

Development and evolution of clinical partnerships: K-12 school leaders' perspectives

K-12 school
leaders'
perspectives

Kimberly Bohannon

Keene State College, Keene, New Hampshire, USA

Vincent Connelly

University of New Hampshire, Durham, New Hampshire, USA

Stephen Bigaj

Keene State College, Keene, New Hampshire, USA, and

Laura M. Wasielewski

Saint Anselm College, Manchester, New Hampshire, USA

Received 27 February 2023

Revised 6 July 2023

7 March 2024

Accepted 18 March 2024

Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this research study was to examine school leaders' critical perspectives about the nature of their partnerships with K-12 schools and two Educator Preparation Programs (EPP).

Design/methodology/approach – Data were collected through interviews with K-12 school leaders to obtain partners' critical perspectives about school–EPP partnerships. The interviews were coded thematically and oriented around the central concept of working to represent the interplay of the participants and their collaborators' perceptions of the nature and dimensions of school–EPP partnerships.

Findings – The analysis resulted in the construction of a mosaic of school leaders' collective lived experiences using a statewide conceptual framework as a guide. Four themes emerged from our interviews with school partners: (a) the need for dynamic, responsive and synergistic partnerships; (b) the need to monitor and maintain the underlying structure and integrity of the partnership; (c) the culture of interns as colleagues or as visitors; and (d) the need to innovate.

Originality/value – Four themes emerged from our interviews with school partners: (1) the need for dynamic, responsive and synergistic partnerships; (2) the need to monitor and maintain the underlying structure and integrity of partnerships; (3) the culture of interns as colleagues or interns as visitors; and (4) the need to innovate.

Keywords Teacher preparation, School-college partnership, School leader

Paper type Research paper

It is well documented that one of the most significant aspects of educator preparation has been and continues to be clinical experiences and the evolving partnerships connected with

© Kimberly Bohannon, Vincent Connelly, Stephen Bigaj and Laura M. Wasielewski. Published in *School-University Partnerships*. Published by Emerald Publishing Limited. This article is published under the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY 4.0) license. Anyone may reproduce, distribute, translate and create derivative works of this article (for both commercial and non-commercial purposes), subject to full attribution to the original publication and authors. The full terms of this license may be seen at <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/legalcode>

NAPDS nine essentials addressed:

Essential Two: Clinical Preparation: A PDS embraces the preparation of educators through clinical practice.

Essential Three: Professional Learning and Leading: A PDS is a context for continuous professional learning and leading for all participants, guided by need and a spirit and practice of inquiry.

Essential Five: Research and Results: A PDS is a community that engages in collaborative research and participates in the public sharing of results in a variety of outlets.



Educator Preparation Programs (EPPs) in K-12 schools (American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education [AACTE], 2018; Dresden & Thompson, 2021; Darling-Hammond & Hylér, 2020; Zeichner, 2021). Furthermore, there is a demonstrated relationship between the success of a teacher candidate and strong clinical preparation (AACTE, 2018). Clearly, colleges and universities rely on their relationships with their K-12 partners to prepare future educators (AACTE, 2018; Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation [CAEP], 2021; Dresden & Thompson, 2021). School–EPP partnerships are foundational to continuing to provide opportunities for meaningful experiences for teacher candidates and K-12 school leaders play a pivotal role in their development (Darling-Hammond & Hylér, 2020; Rosenberg *et al.*, 2021).

On the surface, K-12-school EPP partnerships may be viewed from the narrow lens of the teacher candidate and the on-site clinical educator. School leaders' participation in school–EPP partnerships is essential because they are primarily responsible for establishing the culture of learning in a school including partnerships with the community (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015; Jacobs & West-Burns, 2021; Wepner *et al.*, 2021). It is the school leaders as well as EPP leaders who play a foundational role in setting the stage for effective and mutually beneficial partnerships (Nettleton & Barnett, 2016; Wepner *et al.*, 2021). Additionally, if the school leader is not engaged in the partnership or empowered to develop a joint vision with an EPP, the chances of success will be very limited.

