

**Partnership Best Practices:
A Review of the Literature**

P-12 Project

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People and organizations work together when they realize that they can achieve common goals more effectively than they can by working alone. Successful partnerships usually don't happen just by chance or good will. Although every partnership is shaped by local conditions and individual components, research demonstrates that there are concepts that many successful collaborative partnerships have in common. Each of these concepts represents a continuum of less to more effective factors. When assessing their need or readiness for partnership, organizations can examine where their situation lies on these continua. Situations that are closer to the "more effective" end are more likely be sufficient—to have an adequate amount of what is needed to achieve their purpose or sustain the effort.

This literature review describes the following partnership concepts, grouped in six categories originally identified by the Wilder Research Center (Mattessich, Murray-Close, & Monsey 2001). Most of the literature reviewed focuses on K-12-university partnerships. However, the concepts are applicable to broader community-university collaborations.

1. Environment

- Culture
- Equity
- Leadership

2. Shared Vision

3. Membership

- Diversity
- Commitment
- Relationships
- Trust
- Self-Interest/Benefit

4. Process/Structure

- Decision Making
- Organizational Structure
- Adaptability/Flexibility
- Evaluation
- Continuity/Sustainability

5. Communication

6. Resources

1. Environment

Environmental conditions that influence partnerships include the cultures of the organizations involved, the factors supporting equitable relationships between partners, and type of leadership underlying the collaboration.

Culture

Organizational culture may be defined as "a system of shared orientations that hold an organization together and give it a distinct identity" (Hoy & Miskel, 2005, p. 165). This includes norms, beliefs, values, assumptions, mission, structure, policies, and ways of working (Hoy & Miskel, 2005; Peters, 2002). Although both schools and universities are engaged in teaching and learning, they view these activities from different lenses (Clarke, Davis, Rhodes, & Baker, 1998). The literature is clear that these cultural differences pose significant challenges to collaboration (Amey, Brown, & Sandmann, 2002; Bergstrom et al., 1995; Borden & Perkins, 1998; Borthwick et al., 2003; Byrne

and Hansberry, 2007; California Alliance of PreK-18 Partnerships, 2004; Callahan & Martin, 2007; Halliday et al., 2004; Kerka, 1997; Learning City Network, 1998; Tett, Crowther, & O'Hara, 2003; Wildridge et al., 2004).

School and university cultures differ in the following ways (Selke, 1996):

Professional focus: Schools tend to favor the immediate and practical, universities value theory and research (Grundy, Robison, & Tomazos, 2001; Peters, 2002; Selke, 1996). In higher education, credibility is established through scholarship and publication; credibility in schools may come from the ability to find practical solutions to day-to-day problems (Grundy, et al. 2001).

Work tempo: Higher education faculty tend to have more individual control over the tasks and timing of their work day; the activities and pace of elementary-secondary teachers are typically more constrained by the school schedules (Peters, 2002; Selke, 1996).

Accountability and rewards: School administrators and teachers are held accountable for the achievement of K-12 students as measured by standardized test scores, and school cultures tend to emphasize intrinsic rewards. In contrast, university faculty are accountable to promotion and tenure systems and receive extrinsic rewards (Knight & Wiseman, 2000; Selke, 1996).

Governance: K-12 governance is driven by community, state, and federal mandates and regulations, many of which relate to the custodial nature of schools. Higher education is characterized by a more open climate of academic freedom, subject to some oversight by trustees and, in the case of public institutions, the state (Azinger, 2000; Dotterweich, 2006a).

Partnerships that are more effective—

- Clearly recognize and acknowledge the differences between higher education and school systems (Lauer, Dean, & Nelson, 2005).
- Understand that each partner is a complex social organization shaped by different contexts (Lieberman, 1986).
- Engage in systematic cultural learning in order to understand each other's institutional requirements, chain of command, values, perspectives, and other elements of organizational culture (Lauer, Dean, & Nelson 2005; Valadez & Snyder, 2006).
- Interrupt their traditional ways of working and gatekeeping functions in order to forge a collaborative culture among all the partners (Grundy, et al., 2001; *Understanding Collaboration*, 2007).

