Perspectives and Possibilities: The Building of a School-based/University Partnership

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School-university partnership effectiveness is not always immediately recognizable and the effects of these collaborative efforts may take time to observe (Peters, 2002). Because of this, participants in our partnership conducted a project focused on elucidating the influences on the initiation of our collaboration to better understand its function. Goodlad's (1991) elements of concept, purposes, agenda, and structure provided the theoretical framework to guide this work. We also examined how the partnership has influenced best practices, inquiry efforts, professional development, and pre-service teacher preparation – shared goals associated with school-university partnerships. Finally, we explored how communication, conflicting values, and logistics have created challenges within the partnership. While this analysis supports many of the attributes of successful collaborations, challenges were identified related to goals, particularly with inquiry and professional development efforts.

In search of a partnership to foster pre-service teacher professional development, faculty and administrators from the Department of Secondary Education (DSE, pseudonym) at a regional university in the southeast visited a local high school. Department of Secondary Education faculty were first attracted to Atlantic High School (AHS, pseudonym) because it had a large high school with a diverse student population and seemed reform-minded, as it recently implemented the *Advancement Via Individual Determination* (AVID) program. AHS staff were interested in using college-level students as tutors within the program, while DSE faculty were interested in developing more consistent and mutually beneficial relationships within a local secondary school. Atlantic reflected both the urban and cultural demographics and innovative pedagogies important for the field-related experiences required of DSE's secondary education students.

In this descriptive article, we examine the early development of a university and secondary school partnership to support pre-service teacher education. To illustrate the contextual influences and complexities of initiating, maintaining, and expanding school-based/university partnerships, we examined initial partnership projects and captured the narratives of these key stakeholders (representing AHS administrators and faculty and DSE faculty representing these perspectives). To better understand the nature of the initiation of this partnership and to inform future work we examined key resources and related documents influential during the early life of the partnership developed and implemented a survey to gather information centered on the collaboration (See Table 1 for survey items).

Through our examination of our development process, we will provide insight to aid others interested in creating similar partnerships. To illustrate the development of this partnership, we will discuss the current literature informing our decisions. From this this literature base, we will describe our framework to explore the key supporting factors and constraints that influenced the development of our partnership.

Before proceeding, it is important to note that the authors were also members of the partnership. We made efforts to present the work as objectively as possible and have attempted to minimize subjectivity; however, we recognize that we bring our own perspectives as participants in this paper.

Table 1

Survey Items

1. Are you a member of the Atlantic High School (AHS) or Foundation and Secondary Education (DSE) community?
2. Were you involved in the initiation of the AHS/DSE project?
3. How were you involved in the initial partnership?
4. Identify the goals you had during the early stages of the partnership?
5. Explain how these goals have been achieved.
6. In what academic year did your participation begin within the AHS/DSE partnership?
7. Describe your role(s) in the partnership?
8. Has your role changed over time? If yes, how?
9. Identify the goals you had when entering the partnership?
10. Explain if these goals have been achieved.
11. In what ways do you believe the partnership has benefited AHS/DSE?
12. In what ways have you been impacted by the partnership?
13. Identify factors that you feel have contributed to the sustainability of the partnership.
14. Describe factors that you feel have hindered, or limited, the growth/development of the partnership.
15. Describe efforts and/or outcomes of the partnership that you deem successful.
16. Describe opportunities within the partnership that have been missed or have not been fully capitalized?
17. What have you been most surprised by as a result of the partnership?
18. Do you have any additional thoughts or comments that you would like to share?

Development of School/University Partnerships

School and university partnerships have been a focus in teacher education programs (Castle, Fox, & Souder, 2006; Clift & Brady, 2005; Darling-Hammond, 2006; Goodlad, 1993; Jeffery & Polleck, 2010; Patterson, 1999). Often, the benefits of these collaborations are focused on on-site teacher education efforts with pre-service teachers (Darling-Hammond & Baratz-Snowden, 2007). Others have cited the benefit to in-service teachers (and their students) involved with school and university partnerships (Crocco, Faithfull, & Schwartz, 2003), while others have noted a direct benefit to higher education faculty involved in such partnerships (Beck & Kosnik, 2002).

Less information is available on how school and university partnerships actually develop. Although there are recommended frameworks from which to evaluate partnerships, in particular, the nine essential elements of professional development schools recommended by the National Association for Professional Development Schools

(2008) and Burton and Greher (2007) indicate there is no "one size fits all" formula used in the establishment of partnerships (p. 15).

