

*What's in it for me? Partner teachers and their role in pre-service teacher education in Alberta*

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**ABSTRACT:** With multiple institutions in Alberta, Canada competing for quality partner teachers, the challenge to find mentors willing to share their classrooms with a pre-service teacher has never been more difficult. How do we motivate potential partner teachers to mentor a pre-service teacher during the practicum? This article will present findings from a small exploratory study on the motivating factors present when a partner teacher chooses to mentor a pre-service teacher. Second, it will highlight the power of conversation between institutions and the unanticipated formation of a multi-institution community of practice.

**Keywords:** pre-service teacher, partner teacher, field experience, motivation, Alberta, Canada

**RESUMÉ:** Les plusieurs institutions éducatives en Alberta (Canada) sont en compétition pour des professeurs partenaires de haute qualité. Il y a un énorme défi pour ces institutions de trouver des mentors qui accepteront de partager leur salle de classe avec de futurs enseignants. Comment peut-on motiver ces professeurs partenaires potentiels d'accepter d'être mentor pour un futur enseignant pendant le stage? Dans cet article, nous présentons les résultats d'une étude qui a exploré les raisons pour lesquelles un professeur partenaire choisit d'être mentor pour un futur enseignant. En deuxième lieu, nous allons souligner l'importance de l'échange

d'idées entre les institutions et la formation inattendue d'une communauté de pratique qui comprend plusieurs institutions.

Mots clés : futurs enseignants, professeur partenaire, stage de formation, motivation, Alberta, Canada

Those of us responsible for Bachelor of Education field experience programs find ourselves continually grappling with the same question. How do we motivate potential partner teachers to work with pre-service teachers during their field practicum? This was the case, just over a year ago, when four of us responsible for the field experience placements in our respective universities found ourselves at a meeting discussing this perennial question. With over 10 institutions in Alberta competing for quality partner teachers, the challenge to find partner teachers willing to share their classroom with a pre-service teacher has never been more difficult. We realized that, in coordinating placements for four different programs at three institutions in southern Alberta, we were constantly searching for field experience placements. Although recruiting partner teachers for our individual institutions put us in direct competition with one another for the limited placements available in and around our institutions, we thought there might be value in coming together to discuss the problem and determine, if by doing so, we could gain insight on the issue. Each of us had differing dynamics that made our roles unique, but we shared the desire to learn more about what motivates partner teachers to accept a pre-service teacher and to explore the various ways we could approach the scarcity of placements from a fresh perspective.

### *Context of the Field Experience*

An understanding of the practicum context provided insight into factors that motivated partner teachers to engage in pre-service teacher field education. These contextual variables centred around teacher education programs that provided historical, theoretical and pedagogical content, and the partner teachers who provided practical experience in real-world contexts.

Research centred on partner teacher roles has highlighted two shifts in practice that may impact a partner teacher's engagement in pre-service teacher advising. The first shift is the changing competency demands of pre-service teacher education programs. In their meta-analysis of teacher education research, Cochran-Smith and Villegas, (2015) found that classrooms and pedagogy have changed significantly in the past few decades in response to increasingly diverse classrooms. As a result of these shifts, many institutions have simply added more weeks to the field experience, including non-evaluated field experiences such as was noted by Gambhir, Broad, Evans & Gaskell (2008) in their study of Canadian teacher education. Yet, both partner teachers and pre-service teachers often expressed a sense of disconnect between the realities of the field experience and the coursework to prepare them for the field (Nielsen, Triggs, Clarke & Collins, 2010), a conflict that was not resolved by increased time in practicum alone.

The other shift relevant to this research was the evolution of the role of the partner teacher and the mentorship model used to guide evaluation of a pre-service teacher (Cochran-Smith & Villegas, 2015). Prior to the 21st Century, teacher education programs aimed to help standardize the profession at the preparation level, which resulted in a teacher-centred training approach. Current practices are turning to models that require different pre-service teacher skills however, such as critical thinking, initiative, and the ability to meet diverse student needs (Cochran-Smith & Villegas, 2015). This progression has resulted in a disparity between some partner teacher expectations of their role and the expectations of teacher education programs (Cochran-Smith & Villegas, 2015; Patrick, 2013). These differing expectations have prompted some teachers to feel reluctant to take on the role of advisor to a pre-service teacher (Beck & Kosnik, 2000). These two shifts, one in practice and one in the expectations of mentorship are explored further through the themes of teacher disposition and perceived risks of working with a pre-service teacher.

