

## **Reciprocity through Co-Instructed Site-Based Courses: Perceived Benefit and Challenge Overlap in an Urban School-University Partnership**

**By Jill V. Jeffery & Jody N. Polleck**

Educational reformers have argued that universities and the schools they serve must work as partners in teacher education so as to tighten linkages between theory and practice (e.g., Anagnostopoulos, Smith, & Basmadjian, 2007; Bullough & Draper, 2004; Darling-Hammond & Baratz-Snowden, 2007; Patterson, 1999). Such

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partnerships ultimately aim to achieve “simultaneous renewal” wherein each institution participates equitably in a “mutually beneficial relationship” (Goodlad, 1993, p. 29). However, because partnerships are commonly initiated and evaluated by universities rather than schools, research on the effectiveness of these efforts in meeting partnership goals has typically focused on benefits to university students rather than to the host schools (e.g., Adams, Bondy, & Kuhel, 2005; Buczynski & Sisserson, 2008; Darling-Hammond & Baratz-Snowden, 2007). Partnership models assume that schools benefit, if indirectly, because partnership-based programs will produce teachers whose preparation is more closely aligned with schools’ needs. But do school personnel perceive these and other benefits?

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And if so, do they perceive such benefits as a fair trade for the challenging work that is required for genuine institutional collaboration? Voices of school staff are largely silent in this regard. To address this research gap, we attempt to gain greater insight into an under-examined perspective by conducting observations, surveying teachers, and interviewing the principal at one urban high school about their experiences collaborating with a university.

The larger context of this study is a partnership that joins a university with secondary city schools in the goal of preparing aspiring teachers who will thrive in urban classrooms. Recently, the university began locating teacher education courses on neighboring middle and high school campuses so that pre-service teachers might benefit from immediate and direct contact with life in urban schools, with the further expectation that this effect would be enhanced when the courses were co-instructed by host schoolteachers and university professors. This partnership model assumes that host schools will develop capacity alongside the aspiring teachers enrolled in site-based university courses, yet there has been little examination of benefits host schools derive from such collaborations or how a site-based co-instruction model might facilitate such benefits.

Given that the model we examine here places additional burdens on host schools, it is important that we examine schools' perceptions regarding its challenges and benefits as well as the factors that influence their perceptions. Our experience suggests that schools must dedicate scarce resources to the sustaining of the site-based co-instructed teacher education model. These resources include, for example, classroom spaces in which university classes are held, as well as time and energy to manage logistical issues. Furthermore, co-teaching can often be more challenging than solo teaching since co-instructors face the additional task of working toward consensus when identifying instructional goals, crafting lessons to meet those goals, and assessing student progress (Buczynski & Sisserson, 2008). In fact, Musanti and Pence (2010) found that collaboration is a skill that co-instructors must learn in its own right, one that often involves a long and painful process. If we wish for schools to embrace partnership initiatives—which are typically theorized and designed by universities—we need a better understanding of the extent to which host schools perceive such initiatives as beneficial to their own goals.

Additionally, we are mindful of warnings that the rush to highlight program effectiveness can, if overemphasized in the absence of critical inquiry, harm reform efforts (Goodlad, 1993). We assume that partnership research should not focus solely on outcomes, but also on processes (Goodlad, 1993; Murrasse, 2002), and that the substance of innovative teacher programs is found in “the elaboration and enactment of particular program features rather than in their mere presence or absence” (Zeichner & Conklin, 2008, p. 285). Accordingly, we inquire into the processes, or “ongoing action/interaction/emotion taken in response to situations, or problems” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 96) in which teachers and administrators at one urban school engaged to develop and sustain a school-university partner-

ship. Thus, our study addresses two questions: (1) What collaborative processes, benefits, and challenges are perceived by school stakeholders as being associated with a site-based co-instruction partnership model? (2) What do these findings suggest about relationships among process, context, and perceived outcomes in the site-based co-instruction model?

### **Review of Research**

Research suggests that graduates from mature site-based teacher education programs are better prepared to teach than are graduates from traditional programs (Darling-Hammond & Baratz-Snowden, 2007). Allsopp, DeMarie, Alvarez-McHattton, and Doone (2006), for example, found that teacher candidates' ability to make course-field linkages developed more fully within a model that included site-based instruction, in part because the model helped aspiring teachers to take active roles in their field experiences. However, though it is argued that both universities and site-schools should benefit mutually from engaging in partnerships (e.g., Shroyer, Yahnke, Bennett, & Dunn, 2007; Trachtman, 2007), researchers have noted a disconnect between these institutions, citing issues of "distrust and wariness that are commonly held by many K-12 teachers toward university professors and graduate students who have worked at their schools over the years" (Lewison & Holliday, 1997, p. 105). Lewison and Holliday (1997) discuss "unequal power" (p. 106) among participants, explaining that these imbalances can be improved if site-school teachers are given more authority and control in the instruction and research conducted at their schools. White, Deegan, and Allexsaht (1997) propose that researchers and practitioners in the field of school-university partnership need to critically examine how power shifts are occurring and evolving, specifically looking at how roles and relationships of all stakeholders are sustained to promote future development and durability of collaborative structures. We begin to address these issues by examining an insufficiently understood perspective on partnership—that of site-school stakeholders—in the context of a site-based co-instruction model designed to address institutional power imbalances.

