

Strengthening Collaborative Relationships in Teacher Education

Karen M. Potter, Mary L. Fahrenbruck, Cecilia M. Hernandez, Blanca Araujo,
Teresa C. Valenzuela, and Leanna Lucero
New Mexico, U.S.A.

Abstract

Collaborative relationships between cooperating teachers and university faculty are important in creating positive and effective field experiences for preservice teacher candidates. In the context of a particular elementary teacher preparation program's "Block" field experience, collaborative tensions were addressed by creating and implementing the Four-day Institute. The Block field experience unites the efforts of university faculty from a designated Hispanic Serving Institution and public school teachers from a local district that serves primarily Hispanic students. Collaborative tensions included Block teacher candidate assessment, course assignment implementation with children in the practicum classrooms, and methods knowledge or beliefs in special education, general education science, and general education literacy in reading. The Four-day Institute was used to address collaborative tensions as well as to plan for continuing collaboration. The lessons learned are generalizable in other school and university collaborations or partnerships.

Key Words: *collaboration, partnership, third space, teacher preparation, elementary.*

The collaborative relationships between teacher education programs (TEPs) and school practicum sites is a consistently relevant and challenging area of study. In this article, we consider one method, the Four-day Institute, used by faculty at one university to attempt to strengthen the collaborative relationship between a TEP and a school practicum site. We situate this method in the current research and recommendations regarding collaborative practice, explain the context and details of implementing the Four-day Institute, and consider the lessons learned from addressing collaborative tensions by using this approach. Concepts that framed our collaborative work within the institute include a definition of collaboration (ATE, 2016), boundary investigation (Penuel, Allen, & Farrell, 2015), and the creation of third space (Martin, Snow, & Franklin Torrez, 2011; Zeichner, 2010). In explaining these concepts in relation to the implementation of the Institute components, we describe the unique collaborative relationship between classroom teachers at Arango Elementary (all school-based names are pseudonyms) and university faculty working in a Teacher Education Program (TEP) and we present the role of the collaborative Institute in revaluing and revising this relationship. Finally, as we consider the lessons learned from implementing the Institute, we identify the benefits and continuing challenges that resulted from using the Four-day Collaborative institute as a reflective and pedagogical practice.

Collaborative Relationships

Current Collaborative Context

Collaborative relationships between university teacher preparation programs and the schools in which teacher candidates gain clinical experience are a current focus throughout the teacher preparation community. Recent attention was drawn to this topic by an American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE) January 2018 white paper of findings in clinical

practice, which included a “Partnership Proclamation” that focuses on “mutually beneficial outcomes” (p. 22). This document is a declaration of principles framed as “proclamations” that are a continuation and expansion of work also addressed (in part) by other groups, such as The Association of Teacher Educators (ATE). The ATE revised standards for field experience in teacher education (newly approved in 2016) highlighted the collaborative nature of strong university-school partnerships:

They are viewed as (a) being true partnerships between colleges or universities and public schools; (b) involving shared decision-making, and in doing so, creating new roles, relationships, and responsibilities for all participants; and (C) focusing on outcomes that are intended to benefit the personnel and the programs at both institutions. (p. 8)

Both the AACTE and ATE conclusions follow the pathway spurred by the 2010 National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) report of the Blue Ribbon Panel on Clinical Preparation and Partnerships for Improved Student Learning (2010), which offered ten principles for clinical preparation and emphasized the need for quality clinical partnerships focused on the learning of p-12 students. Strong collaborative relationships are firmly embedded in these principles. The mission of these collaborative relationships was further expanded to encompass the needs of a broader group of p-12 students in a policy statement from AACTE and the National Center for Learning Disabilities (NCLD), which recommends supporting the “development of innovative preparation programs that bring together teacher educators in the curriculum areas, multicultural education, bilingual education, teaching English learners, and special education as active working teams to frame a truly inclusive teacher education agenda” (Blanton, Pugach, & Florian, 2011, p. 6). Within this policy context we sought to strengthen our existing partnership by creating a truly collaborative relationship between a teacher preparation program and an elementary school, centered around teacher candidates’ work in four school site-based methods and practicum courses (early childhood, special education, science, and literacy k-3). Our pedagogical practice to pursue this collaborative goal included creation of the Four-day Institute.

Defining Collaboration, Partnership, and Collaborative Relationships

The ATE Task Force on Field Experience Standards in Teacher Education (2016) defines collaboration as:

Partnerships between schools and colleges/universities that include shared decision making and mutual benefits and are focused on simultaneous reform of schools and higher education. This term denotes relationships that are deeper than cooperative ones in which schools simply participate in the teacher education program designed by higher education institutions. (pp. 14-15)

Essential to this understanding of collaboration is the task force’s distinction between true partnerships with parity relationships and other partnerships in which schools assume a cooperative yet diminished role in relation to higher education.