### *Partner Teacher Disposition*

The disposition of the partner teacher was found in the literature to be of critical importance to the success or failure of a pre-service teaching experience. Pre-service teachers were found to depend on the partner teacher to create a

welcoming environment, share knowledge, and guide them through the uncertainties of the field experience. For example, Cherian (2007) reported that having a caring partner teacher is one of the most significant aspects affecting pre-service teacher development. Similarly, Beck and Kosnik (2002) advised that the friendliness or emotional support of a partner teacher could not be overestimated. A welcoming, approachable, and flexible partner teacher created an environment where pre-service teachers felt more at ease and, as a result, experienced less stress (Murray-Harvey, Silins & Saebel, 1999). All the while, pre-service teachers were keenly aware that they were walking a fine line between established routines and trying out some of the theories they learned in their teacher education courses.

The ability of the partner teacher, through their creation of a warm and welcoming atmosphere, proved not only to affect the well-being but also the performance of the pre-service teacher. Patrick (2013), in his examination of the importance of the relationship between a pre-service teacher and their partner teacher in Australia, noted the importance of freedom for pre-service teachers. Indeed, Patrick found that having a partner teacher who was comfortable allowing their pre-service teacher the freedom to take risks and develop their own style resulted in a better experience as reported by the pre-service teacher. The alternative was also true, resulting in a reported sense of frustration when pre-service teachers were denied the freedom to engage with the class in their own way. This conclusion was supported by Moulding, Stewart and Dunmeyer (2014) who noted, in their study of pre-service teacher self-efficacy in the United States, that the support received by their partner teacher significantly impacted their feelings of self-efficacy and, as a result, their confidence and ability to be successful. What becomes clear is that partner teacher disposition continued to play a significant role in the experiences of pre-service teachers and in the context of the field experience generally.

### *Perceived Risks*

The literature also noted that although partner teachers agreed to take a pre-service teacher into their classroom, they might still hold reservations. Teachers were often conflicted between their responsibility to the students in their class and their responsibility for developing the pre-service teacher's competency (Irby, 2012). If the pre-service teacher was

unable to communicate key concepts to students during his or her teaching, the partner teacher feared needing to re-teach the material before moving on to more complex concepts. This was seen to be extremely risky in the final placement, when pre-service teachers were responsible for 100% of the teaching. In her examination of tensions in the mentor teacher-student teacher relationship, Graham (1997) described her experience as a partner teacher as both the most rewarding and most difficult professional relationship of her career. While she appreciated the collaborative discourse and acknowledged the fact that advising a pre-service teacher helped alleviate the potential isolation of teaching, Graham also noted the tension created when differing philosophical perspectives existed between the partner teacher and the pre-service teacher.

### *Value of Advising*

According to Van Ginkel, Verloop & Denessen (2016), partner teachers were motivated to mentor pre-service teachers for two primary reasons. Many felt a sense of professional obligation to share their knowledge and expertise while others looked forward to collegial dialogue in the classroom and reflection on their own practice. A participant in teacher education conversations facilitated by Nielsen Triggs, Clarke, & Collins (2010) described her experience as a partner teacher as a form of on the job development. "Being a cooperating teacher is the best professional development I've ever had" (p. 17). Practicing teachers also deepened their familiarity with curriculum material and resources available to teachers, which was then shared with their colleagues (Shillingstad, McGlamery, Davis, & Gilles, 2015). Similarly, pre-service teacher presence in a school was found to have a positive impact on the school culture when mentorship was shared and valued (Shillingstad et al., 2015; Ambrosetti & Dekkers, 2010; Kurtz, 2009; Hall, Draper, Smith & Bullough, 2008; Heirdsfield, Walker, Walsh, & Wilss, 2008). Shillingstad et al. (2015) shared a partner teacher's experience to exemplify this point: "The role itself requires you to be a leader - to anticipate the needs of others and meet those needs in a way that is timely and respectful..." (p. 15). This same respondent went on to describe her development as a school leader, noting that her pre-service teacher, colleagues and administration sought her perspective when problem solving and when sharing new ideas during and after

the field experience.

