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Pamela Consuegra

*Andrews University*

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ABSTRACT

A MULTIPLE-CASE STUDY DESCRIBING COLLABORATIVE  
RELATIONS BETWEEN ADVENTIST PASTORS AND  
TEACHERS IN THE EASTERN UNITED STATES

by

Pamela Consuegra

Chair: Shirley Freed

## ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Dissertation

Andrews University

School of Education

Title: A MULTIPLE-CASE STUDY DESCRIBING COLLABORATIVE RELATIONS  
BETWEEN ADVENTIST PASTORS AND TEACHERS IN THE EASTERN  
UNITED STATES

Name of researcher: Pamela Consuegra

Name and degree of faculty chair: Shirley Ann Freed, Ph.D.

Date completed: August 2012

### Introduction

Adventist schools and churches are embedded within a system that provides them with rich opportunities to achieve their missional goals. However, this is possible only through collaboration and the use of available social networks. The purpose of this study was to identify situations where the church and school work together collaboratively and then to describe the collaborative practices between those selected Adventist pastors and teachers. In the context of Adventist elementary schools, the school principal also fulfills a teaching role. Therefore, in this study, the term “teacher” also refers to the principal. The broad research question was, How do Adventist pastors and teachers describe their collaborative relationship in their common purpose of ministry?

The conceptual themes that guided this study were social capital, collaboration, and the importance of trust in relational theory. Social capital, according to Putnam, refers to connectedness with others. Collaboration is defined by Sharma and Kearins as “sets of conversations.” Wagner and Muller describe collaborative relationships as partnerships that demand “face time.” Trust, according to Connolly and James, is the key component in any collaborative relationship. Sharma and Kearins concur and refer to trust as the “critical component.”

### Method

A qualitative multiple-case study design was used to describe the way Adventist pastors and teachers worked together. The local conference administrative team identified pastor-teacher teams that were in a positive collaborative relationship. The selection was then validated by the conference executive committee. Interviews were conducted with the teams and documents were reviewed to provide a thick description of the ways that collaboration unfolded in these settings.

### Findings

Adventist pastors and teachers described four broad themes: (a) a sense of togetherness, (b) the ingredients necessary for a collaborative environment to flourish, (c) connections that bridged the church family to the school family, and (d) the benefits of collaborative practices as well as the results of a failure to collaborate.

Adventist pastors and teachers exhibited a sense of togetherness by viewing their ministry to be one in purpose. Each is an equal partner striving to reach the missional goal—the salvation of young people. The entire church and school community was

centered on positive relationships, and anyone in this community has the potential to initiate and make a difference in regard to this relational building process.

The foundation upon which collaborative practices were built included an intense focus being placed on young people, with their needs taking a high priority. In addition, it was important that both had a clear understanding of the roles and boundaries, be willing to communicate the successes as well as the challenges, and exhibit a flexible attitude. Trust was described by the pastors and teachers to be the foundational anchor of positive relational building.

Connections were made by the pastor and teacher, each intentionally seeking ways to connect the two institutions, the church and the school. Each was an active and visible participant in the life of both the church and the school. Also, the church and the school were viewed as one unified campus and both were utilized as ministry needs dictated.

Pastors and teachers said the benefits of working in a collaborative relationship with each other include an increased probability that young people will make a decision for Jesus Christ, setting of a positive role model, and improved health of those who practice it. Many pastors and teachers were concerned that a failure to collaborate may lead to the demise of the church and the school; however, some feel that the ultimate price to be paid may be that some may not be in heaven as a result of a failure to work together in positive ways to achieve missional objectives.

### Conclusions

Recommendations for both pastor and teacher include closely aligning ministry goals, utilizing the strengths of your ministry partner, seeking ways to intentionally

connect the two entities (church and school), discussing any differences in private, and praying for your ministry partner.

In setting out to describe the collaborative practices of Adventist pastors and teachers, I have listened to their voices tell a story of collaboration at its best. It is a story of the possibilities when one pastor and one teacher join hands in their common missional goal of the salvation of young people. Adventist education and evangelism are inseparable. If we are to fulfill our common mission, Adventist pastors and teachers must link arms in collaborative practices towards this goal attainment. This study celebrates the accomplishments of two. In essence, this is a story about “us.”

Andrews University

School of Education

A MULTIPLE-CASE STUDY DESCRIBING COLLABORATIVE  
RELATIONS BETWEEN ADVENTIST PASTORS AND  
TEACHERS IN THE EASTERN UNITED STATES

A Dissertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Philosophy

by

Pamela Consuegra

August 2012



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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### **Background to the Problem**

Organizations do not exist in isolation. Rather, they are embedded in a wide variety of social networks that provide them with opportunities to achieve their goals (M. Clark, 1991; Coleman, 1988; Covrig, 2007; Granovetter, 1985; Guo & Acar, 2005; Putnam, 2000; Sanders, 1997; Sharma & Kearins, 2011). These networks create opportunities for collaboration and cooperation. Existing social networks are considered to be part of the “capital” that an organization possesses. If we follow the logic that an organization’s success is contingent upon how they put their resources to work, then we can conclude that it is important to understand how to capitalize on existing relationships. These available relationships are an asset to an organization, and it is only as we utilize these relationships in collaborative ways that the benefits will be fully realized.

Literature details specific benefits that organizations experience when taking advantage of social networks through relational building. In fact, the link between social capital and organizational performance has become a prominent field (Maurer, Bartsch, & Ebers, 2011). Some of the advantages reported are said to include the ability to work together through joint efforts to solve problems, shared decision making, and sharing of resources (Guo & Acar, 2005).

Sharma and Kearins (2011) discuss the tendency of organizations to forget their interdependence upon other organizations in their communities as they each set out alone to pursue their local organizational mission. Many organizations function within their own comfortable “boxes” without regard to the existing opportunities that may lie outside their very doors. And, even in those times when there is an admission of the need to develop interorganizational connections, there is an accompanying challenge in knowing how to forge those linkages in a sustainable fashion. Collaboration is all about organizations taking advantage of those links and entails a process of social learning (Ainscow, Muijs, & West, 2006). It is a process of learning to give and take, learning how to communicate effectively, as well as willingness to make oneself vulnerable to another. Learning takes place as participants mature in the social process of collaboration by learning to appreciate and value the differences that exist in each other. Team members learn how to disagree without being disagreeable. According to Gray (1989), collaboration is a process through which parties may see things differently and yet use those differences to explore viable solutions to existing challenges that may go beyond their scope of limited possibilities.

However, despite the known advantages, implementing sustainable interorganizational collaborative practices can prove challenging. Oftentimes, organizations experience problems by encountering what they perceive to be roadblocks and they succumb. Some of the possible pitfalls encountered in implementing interorganizational collaboration include a quest for power, distrust, lack of communication, attitude of competition, a lack of time, or a difference in mission and vision (Sharma & Kearins, 2011). Maurer et al. (2011) remind us that these pitfalls result



in many missed opportunities by organizations that operate without taking advantage of the rich “capital” that exists in the human relationships available to them.

Schools and the constituents they serve also exist within a community, a social network. The social embedded nature of education has repeatedly been documented, and when those social networks operate in unison, this collaborative environment becomes a tool for school improvement (Connolly & James, 2006; Gajda & Koliba, 2007; Gitlin, 1999; Institute of American Values, 2003; T. Wagner, 2001). There is a growing realization that the problems schools face are interconnected and can only be tackled and addressed inter-organizationally (Sowa, 2009). Furthermore, as the classic Coleman report of 1966 (U.S. Office of Education, 1966) shows, relations are an important resource in school improvement, in fact, perhaps even more so than financial resources. He emphasizes that the community actors, whether individual or corporate, have the capacity to bring about the commitment and resources needed to address the challenging needs of educational institutions. Practitioners and academics interested in school outcomes and performance have increasingly become interested in exploring the potential of collaborative relationships to resolve challenges faced by educational institutions (Connolly & James, 2006). The term collaboration is often used very loosely in the school environment to describe interactions by as few as two people working together to as many as an entire community at large, all with the unified purpose of finding solutions to identified problems facing schools (Paulsen, 2008). Paulsen goes on to state that perhaps collaboration in the school environment is best described as an interactive process involving any number of individuals who are all working together to solve a mutually defined problem of the school.

Literature is rich in expounding on the potential benefits a school may experience (Ainscow et al., 2006; Coleman, 1988; Connolly & James, 2006; Frick & Frick, 2010; Sowa, 2009). These benefits include a sharing of resources, partnering with another to invent new responses to an old problem, and offering mutual encouragement and support (Ainscow et al., 2006). Furthermore, Ainscow et al. make the argument that engaging in collaboration is a powerful means of strengthening the capacity of schools to address the challenges they face. It allows school personnel to draw upon and take advantage of the expertise and knowledge of another, thus maximizing the strengths that another possesses to compensate in areas where another is weak. In addition, Frick and Frick (2010) identified a key benefit to lie in the fact that students who see the skills of “community building” in practice will emulate it, thus assuring that this “sense of connectedness” is passed down to future generations.

Despite known benefits, schools often encounter challenges in actual implementation of collaborative practices (Clark et al., 1996; Paulsen, 2008). Evidence-based research suggests that individuals within a school environment are “warm” to the idea of developing positive relationships with colleagues. They may even be able to enter into a conversation concerning the benefits of such relationships, as literature is ripe concerning the advantages schools reap when utilizing the social networks that are available to them. However, there is often a gap in bridging known benefits to actual practice in the classroom (Ainscow et al., 2006). Therefore, while collaboration has emerged as a tool that has great potential for school improvement, the actual attainment and practicing of collaboration has proven challenging, due to the requirement of surrendering one’s autonomy in return for cooperative relationships. A mere knowledge

of the benefits is not enough to encourage actual practice of effective partnerships that, in turn, lead to the benefits being realized.

Relating specifically to private Christian schools, Frick and Frick (2010) appealed to religious schools to do everything possible to enhance this sense of connectedness. They stated, “It is evident that moral purpose and connectedness are linked in principle and practice” (p. 128). In a study involving Catholic schools, Sanders (1997) stated that programs that bridge the schools to the community assist in the important growth and development of the child. She emphasizes that this can be achieved by collaboration and in maximizing the utilization of social networking opportunities. A study involving Christian schools in the state of Pennsylvania (Frick & Frick, 2010) concluded that moral choices were best made in “communitarian” settings rather than in traditional settings that emphasize individual choice. In addition, regarding Lutheran schools, the *Board Manual* for the operation of their denominational schools states, “To separate the ministry of the pastor from the ministry of the school will result in failure” (Wessler, 1987, p. 25). In essence, this means that the very success and sustainability of these schools is dependent upon the unity of mission of the church and school.

Baker (1997) asserts that many churches connected with Christian educational institutions view their educational system to play an important role in passing on religious values and church culture to new generations. Therefore, he goes on to state that the future well-being of these churches is viewed to rest, to a large degree, upon the accomplishment of this goal. Hence, taking advantage of collaborative opportunities and working together will prove beneficial to both the church and the school.

In essence, the primary problem lies in the failure to utilize a tool that is so readily available, that of positive collaboration (Guo & Acar, 2005; Maurer et al., 2011; Sharma & Kearins, 2011). The reason that so many do not utilize these social networks is because the actual processes involved in collaboration are oftentimes socially complex, not to mention time consuming. Many times attempts at utilization of available social networks result in aimless meetings and time-consuming conversations that have minimal impact and little to no payoff (Ainscow et al., 2006).

### **Statement of the Problem**

Adventist schools appear to have the same problem as other Christian schools—an inability to utilize the community, especially the local church, in the attainment of their mission and goals. At the same time, they require that a major portion of their funding be provided by the church, and yet, too often the school is perceived to be separate from the church itself (Sahlin, 1985a). While Sahlin strongly argued the need for churches and schools to collaborate as a team in furthering the goals of both the church and the school, he goes on to say that all too often, this sense of connectedness is missing and many Adventist schools are operating at arm's length from the church. Patterson (2007) summed up the problem in this manner, “Consequently, two parallel organizational systems—the church and the school—function at the local level with minimal structured interaction between the denominationally employed leaders serving each” (p. 5). Patterson's study concluded that there were significant differences between pastors' and educators' perceptions of the role of teachers and pastors in Adventist schools. Educators ranked themselves higher in the role as a “Faith Leader” than did their pastor counterpart. In addition, there were significant differences in their perceptions of

the role of the pastor, with the educators having higher expectations regarding the role the pastor should play in the school. Ledesma (2011) echoed Patterson's call for additional research involving "a study exploring the impact of pastoral support on school systems" (p. 293).

### **Purpose of Study**

Recognizing the importance of collaboration between the Adventist church and school, the purpose of this study was to identify situations where the Adventist pastor and teacher were involved in a positive collaborative relationship and, then, to describe the way the collaboration between selected Adventist church pastors and school teachers worked.

### **Research Question**

How do Adventist pastors and teachers describe their collaborative relationship in their common purpose of ministry?

### **Conceptual Framework**

Several conceptual themes guided this study. They were social capital, collaboration, and the importance of trust in relational theory. This study was built upon the intersection of those theories with the ministries of the Adventist pastor and teacher.

Putnam (2000) refers to social capital as connectedness with others. Sharma and Kearins (2011) state that "we are so linked to the community that we cannot separate ourselves from it" (p. 180). We all have an interdependence on the communities in which we find ourselves.

Social capital exists at many levels in society. At the international and national level (macro) it shows up in the form of the culture, language, and shared social institutions (family, civics, etc.) that frame society. At the meso level, it frames the way regional and organizational interrelations get organized, validated, and authorized to guide social interactions and processes. At the micro level, it shows up within our organizations and social relationships.

Collaboration is defined, according to Sharma and Kearins (2011), as “sets of conversations” (p. 172). Wagner and Muller (2011c) describe collaborative relationships as partnerships that demand “face time.”

Connolly and James (2006) regard trust to be the key component in any successful collaborative relationship. “There is a growing recognition that trust is a key element in encouraging collaboration and that individuals are more likely to trust those with whom they have established good relationships. A history of working together may well develop trust, making further collaboration easier” (p. 79). Sharma and Kearins (2011) concur in their statement, “Trust is a critical component of any collaboration. Members’ commitment to collaboration depends on trust.” They continue, “Trust can help in cementing or rupturing relationships during collaboration” (p. 173).

These layers of constructs of social capital, collaboration, and trust are discussed more fully in Chapter 2 and provide the conceptual framework that guides in the design and implementation of this study.

## **Research Design**

This study utilized a qualitative multiple-case study approach that explored the collaborative relationships between Adventist pastors and teachers in the eastern United

States. A qualitative study was chosen as opposed to a quantitative one because this is a study that is embedded within relationships and personal experiences (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). A multiple-case study approach was also decided upon because multiple pairs of Adventist pastors and teachers were a part of this study.

Various sources were utilized in the data collection including documents such as church bulletins and school newsletters, field notes, and observation; however, the main vehicle is the transcripts from the personal interviews that were conducted. Opportunity was also extended for the pastor or teacher to meet individually if desired. The interviews were recorded and then transcribed. The data were then coded using varied coding techniques to reveal common emerging themes that describe the collaborative relationships that exist. Additional information in regard to the research design of this study is provided in Chapter 3 of this document.

### **Rationale and Significance of Study**

The rationale for this study lies in the ways that the data could potentially impact the ministry of both the local Adventist church and school in the future by setting the stage for collaborative, cooperative practices towards the common goal attainment of the pastor and the teacher: the salvation of young people. By heightening awareness and creating dialogue, it is hoped that this research will lead to insights that will then lead to goal attainment.

### **Assumptions**

An assumption made in this study is that positive collaborative relationships exist within the Adventist system, between the pastor and the teacher, and that these

relationships can be studied. An assumption was also made that each pastor and teacher would respond willingly, honestly, and openly.

### **Delimitations**

This study was delimited to: (a) a single conference in the Seventh-day Adventist system, (b) pastors and teachers recommended by the local conference administration, (c) pastors currently ministering in a local district that has a local church school associated with it, and (d) full-time pastors and classroom teachers.

### **Definition of Terms**

*Bonding Social Capital:* Social ties between individuals of the same ethnicity, gender, and education (Beaudoin, 2011).

*Bridging Social Capital:* Could entail social ties among people of dissimilar ethnicity, gender, and education (Beaudoin, 2011).

*Capital:* Basically something you have that you can use to get something that you need or want (Covrig, 2007).

*Collaboration:* Described as a process to implement shared vision, conduct collective decision making, accept joint responsibility and accountability, and appropriately distribute direct and indirect rewards and benefits (Gray, 1989). Gray went on to explain that it is “a process through which parties who see different aspects of a problem can constructively explore their differences and search for solutions that go beyond their own limited vision of what is possible” (p. 5).

*Community:* Chaskin (1994) states that a community is defined as an environment that contains connotations of connection: some combination of shared beliefs,



circumstances, priorities, relationships, and concerns that provide for the possibility of collective action. For the purposes of this study, the community is the local Adventist church and school.

*Elementary School:* “A unit authorized by the conference board of education and administered by the conference office of education. It offers an organized education program which may be structured in a variety of ways in terms of community needs such as K-6, 1-6, K-8, or 1-8” (*NAD Working Policy*, 2008-2009, p. 331). Often, in the Adventist system, these schools are small, one-room, multi-grade classrooms.

*Interorganizational Collaboration:* Collaborative practices that occur between members of various organizations (Sharma & Kearins, 2011).

*Intraorganizational Collaboration:* Collaborative practices that occur between members who are within the same organization (Sharma & Kearins, 2011).

*Local Church:* A “specific group of Seventh-day Adventist members in a defined location that has been granted, by the constituency of a local conference/mission, in session, official status as a Seventh-day Adventist Church” (*NAD Working Policy*, 2008-2009, p. 36).

*Local Conference:* A “specific group of local churches, within a defined geographic area, that has been granted, by the constituency of a union conference/mission, in session, official status as a Seventh-day Adventist local conference/mission/field” (*NAD Working Policy*, 2008-2009, p. 36). While they typically are organized by state, some states are large enough to house several conferences. The headquarters for each area is referred to as the Conference Office.

*Seventh-day Adventist:* The Seventh-day Adventist Church is a mainstream Protestant church with approximately 14 million adult members worldwide, which includes more than 1 million members in North America. The Seventh-day Adventist Church seeks to enhance quality of life for people everywhere and to let people know that Jesus is coming soon again (Seventh-day Adventist Church, 2012).

*Social Capital:* The social networks and relationships a person has in the immediate surroundings, work community, or area of doing business that can support their functioning (Covrig, 2007).

*Social Network:* A linkage between a person, group, or institution with which a person has contact and on which a person perceives he or she can depend on for support (Sanders, 1997).

### **Summary and Organization of the Study**

It takes a village to raise a child (Clinton, 1996). Schools exist within a community, not in isolation. At their disposal are social elements that may be used to enhance their effectiveness. This social capital can be a powerful tool in which achievements may be utilized that without such would never be possible (Coleman, 1988).

Education has had a central place in Adventism since the founding of the church in the year 1863 and the beginning of the first formal school in 1872. From its inception the Adventist school has shared a common goal with the Adventist church: the salvation of young people and their preparation for Christian service (Knight, 2009). This qualitative case study looked at social capital in terms of Adventist pastor and teacher teams and explored the ways in which a collaborative relationship between the pastor and

the teacher can enhance the ministry of both the church and the school. The heightened awareness and dialogue that it may generate will hopefully lead to not only better practices, but more importantly to the attainment of the common goal, the redemption of young people (Sahlin, 1985b).

This chapter introduced the main conceptual, structural, and research design elements of this study. The next chapter reviews the literature that informs this study, including social capital, collaborative practices, and the history of the Seventh-day Adventist system of churches and schools. The third chapter outlines the research design, reviewing the research question, data collection, analysis, and issues such as trustworthiness, validity, generalizability, and the ethical questions that may arise. The fourth chapter reports the findings, and Chapter 5 discusses the conclusions and recommendations.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this literature review is to explain and critique the scholarship and data-based research that informs this study. The first three sections review scholarship on topics related to this study's core focus: "collaborative relationships." Those three general topics include (a) social capital, with its focus on the broad social context in which social collaboration takes place; (b) collaborative practices, with its focus on attitudes and actions in collaboration with significant inclusion of Gallup's 2009 seminal work on the dynamics of collaboration (Wagner & Muller, 2009); and (c) trust, with a special focus on relationship theory. Social capital reviews current literature as it relates to the importance of utilizing available social networks. The section on collaborative practices explores collaboration as a process as well as a review of the benefits of collaborative relationships and the potential issues associated with such. In addition, I will review existing literature in regard to the importance of trust in the development of collaborative partnerships.

A fourth section pulls together the three main areas and then focuses in on potential components related to teacher interpersonal and organizational relationships with community leaders, specifically boards and civic leaders as well as pastors, as that specifically relates to this study. The focus here is on relationships within school context

and the role that collaborative practices can have on schools and students. The review will then narrow the scope. Because the context of this study is the Adventist system, a general review of the history of that system is provided as well as a description of the specific role played by both the teacher and the pastor in the Adventist church and school system.

