

Chapter 8

Developing Mutually Beneficial Partnerships Through Purposeful Field– Based Experiences: Lessons Learned From Professional Development

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ABSTRACT

In this chapter, two teacher educators share lessons learned when they adapted professional development structures for use with teacher candidates during the clinical practicum experience. Highlighted in this chapter are two field-based teacher education approaches that support the development of mutually beneficial partnerships. Teacher candidates and their cooperating teachers collaboratively used lesson study to examine mathematical discourse in an elementary setting, while teacher candidates used instructional rounds as a way for teacher candidates to observe more experienced teachers in secondary classrooms. Both structures attempted to bridge the persistent divide between university learning and clinical practice to the benefit of K-12 students, teachers, and teacher candidates. The chapter concludes with recommendations for increasing the number of teacher candidates and partnership schools involved in this field-based learning in ways beneficial to all those involved.

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INTRODUCTION

Genuine collaboration between K-12 schools and the university result in partnerships that provide benefits to both systems—not only in the immediate but also the long term. Mutually beneficial partnerships focus on the growth and goals of all participants and for this reason may draw upon practice-based professional development approaches (Ball & Cohen, 1999; Smith, 2001) to support both preservice and inservice teacher learning. The immediate benefits to both partners—and ultimately for K-12 students—come through the participation in professional development designs that focus on collaboration, inquiry, and reflective practice. The longer term benefit from the collaborative inquiry into practice is the shift from a view teaching as an isolating profession (Lortie, 1975) to a collaborative one (Little, 2003).

For teacher collaboration to make a difference in teacher and student learning, it must be centered on important work and be distinguished from mere collegiality (Hargreaves, 1994; Kelchtermans, 2006; Little, 2003). More specifically, collaborative planning is consistently a contributing factor for more skillful teaching and increased student achievement (Darling-Hammond, 2015). In response, more schools are structuring time for teachers to collaborate in professional learning communities (PLCs) that focus on instructional planning and analysis of student learning (Feimen-Nemser, 2012; Ronfeldt, Farmer, McQueen, & Grissom, 2015). Other benefits to structuring time and mindsets toward collaboration include increased teacher retention rates which can result in higher levels of student achievement (Goddard, Goddard, & Tschannen-Moran, 2007; Ronfeldt, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2013). Finally, when K-12 school-university partnerships center on such professional collaboration, teacher candidates begin their careers seeing collaboration as a natural part of their teaching and become enculturated into collaborative professional learning as commonplace in schools (Hammerness, 2003; Lewis, Perry, & Hurd, 2004; Louis & Marks, 1998; Rigelman & Ruben, 2012).

The purpose of this chapter is to describe two field-based structures that have supported classroom teacher professional development alongside teacher candidate learning. It further delineates processes and structures for lesson study and instructional rounds and their connections to mutually beneficial partnerships; describes how these focused investigations of student thinking and classroom practice led to teacher and teacher candidate learning; and provides practical advice to those interested in replicating this work and/or revisioning approaches for linking coursework and clinical experiences on behalf of K-12 student learning.

BACKGROUND

The authors, as faculty members in a graduate-level teacher preparation program, recognized the need for more practical and structured field-experiences to complement the existing practicum structures. Portland State University's Graduate Teacher Education Program (GTEP) clinical structure is such that teacher candidates spend one year in a classroom with a cooperating mentor teacher while engaged in graduate level education coursework. GTEP coursework begins full time in the summer and then the number of courses decreases as the number of hours in the field placement increases across the academic year. By spring, teacher candidates are in their field placement full time using a combination of a traditional apprenticeship, *learn by observing and doing*, approach (Hansman, 2001) and a co-teaching, *learn through collaborative planning-teaching-debriefing practice*, approach (Bacharach, Heck, & Dahlberg, 2010; Kanold & Larson, 2012).

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