In less effective partnerships—

- Scheduling conflicts (for example, because of semester breaks and testing periods) may hamper partnership activities (Ravid & Handler, 2001).
- Jargon and insider references create language barriers (Walsh, 2006).
- Participation is inhibited by perceived lack of recognition and support (Ravid & Handler, 2001).
- Partners may not be used to collaborating within their own culture because of isolation, competition, and lack of communication (Peters, 2002).

Equity

Closely related to differences in organizational culture is the issue of equity in partnerships. The historical relationship between schools and universities is characterized by differences in status and power:

From the standpoint of the school system, the power of the university is in its legally sanctioned role in preservice teacher preparation and the certification and credentialing of school personnel....From the standpoint of the university, the power of the school is located in its ability to provide access for the university's preprofessional students as sources for future students and as sites for research. (Valadez & Snyder, 2006, p. 32)

There have also been status differences between K-12 teachers and university faculty. Clear distinctions have been made between the formal research-based knowledge associated with the university and the practical context-based knowledge associated with the teachers, and university-based knowledge is privileged (Kirschner, Dickinson, & Blosser, 1996; Valadez & Snyder, 2006).

Other status differences that affect the interaction of collaborators include levels of education, gender, and race (Coffin, 1994; Sandoval, 2001).

In less effective partnerships,

- Some stakeholders are less empowered than others. One partner (typically the university) is conceded expert status from the start (Mayers & Schnorr, 2003) or one partner enters the collaboration with the stance of having all the answers (Warren & Peel, 2005).
- There are differences in the degree to which individuals from all relevant groups are involved and partners and stakeholders do not have equal access to information and resources (Halliday et al., 2004).
- There are inequities in the ways in which the collaboration is funded or governance is structured (Sandoval, 2001).

To be effective,

- The collaborators acknowledge, value, and respect the different perspectives, talents, and unique contributions of the stakeholders (Clarke et al., 1998; Essex, 2001; Lefever-Davis, Johnson, & Pearman, 2007; *Understanding Collaboration*, 2007).
- Participants perceive themselves as colleagues and collaborators on a horizontal plane, without privileging one source of expertise over another (Borthwick et al., 2003; Grundy, Robison, & Tomazos, 2001; Kirschner, Dickinson, & Blosser, 1996; Klein & Dunlap, 1993; Marlow & Nass-Fukai, 2000; Ravid & Handler, 2001; Ray, 2002).
- The partners perceive parity in resource allocation and use (Knight & Wiseman, 2000; Learning City Network, 1998; *Understanding Collaboration*, 2007; Wildridge et al., 2004).
- Partners have equal opportunity to be heard and to be involved in decision making (Borthwick et al., 2003; Halliday et al., 2004; Kirschenbaum & Reagan, 2001; Schramm, 2007; Selke, 1996).

According to Backer (2002), "There is no such thing as totally equal collaboration—there are always lead partners and some who put in more than others, and it is important to look at this inequality honestly" (p. 50). From that perspective, partnerships, which are a marriage of conviction, not convenience (Sockett, 1990, cited in Sandoval, 2001), should strive for egalitarianism rather than equality.

Leadership

Among the many ways to look at leadership, one perspective is aligned with a definition of it as "the behaviors of the person administratively responsible for the group and meeting its contractual obligations" (Amey & Brown, 2005, p. 25). Along these lines, successful collaborations require strong, visible, supportive leadership (Cunningham & Tedesco, 2001-02; Hayward et al., 1997; Kerka, 1997; Knight & Wiseman, 2000; Lauer, Dean, & Nelson, 2005; Ravid & Handler, 2001; Ray, 2002; *Understanding Collaboration*, 2007). "Without a strong and visible commitment from its leadership, a partnership has no chance of survival" (Essex, 2001, p. 733).

Another view of leadership is defined by Hoy and Miskel (2005): A member or members of a group influence(s) the interpretation of events, choice of goals, organization of activities, individual motivation, power relations, and orientations. In this perspective, leadership is less about administrative role or function and more about individual skill or personality. This type of leadership is in line with what Hoy and Miskel call "distributed," which means reliance on multiple individuals and roles (formal and informal leaders) to accomplish leadership tasks.