### **Social Capital**

Social connections affect every aspect of daily life. Things such as a life partner, financial stability, career choice, political affiliation, and even emotional health depend to some degree on relationships. Social connections are powerful in personal life and also in shared life at work and in civic activities. Many researchers have challenged individuals to think about how social connections impact business situations if used intentionally and purposefully (Robison, 2011). “Organizations are embedded in a wide variety of networks that provide them with opportunities to achieve their goals. These networks create opportunities for cooperation by deepening awareness, trust, and commitment among parties within the relationship” (Guo & Acar, 2005, p. 348).

We are reminded by Sharma and Kearins (2011) that “we are so linked to the community that we cannot separate ourselves from it” (p. 180). They state that there is a tendency to forget the interdependence we all have on the communities in which we find ourselves. Furthermore, organizations pursue their own local organizational mission without regard to the community around. Their research further revealed that capitalizing on these relationships within the community allows all involved to use resources optimally, share knowledge and skills related to sustainable development, collectively

mobilize resources, save time, and become more effective and efficient in their own individual goals.

In defining social capital, Putnam (2000) states, “Social capital refers to connections among individuals—social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them” (p. 19). Covrig (2007) expands the definition by stating that capital, in its basic form, is something that you can use to get something that you want. He discusses the three most common forms of capital that are studied by sociologists and economists as that of financial, human, and social capital. In short, he explains how one may differentiate between the three in a concise manner.

Financial capital is the use of money, material possessions, or any liquid asset to get what one desires. Human capital is the knowledge, ability, skills, or personality that you may use to acquire something else. Social capital, however, refers to the social networks and relationships a person has in the immediate surroundings that can support their ability to function (Covrig, 2007). Covrig broadens the scope by stating that all relationships may be seen as capital. Since this particular study focuses on an intersection of social capital, collaborative relationships, and the mission of the Seventh-day Adventist church and school, this concept is of particular interest. For, it is here that we see an intersection of this idea of social capital with the spiritual realm.

According to Berger and Hefner (2003) the subcategory of religious capital is included under that of social capital. “Social capital refers to the power, influence, knowledge, and dispositions an individual acquires by virtue of membership in a network or group. Spiritual capital may be thought of as a sub-species of social capital, referring

to the power, influence, knowledge, and dispositions created by participation in a particular religious tradition” (Berger & Hefner, 2003, p. 3).

Coleman (1988) further helps to define social capital as being active, productive, and making possible the achievement of certain ends that without which would not be possible. Social capital, he goes on to explain, is lodged in the relationships that exist between and among the various actors within a social framework.

This type of social network paradigm highlights the significance of others in providing support and resources (Sanders, 1997). A primary function of such a network is to provide a buffer against negative stresses, thus, promoting well-being. In short, a social network is anyone on whom you may depend when the going gets tough. M. Clark (1991) writes that social networks provide social support defined as the “availability of people on whom we can rely, people who let us know that they care about, value, and love us” (p. 45).

Social capital is developed, nurtured, and expanded within a context that already has some built-in ties among members. Building social capital relies on contact between people who are similar and it grows at a much higher rate than for those who are dissimilar. This phenomenon is referred to as “birds of a feather flock together” (McPherson, Smith-Lovin, & Cook, 2001). Adler and Kwon (2002) take the idea of “birds of a feather flock together” and expand it to state the importance of using every opportunity to create social ties with those who are in our network. They go on to state that the key, however, to utilizing social capital to its fullest is to motivate the members within a social network to use those ties to produce collective activity. Only then will the potential exist to leverage those social ties to lead to purposeful action. Opportunity for

social capital will produce no results in and of itself. Opportunity refers only to the mere existence of social capital. Adler and Kwon go on to state that actors must be motivated to use those social ties to produce collective activity. In addition to opportunity and motivation, Adler and Kwon add a third aspect of social capital that is necessary: the actors' ability to use those ties toward purposeful action.

Associability is important in the formation of social capital because its definition presumes that the collective actors have similar goals—some mutually desirable end (Adler & Kwon, 2002). The ability to relate well to those within the network becomes a means to achieving those collectively defined ends. Adler and Kwon see social capital as a valuable asset in that through social capital use of their members, organizations can gain resources that enhance organizational performance.

Olson (1971) discusses the importance of actors within the network having ties that are strong. The stronger the ties within a social capital network, the greater the ability to sustain activities and collective action. Weak ties may erode the social network, thus, negate the positive results that may have been possible to achieve. The greater the ties, the more valuable the asset.

Literature revolving around social capital highlights the acquisition and transfer of knowledge as a key benefit (Adler & Kwon, 2002). Maurer et al. (2011) expanded the literature by focusing on knowledge resources and the relevancy to social capital and organizational performance outcomes. Until this study took place, research had neglected to study the processes that mediate between social capital and organizational performance outcomes. It was Maurer et al. who delved into this area focusing on the steps that must take place in order for benefits to result.



Maurer et al. (2011) went about their study to seek a link between social capital and organizational performance outcomes. Their study explored the question of whether the use of social capital resulted in positive benefits for the organization. They tested their hypothesis that social capital unfolds performance effects by way of three successive processes of resource transfer: the mobilization, assimilation, and use of resources embedded within an actor's social relationships.

Mobilization, according to Maurer et al. (2011), entails a process such as looking for and identifying useful resources within the social network and contacting these relations through business meetings or through social activities. The authors go on to state that the process of assimilation, in general, refers to the retrieval and absorption of network resources, including, for instance, individuals sharing knowledge with each other. There will be no benefit from resource mobilization and assimilation unless such is put to use. The process of resource use refers to the allocation of the resources to particular tasks and their transformation into particular outputs. These steps used in succession of mobilization, assimilation, and use must all take place before social capital can have any positive performance results.

If, as literature suggests, social capital must be mobilized, assimilated, and then used, are there other influences that may dictate this transfer of knowledge resources, and thus influence the benefit to an organization? Beaudoin (2011) looked at the ties within a social capital network and explored the role that ethnicity may play in the utilization of social capital. His study looked at ways in which mass media may help to dictate the nature and direction that these social ties take in relation to ethnicity. His research underscored the postulate that social capital is indeed facilitated by the news media. His

study, however, took the existing research a bit further, in that it also considered news effects on social ties among those in the same ethnic group versus the news effects on social ties among those of different ethnic backgrounds. In so doing, he had to consider two dimensions of social capital—bonding and bridging.

As defined by Beaudoin (2011), bonding social capital is social ties between individuals of the same ethnicity, gender, and education, while bridging social capital could entail social ties among people of dissimilar ethnicity, gender, and education. Among ethnicity groups in the United States, Beaudoin's study revealed that Blacks receive the most unfavorable news depictions, with stories involving crime being common portrayals. Blacks are depicted most often as perpetrators of crime and violence, followed by Latinos and then Whites. Thus, Whites are generally portrayed in the most complimentary way in the coverage of news followed by Asians. Beaudoin concluded that because of the positive news coverage on Whites, the effect is one in which Whites are spurred on to have direct contact and development of stronger social ties with other Whites. On the other hand, the more negative news coverage on Blacks is less likely to encourage strong ties and to foster relationships among other Blacks. It is interesting to note that the study did not find this same link with Internet news. This was related to the non-local nature of Internet news as compared to the local news coverage as commonly found in the local newspapers and local TV stations.

Beaudoin's (2011) study indeed has implications for this current study if we are to maximize the use of social capital in our schools and churches. Because there is a direct relationship between local news and the use of utilizing social capital and building strong social ties among various ethnic groups, this study reveals a significant need to

communicate and accentuate the positive happenings at the local school and church level. Social capital exists; however, we must move from it merely existing to maximizing the utilization of such in order to benefit organizations, for the purpose of this study, the school and the church.

Social capital in and of itself will not produce results. It is an asset whose value will materialize only as a result of its utilization. It is too simple to assume that the mere existence of social ties will necessarily generate value (Maurer et al., 2011). Rather, the value of social capital depends on the mediating processes of resource mobilization, assimilation, and use that help to translate social capital into concrete performance outcomes. Maurer et al. go on to explain that knowledge transfer from one part of the organization to another can trigger the development of new or better products, because it facilitates the integration and combination of specialized knowledge resources.

It is often a notion held by employing organizations that idle chatter in the workplace is a waste of company time. Alex Pentland of MIT would beg to differ. His study revealed that workplace chatter, even of the idle kind, not only produces productivity but actually increases it. Employee badges were embedded with radio transmitters, microphones, and motion sensors. Employees who engaged in social interactions with their coworkers had higher productivity levels than those who did not. The study calls for supervisors to encourage employees to spread out, talk to others, get out of their desks, and build social networks (Pentland, 2011).

Communities are places that provide for connections. Chaskin (1994) states that those connections may be in the form of shared beliefs, circumstances, priorities, relationships, or concerns.

It was hypothesized by Maurer et al. (2011) that the more ties one had within the organization, the more opportunities the actors had for transference of knowledge. More ties would certainly result in more opportunities for information exchange and knowledge flow. The authors had based their hypothesis on a previous study done by Reagans and McEvily (2003). They stated that with an increasing number of intra-organizational ties, it becomes easier for experts from different parts of the organization to interact. Through their many social ties and interactions, members of the organization can inform their colleagues about the existence and location of relevant knowledge. Also, with many social ties, the likelihood of finding a fit between knowledge that is needed and knowledge that is provided increases (Reagans & McEvily, 2003). However, Maurer et al. (2011) concluded that the benefit to the organization was not dependent upon the number of ties, but rather, it was the strength of the ties that played the most important role. Therefore, they proved their hypothesis to be incorrect, stating that strong ties involve frequent interaction, emotional closeness, and reciprocal services. They go on to say that the strength of the ties among organizational members is positively associated with the extent of intra-organizational knowledge transfer.

The above-mentioned study gives hope and encouragement to this current study as it involves only two actors, the teacher and the pastor, and looks at utilization of that one tie to benefit the organizations of both the school and the church. Maurer et al.'s (2011) findings support the hypothesis that strong ties enhance the extent of knowledge transfer. In other words, the strength of the tie is more important than the number of ties. This role that the transfer of knowledge plays is a key benefit in social capital and an important driver in benefits to an organization.

In summation of the importance of social capital, Robison (2011) reminds us that a company's resources are not just its patents or its number of plants or the amount of money it has in the bank. The resources are more than what may be quantified in a company inventory. There is social capital as well. There is value in the mere connections between the workers, and this type of capital needs to be mobilized for productive purposes.

### **Collaborative Practices**

This section will explore collaboration as a process. In addition, it explores the benefits of utilizing collaborative relationships as well as some problems that may occur, thus affecting the sustainability of these relationships.

#### **Collaboration as a Process**

Collaborations are defined, according to Sharma and Kearins (2011), as “networks of relationships” (p. 171) and as “sets of conversations” (p. 172). In addition, the definition of a collaborative partnership, according to Wagner and Muller (2011c, 2011d), is when as few as two people double up to accomplish an objective. The definition is expanded as a process to implement shared vision, conduct collective decision making, accept joint responsibility and accountability, and appropriately distribute direct and indirect rewards and benefits (Gray, 1989). It is “a process through which parties who see different aspects of a problem can constructively explore their differences and search for solutions that go beyond their own limited vision of what is possible” (p. 5). Gray continues, “The recognition by stakeholders that their desired

outcomes are inextricably linked to the actions of the other stakeholders is the fundamental basis for collaborating” (p. 58).

Collaboration is also described as “exchanging information, altering activities, sharing resources and enhancing the capacity of another for mutual benefit and to achieve a common purpose” (Himmelman, 1992, p. 28). Gates and Robinson (2009) see it as a “complex moral relationship between people, based on trust, obligation, commitment, emotion, and a shared vision for good” (p. 148).

On the other hand, Paulsen (2008) defines collaboration as a “term that is used to describe interactions as simple as two individuals informally talking to a large organized group of individuals working on finding solutions to identified problems” (p. 313). He discusses how the term *collaboration* has often been used interchangeably with the word *consultation*. He disagrees with this and says that there is one large distinguishing difference between the two. “In consultation, one person is considered to be the expert and provides the others with needed support and information. In collaboration, no one person is considered to be the expert” (p. 313). In a collaborative relationship everyone is considered an expert and everyone has something valuable to contribute to the relationship.

“No single theory can explain the complex motivations driving collaboration” (Sowa, 2009, p. 1004). “No dominant theory has yet been developed that fully explains why organizations engage in collaborations and what they seek to obtain from such collaborations” (p. 1005). She explains that this is because the particular reasons are as varied as the number engaged in the actual process.

One key reason for collaboration to occur is because of a shared purpose (Gajda & Koliba, 2007). Two or more people or entities come together for a shared purpose or reason. They attempt to achieve something or to do something that they cannot accomplish in isolation. This alliance with another organization or individual achieves outcomes that could never be reached as an independent agency or individual working alone.

Some organizations may be motivated to collaborate and join efforts with others in an attempt to avert a crisis. In other words, their motivation may be to save their particular organization, and it needs others to do so. They may already find themselves in an emergency/crisis mode, on the verge of closing its doors. Others may be motivated to achieve benefits from collaborative efforts that are tied to the long-term benefits and goals for the organization (Sowa, 2009). Sowa, in discussing the motivation that arises from a crisis mode, states, “Collaborations may represent a way for organizations to address survival needs” (p. 1016). “The more that organizations experience turbulence or uncertainty in their resource base, the more likely it is that they will be motivated to enter into collaboration as a means to solidify their resource base and reduce environmental dependency” (p. 1017). These, she says, are “collaborations driven more by desperation rather than by design” (p. 1020).

Wagner and Muller (2011c) looked at collaborative relationships between two people, thus, they refer to such a relationship as a “partnership.” They encourage consideration of the word “partner” and go on to suggest that partners don’t order each other around or abuse their position. Instead, they have a high degree of camaraderie, share the same goals, communicate well and often, divide work responsibilities and

rewards fairly. In regard to “successful” collaborative relationships, Connolly and James (2006) found that two key determining factors were the ability to communicate and the ability to compromise.

One of the most neglected areas of human relationships is an understanding of what happens when two people team up to accomplish a task (Wagner & Muller, 2011d). Many resources exist to assist readers in understanding themselves. Many more are available that describe a high-performing team or a great manager. But little has been done to guide two collaborators through their journey to reach a common goal. “In a world that emphasizes individual achievement—the star salesperson, the MVP, the soloist—we forget that everyone is descended from millions of ancestors who survived because they didn’t go it alone” (p. 1).

The 5-year research project conducted by Wagner and Muller (2011e) also found that all successful partnerships shared some commonalities. They refer to these as the “Eight Elements of a Powerful Partnership” and they are described as follows:

Complementary Strengths, A Common Mission, Fairness, Trust, Acceptance, Forgiveness, Communication, and Unselfishness. When combined, these eight elements form partnerships that are not just effective in accomplishing a mission, but also are personally rewarding. Their definition of each element is as follows:

1. Complementary Strengths: Everyone has weaknesses and blind spots that create obstacles to reaching a goal. One of the most powerful reasons for teaming up is working with someone who is strong where you are weak, and vice versa. Individuals are not well-rounded, but pairs can be.



2. A Common Mission: When a partnership fails, the root cause is often that the two people were pursuing separate agendas. When partners want the same thing badly enough, they will make the personal sacrifices necessary to see it through.

3. Fairness: Humans have an instinctive need for fairness. Because the need for fairness runs deep, it is an essential quality of a strong partnership.

4. Trust: Working with someone means taking risks. You are not likely to contribute your best work unless you trust that your partner will do his or her best. Without trust, it's easier to work alone.

5. Acceptance: We see the world through our own set of lenses. Whenever two disparate personalities come together, there is bound to be a certain friction from their differences. This can be a recipe for conflict unless both learn to accept the idiosyncrasies of the other.

6. Forgiveness: People are imperfect. They make mistakes. They sometimes do the wrong thing. Without forgiveness, the natural revenge motives that stem from friend-or-foe instincts will overpower all the reasons to continue a partnership and it will dissolve.

7. Communication: In the early stages of a partnership, communication helps to prevent misunderstandings; later in the relationship, a continuous flow of information makes the work more efficient by keeping the two people synchronized.

8. Unselfishness: In the best working relationships, the natural concern for your own welfare transforms into gratification in seeing your comrade succeed. Those who have reached this level say such collaborations become among the most fulfilling aspects of their lives (Wagner & Muller, 2011e, p. 6).

In other words, according to Wagner and Muller (2011e), together, these eight elements represent commonalities that exist in successful partnerships. Weaknesses in one is compensated for by the strengths in the other, both are reaching towards the same goal, a sense of fairness is prevalent, and trust provides the foundation upon which the relationship is built. In addition, there is an acceptance of the fact that no one is perfect and forgiveness is therefore freely offered during those times when mistakes are made; communication means a continuous flow of information, and there is a genuine desire to see the other person succeed.

This power of collaborative partnerships may be illustrated with some compelling examples from history (Wagner & Muller, 2011c, p. 2). Their examples include Bill Hewlett and Dave Packard who used the flip of a coin to decide whose name would come first in the company logo; how the constant communication between Francis Crick and James Watson cracked the code of DNA; and how John Stockton and Karl Malone became one of the most successful pairs in NBA history through the combination of their complementary strengths.

The notion of relational connection for a shared purpose or outcome represents a common thread across the literature in this field. Senge (1999) stated,

Leaders must realize that everything is interrelated. The world is becoming more interconnected and interdependent, and business is becoming more complex and dynamic. We have to change the way we think about learning and interacting with each other at all levels. We have to develop a sense of connectedness, of working together as part of a system, where each member is affecting and being affected by the others, and where the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. (p. 7)

Connolly and James (2006), when speaking of collaboration, state, “Many problems are interconnected and can only be meaningfully tackled inter-organizationally” (p. 69).

While we see the world more interconnected by means of becoming a “wired” society, Wagner and Muller (2011c) found out that successful collaborative partnerships demanded more “face time as compared to Facebook” (p. 5). They go on to explain that the highest levels of collaboration happen when the partners are face-to-face and not through e-mails, texting, tweeting, or other forms of technology. They cite studies that reveal that television is actually tricking our brains to believe that we are interacting, when in reality, we are only sitting as passive observers. These methods do create a connection, however, a connection in and of itself is not collaboration.

Collaborative practices may be described as “varied,” however, Connolly and James (2006) state that such partnerships are “characterized by mutual accountability, voluntary commitment, and equality in pursuit of shared goals” (p. 71). They expound upon this to state that “collaborative working in the form of partnerships arises from: a mutuality of interests; the possibility of exchange (that is, partners each table something of value); the absence of feasible alternatives to achieve the same goals; the benefits that come from a shared leadership task; and parity of esteem between the partners” (p. 72).

Collaboration is described in a very succinct way by Erickson (1989), “Collaboration means working together in ways that exchange mutual help” (p. 431). In the study, Collaboration as Dialogue, the purpose of collaboration was not aimed at everyone doing the same work in exactly the same way. Instead, it was aimed at furthering an understanding of each other’s practices. Perhaps the idea of mutual help and an understanding of each other’s “practices” in this study can be used to apply to each other’s ministry—that of pastoral ministry and educational ministry.

Collaborative practices, according to Connolly and James (2006), are varied and complex. They explain how collaboration develops over time and becomes more extensive. It evolves and goes through different stages. Sharma and Kearins (2011) agree that collaboration is “open-ended and a self-evolving social process” (p. 172). Gajda and Koliba’s (2007) study went on to develop this idea of it being an evolving process with varied stages. They revealed that it was not superficial collaboration or dialogue that brought about reform or change, but, rather, it was a level of high-quality collaboration that was imperative. Gajda and Koliba viewed collaboration as a purposeful cycle of continuous inquiry that may be better understood by the following in Figure 1. This diagram depicts the way that successful collaboration happens. It is an ongoing process of dialogue, decision making, acting on those decisions, and then evaluating the outcomes.

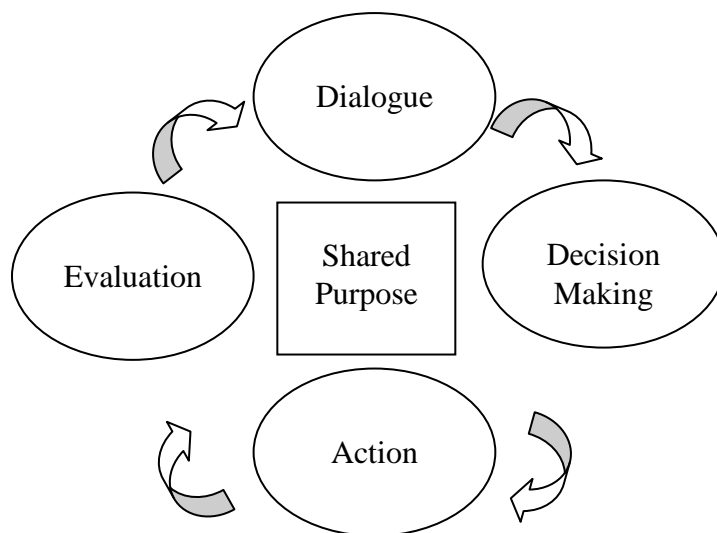


Figure 1. Interpersonal collaboration as a cycle of inquiry.  
From “Evaluating the Imperative of Intraorganizational Collaboration: A School Improvement Perspective,” by R. Gajda and C. Koliba, 2007, *American Journal of Evaluation*, 28(1), p. 30.

