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Creating Community-University Partnerships in a Teacher Education Program: A Case Study

In this study we explored a triad partnership among preservice department instructors and teacher candidates, community practitioners, and partners in a community-university research alliance (CURA). All partners were interviewed about their perceptions of their role in the partnership, the effectiveness of the collaboration, and the key lessons learned. Following content analyses of the conversations, three main themes emerged: the value of the partnership in this professional development project, required commitment and support, and challenges faced throughout the partnership. Recommendations for future partnerships in the educational context are discussed.

Dans cette étude, nous nous sommes penchées sur un partenariat triadique entre des chargés de cours en pédagogie et des stagiaires, des intervenants de la communauté, et des partenaires unis dans une alliance communautaire/universitaire pour la recherche (CURA). Tous les partenaires ont été interrogés pour connaître leurs perceptions quant à leur rôle dans le partenariat, l'efficacité de la collaboration et les leçons principales qu'ils en avaient retirées. Trois thèmes majeurs se sont dégagés des analyses du contenu des conversations: la valeur du partenariat au sein du projet de développement professionnel; la nécessité d'engagement et d'appui; et les défis qu'on avait affrontés tout au long de la collaboration. Nous proposons des recommandations portant sur les partenariats qui se formeront dans un contexte éducatif à l'avenir.

Historically, the family, school, and community were important influences on children's development and lifestyle choices. Families held primary responsibility for nurturing children and preparing them for entry into the educational system, schools were responsible for providing students with prerequisite academic and performance skills needed to assume productive roles in society, and community organizations were to provide students with the values and morals consistent with good citizenship (Epstein, 1995; Parsons, 1985). Today the influence of such institutions in the lives of youth has diminished, with other community organizations such as schools and the popular media assum-

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ing greater roles in their upbringing (Esbensen & Deschenes, 1996; Goodard, 1997, 2000; Larson, Richards, Moneta, Holmbeck, & Duckett, 1996). It is generally agreed that students' cognitive, social, and emotional development, as well as their overall well-being, are enhanced when schools, families, and community organizations collaboratively work together (Epstein & Sanders, 1996; Sanders & Epstein, 2000).

According to Goodard (2000), educators need to become increasingly knowledgeable about the influence of the external environment on students' lives and to seek partnerships with relevant community-based organizations when addressing the role of these factors in the classroom. Presumably this will require educators to engage in the processes of professional development and self-directed learning consistent with the professional expectation that teachers continually add to their theoretical knowledge base and reflect on their practice (Darling-Hammond, 1998). In turn, participation in professional development activities is expected over time to change teachers' behaviors, knowledge, images, beliefs, and perceptions (Elliott & Woloshyn, 2001; Kagan, 1992; Kinucan-Welch & Jenlink, 2001). In addition to personal change and enhanced classroom practice, participation in professional development activities may result in positive changes in the communities and societies to which schools belong (Beattie, 2002).

Given the increased demands on educators to promote students' psychological and personal well-being, effective collaboration with other professionals and peers is not only desirable, but essential (Christiansen & Ramadevi, 2002; Cork, 2001; Lieberman, 1995; Sanders & Epstein, 2000). According to Eisler (2002), truly effective partnerships represent more than a curriculum unit or instructional technique. Rather, collaborative partnerships represent a genuine effort to provide nurturing and connected learning communities that empower young people to make wise choices. These learning communities build on and complement the strengths of each partner to develop the supportive environment. The question, however, arises as to how best to prepare teachers to become collaborative partners. How do we increase their motivation to assume responsibility for their own and their colleagues' professional development?

University-school partnerships represent one common approach to professional development (Dyson, 1999). Over the past decade the teacher-education literature documents many instances of successful and not-so-successful partnerships (Christiansen, Goulet, Krentz & Maeers, 1997; Clandinin & Connelly, 1995; Hayes & Kelly, 2000; Richards, Elliott, Woloshyn, & Mitchell, 2001). Based on these experiences, researchers have identified criteria for successful collaborative partnerships intended to promote teachers' professional development (Elliott & Woloshyn, 1997; Richards et al., 2001). These criteria include building rapport, establishing compatible goals, negotiating tasks, and sustaining a sense of commitment and satisfaction from the collaborative process. These criteria are often established through sharing relevant prior experiences, explicit and ongoing dialogue, and cultivating interpersonal connections. These elements combined help foster an emotional approach to ethics or what Noddings (1984) refers to as an "ethic of care," which is rooted in reciprocity, relatedness, and responsiveness. As Noddings (1984, 2003) suggests, this emo-

tional approach to ethics involves caring and connection that provide an effective context for genuine collaboration and thus serve as critical pieces of the foundation for collaborative partnerships. Thus we believe that one central aspect of professional development programs is to assist educators to develop skills associated with effective collaboration.

