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Ten Steps to Collaboration: The Story of a Professional Development School

by

Helen Schneider, Irving Seidman, and Peter Cannone

Since the fall of 1985, the University of Massachusetts at Amherst and the East Longmeadow public schools have worked together in a preservice and inservice staff development program that has attracted considerable attention in the New England region. In the following pages we will detail the course of our project's development and discuss the principles, accomplishments, and pitfalls of our continuing process of collaboration.

PRINCIPLE ONE: To be successful, a collaborative project must address and balance the basic needs of both parties.

In our conception of the Professional Development School project, the University of Massachusetts at Amherst and the East Longmeadow public schools were responding to two forces: our recognition of mutual needs and a growing awareness of our responsibility to be activists in the educational reform movement of the 1980s. The university needed to improve preparation of novice teachers, and the school district needed to revitalize veteran staff.

Our professional development school began with initial meetings in the fall of 1985 between Peter Cannone, then principal of the East Longmeadow High School, and Professor Irving Seidman of the School of Education. The East Longmeadow High School (55 teachers and 650 students) had recently been accredited, praised for its accomplishments, but also cautioned about the possibility of complacency settling in among its veteran faculty. Cannone was worried both about reinvigorating a mature faculty and about coping with a projected teacher shortage in the 1990s. Seidman, as head of the Secondary Teacher Education Program, was concerned about the adequacy of practicum placements for students completing the all-important student teaching phase of their teacher education experience. Both the number of potential placements available and the quality of those placements were matters of concern.

The solution to our mutual concerns was for East Longmeadow High School (and later the Birchland Park Middle School) to become the equivalent of a teaching hospital for the School of Education. The collaborative relationship would assure the school's access to the pipeline of the best teachers the university developed, and the university would be assured of excellent practicum placements for students in math, science, social studies, and English. Further, it was hoped that the public school faculty would reap intellectual and professional benefits that would empower them and enrich the East Longmeadow school district. As Cannone and Seidman outlined their collaborative teacher education clinical site project, Dr. Helen Schneider of the School of Education joined the team, and in 1986 the triad became co-directors of the University of Massachusetts/East Longmeadow project.

A major purpose of our professional development school project has been to re-create for new teachers the medical profession's concept of a teaching hospital. We believed that joint involvement of school and college faculty in the crucial period of student teaching was an ideal opportunity to markedly improve the student teachers' experience at a pivotal point in their preparation and induction. The real and symbolic rite of passage we call the practicum affects the student teacher's entire subsequent career. Unfortunately, as Goodlad (1984) has observed, placement in student teaching sites has been an idiosyncratic and often random procedure. We also believed that there could be no better way to encourage veteran teachers to reflect upon their own practice than to sponsor a student teacher within a clinical site environment.

PRINCIPLE TWO: Both parties must have specific and concrete goals for the collaboration from the outset.

Our first goal was to develop a pilot clinical site at the East Longmeadow High School. In this prototype, university and high school faculty would collaborate in the preparation of a significant number of secondary school teachers (8-10 each semester).

For the student teachers involved in the project there were two major intended outcomes:

1. The clinical site would provide a placement for student teachers where they would feel welcome: supported by the entire school, mentored by experienced faculty, and treated as valuable additions to the school's resources, not professional obligations to be tolerated.
2. Student teachers would have the benefit of working with a group of student teacher colleagues. That group would become a small community, providing support and enrichment in the student teaching process.

For the public school faculty, there were four intended outcomes:

1. Participation in the program as mentors of student teachers would break down the sense of isolation secondary teachers can feel in their work.
2. Mentoring student teachers would lead veteran teachers to discuss issues of teaching, learning, and the structure in which they work, both among themselves and with the student teachers.
3. Working with other mentors would stimulate a new sense of collegiality among faculty participating in the program.
4. Collaborating with the university would facilitate access to university resources for individual teachers seeking professional and intellectual growth.

For the administrators of the school system there were three intended outcomes:

1. The staff development activity central to the project would benefit public school students as teachers were exposed to new ideas and techniques.
2. The district would have direct access to the university for the recruitment of new teachers in a time of possible shortage of teachers.
3. The project would allow the district to reward creative teachers through the mentoring program.

For the public school students the goals were:

1. To provide access to a cadre of young teachers and potential role models the students might relate to.
2. To increase student interest in and access to the university.

Finally, for the School of Education, the intended outcomes were:

1. To forge relationships with selected school districts in which School of Education faculty would be welcomed as colleagues in teacher education.