The context of our study is important in that central to the partnership's objectives is the preparation of teachers to work in urban schools, whose strengths, weaknesses, and institutional goals are often not experienced nor understood by university students who may look, sound, and behave very differently from the students they will eventually teach. Investigations regarding the need to prepare a still predominantly White candidate pool to work in culturally diverse urban schools suggest that aspiring teachers need better structured support for field-based work if they are to develop the sensitivity necessary for them to be effective (Sleeter, 2001; Wiggins, Follo, & Eberly, 2007). There is some evidence that site-based teacher education courses may enhance aspiring and school-site teachers' engagement with urban communities (Shirley, Hersi, MacDonald, Sanchez, Scandone, Skidmore, &

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Tutwiler, 2006) and also serve to develop aspiring teachers' intercultural competence (Adams, Bondy, & Kuhel, 2005). A goal of this study, then, is to investigate the means through which site-based coursework might help aspiring teachers to develop the dispositions necessary to be successful in urban schools, as these are understood by in-service teachers who have demonstrated effectiveness working in such schools.

In addition to exploring school stakeholders' perceptions regarding how site-based coursework might simultaneously build the capacity of both schools and universities to serve the needs of urban school students, we also study a particularly under-researched partnership model: the employing of schoolteachers as university course instructors. In one model, classroom teachers are released from their duties to work as university guest lecturers for short-term contracts, with the assumption that they will carry new insights back to the classroom when those contracts expire. Researchers in Australia (Allen & Butler-Mader, 2007; Perry, Walton, & Conroy, 1998) and New Zealand (Russell & Chapman, 2001) have examined the use of this strategy and have identified several benefits as reported by participating teachers. These include improved mentoring skills, a tendency to take on leadership roles, and a greater appreciation for theory-practice connections. However, though employing in-service teachers as university teacher educators is identified in this research as a means of achieving reciprocity in school-university partnerships, there is currently little understanding of the collaborative processes in which these teachers engage or how such processes relate to desirable outcomes.

In the partnership model we examine here, the hiring of classroom teachers to co-instruct university courses is intended in part to improve teacher retention. Research suggests that some teacher attrition and migration might be explained by a dearth of opportunities for career growth in the profession (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999; Johnson & Birkeland, 2003). A goal of the co-instruction model, then, is to expand host schoolteachers' career options by extending to them the opportunity of teaching at the university level. In addition, the lack of opportunities for professional collaboration has been identified as a reason that new teachers leave the classroom (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). School-based mentoring models alone cannot provide such opportunities because these are based on an "expert-novice relationship" (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999) that is inconsistent with the collaborative nature of true professional communities (cf., Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). However, university teacher education programs may be able to assist in the ongoing development of communities of practice if they can establish egalitarian institutional relationships with schools. The site-based co-instruction model is designed with this goal in mind.

Another intended benefit to partner schools is the provision of meaningful professional development opportunities for host school teachers. It is well known that teachers often do not value the professional development programs provided (and frequently mandated) by their school districts (Hiemstra & Brockett, 1994; Taylor, 2006). Research in the area of teacher professional development (TPD)

suggests that teachers need educational opportunities that honor their professional experience, relate directly to their practice, offer intrinsic motivation, and enhance collaboration (King, 2004). As Beavers (2009) explains, “effective TPD must include personal, critical reflection, active participation, and willingness to share and challenge other perspectives” (p. 28). Musanti and Pence (2010) further describe the role of collaboration as being central to effective TPD because these experiences allow teachers to reflect critically on the relationships between their theories and practices, thereby disrupting the status quo. It is the dialogue of collaborations that provides necessary dissonance because these conversations often challenge “the existing school norms of individuality, privacy, autonomy, independent work, and distribution of power” (p. 86). The partnership model examined in this study assumes that co-instruction will assist practicing teachers in the further development of their professional knowledge by facilitating collaborative and critical inquiry with other host school teachers, university faculty and university students.

