard, because the expectation was that LaDoris would be there for those who needed help. I tried to build flexibility into my schedule, so that I did not have to be at a meeting shortly after working with them. The highest value for Imani was being present and working on what was most important at that time, which often meant that we did not get too far in our agenda.

It could be challenging, in terms of justifying my time investment in the collaboration. We had to regularly visit and negotiate time commitments. This has been an issue with other small non-profits I have worked with as well. They do such good work, but they have difficulty setting boundaries with those they serve, so those of us who are trying to help and support their work have to help them develop some effective boundaries, so they can occasionally step away from the work and avoid burning themselves out. We also have to adjust our own expectations, so that we are not inadvertently putting additional unrealistic pressures on them.

LaDoris Payne

Distance. My office was located at the University of Missouri in Columbia, and the Imani Family Center was in the City of Jennings, a suburb on the northwest side of St. Louis. It was about a two hour drive each way.

We had very little time together, and a lot of work to do. We had to find creative ways to be together long enough to get any of it done. The things we didn't get done, it was only because we did not have the time to do them.

One of the creative ways we found to work together, was during the time I was working on my Ph.D. My job was in Columbia, but I was working on my Ph.D. at the University of Missouri in St. Louis. Sometimes on days that I had classes, I was able to come early and spend the day in St. Louis working with LaDoris at the Imani Family Center. Once I graduated, it became more difficult, so we had to try to use the time we had together to focus on the specific projects we wanted to accomplish together. This is still an issue today. LaDoris has retired, and is no longer actively working for the Imani Family Center. However, we have been working on a book that documents the work of the Center and Circles of Hope process for a long time. It would be much easier if we had more accessibility to each other.

Learning How to Work Together. Collaboration is not easy. It took us a long time to learn how to work together. Differences in our perspectives, values, traditions, views of the world and other cultural attributes sometimes made communication difficult, and we would talk past each other.

Sometimes I had a particular point-of-view that I was stuck on, and you had a point-of-view you wanted me to see, so we would have to struggle to get our thinking to coincide, so that we could accomplish something ... we had to work hard to work together. It wasn't anything that came naturally or easily, or something that I had a lot of practice at. I had to learn how to work with you. The learning curve was steep and we learned together, but the good part of that was that we remained friends throughout. We never got to the point where, I am not going to work with the SOB anymore ... there was some people I did that too! [Laughing.] We had to struggle to get our ideas to go along the same lines, so that we could verbalize what we were both trying to do.

This was a constant challenge. She spoke in ways I often did not wholly understand, and I spoke in ways she did not know very well, and there were times our differences seemed like chasms. The differences usually surfaced when we tried to blend our ideas in a paper, planning document or program. We did a lot of programs together, so when we worked on curriculum or agendas for a program, we had a lot of questions for each other. We got to where one of my roles

was to record and/or take notes on my computer when we were working on a project. I would read them back to her periodically, as a way of making sure we were still understanding each other. Oftentimes, we had to negotiate our intentions. This allowed us to ask questions and helped us reframe our ideas, so we could better understand and appreciate them.

Culture and Gender. In addition to learning how to work together, we had to overcome differences in culture and gender.

It was a language thing and it was a culture thing, because you're a man and I mostly work with women, and women would ask me who is he? [Laughing.] ... in my national group, [national congress of neighborhood women] there was some distrust toward you as my partner, as a man. We thought of women as partners and almost [pause] men as obstacles. It was hard for me to explain to people why I needed you, because I needed to do the job ... after I trusted you, they began to trust my judgment about trusting you ... over the years, they began to see that you had not abused our relationship in order to advance yourself. But in the beginning the said, you got a man? This is a women's group!

Trust was really a key to our being able to work through some of these differences, and trust made it possible for both of us to gain new insights from our opportunities to work together. For example, one time LaDoris was invited to do a training at a program called, the Grassroots Women's International Academy (GWIA), which was organized by an international network of grassroots women called, GROOTS International (Grassroots Organizations Operating Together in Sisterhood) and the Huairou Commission at the United Nations. It was part of a pre-conference agenda setting session at the World Urban Forum, held in Vancouver in 2006. She wanted me to help her develop her program for the training, and go with her to help her organize and facilitate the session. I was apprehensive about going, but I trusted she knew what she wanted, and that the group would accept me. When we arrived, I felt like a duck out of water because I was the only man involved in the program, and all the participants were grassroots women. However, I was there to support her participation in the program, and I learned a lot in the process. They were very accepting, and it turned out to be a terrific experience. I apparently did not embarrass her too much, as we worked together for several more years after that.

Organizational Development. This was both a challenge, and a strength of our collaboration. One of the program areas that I am responsible for in my work with the University of Missouri extension, is the development of community-based organizations. One of the reasons I was able to justify the time spent working with them was because I was working with them on organizational development issues, and learning more about how to support a small community-

based organization like the Imani Family Center. It was a challenge because part of my job was to bring up issues in terms of how they approached their work, that were not always easy to discuss or comfortable to address, including many of the day-to-day things a small non-profit needs to do to stay legal, and generate the support necessary to keep the doors open.

You would force me to plan more specifically than I would have, had I not been working with you ... you would ask me a lot of questions about my purpose and what my intention was, and what I hoped to achieve, and really forced me into hard thinking about things—which was good, it wasn't a bad thing, but it was hard to do. That was because you had a background in planning and administration, and even the things like grantsmanship that gave me a broader view, which was good in the long run, but it was hard for me as I tried to catch up ... and stay up.

### **What would we do differently if we had it to do over again?**

Stephen Jeanetta

This is always the hardest question, because it requires us to identify specific things we could do better or differently. There are honestly few things I would do differently, but there are a couple of things I would pay more attention to, than I did during the process.

Documenting the Process. One of the things we learned from the German Mothers Center, was that they were very good at telling their story. Most of their programs were well documented, and the publications they produced are still available, even though most of them were never formally published. Given the relative ease with which things can be published today using websites, social media, video, and other tools, I would make a greater effort to document not just the big public events, but also some of the planning sessions where we discussed what we wanted to do, our expectations, and the nature of the relationships we had to develop to make a project work. It is hard to know when you are involved in something special until it is over, so I would document our collaborative efforts much more carefully. I think we would have learned more that would have been helpful to future projects and programs.

Involvement of Students. We could have included more students in the work. It was hard because of the distance and the weird scheduling of our work together. It was also sometimes difficult because we did not always know how much we were going to get done when we worked together. There were so many things that could get in the way. I was okay with being derailed on occasion by events happening around us, but it can be harder for students because I want them to learn things other than just how much time it can take to do something special. I have involved LaDoris in our courses, and she has done a lot of workshops with our students present. We did



have some local students involved in some of our projects. However, as I reflect on what we did and the things we learned along the way about race and gender equity, access to work and health care, social justice, community organizing, power structures and a host of other things, I missed an opportunity to engage more students in the kind of learning that only takes place from working in direct action.

LaDoris Payne

Time Management. The work of the Center was sometimes pretty chaotic, and on occasion our work together would get derailed by events that were happening. We also spent a lot of time on big-picture issues.

We probably could have used some of the time that we had [used] thinking out loud and planning, finishing the work that we had, like the book ... but I wouldn't trade it, I wouldn't trade it ... it helps me now. Even though I am not doing that work every day now, it helps me to think in a broader way—to realize new things as I read. It helps me to advise other people ... so I am not sure I would say we should have done things in a different way because that was really the only way that we had. We didn't have much time ... it's not as if we wasted time, but if we had known how little time we had, I might have done some things differently—been more focused.

One of the challenges is that much of the work we did together was to address the big picture issues, and doing so, provided some context and motivation for the day-to-day work. In some respects, it may have actually made us more efficient when we did focus on the projects. However, sometimes it is difficult to quantify or place value on those kinds of efforts. We know how important that can be, but how much time spent on big picture issues is enough time?

Recognition. One of the challenges for small non-profits, is getting acknowledged for the important contributions they make to their community. Acknowledgement is important because it serves as a means of informing the broader community about the success of organizational efforts, and validates the work of the organization in ways that helps programs continue their efforts.

I think that for some of the events we had or some of the things that we did, I would have figured out how to get more recognition for it, like—things like Wangari's visit were a really big deal, and we didn't even get in the newspaper. Wangari—we didn't even get in the paper ... figuring out tactics and strategies for maximizing recognition of our work, and that it was important, and that people needed it. I didn't give much thought to that. I was just working. There were people [other local organizations] that had a whole piece of their organization structured around putting them in front of people ... so that they would be recognized, and in return, receive outward support.

The Imani Family Center invited Wangari Maathai to visit their Center to help celebrate Earth Day in 2002, about two years before she was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. Dr. Maathai was a visiting faculty member at Yale University at that time. We worked with a number of local institutions to plan the visit, including the Missouri Botanical Garden, the St. Louis Zoo, and several local universities. It was an excellent program, and the Imani Center was visible as the host at all of the public events. However, we could have done more with local media and others to increase coverage of the event, and link it more directly to the work of the Imani Family Center. Recognition is a way to raise the profile of the organization, introduce them to other potential collaborators, and make them more attractive to potential supporters.

Building Support. This is not really referring to financial support, but to building support for the work of the organization in the broader community. It is related to recognition, but it is more focused on the contributions of the organization itself, rather than just giving attention to an event or program.

I didn't give much time to thinking about how we would receive more support, and maybe for a longer time than we did. I would think more about that. Publicize, get recognition for the things we did that went very well ... they knew more about them [the successes] nationally than they did locally. I don't know if that is just the prophet without honor thing [laughing] or if it is something that we could have deliberately worked on, or we could have found somebody to deliberately work on.

Gaining sources of support is a constant effort for small organizations. They do much good work, but often struggle to get acknowledgment for that work, and as a result can have a difficult time gaining any momentum out of the work that they do well.

I am happy about the way our partnership worked. I don't really have any great regrets about how the partnership worked. I don't really have any regrets about my work of the last 40 years. I did the best I could with what I had.

## **Conclusion**

The biggest help you gave me was that you helped me think in terms of running an organization, instead of just doing my daily work. You helped me think about it in a way so that even when you weren't there, I was able to use the things that we had talked about and the frameworks that we had come up with, to expand my thinking and to share with others. A lot of the things I talked to people about nationally, were things we had first talked about sitting around the kitchen table. And some of the things I didn't realize were important, until you pointed out to me why they were important—things about organizational development particularly. I was able to share that with people in other organizations ... not that it always helped, but I felt

stronger in the sharing because we had talked about it, and I understood it better. I wasn't as hesitant to offer my opinion.

When we started working together I was hopeful that I had some perspectives that would be useful to LaDoris in the operation of the Imani Family Center. I knew that she needed help with planning, and I had experience in planning. I also knew she was struggling a little bit with managing the organization. I had experience advising non-profits, and helping them develop the capacity they needed to more effectively leverage resources, and focus more of their time on the mission of their organization rather than the business side of it. I thought I could bring something to the collaboration. I hoped to learn more about how a small non-profit, run completely by volunteers, could be effective with very little visible means of support. I also wanted to better understand the Circles of Hope process, how it developed, how the process worked, and why it was so effective with groups of women that are not easy to engage.

What I did not expect was how important the relationship to LaDoris and the women in her organization would become to me personally and professionally. We worked together long enough to see life changes occur for both of us and others in the group. LaDoris and the other women who worked with her at the Imani Family Center became an important part of my life. I was not really expecting that. However, in retrospect, how could that not happen? The nature of collaboration is based in trust, and I believe when collaborators are very different from one another, the intensity of the relationship has to be high, and it is going to take a great deal of time to earn each other's trust. I do not believe it is possible to earn that trust without being willing to emotionally invest in the relationship, and have a personal stake in the success of the relationship. I also learned that I can actually support the work of more groups and organizations by investing heavily in a smaller number of organizations, and working through those groups to support the work of others in their networks, as they often have similar issues and constraints.

When working with people who do not trust easily, the quality of the relationship may be more important than in collaborations where the collaborators have more in common, and share similar values and expectations about where the collaboration is headed. Even then, I think collaborators still need to take the time to invest in building trust amongst themselves, and not take it for granted. Sometimes issues will emerge because of constraints on the participating organizations, the structure of the collaboration, or expectations that are not realistic for the collaborative effort, even when the collaborators know each other well.

LaDoris was also a good storyteller and incorporated many stories into her work. One of her favorite stories and one she was well known for, was the story of the owl and the little bird. You can see her tell a short version of the story on a YouTube clip at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pA8qumYiVtk>. It is a story of fear, determination and collaboration. In the end, they did the best they could with what they had, and made a difference. I feel the same way about our collaboration. There were some things that went well, there were challenges, and there were a few things that we would likely do differently, knowing what we know now—but in the end, we did the best we could with the resources we had.

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## Chapter 5: Igniting Hope in at Risk Youth: A Collaborative Undertaking

~Tom Peterson~



### Context/Introduction

Why do teachers find children and youth identified as being high risk, such a challenge to reach and motivate to learn? Why do children and youth who are known as “disruptive” in schools feel unwanted, and have such a hard time relating to teachers? Teachers have been perplexed as to how to handle challenging children and youth, and have sought an assortment of ideas to address this reoccurring “problem.” Often plagued with problems not of their making, these students find

themselves in classrooms where they are labeled as lazy, disruptive, or defiant, and quickly erect walls to insulate themselves. These students lack the skills and resources to resolve or respond to deforming home environments, and expectations from their teachers. They long for a sense of the possibility that education can offer, an antidote to the cynicism, self-indulgence, competition, and despair that are so much a part of today's educational culture.

While conventional classroom management techniques are designed to give teachers leverage in confrontations with disruptive youth, their management tools too often merely address the symptoms, and not the primary underlying causes. There emerges an inevitable struggle for survival for both teachers and high risk students, who too often find themselves unable to resolve their differences. Teachers and administrators often lack the knowledge and resources to respond effectively to disruptive and challenging youth, while high risk students also lack the skills to respond in an appropriate manner, and are denied leverage to be heard and understood. Strategies and policies are often developed that find teachers and students in a battle of wills for survival in the classroom. With little imagination for resolving this disconnection with alternative forms of classroom management, teachers and administrators find themselves at a loss to effectively respond to the challenges that a defiant student may pose in their schools. As a result, most often these challenging students find themselves being sent to the "office," disciplined through in school suspension (ISS) and out of school suspension (OSS) or expulsions, placed in alternative schools or in lockdown facilities, or dropping out of school altogether.

Since the early 20th century, classroom management has become the standard teaching practice for the American classroom. Books on classroom management continue to be peddled that promote a behavioristic approach to managing students, with compelling titles such as, *Getting the Buggers to Behave* (Cowley, 2001) or *Bad Students, Not Bad Teachers* (Weisberg, 2010). Others might be more subdued, for example: *Classroom Management that Works* (Marzano, 2003), *Developing a Learning Classroom* (Cooper & Garner, 2012), and *Managing Classroom Behavior using Positive Behavioral Supports* (Scott, Anderson, & Alter, 2012).

Behaviorism, as applied in classroom management, supplies techniques and strategies, with emphasis on incentives and punishment as a way to "manage and control" students. This approach has created a culture where teachers are pitted against students in a never-ending struggle for power and autonomy. While most students comply and conform to the manipulation of well-intentioned teachers, this form of disciplinary approach and consequence does not typically work

with oppositional and defiant youth. Of course, traditional classroom management techniques rarely work to produce intrinsically-motivated, critically thinking, imaginative, and liberated students. Quite to the contrary, the primary purpose of schooling is for the training of social efficiency, and the production of conforming and reliant workers. With focus on social efficiency, it is easy to see why contemporary schools rely so heavily on behaviorism.

This behavioristic approach actually works against the forming of meaningful, intimate relationships, due to the fact that it requires educators to see their students as “its” (objects) (Buber, 1958) that can be manipulated and controlled. It is not a method for building trust, because it is predicated on using conditional responses to change the behaviors of students. While most conventional programs for so-called, students at risk, are designed to change their behavior through rewards, incentives, and punishment, they see short-term benefits at best, and are of little benefit to these students—to say nothing of the fact that they obviate intrinsic motivation.

The pervasive image of teachers today is that they are trained to be effective managers in their classrooms to successfully prepare students for a battery of high-stakes tests. This image of schooling, with its emphasis on pouring information into the minds of passive learners, is so common that few credible voices have been heard to challenge what has become routine vision and policy. While concerned voices (Garner, 1996; Miller, 2002; Palmer, 1993, 1998; Shapiro, 2006) have raised alarm over the direction education is going, for the most part, their concern and outrage (Purpel, 1999) are not taken seriously enough to alter our current direction—one that is promoting an increasing alienation of students and teachers from each other, to say nothing of the alienation of learning that relates to personal meaning.

We want to offer a model that rejects the conventional behaviorist approach that most schools embrace as a way to manage and change the behavior of students. Our challenge has been, and continues to be, about how to respond to those students who repeatedly challenge a teacher’s authority in the classroom, and seem to take delight in being disruptive. We can see what is driving current management policies and programs and why many youths are so resistant to changing their behaviors in spite of consequences that are inevitable, but we also need a clearer understanding of the environments the students are embedded in before providing a meaningful way forward. According to the 2014 Children’s Defense Fund Report on the State of America’s Children:

Nearly 1.2 million public school students were identified as homeless during the 2011-2012 school year and seventy-five percent of homeless public school students in 2011-2012 were living “doubled up” with family or friends, 15 percent were in



shelters, 6 percent were in hotels or motels, and the remaining 4 percent were unsheltered (p. 28).

Poverty plays a significant part in poor health, behavioral issues, social issues, dropping out of school and violence for so-called children “at risk.” “In 2012 over 16 million children were classified as poor and living in poverty—more than 1 in 5 children and over 40 percent of them lived in extreme poverty, at less than half the poverty level of \$11,746 a year for a family of four” (p. 22). High risk youth are very susceptible to dropping out of school. In the school year of 2009-2010, over a half a million public school students dropped out of grades nine-12.

Lastly, a leading cause of death among Black children and teens ages one to 19, and the second leading cause of death (behind car accidents) for all children and teens ages is gun violence. Once again, violence is on the rise across the country, and is all too common among our youth.

All of the above issues, in addition to challenges of inadequate nutrition, lack of a positive support system, pressures from gangs, and an unstable living environment, contribute to the unrelenting struggles that children and youth face daily. It is evident that far too many are not faring well in life at large, much less in school.

Judges who encounter these challenging youth in their courts often describe them as having “dead eyes”, and those working for the department of juvenile justice (DJJ) describe the home environment of these children and youth as “chaotic.” From many perspectives, most of our children and youth known to be high risk are barely able to cope with the turmoil wherever they are living, and they recognize that they are not appreciated or wanted at school. As a result, many mentoring programs have emerged that have focused on the need to change youth behaviors by characterizing them through a problem-based lens (DuBois & Karcher, 2005; DuBois & Rhodes, 2006). Using this model “to fix the problem” of reconciling relationships and motivating apathetic students to perform well in school meets with little success (Kohn, 1993) and breeds students who lack imagination, wonder, and personal meaning (Shapiro, 2006).

However, there is an alternative to our current incentive-driven curriculum; a path that sees youth not as objects, but as humans; one that invites them to be open and real rather than focusing on their behavior. In response to this crisis, we brought together youth known as being high risk and aspiring teachers at a university, where we designed a program with a vision of reconciling the divides that are a source of much stress, apprehension, hopelessness and suffering.

## **Beginnings of Reconciliation**

Our journey began in 2009, in a discussion with a juvenile Judge who had just finished a rough day in juvenile court. He lamented that the 76 youth who came before him showed lack of motivation, little respect for others and themselves, and had “dead eyes” that showed little hope for change. Reacting with alarm that there could be so many young people between the ages of 11 and 18 in trouble with the law, in my naiveté I asked him what happens to these kids? From his response, it appeared that there was little working in favor of helping these young people improve their behavior or attitudes. They had few effective incentives to stay in school, and little hope that anything in their lives would change for the better. Reflecting on this conversation, along with my weekly visits to the jail, it was evident how early patterns were in formation, leading far too many young people into destructive and deforming practices.

School, for most of these young people, is seen as a place to endure until they turn 18. It is not a place where they feel welcomed, and motivated by personal meaning. The next time I met with my class of pre-education majors, we discussed starting a program designed to ignite a spark in those youth who showed so little motivation or hope. Together, we quickly began developing a program, and before we could do much planning, the department of juvenile justice delivered seven youth between the ages of 11 and 18, to a classroom at the university. These young people were either court-ordered, offered incentives, or just encouraged to participate in the program. From this simple beginning, we began to grow a program called SPARK, which was designed to form connections with them.

## **Praxis—SPARK Mentoring Program**

Since its inception, the SPARK mentoring program has provided a non-judgmental and humanistic philosophy of working with youth ages 11-18, who have been identified as high risk by the department of juvenile justice. The framework for this mentoring program was drawn from the holistic/spiritual principles of Martin Buber’s (1958) “I” and “Thou.” In the context of linking preservice teachers with troubled youth, it became the primary way in which each group could connect to each other on a soulful level. It provided an avenue for preservice teachers to understand and authentically relate to some very angry and challenging youth, while also possibly igniting in them, a “spark.”

This collaborative program was designed to provide youth who had found themselves in trouble with law enforcement, an opportunity to move beyond their preconceived biases and experience reconciliation. About a dozen young people who were on probation were brought in weekly for two hours to the university, where they would meet up with a group of around 15 preservice teachers in a classroom setting. Upon the arrival of the high risk youth, it was quite evident that there was considerable apprehension in both groups. Joining together these two groups of young people, with all their preconceived biases toward each other, provided a challenging setting in which to create a hospitable environment. With arms folded and blank looks on the faces of the youth, they evoked images of bewilderment and apprehension. Before any formal introductions or announcements were made, they were given tennis balls to juggle and throw to each other. Soon everybody was laughing, playing and chasing down tennis balls as their apprehension began to subside. Activities were designed for the purposes of having fun and getting to know each other.

### **Seeing Youth as Sacred**

Fundamental to the SPARK mentoring program is the knowledge that these youths who have been identified and or labeled high risk, are much more than the labels applied to them as a result of behaviors or symptoms they may display. We have come to know them as individuals beyond their diagnosable presenting issues or problems, through the therapeutic relationships we have cultivated together (Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Gharabaghi, 2009; Krueger, 2007; Krueger, 2009).