For this study, the following definition for school–EPP partnership and clinical practice was used as developed by the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP, 2021): A partnership is a “mutually beneficial agreement among various partners in which all participating members engage in and contribute to goals for the preparation of education professionals. This may include examples such as pipeline initiatives, Professional Development Schools, and partner networks” (p. 165). According to CAEP (2021), clinical practice is defined as “Teacher candidates’ work in authentic educational settings and engagement in the pedagogical work of the profession of teaching, closely integrated with educator preparation course work and supported by a formal school-university partnership” (p. 157).

The purpose of this study was to examine the dynamic nature, evolution and aspirations of partnerships between two institutions of higher education (IHEs) and their Educator Preparation Program (EPP) with six K-12 partner schools from the perspectives of K-12 school leaders. Capturing the voices of the school leaders was essential to fully understand the ways in which school–EPP partnerships evolve. Highly effective school–EPP partnerships equally value the contributions of all stakeholders (Farrell, 2021).

The following research questions guided the study:

- RQ1. How do school leaders describe the nature and extent of school-EPP partnerships?
- RQ2. What do school leaders identify as the benefits, challenges and barriers?
- RQ3. How do school leaders perceive efficacy of K-12 school-EPP partnerships in the context of a Statewide *Clinical Practice and Partnership Conceptual Framework* (Institutions of Higher Education [IHE] *Institutions of Higher Education Network*, 2016)?

Background

While the federal policy context of the last 10 years has challenged teacher preparation and resulted in strict accountability mandates in some states, our state’s policy context remained localized and democratic. Within this context, a statewide research team was formed to study clinical practice and partnership. The team’s research agenda, focused on examining the state’s EPP practices, ideas and goals for clinical experiences through three research studies from a range of stakeholder perspectives. In support of this work, the Collaboration for

Effective Educator Development, Accountability and Reform (CEEDAR) Center provided partial funding for the team's school-EPP research.

In the first study (Wasliewski, Birch, Bigaj, & Connelly, 2021; Connelly, Wasielewski, Bigaj, & Birch, 2021), a survey was conducted with EPP school leaders from across the state and was framed by a statewide *Clinical Practice and Partnerships Conceptual Framework* (Institutions of Higher Education-Network, [IHE-Network] 2016). Responses were collected across all institutions statewide in order to share knowledge and improve collective practice. Results indicated that EPPs were shifting from a placement approach for clinical experiences to a partnership approach. The team also examined the scope and sequence of clinical experiences within EPPs and provided initial insights into the current state of EPP and K-12 school partnerships including strengths, challenges and opportunities.

In the second study, EPP school leaders who partook in the initial survey were interviewed about their responses to the survey questions from the first study (Wasliewski *et al.*, 2021; Connelly *et al.*, 2021). The purpose was to allow a deeper understanding of the perspectives of EPP school leaders about K-12 partnerships. Although limited in scope, these interview data provided additional insights into challenges, successes and perspectives that are common across EPP statewide.

In order to gain a holistic understanding from a range of stakeholder's perspectives of school partnerships, the team embarked on this study of school leader insights into school-EPP partnerships in the context of the conceptual framework. Seeking school leader insights provides an opportunity to examine the alignment of clinical practice to the reality of the culture of schools and the implementation of partnerships (Mercado *et al.*, 2023).

Clinical practice and partnerships conceptual framework

The Statewide *Clinical Practice and Partnership Conceptual Framework* (IHE Institutions of Higher Education Network, 2016) frames the types of relationships EPPs have with schools and districts. The framework represents the spectrum of relationships with schools ranging from placements to partnerships (Wasliewski *et al.*, 2021; Connelly *et al.*, 2021). On one end of the spectrum, teacher candidates can be placed in schools and EPP faculty focus their energy on the supervision of the teacher candidate. These are often one-time opportunities, unidirectional and focus solely on supporting the teacher candidate. In many respects, this is the "traditional" relationship EPPs have had with schools. The other end of the spectrum reflects a true partnership which aspires to reflect the guiding principles outlined in the conceptual framework while supporting the development of EPP candidates in the field. There is a range of field experiences for EPP candidates. Educator preparation candidates participate in early field experiences (e.g. site-based courses, freshman through junior year experiences) through intensive and immersive clinical experiences (e.g. student teaching, internships, capstone experiences).