Dialogue involves some degree of person-to-person communication; however, this is only a beginning, not the end (Gajda & Koliba, 2007). In a high degree of collaborative practice the dialogue will focus on ways to improve practice rather than a mere exchange of “niceties.” For, if this enveloped the whole of collaborative practices then it would be superficial and weak. Dialogue is shaped and grounded in a shared purpose that stimulates new levels of creativity. School improvement experts warn educators to avoid collaboration “lite,” whereby practitioners confuse mere congeniality and daily niceties with serious professional dialogue that is vital to school improvement (Gajda & Koliba, 2007).

Dialogue is also used as the centerpiece of exchange in the collaborative process espoused by Clark et al. (1996). They explain that this type of collaborative process does not involve two people doing the same work but, rather, it emphasizes that two people understand the work of each other. The particulars of their work may vary, and yet, it is important that they understand the work of each other in order for the collaborative process to be utilized to its fullest.

In a high level of functioning, this type of dialogue will then lead to decision making. This involves making choices. Merely swapping ideas and strategies is not enough to improve practice. A choice needs to be made about what to do next. The process of dialogue that has preceded this step is now used as a guide to make informed decisions about how to move forward. Action must now follow, and all of those who have been involved in the dialogue know why a decision was made and have buy-in in it and can proceed to the next steps (Gajda & Koliba, 2007).

Regarding this cycle of high-level collaboration, Gajda and Koliba (2007) state that once dialogue occurs and a decision is made as to how to move forward, then action becomes necessary. Regardless of the dialogue, a mutually agreed upon decision, by itself, leads to nothing. Actions must now take place in order for organizational change to follow. The participants must now act upon their decision to move forward.

The extent to which the dialogue, decision, and action have merit or have been worthwhile now becomes the question. For, after action has occurred then evaluation must follow to determine if success was achieved. Evaluation of practice is a critical characteristic of high-functioning interpersonal collaboration in any organizational setting (Gajda & Koliba, 2007). The cycle is continually renewed as the collaborative environment recycles.

#### Potential Benefits Relating to Collaboration

Regarding the potential benefits from entering into a collaborative partnership, Rogers (1996) puts it this way, “Those involved in collaboration are more likely to feel an overall sense of ownership and become more committed to ensure the program’s success” (p. 43). The study further found that partners, in a successful collaborative relationship, come to the realization that each of them plays an important role in the collaborative process. Each has something to bring to the table, each has a contribution to make, and each should understand that they can positively impact the process.

Collaborative partnerships are enriched more by differences than by sameness. Prins (2010) put it this way, “Collaboration is based on accepted differences and diversity is an essential condition for a collaborative advantage” (p. 300). She concluded that instead of being an obstacle to collaboration, differences provided a marked advantage.

“On the other hand, being too similar accentuated the competitive nature of the collaborative relationship” (p. 301). She reminds us that the key is to capitalize on the diversity of interests and perspectives that each brings to the relationship. Sharma and Kearins (2011) said that by sharing diverse “experiences and expectations, partners can develop better relationships and respond to various pressures” (p. 168).

Another powerful motivation for teaming up, according to Wagner and Muller (2011e), is working with someone who is strong where you are weak, and vice versa. Specialization allows both people to spend more time doing what each does best and allows the two to tackle together challenges that neither would be able to handle alone. By harnessing this power of collaborative partnerships, you can lighten your load, take advantage of your strengths, and achieve unprecedented success by being one of two people pursuing a shared mission.

Additional benefits, according to Sharma and Kearins (2011), relate to the organization being enabled to share resources and lower problem-solving costs. They go on to reveal that changes may be implemented more effectively as a collective. Thus, “by collaborating, organizations may enhance their collective problem-solving skills, increase the scope and extent of their responsibilities, and gain greater support from stakeholders” (p. 172).

Collaboration, according to Wagner and Muller (2011d), actually affects one’s well-being. Their study found that the most common number of work partnerships in the United States adult population is zero! When asked if they have ever had a great collaborative partner at work, most of the respondents replied negatively. And yet, their study found that “even one strong collaborative relationship markedly increases one’s

well-being over those who are going it alone” (p. 3). They further found that, when compared with those who worked in isolation, those with just one collaborative relationship were more likely to remain in their current position for the following year as well as to stay with their current employer for the remainder of their career. The Gallup research they conducted goes on to show that those who do have one or more strong partnerships at work generate better customer scores, safety, retention, creativity, productivity, and profitability for their companies. They are also happier. One collaborative partnership markedly increases a person’s well-being over those who had none.

In a study conducted by Sharma and Kearins (2011) they discovered some potential benefits that could result when entering into a collaborative practice. These include the joint ability to assume ownership and to solve problems, cost savings to all collaborative partners, increase in efficiency, and a greater ability to be able to sustain the organization. These positive benefits are described further in Table 1.

#### Potential Issues Relating to Collaboration

One of the potential issues that may be present is the lack of motivation on the part of all involved. Motivation to collaborate needs to be present on the part of all parties to be involved in the process. In regard to this, Prins (2010) discovered in her study that one was “convinced of the necessity to collaborate, but soon discovered that others within their organization were not willing to move towards collaboration” (p. 288). In such a case, according to Gray (1989), the first phase must be to search for direction and focus. Working towards a common aim will establish the basis for a collaborative effort to move forward. Prins (2010) says that “the first challenge in collaborative work is to translate



Table 1

*Potential Benefits of Interorganizational Collaboration for Sustainability*

<b>Collaborative Dimensions of Sustainable Development</b>	<b>Potential Benefits of Collaboration</b>	<b>Potential Benefits of Interorganizational Collaboration on Sustainability</b>
Integration of national, regional, and local sustainability	Learning	Enhanced understanding of the regulations and requirements
Integration of economic, social, and environmental sustainability	Relationship building	Critical understanding of various pressures and urgency of sustainable development
Interorganizational and cross-sectoral engagement	Joint problem solving	More realistic expectations of institutional change
Integration of intragenerational and intergenerational framework	Joint innovations and value creation	Enhanced understanding of other actors' efforts in the social drive towards sustainability
	Efficiency resource sharing	Exposure to other organizations' sustainability culture, visions, and missions
	Cost saving	Enhanced vocabulary and communication
	Capacity building and survival	New and deeper relationships with stakeholders
		Development of a positive collaborative spirit
		Insights into new problem-solving approaches
		Integrated development of regional and local sustainability policies and practices
		Integrated development of economic, environmental, and social sustainability policies and practices
		Greater ability to achieve sustainability outcomes that cross-cut different disciplinary, geographic, and organizational boundaries
		More efficient means of engaging with stakeholders
		Greater legitimacy and reputation with respect to sustainable development of the community
		Greater capacity to withstand sustainability issues
		Greater capacity to initiate regional and local-level changes

*Note.* Adapted from “Interorganizational Collaboration for Regional Sustainability: What Happens When Organizational Representatives Come Together?” by A. Sharma and K. Kearins, 2011, *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 47(2), p. 193.

the formal task into a shared aim that will mobilize collaboration (p. 292). She also emphasizes that the purpose of collaboration must be clear. “If there is no goal, it is not meaningful” (p. 295).

There is a price that must be paid when one enters into a collaborative partnership, according to Guo and Acar (2005). They explain it by stating, “Arguably, the greatest cost of developing collaborative activities is the loss of operation autonomy” (p. 345). That cost is echoed in the study done by Ainscow et al. (2006). They state, “Achieving authentic collaboration has proved a challenge, requiring, as it does, the surrendering of some degree of independent control for collective influence” (p. 193). Prins (2010) stated it this way, “There is a dynamic to safeguard the status quo and to protect the identity and autonomy of the organization” (p. 307).

Great collaborative partnerships don’t just happen, according to Wagner and Muller (2011d). If they lack a common mission, the foundation of any joint endeavor, the two will work at cross-purposes. This idea of having a common mission seems to be at the core of being a motivational factor to develop a collaborative partnership. They express their viewpoint by explaining, “If both partners don’t need the talents of the other, there is no reason to team up. Without a willingness by each of them to take substantial risks, and reciprocation from both of them, they will never develop the rhythm of trust that defines collaboration” (p. 4).

Sustainability may also be a concern. Regarding sustaining collaborative partnership, Rogers (1996) stated, “Creating a partnership is usually easy. The difficulty often lies in the ability to sustain them. The key is to assure each partner that he/she has

meaningful and substantive roles to play and that progress or successful outcomes are being generated as a result of the partnership” (p. 48).

Sharma and Kearins’s study (2011) discovered that some potential problems could be encountered when entering into a collaborative practice. There are barriers and issues that prevent collaborative relationships from being sustained over a long period of time. The problems in implementation and sustainability are described in Table 2. Some of those issues identified are the struggle for power or political gains, differences in the mission and vision of each partner, differences in each partner’s knowledge base, and this whole idea of competition, rather than collaboration.

### **Trust**

Trust is difficult to define, explain, or measure because it is based on subjective factors such as one’s beliefs or perceptions. And yet, Connolly and James (2006) suggest that the element of trust is the key component in any successful collaborative partnership. They put it this way, “There is a growing recognition that trust is a key element in encouraging collaboration and that individuals are more likely to trust those with whom they have established good relationships. A history of working together may well develop trust, making further collaboration easier” (p. 79). Sharma and Kearins (2011) concur in their statement, “Trust is a critical component of any collaboration. Members’ commitment to collaboration depends on trust.” They go on, “Trust can help in cementing or rupturing relationships during collaboration” (p. 173).

Regarding the importance of trust, Johal (2001) reminds us that “the essence of any organization is relationships, and the first step in analyzing this is to stop and

Table 2

*Problems in Implementing Interorganizational Collaborations for Sustainability*

<b>Problems in Implementing Sustainable Development</b>	<b>Problems in Implementing Interorganizational Collaborations</b>	<b>Problems in Implementing Interorganizational Collaborations for Sustainability</b>
Tension between intergenerational and intragenerational sustainable development	Power and politics	Competing organizational interests and priorities on economic, social, and environmental dimensions of sustainability for the short and longer term
Multiplicity and complexities of local and/or regional sustainability issues related to economic, social, and environmental dimensions of sustainability	Power differences because of members' differences in knowledge, status, and resource base	Differences in organizational visions
Ambiguities around measurement of achievement of sustainability	Tendency toward preservation of self-interest	Different levels of organizational commitment
Difficulty in integrating economic, social, and environmental dimensions of sustainability	Lack of real commitment to the collaboration process	Differences in organizational expectations
	Resistance and conflict	Different levels of organizational knowledge and experience in planning and implementation
	Distrust of others in the collaboration	Different organizational pace in the movement toward sustainability
	Perceived nonneutral convener	Lack of common vocabulary
	Threat of competition from members	
	Negative collaboration history	
	Prejudices towards organizations	
	Ineffective and inefficient communication	
	Lack of resources, including time, individual member commitment, and information for the collaboration	
	Members' predominant adoption of a task focus as opposed to a communicative focus because of increased workload and pressure	

*Note.* Adapted from “Interorganizational Collaboration for Regional Sustainability: What Happens When Organizational Representatives Come Together?” by A. Sharma and K. Kearins, 2011, *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 47(2), p. 191.

determine the level of trust” (pp. 15-16). Trust is always the pre-condition and an element that is essential to the success of an organization. Trust, built over time, may be eroded or earned based on the quality of the relationship. Makiewicz (2011) found that trust is earned because of repeated positive interactions over a period of time. It is dependent upon the willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another and concluding that the benefits far outweigh the risks.

A high level of “trust cannot be forced” (Kouzes & Posner, 2007, p. 229). This process of relationship building requires us to pay more attention to the process of building, maintaining, and utilizing trust. Building this level of trust and maintaining it is possible through open communication and the sharing of information. It is the foundation upon which relationships are built. Legrone (2010) states that trust is the social glue that keeps relationships and organizations together.

In regard to this process of building trust, Covey (2006) described it this way, “Tell the truth in a way the people can verify. Get real and genuine. Be open and authentic. Err on the side of disclosure. Operate on the premise of what you see is what you get. Don’t have hidden agendas. Don’t hide information” (p. 157). Drucker (2001) states that trust grows from seeds of encouragement, support, reward, and praise. As a result, building trust among those in an organization can lead to a higher performance through increased collaboration, greater problem-solving ability as a team, and an increase in effective communication (Makiewicz, 2011).

### **Collaborative Practices in the School Setting**

Because this particular study focuses on educational institutions, it is important to review literature in this regard. As it relates to educational institutions, this idea of

encouraging collaboration is not new. The universality of this belief is stated this way, “Nearly all major educational institutions, bargaining units, accrediting bodies, and educational sponsors at all levels of schooling openly endorse interpersonal practitioner collaboration as the most powerful strategy for sustained, substantive school improvement” (Gajda & Koliba, 2007, p. 27).

In educational circles, according to Gitlin (1999), “collaboration is viewed as an educational good that can play an important part in furthering school reform” (p. 630). The purpose of collaboration in the school environment, according to this perspective, is to “foster school improvement by developing supportive relationships that can enable schools to move through the critical phase of the reform process” (p. 631). Connolly and James (2006) state, “Increased openness to collaboration within and between schools is a correlate of improved practice in schools” (p. 70).

Specifically relating to the school environment, T. Wagner (2001) addressed this idea of collaborative connectedness, by expressing it in practical terms, thus making it action based. He said that collaborative relationships among adults were the key to school reinvention. School improvement was found not to be about selling an idea or program, but about creating a sense of buy-in and ownership, all aimed at positive student outcomes. Creating this attitude of collective ownership and commitment goes to the very heart of the moral purpose of education, and one of the biggest challenges that educators face is to root their classrooms in community.

In their study on collaboration for school improvement, Connolly and James (2006) stated, “Practitioners and academics interested in the management of educational institutions increasingly recognize the necessity for shared power to resolve particularly

difficult problems” (p. 69). Rogers (1996) adds, “Schools that identify all potential collaborative partnerships and develop strategies to encourage participation enhance the scope of the program” (p. 43). When reflecting on the collaborative process, one teacher stated, “This project has brought me together as an educator, to share problems, share knowledge, and realize that probably one of the best sources of knowledge are the people you work with” (Gitlin, 1999, p. 641).

As schools reach out to social agencies, businesses, religious institutions, or others concerned about the well-being of children, they are then connecting with their community and cashing in on this form of social capital. Regarding the opportunity of a school in building social capital and establishing relationships within the community in which it exists, Sowa (2009) found that schools saw these relationships “as a way to improve their position as a leading service provider in their education community . . . and as a way of being able to better accomplish their organizational goals and thereby promote their services, a way of increasing the visibility of their programs as outstanding ones in their communities” (p. 1019).

A study conducted by Noonan, Morningstar, and Erickson (2008) looked at high-performing schools who had a strong network of linkages and supports within the community that they were a part of. They state, “Once a community reaches that high level, an outgrowth of that is you get to a culture of commitment and all of a sudden, agencies are making suggestions, employers are making suggestions, and it goes far beyond the scope of one individual. It almost feeds on itself” (p. 138). Community members, according to the study, were invited to come in and sit in the classrooms and attend board meetings. Many community members identified the development of

relationships with the staff as the most important aspect of this relationship. One stated, “We get to know them on a personal basis. I think that is probably the key” (p. 138).

One may say that the purpose of schools is to develop human capital in the form of our young people. If this is the case, then perhaps we can maximize the use of the social capital that exists within a school community to develop the human capital in the form of our young people (Coleman, 1988). Perhaps educators have not maximized the development of our young people in terms of modeling for them a collaborative, cooperative environment. Herein lies a problem. Students have seen more of the “I” than of the “we” modeled in the classrooms and, therefore, they themselves continue the cycle for future generations. If, as educators, we truly want to develop this human capital then we need to consider this strong statement, “Community building and cooperative welfare must be an acculturated practice within the schools so that future generations possess the knowledge, skills and dispositions that ensure a connectedness to their society” (Frick & Frick, 2010, p. 118).

When looking at factors that increased the likelihood that schools would enter into a collaborative practice, Guo and Acar (2005) used the term “Resource Dependency Theory.” This theory suggests that “organizations with greater resource scarcity, as indicated by their smaller organizational size, might be more inclined to collaborate” (p. 346). They have a need that must be met in order for the institution to survive and this leads them to consider collaboration in order to address the sustainability issue.

Regarding a concern that some educators may have when considering whether to enter into such a process, Clark et al. (1996) discuss how beginning a collaborative process is somewhat like navigating a minefield in that there are so many hidden and



potential dangers. These dangers of collaboration in the school setting may lie in the fact that the process demands that the teacher open the classroom doors to another. Because of the very nature of teaching and working with children, there are always those days when the teacher may not want a visitor. The classroom is risk-filled. Student interactions and reactions are rarely predictable, and outsiders may not understand the environment and, therefore, the teacher may be opening herself up to misinterpretation by a non-trained educator. A willingness to open the doors and be vulnerable may indeed be the first hurdle needed to be overcome when engaging in a collaborative adventure.

According to Paulsen (2008) there are some additional barriers to school-based collaboration. The most obvious, Paulsen says, is the lack of time available in a school day to allow for collaboration. It is often difficult to find common planning times with a partner. He goes on to state that a second reason is due to the fact that teachers are trained and used to working with children, and some have a more difficult time relating to an adult who may have differing ideas. Paulsen mentions one additional barrier that may rear its ugly head: The last barrier is an educator who may be reluctant to change. Collaboration put into practice may demand some changes. And, that may be the hardest barrier to leap over. Is it worth the risk?

Despite the challenges to collaboration, Ainscow et al. (2006) state that school collaboration is indeed worth any cost. "School collaboration challenges existing assumptions about what is possible with particular groups of learners. It leads staff within school to re-think their expectations and, as a result, to think more creatively about new possibilities for supporting the learning of students who have been stereotyped and then dismissed as 'un-teachable'" (p. 195). Other studies, such as that by Wilson, Nash, and

Earl (2010), also agree that collaboration in schools challenges the targets that may have been previously set, thus, facilitating change in both knowledge and in practice.

According to Dufour, Eaker, and Dufour (2005), as it relates to the purpose of educational institutions, the benefits of collaborative relationships are critical to the success of our students. “The purpose of school is to see to it that all of our students learn at high levels, and the future of our students depends on our successes. We must work collaboratively to achieve that purpose, because it is impossible to accomplish if we work in isolation” (Dufour et al., 2005, pp. 232-233). Collaboration, when used as a specific strategy for school improvement, according to Ainscow et al. (2006), can “widen student learning opportunities and help address the needs of vulnerable groups of learners; be effective in helping schools to solve immediate problems; and, under certain conditions, contribute to the raising of expectations” (p. 192).

To many educators, the number one motive for taking the risk of entering into a collaborative relationship is for the benefit of their students. Evidence indicates, according to Ainscow et al. (2006), that “many teachers are motivated by a belief in the value of working together as a means of finding ways of improving the quality of education they provide for their students” (p. 198). Their study goes on to reveal that there existed a commitment to collaboration for the benefit of pupils. Interviewees stated that it was all about the importance of “providing a suitable and high quality education to all their pupils” (p. 198).

In a report that involved school, family, and community partnerships, Sanders (1997) reported that children in Catholic and other private schools achieve at a higher level in mathematics and verbal skills than do children in public schools largely because

of the transmission of common messages, expectations, and norms from the church, family, and school. In this study, a social network comprising family, church, and school provided children in Catholic schools with the social capital necessary for school success. The study reveals that comprehensive, on-going programs that connect the school to the community assist in building stronger, more extensive social networks that are important to the development and growth of the child. Sanders also reports that with time and commitment, all schools can be more successful and can do a better job in educating and caring for today's young people. She says that this can be achieved by better collaboration within the community. Parents, schools, and communities can partner in a social network that increases students' social capital and their chances for success.

In another study involving teacher collaboration, Clark et al. (1996) found that when teachers participate in a collaborative process it has a positive impact upon the students. In most collaborative projects involving classrooms, an end result would be the improvement of student learning. The study recounts how oftentimes teachers may feel isolated in their classrooms. Many times, however, the students may feel isolated as well. As the teacher started sharing with her class ways in which she was collaborating with another, the students became excited and engaged. They were thrilled to know that their classroom was a part of something bigger. The fact that the teacher was having collaborative meetings and learning from another made the students more open to sharing their knowledge with each other and created an environment of collaboration within the classroom. An outcome of the classroom teacher modeling that collaborative spirit is to produce collaborative students.