The first issue that we address with our college student mentors, is to not see the youth as a label (juvenile delinquent, defiant, troubled, lazy, etc.) but as sacred. We ask them to shift their way of thinking about the young people: to see them with respect and as having great value. This vital requisite sets the stage for the way the participants will relate to each other and to the program content. This can be a challenge for college students, due to their preconceived images of seeing such teens as being a challenge for teachers and administrators. The preservice teachers are reminded frequently that we are not there to judge, criticize, compel or coerce the teens to change their behaviors, but merely to provide a spark, an awakening of their very souls, a sense of hope and possibility through meeting them honestly, respectfully, and directly. The college student mentors are to foster a meaningful trusting relationship that opens opportunities for dialogue,

mentoring, tutoring, exploring, learning, and examining one's life. The aim is to build appropriate relationships of hope and trust, while equipping the teens with a sense of purpose, while knowing that someone cares about them. From his work with troubled youth, Carl Rogers created his person-centered approach to therapy (Rogers, 1966). More importantly, Rogers' person-centered approach focuses on valuing the significance of an individual as more than the obvious problems or behaviors exhibited (Rogers, 1966). Our approach follows this lead.

Martin Buber's (1958) words, "all real living is meeting" (p. 25), describes our philosophy of working, playing, and viewing other people as sacred individuals, and not simply seeing them through the lens of what they do or how they act. Traditionally, mentors are present to assist in modifying the students' behavior in some way. Within the context of the SPARK program, the sacred connotes esteeming, viewing, and treating the relationship with another person with a reverent respect and attention. When mentors and staff model the sentiment of everyone being sacred, it helps to create a culture of acceptance, trust and openness. In addition, as mentors take the initiative and model this sacred perspective, it supports youth in reciprocating the same behaviors towards self, peers, and mentors. Changes in the teens' attitude, appearance and behavior appear quickly, not due to any form of manipulation, but from an inner desire to change. Wayne Dyer (2005) described this approach beautifully when he said, "If you change the way you look at things, the things you look at change" (p. 185). Based on the way we see the youth; they respond to how we see them. They change not due to extrinsic incentives or pressure, but from a desire to be real with themselves and the college students.

Whether in classrooms, around their peers, in the courtroom or in their homes, negative labels are attached to these young people based primarily on their behaviors, social status and appearance. These labels are so frequently used to describe them that, while they do not like the labels, they nonetheless identify themselves through them ("I am bad, mean, a trouble maker, a failure and a loser"). When mentors and staff see the youth as sacred, there awakens a spark that begins to shift their perception of themselves and the world around them.

Seeing youth as sacred also means that we do not look down on them, focus on their behaviors, or try to change their behaviors. We have found that their behaviors do change—not from any form of manipulation—but when they begin to see themselves differently, their behaviors also change. We are all amazed at the changes we see in their attitudes and behaviors, when we do not focus on those attitudes and behaviors.

As mentors view and interact with youth through a sacred perspective, it assists in promoting an accepting culture where youth gradually become open to new relationships and program activities. This emerging process of mutuality between the youth and the mentoring program, helps to create an environment where those involved can gradually learn to be open and honest about their perspectives and life experiences.

We also do not attempt to “fix” them or their problems, due to our lack of understanding and resources to address their personal issues. We find that when we just listen to them and show compassion, they leave in a better frame of mind. The youth also find that they are not alone. Many of the college students have had, and continue to have, problems like theirs, and even worse.

Seeing the youth as sacred, also means that when they come to us with seemingly impenetrable walls—walls that were erected a long time ago—the college student mentors are not to try in any way to get the youth to remove this wall, but allow the youth to be themselves, whatever that may entail. By not focusing on the wall, to everyone’s surprise, the “impenetrable walls” soon vanish, and the youth are sharing details about their lives.

### **Dissolving the Disconnect**

From the outside, the SPARK program looks rather simple and unimpressive. We take teens that are living troubled lives, and link them up with university students for 10 weeks. They meet only weekly over that time. While there is a format or structure for the program, it is also emergent, flexible, and relying heavily on intuition, and all the while it is continually being modified. As we enter the inner sanctums of relationships, we draw upon a construct that I designed many years ago, which is commonly referred to as “the cosmos.”

The cosmos exemplifies the meaning of getting personal. It is sharing and being heard at the meaningful level of our personal being. It promotes the forming of open, direct, sincere, deep, and meaningful relationships. The cosmos is an activity that each of my students creates, and presents at each SPARK meeting. The cosmos is a visual representation, and a narrative of the influences that have shaped and transformed their personal lives. This project requires one to reflect on and examine past relationships in their lives—loving, troubling, good, bad, and hurtful. Sharing this assignment in a classroom setting requires one to become open and vulnerable to what others might think and say. Students are encouraged to be open, honest and above all, real. It is not to be a mere performance, but a sharing of the joys and struggles of what it is like growing up

in their crazy world. They share stories of brokenness, pain, despair, incest, rape, cutting, abandonment, failure, physical and emotional problems, triumph, success, and hope. They gather pictures showing their grandparents, parents and their childhoods, and share these pictures in a PowerPoint with the entire group. They also include pictures that recall dark moments in their lives, as well as images that speak to loving and caring relationships. We have found that for these teens, a significant relationship often relates to one or more of their favorite pets.

Qualitatively explicating their lives and identities, these narratives provide systemic meaning and empowerment for the youth. Narratives by such youth may also explicitly reveal aspects of their experiences that can provide invaluable insight into how to develop potentially more comprehensive mentoring programs. These narratives, whether delivered by college students or the struggling teens, have a profound effect on all who are present. The cosmos provides a recipe for everyone to be real with themselves, and connect with each other on a soulful level. Both college students and teens express compassion, as they identify with pain that has been harbored and previously unexpressed.

Once they have shared their cosmos, students and former SPARK youth volunteer readily to come back and share their cosmos with new SPARK youth, or during meetings with civic and business leaders. We have found that the cosmos is instrumental in igniting a spark in both the troubled youth and college students. It is during the sharing of their cosmos that the SPARK youth are drawn in most deeply. It becomes an instrument of leveling the playing field, as the youth and the college students begin to see that their respective backgrounds are not all that different. After our initial meeting, often a SPARK youth will come to me, and ask if they can share their cosmos someday.

Unique to this, the experiences of these teens is bringing the teens to a university setting, linking them up with college students, and meeting with a professor—none of which they had previously experienced. The success of the program relies heavily on the undergraduate students at the University of West Georgia. Student mentors, also sharing their journeys as they care for the youth are integral to how this program ignites hope in troubled youth, as well as providing future teachers with first-hand experience interacting with a demanding population.

Each program has a variety of activities designed to encourage dialogue and a playful environment. Starting each meeting with an icebreaker which promotes community building is a part of the program that everyone looks forward to. It is through this activity, when everyone

laughs, plays, and has a genuine good time, that they can be themselves, remove their “masks” and connect to each other.

The college student mentors are reminded about the importance of becoming active listeners. They quickly put into practice ways to invite youth to share their voices. This program provides many opportunities where students and youth can drift into small groups that are conducive to having open and meaningful conversations. It is very evident that most of the youth, when invited to dialogue with a college student, are eager to open up and speak directly. We have found that everyone has their own hiding places or walls, and are uncomfortable with meeting someone new, so the students must quickly learn and develop the art of opening dialogue and listening, without “digging,” to what is going on in the lives of the youth.

We intentionally open space for this dialogue through what is known as the “3rd thing.” Trying to start a conversation with someone you just met can be awkward, uncomfortable and somewhat intimidating, so we include refreshments as the “3rd thing”—something that we all enjoy. Eating is something we all do in common, is comforting, and makes for dialogue to happen quite naturally. Every week my students are assigned to purchase, prepare, and serve refreshments, and every week we stress to students that they must leave their comfort zone and seek out one of our SPARK youth. It is during these times that the SPARK youth are more likely to share about some of the struggles they are facing in life. We are quite attentive to ensure the SPARK youth do not sit alone or only with their peers.

Inspiring guest speakers are also invited who have themselves, experienced hardship and pain along their journey. Their talks are meant to encourage the youth that they are not alone, and to not give up on themselves in spite of their deforming environments. Other activities such as African therapeutic drumming have been used to assist teens working through emotional, behavioral, and social issues. This program requires everyone to find ways to work together and be supportive of one another. Drumming uses rhythm to promote a feeling of wellbeing and self-expression, along with reducing feelings of anger and depression. This experience also helps them feel rejuvenated, alive, stronger than before, and more hopeful. At the conclusion of the program, everyone expresses a positive change in their energy level.

## Conclusion

To conclude, many educators and high risk youth have pretty much given up on the idea that the deforming culture they experience will ever change. They long for the possibility that their educational experience can offer something more than an enduring struggle for autonomy, purpose and meaning. Both educators and youth long to fulfill their desire for personally meaningful learning experiences, but they are unable to perceive each other as practicing their deepest longings, and to meet each other in that vulnerable space. The need for a re-visioning of how to reconnect educators and youth, and how to ignite that mysterious spirit within each of us which is the source of inspiration, motivation, meaning, forming intimate relationships, and knowing it is urgent if this situation is going to change. However, I believe it is within our understanding and our grasp.

It is important that we, as teachers, are able to be authentic and true to ourselves. Students see teachers every day who come to school, put on a mask and live what Parker Palmer (2000) describes as a “divided life,” in which the deeply held beliefs of the teacher are marginalized when pressured by administrators or challenged by disempowered students. These kinds of teachers leave students longing for authentic classroom communities where each person seeks to know and also to be known.

Our program is designed to prepare preservice teachers for the day when they will face students in their classrooms who appear apathetic and unmotivated, and will offer them some of their greatest challenges. SPARK offers them a first-hand experience to become involved in a truly challenging and emerging, open-ended adventure that is both exciting and personally rewarding.

The SPARK program has demonstrated over the years, that there is a way to reconcile the differences in our deeply held beliefs and ignite a spark that breeds hope. This model offers an approach for our beginning teachers when responding to students who are perceived as a threat to their being an effective teacher. On completion of the program, they arrive at a more complete and deeper understanding of what does not work with troubled and defiant youth, and how effortless and worthwhile it is to connect with such students. These soon-to-be teachers come away with more than just another strategy to control students—they leave with a clearer picture of their identity, and are no longer intimidated by high risk youth. Many express feeling a deep bond with the youth. This unique “win/win” collaborative program is a model for transforming both high-risk youth, and also preservice teachers.



High risk youth have been traditionally seen as pathological juvenile delinquents, and viewed through their acting out behaviors. This myopic focus on behavior modification and quantifiable outcomes in schools, too often obviates alternative approaches to creating better connections with challenging youth. Ironically, these relationships and experiences have helped us to reframe high risk behaviors into opportunities that potentially foster connections with youth (Brendtro & Long, 2004; Skott-Myhre, 2006).

It is important to re-cogitate how we understand the outcomes we seek and examine alternative approaches to building relationships with youth, that give them hope that things in their lives can change. The SPARK program provides an opportunity for aspiring teachers to reconsider two major topics—the lens through which teachers work with youth, and the youth’s perception of teachers and learning. Finally, how can teachers expect to know how to better serve our youth, if there is not a consistent representation of youths’ voices?

While not exactly sure who benefited more, the soon-to-be teachers or the SPARK youth, the college students have expressed that they find this program to be life changing. It has helped them to examine their own lives, and be more transparent and real. It helped them move out of their comfort zones, inspired them to do more service, and lastly, it better prepared them to meet the diverse challenges of today’s classrooms.

“Everyone thinks of changing the world,  
but no one thinks of changing himself (Tolstoy, 1828-1910).

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## **Chapter 6: Police and Student Teachers as Teaching and Learning Partners: A Win-Win Collaboration**

~Anna Maria Barsanti & Jan Buley~



### **Introduction**

In our culture, police are often cast in the role of rule enforcers. They are the people who stop us when we are speeding down the highway, the people who force us to think twice about zipping through a yellow light at a busy intersection. We look to the police to help us with a stolen wallet, to investigate a fender bender, or to answer our questions about safety in our neighbourhood. However, police officers have also often been involved with school drug awareness programs, bicycle safety sessions, and safe community workshops. To partner several Laurentian University student teachers with the Greater Sudbury Police Services personnel to co-design lessons for middle school and secondary school students and their teachers was beyond the scope of typical consideration. However, this partnership has resulted in exciting and rewarding work, and this chapter will detail the steps taken together by police and educators in this teaching and learning collaboration.

There is much research supporting co-learning and co-mentoring in the field of education. When teacher candidates engage in service learning, they are encouraged to learn about the community and their students' diverse, multicultural environments. (Gandy, Pierce & Brooke, p. 42). Co-learning and co-mentoring can help celebrate the various levels of expertise that adults bring to a particular educational setting. Working in collaboration with others requires a high

degree of commitment and dedication, and a healthy awareness of how to foster positive communication.

Historically, in school settings, a police presence has been employed to respond to something negative that may have developed—student possession of weapons, suspected drug use, defacing of property, and other perceived “threats” to the safety, operations, and health of a school and its community members. Indeed, uniformed police officers are sometimes positioned at the entrances of large urban schools to maintain a sense of a safe and secure environment. Certainly in the United States, a highly visible response to the Columbine shooting resulted in the hiring of security guards, the installation of metal detection devices and security cameras, and police officers to regulate “who and what” entered the school building.

Years ago, the Greater Sudbury Police Service shifted the punitive disciplinary view of police officers in school settings, and now are frequently seen at community events, service groups, school celebrations and other regional functions.

### **How the First Seeds Were Planted**

In 2010, the Greater Sudbury Police Service reached out to the membership for volunteers to participate in the inclusion team. As one of their first strategies to inform all members, the team developed and designed a one-day workshop called “Do You Really Know Me?” Some of the best learning happens when one reaches out to others, and the inclusion team reached out to Dr. Jan Buley in the faculty of education at Laurentian University, to help the group explore the idea of identity. Jan designed a workshop exploring the power and metaphor of masks. In addition to making plaster masks, participants explored ways in which members of society wear figurative masks. Together, we listed the qualities, assumptions, and personal opinions that are sometimes hidden underneath masks that we wear, and the perceived masks that other human beings wear. The workshop consolidated the concept of “what we show and how we grow,” thanks to Jan’s belief in an experiential hands-on learning approach.

Who could have predicted that this wonderful teaching and learning collaboration with masks would set the stage for Greater Sudbury Police Service (GSPS) to hatch yet another proposal to access Dr. Jan Buley’s expertise and enthusiasm? Members of the Community Mobilization Unit were asked to poll local schools, to determine current topics of concern to school administration, staff and students. At the same time, Dr. Buley was reaching out to inquire about

the possibility of funding for a local youth group project through the Greater Sudbury Police Chief's Youth Initiative Fund (CYIF). The CYIF is utilized as a source of funds for social action projects which have a child and youth focus. Anna Barsanti works with the GSPS as the youth education coordinator, and is also involved with CYIF. She is a retired student success leader, a former principal, a former teacher, but never a former learner. Her world revolves around education, school partnerships, and community mobilization in really positive proactive ways. Now joyously failing in retirement, Anna brings tremendous vision and energy to this position. She is an effervescent connector of people, and being in the presence of her "make it better" attitude is transformative. And so, these two educators, Jan and Anna, arranged a meeting to discuss how to better support one another in their joint efforts to best serve children and youth in the community.

Timing is the deciding factor for so many collaborations, and in the spring of 2014, it just so happened that members of the CMU (community mobilization unit) were busy reviewing feedback from schools about how best to reach grade seven and eight students, and how to support educators in the dissemination of information relative to issues experienced by the youth. One of the ideas that surfaced was the development of a series of lessons to be led by GSPS members in the classrooms. To best design the lessons, Dr. Buley was contacted to explore the possibility of a partnership with the Laurentian University School of Education and professional year education students. The partnership PAL-P (Police as Learning Partners) was struck. Sgt. Carrie-Lynn Hotson and Anna Barsanti met with Dr. Buley, and within days, several student teachers expressed interest in volunteering their time, expertise, and commitment to the project.

At this initial meeting, some basic information was shared. The student teachers were told about the proposed collaboration, and then we talked about how this might unfold. We listened to many ideas and thoughts, and eventually, this list was decided upon:

1. During the practicum, student teachers would survey teachers and students in hopes of identifying key socio-emotional topics that pertain to students in middle school and secondary school levels.
2. Once a list was decided upon, the task would be to co-design lesson plans with a partner. Because the student teachers were enrolled in methodology classes addressing drama/literacy education, it was decided that the created lessons for PAL-P would contain a drama-literacy interactive "hook" as part of the lesson design.

3. Participating student teachers knew that they would be presenting these lessons in the presence of police personnel, university faculty (when possible), students, and classroom teachers.
4. Student teachers were also aware that they would eventually be asked to share their lesson plan ideas, as part an ongoing growing bank of ideas for the local police service to use in future school visitations and teaching.
5. With these expectations defined, the student teachers went into their practice teaching placements, and spoke to students and teachers in their designated classrooms. When we gathered in January, they reported their findings, and we began making a list of their observations. Eventually, five topics were chosen—mental health, cell phone etiquette, gender identification, conflict resolution, and cyberbullying. We reflected on the importance of “grabbing the interest of teenagers” and as a result, we designed some creative titles for the workshops that would be offered. These included the following:
  - Whose Skin Are You In? (Body image, body awareness.)
  - What? No Cell Phones in Class? (Responsible social media use.)
  - You Can’t Sit Here! (Inclusion and acceptance of others.)
  - Who Cares? So What? (Bullying.)
  - Not My Problem (Conflict resolution.)
  - What’s the Big Deal? (Mental health awareness.)

The student teachers were then tasked in pairs to create lesson plans about a particular issue of their choosing, with a drama/literacy education component infused into the flow of the lesson. The group shared ideas about how to create effective “hooks” for lesson introductions, as well as how to assess the learning in positive and instructive ways. Several meetings were held to “bounce ideas around” before implementation of the lessons, and each of the partners received valuable coaching from the other. Anna connected with local school boards, and eventually, four schools were selected to participate in the pilot project. The lessons were well received. Classroom teachers, principals, and students were very encouraging, and the student teachers felt empowered and enriched by the experience.

### **More Seeds Are Planted**

The first year of PAL-P had been so successful as a police/school/university collaboration, that in 2015, a decision was made to offer the opportunity to a new group of student teachers.

Student teachers from the previous year had shared some of their excitement with the incoming group of education students, and the news had spread about becoming involved with PAL-P. Consequently, in the fall of 2015, Jan and Anna again met with professional year education students. Due to interest from schools, it was decided to expand the program to include grade 10 classes. As in the past, eight education students designed and offered highly interactive lessons in eight pilot classes that included both grades eight and 10. Again, the response from students, teachers, and principals was overwhelmingly positive.

Students who attended the workshop sessions offered valuable insights into their own learning. One of the lesson requirements for the student teachers was to offer an opportunity for written responses, as part of an assessment strategy at the end of each lesson. After offering the lessons, an “unpacking” was always done in conversation with the observing police personnel, university faculty, and classroom teachers. As a result of these conversations, it became apparent that the creative use of drama, media clips, and literacy ideas were powerful for the learners. Most encouraging, were the attitude shifts that became evident from students’ comments. Various “prompt questions” were provided on exit tickets for students and classroom teachers, and the learning and thinking was evidently powerful.

The following are excerpts taken from some of the assessment questionnaires used by the student teachers in their lessons:

In your opinion, what is one thing that is challenging about “coming out?”

*Not being accepted by others and fearing that everyone will judge me.*

*It takes courage. Now I know what it feels like.*

*Thinking that they will lose friends and family by coming out.*

*The fear of not knowing how family and peers will react.*

*You don’t know how your mom and dad will think.*

*People judge you.*

*The biggest fear is not knowing how people will react and that’s probably one of the scariest things for an LGBTQA (A for asexual) member, because if people do not accept you, it can really affect you.*

What is something you have learned from this workshop?

*I never really thought about how disrespectful cellphones can be in class.*

*I liked the skit about texting in class. I never knew it was so distracting.*

*The YouTube about the kid who was nicknamed Porkchops was really emotional.*

*I never thought about bullying that way. It made me sad.*

*I learned that body image is linked to bullying sometimes. Like what we eat and wear.*

*I didn’t realize how many texts are sent in a day or a week or a month.*



*Some people don't realize that they have everything and are privileged because of the stuff they own. Like having lunch money every day or going on an airplane trip. I learned the difference between tattling and telling. I never knew that some people only pay attention to certain things with body image. I liked really thinking about the words to the song Beautiful.*

What are some things you can do to help others who are in the process of coming out?

*You can say nice things to the person to make them feel better about themselves. You could talk to them, and help them through the troubles or when they get stuck. Accept them and stand up to people who bully them. Help them feel good about themselves. Stand by their side. Tell them that you accept them and it's okay to like the same gender, and that it doesn't make you weird or gross or wrong because you're still a person. Don't ignore them. Listen to what they have to say and be a friend. Like you said about walking in their shoes. Now I know what that's like.*

## **Conclusion**

This collaboration has really been about stretching the perceptions of police partnerships in university and school settings. For more than two decades, there has been a mandatory component in Ontario secondary schools requiring all students to complete a minimum of 40 hours of community service prior to graduation. Community service can include assisting at an event that benefits the community directly through environmental awareness, at an arts or cultural association, or some other type of ethical and positive contribution within the community. Participating in walk-a-thons, charity events, coaching, food drives, tutoring as part of a youth program, assisting seniors or volunteering at library reading programs have all been options. Many of the teacher candidates interested in participating in this partnership had been involved with community projects in their secondary school and undergraduate years, but only one student had volunteered with the local police service before, at a bicycle safety course.

One student teacher reflected aloud one day: "We had the usual police presentations and assemblies on drug awareness, anti-bullying and that kind of thing, but not like this. There would be an announcement about a special assembly, the police would come into the schools, do these slide presentations or talk at us, and then leave. I don't remember the content really. Maybe that's an important thing to notice now that I'm a teacher! The presentations were just talks or PowerPoints, and I don't really remember them well."

Throughout this collaboration, much unpredicted learning took place. The preservice education students were excited to apply what they knew about good teaching and learning

pedagogy, and share this knowledge with the community mobilization unit and police personnel. They were empowered, knowing that their lessons would be witnessed and experienced by young learners, classroom teachers, and police representatives from the community mobilization unit, and then be added to a growing bank of lesson plan ideas for the police to use in their future school education programs. The creation of these interactive lessons has required vulnerability from all parties involved, and a willingness to teach courageously and creatively. The co-learning has been highly reflective. The police as learning partners initiative, now entering its third year, has been very well received, and there are already plans to expand and grow the collaboration in exciting ways. We are presently pondering ways to include family members and new Canadians, and to offer workshops in French for additional learning opportunities. The benefits for preservice teachers are visible. They see themselves involved in purposeful learning and training of others, and they are also aware of the valuable contributions they are making in the lives of young adolescent learners and police members.