Central to this conceptual framework are three guiding principles or ingredients that work to support and constitute a foundation for high-quality partnerships: (1) Partnerships Improve Student Learning; (2) Partnerships Foster a Culture of Adult Lifelong Learning; and (3) Partnerships are Bidirectional and Mutually Beneficial (see Figure 1). These guidelines emerged from subcommittee meetings of EPP program leaders, a comprehensive review of literature and statewide partnership meetings (stakeholders both in schools and EPPs) and were also guided by earlier versions of NAPDS (2021) Nine Essential Principles and CAEP (2021) Standard Two: Clinical Practice and Partnerships.

As represented in Figure 1, the mix of the principles work to inform and lead to high-quality partnerships. A focus on student learning helps to ground the work of the partnership and when coupled with a focus on supporting a culture of lifelong learning for all stakeholders (i.e. P-12 students, EPP students, K-12 staff and EPP faculty) the principles

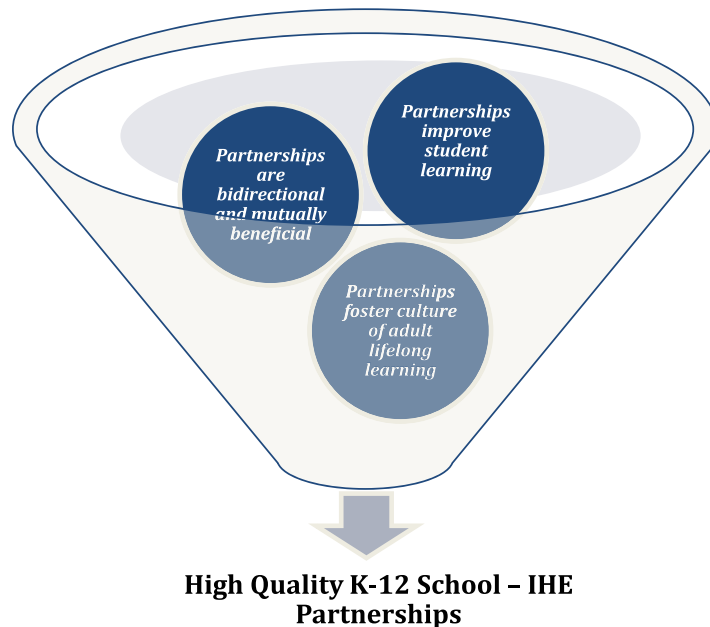


Figure 1.
K-12 school-IHE
partnerships guiding
principles

Note(s): The figure denotes the three principles of the statewide Clinical Practice and Partnership Conceptual Framework (IHE Network, 2016)

actively work together in a spirit of bidirectionality learning and mutual benefit. The mutually beneficial nature of effective partnerships enables the seamless exchange of resources, expertise and support fostering a culture of learning and growing together. The intention is that when dynamically and synergistically aligned, the collective nature of the principles aims to yield high-quality partnerships. A brief overview of each principle is provided as follows.

Student Learning. The first underlying principle is that partnerships improve pupil learning in K-12 schools. As [Heafner et al. \(2014\)](#) stressed, student learning is at the heart of the partnership and is at the core of work in schools which can be enhanced by effective school partnerships. The primary goal of a partnership is to improve teaching and learning and ultimately improve schools ([Boyle-Baise & McIntyre, 2008](#); [Farnan et al., 2019](#)). Recognizing each unique relationship with K-12 schools and realizing that the diversity of school experiences in which our candidates engage is critical supporting K-12 student learning.

Adult Lifelong Learning. The National Professional Development Schools (NAPDS) Nine Essentials of Professional Development Schools are foundational to the statewide *Clinical Practice and Partnership Conceptual Framework* particularly related to the second underlying principle, partnerships foster a culture of adult lifelong learning. NAPDS essential number three states that a school-EPP partnership “is a context for continuous professional learning and leading for all participants, guided by need and a spirit and practice of inquiry” ([NAPDS, 2021](#)). Communities of practice such as EPP partnerships elevate the teaching profession and improve educator preparation.

Clinical practice affords teacher candidates the opportunity to learn how to do the work of teaching rather than just theorize. Essential two states that a school-EPP partnership “embraces the preparation of educators through clinical practice” ([NAPDS, 2021](#)).