With the increasingly complex demands of classrooms, the literature related to the practicum offered unique insights into the varied issues influencing partner teacher engagement in pre-service teacher education. The practicum continues to remain a complex endeavour, but one worth undertaking for most partner teachers. To this end, Clarke and Riecken (2000) argued that teachers should be more vocal in the “promotion of their work as teacher educators in pre-service teacher education” (p. 347), making the need to understand partner teacher engagement even more critical.

### *Method*

This qualitative study was undertaken as a small-scale exploratory examination of the reasons that partner teachers become involved in pre-service teacher field education and those factors that encouraged them to continue in an advising role. The process that was followed consisted of three steps, beginning with the development of key interview questions aimed at determining the main factors that contributed to partner teacher participation in pre-service teacher field education. These questions were designed to understand both the reasons for participation and also those factors that might encourage or discourage a teacher from taking up this important role.

Step two consisted of the implementation of a non-random convenience sampling method by which each of us identified and approached one or two partner teachers thought to be willing to be interviewed about her or his experiences hosting a pre-service teacher from our various programs. The partner teachers who were identified were chosen to ensure a range of years of experience in the role of partner teacher, a range of experience with various school configurations including public schools, public charter schools and private schools at various grade levels, and, finally, a mixture of both urban and rural educational contexts. Six partner teachers were chosen in total and interviewed for their perceptions of the benefits and risks of advising a pre-service teacher and for the elements that would encourage their participation as a partner teacher. These semi-structured interviews were conducted within a social constructionism framework (Gergen & Gergen, 2003; Rogoff, 1990) in order to highlight the manner in which partner teachers made meaning of their

experiences as an advisor to pre-service teachers. Each of us interviewed one or two partner teachers and brought our transcripts to a collaborative data analysis meeting.

Step three of the process saw us, as a group, come together to read through each of the transcripts several times where we determined themes, which were captured in a table. The themes were determined by first drawing out the key points in each interview. This was then followed by a comparative analysis of the key points to determine themes that were common to all participants. These themes were augmented with relevant quotations so as to ensure the voice of the partner teachers was paramount in the work. Five themes, common to all of the partner teachers, are discussed below and suggest that the dominant motivation for hosting a pre-service teacher centred around potential learning for the partner teacher as well as the pre-service teacher. These themes and their resultant implications were determined collaboratively by the researchers and agreed upon by each.

Throughout these three steps, discussion among us was considered important to the research process. Through these discussions our experiences as field experience directors became an important aspect of the work and served, not to influence the themes presented, but to speak to the implications of those themes. Collaboration allowed us to bring our own voice to the interpretation of the data and shaped the way in which the perceptions of the participant partner teachers influenced our work with pre-service teachers.

### *Findings*

The findings presented here share one common thread, that of the opportunities presented by coaching a pre-service teacher. Whether the theme reflected on the positive possibilities of this advising relationship or the perceived risks, at no time was the necessity of such a relationship questioned. Instead, all participants saw the opportunities that existed. The five main themes discussed by the participants were partner teacher advising as an opportunity to 1) reflect on teaching; 2) create a collaborative environment; 3) create excitement in the classroom; 4) support struggling pre-service teachers; and, 5) demonstrate commitment.