Despite the best intentions of many individuals and their commitments to a common cause, university-school collaborative partnerships are often mired by clashes between the two institutional cultures or climates (Hayes & Kelly, 2000; Richards et al., 2001; Sanders & Epstein, 2000). For example, expectations of university academics are about research and publication, whereas classroom teachers are expected to develop and deliver immediate services (Christiansen & Ramadevi, 2002). Successful school-university partnerships require individuals to be sensitive to their partners' institutional realities and develop realistic expectations that acknowledge corresponding time and resource constraints. Potential partners need to move beyond the boundaries of the traditional relationships and responsibilities that define their institutional practices (Richards et al., 2001). In this manner, the integration of the school and university cultures may lead to the emergence of a third educational environment that focuses on caring and connected collaborative partnerships (Eisler, 2002).

Community-university and community-school collaborative partnerships are also becoming increasingly common (Zuckerman, Kaluzny, & Ricketts, 1995). Federal granting agencies such as the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, the Ontario Ministry of Health, Canadian Institutes for Health Research, and Networks of Centres of Excellence have funded projects that deliberately link community organizations with university communities. Although little is known about the overall constitution or success of these partnerships (Catelli, Padovano, & Costello, 2000; Eakin & Maclean, 1992; LeGris et al., 2000), it is likely that the conditions for successful collaboration here are parallel to those associated with school-university endeavors.

The present study explores a triad partnership between a number of preservice instructors and their teacher-candidate students, representatives from a number of community agencies, and ourselves as members of a community-university research alliance project, hereafter referred to as the CURA. The CURA represents a long-term strategic partnership between several faculty members of a local university and many youth-serving community agencies including local school boards. The primary mandate of the CURA is to conduct research to gain a better understanding of the factors influencing youth lifestyle choices and their developmental pathways. In addition, the CURA has two secondary objectives, training/interventions, and dissemination. First, the CURA is committed to working with the secondary and postsecondary educational systems and youth-serving agencies on the development, enhancement, and implementation of school-based and community-based youth lifestyle policies, curriculum, and interventions. In addition, faculty members associated with the CURA educate and assist community partners to evaluate existing programs and services; assist service providers to apply research findings to their programs, policies, and interventions; and train students about the research process. Second, the CURA is committed to disseminating its research

findings to youth, parents, service providers, educators, and the academic community. Dissemination strategies include integrating research findings into educational curriculum, presentations, newsletters, and peer-reviewed publications.

Through our membership in the CURA, we became aware of the difficulties many community organizations experienced in meeting teachers' requests for professional development. Quite simply, dwindling financial and personnel resources prohibited many organizations from fulfilling these requests. We wondered whether we could mediate a partnership between preservice instructors and their teacher-candidate students and relevant community organizations. We were especially hopeful that by inviting teacher candidates to participate in professional development activities that required them not only to be the recipients of such information, but also the vehicles for its dissemination to practicing teachers, we might create a win-win situation for all stakeholders. We describe below our efforts in establishing one such partnership, presenting the experiences and voices of the preservice and community participants throughout the methodology and adding our own reflections as part of the discussion.

Methodology

Research Design

Currently there is a lack of research exploring community-university, community-school, and triad partnerships. We chose to undertake an intrinsic case study to examine a particular triad partnership undertaken between community-university and community-school partners. An intrinsic case study is frequently undertaken when researchers wish to gain a better understanding of a particular phenomenon that is unique or unusual, and we believed that this methodology would best illustrate the complexity and interconnectedness among the stakeholders that formed this partnership (Creswell, 1998, 2002; Stake, 2003).