2. To bridge the destructive dichotomy that can exist in the preparation of teachers between college-based and school-based faculty.

3. To reinvigorate university faculty through involvement off campus in the schools.

PRINCIPLE THREE: The partners' vision of the structure of the collaboration must incorporate mutual respect for what each partner brings to the relationship.

There is a destructive tendency for university and high school faculty who work with student teachers to be skeptical of each other's motives and expertise at best, and disrespectful and cynical at worst. University faculty can be perceived as disconnected eggheads, unaware of the "real world" of teaching in the classroom. They are accused of filling their students with useless ideas about teaching that are either too idealistic or simply irrelevant to the daily reality of life in the schools.

Conversely, while mentor faculty may be individually perceived as good (even great) teachers, they may also be seen as having adapted too well to the status quo in the systems where they work. Conservative in curriculum and methodology, they are accused of doing "what works" and resisting innovation.

These mutual misperceptions can result in the "typical" practicum structure in which students feel discontinuity between what they have learned on campus and what they are learning in the schools. Caught in the middle, the student teacher feels the skepticism of public school faculties towards the university and the devaluing that university faculty may harbor about the school faculty. The result, in the conventional student teaching structure, is a student teacher caught between two worlds and incapable of receiving the full support of either party.

PRINCIPLE FOUR: The isolation of classroom teachers must be confronted and mitigated if the teaching hospital concept is to succeed.

The isolation of teachers and student teachers, particularly at the secondary level, is legendary. Typically student teachers are placed with one or two other student teachers in a building where little attempt is made to make use of their common placement. Even worse, the student teacher is often placed alone in a school or department. Consequently, student teachers are relatively isolated from their peers during the stress filled student teaching experience. Away from the campus with tenuous lifelines to the university community which has harbored them for three years or more, they often face learning their craft in a sink or swim fashion.

Similarly, the cooperating teacher is usually isolated from other faculty working with student teachers. Seldom do cooperating teachers in a school meet to discuss their work with student teachers or have an opportunity to discuss their experiences, expectations, and frustrations with the process. They do the best they can do, based on their past experience and their good sense, but basically without the support of colleagues.

Our mission was to overcome a history of school-university interaction beset by misunderstanding, mistrust, and disrespect. In its place we wanted to develop a structure to foster collegiality among university and school faculty in the preparation of teachers, to end the isolation that student teachers and cooperating teachers often feel. We hoped to develop a community of student teachers, cooperating teachers, and university faculty and staff dedicated to preparing outstanding new teachers.

PRINCIPLE FIVE: Collaborations may work best if the partners are forging a brand new relationship, not reworking an old one.

Ironically, the absence of an historical relationship between East Longmeadow and the School of Education was a benefit to the project. East Longmeadow is thirty-five miles from the university campus. Many school districts and other colleges lie between the two. While individuals at East Longmeadow had positive personal affiliations with the University of Massachusetts, the School of Education and East Longmeadow School District had no prior history of working together. The initial partners in the project could build their own history, establishing their own coinage and good faith with each other. In short, they could deliver what they promised to each other unencumbered by past entanglements.

PRINCIPLE SIX: Whenever possible, funding from the district, the university, and outside sources should be set aside specifically to support the collaboration.

A key initiative for the project was the East Longmeadow school district's support of the pilot phase with a seed grant. This grant not only reflected the school district's commitment, it established that the investment of federal money we sought through the Fund for the Improvement of Post Secondary Education would be a supplement to, not a substitute for, local initiative. East Longmeadow has maintained a modest level of financial support for the project up to the present time despite the serious financial strains on the system's budget that developed in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The financial situation in Massachusetts has worsened dramatically in the past few years, having a devastating impact upon both university funding and state aid to local communities. This has made the support of the district both more crucial and more impressive. Our experience is that both partners in the effort, university and school district, must be willing to generate local support, no matter what the level of actual funding, to provide a sense of ownership and responsibility for the project.

PRINCIPLE SEVEN: Equitable governance structures are crucial to the success of a collaboration.

In 1987 we were awarded a federally sponsored grant from the Fund for the Improvement of Post Secondary Education. The grant supported three crucial years of our development and gave us both economic viability and positive public perception for our work. But the federal funding also posed challenges, such as achieving true collaboration when the university is the funded agency. While taking full fiscal and administrative responsibility for the funded project, we had to work out a governance structure that positioned East Longmeadow as a full partner in the funded project.

