An Upper Peninsula Collaborative Site
of Practice and Inquiry

Rodney Clarken
Northern Michigan University
and
Barbara LeRoy
Wayne State University

Paper presented at the annual meeting of the
American Educational Research Association
San Diego, CA
April 13-17, 1998

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y and K-12 teachers suffer from lack of time, help, collaboration and cooperation. These limit their efforts to help our young people grow, develop and learn. Teacher education students often feel they are not well prepared for the real world of teaching. Northern Michigan University and the Marquette A
s addressing these concerns by working together to improve both K-12 education and teacher education. Through several cooperative and teachers in both institutions are benefitting from the increased professional collaboration. They have become allies to reform and reform and redefining the ways that schools and institutions of higher learning interact with one another to improve education for both of their students.

The main focus of this reform effort has centered on several field experiences that university students have in area schools. These experiences have been to help prepare teacher education students apply what they are learning in the University to the real world of practice and to help area youth effectively. Students in teacher education spend time in classrooms assisting teachers and children with school work, observing how discipline is maintained, teachers teach, and students learn. They develop insights into the roles of schools and teachers. They begin to understand the complex nature of teaching, learning, and classroom management and the part culture plays in education.

Efforts have not dramatically changed the nature of schools for several interrelated reasons (e.g., Senge, 1990; Goodlad, 1990; and Sizer, 1993; Gorman, 1995). They have failed to adopt a holistic focus of schools as learning organizations (Senge, 1990; Goodlad, 1990). Learning organizations are results driven, systems oriented and constructivist (Sparks, 1994). Success is measured by how alterations in organizational ar
a comprehensive multiyear study of over 1,800 schools and teacher preparation programs, Goodlad (1990) concluded that education reform must be an equal partnership between schools and universities allowing practicing teachers to work with preservice teachers on a consistent and long term basis. Efforts fail for lack of these collaborative opportunities for new learning to occur and sustained support for experimentation and reflection.

This describes the work completed thus far at one site, shares the research questions agreed upon by all parties and explores the structure, capacity, and the components of the project and its participants. This is the second year of this ongoing project studying teaming with the purpose of doing a comprehensive study within a unified education system for practicing and preservice general and special education teachers. The study population, sample, variables, validity, reliability, and analysis and the methodology are briefly discussed. Questions and concerns of the project members are presented.

This project is conceptually based on a learning organization model of collaborative personnel preparation. Project objectives for the second year are (a) to describe elements of multidimensional, collaborative teaming and to describe its process; (b) to develop a teaming curriculum module for preservice and in-service educators; and (c) to disseminate learnings. This paper describes the collaboration process at the Whitman Elementary School (Marquette Public Schools)/Northern Michigan University Department of Education site with an overview of the conceptual model; a summary of the first year's activities; a workplan delineating the effort's objectives and activities; a timeline; and a management plan including a person loading chart.

Michigan University (NMU) and Whitman Elementary School (WES) are in Marquette, a community of 22,000 residents. They have a rich and long history of partnerships for both preservice and inservice personnel preparation. The teacher preparation program is premised on the belief that on teacher and content development are intimately linked and must be provided simultaneously to foster quality schools and professionals. Good relations are necessary if Northern is to place hundreds of teacher education students in thousands of practica and student teaching placements. The role in K-12 education, be the university of choice for graduate course work by area teachers and be viewed as a valuable resource by educators of students. At one time, NMU's image suffered, relationships were frayed, and problems existed that impacted on our student teaching and field experiences programs. The Director of Laboratory Field Experiences (DLFE) has worked for several years in trying to bring about a positive change in the relationships between the NMU Department of Education and area K-12 educators, by personally visiting and communicating with university personnel and classroom teachers to address problems or concerns in a prompt, responsible and effective manner, which not only has greatly improved the quality of education students are exposed to during their field experiences but has also improved the NMU's image.
Elementary School allocates a classroom so that NMU courses can be taught on site. NMU students combine university instruction with guided classroom experiences. NMU professor of language arts and reading, Dr. Suzanne Standerford, and her students work closely with the staff of Whitman.