Context and Participants

This study was conducted in a medium-sized Canadian university serving predominantly middle-class European-Canadian students and their families. Community organizations involved in this study were located close to the university and served a similar clientele. The participants represent three distinct groups: preservice instructors (Jennifer, Tammy, Tom, Bruce, Elaine, and Jack) and their teacher-candidates (Jake, Dawn, Ben, Helen, Ashley, Linda, Samantha, and Tina); community practitioners (Susan, Bob, Jan, and Kelly); and ourselves as members of the CURA (Vera, Heather, and Sandra). To protect the identity of the participants, pseudonyms have been used throughout this article for both the preservice instructors and the teacher-candidates.

The CURA

In an effort to address the two secondary objectives of the CURA (i.e., training/intervention and dissemination), we played the roles of mediators and project facilitators in this partnership. We hoped to help establish a collaborative partnership between the preservice instructors and the community partners that over time would sustain itself. Vera and Sandra were faculty members involved in the CURA, with Vera being cross-appointed to teacher

courses in the preservice and undergraduate/graduate departments. Heather was the Community Co-Director of the CURA and at the time of this initiative employed in a community agency.

Preservice Instructors

Responding to a memo outlining a proposed CURA-Preservice partnership, six preservice instructors volunteered to have their classes participate in this project. Of these instructors, Jennifer, Tammy, and Tom were tenured faculty members who had been with their department for over a decade. Bruce, a retired secondary school principal, was a long-term instructor, as was Jack. Elaine was a first-time instructor standing in as a sabbatical replacement. She and Jack were completing doctoral studies at the time of this project.

Elaine and Jack taught multiple sections of what was commonly referred to as Educational Psychology to teacher candidates in the primary/junior division. The main purpose of this course was to help teacher candidates develop basic knowledge, observational and problem-solving skills, and attitudes that would empower them to make informed and defensible decisions in the classroom. Instruction focused on problem-based activities and case-study analysis.

The remaining four instructors taught individual sections of what was commonly referred to as Counseling Group. The goal of the course was to integrate course content and fieldwork and to create a positive learning environment that included ongoing reflection (both collaborative and individual), sharing, and mutual support. Jennifer and Tammy taught teacher candidates in the primary/junior divisions, with Tammy's group specializing in early childhood. Tom and Bruce shared responsible for the intermediate/senior class. Approximately 30 teacher candidates were enrolled in each of these courses.

Teacher Candidates

To provide a range of differing perspectives on this project, each instructor was invited to forward the names of two female and two male teacher candidates to participate in in-depth interviews deconstructing their roles in the partnership. The instructors were encouraged to submit the names of teacher candidates who they felt would best represent the range of perspectives in their course. In total, five women and two men were interviewed. Another woman provided e-mail correspondence in lieu of an interview (Ashley). The teaching practices and experiences of the participants varied. Four teacher candidates (Helen, Ashley, Samantha, Tina) were in the primary/junior divisions; one was enrolled in the junior/intermediate division (Linda); and three were from the intermediate/senior division (Jake, Ben, Dawn).

Community Practitioners

Four practitioners representing three independent community organizations participated in this project. The participating organizations were community members of the CURA, with each organization having a mandate to educate service providers. Jan was the coordinator of a longitudinal collaborative research project involving several community agencies and the local university. Bob and Susan were community consultants for a provincial health organization, and Kelly was the Community Services Coordinator responsible for youth

services at a local chapter of a national health organization. Each practitioner had extensive experience (ranging from 7 to 20 years of experience) in delivering community presentations.

Procedure

The process involved in this partnership was multidimensional. The first dimension involved community presentations about various health issues and risk behaviors. The second dimension involved the completion of a professional development assignment as part of the course curriculum. The third dimension consisted of data-collecting interviews.

Community Presentations

The preservice instructors were provided with a list of topics that reflected issues often associated with youth development (e.g., substance abuse, bullying, adolescent pregnancy, and sexually transmitted diseases [STDs]). Each of these topics was also addressed in the research conducted by the CURA. The research data formed the basis of the presentation to the teacher candidates. In consultation with the teacher candidates, the instructors then selected the topics they felt would best meet the needs of the teacher candidates in their respective classes. To this end each group of teacher candidates received a workshop addressing either substance abuse, mental health issues, or bullying. Before the in-class workshops, community practitioners were provided with an overview of a professional development assignment that the teacher-candidates were expected to complete following their presentations. They were also asked to bring any other resources that they believed would assist the teacher candidates in their role as future teachers. Using resources of the CURA, each candidate was provided with curriculum support materials including lesson plans, local research findings, brochures, and a compendium of evidence-based school programs.