The research conducted by Clark et al. (1996) supports the benefit of opening up the classroom doors into a more cooperative and collaborative environment. They recalled the first year of collaborative experience in the classroom and remember the thing that stood out in the students' memory was the growing sense of importance about what they were doing when outsiders came into the classroom. There was a heightened sense that the work they were doing as students was meaningful. It wasn't just their teacher's crazy ideas, but there were other people who were interested in the kinds of things that were happening in their classroom and in what they were doing. The students took on a different sense of value about their work. A collaborative environment connected student learning to the world beyond the classroom. The positive impact that collaborative experiences can have on students is echoed in a study conducted by Connolly and James (2006). This study found that "the involvement of educational institutions in collaboration can secure various benefits, many of which lead directly or indirectly to improved pupil achievement" (p. 76).

Frick and Frick's (2010) study discusses this whole idea of the impact that an environment of "connectedness" can have on our students. "Community building and cooperative welfare must be an acculturated practice within the schools so that future generations possess the knowledge, skills and dispositions that ensure a connectedness to their society" (p. 118). It is imperative that we model collaboration to our students, thus ensuring that they will continue the cycle in future generations to come. The practice of connectedness to others becomes a framework for life itself. Frick and Frick explain that an environment enveloped in a collaborative spirit is one that

becomes the foundation for treating persons as an ends and not as a means, and can, in a large part, provide the inner basis of an outward social order. To be in a relationship with others where care, nurturance, respect, compassion and trust are the dominant characteristics is to be fully human. (p. 119)

This is one of the greatest life lessons that a teacher can pass on to his students.

According to Blum and Libbey (2004) this idea of school connectedness includes the belief held by students that adults care about their learning as well as about them as individuals. The study reveals that when practiced in a school setting this belief positively affects things such as academic performance, absenteeism, school completion rates, and even disciplinary issues. A key to achieving these outcomes is not only in the fact that the teacher is involved in collaborative relationships but that the students see this modeled in the adults in their school community. These types of collaborative, cooperative relationships must permeate the air that the students live in and breathe. The teacher's participation in such is only the beginning of the larger ripple that will flow outward.

A commitment to a collaborative environment is indeed a commitment to a process that is continuous, recursive, and contagious. It is one that focuses on group awareness, respectful listening, empathetic understanding of others, effective communication, partnering and working together, supporting and encouraging dialogue. Frick and Frick (2010) state that this practice is foundational to the moral aims and purposes of education and learning for all children.

A study involving schools in Pennsylvania revealed that "moral choices are best made in communitarian settings rather than a traditional focus on the experiences internal to an individual agent" (Frick & Frick, 2010, p. 121). A collaborative environment in which students are centered is one in which trust, care, nurture, respect for others, and the integrity of human relationships are taught. A classroom where every person is valued

and ideas are free to be exchanged and evaluated then becomes the foundation upon which these students will build their adult ideologies and practices.

Educators, as a profession, have at their focal point to seek out what is in the students' best interest. One model for determining what is in a student's best interest has a robust focus on this idea of responsibility to others, respect and value for the opinions of others, and the acknowledgment that all individuals have worth (Stefkovich & O'Brien, 2004). The work of the educator in this way becomes a practical and moral activity to be reflected in the collaborative practices in the classroom and lived out not only in his/her own life, but mirrored in the lives of the students outside of the four walls of that classroom.

Any individual involved in a high level of collaboration with a teacher really takes on the role of a co-teacher, according to Clark et al. (1996). A teacher in this case study concluded one reason that the collaborative relationship was so successful was because both partners took equal responsibility if something didn't work well but always tried to make the other feel as if the successes were theirs.

Educators are in a high position as leaders due to the fact that they influence the future. Giroux (1992) states the responsibility in the following manner, "Leadership poses the issue of ethical responsibility as a social relationship in which difference and otherness become articulated into practice" (p. 7). This idea of an environment rich in collaborative practices extends to life lived outside of the classroom. He further states that students become more attentive to all forms of human suffering and to the oppression of others whose voices demand support and recognition. In general, students become more attuned to a life and a world outside of themselves.

## **History of the Seventh-day Adventists as a System**

I have covered the three main concepts involved in this study: social capital, collaboration, and trust. We now look at the literature to explore the school context of this study. I explain Seventh-day Adventism as a system of churches and schools and the key roles that have been defined by that same system to be performed by the Adventist pastor and the Adventist teacher.

### **Founding and Growth of Adventist Education**

The Seventh-day Adventist Church grew out of the Millerite Adventist movement of the 1830s and 1840s and was officially organized as a church in the year 1863. Nine years later the denomination found itself growing rapidly and desperately in need of ministers. Up to this point, the church had made no provision for the formal training of workers. As a result, the denomination established a school near Battle Creek, Michigan, specifically with the purpose of training church workers. Thus, the Adventist educational system was born (Knight, 2009).

The year 1872 also marked a key point for the establishment of Adventist schools. It was in that year that Ellen White authored a pivotal article entitled, “Proper Education,” that launched Seventh-day Adventists into a concerted educational work. The church as a whole was now united towards the establishment of educational institutions (Baker, 1997).

In the 1880s there was some talk among the leaders regarding the establishment of elementary schools; however, no progress was made towards the realization of that. Things began to change rapidly in the late 1890s when Australian law compelled parents to send their children to school. This law agitated the issue and Ellen White wrote,

“In localities where there is a church, schools should be established if there are no more than six children to attend” (White, 1948, p. 199).

In addition, in the 1890s the Adventist Church had a mission thrust and was sending out missionaries to every corner of the globe. Knight (2009) goes on to explain how the educational system was forced to expand rapidly to meet the demand to prepare these workers for service in the fields of education, publishing, and medicine. The church began to change its attitudes towards formal education because now they were united with an enlarged vision of the church’s mission to the world.

There was a push for the establishment of an Adventist elementary system of education. By 1900 the elementary school was firmly established in the Adventist Church. Most of the schools were one-room schools. The church took its role to take the gospel to the world seriously, and the number of elementary schools grew rapidly. In a period of 30 years, the Adventist system grew to include 594 schools, 758 teachers, and 13,357 students (Knight, 2009).

Today, the Adventist educational system has grown to the point that it covers the educational experience from pre-school to the doctoral level and is now the second largest parochial system in the world (Dudley & Gillespie, 1992). The Adventist educational system, to a large degree, consists of small schools, many of which are one-room schoolhouses with only one teacher in a classroom of eight grades.

#### Adventist Education as a Redemptive Ministry

According to the statistics on the North American Division Department of Education website, the Adventist Church of today operates over 7,200 schools worldwide with nearly 1.5 million students (Seventh-day Adventist Church, 2012b). It goes on to



further state that the primary aim of Seventh-day Adventist education is to provide opportunity for students to accept Christ as their Savior, to allow the Holy Spirit to transform their lives, and to fulfill the commission of preaching the gospel to all the world. The goals of the Adventist educational program were to be wholistic in nature, providing for the total mental, physical, social, and spiritual development of the child (White, 1952), with an emphasis being placed on the teaching of the Bible and moral training (White, 1923).

Regarding the mission of the Adventist church, the North American Division Church website states that the Seventh-day Adventist Church seeks to enhance quality of life for people everywhere and to let people know that Jesus is coming soon again (Seventh-day Adventist Church, 2012a). A close examination of the goals of these two entities reveals that they are closely aligned. Both have a redemptive purpose.

Adventist schools operate in close relationship with Adventist churches. Children often attend both the school and sponsoring church and much of the school budget comes directly from appropriations from the church. This relationship from both the church and school provides an opportunity for the two entities to cooperate and collaborate in such a way so as to benefit both the church and the school. The goal of early Adventist education was to prepare the student for a life of service, and while that goal has remained, another emerged as being central. In the book *Education*, Ellen G. White (1952) said that the work of education and the work of redemption were one and the same. Introducing students to Jesus as their Savior is the ultimate goal in every Adventist classroom.

Regarding the importance of the link between the Adventist school to the church, the North American Division Education Code states that the primary purpose for Seventh-day Adventist education is to transmit to the children the church's "ideals, beliefs, values, habits, and customs . . . in order that the church may continue to exist" (Seventh-day Adventist Church, 1984, item 1020). Baker (1997) echoes this by stating that Adventists have viewed the development of the church's educational system as critical to the very future of the church itself. He goes on to state that Adventists view their educational system so important, as it relates to the passing on of religious beliefs to future generations, that the well-being of the Adventist Church rests, to a large degree, upon the success of Adventist schools.

According to Rasmussen (1950), the church's two greatest commands were to preach and to teach, to evangelize, and to educate. He states, "If one is neglected the other suffers; if either one is neglected, the church suffers. The educational program of the church and the evangelistic program of the church must go hand in hand" (p. 15). He goes on to state that the Christian school is the most indispensable method that we have of saving our children within the church.

#### Adventist Teachers' Role

The most important issue that our children will ever have to consider is where to spend eternity (Pollard, 2002). Pollard goes on to state that the most significant experience we can provide for our children is an increasing immersion into the mission of God's remnant church. This immersion occurs best in Adventist schools. A primary role of the Christian teacher is to provide an environment where young people can consider questions that will make an eternal difference.

In describing the role of an Adventist teacher, Baker (1997) states that the teacher is an “agent for salvation; someone who is not just teaching intellectual facts, but who is carrying out one of the most effective forms of ministry” (p. 31). The North American Division Office of Education (Seventh-day Adventist Church, 2012b) website states that “the primary aim of Seventh-day Adventist education is to provide opportunity for students to accept Christ as their Savior, to allow the Holy Spirit to transform their lives, and to fulfill the commission of preaching the gospel to all the world.” Once again, the primary aim of the Adventist educational system is the redemption of our children. Sauer (1950) found that the church is second only to the home upon a child who makes a decision to be baptized.

In comparing the roles of a Christian teacher with a pastor, Hoilette remarked that a Christian teacher is also a pastor or minister of the gospel. The difference between the titles of pastor and teacher in modern society arises from the current division of labor and defining of roles (Hoilette, 1993).

In examining Eph 4:11, 1 Cor 12:28, and Rom 12:6-8, we can see that Scripture considers teaching to be a divine calling with the primary function being redemptive in nature. Ellen White (1952) also agrees that education and redemption in their highest sense are one. It is clear that the role of a Christian teacher must include the redemption of young people as the highest priority.

In his study that looked at the attitudes and support of Adventist ministers towards denominational K-12 schools, Baker (1997) recommends that local Adventist educators seek ways to improve communication and dialogue with the local church pastor. Conclusions drawn from the Valuegenesis study state that

teachers are a vital link in the evangelism of children, and church schools provide the best way to nurture young people for maturity and loyalty to the church. Schools provide experiences to help students avoid at-risk behaviors, assist their grace orientation, and promote pro-social behaviors such as caring for the poor and needy. This valuable resource is beginning to be appreciated by local congregations because they are beginning to talk together about their common mission—the salvation of the next generation. (Gillespie, 1993, p. 7)

### Adventist Pastors' Role

Regarding the role of the Adventist pastor in the local church school, Ochs (1947) said that it is the God-given responsibility for the pastor to be the leader in Christian education. Ochs goes on to state that the pastor should, from the pulpit, present Christian education as an essential, cardinal truth of the church. Furthermore, he strengthens his plea by saying that an active, viable school will contribute to a healthy, growing church. The Valuegenesis Report III strongly recommended the need for a renewed pastoral support of Adventist schools (Benson & Donahue, 1991).

Regarding the attitudes of Adventist ministers towards denominational schools, Baker (1997) found that philosophical and attitudinal support for Adventist schools was strong; however, this support was not demonstrated in a tangible way. Baker's study highlights the fact that the ministers studied held a strong belief that the Adventist educational system was critical to not only the future health of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, but to the actual survival of it. His study noted that this belief held to elementary schools and that there was a weaker belief that secondary schools were crucial for the future and survival of the church. He concluded, however, that the actual effort put forth by ministers in the support of their local church school was at a lower level than their verbal statements that affirmed their belief in the value and importance of the church

having a local church school. In other words, Baker concluded in his study that their actions did not match their words.

When it comes to the actual defined role that Adventist pastors are to play, perhaps there are lessons that we as a denomination must consider. For example, Wen (1976), in his study that involved Adventist pastors and teachers and found that most Adventist pastors recognized the importance of their role as an educational leader, agreed with educators on their role expectations; however, they had received no training to prepare them for their role as an educational leader. According to Baker (1997), this study may be verified by examining bulletins from every Adventist college and university in the North American Division. He goes on to state that at present, there is no class that ministerial students can take that trains them regarding their role and relationship towards their Adventist school. He concludes, “It is truly the most astounding fact evidenced from the review of literature, that although Seventh-day Adventists place such a high priority on the importance of Christian education financially as well as theologically and philosophically, they fail to provide any tangible training of its clergy regarding their potential role and/or involvement in their parochial educational system” (p. 48).

In the study that looked at the attitudes and support of Adventist ministers towards denominational K-12 schools, Baker (1997) recommends that pastors seek ways to improve communication and dialogue with the local church school teacher and administrators. His study revealed that “the support of Seventh-day Adventist ministers for the church’s educational system is vital, since their support of local schools can significantly influence the level of support from their local church members, both in direct financial support, as well as decisions to place their child in the school” (p. 5).

Conclusions drawn from the Valuegenesis study state that

pastors have the unique opportunity to provide the role model for the church members as to the significance of Christian education. Support from the pulpit for the educational system is needed. Taking time to feature faculty whose commitment to the religious development of children of the church could help, too. This leadership role in religious instruction is crucial to the growth of the school system. (Gillespie, 1993, p. 7)

#### Adventist Pastor and Teacher—The Power of Two

After reviewing the history of the Adventist system and looking at the roles of the Adventist pastor and teacher, one is now faced with the question as to how, or if, these two roles and two entities would benefit if linked together in a collaborative relationship. Baker's study (1997) resulted in two key recommendations: "Local Adventist school administrators should seek ways to improve communication and dialogue with local constituent church pastors and Adventist church pastors should seek ways to improve communication and dialogue with the local church school teachers and administrator" (pp. 102-103).

Regarding the question of if, Hoilette (1993) responds in this manner, "The prevailing present-day opinion is that evangelism and education are inseparably bound together and that in true Christian education they both exist" (p. 5). Hoilette further comments, "Pastoral ministry is a gift of preaching, teaching, and nurturing. Teaching ministry is a gift of teaching, nurturing, and creating confrontation with the Almighty. Both are involved with—and designed for—edification and redemptive activity" (p. 5). If indeed this is a common thread, then we must maximize our efforts to reach this common goal, the redemption of our children. The use of collaboration and maximizing the use of

the social capital that is available could be a key to tying the common threads of the pastoral and educational ministry together.

Common goal attainment is perhaps one of the biggest arguments that one can use to promote this high level of collaborative practice between pastor and teacher. Hoilette (1993) puts it this way, “There is no need for conflict, for feelings of inferiority or privilege. Both pastors and teachers are on the same team. Instead of rivalry there should be professional and spiritual collegiality. There is a need for parity, for mutual respect, regard, support, understanding, and cooperation” (p. 4). If the goals of the Adventist pastor and those of the Adventist teacher have parallels, then perhaps the application of collaborative theories into daily classroom practice would benefit educators, students, schools, churches, and our communities at large in positive ways.

In response to the question of how, effective alliances most strongly agreed with three statements that emerged from a Gallups interview (Wagner & Muller, 2011a): “We focus on each other’s strengths, not weaknesses; We accept each other as we are and don’t try to change each other; We are understanding of each other when one of us makes a mistake” (p. 2).

Pastors and teachers in this collaborative partnership must realize that they are both imperfect creatures. One of the greatest challenges in a collaborative relationship is to accept the fact that you are working with a fallible, emotionally driven, imperfect human being just like yourself. “The most successful partnerships accept the rough edges of their colleagues. The best collaborators understand that they are no more going to get a perfect partner than they are going to be one” (Wagner & Muller, 2011a, p. 4).

Monte Sahlin (1985a) addressed this issue of the importance of collaboration specifically between the Adventist preacher and teacher. He states that an intentional strategy of collaboration is necessary for pastors and teachers to work together productively. The inclusion of collaborative dialogue, according to Sahlin, is not optional if a school and church are to maintain a healthy relationship. He suggested that preachers must be visibly active in the school, while teachers must be equally involved in the life of the church. Sahlin presents a collaborative model as pastors and teachers become allies in dealing with difficulties facing both the church and the school.

Pastors and teachers are to be partners in ministry (Wade, 1990). He goes on to say that they are both ministers of the gospel and, therefore, they need to work together on communicating and on achieving common goals. Both pastor and teacher need to dialogue about their mission, vision, and goals in ministry. Scripture speaks of pastors and teachers possessing a common goal. In Eph 4, an unmistakable togetherness exists. The giving of gifts was for the edifying of the saints and the perfecting of the body of Christ. Both pastors and teachers were to serve this function. They are a team. When the team loses, they both lose. When it wins, they both win. The same spirit works through both pastor and teacher. The process by which the pastor/teacher team develops shared goals will facilitate the collaborative process.

Collaborative dialogue needs to begin with a clear goal in mind and in developing an alliance that helps to strengthen both institutions as pastor and teacher learn to support each other (Sahlin, 1985a). Pastors and teachers need each other more than ever before, says Sahlin. Effective collaborative strategies practiced by both the pastor and teacher can positively impact the ministry of both the pastor and teacher, therefore positively



impacting the church and the school. Christian education should be a part of every worship service. Teachers must be actively involved at church and pastors need to be visible on the school campus. At school and at church they are to appear as a joint ministry team.

Perhaps the findings of Wagner and Muller (2011c) may be worth considering and may have implications in this particular study. Their data revealed that more often than not, vacancies are filled individually, not in tandem. Rarely is much thought given to the partnerships that may result from such a hire. Personnel committees and those responsible for hiring typically think of who is the right person for the task as opposed to who is the right partner to add to the situation. We have a culture of individual achievement as opposed to a culture that is open to looking at new possibilities to the power of two. One would have to wonder what the result may be if those given the responsibility of filling vacancies would ponder this question of adding a partner to the church/school collaborative partnership team as opposed to adding a pastor to the church or a teacher to the school.

In a study that looked at perceived pastoral support among Adventist principals, Ledesma (2011) found that “the most supportive pastors are those employed by union and conferences that have a non-negotiable policy of hiring pastors unless they are committed and strong advocates for Christian education” (p. 259). In other words, the hiring entities were intentional when hiring a pastor in regard to addressing the supportive role they would play in Adventist education.

In 1987, the Seventh-day Adventist Church commissioned a study referred to as Project Affirmation, or more commonly known as Valuegenesis. According to Gillespie

(1991), the study confirmed that modern culture was slowly creeping into our Adventist homes, causing the youth to shift their values towards the world. Thus, the implications for Adventist education, according to Geraty (1990), are powerful. He states that the church school often provides the only effective environment for reaching and impacting many of these young people who come from broken homes, who rarely attend church, and who have lost a sense of community. Gillespie (1991) states, “One environment is better than none, but two or three are even best. Strong families, strong churches, and strong schools are imperative” (p. 10).

Perhaps Adventist schools should adopt a statement contained in the *Lutheran Board Manual for Elementary Schools* (Wessler, 1987),

Lutheran theology and educational philosophy clearly advocate a united ministry of pastor and principal. These two are considered to have calls from God to serve in the ministry and they are partners in the gospel. The Lutheran day school should be an integral expression of the church’s mission. To separate the ministry of the pastor from the ministry of the school will result in failure. The pastor and the principal should meet together regularly to coordinate their efforts and to improve the effectiveness of their ministry as partners for Christ. They are a part of the same team. (p. 25)

### **Summary**

Organizations are embedded within existing social networks (Guo & Acar, 2005). However, there is a tendency for organizations to operate in isolation, forgetting the interdependence we have on the community (Sharma & Kearins, 2011). Current literature discusses the benefits that can be realized when these relationships are utilized in ways to reach organizational goals (Adler & Kwon, 2002; Maurer et al., 2011; Robison, 2011). We have also discussed collaboration as a process (Connolly & James, 2006; Gajda & Koliba, 2007; Paulsen, 2008) and in doing so, we have explored the benefits of being in a

collaborative partnership as well as some stumbling blocks that may occur (Sharma & Kearins, 2011; Wagner & Muller, 2011d). In addition, we have seen the importance of trust being the underlying foundation upon which positive relationships are built (Johal, 2001; Kouzes & Posner, 2007).

Specifically, the Seventh-day Adventist church and school are referred to as a system, and yet, research reveals that these two parallel organizations often function in isolation and fail in utilizing available relationships in the attainment of their missional goals (Patterson, 2007; Sahlin, 1985b). A collaborative relationship between the two ministry leaders, Adventist pastor and teacher, would enhance the missional goals of both the church and the school (Sahlin, 1985b; Patterson, 2007).