Each of the assumptions underlying the site-based co-instruction partnership model’s theory of action has been conceptualized by university, rather than school-site, stakeholders. Thus, in this study we ask: To what extent might teachers perceive these and other intended benefits of the co-instructed, site-based course model to themselves and to their schools? What is the nature of the challenges presented by the model as perceived by school stakeholders, and how are challenges and benefits associated in teachers’ perceptions? We investigate these questions by examining questionnaire, field observation and interview data obtained from schoolteachers and administrators involved in a site-based co-instruction model.

## **Mode of Inquiry**

### ***Partnership Context***

The context of this study is a partnership between a large urban university in the Northeastern United States and 19 secondary schools in high-poverty, culturally diverse urban neighborhoods. We narrow the scope of our inquiry to focus on the co-instruction of the university’s signature teacher education course, Explorations,<sup>1</sup> at one partner school, Creative Works High School (CWHS). All aspiring elementary and secondary teachers at the university are required to take one semester of Explorations, the purpose of which is to provide students with a foundational understanding of educational theories, along with a space in which to investigate how these theories might be enacted in practice. In the class students explore such issues as how knowledge is constructed, what constitutes effective instruction, how the politics of education affect classroom practice, and what challenges are associated with enacting culturally responsive pedagogy. Teaching the course on school sites allows much of the class time to be spent observing classrooms. Such field experiences provide springboards for discussions in which Explorations co-instructors and students work together to reconcile the pedagogical theories that

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they read about in class with the concrete realities of urban schooling they are observing. Though Explorations instructors are provided with a list of required core texts and a syllabus template, they are encouraged to experiment with innovative approaches to teaching the course. Thus, the individual sections of the course vary depending on the instructors as well as on the host schools in which the classes are taught. Furthermore, University professors collaborate with host schoolteachers to design syllabi, and frequent revisions are made based on student feedback and the co-instructors' reflections. In fact, Explorations co-instructors meet at least twice each semester to create and re-create their courses. At the writing of this article, all Explorations sections are being taught using the site-based co-instruction model.

#### **School-Site Context**

We focus on CWHS in this investigation because it is perhaps the partner school with which the university has the most collaborative and mature relationship. CWHS is an innovative example of the city's small schools reform effort. For the 2008-2009 school year, the school served approximately 400 students of whom 59% are Latino, 33% African-American/Black, 4% Asian or Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander, 3% White, and 1% Native American/Alaskan Native. Receiving Title I funds, the school has a 77% poverty rate. Of this population, 19% of CWHS students receive special education services and 5% are English language learners with Individual Language Plans. The most recent progress report (2007-2008) gave the school an "A rating" when compared to similar schools in the city, as it demonstrated Adequate Yearly Progress for English language arts and math. Specifically, 67% of CWHS students passed the state's English Exam and 77% passed the Math Exam.

Although CWHS is a high-poverty school, it is perhaps inaccurate to label the school as "under-resourced" given its professional composition. The principal, Kyle, attributes the school's success to the hiring of well-trained professional teachers. Emphasizing a mission of college preparation, the teaching staff consists of seven administrators and other professionals and 38 teachers, of whom 100% are licensed, 37% have been teaching for more than five years, 84% have master's degrees, and 92% are designated as "highly qualified" by NCLB/SED criteria. Kyle also dedicates much of the school's budget to professional development and classroom resources. It is his belief that consistent integration of professional development through weekly meetings, ongoing collaborations between departments and grade levels, and individual coaching enhances CWHS teachers' instructional capacity and thus the academic success of its students. Offering Explorations at this particular host school allows aspiring teachers to view an instructional model where teachers collaborate to ensure the success of each student.

The strength of the relationship between CWHS and the university may be due to the fact that several key individuals in "boundary-spanning" roles (Firestone & Fidler, 2002) have long been in place at CWHS and the university. One of us, Jody,

obtained her doctoral degree from the university and has worked at the school for seven years; she currently teaches part-time at CWHS. In addition, a university doctoral student was teaching at the school at the time of this study, and many CWHS teachers have graduated from the university's teacher education program. Accordingly, the school's well-established relationship with the university made it an ideal site at which to pilot and study the site-based co-instruction model. Another factor in the strength of the collaboration is the disposition of the CWHS principal, whose support of the model is based on his belief that it will augment professional growth for both university students and CWHS teachers. As a result of this longstanding relationship, multiple Explorations courses have been taught at the school over the past four years.