Elementary School is an inclusive school, in that all students are educated within the regular classroom and supports are provided within those settings. The focus of the collaborative teams at Whitman is the logistical, curricular and instructional design of thematic instruction, as a vehicle for student outcomes.

### Planning for Collaboration

In 1995, the Upper Peninsula Collaborative Site of Practice and Inquiry (UPCSI), had a planning year co-directed by Dr. June Schaefer, Superintendent of Schools, and Dr. Jim Hendricks, Head of NMU Department of Education. The Project Steering Committee, composed of representatives of all participating organizations (MAISD, NMU, Marquette Area Schools and community, NICE Community Schools and community, and the Project Evaluator), was responsible for addressing issues involved with implementation of the project. The activities undertaken in the first year are summarized below:

- by appointed a steering committee, composed of project partners and community liaisons, to provide leadership, oversight, and management of the project.

- chosen teaming as the area of study. A team of university faculty, intermediate school district (ISD) staff, local education agency (LEA) staff, parents, and university students was established to design the implementation plan for year two. Research questions were developed through a series of project staff retreats, and were submitted to a process of review and refinement based on a review of the literature. Field visits to exemplary programs which embrace collaborative teams and successful teacher teaming models, and expert conversations on teaming were held. A refined list of six consensus questions and a field survey to 156 education experts implemented to determine the relevance of the proposed consensus questions to teacher preservice, school improvement, inservice staff development, and student learning outcomes. Findings from the survey assisted the inquiry design team in the development of the implementation plan, including its methods and procedures. (See the Appendix for a list of the consensus questions and the results of field survey.

- a series of ongoing meetings, Whitman Elementary (Marquette Area Public Schools) and Aspen Ridge Middle School (NICE Community Schools) developed as the collaborative sites of this project. These sites were chosen because they represent two very different contextual settings for the project.

- the above activities, an implementation plan was drafted, reviewed, and refined into the proposed workplan which included project objectives, methods and procedures, timelines, and project management plan including unit and personnel responsibilities for the second year.

### Elements and Process of Collaboration

Collaborative teams in each implementation site worked together to address each teams specific focus (i.e., Whitman: multiage models; Aspen Ridge: language arts and reading), the teams carried out a formative, reflective process to identify elements of collaborative teaming and to describe the process. That formative and reflective process was done with teams across the horizontal (i.e., teacher teams, student teams, IHE teams) and vertical dimensions (teams across different groups) of the school. They were guided by the research questions developed in first year of this project. Specific activities related to the planning year included the following:

- **Formative Self Assessment and Team/School Improvement Plan**. Whitman first identified a critical team of internal and external educators and stakeholders to design the implementation of its self assessment and plan. The team consisted of the Director of Field Experiences at NMU (Rodney Clarken), the principal (Joe Meyskens), the Title 1 teacher (Marjean Bartelle), the pre-K speech and language impaired teacher (Tami Bott), a first grade teacher (Lucy Harrington), and a fourth grade teacher (Rachel Evans). In February, the fourth grade teacher opted out of some of her responsibilities.

- a series of retreats and meetings during school, after school and in the evenings, the Whitman, NMU, and Marquette-Alger Intermediate School (MAISD) staff, along with parents and community members assessed themselves and consulted about a team/school improvement plan. After several meetings, it was decided to focus on thematic teaching as the area of school improvement. Based on the self assessment, the group had moved from multiage in the planning year to a focus on thematic instruction in the later part of the second year. The collaborative grant tentative budget in the project...
es outlines some activities planned.

A significant outcome of this year of implementation research is the development of a Teaming Self Assessment Instrument. A self assessment instrument was designed by the Director of Field Experiences using the research questions developed in the planning phase (see Appendix). This instrument was shared across all teams. The Whitman team felt that the instrument did not get at the issues they were dealing with and the director recommended a different form that had been used in previous years. The instrument is yet to be tested in a variety of settings and contexts to verify its face and content validity and internal and external reliability. The project evaluator will assist the project co-ordination in testing the validity and reliability of the instrument.