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

#### **Introduction**

This study utilized a qualitative multiple-case study design that explored the collaborative practices between selected Adventist pastors and teachers. It described the collaborative relationship that exists between these two ministry leaders.

Adventist schools are not unique in that, when it comes to the utilization of social networks, they experience some of the same challenges that other organizations face. Specifically, there is a failure to utilize the local church in the attainment of their missional goals. The problem centers on two parallel organizations, the church and the school, in the same system functioning as if they were independent of each other. In other words, this sense of “connectedness” between the church and the school is missing (Sahlin, 1985b). In essence, the real problem is one of a failure to utilize a relational tool that is so readily available—collaborative practices (Guo & Acar, 2005; Maurer et al., 2011; Sharma & Kearins, 2011).

The purpose of this case study was to describe the collaborative practices that exist between selected Adventist pastors and teachers. In so doing I also discovered ways this cooperative collaborative relationship can enhance the ministry of both the Adventist pastor and teacher, thus leading towards the attainment of the missional goals of the church and the school.

## **Research Question**

The following question was explored during the course of this study:

How do Adventist pastors and teachers describe their collaborative relationship in their common purpose of ministry?

## **Qualitative and Multiple-Case Study Research**

This dissertation research project is a multiple-case study exploring the collaborative practices of select Adventist pastors and teachers through their own personal experiences. Because it is a study that is embedded within relationships, a qualitative study was elected as opposed to a quantitative one.

According to Creswell (2003), “case-study research involves the study of an issue explored through one or more cases within a bounded system” (p. 73). Creswell goes on to state that the “focus is either the case or an issue that is illustrated by the case or cases” (p. 244). The system, in this case, is the Adventist system of churches and schools. The players are the pastor and teacher. The issue is that of collaborative practices.

Creswell (2003) referred to qualitative research as “fundamentally interpretive” (p. 82). He goes on to describe this process as “developing a description of an individual or setting, analyzing data for themes or categories, and finally making an interpretation or drawing conclusions about its meaning personally and theoretically” (p. 182).

## **Data Collection**

This section looks at the methodology involving the sampling, data sources that were used, and the data procedures.

## Purposeful Sample

Purposeful sampling means that the inquirer selects individuals for study “because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study (Creswell, 2003, p. 125). Chein (1981) also defined purposeful sampling as the process of selecting a sample from which the most insights into the particular study could be gained. Selecting the cases to be studied requires that the researcher define the types of cases to be included.

For the purposes of this study, there was a purposeful sampling of Adventist pastors and teachers (including principals) whom the local conference administrative team determined to be working in a positive collaborative relationship within their conference territory. The criteria for selection was that the pastor and teacher team had been working together for a minimum of 1 academic year.

A Seventh-day Adventist conference located in the eastern United States was selected for this study. This was due to close proximity to the researcher, allowing for ease of data collection as well as in the local conference administration’s support of this study.

## Data Sources

The data sources that were utilized include data obtained in the interview process as well as specific documents that were shared by both the pastor and teacher such as church bulletins, church and school newsletters, church and school calendars, school evaluation documents, and school handbooks. In addition, field notes and observation were valuable sources.

## **Interviews**

The pastors and teachers were interviewed as a team together in a location that was agreed upon mutually, that being the school facility. The following interview questions guided the interview process:

1. Your conference administration has identified you as a pastor/teacher team that works in a positive collaborative relationship. Why do you think you have been identified as such?

2. Describe the collaborative, cooperative relationship between you as pastor and teacher.

3. Why do you think it is important to collaborate and have connections between the church and the school?

4. How do you connect your entity, be it the church or the school, to the other entity? (Probe for specific examples such as special days of emphasis, church bulletin, newsletters, baptismal classes, etc.)

5. How does a collaborative relationship between the two of you as pastor and teacher benefit the church and the school?

6. What would it take for other pastor/teacher teams to make collaboration work well? (Probe for examples of when it might not work, hindrances, etc.)

7. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about church/school collaborations?

## **Documents**

Some of the documents that were reviewed included church bulletins, church and school calendars, church and school newsletters, school handbooks, and school

evaluation documents. These documents were reviewed to determine if there were any “connections” of the two entities through the use of written materials.

#### Data Procedures

1. Application was made to Andrews University’s Institutional Review Board to grant permission for this study. All of the required documentation such as Institutional Consent and Informed Consent accompanied the application.

2. The conference administrative team met and selected the pastor and teacher teams to be a part of this study. The list and contact information were sent to me.

3. Each selected pastor and teacher was contacted initially by e-mail, and followed up with a phone call, requesting the individual to participate in the study.

4. At a mutually agreed upon time I traveled to each school, arriving early in order to visit classrooms, record some observations, review documents, and have informal conversations.

5. Each pastor and teacher signed the Informed Consent form before the interview commenced. They were also given the opportunity to ask any questions.

6. At the conclusion of the school day the pastors and teachers gathered in an assigned room where the interviews were conducted. The interview was recorded digitally with notes being taken simultaneously.

7. At the conclusion of the interview, the pastors and teachers were given my contact information in the event that they would like to contact me privately and communicate any additional information that they were not comfortable in sharing when the other team members were present.

8. The recordings were transcribed and checked numerous times for accuracy.



9. The transcripts were then sent to the participants and opportunity was given for them to correct anything they felt was not an accurate and true representation of our conversation. Only one individual contacted me and requested that something he had said be stricken from the written document. His wish was granted, and the document was sent again to him to verify his consent of the change he requested.

10. Various coding methods were utilized to identify the themes.

11. Three other researchers independently verified the existence and accuracy of the themes that were identified.

### **Data Analysis**

The data were analyzed using a four-step method as suggested by Giorgi (1985). The four steps were (a) read the transcripts for a general sense of the material, (b) reread the material and identify “meaning units” or coding words or relevant phrases that appear to focus on the phenomenon being researched, (c) reflect on the meaning of what was said in the interview in order to develop themes and meanings about the study, and (d) synthesize the collective data and interpret the themes and meanings discovered through the process.

The data in this study were coded from the transcriptions and analyzed for themes and patterns. The themes were determined through the careful examination of the data collected. The transcribed data were color-coded for elements that related to the general research question on pastor-teacher collaboration. The coded elements were grouped together and analyzed for common threads. I was able to code the responses for emerging themes and I continued this process until saturation of the data was attained. As a result,

these threads produced the general themes for the study. The themes that emerged from the data were organized into categories.

The categories that emerged led to the interpretations and conclusions concerning how Adventist pastors and teachers describe their collaborative relationship. In sum, the data were organized around the research question and presented in narrative format. In addition to the transcribed interviews, the data analysis included the use of field notes, observations, and documents provided by the pastors and teachers.

There are two schools of thought in regard to the coding of data. The first involves using the theoretical framework as a lens to analyze the data while the second approach involves allowing the data to speak for itself and then connecting those themes back to the literature and theoretical framework. This study adopted the second approach because it allows for open discovery of issues that may not be in literature as of yet. In other words, this second approach allows the authentic voice of the subjects to be heard above that of current literature. This approach is espoused by Merriam (1998) by the suggestion that human beings are the primary instrument of data collection and analysis in qualitative research. Therefore, interpretations of reality are accessed directly through their observations and interviews.

### **Trustworthiness and Validity**

This section explores the issue of trustworthiness in relation to validity. According to Creswell (2003), “Validation is a judgment of the trustworthiness or goodness of a piece of research” (p. 205). In order to enhance the validity issues related to this study, various basic strategies were utilized as identified by Merriam (1998).

1. Structural Corroboration: Multiple types of data were used to gain insights into the collaborative relationship that existed between the pastor and the teacher. These data consisted not only of the transcripts from the interviews, but also various documents, field notes, and observation.

2. Member Checks: Once transcribed, the participants were asked to verify that the data that were captured were true.

3. Peer Examination: Feedback was solicited and revisions were made based on the review of three other individuals.

### **Generalizability**

Eisner (1998) described the process of generalizability in a qualitative study as the process of the reader gaining new knowledge and then transferring that newly acquired knowledge to other situations. The results of this particular study inform readers of the collaborative practices that exist between Adventist pastors and teachers. The information gathered from the pastors and teachers will spark ideas in other pastor and teacher teams across the Adventist system. Readers are able to match the research situation described in this study to determine if and where the results may be transferred (Merriam, 1998).

### **Ethics Issues**

Appropriate application was made to the Institutional Review Board at Andrews University to seek approval for the study. Permission was also obtained in writing from the local conference administration as well as from the conference executive committee granting approval to conduct the study within their conference territory. The written transcripts were shared with each participant to be certain that the true essence of what

they said was accurately recorded. Also, in the interest of fostering comfort and freedom for sharing their perspectives, the conference as well as individual participants are granted anonymity in this final written document.

### **Summary**

In summary, this study utilized a qualitative multiple-case study design that described the collaborative relationship between select Adventist pastors and teachers. Observation, recorded interviews, field notes, and various documents all serve to support the research findings. Through the thick descriptions of their positive relational experiences, pastors and teachers told the stories of collaboration at their best. Analytic induction resulted in the conclusions drawn by this research and the significance of the study.

## CHAPTER IV

### VOICES OF PASTORS AND TEACHERS

#### **Introduction**

This study focused on the stories of Adventist pastors and teachers who are working together in positive collaborative relationships within the context of their church and school environment. The qualitative study design was used to obtain a deeper understanding of the collaborative practices that are experienced. The stories below are based on a compilation of recorded interviews, informal observations, field notes, and a review of documents. There were four major themes that emerged in this study: (a) we are in this together, (b) necessary ingredients, (c) connections, and (d) success and failure. Together they answer the research question regarding how Adventist pastors and teachers describe their collaborative relationship in their common purpose of ministry.

#### **We Are in This Together**

As I visited the schools, I received an overwhelming impression that the pastors and teachers really embraced a sense of being “together” in their work. They had a deep commitment to Adventist young people and to their salvation. They viewed Adventist education and the work of the church and school as complementary. This section shares aspects of that collaborative relationship that create and enhance the sense of “we are in this together.” It reveals how this process of “togetherness” begins, starting with a shared

vision and continues on to describe the environment that surrounds a collaborative relationship, thus fostering a sense of community. The various aspects of “togetherness” identified by the participants in the study were: (a) sharing a mutual goal, vision, and mission, (b) team, unity, and us, (c) a sense of community, and (d) initiator of collaborative process. Aiming at the same target and having an attitude of “team” can work to begin the process of building that sense of community that exists in positive collaborative relationships between Adventist pastors and teachers.

### Sharing a Mutual Goal, Vision, and Mission

Underscoring the importance of sharing a mutual goal, vision, and mission, the participants in this study frequently referred to the church and school as “one organization.” In essence, the data noted that it was not a matter of two different or separate entities but, rather, one entity with two branches, each realizing the vital part they play towards reaching their missional goal. According to one pastor, the realization that the ministry of the church and the school are the same is what propels the ministry forward for both entities. He explained, “We need to see the value and explore how we can truly satisfy all the passions for church ministry through the school. In a school you have access to parents; you have access to adults, to whole communities, to kids, to the next generation.” Another viewed the mission of the school to be an extension of the mission of the church. “If you separate the two, it kind of stops making sense.” Several respondents echoed this by stating the need the church and school had for each other in order to reach their common mission. To the pastors and teachers in this study, this meant that there was a strong dependence on each other to reach their missional goal.

The respondents defined their mission as discipling young people, helping them to develop a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, and preparing them for His soon return. Some described a collaborative relationship as all aiming towards the same target, that being the salvation of young people. One teacher said, “After all, we really are working for the same thing. We want our kids to be in heaven.” One pastor told of his personal journey of defining and reflecting on his mission for the church. He went on to explain how that “defining moment” resulted in a realization that the mission of the church and school were the same. He had defined the ministry goals he wanted for his church to be the exact same ministry goals he wanted fulfilled in the school. This means that the bottom line in the missional goal of both the church and the school is redemptive in nature. When pastors and teachers stopped to take the time to put their missional goal for the church and the school into words, they realized them to be one and the same. Another who had participated in this process of reflecting on missional goals described it as an “eye-opening sit-down process” and one that allowed her to come to “a realization that we are all in this together and we all know where we are headed.” This meant that intentional time had been set aside on the part of these pastors and teachers to reflect and focus on defining their common missional goals.

Having a known mission was evidenced in one of the schools and observed in a profound way. In this school, the classroom teacher asked all of the students to repeat the school mission statement for me. I stood witness as these elementary students repeated their school’s mission statement in unison word for word and by memory. Without hesitation they said, “[school name] will journey to excellence by God's strength in body, mind, and spirit.” This was also mentioned by way of a commendation in the school’s

evaluation document stating the fact that the students recite the mission statement every Friday during their school chapel. In this site, even the students were clear as to what the mission of their school was. This same mission statement was also kept before the parents and the church family by having it as the leading headline on their weekly school newsletter. This means that having a common missional goal did not stop with the knowledge of the pastors and teachers, but had expanded to include all of the students enrolled in the school, their parents, and the church family.

The conversations regarding the commonality of mission highlighted the benefits gained when pastor and teacher come to the realization that they are both aiming for the same goal, and together, they have the possibility of achieving far greater results than working independently. One teacher shared that so much more can be accomplished when you are working together for the same mission and the same goal than could be accomplished if you act alone. A pastor remarked that “you will be much healthier” if you are both shooting for the same goal. Another said that when two have a common mission and vision it creates a “great environment to work in” because you are both pushing in the same direction. To the pastors and teachers this means that when it comes to achieving a common missional goal, there is greater power and potential in two than there is in one.

#### Team, Unity, and Us

This study revealed that a sense of team, unity, and us is important in building a collaborative relationship. When describing the collaborative relationship with the pastor, one teacher exclaimed, “It’s never been us and them. It’s just us.” Another concurred by adding that churches and schools need to develop a “we” understanding, not an “I”



understanding. “We have always felt as one family,” remarked one pastor, “and we have never considered the school as something separate.” We are in the same family and on the same team. The significant role that this sense of team plays in the collaborative process was stated this way, “Until you realize that it is a team thing you will never get to this. You just can’t get there if you are not willing to work together as a team.”

Documentation also served to validate this aspect of team. This was evidenced by one school handbook putting their belief to a team approach in writing by including this statement, “The vision of the school is achieved through a team approach to Christian education.” This school offered this written statement up front so that the parents were aware before enrollment that their child would receive a “Team-Based Education.” A school newsletter, when announcing the new teaching staff to the church and school family, referred to the staff as a “team.”

A school administrator emphasized the need to be unified in this way, “As pastors and teachers we are a part of Christ’s body and we need to be unified. We need each other. One is the head, one is the arm, one is the leg, and we need each other in order to function properly.” Another responded that when the spirit of unity is present it serves to support and lift each other up. A pastor elaborated on the “cohesiveness” between the church and the school leadership. He described this “cohesiveness” as liking each other, hanging out together, supporting each other, and never bad-mouthing. Another teacher remarked that working together as a unified team was indeed a “big deal” when referring to an Adventist church and school. She clarified why it was such a “big deal” by explaining that if we are to exemplify Christ then we must demonstrate our Christianity in very real and practical ways through our working relationship.

The pastors and teachers noted that benefits would be bountiful and both the church and school program would be stronger if the pastor and teacher functioned as a team. One teacher discussed the benefit of being in a partnership by saying, “A team of two is always better than a team of one. The more people there are that are on the same page together and doing the same thing for the program—it has to be stronger.” I witnessed this team work and unity firsthand. It was often hard when first walking onto a site to differentiate between the teachers and the pastor. There was a team spirit and unity that was sensed from the onset of the visit when first stepping onto these campuses where team meant everything.

#### A Sense of Community

The conversations described a sense of community that enveloped the relationships between those in the church and the school family. Several referred to the relationships that existed among the church and school family as that of being in a “community.” Another described them as a large and unified community. The positive collaborative relationship of the pastoral and teacher team was identified by still another teacher as being “like a community.” One teacher expressed her personal belief that the biggest benefit in a collaborative environment was the fact that the kids are growing up in an extended “family of community” who all have a part in raising them. Another spoke of this community as being a safe haven that offered support and care.

This sense of community was also seen to be a large contributing factor in what attracts non-Adventist families to enroll in the school. To highlight this fact, one pastor noted that the non-Adventist parents in his school were drawn in by this perception of “community” that is so evident when one visits the school. This environment was seen to

attract and encourage relationships with non-Adventists that otherwise may never be impacted by Adventism. Another teacher told a story of how this sense of community had been specifically identified by a parent as the key reason to why they made the decision for their child to attend. Knowing that a whole “community” cared for her child drew her to desire this nurturing environment for her own child. One pastor put it this way, “The sense of collaboration is safeguarding the community that people are really searching after and that becomes a catalyst to the growth of the school.”

This sense of community was communicated and demonstrated to the students in powerful ways. Two different schools indicated exactly how they sent this message of community to their students. One described a welcoming activity that happened the first day of every school year. It was referred to as “The Red Carpet Welcome.” On the first day of school the teachers, joined by the pastoral staff, lined the front entrance walkway to the school. As the students exited their cars and entered the building, the team clapped and cheered as each child walked down the “red carpet.” In addition, they called out each student’s name and welcomed them to the start of a brand-new year. A letter was shared with me from a parent regarding a child’s prayer after that red-carpet day. The parent repeated the child’s words, “Dear Jesus, thank you that Mrs. . . . called my name today. Thank you that I walked on the red carpet and that everyone clapped for me.”

Another school team used a different exercise to emphasize and illustrate this sense of “community” to their students. All the students assembled in the gymnasium in a large circle. Encircling them were adults who held signs indicating the role they played in the lives of the children. For example, one adult held a sign that said “Sabbath School Teacher,” other signs indicated “Pathfinder Director,” “Custodian,” “Pastor,” “Teacher,”

“Parent,” etc. The objective was to demonstrate to the students in a visual and powerful manner that there was a whole team of adults who were dedicated to care for and support them. In essence, they were saying, We all want the same thing for you, we all love you, and we all are committed to investing in your life.

This sense of community was also evident in a review of documents. When speaking of school being a community, one school handbook stated that it was their philosophy that “the home, the church, and the school form a partnership to accomplish the goals. Children who embrace opportunities with enthusiasm, a teacher who nurtures their growth, and the parents and church family who support the many facets of school life unite to form the family that is the school.” The handbook went on to explain how the Home and School Association existed for the purpose of supporting collaboration and unity among the home, school, church, and community. As a part of the initial student registration process, one school requested the parents and students to complete a worksheet that detailed strengths in the child as well as areas for growth. They were then asked to set goals to be reached. The document stated that this effort was a part of the “collaborative effort of a community of caring individuals” involved in the life of the child.

Another school handbook described the school program as a total “system that consisted of a community of parents, teachers, pastors, and church members all being subsets of the system.” Furthermore, this handbook spoke of intentionally creating this sense of community by boldly stating that the school’s focus is on connecting the school to the various ministries of the church in order for the ministries to support each other. Those ministries were said to include Sabbath School, Pathfinders, Family Life and

Evangelism. “All subsystems must work cooperatively within the system.” This is powerful documentation to the fact that this focus on community was not subtle, but rather was one that is in the forefront of the school goals. The words partnership, together, collaboration, community, and system were frequently used in the various school handbooks and other documents to describe the overall objectives of the school program.

A collaborative environment creates a sense of community. A teacher described the collaborative process as “building community with people.” Another emphasized that collaboration is all about building relationships, thus making community happen. One newsletter to parents talked about the school’s goal of building community as a desire for every student to envision themselves being surrounded by a circle of friends who are all cooperating together for their well-being. Having a sense of community is not automatic or a given, but rather, it is built through the development of positive collaborative relationships. In other words, these pastors and teachers see building relationships synonymous with building a sense of community.

#### Initiator of Collaborative Process

In exploring collaborative relationships, one of the first questions one may ask concerns the role of initiator. In other words, who initiates this collaborative process? This study showed that the initiator of the process is not defined by any one person, but rather, the process of positive relational building can be started by anyone willing and committed to the collaborative process. For example, one site identified the teacher as being the initiator, another identified the pastor, and still others stated that it was the

church and school board or the local conference office leadership that had initiated the collaborative process.

In regard to a teacher initiating the process, one site reported that this was their experience. It was stated that the teacher had taken the initiative to reach out to all of the other pastors in each of the constituent churches and bring them together into a positive working relationship. He had been able to “break down the barriers” that had led to a lack of unity because of his push and desire to collaborate. When speaking of him, a colleague stated that he had brought the concept of “team” to the school. Another site had a similar experience and agreed, stating in their case it had also been a teacher who initiated the process and was instrumental in helping to build a positive working relationship between the church and the school. Another in attendance concurred, explaining that during a tough time it was a teacher who had kept the relationships going when others wanted to give up. She had kept everyone focused and walking down the same road in spite of the bumps that were being encountered.