Effective collaborations may need both types of leadership. *Within* partner organizations, staff participate fully and have the authority to represent their organization in decisions and partnership activities when they perceive that

key administrators support and value the collaboration (Cunningham & Tedesco, 2001-02; Ravid & Handler, 2001). Across organizations, a shared, distributive leadership style is more conducive to successful outcomes and mutual benefits (Bergstrom et al., 1995). As Lasker and Weiss (2003) describe it, “rather than having one person ‘run the show,’ successful collaborations often involve a variety of people in the provision of leadership, in both formal and informal capacities” (p. 30). These formal and informal leaders believe in the capacity of diverse people and organizations to work together; understand and appreciate different perspectives; are comfortable sharing ideas, resources, and power; and are able to bridge diverse cultures (Lasker & Weiss, 2003; Schramm, 2007).

This type of bridging, or “boundary spanning,” is a critical element in collaborative partnerships (Acar, Guo, & Saxton, 2007; Overton & Burkhardt, 1999; Ravid & Handler, 2001; *Understanding Collaboration*, 2007). “‘Boundary spanners’ are those individuals who, *regardless of title* [emphasis added], can motivate and communicate with others. They can facilitate relationships and make or break the operation of the collaboration” (*Understanding Collaboration*, 2007, p. 11).

In less effective collaborations, power is not shared equally among leaders (Lasley, Matczynski, & Williams, 1992). “Inequitable distribution of perceived power can lead to lower levels of investment among the less empowered partnership stakeholders” (Mayers & Schnorr, 2003, p. 109)

2. Shared Vision

The literature is emphatic that “the vision thing” is one of the most important concepts for successful partnerships (Bergstrom et al., 1995; Borthwick et al., 2003; California Alliance, 2004; Cunningham & Tedesco, 2001-02; Dotterweich 2006a; Knight & Wiseman, 2000; Ravid & Handler, 2001; *Understanding Collaboration*, 2007; Valadez & Snyder, 2006; Walsh, 2006).

A shared vision answers the question, What do we want to create? (Senge, 1990). An effective vision statement communicates the purpose and goals of the collaboration and is expressed in words that everyone can understand (Callor et al., 2000; Essex, 2001). Factors contributing to the development of shared vision include time, communication, understanding of other perspectives, dedication, ownership, and shared recognition of need (Halliday et al., 2004; Kirschenbaum & Reagan, 2001; Robertson, 2007; Wildridge et al., 2004). Case studies of effective collaborations demonstrate the key role of leaders who can articulate a vision and help others recognize the mutual benefits that can be achieved (California Alliance, 2004; Lauer, Dean, & Nelson, 2005; Warren & Peel, 2005).

A collaboration is more effective when

- A shared sense of critical needs is the catalyst for the partnership’s vision (Bickel & Hatrup, 1995; California Alliance, 2004; Tett, Crowther, & O’Hara, 2003).
- Priorities are shared (Byrne & Hansberry, 2007).
- Vision is sharply focused on a clearly defined mission (Backer, 2002; Schramm, 2007).
- The mission of the collaboration overlaps with but does not duplicate that of member organizations (Mattessich, Murray-Close, & Monsey, 2001).

In less effective partnerships,

- The vision is spurred by specific funding opportunities or national initiatives (California Alliance, 2004).
- The vision is not clearly understood and accepted by all stakeholders (Kirschner, Dickinson, & Blosser, 1996; Mattessich, Murray-Close, & Monsey, 2001).
- Partners share a common vision but disagree over how to achieve it (Ravid & Handler, 2001).
- The vision is established but not nurtured over time by revisiting and reaffirming the common purpose (California Alliance, 2004; Essex, 2001).

3. Membership

The following aspects of partner membership influence the effectiveness of collaborations: diversity, commitment, relationships, trust, and self-interest.