This sense of equity was accomplished (a) by having the overall direction for development of clinical sites shared by Cannone, Schneider, and Seidman, (b) by making sure financial decisions had the full participation of all parties, and (c) by convening a steering committee open to all interested mentor faculty to review the site's development and communicate their activities to the school community.

PRINCIPLE EIGHT: All affected parties in the school system and university must be consulted for their support of the project and be willing to cross institutional boundaries.

Absolutely essential to the success of our professional development site was the moral support of the superintendent. A vote of the high school faculty revealed that over ninety percent were in favor of the collaboration. We were also fortunate that the local teachers' union was willing to keep an open mind about any changes in job description that might occur as a result of the project.

Apparently, administrators and teachers alike saw the project as an excellent opportunity for staff development, professional growth, and community service.

The dean of the School of Education endorsed the project strongly and signed a written agreement with the school district. Faculty from the Secondary Teacher Education Program also voted unanimously to support the project by recommending the site to their students and meeting with East Longmeadow faculty.

Our project crossed normal institutional and legislative boundaries. The university is governed by a Board of Regents separate from the State Department of Education, which governs the schools. Our university also resides in legislative and congressional districts different from those of East Longmeadow. In order to generate moral and fiscal support for our project, it was important for the Commissioner of Education to be conversant with the project and willing to discuss it with counterparts in the higher education system. For a short time, the Commissioner of Education in Massachusetts and the Chancellor of the Board of Regents were partners in proposing teacher education reforms that emphasized school-university collaborations, such as the East Longmeadow Project. For a time before the state's fiscal crash, our program was touted around the state as a "model" of what new teacher certification regulations envisioned. Now with federal funding concluded, the project must go on its own local energy and initiative while the state tries to straighten out serious fiscal problems.

Throughout the growth period of our professional development school, we have found it important to have legislative allies at the local and state level. Congressmen and State Representatives have lent crucial support at critical times. As much as we might like to think of teacher education issues as being non-political, in this day and age of "bottom line" mentality and highly publicized educational reform initiatives of politicians, keeping in touch with informed and intelligent legislators can be crucial to the well being of a project.

PRINCIPLE NINE: Key features of the PDS must be consistent but flexible.

The program places a cohort of between six and eight student teachers on site each semester. Whenever possible, student teachers are provided a room in the school where they may meet, work, and plan together. They take an on-site seminar to process their student teaching experience, study pedagogical issues, and participate in introducing the clinical site concept to the next generation of student teachers. They are expected to become part of a supportive community of student teachers and to work constructively with a community of mentors.

School faculty who work with student teachers expand the role of cooperating teacher to mentorship; in addition to supervising their student teachers with university supervisors, they act as coaches, resources, tutors, and guides to the entire student teaching cohort. They participate in teaching pre-practicum courses at the university and in the on-site seminar for the student teachers. Every mentor has taken a graduate course offered on site to explore issues of mentoring and provide a forum for planning future development of the program. Mentor faculty participate in two to three developmental workshops per year held at a site mutually convenient to schools and to the university.

University faculty offer the on-site graduate courses for mentor teachers, plan developmental workshops for school faculty participating in the program, act as resources to the schools in curriculum revision, and act as liaisons between the schools and the university.

Three underlying assumptions of this program are:

1. Sharing experiences rather than reflecting on them in isolation enhances learning. Therefore, every attempt is made to forge student teachers and mentor teachers into a learning community to develop collegiality with university faculty.

2. Equity in the relationships among student teachers, school mentors, and university faculty can be developed. Each participant can recognize and respect what the other can offer to the goal of developing the most effective experience for the student teachers.

3. The best way to accomplish equity is by working together on a common project in which each has something the other wants and each wants to contribute to the project for their own reasons. Equity cannot be built only on nice words and smooth talk. It is best built by bringing the different parties together to work on a common project that offers them a chance to move beyond the status quo.

Key planning strategies have been:

1. Faculties learn from each other through summer workshops where they come together to share their experience. Not only are we bringing together university and school faculty who rarely talk to each other, we also bring together school faculty from neighboring districts, each involved in a similar project, to share experiences.