Goodlad (1991) recommended that partnerships be framed within a shared and defined agenda not solely focused on providing solutions for the concerns of the school-based partner nor on the development of the university pre-service teachers, but instead centered on collaborative efforts to bring about change. Goodlad (1991) identified four minimal elements important in school and university partnerships: concept (planned effort to establish a formal, mutually beneficial relationship); purposes (creating processes and structures to build upon each entity's strengths to advance self-interests); agenda (collaborative guidance emerging from the partnership's purposes); and structure (the organization for action).

Stresses on the successful development of school and university partnerships can emanate from a variety of sources. Although partnership tasks are not generally evaluative in nature, school-based participants can be apprehensive about having university faculty within their classrooms because of the perceived risk of judgment of their effectiveness as teachers (Grundy, Robison, & Tomazos, 2001). Other situations negatively influencing the partnership development include ineffective communication, conflicting values, and the time and energy required by participants (Kochan, 1999). To help alleviate these issues, Peters (2002) suggests that the parameters of the partnership be well defined and that participant roles within each context be negotiated instead of being mandated by the project's expectations.

For pragmatic reasons, conflicting values can often be seen in school and university partnerships (Brady, 2008). As an example, the improvement of student performance and learning is often the primary focus for school personnel, while university partners are most concerned with the professional development of the pre-service teachers within their charge (Marlow & Nass-Fukai, 2000). In-service teachers might be apprehensive about bringing pre-service educators into their classrooms, as these "novices" work to improve their craft. They might perceive these pre-service teachers as being deleterious to the student outcomes that are important in their accountability systems (Morton & Birky, 2015). To overcome these conflicting interests, Marlow and Nass-Fukai (2000) believe that the development of positive relationships is critical. Such positive relationships would be defined by a perception that all participants are equal and provide the context in which they share the construction of knowledge. The culture of the partnership would exhibit trust, openness, and collegiality – supporting the positive professional perceptions of the school-based participants while decreasing the perception that university faculty reside within the "ivory tower" (Holen & Yunk, 2014; Walsh & Backe, 2013). Trusting relationships are key in allowing teachers to develop positive attitudes toward university faculty and they help support the sustainability of the partnership by honoring the school-based participants' expertise, in particular through feedback/dialogue with the pre-service teachers, co-design of college course curricula, and guest lectures and seminars (Yendol & Fichtman, 2004).

Analytical Framing

Our analytical efforts are not aimed at generating judgments or critiques of the effectiveness of our partnership outcomes; especially those related to either AHS student performance or that of the DSE pre-service students engaged in the partnership. While future phases of inquiry may be conducted regarding this analysis, we understand that school and university partnership effectiveness is not always immediately recognizable and that measurable change effects may take quite some time to be observed (Peters, 2002). Instead, our examination is focused on the initiation and development/growth of the partnership. To help put context to these processes, we examined key resources and documents. These included agenda and minutes from planning meetings, draft and adopted memorandum of understanding-related documents, and email communications between key players at AHS and DSE. We also administered a survey to the partnership stakeholders, including AHS teachers, AHS administrators, and DSE faculty members. The survey contained predominately open-ended response items designed to obtain descriptions related to participant activity within the partnership as well as the identification of influences on the development and growth of the partnership. Participants for the survey represented a cross-section of all participants within the partnership. Although the survey sample size is small (n=7), it is relative to the full number of participants (19) who have had significant involvement in the partnership.

The theoretical constructs used to guide the survey construction were grounded in both attributes supportive of partnership development and attributes that have the potential to create tension on partnership development. To help frame supportive attributes of our partnership, we used Goodlad's (1991) elements of concept, purposes, agenda, and structure. Evidence (or lack thereof) of these broad attributes can be reflective of the larger, more general underpinnings associated with successful school and university partnerships. A second, more focused (and applied) framework was also incorporated within our efforts. Here, we looked for evidence in support of how the partnership has influenced best practices, inquiry efforts, professional development, and pre-service teacher preparation – specific goals often associated with school and university partnerships (see Abdal-Haqq, 1998; Burton & Greher, 2007). Finally, we wanted to examine how communication, conflicting values, and time/energy have caused tension or stress on the partnership (see Kochan, 1999 for more information on these influences). The survey data was organized by site location (AHS versus DSE) and coded within the aforementioned constructs (see Bogdan & Biklin, 1998) and tested through qualitative coding questioning strategies (Berkowitz, 1997) to obtain final category placement.