Diversity

An appropriate cross-section of individual and organizational stakeholders should be represented in a collaborative partnership (Clark, n.d.; Kerka, 1997; Mattessich, Murray-Close, & Monsey, 2001; Schramm, 2007; *Understanding Collaboration*, 2007; Wildridge et al., 2004). Having broad-based involvement can increase participation and commitment to the endeavor (Knight & Wiseman, 2000),

In more effective partnerships,

- There is a balance between depth and breadth of the membership (Kerka, 1997).
- Different perspectives are respected and valued (California Alliance, 2004).
- Diverse members bring complementary strengths to the effort (Ravid & Handler, 2001; Schramm, 2007).

A collaboration may be less effective when

- Diverse members are brought in just for the sake of heterogeneity but are not meaningfully involved (Knight & Wiseman, 2000; Lasker, Weiss, & Miller, 2001).
- The numbers and types of members are so broad that the process becomes unmanageable (Mattessich, Murray-Close, & Monsey, 2001)

Commitment

It is not enough to have stakeholders at the table; they must also be committed, responsible, and actively engaged for partnerships to succeed (Borthwick et al., 2003; California Alliance, 2004; Clark, n.d.; Schramm, 2007). Commitment is demonstrated by devoting time, allocating resources, and attending to the attainment of partnership goals (Valadez & Snyder, 2006). It is manifested in attitudes, behavior, and a sense of ownership, both personal and institutional, among members (Halliday et al., 2004; Mattessich, Murray-Close, & Monsey, 2001; Ravid & Handler, 2001; Wildridge et al., 2004).

An effective collaboration requires

- Strong institutional commitment, including continuing, visible support from individuals in positions of leadership and influence (Byrne & Hansberry, 2007; Kirschenbaum & Reagan, 2001; Wildridge et al., 2004)
- Willingness to surrender commitment to particular ways of doing things in order to focus on agreed-upon goals (Clarke et al., 1998; Grundy, et al., 2001)
- Recognition that partners may not always share the same level of commitment all the time while still respecting the shared vision (Ravid & Handler, 2001)

A partnership is less effective when

- Participants are unwilling to expend energy or take risks on behalf of the relationship (Ravid & Handler, 2001).
- Institutional commitment is weakened because key individuals or champions are no longer involved (Kirschenbaum & Reagan, 2001).
- There is commitment at the top but lack of buy-in from those who do the daily operations of the organization (Schramm, 2007).

Relationships

“The majority of issues that arise in school-university partnerships relate to the interaction of individuals, making attention to relationships key to successful partnerships” (Lauer, Dean, & Nelson, 2005, p. 10). This dimension can be the strongest or weakest link among all the other concepts of collaboration (*Understanding Collaboration*, 2007). Individuals and the organizations they represent are each part of many other relationships, and new collaborations can interrupt established relationships both within and across organizations. For partnerships to succeed, new productive working relationships must be forged, and relationship building should begin early (Grundy, Robison, & Tomazos 2001; Lauer et al., 2005; Schramm, 2007).

In less effective situations,

- Prior negative history may hinder relationship development and shape the degree to which participants engage in or resist the collaborative process (Ravid & Handler, 2001; *Understanding Collaboration*, 2007).
- Bonding social ties within an organization reinforce exclusivity and inward focus, hindering networking with other organizations (Edens & Gilsinan, 2005; Lasker & Weiss, 2003).

In effective collaborations,

- Bridging mechanisms bring people together across organizations to build productive working relationships (Edens & Gilsinan, 2005; Lasker & Weiss, 2003; Schramm, 2007).
- Relationships are characterized by respect, understanding, openness, accountability, and trust (Lasker, Weiss, & Miller, 2001; Marlow & Nass-Fukai, 2000; Mayers & Schnorr, 2003; *Understanding Collaboration*, 2007; Valadez & Snyder, 2006)
- Partners recognize that relationship building takes time (Learning City Network, 1998; Mattessich, Murray-Close, & Monsey, 2001; Ravid & Handler, 2001; Schramm, 2007; *Understanding Collaboration*, 2007).
- Participants break out of traditional roles and relationships, e.g., university partners as knowledge generators, school partners as knowledge appliers (Bickel & Hatrup, 1995).