The importance of collaborating, reflecting orally, and sharing through conversation was celebrated often throughout this process. As a result of innovative teaching ideas shared by the preservice teachers involved, police personnel were awakened to the benefits of including more creative ways to introduce lessons. For example, one teaching partner used masks and literacy metaphors to share ideas about inclusion. Another lesson utilized a short skit to demonstrate how cellphones distract others and interfere with attention in class. The sharing of these lessons expanded the scope of how lessons might be taught creatively and experientially, and as a result, philosophies and teacher/learner strategies have been expanded for everyone.

The police as learners partnership has created a healthy dialogue with preservice teachers about the role of policing in the community. After the workshops concluded, one student teacher wrote:

This collaboration with the police has really convinced me about how important addressing these issues is. Yes, the topics are difficult to talk about, but it's really important to find ways to have the discussions. I'm excited about the fact that the police have been learning with us. They have seen the importance of interactive lessons and getting kids talking and acting. That's been really rewarding for me too, and I'd love to help to get something like this to happen in my own school someday.

Clearly, this collaboration has clearly shown that together, we're better. With each new preservice educator who participates in PAL-P, one more teacher enters the teaching and learning field who

will reach out to a local police service, where they are engaged in the teaching and learning relationship, to explore partnerships. Together, young people will witness and see teachers and police personnel, as caring adults in their broadening circle of care.

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## Chapter 7: Education for the Anthropocene: The Contribution of Vasily Sukhomlinsky

~Alan Cockerill~



### Introduction: The Anthropocene

Educators generally, and teacher educators in particular, need to consider the context in which they are working if their work is to be meaningful and effective. The broad context within which all educators currently work is that we are living during the Anthropocene, an age when human impact on the global environment is enormous and accelerating. According to one carefully argued paper (Lewis & Maslon, 2015), the Anthropocene may be considered to have begun with the conquest of the Americas by European powers, which led to an acceleration of economic development in Europe and to the industrial revolution. This period also coincided with the scientific revolution, and with a movement towards universal education.

The Anthropocene has been characterized by mass migration of humans around the globe, by an explosion in the human population, by competition for resources, by exponential growth in species extinctions, by ever-accelerating growth in scientific knowledge, technology, and communication networks, and by climate change and environmental degradation. Capitalism appears to have triumphed over communism in the battle for hearts and minds, but an economic system based on ever-increasing consumption of natural resources is clearly not sustainable.

Neither is competition between nations for limited resources. The internet has made disparities in wealth around the globe obvious to many, and national boundaries are becoming ever harder to secure against a flood of refugees that knock at the doors of more prosperous nations.

With humanity playing such a dominant role on the planet, our future security and happiness depends very much on our ability to adapt to changing circumstances, to co-exist with each other, and to modify our behaviour and expectations in light of the growing burden we are placing on the natural environment. The future of humanity depends on the personal qualities of the future citizens of the world, and these, in turn, depend on educational practices in families and schools around the globe.

### **The Relevance of Vasily Sukhomlinsky's Approach to Education**

The age of mathematics, one hears all the time, the age of electronics, the space age. These are all catchy phrases, but they do not reflect the real essence of what is happening in our times. The world is entering the age of humanity—that is what is important ... More than ever before, we are obliged to consider what we are contributing to the human soul. I am very concerned that for the majority of students the end of secondary school marks the end of their education in the humanities. I mean the broad humanitarian education of young people—emotional and aesthetic education, the education of sensitivity and refinement, of an impressionable nature, of a responsive and sensitive heart (Sukhomlinsky, 1987, p. 37).

One educator who developed a methodology applicable to the demands of the Anthropocene was Vasily Sukhomlinsky (1918-1970), a far-sighted Ukrainian teacher, school principal, and member of the USSR Academy of Pedagogical Sciences. From 1948 until his death in 1970, Sukhomlinsky was the principal of a combined primary and secondary school with an enrolment of approximately 500 students, in the rural settlement of Pavlysh in central Ukraine.

Sukhomlinsky combined the practices of teaching, school administration, teacher training, parent education, and scholarship, to a degree that many would find astonishing. (See Soloveichik, 1971.) His school was visited by thousands of educators from the length and breadth of the Soviet Union and beyond, and his books were read by millions. He made strenuous efforts not only to develop the best possible practices in his own school but, through his writing, to promote such practices throughout the Soviet Union and internationally.

Working during the aftermath of the Second World War, when nearly all families in the region had suffered great trauma, Sukhomlinsky developed a holistic system of education that was designed to invigorate and heal, as well as to instruct. Sukhomlinsky's educational methodology

includes features that are likely to interest educators who aspire to educate global citizens. The methodology is underpinned by a deep connection to the natural world, resulting from frequent excursions into fields and forests that surrounded Sukhomlinsky's rural school. (See Sukhomlinsky, 2016.) Such excursions were utilized to foster observation and thought, to develop aesthetic sensibilities, and to strengthen health and resilience. Sukhomlinsky was very concerned that all his students should develop an appreciation for beauty in nature, in human relationships, and in work. He wrote that what a person becomes depends on their notion of happiness (1980a, p. 416), and he sought to ensure that his students found happiness through the appreciation of beauty, and through creativity rather than through consumption.

Sukhomlinsky's first priority in the primary school was to develop health and resilience in his students, and outdoor activities played an important role in this. (Sukhomlinsky, 2016, pp. 54-60, 121-132.) He also paid great attention to students' relationships with each other, with their families, and with members of the community. He challenged the notion, common among Soviet educators at that time, that the interests of the individual must be subordinated to those of the collective, but he did believe that the collective played a crucial role in supporting the development of each individual. (The word "collective" could refer to a class of students, a work group, or to a whole school community. It corresponds fairly closely to the concept of the "group" in social psychology.) He believed that each member of the collective must be trained to have empathy for others, if the collective were to support each individual's growth. Otherwise it could turn into "a blind, soulless force, prepared to trample an individual into the ground" (cited in Cockerill, 1999, pp. 124-125). "How important this is," wrote Sukhomlinsky, "to teach small children to recognize, from the eyes, movements and speech of the people around them, grief and joy, disappointment and concern, anxiety and confusion. If we do not carry out this work, a person may grow up to be an insensitive blockhead" (Sukhomlinsky, 1989a, p. 77).

Sukhomlinsky actively encouraged a sense of global citizenship, teaching his students about the lives of children in other countries, and encouraging them to reach out to those in need. When his students heard of Sadako Sasaki, dying of radiation sickness in a Japanese hospital, they sent her paper cranes. They experienced her death as a personal loss (Sukhomlinsky, 2016, pp. 193-194).

Sukhomlinsky died in 1970, but his ideas continue to resonate with educators around the world. The continuing popularity of his work in Ukraine and Russia is not surprising, but the

growth of interest in his writings in China is particularly interesting, given the expanding influence of China in the world.

### **Sukhomlinsky's Approach to Teacher Education**

Pavlysh Secondary School should be renamed a university of education! We say this quite seriously—a feeling of wonder and admiration overcomes anyone with the slightest love for children and schools (V. A. Karakovsky, principal of School No. 1, Chelyabinsk [cited in Soloveichik, 1971]).

Sukhomlinsky made a contribution to the education of teachers through his direct involvement with the professional development of teachers at his school, and through his many publications. At the school level, he spent a great deal of time in conversation with teachers, sharing his philosophy and experience, and encouraging teachers to develop their individual talents and interests. When a new teacher commenced work at his school, he or his director of studies would spend years developing the teacher's knowledge and skills, through detailed study of professional literature and textbooks, and through visiting each other's lessons. At the whole staff level, regular fortnightly seminars were devoted to the study of individual students, and to the study of various topics related to professional practice. All the teachers at various times were responsible for presentations at these seminars, and most of them at some time published articles based on their practical research in periodicals. Sukhomlinsky himself wrote over 30 books and over 500 articles, based on his experience at the school in Pavlysh.

Sukhomlinsky thought that a principal should be the leading teacher in a school, and should continue to work as an educator, in the same way that the doctor in charge of a hospital should continue to have their own patients. Just as a hospital is a training institution for doctors, the school should be a training institution for teachers. Sukhomlinsky describes the collegiate work of his teaching staff in detail in one of the last of his works to be published during his lifetime: *Pavlyshskaya srednyaya shkola* [Pavlysh Secondary School] (1980b). This book provides significant insights into Sukhomlinsky's expectations of teaching staff, into the way he gradually brought together a dedicated team of teachers, and into the ongoing approach to professional development at his school.

Sukhomlinsky's concept of education went far beyond preparing students for participation in the workforce. The ultimate goal of education was a deeply moral one. In one of his final notebooks he wrote:

My deep pedagogical belief is that the doing of good for others should at the same time be a creation of goodness within oneself, a construction of one's character, so that this revelation of one's desire to be good manifests itself in a great spiritual work, in a huge expenditure of spiritual energy. Here we come to the holy of holies of education: every student must experience their own personal ascent to the summit of moral valour, their own upward flight, their own incandescence, when their heart blazes like that of Gorky's hero Danko. To bring each person to this is the meaning of education. (cited in Sukhomlinsky, 1989b, p. 6.)

This deeply moral interpretation of the meaning of education is reflected in the qualities that Sukhomlinsky looked for in a teacher. Firstly, and most importantly, they should like children, enjoy their company, empathize with them, and have faith in their innate potential for goodness. Secondly, they should be in love with their subject, and keep abreast of latest developments in it. Thirdly, they should be well versed in psychology and educational thought, and fourthly they should have some practical work skill which they could pass on to children (Sukhomlinsky, 1980b, p. 48).

This fourth requirement reflects the exceptional importance that Sukhomlinsky placed on extracurricular activities, and on discovering each child's unique talents and vocational leanings. Extracurricular activities provided an avenue for getting to know students more deeply, and for character development. Sukhomlinsky was himself heavily involved in extracurricular activities at the school, including the supervision of a preschool group. He has described his extracurricular work in great detail in two publications: *Serdtsse otdayu detyam* [My Heart I Give to Children] (2012) and *Rozhdenie Grazhdanina* [The Birth of a Citizen] (1979). *Serdtsse otdayu detyam* is Sukhomlinsky's best known work, and a new Russian language edition appeared in 2012, prepared by Sukhomlinsky's daughter on the basis of a 1966 manuscript. This 2012 edition has provided the basis for a new English language translation, carried out by the author of this paper, and published in 2016.

Sukhomlinsky did not expect beginning teachers to be masters of their craft, but believed they should have at least the potential to develop the four attributes listed above.

A teacher's didactic and methodological inexperience is no cause for alarm; gaps in knowledge are not either, if a person is industrious and has a thirst for knowledge. Of the 25 teachers at our school with higher education, 12 completed their studies externally while working as teachers at our school. Of the 10 teachers without a higher education, six are currently enrolled in teacher training institutions externally. If, however, a teacher has no faith in a child, if he becomes depressed and disillusioned at the slightest failure, if he is convinced that nothing will come



of a child, he has no business to be in a school: he will only torment the children and himself be tormented throughout his life (Sukhomlinsky, 1980b, p. 48).

Sukhomlinsky placed such importance on the personal attributes of teachers, that he sometimes encouraged people working in other jobs to take up teaching and come to work at his school. One instance he describes in detail is that of Aleksandr Aleksandrovich Filippov, who undertook teacher training on Sukhomlinsky's advice. When Aleksandr Filippov was demobilized from the army after the war, he joined the staff of a local factory as an electrician. Sukhomlinsky became aware that students from his school and from a neighbouring school were attracted to Filippov's home in the evenings. Filippov had a well-equipped workshop at home, and under his direction the students were constructing working models and equipment. Sukhomlinsky writes:

I got to know Aleksandr Aleksandrovich, and became convinced that he would make a good teacher. I advised him to undertake external studies in education. Over the following year, Aleksandr Aleksandrovich got to know our school, and visited the lessons of experienced teachers. We helped him with his external studies, and he helped the school with extra-curricular activities. Children, adolescents and senior students with an interest in technical innovation were drawn to him (Sukhomlinsky, 1980b, pp. 44-45).

With each year, the number of students involved in these extracurricular technical activities grew, and so did the variety and complexity of their projects. Filippov joined the staff as a teacher of physics and mathematics, and continued to run an extensive program. Sukhomlinsky and his director of studies worked with every teacher in the school, to help develop their professional knowledge and skills. Sukhomlinsky describes his work with Aleksandr Filippov as an example of how this worked in practice. He writes:

Mr. Filippov became acquainted with the pedagogical views and convictions of our staff, even before he was appointed to our school, through involvement in our extra-curricular programs. I had several conversations with this future teacher about instructional methods and types of lessons, about children's independent work, and about taking an individual approach to students. I was convinced that the young teacher could only become a master of his craft if he developed common spiritual interests with his students—intellectual, vocational and creative interests—as this is the only way to get to know a child. I helped the teacher to study several books on pedagogy devoted to lesson formats, and then he began a didactic analysis of text books used in the subjects he was intending to teach: physics in years six and seven, and mathematics in year eight. He visited the lessons of experienced teachers, sometimes accompanied by me. On these occasions, particular attention was given to the didactic analysis of teaching programs and text books (Sukhomlinsky, 1980, pp. 2; 82-3).

Sukhomlinsky also describes how he worked with Filippov on the preparation and conducting of lessons:

To visit the first lessons of a beginning teacher is counter-productive: you need to give them time to get to know the class and find their feet. But at the same time, it is important to help prevent possible errors. When discussing the content of the first lessons with Aleksandr Filippov, I posed the following questions:

1. What facts from the surrounding life will you use to develop concepts relating to physical phenomena, motion, and the relativity of motion?
2. How will you structure the study of new material, so that students are able to make conclusions and generalisations, analysing, finding meaning, juxtaposing phenomena they encounter in life?
3. What prior knowledge should be developed and deepened during the process of studying new material?
4. What phenomena from surrounding life, and from workplaces, will you direct the children's attention to when setting homework?

Reflecting on these questions should lead the teacher deeper and deeper into the lesson content.

During the first two weeks of lessons, Mr. Filippov told me about his lessons at the end of each working day. Discussing lessons that I had not yet visited, helped me to clarify the extent to which he was able to analyze the dependence of students' knowledge on his preparation for the lesson. I was pleased that Mr. Filippov spoke openly about both the positive and negative aspects of his lessons, and tried to understand the reasons for any failures. From our conversations, it became clear that most of his difficulties arose during the study of new material. At the second lesson of the year, seven physics class students had already forgotten the material studied during the first lesson.

I explained how to gather information about the work of the whole class and of individual students in the process of studying material, and how to observe and analyze the effectiveness of the students' intellectual work. The first, and most important, stage of instruction—the deep understanding of the essence of the phenomenon, rule, or cause and effect relationship that has just been explained—should be clearly observable by the teacher during the lesson. Homework is only for the deepening, developing, and applying of acquired knowledge.

Later conversations showed that Mr. Filippov was now trying to instruct and to get students to demonstrate their knowledge at the same time, so as to avoid gaps in knowledge or understanding, and to study how individual students worked. But it was obtaining feedback that was proving most difficult for the teacher. It was now clear to me what I needed to focus my

attention on at his lessons, and in what areas he needed more help. The time had come to begin visiting and analyzing his lessons.

The very first lesson I visited showed me that Mr. Filippov had difficulty combining exposition, discussion, or practical activities with assessment of students' knowledge, and observation of the process of students' intellectual work. He had to simultaneously think about the content, and about what unforeseen variations it was necessary to introduce into the lesson plan, so as to avoid a lack of comprehension on the part of the students, and to overcome their inability to reflect upon and analyze the facts.

In analyzing the first lesson, I directed most attention to the way in which students move forward on the path to knowledge. But in such cases, even the most thorough analysis is not enough. The teacher needs a demonstration of what you are talking about and advising. We agreed that Mr. Filippov would visit my grammar lesson, and that I would then visit his physics lesson, and that we would continue visiting each other's lessons in turn.

I spent a long time preparing the lesson the young teacher was to visit. It was very important that he should see and understand how to observe and analyze the process of acquiring knowledge.

At my lesson, students were studying the classification of simple sentences, and revising some spelling rules. Each student worked independently on an individual card with sentences and spelling words. The children's responses took the form of reflections that led the students to go deeper into the facts. Through reflection, each student came independently, on the basis of their own data set, to an understanding of a grammatical rule. The assessment was not a separate part of the lesson, but took place during the course of the lesson.

Our conversation after the lesson, showed that the young teacher had understood the main point. To observe the process of intellectual work, it is necessary to skillfully organize independent work (in the broad sense of the word) in which the children make sense of facts and phenomena. I discussed my lesson in detail, directing particular attention to the fact that deep knowledge is only possible if a student is conscious of many facts, and discovers the truth through an analysis of those facts.

We visited each other's lessons for a year, and also visited the lessons of other teachers. The young teacher always sets the task of analyzing how students were stimulated to work actively when studying new material, how they independently made sense of facts, how memorization and learning takes place on the basis of deep understanding. Simultaneously with visiting lessons, the

young teacher studied a section in a pedagogy textbook devoted to the process of active and conscious learning, and a section on “thought and language” in a psychology textbook.

It is impossible to learn from others’ experience, and develop pedagogical mastery without theoretical understanding. At our school, regardless of their previous education, every beginning teacher studies didactics and psychology in close connection with an analysis of their practical work, and the experience of other teachers. Mastery comes to teachers only when they have theoretical insight into each pedagogical phenomenon.

Mr. Filippov experienced significant difficulty in revising previously studied material. He was able to understand how revision takes place during the study of new material, only by clarifying the psychological, pedagogical, and logical connections between the objects and phenomena of the surrounding world. The study of pedagogical and psychological literature helped the young teacher to understand what he observed during the lessons of experienced teachers. He understood that revision is not an end in itself, but a means of developing and deepening knowledge, that the skillful selection of material for revision, comes about through determining the logical connections between topics, concepts, laws, rules, and formulas.

At the end of the first academic year, Mr Filippov and I had a discussion that included other teachers whose lessons he had visited. The young teacher had learnt to engage children in intellectual work, and had developed a strong connection with them. He had mastered the logical step by step exposition of new material, and the heuristic discussion method. He had taken the first steps towards combining the study of new material with incidental assessment of prior knowledge. But there were still many areas for improvement in his work: an inability to plan revision over a sequence of lessons, a separation between the application of knowledge and the acquisition of new knowledge, insufficient use of individual students’ enthusiasm for technical innovation, construction and modeling to broaden their outlook, and deepen their theoretical knowledge.

We decided to continue working together with the same format for another year. I and the other experienced teachers would visit eight to 10 of his lessons, with the aim of further developing methods of instruction, especially the students’ independent work, analyzing facts and phenomena. Mr. Filippov would visit three or four of my lessons, with the aim of studying methods of discussion and exposition, studying methods for revising previously studied material, and for applying knowledge in order to deepen it. Together we would both visit a sequence of year six algebra lessons conducted by Mr. Panchenko, so as to familiarize ourselves with his lesson

preparation, and study the processes he utilized for revising, developing, and deepening knowledge. After that, we would cooperatively prepare a single physics lesson plan (with a verbatim exposition script). Mr. Filippov would study this lesson plan and conduct the lesson. The aim was to perfect the exposition of new material. We would also continue to study the curriculum and textbooks, texts on pedagogy, and the methodology for teaching physics and mathematics.

The second year of Mr. Filippov's work began. Analyzing his lessons, I delved deeper and deeper into the students' intellectual work. We became aware of an interesting rule of thumb—the greater the extent to which material that has been studied earlier is utilized to understand new material, the more students' intellectual activity is stimulated, the deeper the understanding of new material, and the more material studied earlier is consolidated. Students' intellectual activity is stimulated most of all, when material studied earlier is used as a key to understanding new material. In addition, the more I reflected on what was happening during lessons, the more I found a source of new pedagogical ideas, creativity, and convictions.

My educational experience owes a great deal to the intelligent, thoughtful teachers whose lessons I have visited and analyzed. When I was still uncovering some new facet of educational practice, but was having difficulty understanding its essence, I would visit from five to seven lessons in a row given by these teachers, trying to find an answer to the question that was bothering me.

Studying the dependence of students' active intellectual work on the application of prior knowledge at Mr. Filippov's lessons, I discerned another rule of thumb—the more difficult it is to grasp some abstract truth, which has to be memorized, and is required as a key to the explanation of some new fact or phenomenon, the more the memorization of this abstraction (rule, formula, law) depends on the body of facts a student has independently analyzed and made sense of. Going through the young teacher's lessons, we came to the conclusion that deep memorization of a rule (law, formula) takes place when students concentrate their thought on the corresponding facts, analyze them, and work out their own theoretical generalizations based on the relationships they see. This is creative innovation in the process of intellectual activity, leading to the development of intellectual ability (Sukhomlinsky, 1980b, pp. 84-86).

At the end of the second year of Mr. Filippov's employment at the school, he and Sukhomlinsky agreed on a continuing program of visiting each other's lessons, but now over a three-year period. Their analyses became ever more sophisticated and far-reaching, and Mr.

Filippov's practice became more and more refined. Mr. Filippov began to make presentations at staff meetings based on his experience, and to lead discussion on how to get effective feedback on student learning. After more than a decade working at the school, he was playing a leadership role in regional professional development activities, and delivering presentations on a variety of topics related to his own practice.

Mr. Filippov's experience was not unique. All of the teachers at Sukhomlinsky's school were involved in similar programs of professional development, observation of each other's lesson, presenting findings at staff meetings, and publishing articles based on their experience. Sukhomlinsky summarized the collective efforts of his staff to find answers to educational challenges as follows:

When each teacher day after day goes ever deeper into the details and subtleties of the education process, analyzing their work and the intellectual work of their students, there is, figuratively speaking, a kindling of living thought among the staff. The staff seek answers to questions put by life itself, and educational ideas provide the wings upon which collective innovation can soar. An idea inspires the staff, and there begins the most interesting and necessary thing in the life of a school: collective research (Sukhomlinsky, 1980b, p. 93).

It was this collective research that provided a basis for Sukhomlinsky's many publications, which included over 500 articles and over 30 books, many published posthumously, which sold millions of copies, and were translated into many languages. These in turn, became a valuable resource in teacher education, throughout the Soviet Union, but also in other socialist countries. Sukhomlinsky's path to publication was not an easy one. There were many in the communist educational establishment who struggled to accept his ideas about the need to foster the spiritual development of pupils, and who felt he placed too much emphasis on the individual at the expense of the collective. In spite of some resistance, and attacks in the press during the last three years of his life, Sukhomlinsky's writings were extremely popular with teachers, who felt he was one of them, and not living in some ivory tower at an institute or university. His popularity continued to grow after his death, and some of his most mature work was published posthumously. In China, where most of his major works were published during the 1980s and 1990s, he is one of the most widely read and popular foreign educators, and conferences devoted to his legacy attract hundreds of delegates. It remains to be seen how much his writings can inspire Western educators, as more of his work is translated into English. In some respects, his work anticipated modern trends

towards considering the role of the brain in learning, towards environmental education, towards a more collegiate approach to professional development, and the sharing of pedagogical practice.