The pastor was also identified as one who potentially held the leadership reigns of initiator. Two different school and church sites reported that it was the pastor who was to be credited for leading their team towards a collaborative process. According to them, the pastor had taken the initiative to reach out and create a collaborative environment among all the other churches in the constituency by instituting a “sharing of pulpits.” This concept of cooperation and collaboration among all of the constituent church pastors had then spread to the school environment. Another site reported that it was their youth pastor who was leading in this collaborative process. All the teachers at the school were in agreement that this youth pastor sees the school not as one of her ministry objectives, but

rather, as her major ministry focus and considers herself a pastor to all of the students enrolled, regardless of the church where they attend. Her commitment was further evidenced by the countless number of hours she spends at the school by making it a “priority” in her schedule and in her ministry role. The youth pastor’s passion and commitment created the spark for collaborative practices to spread among all in the pastoral and educational team.

One site claimed that the governing boards of the church and school were instrumental in initiating the collaborative process. All were in agreement that in their case it was indeed the church and school board who had created a collaborative environment which in turn “traveled down” to individual players. This church was viewed as having a “history” of a positive working relationship from its inception and before any of the current pastors or teachers were hired. This was reportedly evidenced in the fact that the topic of unity is intentionally discussed in the church and school board meetings, and it is not uncommon for votes to be taken and decisions to be made that preserve and foster this sense of unity. Every board decision was made in a collaborative way with the voices of the pastors and teachers all being welcomed and heard. Furthermore, all of the teachers and pastors on the staff at this site are voting members of both boards.

Still another site claimed that it was the leadership at the local conference level that had assisted them in building the positive relationships between the church and school and pastors and teachers. The conference had achieved this by scheduling a joint pastor and teacher meeting with the purpose of each local ministry team working together to define a united vision and mission. The Superintendent of Schools was also seen to be

a key leader in this process and had encouraged and given support to both pastors and teachers. Also mentioned to be a very positive force was the role of the Conference Executive Committee and the Conference President. In this instance, the conference office had created the opportunity, and the pastors and teachers responded in a positive manner.

One site gave credit to the combined efforts of both the church pastor and the teacher who were seen to lead jointly in the collaborative process. It was noted that it takes both of these players in order for the process to happen. From the positions of pastor and teacher the collaborative process was seen to “filter down to the rest of the staff.”

This study focuses on the team aspect of the collaborative process and the importance of pastors and teachers being equal partners and equal participants in the process. However, this study also revealed that any one person or group serving in a variety of positions has the capacity to initiate the process and start the church and school on a journey towards building positive collaborative relationships. There was no consistency as to who that had to be, but rather, it was more dependent upon an individual's or group's willingness and desire to be a catalyst for the creation of a collaborative environment. In every situation, that spirit and spark of collaboration filtered down into the rest of the church and school team. One school board chair stated it this way, “We have discovered that one can make all the difference, especially when he becomes the catalyst and is intentional about keeping those relationships going.” This means that every individual within the church or school family has the capacity to make a positive difference and begin the journey of initiating a collaborative process.



## Necessary Ingredients

As I visited the church and school sites, I became aware that I was seeing a common thread of “ingredients” that seemed to exist in every situation studied. The participants were asked to expound on what it takes in order for a collaborative environment to work. This section describes those conversations by exploring the ingredients that were deemed to be important: (a) a kids-first attitude, (b) embrace the strengths and accept the weaknesses, (c) trust, (d) respect and value the roles and boundaries, (e) be flexible and welcoming, and (f) communicate the good and the bad. I will describe how the participants in this study possessed and utilized these ingredients to build positive collaborative relationships that helped them reach their common missional goal.

### Kids-First Attitude

In every one of the sites involved in the study there was a “kids-first attitude” that was prevalent in the church family. For example, one teacher remarked, “They are not seen as kids of the members. They are the members.” Another agreed with this statement by stating that the church environment was “all about the kids.” Still another concurred, stating that children were valued as an integral part of the church family. One teacher stated, “We are not afraid to put a child up front. We are not afraid they are going to say the wrong thing or lift up their skirt or do the things that children sometimes do. We value them not only as the future, but as the present reality of our church.”

This “kids-first attitude” created a “guarding of the school” on behalf of the church members. According to one pastor, the school and the children were so important that the needs of the school and students were given a higher priority than the needs of

the church or the older church members. This attitude always begged them to consider the question as to what was the best decision for the children. It was never a question as to what was best for the pastor, the teacher, or the church, but rather, what is the best decision for the kids. This was evidenced by several churches, which reportedly made a decision to build and fund the school before the church. For example, one school received a new roof before the church received a much-needed parking lot. In another case, the school gymnasium was built before the church building as it was decided that the members could wait for a new sanctuary and hold church services in the school gym. Furthermore, a document given to all parents of one church family detailed the church's financial commitment to make it possible for every child in their congregation who desired an Adventist education to receive one.

When it comes to collaborative relationships, one teacher noted that a kids-first attitude must be present to make the whole thing work. This attitude, according to several others, made all the difference. Every site that participated in this study placed a high priority and value on what was in the best interest of the kids. This means that if there is to be a positive collaborative environment between the Adventist pastor and teacher, there must be a high value placed on young people. This also means that sharing a common belief that the kids come first will naturally assist the pastor and the teacher in working together on behalf of the kids. This will in turn be evidenced in the decisions that are made and in the way ministry is practiced. According to one teacher, this attitude also means that “the kids feel that sense of ownership.”

## Embrace the Strengths and Accept the Weaknesses

Identified by the participants in the study was the importance of embracing the strengths and focusing on the positive traits that exist in others. For example, one teacher noted that there is a need to be intentional to look for and identify the strengths that each partner has. Identifying and naming them is an important step in the collaborative process. Another teacher noted that knowing that something is a strength of another person frees me to concentrate on my own strengths and lets someone else concentrate on theirs. When new staff were hired, one church and school team actually took concentrated time to identify individual areas of strengths. The pastors and teachers then focused on ways in which those strengths by the new team member could be utilized to further the mission of the church and school.

Having a positive focus and attitude was deemed by several of the participants to be an ingredient that led to healthy relationships. They noted that negativity has a consequence of affecting one's health in negative ways while focusing on the positive had the opposite and beneficial results. The importance of the "healthy approach" of looking for the good in each other instead of focusing on the negative was emphasized. "Don't get too excited about the bad, but be willing to look for the good." The study highlighted the need to be intentional about focusing on the positive. One teacher believed that we see what we look for; therefore, we need to look for the good.

While concentrating on the strengths in a team member may be an easy task, the participants also discussed the importance of accepting the weaknesses in others. Strengths were easy to identify and accept; however, accepting the weaknesses was often the difficult and hard part. In a collaborative relationship, it is good, however, when you

can get to that point because you can then come to the realization that it is all right to have weak areas and you don't have to be everything to everybody. One pastor explained it this way, "Negative judging of others plays out by a distancing in the relationship. Instead, we need to accept their weaknesses and take the strengths that they have got." Another noted, we all have strengths and weaknesses but when we accept those weaknesses and put the strengths together as a result we all become stronger. Another identified the advantage of knowing what the weakness in your partner is grants you the permission and freedom to pitch in and do the task together. One teacher readily acknowledged that she was far from gifted in all areas, however, she was gifted enough to be able to identify others who had the gifts that she lacked. In other words, this meant that she knew her own weakness and readily admitted such by searching for others who had the potential to fill in the missing gap. A pastor admitted that his area of weakness was in organizational skills; however, this was a strength of one of the teachers. Therefore, he was more than willing to allow her to utilize that gift to offset his weakness. Alone he was weak, but together he became strong. A classroom teacher spoke of her weakness in the area of music but of the pastor's giftedness in this same area and how the use of his musical strength could be witnessed in morning worships, school chapels, or holiday programs, thus, his strength complemented her weakness and positively impacted the overall school program. Once again, this meant that the strength of one compensated for the weakness in another.

Therefore, it was felt by the respondents that strengths in others need to be embraced and celebrated, while weaknesses need to be accepted. To emphasize that, one pastor mentioned the importance of not being intimidated or feeling threatened by the

strengths that the other may possess, but instead, to embrace those strengths and to utilize them for the benefit of the ministry. At the same time, the study revealed that there is also a need to be accepting of the fact that while we all have strengths, we also all have weak areas. This finding suggests that building positive collaborative relationships means accepting the fact that no one is perfect and all possess areas of strengths as well as areas of weakness. The key then becomes to seek ways to work together to maximize each other's strengths.

### Trust

Trust was seen by the participants to be another necessary ingredient in the establishment of a positive collaborative relationship. For example, one pastor stated that he could not have entered into a positive relationship until he had learned to trust the teachers as individuals, as spiritual leaders, and as competent educational instructors. "Trust is very crucial. When I say trust I really mean trusting each other as a person, a spiritual leader. The more we trust each other the more we interact and get engaged in activities." This meant that trust set the stage for collaboration to follow. The meaning of trust was explained by a teacher in this way, "The pastor knows that I will never undermine him in the church and I know that he will never undermine me in the school."

Having a trusting relationship, according to one pastor, meant that misunderstandings were less likely to occur. He told the story of what could have been a major issue but was averted because of the trust that he had built in the teacher. A church member had come to the pastor stating something the teacher had said. This comment was taken negatively by the member, but because the pastor trusted the teacher, he knew right away that it was a misunderstanding. He said, "The only reason that we could do

that was because we trusted.” He had enough trust to know that the teacher would never be critical of him in public. He immediately went to the teacher and then also cleared the matter up with the church member who had spoken to him.

Trust was seen to be created by spending time together. One pastor noted that trust grew by the personal interactions he had with the teacher and with time spent together. Another stated that the more time spent together, the more that trust blossomed. One pastor and teacher team built trust by spending time together before every board meeting to talk about the agenda items. They wanted to be certain that they were both on the same page and in agreement on all agenda items before talking about such matters in a public arena. This helped them create a sense of trust with each other and knowing that they would publicly support each other as any differences had been worked out in private.

The existence of trust in positive collaborative relationships was further evidenced in one school evaluation self-study document that stated an intentional effort was being made to establish a warm and “trusting relationship” between staff and pastors. Trusting relationships between the pastor and the teacher not only builds positive working relationships in the present, but also prevents misunderstandings from being blown out of proportion in the future. This means that building a relationship that is anchored on trust is an important step towards a collaborative journey.

### Respect and Value the Roles and Boundaries

The conversations also highlighted the need to respect and value each other as professionals, have a clear picture of your role, and know your boundaries. One pastor put it this way, “We need to understand the different roles that we have. My job is not to

tell the teacher how to teach. My job is not to tell the teachers how to teach. When those things get blurred, when pastors try to step in and say this is the way you have to do things, it gets messy and it doesn't work and teachers feel devalued." Another pastor noted the need to value the role of the educators and allow them to do what they do best and utilize their gifts. The pastor was not tasked with evaluating the teacher as to how she did her job, but rather, he viewed his job as one of being there to support her in her role. Therefore, having a clear picture of what your role is as a pastor and as a teacher was identified as a building block in collaborative relationships.

Another teacher also shared her view of the significance of valuing and respecting each other. She stated, "It boils down to a few words. We value each other's buildings, we value each other's position, and we value and respect what we are each trying to do." The importance of this was also stated by another as a need to recognize the value in each team member by asking yourself what are the unique things that this person brings to the table.

When roles are not clear and boundaries seem blurred, the participants suggested this may mean time needs to be dedicated for the Adventist pastor and teacher to reflect and define their specific role. This will in turn lead to a clear understanding of what your job is and what it is not and thus may assist in not crossing the boundaries or blurring the lines.

#### Communicate the Good and the Bad

The study revealed that communication between pastor and teacher is important in the collaborative process. One teacher described communication as "taking advantage of every opportunity to share" with each other. Keeping each other informed, according

to one pastor, prevents a breakdown in the chain. “I want to hear what’s going on over at the school,” stated one pastor, “and this means the good and the bad.”

It is pleasant to share good news, however, this study revealed that those in a collaborative relationship did not shy away from the sharing the news that may not be good. According to one pastor, hearing about issues first from the classroom teachers provided him with firsthand knowledge of the problems, challenges, and issues, and in turn, allowed him to support the school administration and teachers. Therefore, communication not only meant talking about the positive things but the participants expressed the necessity of a willingness to communicate and deal with the negative issues as well. Collaborative relationships were not defined as being “problem free” but were defined by the participants as relationships that refused to allow issues to grow and fester. For example, when speaking about how to establish a collaborative relationship, one teacher noted the importance of communicating and dealing with the problems. Another concurred by adding that issues will not disappear, they will not go away, and they will not diminish by ignoring them, pretending they don’t exist, or practicing withdrawal and avoidance. Still another referred to issues as “bumps in the road” that will and do happen; however, the willingness to deal with those “bumps” through the “relational oil of collaboration” was seen to be critical.

Dealing with the issues, according to several, meant handling issues in a Christ-like manner. This was described as modeling the biblical principle of conflict resolution by going directly to the individual involved and resisting the tendency to be “out there gossiping.” This biblical perspective of handling issues, according to another teacher, also forced them to ask the Lord’s guidance when dealing with the tough issues. One



teacher stated, “Don’t try to hide things and sweep them under the rug but have some discretion and only talk to the key player to solve the problem. Don’t be out there gossiping.” Matthew 18:15 (NIV) says, “If your brother or sister sins go and point out their fault just between the two of you.” This teacher said that the ability to deal with issues as Christ would, one on one, makes of any issue one that is easier to have resolution.

Communication was not always dealing with the negative. According to a teacher, it was also a vehicle to tell positive stories and celebrate successes happening in the church and in the school. Ways in which communication took place between the pastor and the teacher, and the church and the school were varied, and yet prevalent among all the sites in the study. For example, all of the church bulletins regularly communicated happenings in the school to the entire church family. Likewise, school newsletters highlighted church events. Both the church and school calendars had the events of each listed and were distributed to church and school families. One pastor reported the teacher sharing and communicating the school calendar with him and then he intentionally merged the church calendar with it. Another pastor and teacher team shared how they would discuss the church and school events and then merge their calendars into one master calendar to be shared with all in the church and school family. Actual documentation was evidence of one master calendar that combined all church and school functions.

Communication between pastors and teachers reportedly took place in a variety of ways. In addition to face-to-face encounters, some other ways included email, with a regular email to each other highlighting any updates, concerns, or needs, text messages,

phone calls, or even Facebook. Time was dedicated to communicate both the positive and negative in one school by means of a scheduled weekly staff meeting. The pastoral team was invited to school staff meetings and time was set aside for “bonding and open dialogue.” It was an opportunity, according to the self-evaluation document, to share concerns with each other and problem solve. Successes were celebrated and the issues were dealt with in this weekly team meeting. When face-to-face communication was not possible, other attempts were made in order to keep everyone informed.

In one of the schools, the school staff communicated with the pastor every time a student was ill. It did not matter if the student was Adventist or not. The teachers at this school shared that doing this afforded the pastor an opportunity to reach out in an act of kindness and concern and minister to the family. The pastor noted appreciation for this type of communication and stated that it also gave him the opportunity to talk and witness to families with whom he may otherwise have no interaction. In addition to communicating to the pastor about student illness, another teacher noted that the school team communicated to the pastor regarding any extended member of the family who may be ill or of any death the school family may have experienced. The pastor was then reported to reach out to the family and respond by a hospital visit or even in conducting a funeral for an extended family member.

Yes, issues will and do arise, even for those in positive relationships. The issue is not “if” they will arise, but rather, how they are dealt with. This means that the words “problem free” are not synonymous with a collaborative relationship; however, addressing and dealing with issues is. Dealing with issues means ongoing and regular

communication about happenings before those small “mole hills” become an insurmountable mountain.

### Be Flexible and Welcoming

The study showed that a willingness to be flexible in your schedule and to be welcoming helped encourage a collaborative environment. This flexible and welcoming attitude needs to be present on the part of both the pastor and the teacher. One teacher remarked that there had to be give and take on both sides. Another shared that flexibility was vital when dealing with varied schedules and unexpected emergencies, as is often the case in ministry.

Pastors spoke of the need of the school staff to be flexible. Several noted that there was a willingness on the part of the teaching staff to adapt their schedule if needed in order to accommodate the pastor’s availability to conduct worships or have Bible studies. This flexibility was also combined with a sense of feeling “welcomed” anytime they walked into the classroom. “The relationship of collaboration and cooperation has meant that I always feel welcome here. I can come in the classroom at any time and shake hands with the kids or talk to them and no one gets anxious about it.” This flexible and welcoming attitude on the part of the teaching team also enabled the pastor to come and interact with the students and the teachers more frequently as they were not locked into a specific day or a specific time. They were free to come and go as their schedules allowed and felt as if the school’s doors were always open to them. While there were pre-arranged times, the typical emergencies that pastors often experience frequently meant a change from that day and time to another and, thus, a teacher’s willingness to accommodate that change was key. One pastor shared concerning an emergency that came up that resulted

in his inability to be at school for his scheduled time; however, because of the knowledge that there was flexibility and that he was always welcomed, he did not hesitate to call to reschedule.

On the other hand, several teachers discussed a willingness on the part of the pastoral team to allow their students to participate in the worship services. This meant that the pastors had to be flexible in their preaching schedules. It was important to the teachers not to feel like the school was “taking over” the church, but rather, to sense that the school was an integral part of worship that happens in the church. The teachers expressed their desire to feel like the school was a welcome addition to the Sabbath worship experience.

Thus, it was revealed that a welcoming spirit and a willingness to be flexible needed to be present for both. The teachers must operate within an academic calendar year and the pastor his own sermonic and church calendar; however, both make time for the other. There was an acknowledgment of the fact that even in the best of situations it is often a challenge to merge schedules and calendars. Ministry may increase that challenge; nevertheless, this finding means that a willingness to flex and rework schedules as needed for the benefit of both is a necessary ingredient in the positive collaborative process of pastors and teachers.

### **Connections**

My visits and conversations made me aware of “connections” that exist in the collaborative relational process of Adventist pastors and teachers. Ways in which pastors and teachers made connections on a personal level as well as ways connections were made to each other’s entity will be shown. This section reviews those connections by

looking at the following: (a) interpersonal relationship outside of church and school, (b) pastor's involvement in connecting the church to the school, (c) teacher's involvement in connecting the school to the church, and (d) shared facilities.

### Interpersonal Relationship Outside of Church and School

It was noted that interpersonal relationships outside of church and school assisted in the building of collaborative relationships. One teacher shared that there was an intentional and conscious effort to make sure that there were strong relational connections outside of the church and school environment. Another spoke of the interpersonal relationships as strong friendships that had developed because of time spent away from the work environment. This was practiced by one teacher and pastor team who spend time on the golf course together. Another team goes skiing together, while still another pastor and his wife enjoy inviting the teaching staff to their home to enjoy a homemade meal. One pastor and teacher team even reported going on summer vacations together with each other's family. Oftentimes, according to one teacher, we do not take the time to really get to know our partner in ministry and this is not an option if there is to be a strong collaborative relationship. These interpersonal relationships must be developed outside of the church and school.

All of the pastor and teacher teams described their relationship as "friends." A teacher remarked, "It forces our working relationship to be functional because if we are going to be friends then we also have to be able to work together well." When speaking about the pastoral team, one teacher noted, "These guys are my friends. I enjoy being able to laugh and talk to them. I enjoy sharing stories with them and I enjoy the friendship that we share." Another wondered how there could be support and respect for

each other if friendship did not exist. “I think it is really a cool thing that I can say that I am friends with my pastor,” remarked one teacher.

One pastor referred to pastors and teachers who interact only on a professional level with no crossover into their personal lives as “having a relationship that is closed-off.” Another described those types of relationships as “cold.” Getting to know each other’s likes, dislikes, concerns, and cares is what it is all about, reported one pastor. Another emphasized that you can never truly work together unless you take the time to get to know each other on a personal level. Still another remarked that those Adventist pastors and teachers who interact only on a professional level miss out on a great opportunity and blessing of true friendship.

Opportunities to interact on a personal level and spend time outside of church and school were also seen to create healthier individuals. One pastor mentioned the constant stress and feeling of being overworked that he often felt and how being intentional to create these moments to build relationships helped to decrease that sense of stress and allowed for relaxation. Another argued for interpersonal relationships between the pastor and teacher by referring to the busyness that ministry represents and the need emotionally to decompress and how an interpersonal relationship with someone else, also involved in the same ministry, helped to alleviate the stresses of life.

In speaking about the relationships between the pastoral and teacher team, one school board chair remarked, “There is a Scripture that says that God is love and that is really what we are talking about here.” He went on to say that this is about living out of those positive relationships. Another talked about how these relationships are a witness to the students who look to see if their pastor and teacher are “walking the walk” or just

“talking the talk.” Kids are able to tell if the relationship is genuine or faked. Regarding the witness to others, one teacher also remembered his interview process and told the story of how he was truly convinced when he came for his initial interview that the pastor and teaching team “really liked each other” by their interactions that he witnessed. This also means that adults are able to discern the genuine from the false when it comes to cooperative collaborative relationships.