Teaming the process across multiple dimensions. The critical friend is to maintain a log of the collaborative teaming process to document the changes in the team members, strategies; strategy related outcomes; barriers to and facilitators of change; reflections on team dynamics and member roles; and preservice/peer coaching. The Collaborative Teaming Process Log was developed for this process (see appendix), but discontinued after trying it because it did not get at process activities used by the team at Whitman. Complementing the critical friend/consultant logs are quarterly interview/survey data from the teacher teams, which were collected by the project evaluator. This documentation and its analysis will assist in the development of a curriculum module.

Teaming Process at Whitman and Northern Michigan University

Between Northern Michigan University and area schools assists preservice teachers move from observation of students and classroom activities to the role of the teacher. These experiences begin in the first education course and progress through student teaching giving students opportunities to plan and practice in a variety of settings appropriate to the professional roles for which they are being prepared. Four basic criteria are considered for placements: a) the student's program; b) the quality of the school, classroom and teacher; c) the willingness of the cooperating teacher to participate; and d) the student's schedule. Students are normally placed in the Marquette Area Public Schools. The procedure for placing Northern Michigan University students in the Marquette Public Schools is outlined in an agreement between NMU and the Marquette School District.

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Teaming Self Assessment Instrument. A significant outcome of this year of implementation research is the development of a Teaming Self Assessment Instrument. Based on the knowledge gained from the site self assessments, the instrument is to delineate essential elements of collaborative teaming, indicator of each element within the school context, and an interval scale for rating personal and team coherence to each element.

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Student Teams. Elementary methods classes are in a block schedule so students can combine the content of these courses and collaborate with each other. The late 1980's, ED 311 Language Arts Methods & Materials and 316 Elementary Reading Instruction I were taught together by one instructor. In 1994, the students in these joined classes were required to take ED 310 Social Studies Methods and Material for Elementary Teachers. The two professors of these courses worked together to interrelate the content taught. In 1997, ED 361 Special Education for the General Teacher and ED 483 Educational Media were added to create an integrated block of methods courses to connect the subject matter, help students...
actions, model collaborative teaching, apply content across subjects and share a field experience (Standerford, 1997, p. 1).

Students taking these classes as a cohort group have been very enthusiastic about the benefits of their collaboration on improved learning. The students recognize that collaboration and working in teams is a natural and valuable part of teaching.

**Faculty Teams.** The DLFE collaborates with all of the professors teaching in the phase I classes, and the teachers in the field with whom NMU students work. The professors for the phase I block of elementary methods, ED 311/316/310/361 and 483, collaborate together and jointly conduct some classes. Evaluations by the professor and students have been positive. Students appreciate the modeling of collaboration by the professors. They continue to improve the coordination of assignments and the integration of concepts (Standerford, 1997, p. 1). This approach has been so successful expanded so that the second set of methods course is also now offered in a block schedule with the professors teaming on how to best accomplish.

**Whitman Teams.** The Director of Laboratory Field Experiences serves as the critical friend/consultant/coordinator for the CSPI project at Whitman University. The elementary block scheduled courses have had one of their classes in Whitman elementary school to bring theory and practice together through real experiences teaching language arts. The teachers in Whitman have oriented to the expectations of NMU’s program and are cooperating to achieve its objectives. Dr. Standerford has developed a very close relationship with the teachers after several years of collaborating with them on different professional activities, such as the writing project and state standards. Students spend many hours collaborating with the supervision of the classroom teacher and the university professor. Students spend three hours a week in the classroom, about 20 to 30 hours during the term.

In the second phase of methods also have ten hours of field experience at Whitman in ED 312 Science Methods and Materials for Elementary Teachers. Students also have an additional ten hours experience in a middle school science classroom, and another four hours in related science teaching activities.