Trust

Collaborations are by nature interdependent; individual partner interests cannot be met without depending on others, making partners vulnerable. There is broad agreement that an essential concept is trust—confidence in the reliability, integrity, competence, and honesty of others (Cunningham & Tedesco, 2001-02; Dotterweich, 2006a, 2006b; Fidler & Firestone, 2006; Halliday et al., 2004; Hoy & Miskel, 2005; Kerka, 1997; Lasker, Weiss, & Miller 2001; Lauer, Dean, & Nelson, 2005, Ravid & Handler, 2001; *Understanding Collaboration*, 2007; Valadez & Snyder, 2006; Wildridge et al., 2004). The effectiveness of other elements, such as decision making, relationships, communication, and commitment, is closely linked to trust.

Trust begins with openness and truthfulness regarding purpose, commitment, role, outcomes, and relationships among partners. When these are established early in the formation of the partnership and followed judiciously, trust will begin to build as the partnership develops and partners become more familiar and comfortable with each other. When conflicts or barriers emerge, they should be addressed in an open and sincere manner. (Essex, 2001)

Effective collaborations

- Build trust by understanding each partner’s perspectives, valuing the needs of each partner, and designing a program with shared goals and mutual benefits (Grundy, Robison, & Tomazos 2001; Lieberman, 1986; Plowfield, Wheeler, & Raymond, 2005)
- Recognize that conflict is inevitable and have a process for managing it (Knight & Wiseman, 2000; Lieberman, 1986)

Partnerships may be less effective because

- Organizations and the individuals representing them mistrust each other because of differences in mission and culture or competitiveness (Edens & Gilsinan, 2005; Knight & Wiseman, 2000; Mattessich, Murray-Close, & Monsey, 2001).
- Within organizations, individuals do not perceive that administrators support partnerships or they believe that collaboration may harm them professionally (Selke, 1996).
- Conflicts are submerged and not dealt with openly and honestly (Essex, 2001; Knight & Wiseman, 2000; Plowfield, Wheeler, & Raymond, 2005; Tett, Crowther, & O'Hara, 2003; Tushnet, 1993).

Self-Interest/Benefit

The pursuit of mutual benefits and the attainment of self-interests by each partner are two fundamental characteristics of institutional partnerships (Bickel and Hatrup, 1995; Cunningham & Tedesco, 2001-02). Collaborators recognize that working together is in their self-interest (Kerka, 1997; Mattessich, Murray-Close, & Monsey, 2001; Schramm, 2007; *Understanding Collaboration*, 2007; Wildridge et al., 2004).

In an effective partnership

- There are tangible, equitable (not equal) benefits for all partners involved (Coffin, 2004; Essex, 2001; Lauer et al., 2005).
- Participants share both risks and rewards (Kattackal, 2003).
- Partners are sensitive to the differences in values and reward systems of collaborating communities and find ways to overcome any mismatch between incentives and the collaborative work (Bickel & Hatrup, 1995; Buys & Bursnall, 2007; Knight & Wiseman, 2000; Selke, 1996).

In a less effective partnership

- One group or another may perceive a lack of parity in participation outcomes (Knight & Wiseman, 2000).
- Turf issues may arise when partners do not see each other as equally involved in benefits, risks, responsibilities, and power (Dotterweich 2006b).
- A collaborator may be focused on self-serving, short-term goals and withdraws when they are achieved (Borthwick et al., 2003; Ravid & Handler, 2001).

4. Process/Structure

Shared Decision Making

To overcome issues of trust and turf or power struggles over control of program goals, activities, or priorities, collaborations need an inclusive, representative decision-making process that empowers those affected by decisions to be involved in and accountable for decisions. (Bergstrom et al., 1995; Bickel & Hatrup, 1995). Shared decision making requires sharing power and authority (Borthwick et al., 2003; Coffin, 1994; Cunningham & Tedesco, 2001-02; Kerka, 1997; Lauer, Dean, & Nelson, 2005; Marlow & Nass-Fukai, 2000; Ravid & Handler, 2001; Valadez & Snyder, 2006).