Professional Development Assignment

Each participating preservice instructor built into their course curriculum an assignment that required students to develop information posters for practicing teachers about each of the health issues/risk behaviors addressed in the community presentations. As part of these posters, teacher candidates were to include relevant statistics and information about signs and symptoms, prevention and remedial strategies, professional responsibilities and curriculum connections, as well as community resources. They were directed to present this information in a manner that was relevant to classroom practice and to include a hand-out that synthesized critical information. Before providing teacher candidates with the specifics for the professional development assignment, each group engaged in a discussion about the ongoing importance for teachers to participate in self-driven professional development activities. They also discussed the importance of sharing these learning experiences with other educators. The preservice instructors graded these assignments.

Interviews

As part of the data-collection process, participants were asked to discuss the community presentations, their experiences as professional development delivery agents, and their overall thoughts about how the CURA-preservice partnership could be further developed and strengthened. All interviews were

held at a time and place that was convenient for the participants and were audiorecorded. The interviews ranged from 45 to 90 minutes in length. Participants were provided with a copy of their transcripts and any conclusions based on them so that they could qualify or clarify this information accordingly.

Data Analysis

Analysis consisted of coding and categorizing data as described by Bogdan and Biklen (1998), Creswell (1998, 2002), and Merriam (2001). Specifically, we independently reviewed the transcripts for themes and then met to present our interpretations and arrive at a shared understanding. Following this process, several themes emerged including: (a) value of the partnership and the professional development project; (b) commitment and support for the project; and (c) challenges in facilitating this project. We discuss each theme below drawing on the experiences and perspectives of the preservice instructors, teacher candidates, and community partners. We conclude with our personal perspectives and provide recommendations for future university-community partnerships.

Results

Value of the Partnership and the Professional Development Project

All the participants agreed that the partnership provided teacher candidates with an opportunity to bridge the theory-practice gap, as well as an opportunity to experience participating in self-directed professional development. According to the preservice instructors, the collaborative partnership provided teacher candidates with alternative viewpoints and perspectives about student development and school life. It also provided them with opportunities to develop research and presentation skills associated with lifelong learning and professional development. An underlying assumption was that if teacher candidates engaged in such professional development activities as part of their teacher education programs, they would be more likely to continue to do so throughout their teaching careers.

I try to have them [teacher candidates] draw on their background experience, their experience in the classroom, and the theory together to make some sense of it for themselves in their own practice. How can I improve my practice is the driving question through out the class and the whole course. (Jennifer)

In addition, they believed that the product (information poster and hand-out) resulting from this experience was one that many candidates would include in their teaching portfolios. Finally, there was a general belief that the teacher candidates would find the community speakers interesting, especially those with relevant life experiences, and enjoy the break from instructor-based lessons.

The teacher candidates also believed that the community presentations and associated professional development project were relevant to their professional lives. They valued learning about pertinent social issues among today's youth including bullying, mental health, and substance use. Some teacher candidates expressed shock about the frequency of some risk behaviors, as well as the myths associated with such topics as drug addiction and bullying. "It was important to uncover some of the myths associated with bullying ... bullying is a reality in all schools. Whether or not you see it, it's there" (Samantha). "She

[community presenter] told us about a lot of community resources that we could use—resources that would not only be useful to use for the professional development poster, but also in our extended roles as classroom teachers” (Tina).

Teacher candidates also reported that their professional development posters had been well received in their schools. For example, Linda and Samantha reported receiving positive feedback from the teachers in their schools with respect to the professional development poster: “They told us they appreciated the information ... visually, they thought it was great.” Ashley told the story of a teacher in her school who needed to use the resource information provided in her poster to assist a student in distress.

Today, I am sad/glad to report that I went to my project display board, that was set up in the staff room at my school, and I took one of the brochures that we made up containing community contact numbers and gave it to a teacher. She was working with a student who had attempted suicide in the past and was once again expressing suicidal thoughts.... This incident validates the project. I don't know whether the student will use the telephone numbers, but at least I know that the teacher was able to provide her with options and can feel somewhat better knowing that they have these numbers.