### **An International Collaboration: The Glade of Dreams Art Competition**

Among Sukhomlinsky's many books on education, there are two dedicated exclusively to the teaching of ethics to children: *Kak vospitat' nastoyashchego cheloveka* [How to Educate a True Human Being] (1989b) and *Krestomatiya po etike* [An Ethics Anthology] (1990). These are books that Sukhomlinsky was working on up until his death, that were published posthumously in a number of different formats. The editions cited above were prepared by Sukhomlinsky's daughter, Professor Olga Sukhomlyns'ka, who suggests that they correspond closely to her father's original intention. *How to Educate a True Human Being* contains moral lectures on 59 topics written specifically for children, together with detailed reflections on each topic, written for teachers. An introduction for teachers contains some interesting reflections on what makes a child "educable" and responsive to a teacher's guidance. (See Cockerill, 1999, pp. 56-57.) *An Ethics Anthology* is made up of hundreds of little tales for children, arranged thematically under eight headings. The first heading is *Beauty—The Joy of Life*, and is indicative of the importance Sukhomlinsky placed on an appreciation of beauty as an integral part of character development.

In 2012, the author of this chapter translated a selection of these little tales about natural beauty for publication in a children's picture book, and was looking for an illustrator from Ukraine. This led to collaboration with a teacher training institute in Donetsk, Ukraine, in 2013, to organize a children's art competition seeking illustrations for 19 of Sukhomlinsky's tales for children. The coordinator of the project in Ukraine was Svetlana Fesenko, a lecturer at the Donetsk Regional Institute for postgraduate studies in education. She promoted the competition in schools in Ukraine, Russia, Belarus, and Kazakhstan, while the author of this chapter undertook to publish the winning entries in a children's picture book in Australia, and to provide prizes to the winners. (The prizes included a copy of the resulting picture book, an Australian picture book, and art materials.) Australian illustrator Cassandra Allen assisted in judging the entries, and was employed to design the resulting picture book (Sukhomlinsky, 2013).

The competition ran for three months, and attracted approximately 2,000 entries, which were posted on the internet by the Ukrainian organizers. In order to participate, the children had to read the stories in Russian, and plan and execute an appropriate illustration for one of the stories.

Stories were grouped according to four age categories, so that prizes could be awarded to children of various ages—in years three and four, five and six, seven to nine, and 10 and 11. The ages of the winners ranged from eight to 17 years old. Nearly all the winners came from the Donetsk region of Ukraine, with just one story being illustrated by two eight-year-old artists from Belarus. (The competition was held before the events of 2014 that led to civil war in the Donetsk region, and the beauty of their illustrations now has an added poignancy.)

One of the stories illustrated by children in years three and four was entitled, *How Can the Bumblebee Get Out?* In it, a young child empathizes with the plight of an insect trapped in a school classroom:

A bumblebee, yellow and furry, flew into the classroom. For a long time, it flew around and then it flew over to the window. It beat against the glass and cried, but it could not get out. When the children arrived at school, the bumblebee was quietly crawling across the window pane. Sometimes it tried to fly, but it had no strength left. The bumblebee was crawling over the glass. Nobody took any notice of the poor bumblebee, except for Nina, the smallest girl in the class, who stared at it all the time. Nina wanted so much to go up to the bumblebee, to take it in the palm of her hand, to lift it up to the open ventilation window, and let it out. Nina could not wait for the break. If only the time would go faster. If only the bell could ring sooner (Sukhomlinsky, 2013, p. 19).

The winning entry for this story was produced by two eight-year-old girls from Belarus, showing a colourful bumblebee looking out at the sun (see Figure 1). Equally interesting is another entry showing the little girl looking at the bumblebee and reaching out to help it (see Figure 2). In order to produce such beautiful illustrations, the children had to enter into the spirit of the stories, and internalize their meaning.



Figure 1: Elizaveta Shinkevich



Figure 2: Yuliya Logvin

(from Sukhomlinsky, 2013, p. 18)



Some of Sukhomlinsky's stories for children are quite poetic. The story, Who the Rowan Tree was Waiting for, was illustrated by students in years seven, eight and nine (see Figure 3):

The rowan tree shed its leaves. Only bunches of red berries remained. They hung like beads, beautiful, but bitter and tart. Whenever birds came and tried the berries, they found them bitter and flew on. Then one morning a beautiful song rang out above the rowan tree, as if silver strings were being played. Some wonderful crested birds had arrived. They were waxwings. They had flown from the far north. They were the ones the rowan tree had been waiting for! Joyfully she welcomed her guests with her red berries. None of the other birds knew the rowan tree's berries had become sweet. People say frost makes the berries sweet, but it was not the frost. It was grief. The rowan tree had waited so long for its dear guests, feeling sad, grieving, worrying that they would not come. And its grief made the berries sweet (Sukhomlinsky, 2013, p. 16).



Figure 3: Nikolai Sirotenko  
(from Sukhomlinsky, 2013, p. 16)

Other stories show contrasting human attitudes to plant and animal life. In, They Cut Down the Willow Tree, the act of felling a tree is presented from the point-of-view of a personified natural environment:

The willow grew by a pond. On quiet summer mornings she looked into the water. Her leaves neither moved nor whispered. But when birds landed on the willow, her leaves trembled. That was because she was surprised. "What bird has landed on

me?” she thought. One day a man came to the pond with an axe. He went up to the willow, took aim and struck. Wood chips flew. The willow shook and even groaned, and her leaves anxiously asked each other: “What is that man doing?” The hewn willow fell. The pond fell silent. The reeds were still. A bird called anxiously. A grey cloud covered the sun and everything around became sad. The hewn willow lay stretched out, and the leaves whispered to each other and asked: “Why are we lying on the ground?” Where the axe had cut through it, the willow began to weep. Pure, transparent tears fell on the earth (Sukhomlynsky, 2013, p. 26).

In, *An Unusual Hunter*, on the other hand, the stereotype of the hunter is broken. This story was illustrated by students in years 10 and 11, and the pencil drawing of the hunter by a 15-year-old student is particularly evocative (see Figure 4).

In our village lives Grandpa Maksim. Everyone says he is a hunter. As soon as the season for hunting hares or ducks begins, Grandpa goes to the forest with his gun. Every day he leaves early in the morning and does not return until evening. But what an unusual hunter he is! He never brings home a hare or a duck. He comes back with an empty sack. Once he did bring home a little baby hare. He found it under a bush. The hare had a broken leg. Grandpa made a splint from two sticks and bandaged its little leg. After a week the leg mended and Grandpa took the little hare back to the field. Why is Grandpa Maksim so hopeless at hunting? One day the children followed Grandpa. They wanted to see how he hunted. They saw him put his gun under a bush, and start walking through the forest laying hay under the bushes for the hares. Then the children understood why Grandpa Maksim is such an unusual hunter (Sukhomlynsky, 2013, p. 30).



Figure 4: Alexandra Kovyneva  
(from Sukhomlinsky, 2013, p. 3)

If humanity is to survive and prosper, and at the same time, to preserve the beautiful natural environment that has evolved on our planet over billions of years, we need to do more than just educate the intellect. We need to think deeply about “what we are contributing to the human soul.” Educators in the past have shown a way to do this, from Comenius and Pestalozzi, to Steiner and Montessori, Korczak and Sukhomlinsky. Revisiting the works of these educators can help us to meet the challenges of education for the Anthropocene.

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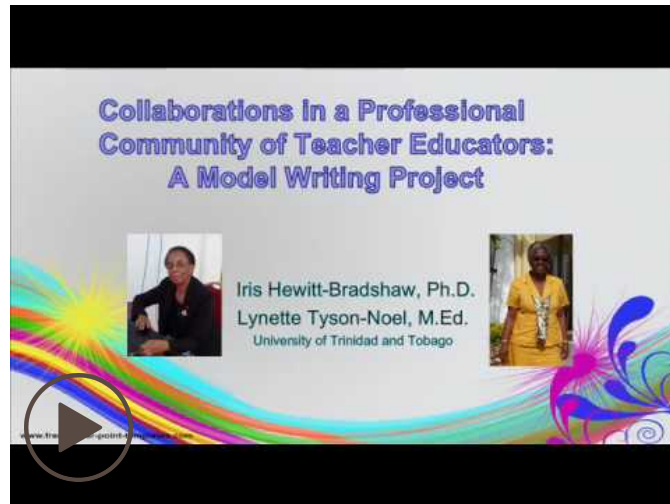
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## **Chapter 8: Collaboration in a Professional Community of Teacher Educators: A Model Writing Project**

~Iris Hewitt-Bradshaw & Lynette Tyson-Noel~



### **Introduction**

The role of collaboration to effect transformation in school reform, curricular innovation and teaching-learning processes, as well as its effectiveness in professional learning communities, has been well explored in the literature on collaborative practice in education (D'Amour et al., 2005; Du Four, 2004; Olson, 2013; Peluso et al., 2014; Riveros, 2012; Rose & Norwich, 2014; Smith et al., 2014). In this chapter, we explore the potential of collaboration to facilitate professional and personal growth of teacher educators in contexts that lack strong facilitative structures to assist teacher educators in building professional knowledge, practice, and a sense of identity as writers in an academic community. More specifically, the chapter describes a case study of a collaborative writing initiative, the Collaborative Writing Project (CWP), to support the position that professional development can be facilitated outside formal, institutionally-organised events. We argue that informal collaborative activities that transcend disciplines can draw on teacher educators' situated practices to develop their professional knowledge and skills, as well as their personal growth and development in domains such as writing.

According to Boice (1994), writing is a time-consuming, emotionally complex process. However, writing is an inescapable facet of academic life in institutes of higher education,

communities where it is important for career advancement, and for fulfilling professional obligations. In this context, the aesthetic function of writing is usually not emphasized and, in many cases, faculty writing is done in isolation. With respect to writing, Muller (2014) documented the benefits of collaboration, including an increase in productivity due to collegiality, camaraderie and supportiveness in groups. Such benefits are applicable to other spheres of academic endeavours at a time when the thrust in educational research is towards collaboration and interdisciplinary work, especially in light of the struggles that faculty members often experience in meeting requirements for continuous research and publication.

Apart from the need to increase writing productivity, educators should be writers themselves in order to effectively teach others how to write—a fact that is especially pertinent to institutions devoted to teacher development. Boswell (2015) contends that teachers need to know what writing is like. This need for models of behaviour applies to educators in every discipline, since writing in the content areas is important, and teacher modeling is instrumental to student learning. However, significant emphasis on writing often leads to an avoidance of writing (Baldwin & Chandler, 2002). These authors suggest that, although writing is perceived as a critical “high-priority task” as a practice, it has ‘low follow-through behaviour’ (p. 8). To address the critical issue of increasing faculty writing, some institutions establish facilitative structures to encourage and support faculty writing. These include writing coaches, writing workshops, writing groups, and organized writing retreats. It is in this context that we offer the CWP as a possible addition to existing models.

To illustrate the benefits of collaboration in a professional community, we first explore some pertinent issues in collaborative partnerships, and then describe the execution of a project that sought to provide faculty with an opportunity for collaborative and reflexive engagement in a fairly open, non-threatening, collegial writing space. The chapter ends by proposing an extension of the model to incorporate non-faculty members as participants in the learning community of institutions of higher education. The original case study addressed two main questions:

1. How can collaboration be used to promote writing productivity of faculty in a higher education community?
2. What benefits can be derived from faculty collaborative writing initiatives?

Writing competence is an important facet of life in education institutions, for both faculty and students. In the literature, prominence is usually given to academic types of writing. Although

these are important, writing is not a purely cognitive process, but has psychological dimensions. It is a skill, as well as a habit of the mind, about which a person can develop attitudes that enable or inhibit performance. Collaborative partnerships can be fostered in faculty spaces to support members through engagement in different types of writing. In a teacher education institution, faculty collaboration and engagement in writing can serve as models for prospective teachers, and support structures for interdisciplinary research.

## **Literature Review**

Freeman (1993) defines collaboration as “...the condition that occurs when two or more people or organizations join forces over a long period of time to produce something neither can achieve alone” (p. 33). This process is usually characterised by joint intellectual efforts, power, skills, knowledge and agreement on shared vision to accomplish a desired goal (Winchester, 2014). Collaboration is undertaken in diverse educational contexts. The contexts can be faculty learning communities (FLCs), as described by Hutson and Downs (2015), and Beach and Cox (2009), or academic writing partnerships, as developed by Stivers and Cramers (2013). The collaborators can be two or more, as in the collaborative writing project. Although the case study that is described later in this chapter was undertaken among teacher educators at an institution of higher education, we suggest that the principles and procedures are highly adaptable, and can be made applicable to other levels of the education system. We use the term teacher educator here, to refer to a member of faculty in a university college or school of education who supervises, mentors, and facilitates the development of teachers and prospective teachers.

## **Collaboration in Teacher Education**

As in the field of general education, collaboration in teacher education can be organized in diverse ways. Institutions sometimes forge relationships across national boundaries to establish global partnerships. Within state borders, different educational institutions often combine expertise and resources to accomplish targeted goals. Another option is utilized when networks or teams are formed within an institution to complete a project considered important to the educational institution. The persistence of collaborative arrangements suggests that there are perceived benefits.

Professional benefits of collaboration are realized, since collaboration helps to build a

professional learning community by fostering staff development, and contributing to school change and improvement (Sturko & Gregson, 2009). This builds a sense of community, as faculty are encouraged to share skills and knowledge leading to team building. Graziano and Navette (2012) also assert that processes that promote interaction among team members, engender collaborative behaviours that are beneficial to organizations. Sturko and Gregson also argue that such professional activities are crucial for career growth, continuous learning, and teacher effectiveness. There are therefore, benefits for both the organization and for individual members. Collaboration improves the infrastructure for communications, reduces faculty isolation, and builds an understanding of professional identity (Sturko & Gregson, 2009). This is especially crucial in education institutions devoted to teacher professional development, where models for teachers and prospective teachers are important for transformative practices that can impact the education system. Additionally, sustainable, effective collaborative structures in an institution of higher learning can engender or foster a resurgence of enthusiasm for scholarly writing and productive academic pursuit (Stivers & Cramer, 2013).

### **Elements of Successful Collaborative Practice**

Successful implementation of collaborative projects requires an understanding and appreciation of the complexities of collaboration. Smith et al. (2014) identified three general determinants of outcomes of collaborative projects: interactional, organizational, and systemic. The nature of the relationship among members of a team is an important interactional component. Organizational conditions might also militate against or facilitate collaborative partnerships. In addition, since institutions operate within specific contexts, systemic or external conditions can impact on the outcome of collaborative activities. In their study, Stivers & Cramer (2013) proposed four guidelines to minimize the negative issues that could arise if collaborations and partnerships are not managed effectively, and the logistics not clarified and assented to by all members. The collaborative writing project described later in this chapter, primarily focused on the interactional and personal aspect of collaboration in the context of a teacher education institution, where facilitative structures for professional development were not very strong.

Bridges et al. (2011) identified important elements of collaborative practice. These include responsibility, coordination, cooperation, and mutual trust and respect. These elements highlight the importance of personality traits of individuals involved in any collaborative exercise, and



suggest that there are affective factors that should be considered when collaborative projects are undertaken. Freeman (1993) also emphasizes the need for a climate of collegiality to foster collaborative relationships in an organisation. He argues that collaboration is an essential prerequisite to successful educational reform. This is because the process involves the effective mobilization of diverse professional knowledge, expertise, and resources. The literature collectively suggests that successful mobilization is facilitated when there is compatibility among faculty, effective administrative support and infrastructure, time allocated for planning and collaborative activities, and commitment of all parties involved in the process.

### **Challenges to Collaborative Practice in Teacher Education**

Problems arise when collaboration is mandated in the absence of consensus about goals and a shared vision, as well as consideration of whether collaboration is wise, desirable or necessary (Winchester, 2014). It also cannot flourish if there is not supportive leadership, facilitative structures that create a suitable environment, and structured time to allow for collaboration. Smith et al. (2014) argue, however, that despite the challenges, successful collaborative partnerships are essential to achieve educational improvement, and progressive evaluation and research.

### **A Case Study of Professional Collaboration for Writing in a Teacher Education Theoretical Framework**

The development, success, or failure of university faculty to engage in productive writing experiences can be understood from the perspective of Bandura's (1977) theory of self-efficacy. In psychological theories, self-efficacy is described as a person's belief in his or her ability to organize and execute a course of action to attain a desired outcome (Artino, 2012). The concept is used to predict and explain the way people function in diverse fields of activity. Bandura (1977) suggested that self-efficacy has a role in motivation, and explains individuals' choice of activities, effort expended on tasks, and their persistence in pursuit of goals. Thus, both participation in writing activities and avoidance of writing, is explained in terms of the level of self-efficacy of faculty members.

Bandura (1995) suggests four main sources through which individuals get information to evaluate beliefs in their ability to accomplish tasks. The first is enactive mastery experiences, through which individuals gain confidence to do something new, if it is similar to something they

have already done well. A second source is through observation of others successfully accomplishing a task. This has a positive effect on self-efficacy. Different forms of persuasion also build self-efficacy, and bolster people's belief that they can attain a goal. The fourth source of information by which people evaluate self-efficacy, is through physiological and affective states. When individuals are worried, anxious or fearful, their belief in their competence is negatively affected.

Social theorists Vygotsky (1978) and Lave and Wenger (1991) consider learning a social activity occurring in groups or communities. Human development in social groups is central to Vygotsky's research, and from this perspective, faculty writing can be viewed as a meaningful cultural practice in an academic community. This means that involvement with colleagues in a writing activity, contributes to an individual's understanding of how to use the tool of writing in a specific and appropriate context. It also provides an ideal opportunity for individuals at different levels of mastery to interact. Collaborative engagement thus provides a space for both modelling and scaffolding. These views are consonant with those of Lave and Wenger (1991), who see learning as a process involving participation in a community of practice. They propose a theory of situated learning to explain how people come to acquire knowledge and skills as members of groups working in a social context. Different genres of writing in an academic community can therefore be considered instances of practices that reflect the enterprises that faculty and staff collectively engage in over time.

The collaborative writing project described here can be characterized as an informal initiative that brought faculty together for engagement in a mutual, collaborative activity—one that can benefit individuals at a personal level, and at public work spaces or sites of practice.

## **Context**

The writing project was undertaken at a university in Trinidad and Tobago, where faculty performance was assessed on the basis of their teaching, research, and service to the university and the wider community. However, the teaching load at the education faculty was invariably a heavy one. Up to the time of the study, no allowances were made for sabbatical leave, and the majority of faculty members received no financial assistance for conference presentations. Most faculty members therefore, found it difficult to engage in research and publications as expected in an academic community. The writing project was conceptualized as a means to stimulate faculty

writing, and lessen the degree of stress and avoidance associated with pursuit of academic imperatives. It aimed to reduce the isolation of faculty members, and engage them in a voluntary activity of writing for pleasure, in an atmosphere that was collegial. It was hoped that there would be beneficial transfer to other aspects of professional activities, but the main intention was to provide an opportunity for a collaborative activity, that would provide participants with a sense of accomplishment and camaraderie through writing.

## **Methodology**

One faculty member extended a written invitation to each colleague in the campus staff room, and four faculty members voluntarily participated in a collaborative writing activity over a period of one month. Two writing notebooks were strategically placed, so that participants could write their thoughts on a chosen topic. A handout with writing prompts was used as a starting point for the writing. Participants wrote individually, but were asked to read all that had been written before, and continue the writing where their colleague had left off. They also had the option of continuing multiple pieces as their interests dictated. The finished pieces were edited and published in a book entitled, *Collaborative Writing Experience, Volume 1*. After the project's completion, all participants were asked to write their reflections about participating in the project. These individual, reflective, narrative accounts were treated as analytic units. Because they were all responses to the same collaborative event, however, they were also treated at another level as a collective, group narrative.

Reissman (2008) suggests that group narratives use stories to mobilize others into action for progressive change, as well as reveal truths about human experiences. In this study, the individual reflective narratives were analyzed, using narrative analysis to understand and compare experiences in specific contexts. First, close reading of the texts was done, with specific attention paid to details as they related to the two research questions. Significant details of individual perspectives were recorded to honour participants' agency and intention. This was considered appropriate since, although faculty members might have similar writing goals, they had individual interests and agendas, and differed in background and disciplines. Further analysis sought to broaden the commentary to highlight how experiences in the writing project revealed common themes and contrasting positions.

The participants wrote on a topic chosen from 25 suggested prompts. Their writing

produced 11 genres of writing: six descriptive, reflective, humorous, or imaginative prose pieces; three reflective or philosophical poetry selections; and two multi-genre pieces comprising prose and poetry. These pieces were created in collaboration with faculty from early childhood and education care (ECCE), language and literature, agriculture, and reading departments. At the end of the specified period, participants, all female, wrote their feedback on the activity, described how it impacted them, and shared their ideas about future writing projects. Although the pieces ranged from one to two pages, the collaboration made the experience worthwhile. The choice of prompts, the types of writing pieces created, and the book that was produced, the Collaborative Writing Experience, Volume 1, were used as sources for the data analysis. Their writing produced 11 pieces as categorized in Table 1:

<b>Genre</b>	<b>Number of pieces</b>
Narrative prose	3
Reflective poetry	2
Reflective prose	1
Multi-genre pieces comprising prose and poetry	2
Humorous narrative	1
Imaginative narrative	1
Philosophical poetry	1

Table 1: Genres of Writing Produced in the Collaborative Writing Project

## Outcomes

The written feedback on the writing experience was matched against the research questions. One participant described the experience as a writing adventure, and saw it as “a novel way to engage ... to express ideas, share experiences ... bond as colleagues ... deepen friendships.” It was also an opportunity to tell about self, learn about others, and “better understand” each other. She appreciated how colleagues committed to write without “pressure or censure.” Another participant who previously viewed writing as “a solitary endeavour” thought

that the experience developed a “sense of collegiality.” She applauded the idea of the project, and valued the opportunity to write for different purposes apart from academic. One agricultural science instructor said she was enthused by the project, and “dived right into it.” She indicated that the project was fun, allowed for self-expression, generated excitement when the thoughts of others had to be extended, and relieved the stress of a heavy teaching load. The experience connected with her youthful dream of writing: “I always wanted to write novels and become a famous author.” This was a particularly insightful comment since it touched on the traditional, compartmentalized way in which writing and writing products are viewed in academic communities. Fiction is written by writers in the humanities, and scientific writing by members of the scientific community. Scholarly writing is often limited to the type of writing found in journal publications, textbooks, or reviewed and edited works. Academics are often limited, or perhaps limit themselves, to their professional disciplines. Exercises such as the CWP can be liberating in simple, yet valuable ways, and they work in contexts that are quite different from what is traditional, and perhaps taken for granted in higher education institutions in other contexts.