#### **Researcher Perspectives**

At the time of this study Jill was a doctoral student at the university who coordinated and researched partnership initiatives. She has been responsible for recruiting, vetting, and assisting in the placement of in-service teachers as co-instructors, as well as for assessing the initiative's impact. In spring 2009, she co-instructed a course with a CWHS math teacher at a partner middle school, an experience that helped her to better understand the model's challenges and benefits. As stated previously, Jody is currently working part-time at CWHS and also works full-time at another teaching college in the city. Previous to this school year, Jody served as the school's literacy coach and the university-CWHS liaison. In her role as coach, she worked with content area teachers to improve their literacy instruction by observing classes, providing immediate feedback to teachers, and assisting in the development of lesson, unit, and yearlong curricula. As is the responsibility of all liaisons within the partnership, Jody helped to place student teachers in the school, facilitated communication between institutions, and coordinated the location of Explorations classrooms and observational schedules for University students.

#### **Data Sources**

We examined a variety of data sources representing multiple perspectives: field notes from two Explorations class observations undertaken between fall 2008 and spring 2009; CWHS co-instructor questionnaires sent out electronically in fall 2008; and an in-depth interview with the CWHS principal conducted in spring 2009. First, observation field notes included participants' verbatim articulations when particularly relevant to this study's research questions (e.g., processes, challenges, benefits, and goals of the partnership). Second, questionnaires were emailed to the five teachers at CWHS who co-taught at least one Explorations course between 2006-2009 (See Appendix A); all five returned complete responses. Third, the interview with CWHS's principal was semi-structured with a protocol; additional questions were posed afterwards, allowing for a more organic conversation (See Appendix B). This interview was recorded and transcribed for analysis.



### **Methods of Analysis**

We used a combination of inductive and deductive procedures to generate code labels from our data sources (Miles & Huberman, 1994). First, we deductively analyzed field notes, questionnaire responses, and interview transcripts according to four descriptive categories which we derived from our research questions and which also formed the basis of our survey and interview protocol questions: processes, challenges, benefits, and needed reforms that participants identified with respect to implementing and sustaining the partnership model at CWHS. Next, we inductively analyzed data (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) to generate interpretive code labels reflective of more nuanced patterns. To gauge the reliability of our coding, each of us separately coded 20% of the data and then compared codes, producing 87% inter-rater agreement. Remaining discrepancies were reconciled through discussion. To analyze relationships between descriptive and interpretive categories, we organized interpretive codes into matrices (Miles & Huberman, 1994) based on descriptive codes and stakeholder categories (e.g., CWHS, university, CWHS faculty, university faculty, CWHS students, and university students). Using matrices to analyze data allowed us to examine the extent to which interpretive categories were consistently discussed in terms of processes, challenges, benefits, and/or needed reforms, as well as who was participating in processes, engaging in challenges, and receiving benefits.

## **Results**

### **Professionalism**

CWHS co-instructors and their principal identified professionalism as an important benefit of the partnership model for university students as well as for the school and its teachers and students. This category is used to delineate teachers' characterizations of the site-based co-instruction model as enhancing professionalism in urban school teaching. Professionalism was often discussed in terms of elevated status for the co-instructors, CWHS, and CWHS students. For example, Ryan explained that

[The partnership] gives [CWHS] a nice rep. I also think that the idea that teachers are studying *us*,<sup>2</sup> and finding *our* experiences interesting and informative (by us I mean the whole [CWHS] community) gives the kids a sense of their own value and power. Future teachers choose to come here to learn about the school and teaching. I trust that that message results in a greater sense of mission and self worth for the institution, and for the individuals who make it up.

Kyle, the school's principal, further related status to teacher retention, explaining, "Our teachers in teaching these courses are gaining some professional growth experiences but they're also getting all this other stuff that I think we need to do to keep people in the field who are the best." Participants invariably discussed the



elevated status associated with the University partnership as a benefit in that it contributed to a more positive impression of urban schools.

Professionalism was also described as a process when participants addressed how collaboration facilitated the development of communities of practice. This occurred within the context of two partnership activities: (1) CWHS teachers' and University professors' discussions of teaching craft while collaboratively planning Explorations curricula, and (2) panel discussions in which CWHS staff visited Explorations classes to discuss their practice after University students had observed their classes. Kyle, the principal, elaborated, "All of the sudden my teachers are becoming experts. It's that confidence building. To see my teachers serve on panels and articulate what they do and how they do things is just a benefit. It's also like professionalizing the business, which I don't think we get to do a lot." Ryan reiterated this benefit, explaining, "Having educated people who have a more nuanced understanding of teaching and high school helps all of us in this work create political space for what we do." Professionalism was additionally discussed in the area of needed reforms, as when Mark wished for more incentives for CWHS teachers to be involved in collaborative work, suggesting that "we need to reward [CWHS] teachers who participate by opening their doors to us in some very powerful way that honors them as professionals, practitioners actively involved in the education of pre-service teachers."