Furthermore, EPPs connect theory to practice in clinical placements with corresponding coursework with the intent of developing correlating projects and experiences that show how theory informs practice (AACTE, 2018; Darling-Hammond, 2015; NAPDS, 2021). Clinical partnerships improve our profession through clinically rich practice in teacher education, such as “look and learn, teaching rounds, talks with teachers, scavenger hunts, and the supported collaborative teaching model” (Dresden *et al.*, 2014, p. 43).

Mutually Beneficial Partnerships. The third foundational principle is that partnerships are bidirectional and mutually beneficial. Effective school–university partnerships share vision and values (Snyder, 2005) while remaining sensitive to the goals of the school and the context where interns practice. In addition, effective partnerships collaborate and share decision-making on curriculum development activities, professional learning and applied research to solidify long-term partnerships (Robinson & Darling-Hammond, 2005). Essential five (NAPDS, 2021) states that a school–EPP partnership creates a “community that engages in collaborative research and participates in the public sharing of results in a variety of outlets.”

It is important to evaluate, refine and expand EPP partnerships with school districts so that educator preparation is valued as a “shared responsibility” that is mutually beneficial to all involved in the process of preparing educators (CAEP, 2021). “Collaboration occurs through mutual problem solving on issues related to student learning, shared teaching at the university and schools, and cooperative, innovative supervision of teacher candidates” (Boyle-Baise & McIntyre, 2008, p. 311). Mutually beneficial school partnerships where EPPs coordinate their programs with school districts can have a significant impact on teacher preparedness (AACTE, 2018). Valuing the perceptions of all educators engaged in school–EPP partnerships is essential in ensuring shared governance, sustainability and continued growth.

Overview of the literature

This overview of the literature aims to address the dimensions of school–EPP partnerships, by examining the barriers and challenges impeding effective EPP–school partnerships, elucidating partnership models that exist and shedding light on the perspectives of school leaders regarding the significance and dynamics of such collaborations. Understanding school leaders’ roles and perspectives in relation to school–EPP partnerships is critical to understanding the context of this study.

Partnership models

The literature identified many different approaches and models related to the development and implementation of K-12 school–EPP partnerships (AACTE, 2018; Jenlink, 2021; Jones & Ryan, 2014; Kuter, 2010; NAPDS, 2021). The NAPDS established the Nine Essential Principles of School Partnerships in 2008 and these were revised in 2021. These principles have provided EPPs with a reference point and guide to the development of various approaches and models. At about the same time, the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE, 2010) established a set of recommendations for schools and EPPs to transform clinical practice. The vehicle for this would involve extensive and intensive partnerships between K-12 schools and EPPs. These recommendations have been revised by CAEP (formerly NCATE) and integrated into their accreditation standards, identifying key areas where EPPs need to focus to establish effective models and approaches.

Schools and EPPs utilize this knowledge and foundational work to develop individually designed school partnerships tailored to the needs of EPP and K-12 schools. For example, the Louisiana Department of Education *Believe and Prepare initiative* has worked extensively to

support developing partnerships and a model to prepare the next generation of teachers (Goldhaber *et al.*, 2022). To this end, a statewide EPP team collaborated to develop their unique framework for K-12 school–EPP partnerships.

Barriers and challenges

While school–EPP partnerships have been cited as beneficial to both institutions, there are multiple barriers that may impact the success and sustainability of these partnerships. School leaders and EPP partners often have differing views on the factors that define a successful partnership (Tracz *et al.*, 2018). Strong communication involving stakeholders from both schools and educator preparation programs and common goals are essential. The absence of shared governance, resources and communication can negate the continued growth of school–EPP partnerships (Burns *et al.*, 2016).

Funding for school–EPP partnerships is often another barrier. Finding adequate resources to support EPP faculty, cooperating professionals and joint efforts is challenging yet must be addressed. The need to remove barriers to collaborative efforts and even provide financial and policy incentives for meeting district needs is critically important. (AACTE, 2018). Additionally, the clinical work of faculty is not always highly valued in the promotion and tenure process in institutions of higher education, sometimes making collaborative engagement with partnerships less attractive and undervalued. EPPs need to ensure that policies are amended to adequately honor the contributions of faculty supporting clinical practice. Breaking down these barriers will contribute to the evolution and advancement of clinical practice through school–EPP partnerships.

The Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP, 2021) emphasized that partners work together to select and support interns and collaborate to retain them as they move through their careers. Collectively, our EPPs are challenged to respond to emerging expectations and changing needs of schools. We also need EPP designs and policy implementation strategies that address the changing context of the educator workforce and make use of findings from teacher attrition and retention research that reflect the importance of the provision of support, compensation and manageable working conditions to beginning educators (Rosenberg *et al.*, 2021). For example, interns entering the workforce from Generation Z (i.e. individuals born between 1997 and 2012) are more likely than older generations to view government and public service as a means to solve social problems (Parker & Igielnik, 2020) and express concern about paying for their education (ECMC Group, 2021). An EPP that provides opportunities for tangible social impact and paid clinical experiences might be very appealing to this group. We need to ensure educator preparation candidates are well prepared to start their careers where they will continue to grow and thrive and have a positive impact on student achievement.

School leader perspectives and role

Existing literature does not thoroughly explore leaders' roles in these relationships between schools and EPPs. The role of the school leader is often perceived as simply being a present, but silent supporter (Nettleton & Barnett, 2016). In actuality, the principal is often the individual who initiates the collaboration between a school and an EPP. School leaders' participation in school-EPP partnerships is essential because they establish a culture of learning in the school and partnering with the community (Wepner *et al.*, 2021).

Nettleton and Barnett (2016) suggested that the role of school leaders within school–EPPs partnerships is cyclical. In the initial phases, they demonstrate interest and enthusiasm, which provides the momentum for the partnership to commence. Professional commitment is then demonstrated, as school leaders go beyond simply permitting teacher candidates to be placed in the schools and extends to ensuring they have a rich experience. The leader's

commitment is reflected in the way teacher candidates are treated and mentored in the school. School leaders also help to ensure teacher candidates are placed with cooperating professionals who are dedicated and qualified to adequately train and mentor prospective teachers. By doing so, they are designing the environment in which the teacher candidates will learn and grow. When school leaders gain experience and insight into the mutual benefits of school-EPPs they are then able to encourage participation and nurture relationships among participants (Nettleton & Barnett, 2016).

Maintaining a common vision and shared goals among leaders from both institutions in a partnership is essential. When differing interpretations exist, tensions may arise (Skoglund, 2022). Given that school leaders set the tone for all aspects of these partnerships, it is essential that regular communication, engagement and ongoing development are central to the structure of the partnership. A key aspect of maintaining partnerships is understanding the roles school leaders play in school-EPP partnerships and valuing their important contributions.

There is a need to further explore school leaders' roles and perspectives with limited guidance in the literature. Gaining this important perspective will inform other EPP of the ways in which they may support the growth of their own partnerships. Enhance clinical practice with K-12 schools, communicate and empower school leaders in the process.

Methods

Participants

To gain school leader perspectives about school-EPP partnerships, an interview process was followed. Participants were purposefully selected because of their significant experience with the school-EPP partnerships. Seven K-12 school leader participants at six schools were identified for this study and included two participants each from elementary and middle levels. Each of the participants had significant experience with school-EPP partnerships and were currently engaged with EPP from either a public or private institution of higher education that are representative of the state's demographic variability and the types of partnerships at these institutions.

The high school representatives included two leaders from one high school and one school leader from the other high school. The two elementary school leaders who participated in this study included principals with over 20 years in their positions and significant experience engaging with EPPs. The middle school participants included a teacher-leader serving as school-EPP partnership liaison and a current middle school principal who also had elementary-level leadership and partnership experience. At the high school level, both a curriculum coordinator who oversaw the partnership and the school principal from that school were interviewed together and at the other high school a principal interviewed all three with significant EPP partnership experience.

Interviews

This study employed semi-structured interviews in which the participants were comfortable speaking about their experiences, yet the researchers were able to follow the interview protocol (see Appendix). Each participant shared their unique stories and experiences regarding EPP partnerships within their school (Patton, 2015). The questions were intentionally broad enabling us to explore various aspects of our conceptual framework without directly referencing them (IHE Institutions of Higher Education Network, 2016). To provide depth, interviews were conducted, using a video conferencing platform (i.e. Zoom). These interviews occurred during two immediate and relevant contextual conditions: (a) pandemic and recruitment and (b) chronic and extreme personnel shortages within the

schools. Interviews were conducted by EPP leaders who did not have an existing partnership or other professional connection to the K-12 school where the leaders were interviewed.

