

A PROVEN METHOD FOR COOPERATIVE TEACHING *Model*
BETWEEN UNIVERSITIES AND PUBLIC SCHOOL
PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMS

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OVERALL HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE PARTNERSHIP

In January of 1991, the Bozeman Public School District and Montana State University's College of Education, Health, and Human Development informally initiated a partnership. Paula Butterfield, Superintendent of Bozeman Public Schools and Randy Hitz, Dean of the College of Education at Montana State University identified the ways in which the district and the university were already working collaboratively, and decided to form a partnership. With the initiating force at the national level from John Goodlad's project, the Partnership developed a mission and some areas of direction.

The following projects and activities were identified by the first participants as ways in which the schools and university were already working together:

- Mentor Program
- Field Placements
- Courses offered on request
- Research
- Magnet School
- Alternative Education
- Various committees

The original mission of the Partnership was seen in the first total group meeting February 13, 1991, of all interested parties.

"The purpose of the Bozeman Public School District - Montana State University Teacher Education Program Partnership is to foster collaboration between the two groups in order to

- (1) improve the quality of K-12 education in the Bozeman District and
- (2) improve the preparation of teachers at MSU.

Mission

John Goodlad defines the purpose of establishing partnerships:

"Teachers and teacher educators must determine jointly which of their self-interests overlap and might be satisfied through collaboration." The mission of the BPSD/MSU Partnership is to foster what John Goodlad calls "simultaneous

renewal," in which members of the district and university communities work collaboratively to improve education for students and increase professional development opportunities and empowerment. The direct objectives for the Partnership are to (1) improve the quality of K-12 education in the Bozeman district and (2) improve the preparation of teachers and administrators at MSU. The main way that this has been accomplished has been through the facilitation of dialogue and collaborative activities between faculty, teachers, and administrators.

National Trend

There is a strong trend nationwide toward reflecting the philosophy of simultaneous renewal through the development of educational partnerships. These run the range from establishing professional development schools, to establishing cooperative arrangements between business and education, to creating partnerships between schools, school districts, and universities. In all cases of successful partnerships, there is a shared concern among the participants about a community's educational needs. The participants identify potential collaborative partners with whom a partnership would help to work together to identify needs and concerns and develop strategies to work together to create new ideas and solutions.

Committees

The BPSD/MSU Partnership is composed in large part of various committees, made up of members from both BPSD and MSU on each committee. These committees have evolved over time to meet the needs of the Bozeman community and the BPSD and MSU communities. The committees were formed for two general purposes:

1. facilitate communication between the university and the district
2. make recommendations regarding needed programs and procedures.

As with all committees, members include personnel from MSU and BPSD. As with all committees, membership and activity has varied with the coming and going of the various members.

Field Placement Committee

A Field Placement Advisory Committee has been in place since the beginning of the Partnership. The purpose of the committee has consistently been the increase in communication between the university and the school districts regarding issues affecting field placement of MSU students into the schools. The committee also determined this year that it should include representation from MSU, from the elementary, middle, and secondary school levels, and that it should include members from the rural districts as well as the Bozeman schools. In the spirit of a partnership, the committee meets at alternating sites each semester.

This committee was highly involved as an advisory committee in each of the crucial changes made in the field placement policies and practices during the past year. Two of the most critical changes included the revision of the student teaching handbook and the change of time requirements required for the student teaching experience. These were both major changes in policy for MSU and for the school districts. In the case of the handbook, the entire document has been revised, describing in an updated manner the requirements of each of the members of the student teacher's field placement team. This revised document has been praised for its clarity and usefulness to student teachers, supervising teachers, and university supervisors. The change in the time requirements of student teaching required cooperation from many people at

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many different schools with many different policies. Beginning in the Fall semester of 1994, student teachers spend 12 weeks in their student teaching experiences, with the option to teach for 14 weeks. Further, they now begin their student teaching on the first day of the school district's school year. Clearly, with so many changes, the Field Placement Advisory Committee and the other people who worked on implementing these changes played a major role in improving the preparation of the future teachers who attend MSU. It should also be noted that these two changes did not arise during this one year. The changes are built upon the work done by this committee and others throughout a number of previous years.

The committee has also designated several field placement related topics for future discussion. 1) The paraprofessional program. 2) Supervising teacher workshops or training sessions. 3) Supervising teacher and student teacher requirements for placement in the program. 4) Standards for entrance to and exit from the teacher education program. 5) Improved communication between student teacher, supervising teacher, and university supervisor through computer linkages.

Early Childhood Education

The Early Childhood Education Committee has been very active since the beginning of the Partnership. As in previous years, the chair of the committee has developed innovative and strong connections between all members of the early childhood community in Bozeman. The committee meets regularly, sponsors conferences and workshops, and provides information to the various childcare providers in the community. During the past year, the committee met five times, sponsored a conference on educating young children, and gathered information from schools and families regarding practices of early childhood

education. Because of the different levels of childcare involved in this transition, including families, many child care centers, preschools, family day care home providers, families, and the school district were all coordinated by this committee. The committee has representatives not only from the BPSD and MSU, but also from the many varied childhood providers and educators throughout the community. Involvement has come especially from the Bozeman Public Schools, MSU faculty, MSU Child Development Center, the Methodist Preschool, Head Start, Child Connections, Southwood Child and Family Center and Pooh Corner Child Care. In the spirit of a partnership, the committee meets at alternating sites each semester.