Collectively, the main benefits can be categorized as personal and affective, since participants felt that the project facilitated community relationships and bonding. Faculty learnt about each other, felt excitement, adventure, fun, freedom of expression, and the development of their creativity. On the academic level, there was the opportunity to appreciate writing for different purposes. The project also provided an avenue for writing in a comfortable, familiar, non-judgmental environment. There was an increased level of self-efficacy, and participants were anxious to know what genre of writing would be introduced next time. Some faculty who were unable to take part because of class schedules and other personal commitments, were enthused by the book produced, *Collaborative Writing Experience, Volume 1*, and verbally expressed an interest in participating in the next collaborative writing project.

Although the participants were pleased to be involved in the project and expressed positive feedback about it, this model has limitations and can be expanded to serve the needs of faculty in different contexts. The prompts were more fiction and literary-based, but in an academic community, there is a need to accommodate other types of academic writing. More time for the writing engagement could give rise to wider participation of faculty and staff across campuses. Since it was paper-based, the use of digital devices as an alternative medium could increase the participation of faculty, and facilitate the writing of more, and varied pieces. The revision, editing,

and formatting of the pieces could be handled more speedily if a digital platform were used. Another consideration for expanding the collaboration would be to introduce the writing project to ancillary staff and personnel in other departments on campus, and at the other campuses.

## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The participatory process of collaborative writing helps faculty to become more empathetic to students who have problems with writing (Fassinger et al., 1992), are uncomfortable working in groups, and do not like being critiqued by their peers. This project can be extended to include other genres of writing—poetry, expository, persuasive, and academic writing. This supports the view of Muller (2014) that “many faculty members are thirsty for just this kind of support. They want to live as writers in community, rather than isolation.” An initiative such as this one, adds to the range of supportive structures to facilitate faculty writing. These are useful for both personal and professional development. Improved writing competence can positively impact on pedagogical practice, with benefits for students’ learning across the curriculum. This strategy can increase motivation and confidence to write for different purposes and audiences. It is internally driven, as opposed to being dependent on external sources. Faculty members thus have an opportunity to broaden a narrow view of writing as a feature limited to the language class, minimize the belief that writing is a purely cognitive activity, and understand the creative nature of the writing process and its importance across the curriculum. Ultimately, the power of writing collaboratively can decrease doubt and alienation, and create connections between scholarship and teaching.

Riveros (2012) emphasizes the multidimensionality of teachers’ professional practice, and suggests that “professional learning is a dynamic process that includes not only collaborative efforts, but also individual action and episodes of informal interaction with colleagues ...” (p. 604). The collaborative writing project serves as a practical demonstration of one way in which professional and personal development can be accomplished outside formal, institutionally organized and sanctioned events. It proves that informal, internal activities can draw on educators’ situated practices and are powerful tools to develop their knowledge, as well as their writing and reading skills. Simultaneously, a sense of self-efficacy in writing is built, and the potential is laid for transference to other genres of writing in an academic community. As Riveros (2012) indicates,

individual action is necessary, if faculty members are to move from the collaborative writing experience to begin to produce diverse academic and scholarly texts.

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## **Chapter 9: Beyond the Buzz: Investigating a Professional Collaboration in Higher Education Teaching**

~Mindy R. Carter & Sheryl Smith-Gilman~



### **Introduction**

In the Canadian context, teacher collaboration and professional learning communities (PLCs) are often cited as key to student and teacher efficacy and success (Futernick, 2007; Goodard, Goodard & Tschannen-Moran, 2007). In fact, without a deep understanding of the benefits of collaboration, most preservice teacher education programs and classes embed collaborative student assignments as the cornerstone for learning about what it means to become a teacher. Despite the hunch that working collaboratively is good for preservice teachers preparing to enter the profession, it is rare that this buzz transfers into formal shifts in values for preservice teachers (Kluth & Straut, 2003), despite the idea of collaboration now being cited as a key competency for 21st century learning (Hernard & Roseveare, 2012; Lee & Schottenfeld, 2014). This chapter thus seeks to move beyond the buzz about collaboration by exploring the way(s) that a collaborative course design encounter illuminated and enhanced the learning of preservice teachers at McGill University (Montreal, Quebec) and their course instructors, as they redesigned a required course on communication in education.

## **Collaboration**

Course planning collaboration amongst educators is not an original practice, or a novel concept (Kluth & Straut, 2003). In fact, the call for teacher education programs to model collaboration in a variety of forms has been distinguished in the literature (Villa, Thousand & Chapple, 2000). What is more, professional collaboration in higher education teaching can be increasingly looked upon as an initiative toward developing a culture of quality teaching for today's generation of students, particularly for preservice teachers. We underscore the principle of professional collaboration in tandem with meeting the many challenges specific to teaching at the college/university level.

Collaboration, or working together towards a common goal, is an indispensable skill that requires practice and nurturing. Classroom teachers design curricula whereby students have numerous opportunities to interact socially and collaborate as they learn, reminding us that learning is essentially a social activity (Vygotsky, 1978). Long ago, Vygotsky proposed that meaningful learning requires interactions between people. Accordingly, we have come to understand that our own instructional strategies, as teachers in higher education, can also be enhanced through our social interactions. We too, have learned and have indeed, practiced what we hope to see in our students—that a collaborative community of learners can foster positive classroom communities and relationships across all levels of education.

Importantly, we acknowledge that we are at a pivotal moment in time for teacher education programs. Effectively preparing preservice teachers for the plethora of needs of today's schools and alternative educational contexts in a rapidly-growing era of technology, is a challenge for those of us who teach future teachers. Joan Richardson (2011) maintains that, when it comes to instruction, new teachers will have to uncover numerous pathways to address and work with their growing diverse, curious, and digitally literate students. Tom Carroll (2009) suggests that learning teams in schools can help face such challenges. He recommends that a range of individuals can contribute to teaching, and in doing so, would create new models of thinking about instruction. Such a paradigm illuminates quality teaching as a collaborative endeavour, avoiding past stigmas regarding teaching as an individual accomplishment. While Carroll (2009) and Richardson (2011) allude to classroom teachers in schools, we argue that an emphasis on collaborative work is deeply relevant to teaching in higher education as well.

With profound confidence in the efficacy of teamwork, we have moved forward in carrying out a collaborative course design project. Our synergy reflects our similar backgrounds, values and interests. Dr. Sheryl Smith-Gilman was an early childhood teacher and administrator for over 25 years, and has been a preservice teacher in higher education for the past 10 years. Her research has been grounded in narrative and arts-based methodologies attached to best practices in early childhood pedagogy, with a concentration on culture and learning. Dr. Mindy R. Carter also began her career in the classroom, first as a volunteer teacher in Guatemala, and then as a high school teacher in Montreal, Quebec. Later, she combined her love of the arts, education and research into a holistic arts-based educational research practice at the university level, where she has worked for nine years.

### **Our Story: Illustrations of Collaboration**

In the fall of 2015, we found ourselves involved in discussions about an undergraduate course, Communication in Education, which needed a boost in our teacher education program. After several discussions amongst the individuals of our teacher education committee, difficulties emerged. In our examination of previous course syllabi, we noted several issues: an over-emphasis on tasks for building academic writing, a lack of concentration on verbal communication, a missing connection between communication and relationships, and a deficiency of creative thinking about what communication methods might encompass to adhere to 21st century expectations (Parkay, Hardcastle Stanford, Vaillancourt, Stephens & Harris, 2012).

As two educators who strongly believe in being mindful to diverse pathways of communication, we volunteered to take on the task of redesigning the content of the course, as well as each teaching a section. We also recognized our common vision: perceiving communication as fundamentally holistic. Based on our research backgrounds, our individual experiences, and our in-depth understanding of teaching and learning, we felt it important to address various dimensions of communication. Those dimensions included topics of diversity, new technologies, classroom applications, and social values. Our interest in effective communication was heightened as we contemplated getting to the matters at hand. We also sensed that an addition of arts-based approaches could be included in our teaching, so as to offer our preservice teachers involvement in different ways of learning. Our ideas converged to examine multiple approaches whereby our diverse students would be inspired. Not only might such an approach add to our

students' learning, we had hoped that our model of teaching, via several pathways, would influence their future delivery as teachers. We were embarking on presenting multiple access points that would support students' individual choices (Dewey, 1938). Dewey referred to such events as appreciating the cumulative effect of experience (Dewey 1934).

Apart from our combined efforts in bringing our ideas to fruition, it was the joy and appreciation of collaborative work that emerged as significant. Establishing connections when developing the course together, proved to be a particularly meaningful way of upholding quality teaching. The unfolding and sequential experience of professional collaboration allowed us to reflect on various episodes during the semester—occurrences that were windows of opportunity for us to distinguish the results of collaborative implementation, as well as providing space for growth and development. Such reflections compel us to consider collective strategies for higher level teaching, alongside respect of the culture and environment of individual institutions.

## **Course Planning**

Historically, the communications in education course at McGill for first year preservice teachers, has focused on writing. Almost immediately, we decided that it was essential to expand this existing focus to include oral and nonverbal kinds of classroom communication, based upon our past experiences teaching similar courses, because of our backgrounds in the arts, and as classroom teachers. While we maintained that it was essential for preservice teachers to have an exemplary handle on a variety of forms of written communication for academic and classroom purposes, being able to express oneself through the body and voice were equally important. Thus, in order to create a more holistic vision of communication in education, we discussed some of our own classroom practices. These conversations eventually led us to focus the first half of the course on written communication (including peer editing, writing for various audiences, and using various forms of written communication) and the second half of the course on oral communication.

A variety of programs at the university were also eager to offer workshops and provide information as a part of this course. A selection of these resources included speech and language specialists, career services, librarians, and our in-house artist in residence. By bringing in a variety of speakers and experiences, we were able to develop our own classroom practices and meet the needs of the diverse learners in our midst. As our planning expanded to include those who might be able to share their expertise on communication in education with our classes, we also began to

discuss ways to integrate alternate forms of representations of communication into our assignments and teaching.

The need to, not only offer students a variety of ways to learn about communication in education, but also to expose them to alternate ways of representing their own work, and to ways of thinking on this subject, became an important aspect of praxis throughout the course planning phase. For this reason, we decided that the final assignment for the class should be open-ended, and offer students opportunities to creatively represent their learning, and explore something they wanted to continue to work on in relation to the course. Storytelling presentations, complete with costumes, puppetry, soundscapes, and lessons and presentation/facilitations on key educational issues, were two of the directions of choice that this final assignment offered.

### **Vignettes**

Since there were multiple sections of this course running simultaneously (i.e., all first year preservice teachers must take this course as a part of the four year B.Ed. in elementary education at McGill), check-ins occurred with the other instructors who were also teaching this new class for the first time. Over the course of the semester, we came together to share our positive and challenging encounters, as well as to impart specific practices we were using in our classrooms. As a way to illustrate how these meetings led to a deepened sense of collaboration among the instructors, two vignettes from the actual courses are illustrated below.

### **Backpack Sculptures**

In order to introduce her students to the idea of learning to self-evaluate one's oral communication skills and tendencies, and to get used to speaking in front of others, Carter decided to take her class of 30 or so students into the hallway, along with their backpacks and cell phones. Over the next 20 minutes, students had to: (1) Take out items from their backpacks that they thought represented them, and make a sculpture from the items; (2) In museum style, walk around and look at the sculptures made by the rest of the class; (3) Stand in front of their sculpture, and describe it to someone they didn't know, while that person used their cell phone to video record the presenter; (4) Switch so that the presenter became the videographer. Once mini-presentations were complete, students returned to class and had to watch their video, and write about some of the observations they had in relation to their own speaking/presentation style. This mini-reflection

was then used to collectively develop a rubric for the final oral presentation assignment, so that individual students could work on the skills they specifically needed to tackle in relation to oral communication.

Once Carter shared this activity with the other instructors of the course, Smith-Gilman tried it out with her class. For Smith-Gilman, this was a wonderful way to incorporate technology into the classroom, and she was excited to use this novel approach with her students. Using Carter's experience as a foundation, Smith-Gilman was also able to capture the essence of the exercise. Smith-Gilman appreciated the benefit of such sharing opportunities, importantly acknowledging how professional collaboration enhanced the learning experience for the preservice teachers.

### **The Environment as Communication**

The administration of McGill's teacher education program, as well as the course instructors themselves, welcomed individual approaches concerning the development of the communication course. To uphold the objective of offering a variety of perceptions on the topic of communication in education, Smith-Gilman considered school/classroom environments. Bringing forward her experiences from her own teaching and research, Smith-Gilman extended an opportunity for her students to ponder how the environment of a school can act as a communicator to children.

During one of her classes, Smith-Gilman asked her 30 students to divide themselves into small groups to discuss and contemplate what makes a good classroom/school environment. The objective of the exercise was for students to deeply consider school settings, in order to conceptualize their role as future designers of classrooms that will "communicate." The following questions were proposed: What would you hope to see in a classroom or school that would add to a healthy environment for learning? What would you want to have in a classroom environment that might meet the needs of today's children? What do students need, environmentally, to learn?

As part of the deliberations, each group of students collaborated in creating a visual concept using their chosen vocabulary terms and definitions (see Figure 1 and Figure 2). They were entitled, Environmental Wordles. Students were happy to undertake this art-based activity, as well as communicate their ideas to their peers (see Figure 3). After the sharing opportunity, each group was handed a clipboard and assigned a different floor of the education building, so as to examine and document: What did the education building environment communicate? What positive spaces were found? What spaces were negative?

Later regrouping at a large common space in the library, students shared their findings and reflected upon the ways the environment can lend itself to learning, or lack thereof. This exercise extended students' original thinking of what they would hope to see in an educational environment, and later helped them underpin ways in which school environments can dramatically alter children's learning experiences. The preservice teachers had the opportunity to contemplate how well-designed spaces could support children's concepts of the world, holistic learning, social abilities, ideas, and cultural identities (Fraser & Gestwicki, 2002).



Figure 1: Sample of an Environmental Wordle



Figure 2: Sample of an Environmental Wordle





Figure. 3: Preservice Teachers Sharing Ideas during the Exercise

### **What We Have Learned**

By working collaboratively on the course design for Communication in Education, and subsequently teaching different sections of the course, and debriefing about the perceived changes, several understandings about collaboration emerged. First, for Carter and Smith-Gilman, collaboration in higher education appears to work when two people understand, and have a shared vision for the objective they are working towards. In the case of this course, both Carter and Smith-Gilman held a common desire to bring a more holistic understanding of communication into the design of the course they were reworking. Despite not having done this kind of work together in the past, their respect for one another as colleagues, and appreciation for what the course could be, guided their experiences.

Secondly, taking the time to share best practices and challenges when teaching (and consequently overseeing all of the sections of this course) helped to show the wider community that, in addition to collaboration being beneficial on a personal level, it was also beneficial for the students enrolled in the course, and for the other instructors. The students benefited from additional strategies and approaches that were shared across sections, and the community of instructors teaching this course knew that if they had an idea about the course, Carter and Smith-Gilman were interested in discussing how new iterations of the course could be improved in future.

In a sense, Carter and Smith-Gilman made their collaboration and their own learning along the way visible. By speaking about the course reconstruction process with one another, other

instructors, students, and additional guest speakers, the course design process became the holistic experience they hoped the course they were codesigning would become. Possibly because of their experiences in the arts, where creativity emerges through an artistic process, Carter and Smith-Gilman were also able to allow emergence to guide their work. This is in opposition to some constructivist ideas about course design and curriculum development (Bobbitt, 1918; Tyler, 1949) which oftentimes still permeate our public school systems in North America.

## **Challenges**

Despite the positive results of this collaboration in higher education teaching, Carter was initially hesitant about taking on the re-visioning of the communications course. In fact, at first she thought she would have to do it by herself, and that it would be a difficult process. In actuality, though, it turned out to be an incredible experience (thanks to Smith-Gilman). When pressed to articulate what turned this initial concern around, the complete control to redesign the course given by their department's teacher education program committee (TEPC) had a significant hand in this outcome.

Additionally, the energy, enthusiasm, and creativity of Carter's first year McGill students, who took up the final creative assignment option with professionalism, rigor, and enthusiasm, also helped to make this experience a positive one. This lived-co-constructed classroom experience (Pinar, 2004) was notably only possible because of the availability and flexibility for personal instructor expression, that was built into the course design.

Smith-Gilman distinguishes that there were actually few obstacles encountered throughout this collaborative work experience; the teaching team was open to following a new approach, and believed in the emphasis on best practices and deep-rooted values of the program. Furthermore, administrative support was ever-present. Carter and Smith-Gilman acknowledge here that other higher education institutions, and perhaps our own colleagues, might be challenged by such an approach due to social, logistical or ideological differences. It is our hope, nonetheless, that our experience might prompt further dialogue about professional collaboration when course planning occurs and perhaps, sections of our experiences might support new considerations to develop original collaborative teaching approaches within the field.

## **Beyond the Buzz**

For some of the aforementioned reasons, collaboration in higher education can be a generative and illuminating experience, and what Carter and Smith-Gilman did together essentially could not have been done alone. Professional outcomes have emerged showing themselves as gains in learning. Such advances have included improved professional understandings about relationships, teaching and learning, and change. To summarize, some of the things that made this particular course planning collaboration an authentic, positive, and successful experience will now be stated.

First, it was easier to make decisions together for the course redesign, because together, Carter and Smith-Gilman could bounce ideas off of one another, e.g., which text to select, which speakers to come in, and how much weight to give to certain assignments. This shifted the individual decision making aspects of course design, to a shared experience that provided the instructors, students, and department with a rationale for why and how decisions were made. The transparent collaborative efforts involved Carter's and Smith-Gilman's "unlocking of themselves," whereby each felt empowered to express ideas and receive new practices. Their negotiated collaboration supported a productive experience, and was positively reflected in the actual classroom experiences.

Secondly, hearing about other people's "good classes" during the regular check-ins with all of the course instructors, was inspirational. These sessions made the individual instructors feel as though, even the teaching of the course was a collaboration, in the sense that there were other people with complimentary skills and similar experiences, who could share their feedback for best practices, and strategies for challenging situations.

As an instructor, being part of a wider collaborative teaching community after designing the course, also made Carter feel like all of the instructors and sections of the course were connected. In the classroom, she felt supported because she knew others were covering similar ground; this made it easier to provide rationale for course design decisions and assignment decisions to the class. Positive feedback was generated in Carter's class in particular, as students felt that Carter modeled a collaborative atmosphere in her class, by inviting students to be a part of co-creating rubrics for assignments, and negotiating assignment deadlines throughout the semester. While some of these authentic assessment practices were already a part of Carter's commitment to living pedagogical values that center on the needs of her students (Carter, 2015 &

2014), they were strengthened because of her professional collaboration with Smith-Gilman. The ownership of the course, thus became an important component of what made this experience positive. In order to summarize some of the strategies that made this particular collaboration in higher education course design a positive one, identified components that helped create the conditions for this to occur, will now be articulated.

### **Conditions that Fostered Success**

The conditions that Carter and Smith-Gilman felt were essential to their successful course design collaboration, included the understanding that they worked toward a common goal. Knowing that within the year that they were working together, a new redesigned course needed to be in place; with proper texts, instructors to teach the course, and justification for the changes (to be provided to teacher education program committee, made the work that was being done both motivating and stressful (in a positive way). In this sense, understanding the common goal everyone is working towards (i.e., course design, in this instance) is an important condition for collaboration.

Collaboration is not a skill that necessarily “comes naturally” (Friend, 2000, p. 132). Friend (2000) insists that collaborative abilities need attention; they have to be practiced, and nurtured. The mutual respect and sharing opportunities between Carter and Smith-Gilman proved to develop their individual teaching skills, as well as prompting each to critically reflect on the benefits of effective collaboration. Once a common goal is in place, a mutual appreciation for individual perspectives and approaches, even if they may differ from one’s own, is another important condition for collaboration. Despite Carter and Smith-Gilman sharing similar values and pedagogical understandings about creativity and communication in educational contexts, there was still some ambiguity and tension around their collaboration. This was the first time that these two women had worked together, so they still had to navigate their new professional relationship. Thus, their communication (in education) became just as important as the course they were working on.

Furthermore, these collaborative efforts would not have happened without encouragement and support from the administrators and colleagues involved. Rather, it was the backing from the institution that allowed for a creative approach to develop a course, that required comprehensive ways of thinking about communication. Input from the team of instructors, who were flexible in

experimenting with novel ideas, helped develop the partnership between Carter and Smith-Gilman, indeed, encouraging continued collaboration for the future.

Finally, the condition that made this collaboration so enriching, was that it was a shared experience. There are so many times in higher academia, that one can find oneself working alone. While this can be a liberating and freeing experience, it can also be lonely at times. This notion of “feeling connected” to the course, to one’s co-planner, to the students across sections, to the other instructors and resources, and to the wider McGill community, all helped to make this an enriching experience that moved this collaboration in preservice teacher education ‘beyond the buzz.’

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## Chapter 10: Initial Teacher Education: Partnership in Practice

~Sandra Williamson-Leadley & Steven Sexton~



### Introduction

We believe learning to be a teacher is a complex journey, one in which we seek to guide and support our students. The journey is one where modelling and demonstration, growing mastery of skills, increasing sophistication of ideas, the ability to problematize, to know and understand the language of teaching and learning, and the capacity to adapt pedagogical tools, are all important and must be evident and evidenced. We further believe, there is a knowledge base for initial teacher education, and that what our students learn in our programs is important to their practice (Young & Boyd, 2010). The particular view of knowledge we bring to the design of our programs posits knowledge as being created, through and by, social interaction with others. It involves knowing, doing, and being (Bolstad et al., 2012). People learn as they collaborate with others in carrying out activities that are connected explicitly with the history and current practices of the community (Rogoff, Matusov, & White, 1996). Thus, learning is a co-construction process of social participation, or more accurately, it is a process of transformation of participation (Rogoff, 2003).