Other definitions of collaboration may consider different components of the relationship but still maintain a parity and respect focus. As Wasonga, Rari, and Wanzare (2011) suggested, there are many ways to promote successful collaboration, including “equal partnership” and “collegiality

and mutual respect” (p. 1040). Pultorak, McCarthy, and Young (2006) further connect collaboration and partnership definitions using Barnett, Hall, Berg, and Camarena’s (1999) explanation “that ‘collaboration is a distinct form of partnership (p. 488)’ that requires ‘intensive and sustained mutual exchange and benefit (p. 499)’” (p.102). These functional equality components of the definitions of *collaboration* are also core components of definitions of partnership and to some extent synonymize these terms (Opolot-Okurut & Bbuye, 2014).

There are also more broad definitions of partnership that focus less on collaborative relationships. As explained in a call for increased productive study of partnerships between higher education and p-12 schools, Coburn and Penuel (2016) defined partnerships as “a broad range of arrangements between researchers and practitioners, such as consulting agreements, use of schools or districts as places to test university-developed innovations, and sites for teacher training and internships” (p. 49). Despite the possibility of using a broader definition such as this, the use of the term partnership in this paper is more specific in that it includes the understanding that equality and respect are defining components of partnership and that these components situate *partnership* as synonymous with *collaboration*.

The goal of *collaboration/partnership* in this context is to create a stronger preparatory experience for preservice teacher candidates. Hammerness, Darling-Hammond, Grossman, Rust and Shulman (2005) state that one of the common features of successful programs in which graduates report significantly high feelings of being prepared includes “strong relationships, based on common knowledge and beliefs, between universities and reform minded schools” (p. 406). Keeping this goal in mind, in this paper we use *collaborative relationships* as an overarching term that includes the goal of building strong relationships that are based on the parity and respect components expressed in definitions of both collaboration and partnership.

Investigating Boundaries to Strengthen Relationships

Penuel et al. (2015) considered the challenges in working across boundaries in research-practice partnerships, which is relevant across multiple forms of collaborative relationships. This research focused on collaboration as a method of increasing the use of research in practice. The researchers described boundaries as those items that “separate the world of research from the world of practice, as well as boundaries between subunits within districts and within research teams” (p. 183). As they explain, differences come from the varied working methods and perspectives within the partnership; crossing boundaries includes understanding boundaries as differences and engaging with those differences. This encompasses the possible perspective that teacher preparation programs and the “real” world of schooling are not aligned. Educators of both schools and universities may see both institutions as being very different and having distinct cultures that construct boundaries. Strong collaborative relationships allow participants to engage across these boundaries to create a better result for all participants. Further, in addition to crossing boundaries, the development of boundary practices is needed in collaborative relationships and is explained by the researchers as “more stabilized routines, established and sustained over time, that bring together participants from different domains for ongoing engagement” (p. 190). Using this framework, The Four-day Institute exemplified an attempted boundary practice in which school and university participants engaged in boundary crossing activities to collaboratively address differences. These differences are described as tensions in this paper and engaging in boundary crossing to directly address these differences was an essential component and goal of the Institute.

Constructing Third Space within Relationships

Martin et al. (2011) discussed *third space* in collaborative relationships between p-12 schools and university TEPs. These researchers considered using third space as an alternative to the triad relationship among student teachers, university supervisors, and cooperating classroom teachers. Within this perspective, third space permits a constructed understanding that arises from moving away from potentially oppositional viewpoints based on relationship roles and toward a new, collective view. Both Martin et al.'s discussion of third space and Zeichner's (2010) discussion of hybrid space (rather than traditionally hierarchical teacher candidate mentorship) contribute to the view that it is possible to construct collaborative relationships to better use the strengths of all participants in addressing the learning needs of teacher candidates. What is attractive about third space and hybrid models is their capacity for work in investigating complex differences and using that boundary-crossing work to socially construct better options in a new type of collaborative relationship. The Four-day Institute was a beginning work in third space, focusing specifically on boundary work between k-6 educators and university TEP faculty.

Situating Our Collaboration

Located in the southwest borderland region of the US, we, the authors, work in a university designated as a Hispanic Serving Institution, serving over 25,000 students of whom 52% are Hispanic (Office of Institutional Analysis, New Mexico State University, 2016). This borderland region provides access to public school districts where preservice teacher candidates engage in on-site practicum experiences as they prepare for careers in education. Rio Independent School District (RISD) is one district that works with university preservice teacher candidates. The district has over 13,000 students, 97% of whom are Hispanic, 34% identified as English Learners (EL), and 100% of whom receive free or reduced lunch (New Mexico Public Education Department, 2016). One school located in RISD, Arango Elementary, hosts teacher candidates each semester through on-site practicum experiences called Blocks.