### *Partner Teacher Advising as an Opportunity to Reflect on Teaching*

Five of the six teachers surveyed referred to advising a pre-service teacher as an opportunity to examine their own practice. Several partner teachers stated after years of teaching they had a tendency to rely on certain techniques and practices without giving a lot of thought to why they were utilizing them. Having a pre-service teacher in the classroom necessitated partner teachers to slow down and become explicit about the reasons behind their choices, one partner teacher stated, “You have to want to show someone not just how it is done but why.” Another participant echoed the same sentiment. She stated,

There are two big things I learn from having pre-service teachers. The first is you get a chance to see what's big at the university, what they're teaching and sometimes the students come with ideas about what the research says and I really appreciate that. It also teaches me to really look at what I'm doing and ask why because if someone else wants to know why you're doing something, you can't just say because. You really have to think about why you mark the way you do, for example.

In doing so, partner teachers approached teaching with a fresh set of eyes and became open to examining their teaching context from a different perspective.

The presence of a pre-service teacher also provided partner teachers with an informal opportunity to engage in professional development. Pre-service teachers shared with their partner teacher the latest research and technology they had learned in their program, which provided partner teachers with an opportunity to incorporate new ideas and stay current in their field. One partner teacher described how having a pre-service teacher in the classroom exposed her to some of the new technological applications such as Kahoot and how it could be used for assessment. This sharing of current knowledge provided partner teachers with the opportunity to engage in professional development without having to leave their classroom.

### *Partner Teacher Advising as an Opportunity to Create a Collaborative Learning Environment*

Three of the partner teachers described how the presence of a pre-service teacher resulted in collaboration, not only between the partner teacher and pre-service teacher, but

also among the students in the classroom. Students became invested in seeing the pre-service teacher succeed and that created an environment of enhanced group effort. One partner teacher described it in the following way, “The students tend to get invested in helping a pre-service teacher succeed, so it develops community and the students learn from watching someone else learn, make mistakes and keep trying.” Another partner teacher concurred stating, “I loved watching how students interacted with her. They too were empowered and loved to support and teach her too!” This enhanced sense of collaboration in the classroom was described as beneficial to the students as one participant revealed “Our conversations help focus both of our attention on teaching and student learning, so I become more aware of my student’s needs, which benefits all of us.” The presence of a pre-service teacher in the classroom extended the collaborative environment beyond that of students and teacher, as the pre-service teacher enhanced the learning and engagement of all three parties.

The collaborative learning environment also included partner teachers allowing pre-service teachers to take risks and to try out new ideas without the fear of failure. Being open to new strategies for teaching lessened the fear of failure. One partner teacher shared,

I guess I see myself more as an overseer, so I’ll add my input, but really also listen to them as a facilitator, their thoughts, and see how does that fit with my curriculum and my agenda and what needs to be taught? You have to be open to someone trying something, if it works, great and if it can be tweaked, that’s good and if it doesn’t work, then [consider] what do we do now.

Partner teachers indicated the presence of a pre-service teacher in the classroom enhanced the learning environment for students, the partner teacher and the pre-service teacher. The collaborative learning environment encouraged pre-service teachers to take risks with their teaching and try out ideas that might not work.

#### *Partner Teacher Advising as an Opportunity to Create Excitement in the Classroom*

Partner teachers described how a pre-service teacher added a renewed sense of energy to the classroom. One partner teacher explained how having a pre-service teacher in

the classroom “brings life into your classroom with their new experiences and eagerness.” Partner teachers appreciated the opportunity to impact the career of a new teacher at a formative time in his or her practice, “To meet new people in the field, excited about the field, and making that positive impact on someone else at the start of their career has a beneficial impact on my own teaching.” That excitement extended beyond the initial novelty of having a new person in the classroom to witnessing students learn from the pre-service teacher. As one partner teacher noted,

The most rewarding aspect is when you see the students connect to the pre-service teacher and they see it too. It is also the most challenging part because you have to be able to let go but I try and see it from the perspective of the profession. If we want great teachers someone has to give them a chance and that means sharing your classroom.

Excitement was enhanced when the pre-service teacher tried something new and met with success. One partner teacher described this excitement in the following way. “The most rewarding aspect of mentoring a pre-service teacher is seeing them have their light bulb moments. The adrenaline from a successful moment can trickle down for weeks.”