**Team Collaboration.** DLFE has been actively involved and collaborated in many professional activities with professionals in our university, in Whitman and in the community. NMU teacher education field experiences are supervised by the classroom teacher, the course instructor, and the Director of Laboratory Field Experiences. The evaluation of the preservice teachers' competencies in field settings is the primary responsibility of the supervising teacher. The elementary block scheduled courses have had one of their classes in Whitman elementary school to bring theory and practice together through real experiences teaching language arts. The teachers in Whitman have oriented to the expectations of NMU's program and are cooperating to achieve its objectives. Dr. Standerford has developed a very close relationship with the teachers after several years of collaborating with them on different professional activities, such as the writing project and state standards. Students spend many hours collaborating with Whitman teachers. These experiences help them to become better teachers. They also help students in the classroom, and the community. This symbiotic relationship is one in which everyone wins and benefits. Through continued collaborative efforts like these, public schools and communities become partners in providing excellent education and allies to improve educational opportunity for this region.

**Curriculum Module**

A curriculum module will be developed which will allow teacher education faculty and personnel development professionals to incorporate training on collaborative teaming into their respective education programs. This module will provide lecture materials, activities, and evaluation forms on teacher teaming within the context of a unified educational system. Specific content will include:

- New materials on collaborative teaming, unified (inclusive) schools, unified preservice and inservice teacher preparation. These materials will address how to best accomplish.
- Learning Self Assessment Instrument with instructions for use, interpretation, and incorporation into a formative school improvement process.
- Collaborative Teaming Facilitation Guide with powerful questions/instigating probes, team development strategies, delineation of barrier removal strategies, and increased opportunities. This guide will be generated from the teaming process logs.
ecklist for determining university/community school readiness for collaborative teacher preservice and inservice preparation.

Annotated bibliography on collaborative teaming and unified teacher preparation.

For this Curriculum Module will be gathered during the first nine months of this second Year of the Project through the collaborative work of the instructors, site-based team members, and the Project Evaluator. The actual Module will be drafted during months 10 and 11 of Year Two.

Curriculum Module Field Test and Refinement. Following the first draft of the Curriculum Module two field tests of the Modules content will be undertaken. Each field test will take one day to implement. Higher education teacher preparation faculty representatives and personnel development professionals from ISDs and LEAs will be invited to participate in the field tests. During that field test, the participants will become familiar with the content of the Module and they will be trained on how to use the Module in their respective education programs. They will be asked systematically to critique each component of the Module as to content relevance, content accessibility, anticipated content effectiveness and innovation. The formats for the Module critiques will be collaboratively developed between the project staff and the project evaluator. Written and verbal critiques of the Module content will be analyzed and used to refine the Module.

Evaluation

Formative and summative evaluations of the project will be conducted by the Project Evaluation Consultant and monitored by the Project Management Team. Evaluation design will be based on the principles of participatory action research (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992), in which project participants assist the evaluator in the continuous description, monitoring, and modification of all aspects of the project to ensure that the project activities are facilitating the stated objectives and the project goal. Based on quarterly reviews, project activities and objectives will be refined. The quarterly reviews will address such questions as:

To what extent is the project functioning as planned?
Have adjustments been made to the project? If yes, what are the adjustments and what is the impact of those adjustments?
What are the critical activities and characteristics of the project?
Are the project timelines being met?
Are products developed and disseminated as planned?
Are project activities addressing the target audiences?

Formative evaluation will detail outcomes and the relationship of the outcomes to the objectives. The summative evaluation will be conducted by the评价 consultant on an annual basis, addressing such questions as:

Did the project activities lead to the achievement of the goal and objectives?
What aspects of the project were unique and enhanced the implementation plan?
Was the implementation process effective for students, site staff, and university participants, i.e., was it needs satisfying; skill enhancing?
What was the impact of the implementation process on students, site staff, and university participants?
What was the cost of the project?
Were the proposed products developed and effective?
What was the impact of the curriculum module on workshop participants?
Was the project disseminated through a variety of sources?
Were the required reports relevant, accessible, and useful?

Sources for the summative evaluation will include surveys, questionnaires, and interviews administered to project participants at all levels of the evaluation. The summative evaluation will provide information necessary for project accountability and replication.

References


Sparks, D. (1994). A paradigm shift in staff development. Educational Week, 42