The Hoy-Tarter model of shared decision making (Hoy & Miskel, 2005) depicts a continuum along which more and less effective collaborations may be situated. The model applies three tests to help determine the degree to which others should be involved in making decisions:

1. Do they feel the decision is **RELEVANT** to them? (a personal stake in the outcome)
2. Do they have **EXPERTISE** to bring to the decision? (the ability to make a useful contribution)
3. Can they be **TRUSTED** to make decisions in the best interests of the organization? (commitment to the mission)

The model identifies types of situations and decision making processes that differ depending on the answers to these questions:

1. *Unilateral decision making* without involvement of others
Situation: Noncollaborative (Relevance No; Expertise No; Trust N/A)
2. *Individual advisory* (individuals provide data, discuss, and recommend; leader decides)
Situation: Expert—occasional involvement (Relevance No; Expertise Yes; Trust Yes/No)
3. *Group advisory* (group shares information, analyzes, and recommends; leader decides)
Situation: Conflictual—Limited Involvement (Relevance Yes; Expertise Yes; Trust No)
Situation: Stakeholder— occasional involvement (Relevance Yes; Expertise No; Trust Yes/No)
4. *Group majority* (group shares information, deliberates, and votes on action)
Situation: Democratic—maximum involvement (Relevance Yes; Expertise Yes; Trust Yes)
5. *Group consensus* (group shares information, analyzes, and reaches consensus)
Situation: Democratic—maximum involvement (Relevance Yes; Expertise Yes; Trust Yes)

Effective collaborations aim for democratic situations in which the decision-making process is group majority or group consensus (Bergstrom et al., 1995; Selke; 1996). Mayers and Schnorr (2003) describe how this worked in one partnership and the benefits that resulted:

Instead of participating in a traditional manner, the director chose to facilitate, rather than direct, the process of a democratic and egalitarian caucus of stakeholders. Issues were examined and strategies for remediation were formulated and weighed by the group. The payoff was a broader base of expertise and efficient utilization of human resources. Relevance and accuracy of information lent to the process was enhanced by virtue of the fact that stakeholder representatives functioned as experts in the function of their respective systems. There was also identified secondary gain. The plan now belonged to the collective. The collective had crafted it and saw no need to resist or circumvent their own process. (p. 110)

Organizational Structure

Organizational structures may be formal (hierarchy, division of labor, official communication channels, formal leadership) or informal (personal relationships, interpersonal communication, and informal leadership) (Hoy & Miskel, 2005). Most of the literature on collaboration advocates the establishment of formal structure, including

- Written documents such as memoranda of understanding or bylaws that identify policies, regulations, and decision-making mechanisms (Bergstrom et al., 1995; Clark, n.d.; Dotterweich, 2006a; Kattackal, 2003; Lasker, Weiss, & Miller, 2001; Lauer, Dean, & Nelson, 2005; *Understanding Collaboration*, 2007)
- Policies, rules, and regulations to ensure that expectations are shared and behaviors are consistent with the direction or goals (Mattessich, Murray-Close, & Monsey, 2001; *Understanding Collaboration*, 2007)
- Clearly defined roles and responsibilities (Borthwick et al., 2003; Kerka, 1997; Mattessich, Murray-Close, & Monsey, 2001; Ravid & Handler, 2001; Schramm, 2007)
- Clear, robust working arrangements (Halliday et al., 2004; *Understanding Collaboration*, 2007; Wildridge et al. 2004)
- An advisory or steering committee that is representative of the institutions involved (California Alliance, 2004)

Other sources describe a variety of organizational models:

Summer Scholars' partnership with Parks and Recreation is very hands on, with lots of joint planning sessions and meetings. The partnership with Denver Public Schools is much less interactive and focuses on well-established roles and responsibilities for each group. The day-to-day management of programs



is jointly shared by Summer Scholars and Parks and Recreation, whereas Summer Scholars bears more responsibility than does Denver Public Schools in actual program implementation. (Byrne & Hansberry, 2007, p. 80)

One partnership evolved informally with little organizational structure, while focusing on development of an integrated curriculum in a single site. The second partnership created a formal structure consisting of various committees, organizational support, and written agreements for implementation of a specific school renewal model in multiple sites. The third developed a formal structure composed of written agreements and formalized committees focusing on collaborative research in multiple sites. (Knight & Wiseman, 2000. p. 4)

What is most effective is using a model that is appropriate for the situation, being clear about expectations, and having roles and responsibilities that are easy to comprehend (Byrne & Hansberry, 2007; California Alliance, 2004; Dotterweich 2006a). “Partnership structures and support mechanisms must provide a scaffold sufficient to support the vision, purpose, and function of the partnership” (Clark, 1997, cited in Backer, 2002, p. 8).