The Blocks

Teacher candidates, typically juniors and seniors, participate in two Block semesters during their elementary TEP. The Blocks support candidates majoring in all elementary teaching fields, including bilingual and TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) and Special Education Dual Licensure. Candidates enrolled in the Blocks spend approximately two hours daily, four days per week, working in partnership with teachers in k-6 classrooms. Each day, after their time in the classroom, candidates attend methods courses taught on-site by university faculty. These methods courses focus on teaching early childhood, special education, science, and literacy (k-3) during the first Block semester, and mathematics, literacy (4-8), language arts, and social studies during the second Block semester. Assignments from the courses are integrated within the candidates' practicum work in the elementary classrooms. Candidates are expected to observe, tutor, teach small groups, and progress to designing and teaching lessons. After two semesters of Block experiences, candidates have over 360 hours of contact with children, teachers, staff, and the classroom and school culture before going on to the student teaching experience. Approximately 100 teacher candidates participate in the on-site Block programs annually. We, the authors, are the instructors for the methods courses in the Blocks and observe and provide feedback to teacher candidates working in classrooms.

Collaborative History

As we entered the 10th year of partnership with Arango Elementary, it seemed that an in-depth evaluation of the program was necessary to provide the best teaching and learning experience for all involved. Our experiences as former classroom teachers and as faculty in the TEP impacted our perceptions of collaborative school-university relationships and we experienced concern when we realized that our perceptions within the TEP were not aligned with the k-6 partner teachers' perceptions of the world of public schooling, perpetuating dissatisfaction and distrust between the two faculty groups. After review of the current TEP program we found that it was necessary to investigate tensional boundaries through mutual collaboration between classroom teachers and TEP faculty. To investigate these tensions, our goal was to take action that required us to step back from the TEP and allow classroom teachers to step forward in planning, implementing and evaluating the program. This goal created a new reflective and pedagogical practice within the program: the Four Day Institute.

Four-day Institute

Developing the Institute

The university TEP was awarded a Capacity Building Grant through the Penn Center for Minority Serving Institutions to support the on-site Blocks program. Funds were used to pay each attendee a \$500 stipend and to pay the graduate assistants an hourly rate of \$24 for part-time attendance. Funds were also used to purchase materials/supplies for the Institute.

To begin planning the Institute, faculty from both groups met separately with leaders in each faculty to create a list of tensions in the Blocks. The TEP director and the principal at Arango Elementary met to discuss the tensions that had been compiled from faculty in both groups. It was important that parity concerns be addressed by offering equal time for both faculties to present information and lead the discussion pertaining to changes that would benefit the teacher candidates.

Implementing the Institute

After the pre-planning, we created a Four-day Institute where university faculty presented collaborative professional development on the first and third day at the university and classroom teachers presented collaborative professional development on the second and fourth day at Arango Elementary. In this way, we reduced potential hierarchical parity barriers related to use of space and to constructing both groups as knowledgeable.

The agenda included topics from both faculty's lists of tensions. Each faculty presented using a variety of strategies, including presentations, demonstrations, a computer simulation, a KWL chart, and a Graffiti Board (Short, Burke & Harste, 1995). Each day began with an ice breaker designed to foster community building and ended with a debriefing session designed to summarize the day's activities.

The result was that 15 K-6 classroom teachers, 5 TEP faculty members, and a graduate assistant attended the Institute. Because of the collaborative planning of the agenda, the Institute focused

specifically on exploring the tensional boundaries that had developed regarding expectations for the on-site Blocks. Below we describe the sessions each of us facilitated during the Institute.

Institute Sessions

We now further describe the collaborative elements that best addressed the tensions presented in different areas of the agenda for the Institute. Included in this description is an exploration of tensional boundaries between the on-site Block expectations and the realities of teacher candidates' experiences in the classroom. Also included are the teachers' perceptions of the evaluation process and the teaching experiences of the university faculty in the Block courses. Finally, we present the tensions teachers shared during the Four-day Institute along with the actions taken to resolve these tensions, and end with our vision for the future of the TEP.

Teachers' tensions with Block assessments. The first challenging discussion focused on teachers' perceptions of the university mid-term and final assessment tool that the classroom teachers used to evaluate preservice teacher candidates' competencies. The tool contains components about the behaviors, experiences, and actions in which candidates are expected to engage. Teachers are instructed to rate candidates using a 4-point rubric included on the assessment tool. Even though this assessment tool was created with positive intentions, it was created with only university faculty input, and as a result tensions about the assessment tool developed between teachers and faculty.