The community presenters also believed that the partnership held promise for long-term outcomes that went beyond the immediate mandate of their organizations. Specifically, they hoped that the information they provided to teacher candidates would facilitate their future practice, as well as the practice of current teachers, in a time-efficient manner. “I think this is a positive thing for us as an organization because eventually those teacher candidates will go out in schools around the province and then they know about our organization and the programs that we provide” (Bob).

Commitment and Support

One way instructors demonstrated their belief about the importance of the partnership was in their willingness to allocate class time and instructional resources to it. All the instructors adjusted their timetables to accommodate at least one presentation by a community member. Some, like Tammy, were able to make accommodations for several presentations. Other instructors, like Jennifer and Elaine, provided the teacher candidates with class time to work on the professional development project. Considering the limited instructional hours available in the preservice program, such timetable adjustments could only be made at the expense of other topics. By making these adjustments, instructors sent a strong message to teacher candidates about the importance of the partnership and its associated professional development project.

Participation in the professional development project was also associated with course credit. Again, we believed that in an extremely time-sensitive program, the allocation of grades to any one activity tended to elevate and reinforce its importance in the course. The integration of the professional development project into the course curriculum was another reflection of the instructors' willingness to embrace this partnership fully.

Instructors' commitment to the project was also evident in their willingness to *sell* the professional development project. Instructors often spoke of the

project as one that addressed factors that affected the daily lives of teachers and their students. However, in one class, where participation in the professional development project was one of several assignment options and where the instructor was not particularly adamant about the partnership, the candidates viewed other activities such as tutoring as being more relevant to their teaching careers. "It wasn't that the partnership project wasn't good, it was that I was already working directly with a student" (Ben).

Support for the project also translated into creating a balance with respect to the feasibility of the project for the teacher candidates and the underlying principles of the partnership. This balancing act often meant sustaining teacher candidates' motivation and reinforcing the teacher candidates' ability to complete the project. For instructors like Jennifer, Elaine, and Jack, this also included locating additional resources, facilitating teacher candidates' entry into schools, and holding high expectations about the delivery of the professional development poster. At times some instructors appeared to struggle between providing assistance to the teacher candidates (e.g., locating relevant Web-based and community resources) and having them complete the project in a self-directed manner. "They come in as students, very much as students, and I would like to see them exit that course as professionals so I am constantly orienting them towards the classroom, and their professional responsibilities as teachers" (Jennifer).

Furthermore, some students found working together collaboratively in groups challenging, as stated by Jack in his descriptions of his students' experiences: "They had the hardest time dividing themselves into groups. Once that was done they worked very well."

Community practitioners also illustrated their commitment to the project by adapting their work schedule to accommodate the presentation times and traveling from communities outside of the area to deliver multiple presentations. For example, one community presenter traveled over 200 kilometers to deliver her presentation. Other presenters such as Kelly reported making accommodations in their work schedules given the importance of this partnership.

I work part-time and I really have to prioritize. It is very difficult to do that when there are so many other pressing matters. I discussed it [the presentation] with my manager and she felt that it certainly fit with the organization's mandate.

Challenges

Throughout the partnership several issues arose including presentation quality, instructional timing, hierarchical structures, and visibility. These challenges were exacerbated by administrative difficulties including scheduling rooms for the presentations and insufficient photocopying. In retrospect, although some of these concerns might have been addressed, others were beyond the control of any partner.

Presentations

One challenge involved ensuring the quality of the community presentations. Both the instructors and the candidates agreed that the overall community presentations were of high quality and addressed critical topics in school life.

In one instance, however, the presenter did not gauge the climate of the class or sustain the teacher candidates' interest. More positively, the other presenters effectively captured the attention of the teacher candidates, successfully integrating stories from their lived experiences, as well as hands-on activities, into their presentations, perhaps resulting in a more sustained student interest. As Kelly summarized, "What we tend to remember is the personal stories."

There was also a call to extend the dialogue about how classroom teachers can effectively manage or become engaged in preventive and intervention processes. This seemed to be especially true in classes where most teacher candidates were mature students entering teaching as a second career. Perhaps these teacher candidates were more sensitive to the overall complexity of the discussed topics.