2. A second key planning strategy has been the production of materials such as handbooks and bibliographies as by-products of the mentoring seminars. As the program has matured, the faculty have written booklets describing their experiences and documenting their programs, completed a video describing the progress of the clinical sites, and edited a series of handbooks to describe the policies and procedures of the clinical site. In each case, mentor faculty and university faculty collaborate on a real problem with a concrete intended outcome; by having a common project, information is shared, positions are clarified, and the development of the program is enhanced.

3. Another planning strategy has developed where students from colleges other than the University of Massachusetts are placed. To maintain community, the on-site student teacher seminar is for students from all the colleges involved, under the leadership of the University of Massachusetts.

PRINCIPLE TEN: Important results must be perceived by all parties and supported by research.

Our goal was to establish a professional development site where teacher education would be collaborative, where university and school faculty would welcome and respect each other's efforts, and where consequently the experience of student teachers, mentor faculty, and university faculty would be enhanced. Our experience, and the research and evaluation we have done on the project, indicate that we have accomplished, if not exceeded, our goals.

The comprehensive research and evaluation effort that has been an integral part of our project has taken the form of in-depth interviews of student teachers and faculty mentors. The method is based on work by Seidman (1985) and described in a book recently published by Teachers College Press (Seidman, 1991). The method consists of a series of three in-depth interviews with a sample of professional development school student teachers and mentors.

The interviewing research has produced important data on several key aspects of clinical site teacher education. Positive outcomes for both student teachers and mentors involved in professional development school sites have been significant, tempered with a few complexities and cautionary tales.

Results: Site Support

A major goal of the program was to develop sites which would welcome student teachers and offer them a broad base of support. One student teacher expressed the following:

> I couldn't think of a better environment for you to do your student teaching in. The faculty's used to student teachers, so they accept you immediately as part of the faculty when you show up. They're supportive. They'll help you even if they're not your cooperating teacher; if you ask them questions, they're there to answer them.

One talked about the warmth and sense of inclusion that the clinical site offered:

> I have NEVER felt like an intruder. You know, the [associate] superintendent's involved, and his office is in the building. I mean ... student teaching has its ups and downs as it is. I can't imagine having to deal with personalities and people who didn't like student teachers.

Perhaps one of the most significant accomplishments of the clinical site is to encourage the entire faculty and staff, not just those working directly with the student teachers, to support their efforts:

> This school was very supportive ... everybody seems to be really willing to help. ... The librarian's been wonderful. [My mentor] has been wonderful. The writing lab people, other subject teachers ... that was a nice surprise, because I had been at so many schools. ... And here, it was more like, "Oh, we welcome you!" ... That was a great help. ... I feel like I'm part of the school.

Support was not limited to the student teaching experience. The East Longmeadow clinical faculty concerned themselves with the future welfare of the student teachers, devising a mock job interview for beginning teachers. As one recalls:

> [The associate superintendent] did a mock interview with me. I'm not sure if students at other teaching sites are getting [that]. ... It's just–they're really concerned here that you're going to succeed in your field. Everyone's saying, "Oh, now we have to get you a job. You have to get a job." All this–you know ... you can't really put a finger on what that support system really is, except for isolated incidents. But those isolated incidents really do add up and make a difference.

It is important to note that the welcome and the support that the clinical sites offer is not without its complications. While our research indicates an overwhelming appreciation for the amount of support the clinical site offers, a concern for too much support bordering on over-protection does appear in the research:

> Basically, I felt that I had a lot of nurturing already in terms of my experiences, because of my own high school. And if I was going to get out there and teach, I wanted to do the real thing. I was tired of being protected. And I felt that a clinical site was just that. It was a protection; it was a shelter, because it was a clinical site. And I didn't want that. I wanted the real thing.

The notion of over-protection is a decidedly minor theme in our research on the clinical sites, but it deserves attention as we gain more experience and learn how to provide support and at the same time promote the autonomy of the student teachers. We must also consider to what extent the clinical site experience is not "the real thing."

Results: Building a Community of Student Teachers

Another basic structural element of the site was the development of the student teacher cohort into a community to provide support and serve as sounding boards for each other. Breaking down the sense of isolation suffered by so many student teachers was a major achievement of the site:

> "I would tend to get very isolated if I were in a school without other student teachers ..."

> "It's a shared experience. We watch each other teach, and we observe each other. We've–we put up with the same little things and enjoy the same little things. And it's developed some bonds."

> "It's good to be able to do some bantering and let loose a little bit and sort of vent, you know, stuff that's going on. I'd certainly try to compare experiences, especially when I've been in trouble. I've tried to tell that to people and ask them what kind of experiences they're having and that kind of thing. ... And when you hear somebody else's sad story you realize that you're not the only one going through turmoil and difficulty at times. ..."