In the past, teachers at Arango Elementary had expressed concerns about two assessment components they believed were not applicable to the Block experience. The first component, *Instruction & Classroom Environment*, contained an item, "Arranges the classroom environment for optimal learning and students' success" that teachers strongly felt should be deleted from the tool (College of Education, 2012). Teachers reasoned that candidates began the Block experience weeks after the start of the school year, after they had arranged their classrooms, making this item unassessable. The second component, *Assessment*, also presented a tension for teachers in that they felt that candidates did not have the opportunity to participate in many of the items under the *Assessment* component. If the candidate happened to be in the classroom when an assessment was being administered, the classroom teacher did not usually hand over this activity to the candidate, and the candidate was not usually in the classroom when assessments were administered. Given the logic in the teachers' rationale, we attempted to revise the mid-term and final assessment tool according to their suggestions but encountered a roadblock when the need for these items became clear in relation to providing documentary evidence to verify the TEP was meeting the standards of the National Council of Accreditation for Teacher Education (NCATE). Teresa, the Assistant Coordinator of Elementary Education, shared this information with classroom teachers; nevertheless, each semester teachers continued to suggest changes to the assessment tool to better fit what teacher candidates actually experienced during the Blocks.

Addressing tensions about Block assessments. At the Institute, we continued the conversation about the assessment tool. Teresa shared with classroom teachers the connection between the assessment tool and the accreditation system. Sharing this information and talking about the frameworks and accountability the TEP had to follow for accreditation seemed to clarify for teachers the reasons why changes to the assessment tool they repeatedly requested could not always be adopted. This opened discussion about the different possibilities classroom teachers

within the Block could use to better assess these items. The collegial environment of parity and respect that had been created during the Four-day Institute provided an opportunity for multidirectional sharing rather than the prior authoritative response to this tension. University faculty and school faculty had united, with the goal of working together to resolve this assessment challenge and thereby support teacher candidates.

Teachers' tensions with special education methods course. Special Education and Elementary Education are different departments within the College of Education at our university and have historically had limited direct cooperative contact with each other in the mutual goal of teacher preparation. Although this separation has created some challenges in collaboration, we now work together in the Blocks to improve all candidates' preparation for success in working with a diverse student body within schools. With an overall goal of improving collaboration with the school district to more fully address the preparation of teacher candidates to meet the needs of children with disabilities in the Block experience, the first step was to gain an understanding of classroom teachers' needs perceptions. To accomplish this, we asked three questions using a Graffiti Board strategy (Short et al., 1995):

- 1) What aspects of special education do you wish you would have learned more about before beginning teaching? What areas do you still wish you knew more about?
- 2) As a general education teacher at your school, what collaboration is expected with special education teachers?
- 3) What should teacher candidates know, understand, and be able to do when working with children with disabilities in your general education class?

The questions were written on large sheets of chart paper posted around the room. Teachers circulated among the charts, writing their own thoughts on the papers and adding to what other teachers had written. Classroom teachers clarified and elaborated on their thoughts during a whole group discussion. After the discussion the teachers and faculty informally analyzed the comments. We concluded that the results indicated requests for collaboration in two areas: 1) overall areas of desired special education knowledge, and 2) knowledge essential for beginning teachers to work successfully with elementary children with disabilities.

The first category, overall special education knowledge, included the perceived need for information about diagnostic procedures/decision-making and the categorization of children into one of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA, 2004) eligibility categories. This is reflective of a categorical and/or medical model approach to special education (Brownell, Sindelar, Kiely, & Danielson, 2010) that often persists among school districts as a product of the way special education services are provided nationally. It is important to understand this perspective as the context in which general education elementary teachers currently work and may have received their special education preparation, although that is not the perspective from which the Block special education curriculum coursework is taught. The Block course instead uses a critical disability studies perspective (Baglieri & Shapiro, 2017) that emphasizes inclusive curricular practices such as Universal Design for Learning (UDL) (www.cast.org) and Differentiated Instruction (Tomlinson, 2014) with individualized adaptations as needed. Differences between a critical disability studies perspective and a categorical focus as demonstrated at the Institute highlight a tensional boundary that may need to be addressed as collaboration continues, in that divergent perspectives of the purpose of special education and/or

a lack of a common language to discuss variations in perspectives could be a barrier to progress if it remains unaddressed.

The second category, immediate needs for teacher candidates, included comments that focused on providing individual supports to children. For example, that it is important for teacher candidates to know strategies to address a particular individual child's needs (that may match the needs of other individual children similarly categorized). Additionally, classroom teachers responded that candidates need to have a knowledge of resources, how to adapt lessons, each child's modifications, and which child receives what services. These concerns are reflective of what an elementary general education teacher may experience on a day-to-day basis in working inclusively with children with disabilities.