### **Reflection**

Closely related to professionalism is the theme of reflection—the co-teachers' perception that the model helped them and their colleagues at the school to reflect critically on their teaching. This theme was discussed among all five CWHS teachers as a beneficial product of their collaborative work. Reflection includes perceptions that collaboration helped teachers make implicit practices explicit, articulate the rarely examined, and re-examine their teaching practices in light of new perspectives. When discussing this phenomenon, Nancy explained how "in addition to reading texts I hadn't read before and holding them up against my own experience as a teacher, I was pushed to reflect on the field and my practices, in a way that I don't normally do. It made me more conscious of my assumptions and methods." Mark mirrored Nancy's statement, explaining, "It helped me reflect on my teaching more. Whenever you teach others learning to become teachers, you're forced to think about your own values, systems, etc. I think it made me really think about why I teach how I teach."

CWHS co-instructors discussed reflection as a benefit not only to themselves, but also to their colleagues who were observed by the University students weekly. As Nancy explained, "It might have made the teachers who allowed their classes to be observed and then agreed to talk with university students afterwards to be more reflective about their practices." Ryan concurred, stating, "Answering questions [during panel discussions] helped [CWHS] teachers really clarify their own

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ideas and brought out into the open some of their assumptions and how they had changed.” These reflections, transparently discussed with University students during the panel presentations, also allowed for modeling of how teachers think about and adjust their pedagogical practices based on new information.

#### ***Theory-to-Practice***

Another theme that emerged from the analysis is the perception that the physical location of teacher education courses in an urban school enhanced participants’ ability to interpret the significance of educational theories. As with professionalism and reflection, theory-to-practice was viewed by participants as a benefit to aspiring teachers enrolled in Explorations courses, as well as to CWHS co-instructors and their colleagues at the school. Alan explained, “The idea is to bring theory within close proximity of practice... Theory is ordinarily something you find in an academic bubble. This opportunity provides the chance to square on-the-ground-realities with theoretical ideals.” Similarly, Serena asserted, “It was good for those grad students to be able to observe students in the high school setting and see school in action. It really makes the course not just about theory, but about practice as well.” Alan provided a specific illustration of how theory-to-practice linkage was accomplished in his Explorations course:

Recently, I had grad students read Freire, then participate in accountable talk circles facilitated by [CWHS teachers]. There was a challenge for these young teachers they simply couldn’t have anticipated, one that is indeed predicted by the very passage they’d read—namely, the difficulty of allowing students to grapple with ideas independently of “Teacher.”

The pattern of joining educational theory to teaching practice within the context of the site-based courses was also strikingly apparent in field notes taken from a fall 2008 Explorations class observation in which University students, who were returning from classroom observations, discussed their reactions. Responding to a student’s comment that the “dynamic” of the class she had observed altered when the class “went from one to three teachers,” Ryan segued, “That’s a good link to today’s reading on team-teaching.” Such illustrations suggest the model’s potential to support teacher educators’ efforts to make theory more relevant to practice by physically situating coursework in clinical contexts.

Theory-to-practice was also discussed as a process when CWHS teachers responded to a questionnaire item regarding adjustments they had made to Explorations curricula as their collaborations evolved. They explained how they had re-designed activities so as to help aspiring teachers make stronger theory-practice connections. These course revisions included: structuring CWHS classroom observations with the aim of focusing University students’ attention to a specific issue they were reading about, assigning field-based research projects, and re-sequencing course readings so that they were better aligned with students’ emerging understandings. For ex-

ample, discussing how he and his Explorations co-instructor worked to strengthen the alignment between readings and classroom observations, Mark noted how they “insisted that students situate the theory in the practice they’re observing and the burgeoning practice they enact in our class.” Similarly, Nancy explained how she and her co-instructor revised an assigned project to help students “reflect on . . . how their philosophy of education had changed from the beginning of the semester to the end, and what texts and class experiences had challenged their views most.”

### **Sensation**

Highly relevant to but ultimately distinct from theory-to-practice is the theme of sensation, or the perception that the school setting affected aspiring teachers’ understandings of what it “feels like” to teach in an urban school. For example, Mark described “what we hear in the hallways, see on the walls, notice in the faces of the students who bump into us as we navigate crowded hallways. Reading about pedagogy is one thing. Using a high school bathroom . . . makes it all the more real.” Jill reflected on her own sensory experience after a spring 2008 Explorations observation in which she noted being aware of the sounds made by city and student traffic outside the classroom. Sensation was viewed by participants in the study as a benefit to aspiring teachers, as when Ryan explained how he supported “pushing people to teach in schools in the city, that our best potential teachers should have a chance to see the positive aspects of teaching in such an environment.” Furthermore, he viewed the course as an opportunity “to move to a more realistic and positive image of teaching and schools, particularly city schools with lots of students of color and poverty.”