Initiation of the Partnership

The partnership was initiated with a site visit by FSE faculty and administration and facilitated by AHS faculty. Upon completion of the visit, the DSE chairperson and faculty were highly impressed with the teaching and learning processes exhibited in the AVID classrooms, including the evidence of care demonstrated by teachers and students

and the high-level of engagement of the learners. This visit proved to be the initial catalyst for the growth of the AHS/DSE partnership, as subsequent meetings were conducted that lead to a formal memorandum of understanding. The agreement outlined three levels of initial interaction between AHS and DSE:

1) The placement of DSE students from EDF 2085 (Introduction to Diversity for Educators) as AVID tutors to fulfill an 18-hour field component;
2) The instruction of EDF 3946 (Field Laboratory II) at Atlantic and placement of enrolled students in non-AVID Atlantic classrooms to fulfill a 50-hour field component; and
3) The instruction of specific subject matter methods courses at Atlantic, with methods instructors utilizing Atlantic classrooms and teachers as part of the methods instruction.

Since this time, 19 members from both entities (13 from AHS and 6 from DSE) have contributed significantly to the development and continuation of the partnership across 10 projects.

The partnership has flourished and expanded in a number of facets since the initial implementation of the aforementioned interaction levels. Atlantic and DSE stakeholders have implemented new partnership projects, including creating and co-teaching cross-curricular instructional units, developing exceptional student education-oriented inclusion experiences, and recording videos of Atlantic teachers to be used within DSE teacher education courses.

Both AHS and DSE participants heavily referenced all four of Goodlad's broad support attributes related to school and university partnerships. These results are summarized in Table 2. Within the surveys, there were 81 references to concept, purposes, agenda, and structure, and nearly all were communicated from a positive perspective. The AHS administrator noted the mutual, shared benefit (concept) of the relationship when saying, "The partnership has helped extend the knowledge of the (university) students with the varied on-campus experiences… as well as provided multiple layers of opportunities for Atlantic teachers to learn and grow." One DSE faculty member referenced shared benefits when responding about goals within the partnership, "I have other goals, which include 'giving back' to the schools that work with our students." This mutuality included DSE faculty working with AHS faculty on joint secondary curriculum projects including inquiry-oriented strategies within science instruction and interventions targeting increased student engagement in social studies classrooms.

Table 2

Number of References to Broad Support Attributes

	Concept	Purposes	Agenda	Structure
Atlantic Participants	6	4	8	12
DSE Participants	17	10	13	11
Total	23	14	21	23

For supporting purposes, an AHS faculty member described the importance of the Atlantic's setting to provide pre-service teachers an experience within a diverse, comprehensive high school. A DSE participant noted the purposes evolved beyond pre-service teacher education through the creation of a master's degree focused on in-service teacher professional development. Activities in this area included developing an agreement for the graduate program to be designed for the specific needs AHS faculty that included after school course offerings, adjustments to the program of study due to school assignment workload, and individualized action research projects. While the purposes of pre- and in-service teacher professional development were important features of the partnership, difference in context could pose challenges. A DSE faculty member noted challenges within purposes, by saying, "How willing is Atlantic to work (with us), especially in light of all the accountability pressures they are facing?" Individual and school accountability has provided pressure on AHS faculty, but they have continued to be willing to work with pre-service teachers in student teaching internships and AVID tutoring, as they help provide support for these instructors.

For agenda, a telling statement came from an AHS participant, "The openness of the two leadership groups to examine and explore opportunities provides a different way of doing business." An AHS teacher noted agenda by saying, "With the current combination of administrators, professors, and teachers, it appears that any and all opportunities are seized when discovered." A second teacher commented that, "regular (but not too frequent) meetings have helped keep the doors of communication open so we can make improvements on both ends of the partnership." A DSE participant showed how collaborative guidance supported a key partnership goal by stating, "I'm on site and I'm able to interact with teachers on a regular basis, not just during student teaching supervision." In this area, a DSE faculty-in-residence (who served as a liaison from DSE assigned to AHS) was very important to establish and keep a presence on the AHS campus to maintain contact between the staffs of both sites. Additionally, DSE faculty were given space at AHS and made to feel part of the campus community.