In teaching, working with others is a fundamental skill. A focus on social learning and building engagement, and the skills associated with working with others through communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991) is necessary. Darling-Hammond's (2006) analysis of exemplary teaching programs supports the building of professional learning communities. Beyer (2001) also

identifies the building of community as important, saying “effective teacher education preparation requires that participants develop a sense of community” (p. 161). Developing community and partnership in learning and problem solving provides a foundation for the development of reflexivity, ongoing professional development, and engagement with research-informed practice. The power of partnerships, including those with schools and associate (supervising) teachers, is developed where connections are built, through encouraging beginning teachers who “learn from teaching as well as learn for teaching” (p.109).

This chapter reports on the partner-school relationship between the University of Otago’s College of Education Master of Teaching and Learning (MTchgLn) (primary) program, and a primary partner school. This relationship began in 2013, with the development of the MTchgLn program, and is now in its third year.

The school partnership is critical to our students’ and this program’s success. The school contexts provide a natural extension of the university-based learning community, and a setting where a shared focus on supporting students to become teachers, learning from and with others is the aim. In professional practice settings, students should experience learning as a collaborative endeavour, and gain insight first-hand into the collaborative nature of the teaching profession. Le Cornu and Ewing (2008) suggest that it is not only desirable, but is in fact vital, that school-based teaching time is presented and modeled as further engagement in professional learning communities. The classroom setting is more than a place for practice—it is a community of practice. Ideally, at times of professional practice experience, students should be engaged in several overlapping communities—a professional experience community, their peer community, a community of lecturers, and a broader scholarly community accessed through program material (Yandell, 2010). Thus, Lave and Wenger’s (1991) concept of situated negotiation and renegotiation is enacted.

### **Changes to Structure of Initial Teacher Education**

For the past two decades, those seeking to gain initial teacher education (ITE) qualifications in New Zealand, completed either an undergraduate degree program or a one-year graduate diploma. In 2013, the Ministry of Education invited tertiary providers to develop one-year, course-taught, master’s level ITE programs. These new Master of Teaching and Learning (MTchgLn) programs began in 2014 (Parata, 2014). Preservice teachers who graduated from these



MTchgLn programs began their careers with, not only a teaching qualification, but also with a master's degree. Malinen, Väisänen and Savolainen (2012) acknowledged that, while the minimum requirement of a master's degree raised the prestige of the teacher profession, Antikainen (2006) argued that just increasing the content of instruction does not help, as learning to learn is required. Feiman-Nemser (2008) examined this concept of learning to teach.

She said (2008), teachers need more than subject matter knowledge. She argued that teachers' learning to teach required "learning to *think* like a teacher, learning to *know* like a teacher, learning to *feel* like a teacher, and learning to *act* like a teacher" (p. 214, italics in original). Feiman-Nemser noted that, unfortunately, typical ITE programs did not align well with what was known about teaching and learning to teach. She reported that ITE programs are often unrelated courses intermixed with school-based experiences. She highlighted the design principles that research has shown to make a difference to learning how to be a teacher—a continuum of learning opportunities, knowledge connected to practice, transforming beliefs, learning situated in practice, and critical collegueship. Feiman-Nemser (2008) cautioned that while learning to teach required practice, the adage "that practice makes perfect was incorrect, to learn well from experience, teachers need time, space and frameworks to analyse their teaching and its effects on students" (p. 213). Teachers, however, are not alone in the educational system. The school systems in which teachers practice, help to enable better teaching and learning (Mourshed, Chijioke, & Barber, 2010).

In a study that identified interventions in how the world's most improved school systems keep getting better, Mourshed et al. (2010) highlighted five ways "great" schools are shifting to 'excellent,' to raise the caliber of entering teachers. First, the learning community facilitated school-based learning communities to create peer-led support and accountability. Second, the school system provided effective educators with greater pedagogical autonomy. Third, school systems rotated educators throughout the system, in order to spread the learning and mentorship. Fourth, the system provided administrative staff to support teachers, and finally, the school system actively worked to develop and share innovations. Mourshed et al. (2010) directly referenced John Hattie's (2009) *Visible Learning*, about the significance of teachers becoming learners of their own teaching. However, Mourshed et al. (2010) only quoted the teacher part of the statement, and did not include the students. Hattie (2009) noted what makes the difference, "is visible teaching and learning by teachers and students" (p. 22). Explicitly attempting to address limitations

identified in ITE programs (Feiman-Nemser, 2008), and incorporating what works in school systems (Hattie, 2009; Mourshed, et al., 2010), this study's Master of Teaching and Learning (MTchgLn) program was designed to support and facilitate student teachers' learning from their classroom experience.

### **Master of Teaching and Learning Program**

This chapter reports on an intensive one-year, course-taught, master's level degree program for primary (students aged five to 12) teacher candidates. While this program does not have a thesis component, it does incorporate a self-study/community of practice research component through the use of video capturing, to facilitate the student teachers' development of their self-as-teacher role identity. One of the entry requirements for this program, was that students had to have a B+ (75%) grade average in their final year of undergraduate study, or proven postgraduate academic ability. As a result, it was anticipated that the students entering this program would have had a history of academic success, and a favourable self-efficacy in their abilities.

As stated, this program's design addressed the ITE program limitations raised by Feiman-Nemser (2008) about typical teacher education programs being a disjointed mix of courses and school-based experiences. It also incorporated features identified of those school systems that are shifting from great to excellent (Mourshed et al., 2010). Student teachers in this program spend 114 days at university, and 112 days in a professional experience school, known as a partner school (see Figure 1). In 2016, this program began on January 5th, with a four-week intensive block of course content to prepare the student teachers for their classroom experiences. The program's partner schools began their 2016 school year on February 1st, and the student teachers spent the first two weeks of the school year in their partner school. The completion of this two-week block started a weekly pattern of three days a week at university (Monday, Tuesday and Friday) and two days a week in a partner school (Wednesday and Thursday). The program was designed to integrate the course content with the student teachers' school learning experiences. It was anticipated that this interaction of learning opportunity, knowledge, and practice in an atmosphere of critical collegiality would positively influence how these student teachers saw themselves learning to think, know, feel, and act like a teacher (Feiman-Nemser, 2008; Mourshed et al., 2010).

Semester	Dates	Week	Master of Teaching & Learning					Week	SCHOOLS
			2016 Year Plan		Papers				
SUMMER SCHOOL	28 Dec - 1 Jan*	0						0	School Holidays
	4-8 Jan*	1	Programme begins Tue 5 Jan					1	
	11-15 Jan	2						2	
	18-22 Jan	3						3	
	25-29 Jan	4						4	
	1-5 Feb	5	2 weeks in Schools					5	
	8-12 Feb*	6						6	
SEMESTER ONE	15-19 Feb	7						7	TERM 1 (11 weeks)
	22-26 Feb★	8						8	
	29 Feb - 4 Mar	9						9	
	7-11 Mar	10						10	
	14-18 Mar	11						11	
	21-25 Mar*	12						12	
	28 Mar - 1 Apr*	13						13	
	4-8 Apr	14						14	
	11-15 Apr	15						15	
	18 -22 Apr	16	MID-SEMESTER BREAK					16	School Holidays
	*25-29 Apr●	17						17	
	2-6 May	18						18	TERM 2 (10 weeks)  All schools 2 May to 8 July
	9-13 May	19						19	
	16-20 May	20	Professional Experience (full-time in schools)					20	
	23-27 May	21						21	
	30 May - 3 Jun	22						22	
	*6-10 Jun	23						23	
13-17 Jun	24						24		
20-24 Jun	25						25		
27 Jun - 1 Jul	26	BREAK					26		
4-8 Jul	27						27		
SEMESTER TWO	11-15 Jul	28						28	School Holidays
	18-22 Jul	29						29	
	25 - 29 Jul	30						30	TERM 3 (9 weeks)  All schools 25 July to 23 September
	1-5 Aug	31						31	
	8-12 Aug	32						32	
	15-19 Aug	33	Professional Experience (full-time in schools)					33	
	22-26 Aug	34						34	
	29 Aug - 2 Sep	35						35	
	5-9 Sep	36						36	
	12-16 Sep	37						37	
	19-23 Sep	38						38	
	26-30 Sep	39	BREAK					39	School Holidays
	3-7 Oct	40						40	
	10-14 Oct	41						41	TERM 4 (10 weeks)  All Schools start Mon 10 Oct  Primary & Intermediate Schools finish no later than Tue 20 Dec  Secondary & Composite Schools finish no later than Fri 16 Dec
	17-21 Oct	42						42	
	*24-28 Oct	43						43	
	31 Oct - 4 Nov	44						44	
7-11 Nov	45						45		
14-18 Nov	46						46		
21-25 Nov	47						47		
28 Nov - 2 Dec	48						48		
5-9 Dec	49						49		
12-16 Dec	50	◆ Programme ends Fri 16 Dec					50		
19-23 Dec	51	CHRISTMAS/NEW YEAR BREAK					51	School Holidays	

Figure 1: MTchgLn 2016 Year Plan

## Conceptual Framework

Research has long identified that the influence of what student teachers have previously experienced, filters what they accept, modify, or reject from both their university course work and school-based teaching experiences (see, for example, Dewey, 1938; Knowles & Holt-Reynolds, 1991; Lortie, 1975; Schmidt, 2010; Schön, 1987). As a result, the MTchgLn program was designed, developed, and delivered based on realistic teacher education (Korthagen, Kessel, Kesters, Lagerwerf, & Wubbels, 2008; Korthagen, Loughran, & Russell, 2006), critical reflexivity (Cunliffe, 2004; Thompson & Pascal, 2012), and adaptive expertise (Timperley, 2013).

These three pillars are not linear, sequential or cyclic, but work together to support the development of the student teachers. Realistic teacher education is a process of student teachers changing their gestalts, while becoming aware of his or her learning needs, while having and reflecting on useful experiences (Korthagen et al., 2008). Realistic teacher education acknowledges that the necessary changes in student teachers may encounter resistance, and as a result, student teachers' feelings and emotions should be given attention. Student teachers need to build upon their prior experiences as students in the classroom as they process the, "needs, concerns, values, meanings, preferences, feeling, and behavioural tendencies" (Korthagen et al., 2008, p. 42) or gestalts in their learning in order to take on the role of the classroom teacher.

Korthagen et al. (2008) noted that experience was a starting point for learning; however, for gestalts student teachers needed sufficient practical experiences. These practical experiences needed to support the relationship between theoretical and practical components of ITE. While ITE programs may benefit from starting from practical experiences, or including sustained teaching experiences within the program, this was not a guarantee of success (Korthagen et al., 2008). The design of the MTchgLn program in this study sought to capitalize on the benefits of both school-based practice, and periods of sustained teaching practice (see Figure 1). The program provided these student teachers with regular opportunities to alternate between teaching practice, and time for reflection.

While Schön (1987) laid the foundation for reflective practice that focused on reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action, Thompson and Pascal (2012) took Schön's work further to include reflection-for-practice. Thompson and Pascal (2012) defined their differences between reflexive and reflective practice, noting that reflexivity is key to critically reflective practice. This MTchgLn program takes the position that student teachers need critical reflexivity combining

Cunliffe's (2004) critical reflexivity, with Thompson and Pascal's (2012) reflection-in/on/for-action. This MTchgLn program's critical reflexivity requires student teachers to go beyond reflection, and explicitly include possibilities for self-development in how they are teaching. Specifically, student teachers use video capturing to identify an event from their teaching experience that provoked their thinking or practice in some way, and wrote this up in a short narrative. After that, the student teachers explained why the event was significant to them, to include how their own personal and theoretical perspectives generated particular responses and understandings. Next, the student teachers deconstructed what happened, noting dominant constructions and how the people involved, experienced the event from their different perspectives. Finally, the student teachers re-theorized what they learnt from this case for their continuing teaching practice, with reference to relevant literature.

Adaptive expertise focuses on students' learning through valued outcomes (Timperley, 2013). As an adaptive expert, teachers accept agency for the development of the relationships, and strategies necessary for these valued outcomes. This will always involve teachers questioning their taken-for-granted assumptions, and how their worldview is shaped by their personal experiences.

Adaptive experts are "driven by the moral imperative to promote the engagement, learning, and well-being of *each* of their students" (Timperley, 2013, p. 5, italics in original). It was anticipated that as student teachers progressed through this program, the structured experiences both within the university and partner schools would support these student teachers in developing critical reflexivity of their own practice, as a central tenet of their future self-regulated learning as classroom teachers. In 2016, the student teachers were in a partner school for two days a week for 26 weeks of the school year, and for three sustained teaching block placements of two weeks, four weeks and six weeks respectively (see Figure 1). This was a program design to incorporate the first three interventions of schools, making the shift from great to excellent (Mourshed et al., 2010). In addition, this program made explicit shifts from how students, schools, and teachers were positioned from existing ITE programs (see Table 1).

<b>Existing ITE Terminology</b>	<b>MTchgLn Terminology</b>	<b>Explanation</b>
Associate Teacher	Mentoring Teacher	As a mentor teacher, the classroom teachers have a more explicit role in the development of the student teachers, as the relationship is more collegial.
Visiting Lecturer	University Mentor	As a university mentor, the university is working more equitably with the partner school and mentor teacher, to support the development of the student teacher.
Practicum	Professional Experience	As a professional experience, the student teachers are viewed as professional colleagues engaged in learning in a broader community of teachers and educational professionals.
Practicum School	Partner School	As a partner school, the partner school has greater input in how the student teachers are progressing, and how the program is implemented.
	Liaison Teacher	This is a new position developed in this program. This is the partner school's dedicated point of contact with the university. This person also provides the student teachers with a senior member of the partner school staff, for professional development as an emerging classroom teacher.
	Liaison Lecturer	This is a new position developed in this program. This is the university's dedicated point of contact with the partner school. They are physically in the school on a weekly basis, and are generally able to address any concerns or issues in situ, or able to bring concerns to the program coordinator.

Table 1: MTchgLn

The student teachers worked alongside mentor teachers. This required new terminology from the other existing ITE programs in the study's university. This was a deliberate move towards a model of professional experience, where student teachers were seen as contributing members of a school, and their mentor teachers were co-learners in this program. Mentor teachers agreed not only to facilitate learning conversations that challenged the student teachers based on their classroom practice, but also to assist the student teachers in gathering and analyzing student learning data, in order to inform next steps/different approaches in their learning. This program's intent was to make visible the teaching and learning, of and by, the teachers and students in the classrooms (Hattie, 2009). To support this program, the partner school assigned a senior member of staff as a liaison teacher to support the mentor teachers; the fourth intervention noted by Mourshed et al. (2010). The liaison teacher ensured all aspects of the school-based requirements of the program were met, such as identifying suitable service projects within the school community. The MTchgLn program allocated one staff member to liaise with the partner school's liaison teacher through a liaison lecturer. The liaison lecturer coordinated with the liaison teacher to identify common challenges, and to provide feedback about the school-based experience to the program; the fifth intervention noted by Mourshed et al. (2010). The liaison lecturer supported the student teachers in development of the e-portfolios, to evidence their progress towards meeting the

graduating teacher standards required for professional teacher registration (Education Council New Zealand, n.d.). Finally, the university mentors provided guidance, support, and pastoral care to the student teacher as he or she worked towards achieving their teaching goals and professional experience requirements. The university mentor observed the student teacher in the classroom, and provided oral and written feedback to the student, and the mentor teacher.

### **Partners in Practice**

Across a number of studies, student teachers have identified their professional teaching experience as one of the more challenging, positive, and significant aspects of their preservice teacher education (Groundwater-Smith, Ewing, & Le Cornu, 2006; Hoban, 2005; Le Cornu, 2005). The importance of the coherence and integration between ITE course work and professional experience have been highlighted as essential components of exemplary teacher education programs (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Le Cornu & Ewing, 2008). Work on the development of expertise in various domains (see, for example, Ericsson, 2002; 2006) suggests that part of what differentiates experts is not only their ability to view a domain's underlying structure, but also their ability to engage in what Ericsson calls "deliberate practice." Bringing practitioner and academic knowledge together has the potential to create "a transformative space where the potential for an expanded form of learning and the development of new knowledge are heightened" (Gutiérrez, 2008, p. 152). Specifically, Timperley (2013) argued that teaching experience should be situated in an inquiry stance, and student teachers taught to be "responsive and adaptive experts who have the promotion of engagement, learning, and wellbeing of all student learners as the basis of their professional identity" (p. 4). Finally, adult learners need opportunities to take increasing responsibility for their own learning, recognizing that learning is an ongoing process, and that learners should have the opportunity to make decisions and choices for themselves (Findsen, 1999).

It is an approach that encourages students to develop as agents of change, by exposing them to the theoretical tools and practical experiences needed to critique and build on what they have experienced (Ballard, 2012). It was envisaged that over the course of their program, this method would be a transformative one for both the student teachers and their students, i.e., moving from reflection-on-action to reflexive thought about how their actions, assumptions, and beliefs inform their teaching practice.

Through their practice, students were encouraged to engage in their critical thinking about the coherence between their pedagogical practice and the theoretical underpinnings, by questioning dominant discourses, challenging hegemonic beliefs, and clarifying their own thinking about what is important in effective teaching. Out of these reflections, students are challenged to make sense of their experiences, construct their own beliefs about effective pedagogy and then, as necessary, adapt their practices to ensure their continuing professional growth. However, while student teachers are apt at reflecting on their experience (descriptive voice), they struggle to engage reflexively—that is, to clarify the ways in which their work is underpinned by theory (theoretical and conceptual voice). This project facilitated student teachers' ability to integrate their professional and personal learning, as well as beginning to theorize about their own professional self—critically examining the beliefs, experiences, and theoretical understandings that shape the way they work with learners. An outcome of this project was to strengthen the student's ability to demonstrate reflexive thinking about their adaptive practice as teachers.

Developing an understanding of the affordances of working as a community of practice/inquiry, and the recognition of the role of social context in learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991) is integral to this project. The best evidence synthesis on professional learning (Timperley, Wilson, Barrar, & Fung, 2007) emphasized the place of social interaction among teachers as peers, and those who bring relevant expertise. Challenging group norms, seeking feedback, and seeking clarification, are key elements to supporting deep constructs of practice (Timperley, 2013). The challenge was to guide the student teachers, to enable them to reconsider and reconstruct their own everyday theories, and to integrate their practice with more formal theories (Timperley, 2013).

The MTchgLn program has student teachers assigned to a partner school from the beginning of term one. Student teachers were in their partner school for a two-week block. As part of this two-week block, student teachers worked with their mentor teacher(s). Primary student teachers are assigned one mentor teacher, and placed in the associated classroom.

### **Mentor Teachers' Voices**

This chapter reports on the views of the mentor teachers at one of the partnership schools in the MTchgLn program for primary student teachers. A focus group interview was arranged at the school, and the mentor teachers were asked to comment on three aspects of the program: (1) What the partnership collaboration with the university meant for them; (2) Their views on the



student teachers being in their class for two days a week, in addition to the block professional experience placements; and, (3) Their views on how the partnership between the school and the university could be strengthened. The use of a focus group interview privileged the mentor teachers' voices, giving them the opportunity to hear what their colleagues had to say, and build on each other's responses. Pseudonyms for the mentor teachers have been used.

*What does this partnership collaboration mean to you?*

All of the mentor teachers had previously worked with student teachers in the undergraduate and graduate diploma programs. The initial responses from the mentor teachers were about the differences between the existing programs, and the MTchgLn program. Chris stated that in the past, being an associate teacher was not a partnership, as they were given a manual about requirements, and the university took care of teaching the content. Denise agreed and commented that the [undergraduate] "program was very prescriptive whereas in the MTchgLn program, you have to read students' needs better." Anne also commented, that the MTchgLn program was a "very different approach from final year [students]. Not just ticking boxes ... more responsive in nature."

Carolyn and Jessica not only commented on the differences in the programs, but also on the differences in the students in the programs, as undergraduate students in their final year of ITE are in the same classroom for the entire year, while the MTchgLn students are placed in two different schools during the year. Carolyn found the change of MTchgLn students at the end of term two frustrating, "as [you] get the best from a student teacher in the last part of the year." Jessica found that as the "students are so used to being successful that they need more TLC."

The mentor teachers then commented on the difficulties experienced in the first year of the program, and making the change from being an associate (supervising) teacher to being a mentor teacher. Chris, Denise, Jessica, and Carolyn stated that in the first year, they were not sure the program was going to work. Carolyn's response echoed the comments of the other mentor teachers. "Very demanding on the mentor teacher, as needed to supply a lot more curriculum knowledge, planning, achievement objectives, etc." Anne, however, commented that these demands also made the mentor more reflective about the program being delivered in the school.

As well as the differences and changes the mentor teachers experienced, they also commented on what they viewed as the more positive aspects of the MTchgLn program. These

included open communication lines, regular meetings between the mentor teachers, students, and university staff, and the liaison lecturer being in the school each week. Anne stated, that “effective communication is key.”

### *Two days a week?*

The mentor teachers were then asked about how they found the students being in the school for two days a week, in addition to the block professional experience placements. Overall, the mentor teachers were positive about the student teachers being in the schools for more time than in the other programs. The responses from the mentor teachers show the variety of advantages they saw in having the student teachers spend more time in the school.

The continuity works well. [The student teachers] develop relationships with colleagues and students. The class accepts the student teacher more. Much more important to be in the classroom. Would not work with only one day (Denise).

Student teachers get a lot from the school—maths, literacy, any PD [professional development] the school is doing, the students take part in (Carolyn).

Take part in different activities and clubs. Read people’s needs and develop relationships. How to approach other people in the school. How to behave in the school. (Grace).

Able to induct them into the culture of the school. Very important to attend TOD [teacher only day] (Chris).

Jessica stated that she felt that the student teachers being in the classroom two days per week was a positive aspect of the program, as it “prepared them for the real world of teaching. A more realistic view of teaching.” However, Jessica also pointed out that in order for students to be able to be fully immersed in the two days at school a week, there needed to be more consideration as to the number and type of assessments versus time for planning of lessons for those days.

As well as the positive aspects, Chris, Jessica, and Carolyn also identified that having the student teachers in their classrooms two days per week added to their workload. Chris commented that it “added workload as students are there twice as much, but know less.”

As the New Zealand Ministry of Education has advised the universities that are offering the one-year course taught MTchgLn ITE programs, that they will continue for 2017, the mentor teachers were asked for ideas for strengthening the partnership between the school and the university.

### *Ideas to Strengthen Partnership*

The mentor teachers put forward a variety of ideas to build on what was already happening in the MTchgLn program, and strengthen the program further. The ideas ranged from the professional development offered to the mentor teachers, to changing the length of the program.