> "I've talked to people about discipline and ... and they've talked about how they've had similar problems in their classes. [I have] talked about preparation. How they go about preparing. How much work that they're putting into stuff. How much time they're putting into it. I've asked them how they feel about their mentor teachers. Are they being helpful, supportive and that sort of thing. [I have] talked about motivation for teaching. How motivated are they to continue in the profession? And I've observed a few of them in their classes, too."

East Longmeadow's distant geographical location from the university provided a serendipitous benefit. Because the school was thirty-five miles away, student teachers car pooled to the site, which contributed to the sense of community. As one student teacher described:

> Some mornings you just need that person [small laugh] to drive while you catch–not even catch–sleep, but just close your eyes. Or, going out to Friendly's afterwards for an ice cream type of thing! Winding down. Having some sort of social life, because a lot of times, I mean, you get home and you have enough time to eat and then plan. And you don't really get to talk to anyone. Whereas, at least in the car ride home, you have that hour–you can talk about school if you want.

A central academic feature of the program is the on-site seminar for the student teachers which encourages them to work together and develop into a community of learners. One student teacher explained the importance of the academic cohort as follows:

> You plan together. If anyone has a good idea, you tell each other about it. If you have a bad idea, you tell that too. "Don't do this," you know, (laugh) or, "Do this." ... It's easier when you're going through an experience, if you know other people are there with you. ... You tell them your problems. You can support other people when they need support.

Developing into a community is not an automatic result of placing several students at a single site, and it takes time. One semester a student recalled:

> There was no bonding to begin with–no real working together–it took us ... well into the semester to really start to know each other and be able to talk to each other.

While the numbers alone do not produce a community of learners, results are very meaningful when community does develop and combine with the support of both university and school faculty. One student teacher said about her experience:

> When you're at this stage ... you're just so vulnerable that if people aren't sympathetic and understanding to what you're going through, then you could quit or you could just give up. Because you need the support group.

She compared her own positive experience with that of classmates who were not working at a clinical site:

> A lot of people who dropped out, dropped out because they were the only student teacher there. They didn't have somebody to talk to if they had a problem. Maybe they didn't feel like they could go to their mentor. Or, maybe they didn't have somebody to car pool with in the morning, and their car broke down, and they couldn't go. And it was just one thing after another. Or, the teachers in the lunchroom always looked at them kind of [like], 'Oh, who is he?' And never made them feel welcome. Just those little things add up. ... Whereas maybe, if that person had been in the clinical site, they would have had these support groups to diffuse that problem before it went into this snowball effect and got out of control. So ... I'm saying that I've had such a good experience here because people were welcoming to me. I had other people, people my own age, people older than me, but still people in the same boat that I was in and going through a lot of the same things, and unsure about certain things. And every Monday morning getting that knot in your stomach and ... knowing that I wasn't the only one. And then gradually the knot disappeared. And getting comfortable with it, and actually enjoying it.

It is abundantly clear to us from our experience and from our research that the impact on our student teachers, while not without some complexity, is significant and positive. Based solely on the student teachers' experience we would recommend the clinical site approach to teacher education as a marked improvement on the more traditional student teaching program.

Results: Effect on Mentors

A new and critical insight developed as we progressed in our project: the clinical site, although certainly beneficial to student teachers, was at least as beneficial to the experienced teachers who worked with them as mentors. While our original goals envisioned the program's having benefits for the experienced faculty, we did not anticipate the depth and extent of benefit which our experience and research have revealed.

Involvement of public school teachers in the clinical site project was not without its costs. The most serious complexities we found were these: (1) the sense of loss that develops as mentor teachers give up their classes and students to student teachers; (2) the amount of time mentoring requires for an already overburdened master teacher; and (3) the risk of failure and potential conflict that a mentor might have with a student teacher.

Results: Sense of Loss. If a mentoring program selects the "best," most committed teachers, then replaces them temporarily in the classroom, there will inevitably be an interruption, even disruption, in their relationship with their own students. Such teachers rarely let go of their students without pain or guilt. As one said:

> One of the problems I had, I'll be very honest with you, is when kids come up to me in the halls ... when the practice teacher's not around, and privately ask me when I am coming back ... I don't know how to deal with that.

