

Chapter 10

Partnerships as Innovative Practices in Teacher Education

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ABSTRACT

Education preparation providers (EPPs) and school districts are facing many challenges, such as declining enrollment, lack of teacher educators willing to teach in high need content areas, and attrition for those teachers who do enter the profession. Innovative thinking and creative planning are necessary to meet these challenges. Partnerships between EPPs and school districts can be part of the answer for overwhelmed school districts and struggling EPPs. Innovative partnerships between universities and school districts, consistently reviewed and adjusted based on data and needs, will benefit the teacher candidates, schools, and P-12 students. This chapter will highlight an innovative partnership between an EPP and a school district by describing the process of developing an effective partnership, the challenges that were overcome, resources utilized, and responsibilities of key personnel who were involved. Suggestions will be provided for other partnerships seeking to develop similar programs to address inequities and exclusivities.

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INTRODUCTION

Challenges for Clinical Practice

Teacher education programs across the country are increasingly under the spotlight. State and federal funding to universities and their colleges of education is decreasing, while more and more is demanded from them. Other challenges include a decline in enrollment in teacher education programs, struggles to attract diverse teacher candidates and faculty, perceptions that teaching is not a desirable career, and the difficulty in filling high-needs areas. (AACTE, 2018).

An additional report by the American Association of Teacher Education (2019) reveals even more disturbing data related to challenges that face diverse students pursuing a degree in education. While white students often maintain part-time jobs while pursuing a degree in education, nearly 20% of African Americans are employed as full-time employees while enrolled as a student in a teacher preparation program. African American students tend to have more family caretaking obligations than their white counterparts, are often not enrolled for the full academic year, and one in five African American students who are education majors is a single parent. Hispanic students often come from homes where they are the first to pursue a degree in education, and 22% of their parents did not complete high school (AACTE, 2019). These statistics indicate that Hispanics and African Americans education students may face unique challenges that they must be overcome. In order to be successful, they need innovative resources and supports that will help them manage their personal obligations, overcome struggles as first-generation college students, and handle the increased financial burden that clinical teaching may present.

Declining enrollments in EPPs directly impact the school districts. Many school districts are facing challenging shortages in the teacher pipeline. According to ACT (2015), the percentage of high school students interested in pursuing teaching as a career decreased 3% from 2010 to 2014. Enrollment in teacher preparation programs dropped a whopping 35% nationally between 2009 and 2014, while P-12 student enrollment is expected to grow by 3 million in the next decade (Berry & Shields, 2017). Reasons vary for the drop in the teacher workforce such as political climate, unstable pay, and lack of support as beginning teachers. Regardless of the cause, school districts are faced with having more students, yet fewer teachers, for their classrooms.

Need for Innovation

Partnerships between education preparation programs and school districts are not new, but when thoughtfully executed, can reap benefits of recruiting a diverse teacher

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