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EDITORIAL

The Complexity of Collaboration: Personal Stories from a School and College Partnership

Lorraine Kasprisin, editor

This issue of the *Journal of Educational Controversy* is somewhat different from the issues we previously published, but it still retains our primary purpose by posing a contemporary controversy central to education and exploring the tensions that arise as we have done in earlier issues.

The controversy for this issue focuses on the complexity of collaboration when schools and universities that come out of two different cultures meet and work intimately to solve common problems. We constructed the scenario and posed the questions to be addressed as follows:

Theme: The Complexity of Collaboration: Personal Stories from a School and College Partnership

School, university and community partnerships are widely promoted by accrediting bodies, professional organizations and state legislatures. Such partnerships are considered to be central to effective teacher preparation and to positive P-12 student learning. Yet, such collaborations are complex to enact. Schools, universities and communities have entrenched hierarchies and cultures that may clash.

How can university professors, school teachers/administrators, and parents and community work together to bridge these inherent chasms? How can they work together to create the right collaborative conditions for positive school and university culture change? How can we redesign both teacher and teacher-educator work to encourage mutual learning? How can we prepare new teachers to navigate the existing education system while incorporating innovative teaching practices and addressing social justice issues?

This invited issue highlights the personal stories of those involved in a special partnership – university faculty, school teachers, administrators, parents, community and representatives from the Washington State Legislature, whose grant made this possible. It tells the story from their perspectives.

What makes this issue a little different from our other issues is the complete focus on one collaborative school/university project that offers readers an opportunity to hear the authentic voices of all the stakeholders as they collectively tell their stories. All the papers, video interviews, classroom videos, and public forums published in this issue focus on this one experiment conducted between a school in a rural community in Washington State and a state university. One of the goals of this collaborative project was to better prepare new teachers to more effectively teach in a community with diverse learners, especially one with a significant population of English learners and students impacted by poverty. This required a place-based approach and the development of community teachers who could work collaboratively with the community.

Because the partnership was made possible by a special grant from the state legislature, the chair of the committee, Washington State Representative Sharon Tomiko Santos, was interviewed in a video to provide an historical and political context for the legislation that funded the project. The video is inserted on the journal's website so readers can get a full picture of all the stakeholders in the telling of this story. Many of the articles are co-written by university faculty, teachers, student interns, parents, and school resource experts. The public forum that was held at the university brought to the campus all the different participants including many parents. Parental involvement played a large role in the project. The title of the forum was, "The Parent Action Team: Bringing Parents and the Community into the Life of the School." The genuine role that the parents had in the partnership was most noticed by the university students in our audience who were preparing to become teachers. They were inspired to witness the level of collaboration that occurred. When asked "what about this forum was most significant for you," they wrote comments like:

It's very encouraging to see and hear about the genuine efforts to know and connect with families. The mission of this project is so worthy and needs to be implemented in so many places.

I was blessed and honored to meet the parents that are role models in these schools. I hope one day to be able to work with such an amazing community.

How much trust and understanding comes through intentionally shared activities that affirm the mutual interests and responsibility for children's learning. The expertise emerges in family and classrooms, so bridging is synergetic.

Just knowing that I can make anyone feel welcome in my classroom just by inviting them in, no matter the language barriers.

It will make me think more critically about my classroom and how I can get to know the families and communities of my students in order to use all assets to better my classroom, school and community.

It was wonderful hearing from the parents and the parents' perspectives on school involvement and the work that the team is doing. It's powerful to this sort of action being taken and how motivated everyone is, and hearing the perspectives for why they are doing this work.

I can certainly use this in my classroom in the future. Try to create a community where parents feel part of.

The title of one of the articles that had been published earlier was collaboratively written by teachers, the principal, university faculty and parents and is most revealing: "Everyone Should Feel So Connected and Safe: Using Parent Action Teams to Reach all Families."

Finding new innovative teaching approaches, bringing voices that have often been marginalized into the life of the school, taking advantage of a place-based environment for student interns to really understand the needs and strengths of the community in which they are teaching, creating new models of family engagement and community support, and redesigning ways that teachers

and teacher educators from the university can encourage mutual learning and positive cultural change is the story this issue tells. As the superintendent Carl Bruner says in his interview that was videotaped and inserted into the issue, the experience was truly transformative.

I know many of the readers of our journal are interested in collaborative efforts between the colleges and the schools in the community. This issue will give them perspectives from many sides from those who are the actual actors in their own story.