The committee had two major areas of focus during the past year, with the general theme of "fostering smooth transitions for children from pre-school/child care programming to kindergarten programs." The first main focus has been on planning the joint training opportunity for early childhood professionals. The second area of emphasis has been to "fine tune" the work begun during the previous year. Publications, events, and procedures were further fine tuned to assist in the transition from pre-school to kindergarten. The committee developed an informational flyer entitled "Welcome to Kindergarten in Bozeman Public Schools." This flyer was information for parents, teachers, and other childcare providers.

The Early Childhood Committee created and administered a survey designed to gather information on "Entrance to Kindergarten." The survey was designed to gather information on the parents' perceptions of the work of the committee and of the schools in the areas of early childhood. For instance, parents were asked if they attended the informational meeting described above, as well as to give their suggestions for possible improvements. The survey gathered

the parents' "questions or areas of concern regarding kindergarten." And finally, it asked the parents to give suggestions to make the process of entering kindergarten easier. The survey was well-thought out, well-prepared, and well examined very closely for learning from the results. It was reassuring to note that the strong positive remarks from the survey far outweighed the concerns or issues raised. Information from this survey was used to revise the community informational meeting on entrance to kindergarten as well as to provide feedback for individual elementary schools and the district.

Individual Partnerships

Individual partnerships brought educational professionals together for the purpose of professional growth and interaction outside of their immediate teaching environment. Over 15 partnerships have been active to date with many more underway still to be documented.

Partners in these individual partnerships have initiated these collaborative arrangements with the sense of shared teaching, shared resources, shared development of instructional activities, and the shared need to continue growing professionally. Examples of partnerships include team teaching, co-development of instructional materials, bringing together of students and teachers for projects, pulling together discussions among administrators regarding school change and improvement, and joint publication.

These joint activities are refreshing, invigorating, and rewarding to those involved. It must be noted, however, that such individual partnerships are not always reported and thus we have no documentation of the good work that is being done. Further, those involved do not always receive recognition for their time and effort.

Danforth Foundation Project

As a member of the Danforth Foundation, Paula Butterfield received the Danforth Grant for early childhood, called "Success for all Children." There are only eight sites in the country that received these grants. This project is a direct result of the spirit of partnerships that has developed within the Bozeman educational community. The committee working on the grant includes many community organizations such as HRDC, the Gallatin County Health Department, and educational professionals from MSU, BPSD, and the Early Childhood Project.

Through this grant, the committee will be involved in many aspects of children's lives, from daycare to housing. They plan to distribute informational pamphlets on what is available for young children and their families within the community. Further, speakers from the Danforth Foundation will come to Bozeman to offer lectures and workshops on this topic. Also required by the grant is that contingencies from Bozeman travel to the national meetings to discuss the local efforts.

Future

A component of the Partnership that has only recently been formally added to the structure has been computer linkages with the schools. During the past year, preliminary work has been done to connect the schools and the university. This has been especially evident in the new connections between administrators and in the connections between those involved in student teaching. Linkages have been arranged between student teachers and their university supervisors through the use of modems in the schools. Student teachers can now communicate regarding scheduling, assignments, and any issues or concerns they are facing.

Conclusion

The BPSD/MSU Partnership has evolved organically, from within. Members of the educational community have determined their needs and have decided to work collaboratively with other educators to work on meeting these needs and improving the education of students and the professional development of professionals. The spirit of collaboration, renewal, initiative, and empowerment has driven educators within the Bozeman community to create new solutions to problems and new ways to work together to improve education.

This spirit of partnership will also enable new practical solutions to one of the key needs in education, more funding! The majority of new calls for grant proposals request that partnerships apply for the funding. While many applicants across the country may attempt to form quick partnerships for the purposes of applying for grants, the BPSD/MSU Partnership is a true partnership between educators who firmly believe in the importance of working collaboratively. The Danforth Grant indicates the importance placed on partnership work as well as the quality of our efforts to work together for the improvement of education.

Last year's annual summary of the Partnership listed the positive results that can arise from partnerships. It is worth repeating here some of these positive results, to remind us all of what working together can accomplish.

- Revitalization of teachers and administrators
- More alternative viewpoints in problem solving efforts
- Elimination of duplication of services
- Encourages collegial interaction and professional talk
- Narrows gap between research and practice
- Shaping of educational goals
- Provides educational leadership to community
- Networking
- Personal growth
- Continuous reminder of what can be done to improve schools

In the fall of 1995, there was a proposal for a pilot program involving teachers from the Bozeman Public Schools and college professors from Montana State University. The pilot program will be conducted during the fall semester of 1996. During this time, there will be an exchange of teachers. The public school teachers will teach a portion of the Educational Psychology course at Montana State University and the professor of the university course will teach the corresponding class of psychology in the public high school. The teachers will not only exchange classes, but will use the jigsaw method of cooperative learning. This method was first suggested by Johnson and Johnson. The classes will be divided into small groups of four people and will use the very basic techniques of cooperative learning during the entire experience. The experience will last from two to four weeks. The purpose of this experiment is primarily to increase communications between the university setting and the public schools. After the experiment, the college professors and the public school teachers will evaluate all phases of the exchange. Hopefully, this experiment will serve to:

1. Familiarize college professors with the needs of incoming students.
2. Provide communication with public school teachers in regard to techniques and methods needed to improve college courses.
3. Build rapport between the university and the public schools.

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