By sharing lesson planning and instruction, partner teachers had the opportunity to enhance their teaching by having a teaching partner. One partner teacher elaborated by stating,

I truly felt like [pre-service teacher’s name] was my team teacher and we were able to teach from “all angles”. It was a fantastic experience! She was a “breath of fresh air” during a time of the school year when time seems to drag on.

The opportunity to work with someone who was at the beginning of their career and was excited about the profession and all of its possibilities, created a new energy in the classroom, not just for students but also for the partner teacher.

#### *Partner Teacher Advising as an Opportunity to Support Struggling Pre-service Teachers*

Partner teachers also shared the distress of witnessing a pre-service teacher struggle with issues of suitability for teaching. When a pre-service teacher was unable to have a

successful placement even with guidance, partner teachers described feeling a sense of failure.

When you have a pre-service teacher that really struggles and someone has to decide that this isn't for them, that is the worst. Whether it's someone from the university or they come the realization themselves, when the student fails it can be really hard on the teacher because I always assume I didn't do a proper job.

Partner teachers described additional concerns that arose in this situation such as: an increased workload, extra coaching, modeling, and the encouragement required in advising a struggling pre-service teacher. These conversations were sometimes challenging for partner teachers, "My pre-service teacher needed a lot of positive reinforcement as her confidence in her abilities was low, even though [her abilities] weren't. Having to have honest conversations in regards to her practice to enable growth was a challenge for me."

A few partner teachers expressed frustration when witnessing pre-service teachers who were unable to engage in reflection about teaching and who struggled to move beyond their own experiences as a student. One partner teacher explained, "I worked with one pre-service teacher who continued to fall back on what she recalled from school, instead of what the research and district identified as best practices. It resulted in a lot of coaching and modeling." While there were frustrations evident, this teacher also noted the opportunities for even deeper examination of her own practices through her need to model best practices for the pre-service teacher.

When a partner teacher had experience with a pre-service teacher who had struggled, they were less willing to allow the next pre-service teacher as much control over the class. As one partner teacher stated, "Handing the 'reigns' over to someone else can be difficult sometimes, especially if you haven't had a wonderful experience in the past." When pre-service teachers were unable to meet the expectations of their field experience, partner teachers shared a sense of failure that impacted their willingness to take on another pre-service student in the future.

### *Partner Teacher Advising as an Opportunity to Demonstrate Commitment*

Partner teachers described their role as advisors as both a duty and a professional responsibility. Several mentioned their experiences as a pre-service teacher and connected those experiences to their desire to provide the same opportunity for another aspiring teacher. One partner teacher described their sense of responsibility in this way, "Mentoring student teachers is part of the journey in contributing to the profession." Another partner teacher reflected how all professionals have a role to play in developing the skills of those just beginning in the profession,

I really do believe it is part of what we do. I wouldn't want a nurse or a doctor who had never been in a hospital before taking care of me and I also don't want a teacher for my kids that has never been in a classroom before so it's my job to make sure that doesn't happen.

The opportunity to show commitment, both as a leader and as a member of the profession was paramount in their decision to become a partner teacher.

In response to a question regarding how partner teachers would like to be recognized, none of the participants mentioned monetary compensation. Instead, they described a desire to be acknowledged by administration of their school board, as follows, "This really comes back to the administration. Some kind of recognition from them would be nice. I don't know what, exactly, but something and it doesn't have to be time off or anything. Even just acknowledgement."

These themes suggested a variety of positive elements and challenges associated with advising a pre-service teacher. Partner teachers indicated having a pre-service teacher in their classroom was a form of on-the-job professional development. It provided an opportunity to reconsider their teaching strategies and to learn new ones. The collaborative nature of working with another adult in the classroom added a new vitality to the classroom that impacted the partner teacher, pre-service teacher and the students. Motivations for taking a pre-service teacher were related to a sense of duty to the profession, but also a desire for recognition from their employer. However, the experience of working with a pre-service teacher who struggles had implications for that teacher's willingness to consider taking on a pre-service teacher in the future.