Organizing and taking action (supporting structure) was evident in an AHS teacher's comments on roles, "I continue to work with the partnership and have honed the training process for (university) students placed in our AVID classrooms." A sense of structure can also be seen in a comment by an DSE faculty member, "Ms. [Atlantic

administrator] went extra miles scheduling observations, pairing pre-service and in-service teachers to ensure a great experience for our students and their students." Training for AVID tutoring was conducted, and jointly by DSE and AHS faculty jointly coordinated placements, with input from both parties to insure good matches for pre-service teacher need and in-service instructor assignment and working style. Multiple references to formal structures are also evident, as seen in one example, "I helped develop the memorandum of understanding outlining the three levels of engagement between Atlantic and DSE." Formal structures, like memoranda of understanding, help continue activities, as faculty from both sites cycled in and out of the partnership.

There was less evidence for focused support attributes – best practices, inquiry efforts, professional development, and pre-service teacher preparation – within the survey results. These results are summarized in Table 3. Of these four attributes, there were 55 total references. Professional development received the most references of all attributes (26), while inquiry efforts received the fewest (2).

Table 3

Number of References to Focused Support Attributes

	Concept	Purposes	Agenda	Structure
Atlantic Participants	7	0	7	9
DSE Participants	6	2	5	17
Total	15	2	12	26

Best practices can be seen in the following DSE faculty comment: "It [the partnership] definitely benefitted the students enrolled in our programs as it gave them a chance to get hands-on experience in inclusive settings and inclusive strategies." Atlantic teachers also referenced how the partnership supported best practices. One teacher stated, "The (university) students enrolled in the diversity course are given a quality experience in our AVID classrooms and in the content areas that are more engaging than their usual pre-service teacher experiences." "This partnership exemplifies best practices at work," was said by an AHS administrator, who also added, "The methods classes have had speakers from the faculty and administration that have provided first-hand, current information about expectations for teachers." On numerous occasions, AHS faculty and administration were guest lecturers in DSE methods classrooms to share expertise and experiences working in their setting.

There were 12 references to professional development within the responses. An AHS teacher touched on how dissemination of partnership efforts supported professional development when stating, "I feel that presenting our partnership at conferences has allowed other universities to see how they might replicate the programs we offer." In

multiple cases, AHS and DSE faculty jointly presented papers at conferences. Another AHS participant said, "[The partnership] has provided opportunities for us to become better teachers." A third AHS participant comment was, "All of these experiences have enriched my practice as an educator." Those within the DSE faculty also cited personal growth as a result of the partnership, "I am a better methods instructor. Because of the partnership, I have much more grounding of the day-to-day influences with high school teaching." Another stated, "On a personal level, it gave me hands-on exposure to inclusive settings. Rather than only teaching the theory behind it, I understand much better the intricacies of working in inclusive environments."

Pre-service teacher preparation references were highest of all attributes, with 26 connections. One DSE faculty member noted that, "Quite a few of our graduates have found jobs at Atlantic, some directly from having been in the program." While it might seem that pre-service teacher education could be seen as strictly within the university faculty's purview, those within AHS also viewed themselves as teacher educators. An AHS teacher said, "My goal is to not only learn through teaching, but to also help in the development of new teachers who will soon be joining the education profession." A third stated, "The university students are able to get a real life sense of working in a high school environment and all of the layers that come with that."

Within the focused attributes group, there was little reference to inquiry projects in the survey results. In fact, only two positive references were made to this attribute (both from DSE faculty members). In one case, a faculty member cited work on a collaborative curriculum-writing project between two DSE faculty members and an AHS chemistry teacher (this project was presented at an international education conference and the three participants have co-authored a manuscript accepted for publication). In the second case, a DSE professor referenced how the partnership has influenced pre-service teacher beliefs about working in inclusive settings (a topic under study by this faculty member and AHS experiences were utilized, in part, by participants within the study). Although not counted for this attribute, it should be noted that an AHS administrator said, "It is a very important opportunity [the partnership] that should be documented. I think the framework of this work should be established so that it can be a model to be used in other partnerships."

Of the three frameworks used to guide the data analysis, tension attributes received the least references. These results are summarized in Table 4. Ineffective communication references were noted six times, including the aforementioned statement of the administrator regarding the need to document and communicate the efforts of the partnership. In addition, a DSE faculty member, when suggesting improvements said, "The partnership has not been well enough publicized so that the Atlantic folk know what we are doing, our intentions, our desire to work with them (not to critique them, etc.)." A pragmatic communication issue was highlighted by a second DSE faculty member, "The schedule interfered with observations as teachers had to miss class for field trips, or conduct IEP meetings, etc." In a critique of DSE communication, one faculty member stated, "We really bombed on that one (not fully implementing a Field II section as per

the memorandum of understanding). Part of that was personnel on the university's end, but we never got that part going."