Thus, the ability to sustain and have a relationship on an interpersonal level outside of the classroom and church environment was seen as important in every site visited. A pastor highlighted this by stating this is truly what makes for an enjoyable workplace. There is a need for intentionality about creating such an environment by seeking ways and looking for opportunities to interact on a social level outside of the church and school. These opportunities not only are reported to build collaborative relationships, but they also decrease stress, thus leading to healthier individuals. In addition, they also serve as a witness to others about being in Christ-like relationships. “It’s not just about business. It’s about personal relationships.” This means that positive relationships are not witnessed only in the church and school environment but are evident outside of both entities. These relationships are authentic and genuine ones that are lived and practiced in and out of work-related events. Therefore, when it comes to collaborative relationships, this finding means that connections occur not only on a professional level, but on a personal one as well.

#### Pastor’s Involvement in Connecting the Church to the School

This study revealed that a pastor’s role is important when it comes to connecting the church family to the school family. According to the participants, since the pastor is

seen by the congregation as being the spiritual leader in the church, it becomes very important for him to play a key role in bridging the two entities. The need of the pastor to be an active participant in the process of connecting the church to the school was echoed in every school. Teachers highlighted the necessity of the pastor to be visible and active in this process. One pastor noted, “You must have a relationship with the kids first before you can have a spiritual impact on them.” This relationship was seen to be developed through a pastor’s involvement at the school.

Commendation was given to one pastor in a visiting committee’s exit report for the school evaluation. This document commended the pastor for his strong support to Adventist education. Some of the specific ways in which the pastor bridged the church to the school were identified as the pastor giving the students Bible studies, leading out in school worships, bringing musical instruments and leading out in a song service at the school, eating lunch with the students and staff, playing at recess with the students, and even taking charge of a recess in order for the teacher to have a free period. Another pastor received a major commendation on a school evaluation document for his direct involvement with the students on a weekly basis.

Involvement, according to the teachers in this study, was identified as anything from spending an entire day accompanying the students on a field trip or quickly stopping by the school to run in and give all the kids a hug, a pat on the back, or a quick word of encouragement. One pastor would visit the school on a regular basis with his purpose being to actively recruit the students to participate in the church services. In addition, this pastor shared a written document with the students about how to prepare for Scripture reading and he came to school to work with the students one on one beforehand. All of



the pastor's efforts meant the students would feel confident and prepared to participate in the worship service.

The story was told of one pastor who had a unique way of making sure that he was connected to the students in the school. Prior to the first day of school every year, if one were to visit the pastor's office, you would see a wall covered with the pictures of every student who had enrolled in the school. The name of each student accompanied the photograph. One teacher at the school said, "The pastor's goal is to know the names of all the kids by the first chapel of the school year." The pastor would spend time memorizing the faces as well as the names of every child. By the time the first chapel of the school year arrived, the pastor had finished his "homework," had his facts down, and had already started the process of building relationships with the young people.

Observations made at the site visits and documentation also confirmed the involvement of the pastor in the school. When visiting one of the schools I observed the pastor on the field playing kickball with the students for morning recess and shooting baskets with them for the afternoon break. In another school I saw the pastor in a room teaching Bible class. And, one school reported that it was not an unusual sight to see the pastor in the kitchen preparing and then serving hot lunch to the students. A school self-study documented the pastor's involvement as leading out in Bible studies, participating in physical education classes, having weekly worships, preparing students for baptism, and teaching a Seventh-day Adventist Beliefs class. It also recorded the students as "looking forward to the pastor's on-campus visits, indoor and outdoor."

The study revealed that a pastor's involvement was not hindered by the number of churches he pastored or the size of the church he pastored. For example, one pastor had

three churches and two schools in his district, and yet he was regularly involved at the school in teaching Bible class and going on field trips. This same pastor indicated that a way in which he intentionally connected with the school, despite the fact that he was in a multi-church district, was to have his office located at the school. He desired to have a visible presence at the school and having an office there was one way that made this easier. He then was there to eat lunch and take recess breaks with the students. Also, in the largest church in this study, the pastor made the school a top ministry priority. The school was not just one of the ministries of the church, but the main ministry. Since his church invested the largest percentage of their financial resources in the school, the pastor believed his time spent at the school should also mirror that same ministry priority. His calendar reflected that priority. From the smallest church to the largest church, the pastor was involved and active in the life of the school.

Pastors in this study also maximized the use of their pulpit to bridge the gap between church and school. Every pastor in this study talked in positive ways about the school from the pulpit on Sabbath morning. Specific Sabbaths were scheduled that highlighted the importance of Adventist education by putting a spotlight on the students and the teaching team. One teaching team shared that when major facility renovations were needed at the school, the pastor had taken on this challenge and single-handedly had led in the effort and raised all of the necessary funds by stating the need from the pulpit and placing it before the congregation. One teacher stated, “Our pastor’s face lights up and everyone can see that he loves the students and teachers because he raves about them from the pulpit on Sabbath.”

Written documents also served as a witness of ways in which the church was connected to the school. One church bulletin listed the teachers as a part of the “ministerial team.” Another church bulletin listed the teachers under the section, “church officers.” When members and visitors alike attended church and looked in their church bulletins on Sabbath, it was clear that the educational team was seen to be one with the pastoral team in ministry. One pastor put it this way, “My role is to be the main cheerleader for my school.” Another remarked, “There needs to be no question from anyone as to where I stand in regard to Adventist education.”

#### Teacher’s Involvement in Connecting the School to the Church

In the same manner as a pastor’s role was seen as critical in connecting the church to the school, the role of the teacher was deemed critical in connecting the school to the church. While the congregation looks to the pastor as their leader, the parents and the students look to their teachers. Therefore, the teachers have an active role to play in building the bridge from the school to the church.

Some of the specific ways teachers connected the school to the church were: the teacher making announcements at church about upcoming school events, inviting all of the children in the congregation to participate in the Christmas program, teaching Sabbath School classes, reading a Scripture, working with the students to have a special musical number, helping with church meals and children’s stories, and even filling in for the pastor and preaching a sermon. One pastor noted that even though the teacher was with students all week long, on Sabbath she was also with them in a Sabbath School class. Another pastor remembered an emergency that had come up on Sabbath and when he called a teacher and told him of a need for a last-minute speaker, the teacher readily

agreed to preach the sermon. Still another cited the willingness of the teachers to serve the meals for church dinners and to assist in cleaning up afterwards. In one of the schools the teacher was an ordained elder of the church and very active in filling the preaching role.

Along with the teacher's personal involvement, the study also showed that the teachers were instrumental in making sure the students were visible and involved in the church. In one school the piano students of the school were responsible for playing the piano for children's story every Sabbath. Another school had the students draw the illustrations for the church bulletin. Still another teacher filled the Scripture-reading slots with students. All of the schools in the study held major school programs such as Christmas programs, spring concerts, or graduations in the church.

In addition, written documents from the school such as the school handbook and the school newsletter were used to communicate to the school family information concerning upcoming events and activities in the church. One school newsletter had a section containing a summary of the sermon the pastor had preached in church the previous Sabbath. Another school newsletter listed the pastor as a member of the school team. Still another listed the upcoming church events as well as the upcoming sermon titles. In addition, one school placed a weekly school newsletter inside the church bulletin every Sabbath. "The Connection" was the title of one school newsletter with the stated purpose being "to connect the school family to the church family." Pastors were named in the school newsletter as being members of the school board, and there was even a section dedicated to thanking the pastors for their hard work and support of the school. Several

schools in this study also had a link on the school website that connected to the church and vice versa.

One pastor summed up a teacher's willingness to intentionally connect the school to the church in this way, "There is just willingness and an openness to step in without a sigh or a hesitation on the part of the teacher. It is wonderful to know that these resources are here and that the teacher is willing to go the extra mile if need be." This means that teachers did not sit in the pews each Sabbath as mere observers or spend the day resting at home. Instead, they were active and visible participants at Sabbath services and at other church events. One pastor stated, "I really appreciate the teachers being in attendance at church every week and their willingness to help out in everything from meals to teaching Sabbath School classes, and just being available." In addition, this study highlights the need for teachers to intentionally provide opportunities for their students to be involved in the church. Doing so not only enables church members to build a connection with the school, thus developing a sense of ownership, it was also shown to assist in connecting the students and their families to the church.

### Shared Facilities

Despite the fact that every case involved in this study had separate church and school facilities, this study highlighted the importance of viewing the church and school as one connected campus. The sharing of the church and school facility was evidenced in varying ways. In most sites the school used the church sanctuary to hold events such as their Christmas play and graduation. While it was reported to have been easier and more convenient to hold these events in the school gymnasium, having them in the church facility was seen as a way to intentionally connect the school to the church by getting the

school families through the church doors. “We use the church for all the school programs, The school programs are not in the gym of the school, but in the church sanctuary. There’s just that strong connection.” This also meant that the students and the school were visible and in front of the church family. Another school had their weekly student chapel services in the church. “This is just one small way how the entities are connected. We could do chapel here in our gym, but the kids get to go worship in the sanctuary.” Again, while it was noted to be easier to keep the students in the school building instead of bundling them up on cold days to walk across the parking lot to the church, it was another intentional way to connect the two entities.

In the same manner, the study also revealed the importance of connecting the church family to the school campus. This is practiced by several churches that hold their weekly prayer services at the school facility. Another church has their Sabbath School classes in the school gymnasium. Still another uses the school gym to have a weekly church basketball team practice. Several churches utilize the gymnasium in the school to host various social functions including their church dinners.

The participants in this study viewed the church and school facilities as “one.” One teacher noted that the students did not see the church and the school as two separate buildings but, rather, the church was a part of the school. It was not seen as church and school, but rather, as a combined campus. When it was time for chapel, the students were not instructed to walk to “the church”—it was just referred to as “the chapel.”

In order for there to be a sharing of facilities, “territorial issues,” as referred to by one pastor, needed to be absent. One pastor spoke in regard to this, stating that the church staff must never feel like the school is coming in the church to “take over” but, instead, to

have an attitude that the church facility actually belongs to the students and the teachers too. It was also noted there was no “formalized” agreement that existed as to how much or when each facility could be used by the other. It was just a natural occurrence that was so welcomed in one school that the teacher carried a key to the church while the pastor carried a key to the school. Both were free to enter and use either facility as ministry needs surfaced.

Several of the sites visited consisted of multi-churches in the constituency. In these cases there was an actual sharing of all the church facilities as well. For example, one school took turns having their school Christmas program in the different churches. One year it would be in one of the churches and the next year it would be switched to another. Another site spoke of how all of the constituent churches associated with the school came together weekly for one unified prayer meeting at the school. Still another spoke of taking their school programs to all of the churches involved in the constituency, thus making sure that the students were visible and present in every one of the churches. One pastor even spoke of “pulpit exchanges” and sharing his pulpit on a rotating basis with the other pastors so that all the members in every church associated with the school would not miss on the opportunity to have this sense of unity and community. This meant that the members in every constituent church had a connectedness with all of the pastors, teachers, and facilities.

The students, parents, church members, pastors, and teachers involved in this study did not see two separate buildings but, rather, they saw one extended campus. There was exhibited a great deal of crossover in the numerous programs of the church happening in the school and school programs held in the church. This sharing of church

and school facilities was willingly agreed upon by all parties. The sharing of facilities enhanced the sense of connectedness and oneness and extends its arm beyond a unity in people to a unity in actual buildings.

### **Success and Failure**

This study focused on the stories of pastors and teachers who were involved in practicing positive collaborative relationships. On the other hand, the participants also identified the results that can occur when there is a failure to collaborate. This section describes: (a) benefits of collaboration, and (b) results of failed collaboration.

#### **Benefits of Collaboration**

This study highlighted the benefits that are gained from a positive collaborative environment. Several participants spoke of how collaborative practices modeled by the pastor and the teacher set a model “for the parents, for the children, and for church members” to follow. There were also several comments about how collaborative practices become “Christianity in motion” for the students. A pastor defined a place where collaboration was occurring as a “sacred place.” Another spoke of his desire as a parent for his own children to experience what a true harmonious relationship with God is all about and one place in which they experienced this was in the church and school environment.

Teachers credited a positive collaborative environment with increasing the likelihood that students will make decisions for baptism. It was noted that when a student was contemplating giving their life to Jesus, there was a decreased chance that there would be any hesitation because the students already had a positive relationship with the



pastor and the church. Furthermore, there was a greater openness and willingness on the part of the students to engage the pastor in discussions and questions of a spiritual nature. Collaboration was seen to create a Christ-like foundation upon which these pastor-student conversations took place. This benefit was summed up in this way, “By working collaboratively, student lives are transformed.”

Pastors and teachers reported that students experienced additional benefits as a result of being actively involved in church. Participating in the worship service gives the students a sense of ownership in the church. Another said that it gives the students a “reason” to come to church. Still another referred to the leadership skills that the students were developing as a result of being an active participant in the church service.

The students were also seen to be the benefactors from the positive message that collaboration sent to them personally. One teacher remarked that collaboration sent a message to them that everyone in their lives was pulling together in the same direction for them. A pastor spoke of the need to have as many as possible link arms to help raise this current generation. Another stated that seeing someone who loves you at home, someone who loves you at school, and someone who loves you at church creates a strong safety net for the kids. Collaboration creates the sense for students that they are cared for by committed people. It makes kids secure to know so many people are pulling for them. One teacher told of how so many of the students enrolled in the schools were from broken homes and never had the opportunity to interact with a positive male role model. Thus, having the pastor around the school provided this important element and allowed the students to experience a true “family” atmosphere.

Church members were also reported to experience the benefits from collaboration on the part of the pastor and teacher. Older church members often expressed concern about how their church would survive once their generation was gone. However, seeing the children involved and active on Sabbath took away their fears. Another spoke of it as giving hope to the church members when they see the students reading Scripture, praying, and having special music. A teacher noted that the church members benefited by having the opportunity to develop relationships with some of the non-Adventist young people, who otherwise would not be in church. Furthermore, the more the members saw the students participate in the church service, the more they felt connected not only to the school but to the individual student. One teacher recalled a student who had recently preached a sermon and, afterwards, an elderly church member was so moved they came forward and paid a significant amount on that student's school bill.

Pastors and teachers reported the personal benefits they experienced that helped ease the challenges of "ministry." It was noted that collaboration helped "those in the fishbowl" know that there was someone else in that same "fishbowl" with them to offer support and hold them up. Another spoke of it as enabling one to have the strength to withstand the darts when they were thrown. Still another referred to collaboration as creating a "peaceful island" of retreat when everything else has failed.

Another benefit mentioned was the ability to plan, think, and dream together. Still another spoke of the blessing of having someone else to bounce ideas off and to work through the planning stages with. Together, they could dream and plan in ways that they could not do in isolation.

An additional benefit of pastors and teachers that was echoed by several was one of improved health. One teacher referred to the benefit of a positive work environment by stating that “everybody’s blood pressure is lower.” Collaboration was seen to be instrumental in removing the stresses and the anxiety that can often be present. A pastor spoke of how working with the teachers made his job as a pastor less stressful. A teacher told the story of how her daughter had been murdered and how through that tragedy the knowledge that “family” was there for her and that she was not alone had become a major part of the healing process. She recalled the pastor barely being able to conduct the funeral service because there was a feeling that this was also his own daughter who had been murdered.

According to the pastors and teachers, it is hard to quantify the true benefits received from a collaborative relationship. One teacher stated it this way, “You really can’t put a value on all the benefits of collaboration.” Collaboration, when practiced by the pastoral and educational team, becomes a model to be emulated by others who witness it. To practice is to live as Christ did. Additionally, when students know that multiple individuals are pulling together for them, it creates a strong nurturing environment. Also, planning and dreaming together improves the health of those who practice it. Overall, this means that collaboration, when practiced in the Adventist church and school environment, creates a win-win situation for parents, students, teachers, pastors, and church members.

### Results of Failed Collaboration

After discussing the positive collaborative practices with all of the pastors and teachers involved in this study, opportunity was given for the participants to share

anything else they desired. During this time the results of failed collaboration were discussed. What happens as a result of a non-collaborative environment at the church and the school? The study revealed that a lack of collaboration creates a negative environment. One pastor said, “When it is not there, chaos reigns.” A teacher spoke of the tension and stress that resulted from an unwillingness to work together. Without collaboration, both the church and the school are weak. Every site involved in the study concurred that a lack of collaboration would ultimately mean the death of both the church and the school.

The negative consequences for students were also discussed. A teacher spoke of the natural curiosity of children and their ability to notice and recognize tension and stress that exist in relationships among those close to them. Failure to work together sets a negative model that is witnessed and ultimately followed by the students. According to one teacher, the greater the number of positive significant relationships that a child had in their life, the greater the benefit to the child. This means that failure to collaborate would also mean that students would miss out on this opportunity. One pastor spoke of the negative impact on students in eternal terms by saying when it comes to a failure to collaborate, “the bottom line is that some kids will not be in heaven.” The negative effects were seen to have an eternal impact. Another teacher remarked that the non-Adventist students and their families would never have the opportunity to come to church, thus, they may miss on the opportunity to get to know Jesus Christ. Still another pointed out the missed opportunities on the part of the pastor to minister to these non-Adventist students and their families and, thus, failure may result in letting a moment pass when a decision for Christ could have been made.

The church family was also seen to bear the brunt of failed collaborative practices. It was noted that a pastor's lack of willingness to allow the students to participate in the church service means that the church members will miss out on so much. Another spoke of the richness brought to the church family in the worship service through seeing the students involved on a regular basis. One pastor went so far as to say that failure to collaborate would negatively affect the future and very existence of the church itself. A teacher concurred with this belief by stating that the future of the church would be in question. The negative results the church would experience were summed up this way, "We have too many church groups that are really just a country club model. In other words, we have a little building, we have little programs, we like who we are and we want to stay there. The staff and school are expensive, kids are messy, they ruin carpets, things get broken, and all kinds of bad stuff happens. We don't want that to happen in our country club. And, if churches have that mind-set then kids are going to stop coming to their country club and pretty soon they will have no membership."

Failure to collaborate has negative consequences for the pastor and the teacher, for students and their families, and for the church family. Church members miss out on the opportunity to be blessed by the young people, the students miss out on leadership opportunities, and the negative results are also seen to include possible eternal consequences. It is not the purpose of this study to dwell on these negative consequences. Instead, let's focus our attention towards the exciting possibilities when collaboration between the Adventist pastor and teacher is utilized as a tool to enhance missional goals.

## Summary

The voices of these pastors and teachers tell the story of collaboration at its best. The four major themes that developed have been unfolded. I have explored how the pastors and teachers in the study experience “togetherness,” identified the necessary ingredients, explored how connections were made, and concluded with insights into the benefits of collaborative relationships as well as in results of failure to collaborate. Perhaps, one teacher gave us the best picture yet of a collaborative environment. In the smallest school in this study the teacher stated, “We are a small school but we can do big things because we have a collaborative atmosphere.” Yes, this study was truly a collection of the stories of “big things” that are possible when Adventist pastors and teachers are engaged in positive collaborative relationships, all for a common missional goal, that of the redemption of our young people.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

#### **Introduction**

This study focused on the stories of Adventist pastors and teachers who are working together in positive collaborative relationships within the context of their church and school environment. Adventist schools are embedded in a system that provides them with rich opportunities to achieve their missional goals. However, the problem lies in a failure to utilize the relational tool of collaboration in order to benefit the church and the school, thus enhancing their common purpose of ministry (Sahlin, 1985b). To date, limited research has been done in this area, making its exploration a need (Ledesma, 2011; Patterson, 2007). The purpose of this study is to add to existing literature by describing the collaborative relationship between select Adventist pastors and teachers.

#### **Research Design and Sampling**

A qualitative, multiple-case study design using narrative inquiry was used to obtain a deeper understanding of the collaborative relationship that exists between Adventist pastors and teachers (Merriam, 1998). The criterion used for this sampling directly reflected the purpose of this study and guided in the identification of pastor-teacher pairs (Creswell, 2003; Merriam, 1998). The primary criterion used for the study was the identification of the pastors and teachers, by the local conference administrative

team, as pairs that were viewed to be working together in a positive collaborative relationship.

The stories represent the voices of 43 individuals. There was a balance between male and female voices with 20 being male and 23 being female. Twelve pastors are represented, as are 29 teachers, and two school board chairs. In addition, the schools vary in size with the smallest having an enrollment of 11 students and the largest having 220 enrolled. The stories are based on a compilation of recorded interviews, informal observations, field notes, and a review of documents.

### **Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework that guides this study is the intersection of social capital theory, collaboration, and trust relational theory with the ministries of the Adventist pastor and teacher. The review of literature showed the benefits of utilizing human capital available to us and engaging in positive relational building through collaborative practices (Gray, 1989; Sharma & Kearins, 2011; Wagner & Muller, 2011c).

Social capital theory refers to the relational connections that we are surrounded with and how these networks create opportunities for collaboration and cooperation (Guo & Acar, 2005). These relational connections become major catalysts for the establishment of cooperative partnerships. Social capital theory involves establishing and utilizing these relationships in ways to enhance our own organizational mission (Sharma & Kearins, 2011).