### *Discussion*

There are many complexities linked to the role of partner teachers in advising pre-service teachers. The rewarding aspects of this role and the challenges involved highlight the various ways in which individual partner teachers experienced the advising role. The five themes shared in the findings section suggested ways in which teacher educators can better understand the role of partner teachers in advising pre-service teachers.

Partner teachers described how having a pre-service teacher in their classroom was a form of professional development for them, echoed in the results from Willegems, Consuegra, Struyven and Engels (2017). Partner teachers noted that advising a pre-service teacher gave them an opportunity to reflect on the dimensions of their own teaching practice. The teaching profession supports the practice of reflection to situate and improve pedagogy (Wlodarsky, 2009), so that shifts in perspective and practice are intentionally and deliberately acted on (Dewey, 1933). The opportunity to observe pre-service teachers and new ways of approaching instruction allowed partner teachers to reflect on their practice. The chance to refine their pedagogical practice and experience professional growth was viewed as beneficial by the partner teachers in this study.

As well, partner teachers described the collaborative engagement and sense of community that was created between the students in the classroom, the pre-service teacher and themselves as partner teachers. This supportive environment and the mutual trust implied, encouraged pre-service teachers to invest in the development of their practice and allowed them to contribute to the classroom community. Further, partner teachers described how the shared, collaborative endeavor of teaching with their pre-service teacher also created a feeling of community in their classroom.

Partner teachers also experienced a sense of excitement and renewed energy when they welcomed pre-service teachers into their classroom. Teaching is a complex, dynamic activity (Cochran-Smith and Villegas, 2015; Hoffman & Duffy, 2016; Lortie, 2002; Ragoonaden, 2015; Shields, 2012), but one that can often be isolating. The arrival of a pre-service teacher, just beginning their career, into a classroom setting, can be beneficial to partner teachers

in renewing their commitment to their professionalism. Clarke et al. (2012) found that mentoring pre-service teachers allowed partner teachers to re-affirm the professional beliefs and values that they develop throughout a teaching career.

Partner teachers discussed the challenge of supporting pre-service teachers who struggled with their new role and teaching identity. The additional workload involved in advising pre-service teachers is considerable and when pre-service teachers have difficulty meeting expectations, partner teachers may be overwhelmed by the responsibility to support them. Challenges in mentoring pre-service teachers may prompt partner teachers to think differently about their advisory role (Clarke et al., 2012) and influence their interest in taking on pre-service students for future practicum. Challenges in field practicums do arise and teacher education institutions can support partner teachers by establishing and maintaining clear protocols for addressing these issues.

Finally, partner teachers expressed the deep sense of commitment they had to their role as advisors. They believed that they served the profession through their advising role. Recognition for their advising was valued, not through a monetary sense, but rather by a professional acknowledgement of their work. However, this recognition is not easily facilitated and often partner teacher advising efforts are not acknowledged outside their own school community.

There were also unanticipated outcomes that we agreed upon reflection, were valuable for our work as field directors. First, our findings in this project allowed us to make visible the perspectives of partner teachers who support pre-service teachers through advising. Often, the role of partner teachers is unexamined and unacknowledged in K-12 systems and the reasons for undertaking this role often go unrecognized and unsupported. In the conversations that we had with partner teachers, we saw that they welcomed the opportunity to express their perspectives on advising pre-service teachers and to reflect on their own practice.

Second, through our collaboration, we realized our field experience programs were connected more so through their similarities, rather than distinguished by their differences. The processes and expectations related to field practicums shared many commonalities across each of our teacher education programs. The challenges we encounter in our roles and responsibilities were also similar. While our teacher education programs have different contexts and focuses, our

successes and frustrations are similar. In the future, we know that continued dialogue about the practices that frame our work will support us individually in our roles.