Addressing tensions about special education knowledge and support. As a result of the collaboration, Karen, the Special Education Curriculum and Methods course instructor, changed the course curriculum to provide earlier and more in-depth work in two areas. First, teacher candidates are now required to gain greater initial information about the needs of the specific individual children with whom they work in the Block experiences, including children's IEP goals along with the specific services that can be embedded into lessons taught within the general education classroom. This information is used throughout the coursework. Second, candidates now spend less time creating original lesson plans within the Special Education coursework and more time collaboratively designing lesson plans across content areas and adapting general education lesson plans. The goal for candidates is twofold: 1) to use universal design principles (Baglieri, Valle, Connor, & Gallagher, 2011) and differentiation strategies (Tomlinson, 2014) to produce and implement stronger lesson plans throughout all of their Block courses, and 2) after using these strategies to then specifically adapt lessons to meet further accommodation and modification needs of the individual children with whom they are working.

As we move forward in working collaboratively within the Blocks, we expect to have greater depth of conversation about effective inclusion of children with disabilities with their peers in elementary classrooms. We also expect greater understanding of the site-specific opportunities to collaboratively support children with disabilities.

Teachers' tensions with the science methods course. During the planning meeting for the Institute, classroom teachers had voiced a tension about course expectations and Block teaching assignments for the science methods course. Cecilia, the science methods instructor, addressed teachers' concerns during the Institute where she informed teachers that she provided teacher candidates with information on a variety of teaching methods throughout the semester including a traditional approach, the discovery approach, and the learning cycle approach (Bybee, 2014). To help teachers more fully understand course expectations, Cecilia emphasized a standards-based, inquiry, hands-on learning strategy known in K-12 science teaching as the BSCS 5E Instructional Model (Office of Science Education National Institute of Health, 2006). Most teachers at Arango Elementary were not familiar with this model. Because science is not taught with regularity in many primary elementary classrooms, many of the teachers did not have experience with varied ways of teaching science and did not fully understand expectations for teacher candidates regarding the hands-on, inquiry-based method of teaching science. Cecilia led the teachers through a lesson using the 5E Model on the first day of the Institute to provide them with a clearer

understanding of what the Model would look like in the classroom and to provide a rationale for its importance in the Block.

The inquiry-based approach to teaching science has been emphasized in both the standards and in TEPs since the mid – 1990s, but has not translated into the classroom for many reasons. According to the National Research Council (2011), “...effective instruction capitalizes on students’ early interest and experiences, identifies and builds on what they know, and provides them with experiences to engage them in the practices of science and sustain their interest” (p. 18). By providing the teachers the opportunity to experience a well-planned inquiry-based approach to learning that emphasized the “doing” of science, Cecilia hoped to show that this type of facilitation could be a powerful learning tool for children in their classrooms and that there is value in teaching science in the primary grades.

On the second day of the Institute, teachers presented information about the district adopted curricula for each subject area. Cecilia noted that the science curriculum only addressed grades 3-6 and that no science curriculum for primary grades existed. This has implications for the science methods course because the candidates need to be prepared to teach science with little or no district materials and limited professional development.

Addressing tensions about science course expectations. With the research in mind, along with what was learned during the Institute, Cecilia reconceptualized the science methods course to better meet the needs of teacher candidates, classroom teachers, and children in the classrooms. She now emphasizes strategies that help candidates and teachers find and use resources available locally, state-wide, and beyond to enhance their science lessons. In this way, she can provide more effective professional development as outlined by the National Research Council (2011) by acting to:

- Focus on developing teachers’ capabilities and knowledge to teach content and subject matter
- Address teachers’ classroom work and the problems they encounter in their school setting
- Provide multiple and sustained opportunities for teacher learning over a substantial time interval. (p. 21)

Teachers’ tensions with the literacy methods course. Like the tensions voiced about the science methods course, teachers expressed a tension about the misalignment of literacy course assignments with classroom teachers’ instruction. Teachers reported that some of the assignments like an in-depth read aloud assignment would be difficult to do in their classrooms because of the amount of time it took from their teaching schedules. Teachers also reported that they were reluctant to provide time for candidates to teach a one-shot literacy lesson, citing the disconnect between candidates’ literacy lessons and teacher literacy instruction. Mary, the instructor for the literacy course, agreed that the literacy assignments lacked a connection despite efforts to align candidates’ lessons with classroom instruction. The teachers and Mary also noted that candidates did not feel accountable for children to master the objectives in their lessons because they wouldn’t be teaching the content the next day.