When discussing sensory impact, CWHS co-instructors explained that teaching the class at the school-site grounded abstract ideas in concrete experiences. Nancy described the “reality” of teaching a course in a public, urban school, proposing that the on-site class allowed educational theory to be taken out of its “vacuum.” She explained, “What is so wonderful about taking this course in an actual high school is that the students are surrounded by the chaotic and loud world of public school . . . Being in the high school ‘keeps it real.’” Simultaneously, CWHS co-instructors reported that University students were often dismayed by what they perceived as “chaos” in the school environment. Yet while participants cited this a challenge, they also unanimously agreed that this challenge benefited University students in that it provided them with a deeper, lived understanding of urban schools. Ryan discussed this phenomenon as creating dissonance that was necessary for challenging aspiring teachers’ assumptions regarding urban school students:

I think that many of my [university] students found the population of students quite jarring, some of the behaviors they observed, or skill levels they saw, were really upsetting to them. Some of them had a really hard time seeing past those to other issues, to what was the kid learning, what were their ideas, etc. This was indeed a

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challenge, but also an incredible opportunity and an essential set of assumptions and perceptions to work through. This challenge and struggle really helped them and all of us figure out what to look at when we were looking at teaching. It helped us meet head on some of the basic misconceptions people may have about teaching.

In this way, sensation spanned process, challenge, and benefit categories, and ultimately suggested an overlap between perceived benefits and challenges involved in co-instructing courses on the school site.

#### **Logistics**

CWHS faculty and staff described logistics—time, space, and monetary factors that affected collaborative work—in terms of processes, benefits, challenges, and needed reforms. Unsurprisingly, however, logistics was commonly viewed as a challenge. The principal, Kyle, noted that “schools are really busy places so we don’t have classrooms for these guys.” He added, “All that is so much work because you’re working with teachers’ schedules.” Kyle further explained that many panel presentations had to be canceled, as CWHS teachers could no longer be reimbursed for their time and efforts to serve on panels after school.<sup>3</sup> The logistical challenges involved in implementing the model were also evident in Jill’s memo following a fall 2008 Explorations observation, in which she wrote that she “found [Mark’s] explanations of the scheduling conflicts too difficult to even follow.” Following this same observation, the co-instructors discussed with her the processes in which they engaged to address such challenges. These included multiple room changes, schedule restructuring wherein the courses met once rather than twice weekly, and agenda reengineering in which students went directly “from the train to their [classroom] observations” rather than meeting as a class before engaging in assigned field work. We suggest that these logistical issues are absolutely crucial to explore as we work to understand the processes that underpin effective university-school partnerships. It is this kind of ingenuity and flexibility that is truly needed in order to make site-based courses meaningful to all stakeholders involved.

In addition to space and scheduling issues, CWHS co-instructors also discussed their lack of time and energy as a logistical challenge. Both Ryan and Nancy reported feeling overwhelmed by the combined instructional load of teaching full-time at CWHS and teaching a University class. Mark discussed the further challenge of overcoming physical and mental fatigue, explaining, “I literally stop teaching teenagers at 2:20 and start teaching graduate students at 2:30. Diminished energies from teaching all day aside, it’s intense to make that psychic shift into a calm, reflective, authoritative space that focuses on graduate study demands.” Yet logistics were not always identified as a challenge that needed to be addressed through revisions to the model. Rather, as with sensation, challenge and benefit categories sometimes overlapped. For example, Ryan discussed logistical challenges as they related to the benefits of sensation, explaining how “some logistical stuff was difficult. I guess it was not totally comfortable sitting at desks, with noisy hallways, heat in the summer,

etc. However, that did not bother me, and I think that those things were actually helpful.” When participants discussed logistics as both challenge and benefit, it was construed as a *necessary* challenge, one that was integral to the model’s effectiveness. As Serena put it, addressing logistical issues was “the only way high school teachers can actually be involved in co-teaching.” Alan was similarly pragmatic when discussing such challenges, explaining how “there’s a ton of negotiation I must do to keep the classroom observations consistent. No big deal. It’s what we do.” Though the logistical issues participants discussed were substantial and persistent, they felt they had made great progress over time in negotiating these challenges, to the benefit of themselves and of the aspiring teachers in their Explorations classes. Furthermore, when discussing logistical challenges, participants frequently saw the existence of such challenges as unavoidable and, moreover, integral to the task of preparing teachers to work in the city’s schools.