Third, the sense of community we established in our shared endeavor was one of the most rewarding outcomes of our collaboration. While we agreed that the collective insights we arrived at during our research into the advising role of partner teachers were important and helpful for carrying out our professional roles, the sense of community we established was equally significant. Our collaboration offered us a way to engage with others who held a similar role and to share fresh perspectives and new ways of thinking about tasks and responsibilities. Wenger (1999) described a community of practice (CoP) as the coming together of a group of people with shared interests and common goals. As our group continued to meet and collaborate, we developed our own learning community. It was our shared experience of reading, discussion, and examination of field issues, that allowed us to establish a new collective understanding that we would not have reached on our own (Groen & Kawalilak, 2014). Additionally, our learning community allowed us to critically examine issues and ideas in a supportive environment that facilitated the development of this community (Wenger, 1999).

### *Implications*

It is acknowledged that this research is limited by its small sample size and, as such, may not be widely generalizable. However, in our work with pre-service teachers, we discovered multiple implications for partner teachers considering a pre-service teacher-advising role, for school divisions in support of their partner teachers, and for our teacher education programs asking teachers to take up this work. First, this research has shown that, for some partner teachers, honoraria may not adequately compensate for taking up the work of pre-service teacher advising. Schools and school divisions, in partnership with universities, will need to find ways in which teachers can be recognized appropriately. Such recognition ought to bring attention to the incredible commitment of time and knowledge required by partner teachers and, as such, be acknowledged by those who have a role to play in the career advancement of the teachers themselves, including both schools and school divisions.

A second implication of this work is the need for our teacher education programs to be aware of and responsive to the needs of the partner teacher and the class, should issues arise in the field experience. Advising a struggling student can be a difficult process requiring an additional commitment of time and resources. Having some clear guidelines that are developed in partnership with the school and university may make this process somewhat easier for partner teachers and pre-service teachers. Alternatively, however, an important implication of working with struggling pre-service teachers is the need to recognize that this may provide an opportunity for school-aged students to witness and employ resilience of their own. As school-aged students also work with pre-service teachers, as their learners, they may have an interesting and critical role to play in the support of those pre-service teachers and, as a result, in the development of their own resilience and empathy.

Third, the partner teachers interviewed in this work noted that there is much to be gained from advising a pre-service teacher. We believe the reasons for doing so, along with stories of success, ought to be shared in the voices of those doing the work, the partner teachers. Partner teacher stories of their advising roles and the resultant leadership they demonstrated need to be shared publically. These stories need to be made available to other potential partner teachers, to parents, and to government in order to promote the positive narrative that accompanies the vast majority of pre-service teacher placements.

Finally, the implications inherent in understanding what motivates partner teachers to engage in pre-service teacher field education are many, but perhaps one that stands out among others for us is, without partner teachers to coach and support pre-service teacher education, the continued excellence we currently enjoy in the profession is at risk. The importance of the opportunity to translate theoretical understanding into practice cannot be overestimated, nor can it be fully realized in a campus course setting.

### *Conclusion*

Although the exact nature of our field experience responsibilities are bound up in the particular contexts of our individual teacher education programs, we recognize that there are common practices and challenges involved in

placing pre-service teachers in practicum settings for each of us. These common experiences informed our collaborative exploration into the nature of the partner teacher role in pre-service teacher education.

With the practicum playing a significant role in the education of pre-service teachers, an understanding of what motivates potential partner teachers in providing an advising role is essential. Partner teachers play a vital role in supporting pre-service teachers as they develop an understanding and knowledge of curriculum and teaching strategies that will allow them to interpret and implement meaningful practice in their future classrooms. Partner teachers also provide guidance in encouraging pre-service teachers to examine their deeply held beliefs about teaching and learning and to explore how these beliefs inform their work in diverse classroom settings. As such, an awareness of the challenging and rewarding aspects of working with pre-service teachers can shape the manner in which we communicate and collaborate with partner teachers. It can also inform the expectations that teacher education programs develop for practicum experiences and support partner teachers' work with our students in authentic and reciprocal ways.

In re-framing the conversations that we have with teachers about the benefits and challenges of advising pre-service teachers, we are offering a fresh way to understand the potential benefits and rewards of working with these students. We intend to continue to collaborate in our efforts to understand how to best support partner teachers in ways that create sustaining partnerships between themselves and our institutions.

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