Another added:

> You want to get up there and do it yourself. That's a normal thing I guess. You want to take over because it's your class. The kids are bonded to me; I'm bonded to them too–it works in both directions. I want to get up and teach the class, especially things that I've taught before. I know how to do it, and it's fun to do it because certain things that work are fun for a teacher. And those are the hard things to give up, but you've got to.

Some teachers experience a mix of anxiety and eagerness as they anticipate taking their classes back:

> [I'm anxious] about getting back up there because the kids have become familiar with her and they see me sitting in the back, and I don't know how they're going to react to me now. I don't think any differently, but you never know. I wouldn't want them to say "Oh, the real teacher is back," but I don't know how they will treat me. ... Those are the unknowns that I think I'm going to be faced with.

Results: Burden of Time. Mentor teachers who take the role seriously describe an overwhelming work load:

> It's very time consuming. I have a real hard time because I am torn in a lot of directions with my job. I have to put some quality time into this person. You meet right after that class; it isn't good enough to meet the next day ... and talk about what happened in that class, good or bad, and get that relationship going with that person–immediate feedback. So there's a real time problem to do it right.

Another mentor worried about her own class preparation:

> You have to be careful that you strike a balance between your responsibility with your own students because you can't get so immersed in what she's doing that (you) then lose your head and forget that you have your own responsibilities, and you want to do a good job at what you're doing too. ... I didn't feel as relaxed as I could because I couldn't shift gears from her to me as well as I wanted to–because so much of my time was being taken up with her.

Results: Risk of Failure. Dealing every day with a student teacher who is struggling and full of doubts can be very draining for the mentor:

> There's potential that you might be dealing with a person that's going to fail, so it's going to be a very bad experience for him. ... And you have to be willing to accept the risk, the emotional risk of being involved with a person who's going through failure.

Another explained:

> It's draining to sit in the back of a classroom and watch someone who's inexperienced and who is trying their hardest to do a good job, and it just isn't working the way they want it to. ... That's 55 minutes of watching someone struggling, and I just don't take these things lightly. These were emotional times for me, just trying to pinpoint what was going well and what wasn't going well and where she could improve.

Results: Mentor Satisfaction. We also found considerable, even moving, evidence of the satisfaction that mentor teachers experience working as teacher educators. In their interviews, mentors spoke of the sense of renewed career opportunity they felt as a result of their participation in the clinical site program. They talked about the program's allowing them the opportunity to talk with faculty in the school with whom they otherwise would not speak for months. As had the student teachers, they discussed the program's tendency to break their sense of isolation. As the program continued to develop, we were very curious to see if that sense of reinvigoration and collegiality would sustain itself.

One mentor teacher, a veteran of many years, said the following about her experience in the program:

> It put me in contact with colleagues in the school who are also doing [mentoring]. And I perhaps had not spent that much time speaking with them. It afforded me that time. I think those afternoons that we stayed after school, discussing, sometimes frustrations and sometimes the things that we're doing ... gave me a–a different outlook. I saw that ... other colleagues felt the way I did in many ways. And I sometimes learned some of the enthusiasms that they had. It shed a different light. It just sort of put things in perspective. Made me get–renewed my interest. Let me put it that way. ... I think that we too often get stuck in our little ruts where we do our own thing, and we're in our room and we teach. And we work hard at it. ... And we don't talk to adults [breath of laughter]. And that can be harmful.

This particular teacher had a student teacher the first year, but not the second, and she felt a little disconnected from the program at the time of her interview:

> And I'm kind of sad that I don't have that much of a connection this year, like last year. But, you know, I–I see how things have to move on.

Comments like hers alerted us to the fact that we had to work out ways for mentor teachers to stay involved with the project when they did not have a student teacher in a particular semester. Consequently, we began to ask mentor teachers without student teachers to sponsor such aspects of the program as pre-student teaching field experiences.

Another mentor teacher echoed the theme of seeing her colleagues in a different way:

> You realize something more about some of your colleagues in the school. You know, and get to know them more–and what they feel about education, what their interests are. Sometimes you don't think they care about anything at all. You know, and you see them in a different light.

There was an unanticipated sense of professional recognition associated with being a mentor in the program.

> There is a certain amount of prestige attached to being a mentor. I think that being a mentor gives you–gives you a boost. Because it renews your interest and it makes you take a fresh look, perhaps, at what you're doing. I think that if you stay just as a teacher, doing your job every day, you don't stop to think about that too much. You go along and you do your thing.