Addressing tensions about literacy assignments. After hearing teachers’ concerns, Mary redesigned the Read Aloud assignment so that it better fit teachers’ schedules. The assignment

now focuses on reading aloud to children for pleasure and enjoyment rather than to teach literacy skills and strategies. Candidates were instructed to notice and note the benefits they saw from reading aloud to children such as expanding and developing vocabulary (for more benefits see Trelease, 2013). They were also instructed to notice and note signs of student engagement and classroom management during read alouds. Because of the revisions, teachers were willing to provide 7-10 minutes a few times per week for candidates to read aloud in their classrooms.

To resolve the tension of candidates teaching a one-shot literacy lesson, we (Mary, Cecilia, and Karen) collaborated with Kindergarten/1st grade (K-1) teacher, Mrs. Paris, to design an integrated literacy and science unit that candidates would teach continuously for nine days near the end of the semester. The goal of the unit was for K-1 children to use science to explore the stories of author/illustrator Yuyi Morales. At the end of the unit, each child would have written and illustrated a story in the spirit of Yuyi Morales' picturebooks.

Mrs. Paris provided candidates with grade level Common Core State Standards (CCSSs) to incorporate into their lessons. Mary and Cecilia provided the first lesson for Day 1 to help students get started and model teaching an effective lesson for candidates. Responsibility shifted from instructors to the candidates on Day 2 when they took on the role of the teacher. Candidates worked in triads to plan lessons that built on the previous day's learning, to manage their instructional time and resources, to assess children's learning based on measurable objectives and CCSSs, and to reflect on their lessons. They rotated teaching the lessons each day with one candidate teaching, one observing the teacher candidate and taking notes, and one Kidwatching (Owocki & Goodman, 2002). We, along with Mrs. Paris, supported candidates throughout the experience but only as needed.

At the end of the unit, candidates reflected on how beneficial the experience of continuous daily teaching was to them. They compared this to their experiences in other contexts and stated that it felt more authentic than one-shot lessons. As an additional benefit, candidates planned, taught and reflected on nine lessons rather than two during the semester. We also noticed the candidates had an increased awareness of the children who met the lesson objective and those who had not. The experience of continuous teaching was a success that began with addressing tensional boundaries in the Institute and we plan to include this assignment in future Block methods courses.

Benefits of the Four-day Institute

We believe the most critical factor that made the Four-day Institute successful was the new relationship of greater shared responsibility and mutuality that developed between teachers and university faculty. This collaborative relationship led to a number of new practices that were a direct result of exploring tensions during the Four-day Institute.

First, to further foster meaningful collaboration, we decided to share the goals and objectives of our methods courses with teachers before the start of each academic semester. We accomplished this by providing detailed syllabi from each of our courses to teachers as well as administrators, reading specialists, librarians, and special education faculty. This timing allowed us to solicit feedback from the teachers about the course curriculum we were planning to teach and to modify the assignments based on their feedback.

Another way we strengthened relationships was to honor the teachers' request to limit candidates' classroom assignments in the weeks leading up to and during state testing. The teachers felt torn between preparing children for the test and providing instructional time for candidates to teach. We honored the teachers' requests by assigning classroom assignments at least six weeks prior to the start of state testing. Further, we designed assignments where candidates taught mini lessons to each other in the methods classes during the time teachers were administering the state tests. As evidenced by candidate journals and course evaluations, candidates benefitted from watching their peers teach during the mini lessons and from giving and receiving real time feedback with each other.

To further meaningful collaboration with teachers, we invited them to teach or to co-teach lessons to candidates in the Block classes. Mrs. Gill, a reading specialist, modeled a phonics lesson with four first grade children during the literacy class. Rather than teach a lesson, Mrs. Garza, a 3rd grade teacher, shared the format and organization of the data folders she uses to track children's yearly progress. Mrs. Cortez, the principal, shared strategies and suggestions for writing professional cover letters and for filling out job applications. Candidates valued the hands-on experiences, citing the information as useful almost immediately.

During follow-up conversations, teachers commented positively about their experience and welcomed the opportunity to present to candidates in the future. Even more significant, other teachers approached us and expressed their interest in presenting to candidates. As a result, Mary now creates blocks of time for interested teachers to present an educational topic of their choice during the Literacy class. She also encourages teachers to invite candidates into their classroom to watch them model a strategy or skill. These demonstrations furthered the construction of a third space that valued the roles of both the classroom teachers and the university professors.

Challenges of the Four-day Institute

Perhaps the greatest lesson we learned in implementing the Four-day Institute was that although it was a strong tool for revitalizing collaboration and addressing surface level tensions, the institute allowed more for planning around areas with deeper tensions, rather than for resolving these deeper tensions. We believe that the complex nature of deeper tensions will require sustained long-term efforts and communication capacity-building. This complexity was clearest when attempting to address systemic concerns that impacted both the school and the TEP.