What is less effective:

- Lack of role clarity (Byrne & Hansberry, 2007; Ravid & Handler, 2001)
- Structures that merely create a new level of bureaucracy (Ray, 2002)
- Conflicting structures across partners, involving multiple departments with differing procedures, practices, regulations, and timetables (Ame, Brown, & Sandemann, 2002; Schramm, 2007)

Adaptability/Flexibility

“Ambiguity and flexibility more aptly describe collaborations than do certainty and rigidity” (Lieberman, 1986, p. 7). The collaborative process is cyclical. Partners need to revisit the mission, goals, and activities over time as circumstances change (Buys & Bursnall, 2007). Ideally, individual partner organizations will also change: according to Ray (2002), collaboration should lead to mutual institutional renewal.

More effective partnerships

- Evolve over time and maintain responsiveness to their environments (Backer, 2002; Ravid & Handler, 2001).
- Have flexible structures, plans, and written agreements that enable them to adapt to changing conditions (Borthwick et al., 2003; Kerka, 1997; Ray, 2002; *Understanding Collaboration*, 2007; Wildridge et al., 2004).
- Remain focused on the shared vision while adjusting their strategies for accomplishing their goals (California Alliance, 2004; Mattessich, Murray-Close, & Monsey, 2001).

In less effective partnerships

- Change in the environment disrupts or dissolves the partnership (Ravid & Handler, 2001).
- Adaptation may be unilateral—one partner evolves while others do not (Callahan & Martin, 2007).
- Over time the group becomes more rigid in thinking or behavior (Mattessich, Murray-Close, & Monsey, 2001).

Evaluation

An effective partnership has mechanisms for measuring outcomes and determining whether the strategies are supporting the goals (Bergstrom et al., 1995; California Alliance, 2004; Essex, 2001; Lauer, Dean, & Nelson, 2005; *Understanding Collaboration*, 2007). Evaluation results can create a more universal understanding of the partnership goals, resources, activities and impacts and providing useful feedback to shape partnership activities (Schramm, 2007).

- Assessment is ongoing and cyclical: “monitor, measure, learn” (Halliday et al., 2004; Selke 1996; Wildridge et al., 2004, p. 9).

- Formative evaluation is used to ensure the partnership is functioning well, activities are on course, and objectives and outcomes are being met (*Understanding Collaboration*, 2007; Valadez & Snyder, 2006).
- Summative evaluation provides documentation of fundamental change, student success, and long-term impact (*Understanding Collaboration*, 2007; Valadez & Snyder, 2006).

Continuity/Sustainability

Research shows that the following factors influence the sustainability of a collaboration:

- Prior history of working together (Bergstrom et al., 1995; Clark, n.d.; Mattessich, Murray-Close, & Monsey, 2001; Wildridge et al.; 2004)
- Periodic reassessment of the mission and vision (Kerka, 1997; Valadez & Snyder, 2006)
- Diverse funding sources (Backer, 2002; Kerka, 1997; Valadez & Snyder, 2006)
- Continuity of leadership (Kirschenbaum & Reagan, 2001; Knight & Wiseman, 2000)
- Anticipating change by planning for continuous improvement and inevitable turnovers (Ravid & Handler, 2001; *Understanding Collaboration*, 2007)

Ultimately, the best way to support sustained collaboration is by creating a collaborative culture in the university and the school, one that acknowledges the desirability of working together by institutionalizing collaboration (Knight & Wiseman, 2000; Schramm, 2007).

It is also important to know when to call it quits (Byrne & Hansberry, 2007; Schramm, 2007). Not all collaborations will be successful and not all need to continue indefinitely. Therefore, “whether the end of a partnership signifies success or failure, it should be planned for in advance, as part of discussion about what the partnership plans to achieve” (Wildridge et al., 2004, p. 9).