Some community members also found the behaviors of a few of the teacher candidates unsettling and at times disruptive: "One girl fell asleep in the front row" (Kelly); "There seemed to be some unruly behavior" (Susan). Further, one presenter was caught unawares when the teacher candidates arrived with lunch: "They were eating lunch and having snacks ... it [eating] did not seem particularly receptive" (Jan). In short, we were reminded that expertise in the field did not necessarily transfer to pedagogical practice, and we realized that we needed to provide all partners with greater insights into each other's professional expectations and cultures.

Instructional Timing

Some preservice instructors questioned whether the teacher candidates would truly grasp the importance of the partnership and the professional development project as a function of its timing in the program. Specifically, all the community presentations were held before the candidates' first teaching practicum. Perhaps if teacher candidates had spent time in the field before the presentations, their understanding of the realities of school life might have been enhanced, especially with respect to the influence of external factors on student behavior. Although constraints associated with the structure of the preservice program made it impossible to offer the community presentations later in the preservice year, in the context of this partnership we acknowledge the need to recognize timing as an important instructional factor when developing future partnerships.

The community partners also questioned whether the teacher candidates' interests would have been better served if the presentations had been delivered after a teaching block.

It would have been better timing because they [the candidates] would have had some practical experiences. They would not be basing it on what they think may happen. They would have been there [in the schools] and would have had some experience in the classroom. They may have recognized the relevance of what is being presented to them a bit better. (Bob)

Hierarchical Relations

Although all the teacher candidates clearly recognized the need for their own professional development, many expressed concern about their ability to participate in the professional development of their practicing colleagues. "You're just learning to be a teacher. Who are you to have any input on anything?"

(Helen). "Presenting it [the poster] to a group of teachers was a big deal for me" (Jake).

Although the preservice faculty may have miscalculated teacher candidates' comfort in delivering a professional development program, they were adamant that the teacher candidates present it to some form of audience. One concern was that the assignment would otherwise be perceived as busy work. Having the teacher candidates prepare and deliver a professional development poster that could be left at a school for review by the teaching staff (versus a formal presentation) provided an acceptable compromise. Some instructors even provided their teacher candidates with the option of creating a Web site of relevant information and resources for practicing teachers. More positively, at least two of the teacher candidates that we interviewed believed that they had a valid role to play not only in their own professional development, but also in the professional development of practicing teachers. "I have a lot of give ... she who teaches, learns" (Dawn).

We're closer to the research ... we have just finished university, so we are closer to the research. So in that sense, I think we do have a role to play and teachers in the field respect us ... they see us as a new energy ... they believe we have important things to say ... all the teachers I have seen have been receptive to student teachers and their ideas so I think that they would be really interested in the professional development we deliver. (Samantha)

In retrospect we acknowledge that the teacher candidates' uncertainty about their professional status and topic expertise affected their perceptions and reactions to the project and the partnership. However, we also believe that by negotiating the structure of the professional development activity with the preservice instructors, a compromise was reached that provided the teacher candidates with a level of comfort while still reinforcing their roles as agents for professional development.

Visibility

Some preservice faculty and teacher candidates suggested that a greater presence from us, as representatives of the CURA, might have been helpful in promoting the importance of the professional development project and its associated partnership. Although we were actively engaged in assisting instructors to promote the professional development project, arranging community presentations, and providing resources and feedback for the poster assignment, these contributions were often completed behind the scenes. Having a physical presence might have been especially helpful during class work sessions and might have reinforced teacher candidates' perceptions about the importance of the professional development project.

I would have had somebody from the CURA there throughout the project ... Describe what the project is about ... Constantly tell them [teacher candidates] what you are about and about the importance of the project and what is involved ... then provide them with the literature to take away. (Ben)

We had expected that the role of promotion in the classroom would be the responsibility of each instructor. For us these comments reinforced the critical role of visibility in collaborative partnerships, as well as underscoring the need

for explicit negotiations about partners' expectations, duties, and responsibilities.