Carolyn stated, that the school needed to have the university offer professional development (PD), not just for the mentor teachers, but for all staff, as she felt that the university had staff who were able to offer expertise in a variety of areas.

More professional development. [university] is at the cutting edge. Opportunity for schools to have an expert come in, and include all staff. Collaborative approaches to learning, latest theory, etc. Schools don't have the same access to professional learning as in the past. PD opportunities are important. PD funding [available through the MTchgLn partnership] not necessarily used for courses. What is available [at the university] needs to be communicated (Carolyn).

Jessica stated that they needed to know, not only what the university could offer in terms of professional development, but also how the teachers could be supported to upgrade their own qualifications. "What will they have to give for mentor teachers to be able to upgrade [to a Master's degree]?"

Communication was another aspect that the mentor teachers felt could be further strengthened in the program. Grace commented, that there needed to be more conversations between the partner school and the university in regards to the delivery of curriculum knowledge. "Scaffolding of curriculum, so we know what students are getting and when ... Better able to respond to what student teachers are getting at [university]."

The relationship between the mentor teacher and the student teacher was seen as being crucial. Jessica, Chris, and Carolyn all stated that it was important to match the students and mentor teachers. Chris took this idea further and stated, "Liaison lecturers know the teachers and students well, and can match them [together]". Carolyn commented that matching, "dispositions and personalities are important" and that "mentor teachers need to be open and supportive." With the students changing schools in the middle of the year, Grace stated, that mentor teachers had a "different sort of relationship with student teachers in the second half of the year." She commented, that she felt that the transition between the school settings needed to be retained, but that the lead in time was important to develop the new student teacher-mentor teacher relationships.

All of the mentor teachers felt that it was important for the mentor teacher, visiting lecturer, and the student teacher to have input into the student teachers' progress reports. They commented

that it gave a wider picture of the student teacher, included student voice, spread the responsibility for the content of the report, and the decision about a student teacher's progress was shared. These "professional conversations" between the student teacher, mentor teacher and visiting lecturer, which were led by the student, were good practice, and needed to continue.

It has been rumored that a postgraduate qualification in the future, could become the only pathway to attaining an initial teacher qualification in New Zealand. Carolyn raised her concern, if the MTchgLn program became the only pathway. She commented, that she believed that the program would need to have another six months in order to prepare these student teachers for the classroom.

Too many undercooked teachers with poor curriculum knowledge. There is enough experience [in schools] to cover those [students] coming through. If [postgraduate/Master program] are the only way[s] through, than that could present problems. Lots of stress on schools. A year is not long enough (Carolyn).

While it has not been confirmed that the postgraduate diploma or master's programs will be the only pathway for gaining initial teacher qualifications, it has certainly been a persistent rumor. How this possible development will affect ITE programs is unknown at this stage. Continuing to look at ways to strengthen and further develop the MTchgLn program would be advantageous for all involved in the program.

## **Final Thoughts**

One of the purposes of ITE is to challenge student teachers' naïve preconceptions of teaching, and being the teacher (Fives & Buehl, 2010; Stuart & Thurlow, 2000; Weinstein, 1990). This challenge is addressed through the student teachers learning and teaching alongside, and receiving feedback from, experienced classroom practitioners, while gaining theoretical, pedagogical, and content knowledge from the lecturers at university. Bringing classroom experiences, practitioner knowledge, and academic knowledge together in an integrated and coherent manner are essential components of exemplary ITE programs (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Gutiérrez, 2008; Le Cornu & Ewing, 2008). Working with classroom practitioners in school and academic staff at university, allows the students to experience and participate in a number of communities of practice on their journey to becoming a teacher (Darling-Hammond, 2006).

A meaningful collaborative partnership between our partner schools and the university is imperative to the success of this program. Valuing what each member of the partnership brings to

the program is essential. Communication is a key aspect of any partnership, and all voices must be privileged. The university and this partner school have been working together for three years, building this collaborative partnership in order to provide a seamless continuum of learning opportunities. Over these three years, both the university and the partner school recognize that each partner is vital, in order to provide student teachers with the opportunity to connect the theory of practice to the practice of theory.

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## **Chapter 11: An Examination of School Speech-Language Pathology and Collaboration**

~Beth Parker-Godin~



This chapter will discuss collaborative practice as it relates to speech-language pathologists working in the school setting. A review of the literature indicates that the term “collaboration” is frequently applied to business and various areas of health care, such as nursing. Over the years it has been increasingly used in the literature in relation to the school environment. It is indeed a “buzz” word when attempting to provide the best possible service, regardless of the profession or domain cited. To date, the amount of literature on educational collaboration between school staff is less than robust (Stern, 2011). This chapter will briefly discuss the history of speech-language pathology, and the changes this field has undergone, which influence current practices in schools. The need to clearly define collaboration will be highlighted. While most literature tends to agree that collaborating is beneficial, a clear consensus as to how to clearly describe it appears elusive (Stern, 2011; D’Amour, Ferrada-Videla, & Beaulieu, 2005). Selected individual factors in achieving a successful collaboration, as well as the disadvantages and barriers will be discussed.

### **Historical Perspectives and Changing Roles**

Speech-language pathologists have been working in school settings for many decades. In this time, the scope of practice for speech-language pathologists has changed significantly (Rosenbaum, 2001; Elksnin, 1994; Katz, Maag, Fallon, Blenkarn, & Smith, 2010; Harn, Bradshaw, & Ogletree, 1999). Speech-language pathologists work with students with a wide diversity of speech-language impairments, and often have large caseloads over a number of schools (Roberts,

2006). In order to provide service to students, interactions must occur with administration, classroom teachers, specialists, disciplines (such as guidance counselors or psychologists), and parents. To meet varying student needs, it can be beneficial to collaborate with teachers and other professionals within the school environment (Pena, 2014; Harn et al., 1999; Rosenbaum, 2001). Collaboration among school staff and speech-language pathologists can assist in developing the student's skills in a real-life context. Working together to share information and perspectives not only benefits the student, but also the other individuals involved (Girolametto, Weitzman & Greenberg, 2012).

The landscape in which school speech-language pathologists carry out their role has evolved over several decades. These changes have resulted from forces outside, as well as from within the field of communication disorders. Changes in legislation, policy and educational practices have altered the provision of services. Inclusive education for all students, regardless of speech and language abilities and other differences, has been implemented in many countries worldwide (Wickremesooriya, 2014). Developments from within the field of speech-language pathology have created new and expanded tools for conducting assessments and intervention. These developments have created new ways to look at, and address communication and literacy challenges. One example of this, was the increased research and attention given to language disorders and language development in the 1970s. This shift in focus served to change how speech-language pathologists began to work with children within the school environment. (Prior to that time, speech-language pathologists were frequently known as “speech correctionists” and were mainly involved with students with articulation, voice and stuttering difficulties [Whitmire, Rivers, Mele-McCarthy, & Staskowski, 2014, p. 68].) A more recent development has been the explosion of assistive technology, which can be implemented with persons who have complex communication needs through the means of augmentative and alternative communication.

Changing demographics of school populations has also impacted on the composition of the speech-language pathologist's caseload. Many schools now have a student population that in many cases, is increasingly diverse culturally and linguistically. Issues related to social and economic difficulties have also put a large number of students at risk for experiencing academic (particularly literacy) challenges (Streelasky, 2008). Health care advancements have also allowed for more children to survive early medical difficulties such as premature birth, childhood trauma, and illnesses, but who are many times left with physical and/or learning challenges. As a result,

services have expanded to include students with many different communicative difficulties (Whitmire et al., 2014, Rosenbaum, 2001).

Nowadays, speech-language pathologists will often combine various roles within the school setting to meet these various needs. The needs of the learner, adherence to administrative guidelines, and personal preferences can come into play (Harn et al., 1999). Historically, the main role of the speech-language pathologist is that of a direct service provider. In this role, intervention services are provided directly to the students on the caseload. Direct services could be in a therapy room, or classroom-based. The second role is that of a collaborative consultant. The speech-language pathologist may interact with other disciplines or team members, such as educators and parents/guardians. The speech-language pathologist shares information, plans goals and intervention activities, and generally collaborates to deliver remediation. The last role involves acting as a supervisor to communication assistants, or university speech-language pathologist interns.

In the schools of today, speech-language pathologists generally provide service to students within set guidelines of service delivery options. These guidelines are established mainly through government or school board policy; however, there is some flexibility at times based on school need, precedent, and activities of the speech-language pathologist. Frequently, two or more service delivery options tend to be utilized at a single school (Rosenbaum, 2001; Ritzman, Sanger, & Coufal, 2006; Harn et al., 1999). This is seen as an effective way of dealing with the dynamic process of addressing the changing needs of students. Service delivery tends to consist of the following options: monitoring, pull-out assessment/therapy, classroom-based and collaborative consultation. Studies have suggested that there are multiple factors affecting the speech-language pathologist's decision making strategies for selecting a model of service delivery (Bland, 1995). Regardless of the model employed, intervention should be functional and content-based, integrating intervention with activities meaningful to the student's educational experience (Whitmire et al., 2014).

The pull-out model of service delivery has traditionally been a dominant feature in the school setting. In this model, students are seen in a separate therapy room, either individually or in small groups at scheduled times (such as 20 to 30 minutes, one to two times per week). While there are exceptions, generally the goals and objectives in the speech and language therapy, often have little or no direct link to the classroom curriculum. While the pull-out model has limitations,

it continues to be at least one of the models used by many speech-language pathologists (Harn et al., 1999).

Due to its limitations and the movement towards inclusive practices, other service delivery models have emerged to address changing needs. These models include monitoring, classroom-based service, and collaborative consultation. Monitoring involves the speech-language pathologist “checking in” on the student’s speech and language skills, often by way of an occasional quick session with the student, or in discussions with the classroom teacher. This type of practice is often employed just prior to being discharged from a caseload. Classroom-based services involve an integrated approach, whereby the speech-language pathologist provides direct service, either in the classroom setting or other natural school environments. Team teaching with the teacher, resource teacher, and/or learning centre teacher is prominent in this model. The last popular model is collaborative consultation. This model of service delivery is considered to be an effective way to work with students with speech and language impairments (ASHA, 1993), and is referenced as an appropriate option in the Nova Scotia Department of Education’s Speech-Language Pathology Guidelines (2010). In this type of service, the speech-language pathologist, teacher (classroom/resource/learning centre, etc.) and the parents/guardians of the student work together to facilitate a student’s communication and learning in the school environment. Opinions, perspectives and viewpoints of multiple disciplines are encouraged, in order to attempt to create more effective solutions. In this model, the speech-language pathologist may, or may not see the student directly. Regardless of the model employed, in order to be effective, there must be some degree of collaboration with family members and school staff.

The roles and responsibilities of a speech-language pathologist could include prevention/identification, assessment, intervention, transition, advocacy, participation on school teams, and individual education program (IEP) development. Effective collaboration between teachers and speech-language pathologists can have positive benefits in daily communication and academic achievement for students with language impairments (Pena & Quinn, 2003). Collaborative efforts with parents and guardians can also lead to positive gains for the students (Roberts, 2006). Girolametto, Weitzman, and Greenberg (2012) noted that children who are at risk of delays in literacy skills, demonstrated a language impairment or had impoverished literacy experiences, could all benefit from collaborative efforts between educators, speech-language pathologists and families.

## **Defining the Exact Nature of Collaboration**

In its simplest form, collaboration is defined by the Merriam-Webster dictionary as “to work with another person or group in order to achieve or do something.” While this definition covers the basics, it does not inform as to how the individual persons interact with each other, or provide clarity as to the role each individual plays in working towards the shared goal. At times, in the research literature, there does not seem to be a clear consensus as to how collaboration is defined. Due to the nature of collaboration and the complexity required for collaboration to be effective, it is often misunderstood (Welch, 1998; Bland, 1995). Confusion can occur when the exact type of collaboration, and its related roles and goals, are not clearly conveyed or defined (Pena & Quinn, 2003).

There are currently other issues with present research into speech-language pathology collaborative practices in the school setting. For example, in the educational research reviewed, there did not appear to be a standard definition of the exact nature or type of collaboration implemented. It was frequently vaguely defined or absent. Without a clear definition in the literature, it can be at times, difficult to compare methods in order to determine what made the venture successful or unsuccessful. There also was a paucity of information related to the complexities which can occur when disciplines work together, making it more challenging to gain a clear perspective. The lack of succinct definitions and scant research in the field of education related to speech-language pathology collaborative practices, may in fact, impact on its overall success. There are other challenges as well within the current research, related to school collaborative practices. Numerous studies documented, tend to be completed by graduate students fulfilling a thesis or necessary coursework. It is beneficial to see potential graduates of speech-language pathology or other professions show interest in collaboration in the workplace. However, their lack of real-world experience in their chosen professions, may hamper the degree to which the intricacies of collaboration may be completely understood.

Collaboration by its very nature is a complex process. Beyond policies and guidelines, on a personal level, it involves each person’s philosophies, the theoretical framework by which they undertake their respective roles, their own conceptualizations of the difficulty presented, and a barrage of other factors. Some believe that collaboration is an attitude, not an activity (Ritzman et al., 2006) while others view it as existing on a continuum of skills (Elksnin & Capilouto, 1994). Marvin (1990) describes collaboration in four stages:

- Co-activity, which is the lowest level of collaboration, in which activities are done in parallel—instructional activities are completed individually with little sharing of ideas.
- Cooperation, which involves jointly establishing general goals instead of individual goals for individual students.
- Coordination, a form of group cohesion in which individuals of different disciplines share opinions and instructional strategies related to specific students.
- Collaboration, when individuals of different disciplines engage in informal networking and have a high degree of trust and respect for each other.

A brief examination of research in the field of health care yielded a large number of articles, published within the last several decades, with definitions more clearly defined (Mu, 2004). Related to collaboration, various descriptors have been used to convey the varying degrees to which the members work together. D’Amour, Ferrada-Videla, San Martin-Rodriguez and Beliveau (2005) performed an examination of the various definitions found in the literature. The most frequently used qualifiers were: multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary, and transdisciplinary.

Multidisciplinary teams refer to teams which are comprised of professionals from different disciplines, who work together on the same issue, either independent of each other or in a parallel fashion. The association between disciplines is not explicit, and there is no formal group relationship. Interactions between professionals may be limited and transient. In an interdisciplinary model, different disciplines, such as general and special educators, psychologists and speech-language pathologists, work together in assessment and development of intervention programs (Mu, 2004). Assessment and implementation of the intervention programs oftentimes remain isolated, according to Mu (2004). D’Amour et al. (2005) indicate that within the transdisciplinary model, the various professionals on the team collaborate and work together during the assessment, planning, and implementation process. The hallmark of this type of team is characterized by sharing of information and skills across traditional disciplinary boundaries.

Another term which has not, as of yet, occurred frequently in the school setting literature is the inter-professional team. This type of team is frequently cited in health professional literature. D’Amour and Oandasan (2005) define inter-professional as “the development of a cohesive practice between professionals from different disciplines. It is the method by which professionals examine and develop ways of practicing in a more integrated fashion” (p. 9). Collaborating by this method involves continuous interaction and knowledge sharing between professionals. Equal weight is generally given to the input received from each discipline involved (Jantsch, 1972). Information is then synthesized from the different discipline perspectives involved, to form a more

integrated and cohesive solution. An inter-professional team model is well suited to the school environment, due to complex educational issues and the variety of disciplines that can be involved within this setting (Stern, 2011). It has also been argued that this is the clearer definition of the type of team collaboration that takes place between disciplines in the school setting (Mu, 2004).

Due to the increasing intricacies of changing demographics in the school environment, it is important to have a better, and clearer definition and understanding of collaboration. D'Amour and Oandasan (2005) state that inter-professional collaboration "is the process by which professionals reflect on and develop ways of practicing that provides an integrated and cohesive answer to the needs of the client/family/population. Inter-professionality comes from the preoccupation of professionals to reconcile their differences and their sometimes opposing views and it involves continuous interaction and knowledge sharing between professionals organized, to solve or explore a variety of education and care issues" (D'Amour et al., 2005, p. 9). Speech-Language and Audiology Canada (SAC), a national governing body for certified speech-language pathologists, defines the following scope of practice: "Speech-language pathologists may work alone or as part of an inter-professional team to help individuals of all ages to communicate effectively, and to swallow safely and efficiently." (SAC, 2014, p.2). It is therefore, well within the mandate of speech-language pathologists to adopt and use this terminology.

Even with challenges in how to define the nature of collaboration, there is little dispute as to its power to significantly improve supports offered to struggling students (Bauer, Iyer, Boon, & Fore, 2010; Baxter, Brookes, Bianchi, Rashid, & Hay, 2009; Fletcher, Fletcher, Cross, Tanney, & Schneider, 2008). Evidence suggests that even when collaboration could be beneficial, it is not always done (Katz, Maag, Fallon, Blenkarn, & Smith (2010); Ritzman et al., 2006). Rosenbaum (2001) notes that in her study, the majority of speech-language pathologists reported using collaborative consultation between 10 percent and 25 percent of the time. Elksnin and Capilouto (1994) surveyed speech-language pathologists to determine the factors behind why they may or may not collaborate. Both groups agreed that the generalization of language skills was more likely with more cohesive services. It was also noted that those who collaborated frequently, rated it as more effective than those who did not. Good communication and language skills are essential to mastering the entire curriculum. Challenges with language and communication skills have been linked with difficulties in learning to read and write, in addition to poor academic performance (Fletcher et al., 2008; Girolametto et al., 2012). With the classroom teacher and the speech-

language pathologist working together, there is also the potential to reach at risk children through in-class interventions (Saar, 2012).

Shaughnessy and Sanger (2005) did a mail-in survey of 484 kindergarten teachers' perceptions of language and literacy development, speech-language pathologists, and language interventions. The survey listed eight types of interactions with speech-language pathologists, and the teachers were asked to check all types that they had experienced. The majority of teachers (75%) indicated that the speech-language pathologists used a pull-out model the majority of the time. Approximately 25 percent had experienced planning collaboratively. Other options of service delivery reported less frequently included team teaching, shared planning followed by the teacher or paraprofessional delivering therapy, and a paraprofessional providing services inside or outside the regular classroom setting. Teachers perceived speech-language pathologists as having a valued shared role in both language and literacy development. This study also suggested that there was an overall increase in collaborative efforts for speech-language pathologists in the area of language and literacy, when compared to previous research.

Rosenbaum (2001) reported that speech-language pathologists who employed collaboration, more often found it to be more effective and efficient, than those that did not. The study noted that speech-language pathologists who co-taught in the classroom, supported the regular education class, and supported the special educator classroom had higher positive perceptions of collaborative practices.

### **The Benefits of Collaboration**

While a collaborative approach is considered to be beneficial, there can be challenges in implementation, and in maintaining such a practice. Even when a positive and functional partnership is desirable to all persons, the simple desire to work collaboratively is not a sufficient foundation (Saar, 2012). Due to the complex multi-faceted nature of collaboration and school culture, a definitive list of what makes a team successful or not, may be elusive (Bland, 1995). Efforts to determine what factors enable the development of successful teams, have been studied at length in research (Roberts, 2006; Stern, 2011; Bland, 1995; Pena & Quinn, 2003; Ritzman et al., 2006). The following factors were considered to be beneficial for collaborative endeavors.

Working with persons with similar backgrounds helped staff relate to each other, and to better understand each other. Philosophical compatibility and complimentary teaching styles were



perceived as being important to school speech-language pathologists, when thinking of starting a collaborative endeavor (Elksnin & Capilouto, 1994). People's openness to change and a positive school atmosphere allowed for a shift in thinking, to allow increased opportunities for collaboration (Fisher, 2008; Paradice, Bailey-Wood, Davies, & Solomon, 2007). Speech-language pathologists need to also be familiar with the "culture of the classroom"—each class has its own unique rhythm. Many factors influence this "culture," such as the classroom teacher's teaching style, class rules and routines, composition of the learners in the class (strengths, challenges, cultural, linguistics), and even the physical layout of the room. A speech-language pathologist must be able to successfully navigate the social structure of each school they provide service to (Saar, 2012). The tone of the school with respect to collaboration between professionals is frequently conveyed to staff via the administration at the school (Stern, 2011; Fisher, 2008). The speech-language pathologist must on occasion, negotiate use of their time with the school administrators. Advocating for the various types of service delivery models, and how they can optimize services for students, can greatly increase the overall support.

A key component to collaborative consultation is the participants' ability to recognize and capitalize on each other's professional strengths (Elksnin & Capilouto, 1994). Pena and Quinn (2003) note that collaboration must be undertaken voluntarily, with team members functioning as equal participants. There must be a willingness of those involved to work together, and team members must be aware of the importance of other members' roles in the process. The speech-language pathologist and classroom teacher's respective knowledge and skills must be valued by their partner (Elksnin & Capilouto, 1994). The ability to recognize the limits of one's own knowledge and attempt to understand another's paradigm, is considered to be important in order to integrate information (Stern, 2011). A speech-language pathologist and teacher can work together to identify naturally occurring activities that could be used to practice the targeted skills. This could include, making requests in the class, responding to the teacher's directions, concept development, reading comprehension, social skills, and targeting articulation sounds during oral reading. Sharing and seeking information both formally (lunchtime meetings or using time during a teacher's prep) and informally (in the school halls, at the photocopier, a quick chat in the lunch room) can keep communication open.

Trust among colleagues is critical when collaborating in the school setting. A high degree of trust must be developed in order for collaborators to be comfortable sharing beliefs, ideas, and

resources freely without hesitation (Fisher, 2008). In collaborative groups, showing interest and openness in the viewpoint of others is paramount. The ability to provide constructive feedback, and to listen to feedback, benefits the process. Communicating in a style that conveys respect and openness allows for the creation of an open and accepting atmosphere (Stern, 2011). Being mindful of the roles each discipline can play, assists in the development and follow through of the goal (Pena & Quinn, 2003). In more formalized teams, providing clear and effective communication, such as opportunities to speak and listen, and being aware of nonverbal cues, also impact on the overall effectiveness (Stern, 2011). Along with these factors, the expectation for collaboration must exist, and be communicated. The expectation must be set that collaboration will occur, but that expectation alone is not sufficient (Fisher, 2008). Having the opportunity to plan and meet on a consistent basis was seen as an essential factor to success (Bland, 1995; Elksnin & Capilouto, 1994).

Speech-language pathologists are frequently viewed as visitors to the school, potentially creating a social barrier, which can affect mutual trust and respect (Baxter et al., 2009). Speech-language pathologists must work to establish a presence in their schools. This allows for increased opportunities to promote formal, as well as informal communication (such as eating in the lunch room, adding to the school newsletter, participating on the school programming team, or creating displays in the school).