Collaboration, according to Gray (1989), is the process that may be used to take full advantage of the networks of relationships (Sharma & Kearins, 2011). A



collaborative partnership is described as an equalizer (Rogers, 1996) by recognizing and valuing the contribution that each can make towards the goal attainment.

Trust represents a critical component in the establishment of a collaborative partnership (Connolly & James, 2006; Johal, 2001). Trust was referred to as the foundation upon which collaborative relationships are built (Kouzes & Posner, 2007). This foundation of trust may then lead us to take full advantage of the relational networks around us and, therefore, build positive collaborative relationships (Makiewicz, 2011).

### **Findings**

In this section, I will describe the major themes that emerged, providing insight into the research question: How do Adventist pastors and teachers describe their collaborative relationship in their common purpose of ministry. I will review the findings by looking at the four themes that emerged from the study: (a) we are in this together, (b) necessary ingredients, (c) connections, and (d) success and failure.

#### **We Are in This Together**

The pastors and teachers represented in this study viewed their ministry from a strong sense of togetherness. The words “I” and “my” were not used. Instead, the pastors and teachers spoke in terms of “our ministry” and “us.” Ministry was never spoken about from the standpoint of the church or the school, but, rather, as a unified ministry of one.

Pastors and teachers who are working together in a positive collaborative relationship share a mutual goal, vision, and mission and view each other as partners on the same team. The pastors and teachers saw each other as equal partners and equal

participants marching together towards their common missional goal regarding the salvation of young people.

When referring to the church and school environment, the pastors and teachers defined it as a “community.” This “community” of church and school was centered on positive relationships. Building relationships was synonymous with building community. Therefore, as relationships grew, so did the sense of community.

While pastors and teachers were equal partners and participants in the relational building, anyone is capable of initiating the process. When the pastors and teachers spoke of the very inception of the collaborative process, the role of initiator was said to be credited to varied individuals, from the pastor, teacher, church and school board, or the local conference leadership. In other words, this means that no one need sit and wait for collaboration to develop, but we all have the capacity to begin a collaborative journey.

#### Necessary Ingredients

Commonalities existed in each of the sites that assisted in the creation of a positive collaborative environment. Each of these elements was identified by pastors and teachers as being a necessary component to positive collaborative experiences. The participants discussed how they utilized these elements as they worked together to build relationships.

In each case, the ministry focus was put on the kids. When faced with decisions, the question was not what is best for the church or what is best for the school, but rather, what is the best decision for the kids. There was a high value and priority of ministry placed on young people. By placing kids at the top of their priority list, the pastors and

teachers believed they were being faithful to their missional goal, that being the redemption of young people.

The pastors and teachers also possessed a willingness to admit their weaknesses and build on their strengths. There was an acknowledgment of the different strengths or gifts that we all have as well as a realization that we all bring our faults and weaknesses in that same package. Accepting those weaknesses in ourselves and each other as well as maximizing the strengths in our partner makes for a stronger ministry team.

Trust was also identified as a foundational ingredient that must exist between partners in order for positive collaboration to take place. Trust was described as the “anchor” of the collaborative journey that creates a sense of knowing that the other person will be there to support and hold you. The pastors and teachers all trusted that the other “had their back” in public and in private.

Understanding the roles and boundaries of an Adventist pastor and teacher is also a necessity. The pastors and teachers believed that having a clear picture and an understanding of what one’s role is and what it is not is an important step on this collaborative journey. The pastors could clearly verbalize what their role was in relation to the school and what it was not and the teachers could do the same.

In order for the pastor and teacher to enter into a positive collaborative experience, it is necessary for both to exhibit flexibility. Pastors need to be flexible in their church calendars and teachers need to be flexible in their daily class schedules as well as in their overall academic calendars. The very nature of ministry means that emergencies and unexpected events arise; however, this willingness to be flexible was

identified as an important ingredient to the overall success of relational building between pastor and teacher.

While we all enjoy sharing good news, the pastors and teachers involved in this study stressed the importance of communicating the good as well as the not so good with each other. Problems or issues may be dealt with only if they are communicated and known. Positive collaborative relationships were not seen to be void of problems or conflicts; however, those problems are acknowledged, communicated to each other, and addressed.

### Connections

This study revealed various connections that exist among those identified to be in positive collaborative relationships. These connections were evident and practiced in each of the sites. In addition, these connections also took place in and out of the actual work environment. As the pastors and teachers described the relationship that existed between them, they referred to it as a “friendship.” The relationship was one that was not exclusive to the church and school environment, but, rather, was a relationship and friendship that extended beyond the boundaries of walls and into their personal lives. They spoke of multiple opportunities and examples of interacting on a social level. They were intentional about creating these moments and times to spend together to decompress and allow for relaxation from the stresses that often accompany ministry.

The pastors in the study were all actively involved in connecting the church to the school. In every case, the pastor’s words and actions spoke loudly of his support of Adventist education. He was seen to carry the role of “head cheerleader,” and this role was played well in public and in private. Church bulletins and newsletters gave the

school a prominent place of importance by celebrating the success of the school as well as keeping the challenges and needs before the church family. Documents, words, and actions raised no question on behalf of any in the church and school family as to where the pastor stood regarding the local Adventist school, as well as the staff and students.

In the same manner, the teachers carried the role of being active participants in connecting the school to the church. Teachers were active and visible in the church. They did not sit in the pews on Sabbath but could be seen in Sabbath School rooms teaching the little ones or behind the pulpit reading Scripture, having special music, or even preaching the sermon. In addition, the teachers intentionally created opportunities for their students to be engaged in all areas of the life of the church. School newsletters, calendars, and handbooks also made mention of the church and further served to connect the school to the church.

Connections were also made by the manner in which the pastors and teachers viewed their facilities. The church and school were referred to by the pastors and teachers as one unified campus. Church and school were not seen as two separate entities, but were melded together as one campus, with both buildings being fully utilized as ministry needs dictated.

### Success and Failure

Positive collaboration was seen to yield numerous results, while failed collaboration was seen to generate negative consequences. Every participant in the study was currently in a positive collaborative experience; however, they were also willing to explore the results that would be reaped by pastors and teachers engaged in a negative experience.

Pastors and teachers in this study were deeply committed to the collaborative process and were eager to share what they believed to be the benefits gleaned from working together in a positive collaborative relationship. Everyone in the church and school family was seen to be benefactors of the relational building process.

As a direct means of fulfilling their missional goal, the pastors and teachers identified the benefits to include a greater potential on the part of students that they would make a decision to accept Jesus as their Lord and Savior. Because the pastor was an active participant in the life of the school, this meant that the students had greater opportunity to develop positive relationships with the pastor. In turn, this would naturally lead to a great probability that the student would have spiritual discussions with the pastor and be drawn to Jesus.

Pastor and teacher working together in a positive relationship were seen to set a positive role model for students to emulate. This idea of setting a positive role model for students was identified as being an important role of the Adventist pastor and teacher. And what better way to teach a concept than to live it and have the students as a witness.

In addition, when an Adventist school has a positive relationship with the church, it was seen to create a sense of security for the older church members. They were not concerned if their beloved church would continue after their death, but they were assured of the sustainability of the church as they witnessed young people from the school taking on leadership roles and becoming active participants. Combined planning and dreaming also were seen to lead to improved health of the pastors and teachers who practice it. This was believed to be a very valuable benefit that they personally experienced. The pastors and teachers expressed greater happiness, decreased stress, less anxiety, and fewer

sleepless nights in knowing that they had a “partner in ministry.” Successes were shared with their ministry partner as were burdens and concerns. Having another to help “shoulder” the burdens was seen to make them easier to bear.

While this study focused on the positive, the participants also identified some of the negative consequences that may result when there is a failure on the part of the Adventist pastor and teacher to collaborate. They drew on their own previous work experiences or the experience of colleagues. Failed collaboration was seen to ultimately lead to the demise of both the church and the school. It also was identified as decreasing the likelihood that some would be in heaven because of the failure of pastor and teachers to join hands and work together towards the common mission of the salvation of young people. The belief that “some will not be in heaven because of a failure to collaborate” was seen as the ultimate price that would be paid.

### **Discussion**

The Adventist pastors and teachers in this study agreed with Coleman (1988) on the importance of maximizing the relationships that exist within the school community. Whereas both pastors and teachers are equal partners and equal participants, perhaps one may inquire as to how the collaborative process begins. The good news is that it can begin with anyone. Pastors, teachers, church and school board leaders, and conference leadership were all identified at different school sites to have been the initiator in the collaborative process. Existing literature also corroborates this finding by identifying various players capable of possessing this role (Baker, 1997; Gillespie, 1993; Ledesma, 2011; Wagner & Muller, 2011c). This discovery is to be celebrated because it empowers every member of the church and school family to move forward in a collaborative

process. In essence, this means that in settings where collaboration is at its best, there is an entire community who supports young people and realizes that the purpose of Adventist education aligns with the purpose of the church. This story truly is a celebration of community. It is not just two people, but rather everyone in the church and school community coming together for a common purpose. In essence, this finding suggests a deep understanding exists in collaborative environments about what community really means.

Adventist pastors and teachers in this study exhibited a sense of togetherness by viewing their ministry to be one in purpose (Himmelman, 1992; Wagner & Muller, 2011c). Each is an equal partner striving to reach the missional goal—the salvation of young people (Baker, 1997; Patterson, 2007; Sahlin, 1985b). Introducing young people to Jesus is a mission that the pastor and teacher identified as being shared. Wagner and Muller (2011d) discussed the importance of possessing a common mission by explaining that it was at the core of the development of collaborative partnerships. Others, such as Gajda and Koliba (2007), have written about the importance of having a shared purpose. Close examination of the goals of the Adventist church and the Adventist school reveals that they are both redemptive in nature (Rasmussen, 1950; Sahlin, 1985b; White, 1952). The point is that when pastors and teachers maximize the use of collaborative practices, they are in essence creating a thread that ties the common goals of the pastoral ministry and the educational ministry together.

Trust was described by the pastors and teachers to be the foundational anchor of positive relational building (Connolly & James, 2006; Sharma & Kearins, 2011; Wagner & Muller, 2011d). Other building blocks were said to include an intense focus being



placed on young people, with their needs taking a high priority. In addition, it was important that both had a clear understanding of the roles and boundaries, be willing to communicate the successes as well as the challenges (Makiewicz, 2011; Wagner & Muller, 2011d), and exhibit a flexible attitude.

Regarding the importance of having a clear understanding of the roles and boundaries, Patterson (2007) discussed one problem to be the absence of definitive written guidelines as to how the pastor should relate to the school or how the teacher should relate to the church. While his statement is still true today in that no formal guidelines are in existence, according to the findings in this study, the lack of formal written documents did not inhibit positive collaborative experiences as this was solved by the application of relational oil.

Ledesma (2011) found that, oftentimes, Adventist educators do not want to attend church because of their inability to truly “worship” in the existing environment. However, the teachers in this study not only desired to attend their local church, but were all actively engaged in the life of the church. Perhaps a difference in the findings may be that, in these cases, the pastor intentionally sought ways to connect the church to the school. In other words, it was not a one-way street. Connections were made by the pastor and teacher, each intentionally seeking ways to connect the two institutions (Chaskin, 1994; Senge, 1999), each an active and visible participant in the life of both the church and the school (Sahlin, 1985a). In essence, collaboration had created an environment where people not only worked together throughout the week but they also looked forward to coming together to worship on Sabbath.

According to Patterson (2007), one identified challenge was the fact that, oftentimes, the church and the school are two separate buildings. Therefore, two separate buildings contribute to the attitudes of two separate ministries. In this study, although every site had two separate and distinct buildings, the church and the school, this did not inhibit or detract from the belief that there was one ministry. In addition, the pastors and the teachers each viewed the church and the school as one unified campus, with one unified ministry. This suggests that the positive relationship between the pastor and the teacher was the bridge that connected the two buildings. Relationships had built the walkway.

Adventist pastors and teachers said the benefits of working in a collaborative relationship with each other include an increased probability that young people will make a decision for Jesus Christ. Research, as it relates to collaboration specifically in the school environment, considers the benefits that students experience to be the number one motivating factor for entering into a collaborative partnership (Ainscow et al., 2006). This study concurred with that belief with the pastor's and teacher's acknowledgment that benefits to the students were the key motivational factor for them entering into and sustaining positive relationships. The educational model viewed by Stefkovich and O'Brien (2004) places this idea of collaboration being of benefit to students at the forefront of the purpose of education. This means that the work of true education becomes a practical and moral activity of living out collaborative practices in a way that students will benefit.

Other benefits were identified as the setting of a positive role model (Blum & Libbey, 2004; Frick & Frick, 2010), and improved health of those who practice it

(Sharma & Kearins, 2011). The benefits of positive relations, experienced by the greater church and school family, were said to lie with the security in knowing that the church and school were sustainable. Participants spoke of this being a benefit specifically to the older members of the congregation. The graying church members witnessed the students growing and maturing as Christians and had faith that when they passed on, the organization would remain vibrant and strong. This issue of sustainability of the organization is also recognized in literature to be a benefit of collaborative practices (Sharma & Kearins, 2011). In short, the church family not only witnessed “today” but they were looking at a bright “tomorrow.”

Adventist pastors and teachers in this study spoke of the results that may occur when there is a failure for pastor and teachers to work together in a positive collaborative relationship. Ultimately, according to them, the greatest negative impact in a failure to collaborate is in regard to the possible eternal consequences. According to one pastor, “the bottom line is that some kids may not be in heaven.” Hoilette (1993) speaks of collaboration as the “key” to fulfilling the redemptive purpose of ministry. This means that when we fail to work together as Adventist pastor and teacher, we are neglecting our God-given responsibility and, as a result, some may not be in heaven because of our failure.

### **Recommendations**

At the conclusion of each interview, the pastors and teachers were asked to share advice and recommendations for other pastors and teachers who desired to enter into a positive collaborative relationship. This section will highlight that discussion.

## Recommendations for Pastors

1. Closely align the goals of the church and the school so that a common missional goal is clear.
2. Identify your strengths and your weaknesses. Discuss ways with the school staff that you may maximize the use of your strengths in order to attain your ministry goals.
3. Make the school a priority in your calendar.
4. Be visible and active on the school campus on a regular basis.
5. Schedule special Sabbaths in the church calendar to focus on Adventist education.
6. Schedule regular times with your teaching ministry team to discuss goals and dreams.
7. Discuss any differences with the teacher and deal with conflicts in private according to scriptural principles.
8. Be a cheerleader for the school, staff, and students from the pulpit.
9. Be intentional about creating opportunities to get to know your educational partner in ministry outside the school environment.
10. Pray daily for your teacher as a partner in ministry.
11. Don't expect perfection in your educational partner in ministry.
12. Make full use of that "relational oil" of collaboration as you build relationships with those you serve in the church and school family. In so doing, your ministry will be blessed.

## Recommendations for Teachers

1. Closely align the goals of the school and the church so that a common missional goal is clear.
2. Identify your strengths and your weaknesses. Discuss ways with the pastoral staff that you may maximize the use of your strengths in order to attain your ministry goals.
3. Make the church a priority in your calendar.
4. Be visible and active at church on Sabbaths and at other church functions.
5. Schedule regular times to sit down with your pastor as a ministry partner to discuss your goals and dreams.
6. Communicate the successes as well as the challenges that exist in the school with your local pastor.
7. Discuss any differences with your pastor and deal with conflicts in private according to scriptural principles.
8. Be intentional about getting to know your pastor outside the church environment.
9. Pray for your pastor as a ministry partner.
10. Don't expect perfection of your pastor.
11. Make full use of that "relational oil" of collaboration as you build relationships with those you serve in the church and school family. In so doing, your ministry will be blessed.

## **Implications for Further Research**

Thus study revealed the need for further research in the area of collaboration. It is recommended that the following future studies be considered:

1. Using the themes found in this study as factors/items, a quantitative study exploring the relationships between Adventist pastors and teachers across the North American Division and/or world church
2. A study exploring the role that collaborative relationships between pastor and teacher have on employee satisfaction and retention
3. A quantitative study exploring the impact that positive collaborative relationships between Adventist pastors and teachers have on school enrollment and financial sustainability
4. A study exploring the collaborative practices between Adventist schools
5. A study exploring the collaborative practices among teaching teams at the same school
6. A study exploring the collaborative practices between Adventist churches
7. A study exploring the collaborative practices between home and school environments (including students).

## **Summary**

In setting out to describe the collaborative practices of Adventist pastors and teachers, we have listened to their voices tell a story of collaboration at its best. It is a story of the possibilities when one pastor and one teacher join hands in their common missional goal of the salvation of young people. Adventist education and evangelism are inseparable. If we are to fulfill our common mission, Adventist pastors and teachers must

link arms in collaborative practices towards this goal attainment. This study celebrates the accomplishments of two. In essence, this is a story about “us.”

APPENDIX A

IRB APPROVAL PAGE



# Andrews University

January 26, 2012

Pamela Consuegra

Tel: 240-463-9447

Email: [Pamela.Consuegra@nad.adventist.org](mailto:Pamela.Consuegra@nad.adventist.org)

**RE: APPLICATION FOR APPROVAL OF RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS**  
IRB Protocol #: 11-159      Application Type: Original      Dept.: Leadership  
Review Category: Expedited      Action Taken: Approved      Advisor: Duane Covrig  
Title: A Multiple Case-Study Exploring Collaborative Relations between Adventist Pastors and Teachers in the Eastern United States

This letter is to advise you that the Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed and approved your proposal for research involving human subjects entitled: "*A Multiple Case-Study Exploring Collaborative Relations Between Adventist Pastors and Teachers in the Eastern United States*" IRB protocol number 11-159 under Expedited category. This approval is valid until January 25, 2013. If your research is not completed by the end of this period you must apply for an extension at least two weeks prior to the expiration date. We ask that you inform the IRB Office whenever you complete your research. Please reference the IRB protocol number in any future correspondence regarding this study.

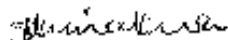
Any future changes made to the study design and/or consent form require prior approval from the IRB before such changes can be implemented.

While there appears to be no more than minimum risks with your study, should an incidence occur that results in a research-related adverse reaction and/or physical injury, this must be reported immediately in writing to the IRB. Any project-related physical injury must also be reported immediately to the University physician, Dr. Hamel, by calling (269) 473-2222.

Please feel free to contact our office if you have questions.

We wish you success in your research project.

Sincerely



Sarah Kimakwa  
IRB, Research & Creative Scholarship

Institutional Review Board  
Tel: (269) 471-6361 Fax: (269) 471-6543 E-mail: [irb@andrews.edu](mailto:irb@andrews.edu)  
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## APPENDIX B

### VALIDATION OF THEMES

## Methodological Triangulation: Validation of Themes by Source

### A MULTIPLE-CASE STUDY DESCRIBING COLLABORATIVE RELATIONS BETWEEN ADVENTIST PASTORS AND TEACHERS IN THE EASTERN UNITED STATES

Themes	Pastor	Teacher	School	Documents	Observation	Field Notes
			Board Chair			
<b>We are in This Together</b>						
• Mutual Goal, Vision, Mission	X	X	X	X	X	X
• Team, Unity, Us	X	X	X	X	X	X
• A Sense of Community	X	X	X	X	X	X
• Initiator of Collaborative Process	X	X	X			X
<b>Necessary Ingredients</b>						
• Kid's First Attitude	X	X		X	X	X
• Embrace Strengths/Accept the Weaknesses	X	X		X	X	X
• Trust	X	X		X		
• Respect and Value the Roles and Boundaries	X	X			X	X
• Communicate the Good and the Bad				X	X	
• Be Flexible and Welcoming	X	X		X	X	X
<b>Connections</b>						
• Interpersonal Relationship Outside of Church and School	X	X	X		X	X
• Pastor Connecting Church to the School	X	X	X	X	X	X
• Teacher Connecting School to the Church	X	X	X	X	X	X
• Shared Facilities	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Success and Failure</b>						
• Benefits of Collaboration	X	X	X	X	X	X
• Results of Failed Collaboration	X	X	X			X

## APPENDIX C

### SAMPLE BREAKDOWN

### Sample Breakdown

A MULTIPLE-CASE STUDY DESCRIBING COLLABORATIVE RELATIONS BETWEEN ADVENTIST PASTORS AND TEACHERS IN THE EASTERN UNITED STATES

	Pastors	Teachers	Other (School Board Chair)	Total	Males	Females	School Enrollment	Grades Offered
<b>School 1</b>	3	3	1	7	5	2	41	Pre K-8
<b>School 2</b>	2	8		10	6	4	96	Pre K-8
<b>School 3</b>	1	2		3	1	2	11	K-8
<b>School 4</b>	4	9		13	3	10	220	K-8
<b>School 5</b>	1	2		3	1	2	16	1-8
<b>School 6</b>	1	5	1	7	4	3	72	Pre K-10
<b>TOTALS</b>	12	29	2	43	20	23		

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