One challenging systemic tension that arose during the Institute, and that remains, is the systemic curricular requirements present in this particular school and representative of the challenges many schools face. There is an expectation in the school that set curricular materials will be used, but TEP methods coursework embraces the ideas of incorporating play in curricular learning for k-3 students, incorporating literacy learning with culturally responsive and community based materials, and using a hands-on investigative method in science. Although teachers allow university faculty to create and implement assignments that use these methods, the majority of examples of practice that teacher candidates experience with their cooperating teachers are much more typical of more traditional classroom instruction. This tension is particularly of note in that it is primarily a tension experienced by university faculty rather than the classroom teachers, who tended to represent the school curricular programs as valuable as-is and who tended to discuss fidelity of program implementation. In making the effort to avoid authoritarian decision-making

and avoid potentially alienating classroom teachers, we as university faculty did not directly address the issue of predetermined curricular materials, but instead discussed particular deviating assignments introduced in the methods courses. This approach allowed a large tension to remain unaddressed while unfortunately legitimizing the continued assumption that the “program” used by the school must be implemented with fidelity in order to be beneficial for children and for teacher candidates. Although the Institute demonstrated this tension, which is valuable in planning, it was not designed to address conflicts that are more deeply or systemically based. It is possible that adding in some less structured time within the Institute might lead to deeper consideration of these types of tensions and generate productive discussion. The hope is that the Institute can be a launching point for deeper conversations and change as we build the relationships which can support more fully engaging in areas of deeper tension.

Another unresolved systemic tension is present in the context of connecting content from the special education course to actual practice at the school site; perspectives of special education from a deficit model and categorical framework are so systemically engrained that it is difficult to find a space in the school to model other options for teacher candidates. Tension remains in this area because the teachers’ desire for increased medical and categorical information clashes with what many special education researchers would describe as best practice. It makes sense that this tension would be seen in schools as it continues to be a current tension in the field of special education (Baglieri et al., 2011; Kauffman, Anastasiou, & Maag, 2017). This was an additional deep tension that we must move beyond the Institute to address.

A third systemic challenge is the engrained hierarchical triadic teacher candidate feedback and evaluation system. As Martin et al. (2011) and Zeichner (2010) explained, third space and hybrid space may allow more productive feedback models for teacher candidates. Although we worked as faculty and teachers to be mutually collaborative in addressing assessment tool issues during the Institute, we did not fully explore tensional boundaries to develop third space or hybrid space in teacher candidate evaluation. Additionally, in this first attempt at implementing the Institute, we used it to strengthen collaborative relationships between faculty from the university and the school, but we did not include teacher candidates. Including teacher candidates is an essential component for progressing in this work. Resolving this tension would require some creative thought about how to genuinely collaborate with teacher candidates in an evaluation and feedback process that is grounded in well-designed third space.

Next Steps in Strengthening Collaborative Relationships

Now that the foundation for collaboration has been reenergized, we plan to continue to strengthen our relationship with teachers who support preservice teacher candidates in their classrooms. We have pursued grant funding to plan a second Four-day Institute to continue to build the relationship between both faculties and teacher candidates, and to begin to more deeply address select priorities. Meanwhile, we intend to collaborate further to construct a workable third-space. Although this paper privileges the perspective of teacher educators, as faculty, teachers, and teacher candidates become more comfortable in their collaborative roles, we hope to co-imagine, co-author, and co-present our work so that on-site TEPs can learn from our experiences. We especially hope to more deeply engage with the concerns of both the school and the university, in the pursuit of a working relationship that includes, parity, deep discussion, and sustainable action. By working toward

genuine collaborative relationships, using methods such as the Four-day Institute, classroom teachers and university faculty can together positively impact teacher education.