Table 4

Number of References to Tension Attributes

	Ineffective Communication	Conflicting Values	Time and Energy Required
Atlantic Participants	1	1	3
DSE Participants	5	5	6
Total	6	6	9

Like ineffective communication, conflicting values was referenced six times within the data. Of these, only one emanated from an AHS participant, who commented, "It would be nice to offer incentives for the AVID teachers to earn university credit in exchange for hosting these interns (which is done for student teaching hosts). This request was ultimately acted upon, as the special graduate program for AHS faculty was partially funded through course vouchers granted for working with student teaching interns. DSE faculty members also expressed concerns with conflicting values. A number of DSE items associated with conflicting values stemmed from the myriad influences on the AHS teachers.

Finally, time and energy commitments were referenced nine times. Of these, there was a common theme that building and sustaining partnerships has taken much effort. One participant illustrated this issue when stating, "The time it takes – going through two sets of leadership approval processes." Another noted, "scheduling the university student training can be difficult" while another commented, "[one problem] is the Atlantic teachers' very busy schedules, testing, field trips, etc." In noting the loss of an DSE faculty in-residence after grant monies expired, one DSE faculty member said that, "Having a faculty member in residence at Atlantic is critical and we need to get that back."

Conclusions

It appeared that the AHS/DSE partnership was supportive of many of the broad frameworks and specific foci/outcomes within the school and university collaboration literature. In the constructs that served as a guide for our analysis, we found strong evidence supporting Goodlad's minimal attributes of successful partnerships. Of these, three were particularly favorable. Goodlad's suggestions are broad constructs and seem best applied to the organizational planning and action structures that make a collaboration

effort successful. In some ways, we may have been fortunate in that our initial efforts matched the suggestions of Goodlad, and perhaps these were serendipitous, as our early planning efforts were not always organized and structured. Perhaps it was also beneficial to allow a more emergent process to develop, which in our case, eventually led to the formal three-level interaction model and the first memorandum of understanding. The survey responses begin to capture an ebb and flow of the partnership. At times, there appears to be a fluid, more free-formed growth pattern where ideas and related discussions are shared and conceptualized (Goodlad's concept) and then a more direct pattern, focused on planning and action (Goodlad's structure). We seem to be in the latter stage currently, as we have planned for and now are beginning to implement the graduate degree cohort of AHS teachers, centered on teacher personal theorizing and action research (see Lieberman and Miller, 1990).

Embedded within Goodlad's suggestions (and much of the partnership literature) is the implied notion of the quality of those involved within successful partnerships, and this we believe is true of our partnership. As one participant commented, "These are good people wanting to do the right thing. It's people at both locations that make this work and they do so because they see its value." There was a positive human resource element within the survey responses and, often, credit was given to the partnership participants by name. However, the success of the partnership may not be strictly reliant on current individuals. When identifying sustainability factors, one responded wrote, "Sustainability is when the importance of the outcome is greater than the current leadership and can continue with changes in personnel." A second wrote, "I may be exiting [leaving Atlantic] next year, but I have full faith that my replacement will see the benefits and will be embraced by the faculty at [the university] so our partnership can continue to grow." The notations expressed by these respondents may be accurate, as the partnership has continued to grow despite the loss or replacement of one principal, two assistant principals, and a number of key AHS teachers.

Interestingly, although we note multiple references to all of Goodlad's broad attributes, that was not the case with all of the focused attributes used in the analysis. Of these, our lack of references to inquiry efforts is troubling and we believe is an accurate portrayal of our research efforts (or lack of) emanating from the project. After five years of collaboration, we have completed one theoretical-based inquiry project related to an interdisciplinary curriculum project, which has resulted in two publications. Another research project regarding pre-service teacher beliefs towards exceptional education inclusion strategies involved university students who were engaged with AHS, but the context was peripheral to the study. There is a third initiative involving AHS English language arts teachers and reading context strategies, but is only in the initiation phase.

Along the lines of research is the general need to better communicate the success of our partnership. Some of the calls within the responses were focused on internal communication to help support our efforts through the involvement of additional AHS teachers, but a number of the responses called for external communication, in particular to the benefit of other school locations (including higher education contexts) as well as to the broader community that Atlantic serves. In some sense, our efforts described herein

support these calls, but having additional research to validate the success of the partnership seem important, in particular, data supporting the learning and growth of Atlantic students along with the pre-service teachers from our university programs engaged at Atlantic.

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