### **Integration**

Finally, participants referred to systemic, long-term integration between the University and the school as both a benefit and a needed reform. Most often, however, integration was discussed as a needed reform, as when teachers worried that the University’s involvement with CWHS was a “one-off” collaboration. Participants described integration as their desire to move beyond day-to-day instantiations of collaboration and toward a more sustained, normalized and mutually beneficial relationship with the University. This theme was particularly evident in Kyle’s interview, in which he insisted that “universities really need to think about long-term relationships with schools and really developing those. I mean this stuff going on with [the University] has been really nice but it could be so much stronger.” He also felt that University students needed more time to interact within the school community, explaining,

So what? We have a two hour class and I’m going to spend 15 minutes with the same kid. I mean the complexity that’s not happening is that they’re not really getting to know kids on a deeper level. You know when you are a teacher you are dealing with families, culture, health, learning styles and I think [University] students aren’t getting that.

Kyle also felt that CWHS teachers could benefit from greater access to University resources. He expressed his desire that CWHS teachers be invited to Explorations classes, especially when guest lecturers are scheduled to present, so as to enhance their own professional development. He suggested that placing a “University professor on site” could improve the integration of partnership efforts. At the same time, Kyle also discussed integration as a benefit, reflecting on how “really nice” it was that “teachers have really built relationships with the [University] professors, teaching for several semesters in a row together.” Though the CWHS instructors were less focused than Kyle on the issue of integration, several worried about the

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University's long-term commitment to the school, with one teacher suggesting that it might amount to a "drive by." In such cases, integration overlapped with logistics when teachers expressed uncertainty as to whether the collaborative model they had worked so hard to develop could be sustained in the absence of financial support.

### **Discussion**

Our results suggest that participants viewed the site-based, co-instructed teacher education model as helping both them and their University students better integrate educational theory with teaching practice. This finding is consistent with the partnership's stated goals. Yet it is important to note that while CWHS instructors involved in co-instruction perceived their colleagues at the school as benefitting from the model, we do not know the extent to which those teachers perceived such effects. Nevertheless, we wish to emphasize the appreciation teachers expressed for the model's impact on their school's professional atmosphere, especially as it pertained to their perceptions that their partnership work had elevated both their and their school's status. We view this as a crucial benefit given the negative stereotypes that are often projected onto urban schools. And while we are unable to draw conclusions regarding the model's impact on teacher retention, given that the school's principal is the only participant who discussed this as a benefit, we are encouraged to find that participants' perceptions of their work as University professors are consistent with the partnership's goal of expanding teachers' career opportunities. Furthermore, the emergence of professionalism as a theme in the analysis, which was discussed by all five teacher-participants, suggests that the partnership model can help schools develop the communities of practice that have been identified as facilitating teachers' professional development (Beavers, 2009; King, 2004; Musanti & Pence, 2010).

This study's results also suggest that situating teacher education courses in urban schools can potentially help aspiring teachers to develop the dispositions necessary to be effective working in such schools—as discussed by thriving urban schoolteachers. One important medium through which CWHS teachers perceived this benefit as resulting is the environment's sensory impact, a product of the very logistical challenges they identified. The teachers at the school encourage aspiring teachers to discuss their dismay at how, as one University student put it during a classroom observation, student behavior and interaction with adults at the school is "not what I'm used to." As observed in Explorations classes, CWHS teachers are able to quickly address University students' assumptions about urban schools and their students by discussing how the school's philosophy is tailored to meet the needs of its student population; how students' backgrounds and experiences affect their educational interactions; and how DOE policies regarding, for example, the instruction of special education students affect teaching practice. Such transparent conversations provide CWHS teachers with opportunities to cultivate "the open-

ness and compassion with which we want [pre-service teachers] to approach the unfamiliar” (Adams et al., 2005, p. 59). The benefits that urban school stakeholders associated with the model—the linking of theory to practice, the building of professional community, and the carefully mentored introduction of aspiring teachers to urban schools—reflect intended outcomes, as stated in the partnership goals we describe above.

This study’s results also point to unintended outcomes with regard to the interdependence of challenges and benefits. The finding that participants did not typically view challenges to cultivating professionalism in terms of institutional differences is unexpected given that partnership literature suggests entrenched differences in institutional cultures and goals present great challenges to school-university partnerships (e.g., Lewison & Holliday, 1997; White, Deegan, & Alleksaht, 1997). Rather than focusing on challenges such as clashing cultures, misunderstandings, and competing goals (cf., Bringle & Hatcher, 2002; Bullough et al., 1999; Corrihan, 2000; Knight, Wiseman, & Smith, 1992; Lefever-Davis, Johnson, & Pearman, 2007; Miller & Hafner, 2008), our participants emphasized logistical challenges involved in implementing the partnership model. Yet, significantly, CWHS staff did not identify logistical challenges as obstacles to attaining partnership goals. Rather, the discomfort, inconvenience, and additional effort involved in implementing the on-site courses provided precisely the mechanisms that allowed aspiring teachers to experience the benefits of sensation. CWHS teachers viewed the logistical challenges they face as being integral to the task of transforming University students’ assumptions about urban schools. This finding is reflective of Sarason’s (1996) argument that we must re-think institutional time and space boundaries if we are to truly reform teacher education.