Participating in the clinical site program affected one teacher's decision not to retire:

> I made some inquiries [about a job outside of teaching]–a few inquiries. But then I decided against it. Somebody wanted me to sell real estate and, you know, I don't care to do that. ... And then the mentoring program came on, and ... it has renewed my interest in–or renewed the importance ... that I used to attach to teaching. ... It's given me a second look at what I'm doing.

Another mentor teacher talked about at first not being sure that he wanted to become a mentor, being observed continually and having to discuss his own performance with a student teacher. However, the experience turned out to be validating for him:

> In the beginning, I was worried about it. ... I didn't know how good I was, because not many people had ever really watched me. ... Teachers never realize what they do, because nobody ever tells them. [laugh] You know. Everybody who comes in to watch them is usually there to criticize them. ... It's an evaluation business. ... But, I never really had anybody watch me on a continual basis, and react to what I was doing. And it really added a whole new dimension to the way I feel about my job and myself, to have somebody who is so interested in listening to what I have to say, you know. It put me in a position that I wasn't in before. You know, usually as a teacher ... you have the kids, and you don't have the adults there. You don't interact with adults! You interact with kids all day. ... And I started to realize for the first time, "Wow, I guess I can do a lot of stuff!" you know?

Another experienced mentor teacher summed up what his experience in the program has meant to him, in the following terms:

> That has been a very good experience for me. It has required that I stand back and look at the reasons why I do things. [pause] And overall, I think that is probably one of the greatest benefits of this project, ... standing back and looking at the reasons why we do things. It is so easy to just do things the same way, over and over again ... but with an intern here, they will come into your classroom, and they will do things [pause] in a way that's perhaps very different from the way you've done it. And sometimes that can work very well, and you'll ask yourself, "Is there a better way?" Frequently the answer to that is, "Yes, there is a better way." Trying to do something differently. So it takes some of that assembly-line texture of teaching ... out of what we're doing. That's a good feeling.
>
> We really need more opportunity to reflect on what we're doing. ... I think one of the things that [pause]–that saps away a person's ability to play the role as teacher ... is this business about being isolated in the classroom with the students. Now what does that generate? What happens to people under those circumstances? ... What happened to me is that you begin to fantasize [small laugh] that you somehow are the receptacle of the truth. And the world as you see it is the way the world really is. That you see life in shades of only black and white. Not in shades, but as black and white. And that things in between don't seem to exist any more. ... I began to feel it too. I began to sense that I was becoming rigid in my thinking. Let's face it, standing in front of students ... is a pretty heady experience. It's an experience which

> is very ego-expanding. And you may begin to think [small laugh] that what you're doing is in fact the truth as you see it. ...
>
> How has it helped, to bring other people into the classroom? I think, well, the mere fact that you have ... the interns in here questioning what you're doing, and watching them go through the same sorts of things that you went through, as a–as a student intern, or as a new teacher. You realize that you're not God!
>
> The final thing I'd want to say is that this program has provided a degree of optimism for myself and colleagues that I'm happy about. That what I've seen so far [that] makes me feel good about what's happening here. I feel good about myself. Working with the interns has been exciting. I feel that I have something to contribute.

The project has made significant strides to becoming institutionalized. First, at the university, the School of Education has recognized the merits of the clinical site program, and has expanded to include four school districts. Clinical sites have become a sought after option for student teachers. Representatives from our clinical sites regularly attend information and recruitment meetings for prospective student teachers. Despite the atmosphere of financial crisis in the state, the university has recognized our efforts and has not indicated any intention to reduce teacher education efforts.

Conclusion

The Professional Development School project has offered pioneering work that has contributed enormously to our understanding of preservice and inservice teacher education. We have served more than one hundred student teachers and have grown as school and university faculty. Like partners in any relationship, we have our conflicts. To date we have been able through frank communication to work through our differences because we all want the collaborative to work. Also, any relationship goes through stages of development: the sense of excitement that marked our first four or five years had to diminish with time, and it has. But as the sense of newness abated, we took strength from our shared history of accomplishment and worked to revitalize our joint commitment to teacher education by reaching out to other schools and colleges in Western Massachusetts. East Longmeadow and University of Massachusetts faculty and staff have shared their experiences in innumerable workshops and conferences and have sponsored summer workshops for our colleagues. As a result, three additional districts have signed on to work with us, and we have welcomed five other colleges to the collaborative. We plan to continue working and learning together in the upcoming years.

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