Final Reflections and Discussion

In an educational climate where increasingly fewer resources are available for the formal training of teacher candidates and the inservicing of practicing teachers, educators' willingness to participate in professional development activities, including those that are self-directed, is paramount. Entities like the CURA can play an important role in assisting educators to fulfill this mandate. In the study reported here, the CURA facilitated a collaborative partnership to create a win-win situation where partners participated in a reciprocal professional development project. Specifically, community members were invited to address relatively large numbers of teacher candidates and their instructors knowing that these individuals in turn would be required to disseminate the provided information systematically into the school system.

The project challenged teacher candidates to create their own meaning from the presentations, as well as to work collaboratively with others in an effort to further disseminate this information to practicing teachers. Overall, we believe that the project was successful with respect to meeting these objectives, and we are optimistic about the potential for continued partnerships of this nature in faculties of education. Furthermore, we believe that university-community partnerships like the CURA are particularly well positioned to mediate such partnerships given that their members represent these sectors.

As we continue to reflect on the findings of this study and consider them in the context of the collaborative literature, several insights emerged about our mediating role in connection with the collaborative process. Specifically, we questioned whether the mediating role that as members of the CURA we adopted may have somewhat inhibited partners' abilities to establish trust and rapport fully with one another. To facilitate this collaborative project, we capitalized on our existing relationship with at least one of the partner groups (i.e., Vera and Sandra as faculty colleagues, Heather as a community worker). Being sensitive to the relatively tight timelines associated with the project, we served as a liaison between the partners, addressing each partner's needs and concerns and parleying messages between them. In some ways the situation was analogous to that of being a matchmaker for a blind date. That is, we each asked one of the partners who knew us well to enter a partnership with a relatively unknown third party on the basis of our recommendation. Although the preservice faculty and community members had several opportunities to dialogue and correspond with one another, we wonder now whether the resulting relations might have been stronger without our mediating presence.

Our mediating role may also have denied the partners an opportunity to negotiate their duties and responsibilities fully in the partnership. On reflection we realized that we served as the contact persons between the community and preservice partners. For example, we assisted the preservice faculty in the development of the professional development project, made all necessary arrangements for the community presentations, prepared a presentation guideline, and gathered relevant curriculum resources. Motivated to make the partnership attractive, we attempted to relieve the partners of as many of the administrative duties as possible. In so doing we may have inadvertently

denied them the opportunity to define their own duties and responsibilities to the project. Committing to such responsibilities and duties explicitly, especially when based on areas of expertise, can create a sense of accountability and strengthen resolve to the partnership (Elliott & Woloshyn, 1997). Although there is no doubt that all partners fulfilled their responsibilities to this project, we again wonder if their sense of satisfaction would have been greater if they had been more fully aware of the efforts of all the partners.

Finally, like others (Christiansen & Ramadevi, 2002; Elliott & Woloshyn, 1997; Noddings, 1984; Richards et al., 2001), we acknowledge that collaborative efforts are most successful when all partners believe that they have gained directly as a result of participating in the partnership. That is, the collaborative partnership must satisfy some goal or objective held by each partner. Although these goals do not need to be identical, they must be compatible. In the partnership described here, a number of compatible short-term goals were satisfied (e.g., community agencies were able to inform a large number of future and practicing teachers about student risk-taking behaviors; teacher candidates participated in a professional development project). We suspect, however, that the true benefits associated with this partnership have yet to unfold. That is, the partnership may serve the long-term goal of helping students adopt healthy lifestyle choices. We believe that as these participating teacher candidates enter the teaching profession, they will be better informed about risk-taking behaviors and will possess some of the skills needed to assist students in making positive lifestyle choices or when addressing existing risk-taking behaviors. We also suspect that participating in this project may positively affect participants' perspectives of their collaborative partners and encourage ongoing collaborative efforts.

Indeed, as we write this article we have preliminary evidence to this effect. As a direct result of her experience in the CURA-preservice partnership, one community practitioner has approached a number of other preservice programs in an effort to deliver similar presentations. In addition, the CURA has displayed the information posters developed by the teacher candidates at a number of educational conferences. The CURA also created a link between their Web site and that created by the teacher candidates in this study and continues to deliver presentations in one of the preservice instructor's classes. In sum, we remain committed to continued collaborative efforts between faculties of education and community organizations and are optimistic that our experiences in this triad partnership may provide insights and recommendations for those who embark on similar partnerships.

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