Despite the perceived benefits to individual participants, however, our results suggest that the site-based co-instruction model has not yet fully achieved simultaneous renewal at the institutional level. The relationships between individuals at the school and the University appear to be well developed and authentically collaborative, and these collaborations were perceived by the participants in this study as being beneficial to both themselves and to aspiring teachers enrolled in site-based University classes. We suspect that CWHS teachers did not discuss the difficulties involved in working across institutional boundaries in their responses partly due to the fact they had been working with their University co-instructors for as many as five semesters. Perhaps if we had conducted our study at earlier stages of these collaborations, participants would have discussed the need to reconcile competing institutional goals as a challenge. Nevertheless, despite the development of collaborative interpersonal relationships, CWHS educators expressed a lack of confidence regarding the University’s long-term commitment to sustained institutional collaboration. Their suspicions suggest to us that school-site stakeholders perceived a fundamental imbalance in the partnership in that the University defined the parameters of contact. True reciprocity in school-university partnerships, as



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discussed by Hamlin (1997), requires extraordinary perseverance on the part of both institutions. To be effective, such partnerships must begin with this understanding and proceed with patience and steadfastness. Thus, we join White, Deegan, and Allestaht-Snyder (1997) in urging researchers to “examine how changes in roles and relationships are maintained, sustained, and continue to interactively fuel curricular renewal and development,” which includes considering durability and vulnerability of “old and new structures and processes over a longer time span” (p. 65). We would also advise reformers to be mindful of the need to construe partnership as an evolving relationship that requires long-term commitment to change. Otherwise, partnership initiatives run the risk of becoming “boutique” programs that will not realize the goal of systemic reform.

### **Conclusion**

Based on our preliminary findings, we suggest that more research be undertaken to explore the potential for reciprocity and simultaneous renewal in school-university partnerships. Such research might examine, for instance, the impact on not only groups directly involved in partnership initiatives (e.g., aspiring teachers, university course instructors, and cooperating teachers) but also on the wider school community. Future research might target partner school students and teachers who are not participating directly in collaborative work to examine a partnership’s indirect effects. We would also advise universities wishing to implement similar partnership models to emphasize relationships between challenges and beneficial outcomes in site-based teacher education. The inevitable resistance to implementing field-based teacher education programs (Kleinasser & Paradis, 1997) might be better overcome if reform agents were to acknowledge the substantial and persistent challenges involved, but also to present such challenges in light of a more asset-based theoretical framework with complex and crucial associated benefits.

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### **Notes**

- <sup>1</sup> The course name, school name, and all participant names are pseudonyms.
- <sup>2</sup> Emphases in original, typed questionnaire response.
- <sup>3</sup> Despite this lack of funding, it should be noted that most CWHS teachers still came to the Explorations classes for discussion of the University students’ observations.

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## **Appendix A**

### **CWHS Co-Instructor Electronic Questionnaire**

1. How (if at all) did the experience of co-teaching [Explorations] help you develop professionally?
2. What challenges were involved in co-teaching the [Explorations] course?
3. What kinds of modifications did you and your co-teacher make to the [Explorations] course?
4. In working with your co-teacher, how did you reach consensus and/or common understandings of what students should know?
5. How (if at all) do you think this course helped [Creative Works High School]?
6. When compared to a traditional university course, how did the unique setting of teaching at the high school make the course more effective?
7. When compared to a traditional university course, how (if at all) did the unique setting of teaching at the high school make the course more challenging to teach?
8. How was the unique setting of teaching at the high school beneficial (if at all) to your students?
9. How was the unique setting of teaching at the high school detrimental/challenging (if at all) for your students?
10. Do you have any other comments/concerns you would like to add about teaching the [Explorations] course?

## **Appendix B**

### **Semi-Structured Ppincipal Interview Protocol**

1. What is your vision for the school's professional development?
2. What is the history of the [university] partnership?
3. What do you notice about your teachers who co-instructed [university] courses?
4. How do make the decisions about recommending [CWHS] teachers to co-instruct the course?
5. What were some of the challenges that you've had in partnering with [the university]?
6. What has been your role in the partnership?
7. Why are we no longer doing the Explorations panels?
8. What do you think [CWHS] gets out of this, if anything at all?
9. Describe the engagement you have had with [university] student teachers.
10. What (if any) changes are needed to make the partnership more beneficial?
11. Is there anything else you would like to discuss about the Explorations course/[university] partnership?