### **Barriers to Collaboration**

Research has documented numerous qualities and characteristics which can influence the success of collaboration. Even when factors are optimal, there still may be a variety of barriers and challenges when attempting to collaborate (Baxter et al., 2009; Bland, 1995; Hartas, 2004; Paul, Blosser, & Jakuowtiz, 2006; Rosenbaum, 2001). Barriers or obstacles can occur in the school setting, due to environmental or attitudinal views. Several research papers reviewed, considered collaboration as a way to save money, or as a way to enforce a new agenda in a school (Nellis, Sickman, Newman, & Harman, 2014; Salm, 2014). Collaboration can be influenced by degree of administrative support, organizational structure, or personal theoretical framework of service delivery (Ehren, 2000). Often, there can be multiple factors occurring at the same time or in succession, which can have an impact. These factors may be obvious, such as an administrative directive to maintain the “pull out” service delivery model, or school personnel wanting to maintain total individual control of a particular situation. At other times, there may be much more

subtle challenges, like team members having alternative motives for their participation in collaborative endeavors.

Within the school environment, the administration's attitude towards collaboration can influence what sort of role teachers and specialists play as part of a formalized team (Stern, 2011), or in more informal approaches. Historically, the role of the speech-language pathologist was to remediate communication impairments. Some administrators and/or teachers continue to be unaware of the scope of practice of the school speech-language pathologist. In general, the school staff may be more familiar with the traditional pull-out model of speech and language therapy (Pena & Quinn, 2003). In these instances, it may be more challenging to obtain support or "buy in" from all potential group members (Saar, 2012).

If a teacher is not aware of the range of speech-language pathologists' abilities, from language development, phonological awareness, voice, to fluency (stuttering) therapy, they may be less likely to seek collaboration. Another issue can be that speech-language pathologists generally do not have an extensive knowledge of the curriculum for all grades that they service. Without a greater knowledge of the curriculum, it may at times be more challenging to offer in-class support, or for the classroom teacher and pathologist to work together. The classroom can present a vastly different context in terms of the demands it places on students' communication skills (Harn et al., 1999). If professionals' backgrounds and perspectives are vastly different, it may be harder to find common ground, and thus collaborate.

Ehren (2000) noted that many speech-language pathologists do not want to become classroom teachers, and prefer to maintain a pull-out type of caseload. It was felt that the speech-language pathology services to students in the classroom made for "watered down" therapy. Data collection was also noted to become more challenging in the classroom. In another survey, speech-language pathologists reported concerns about lack of individual customization, if not seen for direct pull-out therapy (Elksnin & Capilouto, 1994).

The amount of time required for additional planning was frequently cited as having a negative effect on collaborative efforts and results (Stern, 2011; Elksnin & Capilouto, 1994). When the workload was high, it also added strain to the overall effectiveness of collaborative undertakings (Roberts, 2006, Katz et al., 2010; Stern, 2011).

## Summary

In conclusion, the collaborative process is complex—from clearly defining it, to developing and maintaining it in the work environment. Developing a relationship into a true collaboration can take time. It does not occur in a single setting, or within a set of traditional time constraints (Ritzman et al., 2006). It is a process that can evolve over time, and cannot be rushed. It may develop at different rates for different teams; factors such as personality, experience, and resources (such as time, space materials) can impact the course of team development (Pena & Quinn, 2003). Shifts in belief, thinking, and the way we practice as speech-language pathologists are necessary (Whitmire et al., 2002). In order to be effective, there must be support for this type of service from teachers, as well as school and board level administrators. It is critical that speech-language pathologists advocate for themselves, and for their students in the school setting (Ritzman et al., 2006). Advocating for the various roles that speech-language pathologists can provide, may make new service delivery options more viable. Research suggests that a collaborative approach can result in positive changes for all members involved (Bland, 1995). Potentially, the most positive change can be for the students, as a cohesive approach will ultimately benefit their learning.

While there can be challenges along the way, the benefits of working together in an inter-professional approach are undisputable. More research is needed to address the challenges noted above, as well as to enhance understanding as to how collaboration can work in the school setting between professionals. As Henry Ford once said, though: “Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; working together is success.”

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## Chapter 12: Enhancing Teaching and Learning through a Global Connection

~Anita Reynolds<sup>1</sup>, Terry Mullins<sup>2</sup> & Greg Neal<sup>3</sup>~



### Introduction

Collaborative teaching and learning have become more and more important, as the 21st century classroom has evolved. As part of preparing a framework for 21st century education, those involved in higher education and teacher preparation in particular, have had to become creative with strategies that prepare 21st century teachers for the classroom of today and the future.

It is now widely recognized that teaching and learning in the 21st century requires the effective use of current technology resources (Moyle, 2010; Trilling & Fadel, 2009). In delivering subject matter or content—years ago referred to as the 3 Rs: reading, writing and arithmetic—the focus needs to be on moving the instructional teacher to a constructivist approach (Jonassen, 2000; Heppell, 1993), where students focus on understanding, and demonstrate their learning through means other than exams, and the regurgitation of facts.

In our global society with its abstract boundaries, the ability to collaboratively problem solve through engaging projects with real-world applications is critical (Reed, 2007). This chapter reports on a global collaboration that has created a partnership between two universities from

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opposite sides of the Pacific Ocean—one that incorporates varying levels of connectivity, synchronicity, authentic inquiry and creativity. This global partnership promotes an appreciation of the depth of understanding that is cultivated, when meaning is extracted from the context of a culturally diverse setting (Cook et al., 2016).

Research supports the need for 21st century teachers to go beyond the delivery of content, to move students into new ways of thinking, working, and communicating in a global context (Neal, Mullins & Reynolds, 2013). It is now imperative that teacher education ensures new teachers develop and utilize these common attributes as part of their practice, for the benefit of today's students. This chapter highlights a case where teacher candidates were invited to engage in a new learning considered appropriate for the 21st century, and the shared learning experiences that ensued.

## **Background**

Educators from Concord University approached this challenge, by introducing an integrated approach to the presentation of three courses at Concord University in Athens, West Virginia. The strategy was entitled, EPAT: a combination of educational psychology, educational assessment, and educational technology. This combination provided a unique opportunity for three different professors to team teach in both online and face to face environments, including an onsite field experience in a public school classroom. EPAT is an integral component of the teacher education program, that is now required of all education majors at Concord University. The course was developed with an online learning management system, that included a single online course, an integrated grade book, and the opportunity for three professors to work in partnership with one another, and with the teacher candidates enrolled in the course. With this in mind, the three education courses were able to present concepts in an integrated fashion, rather than in isolation.

The major goals for combining the three courses included, the opportunity to present educational concepts in an integrated rather than an isolated fashion, to provide greater relevance for course objectives, and to increase classroom applications of the educational theories and concepts introduced in the three classes. In addition to the more salient goals, this course also presented a model of collaborative instruction for teacher candidates. The online component and traditional face-to-face meetings are amplified by weekly onsite field placements. At these placements, students become a part of their classroom, while working with master teachers at

various schools throughout the region. This unique approach to online instruction maximizes the advantages of collaborative teaching, the traditional educational field placement, and 21st century online educational opportunities.

In October 2011, the Concord University professors presented their unique course approach at the e-Learn world conference in Honolulu, Hawaii. In a breakout session at the world conference, the professors expanded on their strategy to a group of session participants. One of those participants was a professor at Victoria University in Melbourne, Victoria, Australia. Following the assembly, a discussion followed between the professors about commonalities in the field site-based approach for both teacher education programs at their respective universities. Out of these discussions, a partnership between the professors grew, and the idea evolved that a collaboration be expanded to include students at the two universities. As a result, for more than eight semesters, students at the two universities have collaborated to discuss a variety of topics related to educational similarities and differences in the two countries.

This multi-week collaboration has now been incorporated into the EPAT curriculum. The result has been a very rich global collaboration between the two education programs. The purpose of this collaboration is multifaceted. Teacher candidates broaden their perspectives of education by learning about the educational system in a different country. The collaboration requires students to utilize 21st century technologies, while developing skills in teamwork and collaboration. An added benefit is the necessity for students to problem solve and think critically, as they work in teams separated by 10,000 miles (16,000 km) and a time difference of 14 hours. The ongoing collaboration has evolved into an innovative model for creating a collaborative strategy that involves e-learning opportunities. This model emphasizes the application of technologies that allow higher education students to communicate across cultural and international boundaries. Using this e-learning model, students correspond weekly with teacher candidates from another country, employing various interactive and current technologies.

### **The Online Collaboration**

This particular global collaboration has resulted in an outstanding level of scholarship in teaching, as well as an exemplary experience for the participating teacher candidates. The project continues to take place as an integral part of units of study within each university's teacher

education courses. The aim of the project was to have the teacher candidates position themselves as:

- Adaptable and capable 21st century citizens who can communicate effectively, work collaboratively, think critically, and solve complex problems.
- Responsible and ethical citizens who participate in inter-cultural understanding, and contribute to local and global communities.

The global collaboration initiative has linked teacher candidates together, so that they are able to contribute to each other's developing teaching capabilities. This has required them to use selected social software resources to enhance and build connectedness, first with their local group members, and second, with their international counterparts.

The focus of the global collaboration initiative has been to challenge students to participate beyond the traditional instructional teacher delivering subject matter, to one that supports them in a student-centered learning situation. This initiative models effective teaching and learning practices appropriate to current classroom practices. It encourages students to be active participants in the learning process, and engage in shared knowledge, building through a global connection. It was considered important to ensure that the teacher candidates used online resources in a real-world context, and to promote the use of various technological resources, which can be readily transferred into their future teaching practice. It also encourages students to develop new learning, and new relationships beyond their own culture—important attributes of being a global educator.

The collaboration activities were accomplished using a team approach. A team of Concord students from West Virginia, were partnered with a team of teacher education students from Victoria University, Australia. The collaboration was structured so that each week, students had a designated topic with specific questions, and a recommended technology to facilitate the learning. The teacher candidates were encouraged to provide depth and breadth in their exchange, by including personal experiences from their classrooms. This provided each group with an opportunity to share the insights and findings of other groups.

Once initial contact was made, the teacher candidates began to exchange and share information, present current literature and research evidence, and add their own personal anecdotes to uncover similarities and differences between their respective education systems. In each semester of each year, the four-week project has generally followed this structure:

- In week one, students are required to discover, and begin to explain their different school

systems, funding arrangements, university requirements, etc. Week one of the collaboration is a get acquainted week for the group members. Both groups of students connect through email and/or social networking to introduce themselves, and to share their educational goals as they pursue their teaching degrees. Many students find the social networking angle to be one of the easiest ways to communicate over the Pacific.

- In week two, students link up using an online forum (e.g., Skype) to speak directly with their overseas partners, and exchange information about issues confronting education in their respective countries. Week two is significant, as students exchange information synchronously, and discuss a variety of topical matters. Accommodating diversity, bullying, global ranking, and national curriculums, have been common topics unpacked over the years. This synchronous technology also poses challenges for the groups, as they schedule around a 14-hour time difference, but it has been found to build relationships between overseas partners and is a major impetus in ongoing collaboration.
- In week three, students use a blog or a wiki to exchange information about their respective cultures and societies, and the ways teachers adopt strategies appropriate for today's learners. Week three focuses on classroom considerations, such as instructional strategies, promoting higher level thinking skills, lesson plan components, meeting the needs of students with disabilities, providing differentiated learning, and classroom management.
- In week four, students concentrate on assessment practices, and how they impact on teaching and learning. The students use Google Docs to co-create a shared account of the main facets of assessment happening in schools today. Students discuss the various types of formative and summative assessments, along with the use of high-stakes standardized assessments in public schools, and college entrance examinations.

At the conclusion of each semester, students at Concord University celebrate a Global Collaboration Symposium. Through learning station conversations, current teacher candidates, in-service teachers from partner public schools, and university faculty, participate to commemorate the global learning initiative. Concord students share their learning experiences, newly acquired technology skills, and increased awareness of their global learning initiative with teachers and students from local public schools. This annual event has permitted the teacher candidates to showcase their achievements to the wider education community.

For Victoria University students, they adopt a student-centered learning approach to

package their findings from the global collaboration, co-creating a multimedia package using programs such as Voicethread. This requires them to share their collated findings, and to provide a voiceover for the finished product that encourages them to share informed opinions and new understandings. The chance to discuss the similarities and differences, provides the teacher candidates the opportunity to demonstrate their broadening knowledge from a global perspective.

## **Findings and Discussion**

Even from the first year of operation, the positive reactions from teacher candidates strongly suggested that the experience had much merit, and was worth further developing. Decreasing the number of participants in each collaborative group (originally had collaborative groups of six, but the groups were reduced to a maximum of four per group; two local and two international) encouraged each individual to engage in the discourse, and promoted reflective strategies as part of the ongoing dialogue. Teacher candidates reacted to the global collaboration with an assortment of comments and observations, most of which, over several semesters, have been very positive.

I found the global collaboration exercise to be very extensive, but highly informative. I thought that the strong points of this exercise were the integration of communication, collaboration, and research-based evidence.

This exercise has helped to shape my understanding of education from different perspectives, while gaining new knowledge to take into my own classroom. Through this experience, I have grown and learned about other education systems, but also the one I will teach in in a few years.

As well, the focus on the process of dialogue exchange was critical to highlight new learning, and to show what has changed for students as global educators.

I really liked their strategies on teaching. They tended to focus more on group work and collaborative learning instead of individual direct learning. They also had interesting types of formative assessments that I haven't seen used much here.

It was neat to get a first-hand account of Australian education. You can always Google answers, but to get the information from someone that lives there was an enriching experience.

Meeting new people and learning their personalities, their stories, and their ways of teaching/learning is something you definitely can't pull from traditional resources.

While the information age has largely eliminated global boundaries, school teachers often operate in a self-contained environment, with limited interaction with peers. An unexpected

outcome of the global collaboration has been the development of a spirit of future collaboration with administrators, other teachers, and even students. Teacher candidates have internalized the potential for asynchronous projects, co-teaching, and networking.

As classrooms become increasingly diverse, it is imperative that teachers recognize and embrace differences in thoughts and opinions, as well as identify different aspects of effective teaching and learning approaches. For many teacher candidates at these two universities, the global collaboration initiative is their first opportunity to participate in such discourse. In addition to the exchange of ideas, the collaboration impresses upon students the importance of open dialogues and consideration of alternative ideas and approaches. The qualitative voice of the teacher candidates portrays how they perceived the value of the global collaboration, and whether they in fact, gained from these networking opportunities. The following statements made by some of the teacher candidates from both countries encapsulates their understandings:

I found the global collaboration to be rather interesting and enlightening in ways that I would not have otherwise had the opportunity to experience. Looking into the ways that other people think and collaborate within small local groups and around the world to create projects and manage school systems, brings insight into the reasons behind and the results of our own collaborations, and local school system structures.

I have found the global collaboration exercise to be very interesting and insightful. How many more times in my life am I going to be able to speak to someone a half a world away, and find out that we have so many things in common?

I was able to better see the similarities from other educators in the world, but more interestingly, I was able to experience the vastly different philosophies they implemented to address the same problems America deals with. My Australian counterparts specifically challenged me to reconsider some of my teaching approaches.

The global collaboration has provided a new context for teacher candidates to engage with others over an extended period of time. The intent of the online experience has been to provide another perspective from which to formulate and confirm thinking around particular global issues. In this case, there was a genuine attempt to encourage individual teacher candidates to think beyond their immediate environment, and their localized knowledge about curriculum, assessment requirements, and teaching and learning practices, as part of a team of developing new teachers. The intent has been to challenge the participants to become part of a global education community, rather than remain localized practitioners.



One of the strengths of enabling a global connection, is the opportunity it has provided to participants to share personal anecdotes and vignettes that enhance the authenticity of the global exchange. The students could easily locate answers to questions about each other's education systems by undertaking an Internet search, but the opportunity to provide each other with specific personal experiences to elaborate or further explain a point is invaluable.

By directly communicating with my partners in Australia I was able to get a more personal view, than I would have if using traditional search resources.

I think my favorite part of this exercise was the communication with the assigned Australian. The student I was assigned to, gave me more than enough information. He provided me with well stated explanations to all the questions I asked.

It was interesting to converse with students in the USA undertaking teaching a course. It was certainly a valuable experience trialing different ICT, and gaining a different perspective on teaching and learning.

The collaboration was an extension into the social and/or working lives of the participants, to further promote and encourage ongoing communication. In today's classroom, working in teams or groups is a desired 21st century learning approach (Fullan, 2013) to expose the learners to alternate viewpoints. However, the importance of good working relationships is significant within and between groups, and the IT arrangements can exacerbate social problems, and is inimical to learning. Working with local and global partners requires negotiation and collaboration. The inclusion of IT, can also add to social pressure. There was a presumption that simply placing students in collaborative situations would provide a set of positive learning opportunities for all.

Thinking in terms of the level of trust, respect, and student/teacher responsibilities in other countries, prompts us to have new perspectives regarding American school systems. Certain aspects of the global collaboration were somewhat challenging, but always rewarding.

The human aspect of considering time zones, workloads, other peoples' commitments can be irritating for some, but they are all aspects to consider when working effectively in groups.

While the group members were to act as support for each other, some groups encountered difficulties, and some became less collaborative and more cooperative. That is, they formulated plans to have individual group members act on behalf of the group, usually as a way to strategically ease the workload of group members, or to help overcome organizational concerns. This is evidenced by the following comments made by some students:

One of our partners was very helpful and gave us good feedback but we didn't hear much from our other student.

This group did suffer from a lack of connection at times.

The information that we supplied was a lot more detailed than we received. Even though there were two in our overseas group, they seemed to take it in turns to respond to the week's questions.

The inclusion of different IT resources, also challenged the expert and novice IT user in different ways. Clearly, the collaboration helped students gain confidence in using different media for professional purposes, and helped them become familiar with online communities. The asynchronous forms of communication, e.g., email, Google Docs, and blogs, gave students the opportunity to have a delayed text conversation, that supported inquiry learning tasks. These delayed communication forums allowed preservice teachers to consider the information before responding, and provided the opportunity to be strategic with the information they shared.

The blog allowed us to share ideas and comments. More time to refine answers and information.

Google Docs allowed us to access, and edit the same document at any time.

The synchronous forms of communication were much more demanding on time and risk-taking, and often received mixed reactions, due to technical problems. As well, the synchronous exchange caused some organizational challenges, such as the ability to manage mutual online meetings, given the huge time difference between countries. However, these approaches demanded immediate and impromptu responses, and reflected on the individual's knowledge about a topic. It placed individuals in a real time position, that sometimes made the experience challenging.

I enjoyed Skype, and having the opportunity to speak with the West Virginia students, although with technical issues and the time difference, it was difficult to get hold of the students.

It was really good to learn about the differences and similarities between the schooling systems in Australia and West Virginia. I also really enjoyed the Skype aspect of it. It was great to actually see and speak to the people we had been emailing over the duration.

I was able to have a conversation with someone who is experiencing an education system that is different to mine, and we were able to discuss and compare our education experiences. Speaking to someone who has had first-hand experience was an opportunity I would have missed, if I had just looked at the data myself.

The intention of the initiative was to enhance the participants' 21st century skills, so that they could hopefully transfer them into their own ICT pedagogy, when they gained a classroom teaching position. For example:

I feel I now have a greater understanding of the importance of ICT, and have been thinking critically about the ways in which it can be implemented into the classroom in a meaningful and appropriate way.

From all of this, I have gained knowledge of new (to me) technology, such as Google Docs and Wikis. I also rediscovered those few forms of technology I had, but did not use, such as Skype. For my future teaching strategies, I would definitely incorporate the use of Google Docs and the use of Wikis within a group project. Students could work together, and not have to be physically together.

In fact, in the initial planning stages it was thought the integration of different IT resources was only fully realized, if and when, the teacher candidates used the tools in their own future teaching practices. This was evidenced by one of the teacher candidates now employed in a full-time teaching position.

For my future teaching practice, I feel I have gained some techniques with this, meaning that I did not realize technology could be as useful in the classroom as it can be. My goal for my classroom is to get the children involved with technology, and showing them how to utilize it for academic work.

By extending the global collaboration into their own classroom practice, the value of the project in promoting 21st century teaching and learning was highlighted. There are many individual teachers and lecturers who are endeavoring to transform the 21st century teaching and learning process, by encouraging individuals and collective groups, to perform functions, solve problems, and apply different thinking strategies to achieve social and academic objectives.

I think that I have gained different strategies in relation to collaborating with others and collecting data. I would definitely use Google Docs in future. In regard to teaching, I believe that what I learnt from the global collaboration will assist me in emphasizing how important team work and group work is, when attempting to complete tasks and learn new things.

In an effort to integrate technological applications with knowledge-building—that is, to provide authentic learning—the global collaboration between these two universities has challenged the conventional teaching practice, often experienced in university teacher education programs.

## **Conclusion and Discussion**

The immersion of teacher candidates from across the globe in rich and meaningful discourse, transcends the current educational practice for higher education. Such international activities and interactions promote an awareness of multiple ways to solve problems, the summative power of innovative collaboration, and the influence of contextual factors when implementing current trends and best practices. This tactic results, not only in enlightenment of our future educators, but also in the internalization of these processes. As a result, they will promote the development of these practices in their own classrooms one day. By emphasizing engaged global collaboration, students practice writing and speaking for an authentic audience, gain expertise in utilizing 21st century technology, and develop cross-cultural empathy and global perspectives (Cook et al., 2016).

The evidence from the participating teacher candidates has demonstrated how and what they have gained from working in a safe global environment. The teacher educators have facilitated a learning environment that supported co-constructive learning opportunities for their students to integrate ICT with content. The exchange has encouraged students to be active participants in the learning process, and engage in socially constructive ways, where they have had opportunities to explore, challenge, and evaluate new knowledge. The learning has been mediated and structured by the teacher educators, who have supported and guided the learners during this real world experience.

Comments from the student participants have shown that the project has opened opportunities for them to deploy technology in ways that are meaningful, appropriate, and current in today's educational environment. The statements made by students confirms, they have utilized higher order thinking skills to enhance their learning in a global context.

Not only has the collaboration enhanced and enriched opportunities to assimilate new and old knowledge, the integration of technology skills has supported and encouraged teacher candidates to examine how these technologies may be used in future classroom settings, as part of their education degrees. They have learnt with and from each other, as they have been encouraged to take risks with the technology, and use it asynchronously and synchronously to diagnose the value of each approach for their own development. So far, the evidence clearly suggests that most students have gained much from the connection, and have been able to reflect on their own teaching pedagogy.

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