References

- American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE), Clinical Practice Commission. (2018). *A pivot toward clinical practice, its lexicon, and the renewal of educator preparation: A report of the AACTE Clinical Practice Commission*. Retrieved from <https://aacte.org/resources>
- Association of Teacher Educators, Task Force on Field Experience Standards in Teacher Education. (2016). *Report of the ATE Task Forces on Field Experience Standards in Teacher Education*. Retrieved from <http://www.ate1.org>
- Baglieri, S., (with Shapiro, A.). (2017). *Disability studies and the inclusive classroom: Critical practices for embracing diversity in education*. (2nd ed.). New York: Routledge.
- Baglieri, S., Valle, J. W., Connor, D. J., & Gallagher, D.J. (2011). Disability studies in education: The need for a plurality of perspectives on disability. *Remedial and Special Education, 32*(4), 267-278. doi:10.1177/0741932510362200
- Blanton, L. P., Pugach, M. C., & Florian, L. (2011). *Preparing general education teachers to improve outcomes for students with disabilities*. Retrieved from American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE) & National Center for Learning Disabilities (NCLD) at <http://www.aacte.org>
- Blue Ribbon Panel on Clinical Preparation and Partnerships for Improved Student Learning. (2010). *Transforming teacher education through clinical practice: A national strategy to prepare effective teachers*. Retrieved from The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education website: <http://www.ncate.org>
- Brownell, M. T., Sindelar, P. T., Kiely, M. T., & Danielson, L. C. (2010). Special Education teacher quality and preparation: Exposing foundations, constructing a new model. *Exceptional Children, 76*(3), 357-377. Retrieved from <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ879550>
- Bybee, R. (2014). *The BSCS 5E instructional model: Creating teachable moments*. National Science Teachers Association Press: Arlington, VA.
- Coburn, C. E., & Penuel, W. R. (2016). Research-practice partnerships in education: Outcomes, dynamics, and open questions. *Educational Researcher, 45*(1), 48-54. doi:10.3102/0013189X16631750.
- College of Education, New Mexico State University. (2012). Evaluation [document]. Las Cruces, NM: Authors.
- Hammerness, K., Darling-Hammond, L., Grossman, P., Rust, F., & Shulman, L. (2005). The design of teacher education programs. In L. Darling-Hammond & J. Bransford (Eds.), *Preparing teachers for a changing world, what teachers should learn and be able to do* (pp. 390-441). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Individuals with Disabilities Educational Improvement Act of 2004, PL108-446, 20 U.S.C.
- Kauffman, J.M., Anastasiou, D., & Maag, J.W. (2017). Special education at the crossroad: An identity crisis and the need for a scientific reconstruction. *Exceptionality, 25*(2), 139-155. doi:10.1080/09362835.2016.1238380
- Martin, S. D., Snow, J., & Franklin Torrez, C. A. (2011). Navigating the terrain of third space: Tensions with/in relationships in school-university partnerships. *Journal of Teacher Education, 62*(3), 299–311. doi:10.1177/0022487110396096.

- National Research Council. (2011). *Successful K-12 STEM Education: Identifying effective approaches in science, technology, engineering, and Mathematics*. Committee on Highly Successful Science Programs for K-12 Science Education. Board on Science Education and Board on Testing and Assessment, Division of Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press.
- New Mexico Public Education Department. (2016). *School district report card 2015-2016*. Santa Fe, NM: Author.
- Office of Institutional Analysis, New Mexico State University. (2016). *Quick facts: 2016-2017*. Las Cruces, NM: Author.
- Office of Science Education National Institute of Health. (2006). *The BSCS 5E instructional model: Origins and effectiveness*. BSCS: Colorado Springs, CO.
- Opolot-Okurut, C., & Bbuye, J. (2014). School-university collaboration initiative: Benefits and challenges in Uganda. *American Journal of Educational Research*, 2(10), 843-849. doi:10.12691/education-2-10-1
- Owocki, G., & Goodman, Y. (2002). *Kidwatching: Documenting children's literacy development*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Penuel W. R., Allen, A., Coburn, C. E., & Farrell, C. (2015) Conceptualizing research–practice partnerships as joint work at boundaries. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk (JESPAR)*, 20(1-2), 182-197. doi:10.1080/10824669.2014.988334
- Pultorak, E., McCarthy, J., & Young, M. (2006). School and university partnerships and the role of teacher as researcher. *Action in Teacher Education*, 28(1), 99-109. doi:10.1080/01626620.2006.10463571
- Short, K. G., Burke, C., & Harste, J. (1995). *Creating classrooms for authors and inquirers*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Tomlinson, C. (2014). *The differentiated classroom: Responding to the needs of all learners*. (2nd ed.). ASCD: Alexandria, VA.
- Trelease, J. (2013). *The read aloud handbook* (7th ed.). New York, NY: Penguin Press.
- Wasonga, C. O., Rari, B. O., & Wanzare, Z. O. (2011). Re-thinking school-university collaboration: Agenda for the 21st century. *Educational Research and Reviews*, 6(22), 1036-1045.
- Zeichner, K. (2010). Rethinking the connections between campus courses and field experiences in college- and university-based teacher education. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 61(1-2), 89-99. doi:10.1177/0022487109347671

Corresponding Author:

Karen M. Potter
Upper Iowa University
Fayette, Iowa, U.S.A.
potterk12@uiu.edu

Author Note:

Mary L. Fahrenbruck
Cecilia M. Hernandez
Blanca Araujo

Teresa C. Valenzuela
Leanna Lucero
New Mexico State University
Las Cruces, New Mexico, U.S.A.