5. Communication

Communication is a key factor in any type of relationship. A strong theme in the literature is that, in effective partnerships,

- Communication is open, frequent, ongoing, timely, and clear (Bergstrom et al., 1995; Essex, 2001; Halliday et al., 2004; Kerka, 1997; Kirschenbaum & Reagan, 2001; Schramm, 2007; Selke, 1996; *Understanding Collaboration*, 2007; Valadez & Snyder, 2006; Wildridge et al., 2004).
- A wide range of communication tools is used to give, receive, and reflect on information (Borthwick et al., 2003; Clark, n.d.; Hoy & Miskel, 2005; Learning City Network, 1998).
- Partners feel free to debate, brainstorm, and agree to disagree on issues without damaging relationships (Essex, 2001; Mattessich, Murray-Close, & Monsey, 2001; Warren & Peel, 2005).
- The partners allocate time and resources to developing the communication system (California Alliance, 2004; Mattessich, Murray-Close, & Monsey, 2001; Robertson, 2007).
- The partnership uses multiple lines of communication and both formal channels (established by the organization) and informal ones (personal networks) (California Alliance, 2004; Hoy & Miskel, 2005; Lauer, Dean, & Nelson, 2005; Mattessich, Murray-Close, & Monsey, 2001; Ravid & Handler, 2001; Schramm, 2007; *Understanding Collaboration*, 2007).
- Partners are open about sharing constraints on their participation (Ravid & Handler, 2001).
- Strategies for resolving conflict are in place (Byrne & Hansberry, 2007; Essex, 2001; Knight & Wiseman, 2000; Ravid & Handler, 2001; Ray, 2002).

In less effective partnerships,

- Members have unspoken assumptions about what will happen, resulting in unmet expectations (Ravid & Handler, 2001).
- Lack of communication fuels rumors or misperceptions regarding the partnership (Essex, 2001).
- Individuals do not feeling comfortable in voicing their opinions, experiences, perspectives, and feelings (Warren & Peel, 2005).
- Conflicts are not recognized, discussed, or managed (Byrne & Hansberry, 2007; Essex, 2001; Knight & Wiseman, 2000; Ravid & Handler, 2001).

6. Resources

Collaborations need several kinds of resources to develop and sustain their work:

- Financial resources (Borthwick et al., 2003; Kerka, 1997; Lasker, Weiss, & Miller, 2001; Ravid & Handler, 2001; Schramm, 2007; Selke, 1996; Thompson, 2005; *Understanding Collaboration*, 2007; Valadez & Snyder, 2006; Wildridge et al., 2004)
- Material resources (facilities, equipment, supplies, technology) (Kerka, 1997; Lasker, Weiss, & Miller, 2001; Selke, 1996; Wildridge et al., 2004)
- Human resources (expertise, time) (Kerka, 1997; Lasker, Weiss, & Miller, 2001; Ravid & Handler, 2001; Schramm, 2007; Selke, 1996; Wildridge et al., 2004)
- Intangible resources (information, connections, training) (Kerka, 1997; Lasker, Weiss, & Miller, 2001; Selke, 1996)

In effective collaborations,

- Partners demonstrate commitment by making a significant investment of resources (Byrne & Hansberry, 2007; Lauer, Dean, & Nelson, 2005; Valadez & Snyder, 2006).
- The power of partnership is used to leverage additional resources (Clark, n.d.; Lauer, Dean, & Nelson, 2005).
- Partners take a positive, assets-based approach, identifying “what works” in their respective situations as assets that they bring to the table (Mayers & Schnorr, 2003).
- Partners recognize that real change takes time and make a significant long-term effort to develop collaborative processes and common understanding (Amey & Brown, 2005; Dotterweich, 2006a; Kerka, 1997; Mattessich, Murray-Close, & Monsey, 2001; Tett, Crowther, & O’Hara, 2003).

In less effective collaborations,

- Inequitable investment of resources contributes to disparity of ownership (Byrne & Hansberry, 2007).
- Partners disagree about how resources are used or members may feel that funding spent on partnership activities could be better used for other needs (Borthwick et al., 2003; Dotterweich, 2006b).
- Partners underestimate the time needed for developing relationships and nurturing the collaborative process (Bickel & Hatrup, 1995).

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