Data analysis

Each interview was recorded and transcribed immediately after the interview. Interview data analysis began as the research team first independently open-coded the focus group interview transcripts labeling excerpts of data to summarize what the researchers saw in the data (Patton, 2015). After engaging in this initial independent open coding process, the researchers met to share, discuss and begin categorizing the open codes into themes and patterns. Together, researchers compared the initial independently identified codes related to the research questions and collaboratively identified a set of shared codes related to the participants' perceptions of partnerships (Patton, 2015). During this stage of coding, the researchers shared their codes and notes, raised questions, offered suggestions, discussed limitations, insights and thoughts about the emerging themes. In sum, an iterative comparative method of reflecting and exploring the data allowed emerging patterns to collectively come into focus (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Interview thematic analyses provided depth into how the school leaders perceive and experience partnerships and uncovered their thoughts, insights, feelings, struggles and hopes. Finally, member checks of the findings were conducted with the candidates to confirm the study's findings and assertions.

Results

The analysis resulted in the construction of a mosaic of the school leaders' collective lived experiences using the statewide conceptual framework (IHE [Institutions of Higher Education Network, 2016](#)). The framework permitted the research team to highlight aspects of the school leader's perceptions about EPP partnerships and helped organize the findings around four unifying themes: (a) The need for dynamic, responsive and synergistic partnerships; (b) The need to monitor and maintain the underlying structure and integrity of the partnership; (c) The culture of interns as colleagues or as visitors; and (d) The constant need to innovate to ward off stagnation. These themes were present in each participant's answers to the guiding interview questions, and there were no readily discernible differences within these themes across respondents and grade level.

The need for dynamic, responsive and synergistic partnerships

The conceptual framework presented the importance of the *shared responsibility* that both EPPs and schools must have when developing mutually beneficial and expansive partnerships. Participants in our study addressed a number of different themes surrounding the establishment and developmental needs of shared responsibility school–EPP partnerships. In particular, participants expressed frustrations with the complex nature of partnerships, expressing a triad of challenges in maintaining dynamic, responsive and synergistic partnerships between schools and universities. One participant stated:

The box of education itself is like origami and we're refolding it constantly. And so, I just [compare] our higher education view [with our view] of the progression of a student teacher. We have to look at that. I think it doesn't reflect necessarily the progression of our school systems all the time.

Respondents repeatedly emphasized their perceptions that schools face constant situational challenges (i.e. staffing shortages, difficulty programming for tutoring, etc.) and that "traditional" partnerships (versus school site-responsive partnerships) lack the ability to generate the collaborative, responsive synergies needed to address them. Examples of these dynamic and responsive synergies include internships that continue over two semesters, site

(school) based cohort EPP courses and early “step-up” programs that progressively move students from intern to supported paid roles more efficiently, including year-long paid residencies for interns. These examples, taken within the context of moving from mere intern placement to more sustained and committed partnerships, help provide schools with shared, extended and enhanced opportunities for interns to partner with seasoned educators to increase K-12 student learning.

The synergistic nature of robust partnerships was expressed clearly by school leaders across grade levels. For example, one administrator faced staffing shortages at the secondary education level and leveraged the fruits of a partnership’s labor over the academic year:

So, we had a conversation between our central office and state and the school, and we were able to hire teachers that were student teachers (to fill school vacancies) for the last six weeks of the program. They ran their own classes, the grading, the curriculum, everything for the last six weeks of work. And I think that this was really beneficial, obviously, not only to us, because we had people that were able to teach those classes, but for me, I could trust those student teachers because (the internship) had done such a good job of setting them up.

School leaders stressed the value of extended (two-semester) internships for interns facilitated through their extant partnerships. In one administrator’s view, extended opportunities forged by such partnerships did not merely afford a placement for an intern, it provided a crucible within which a beginning educator could gain their professional identity as an effective educator:

“Having that full year as an intern, is, I think the intern gets a much deeper experience (for) what it is to be a teacher. And I hate to say when I talk to my interns, there’s a certain level of endurance that you have to have to be an educator, and you see that over the course of a year. You’re so tight. Everybody remembers their first-year: Just headaches. You know, all these things that should have taken two seconds, they take so much longer, and you really start to understand what it is to build your endurance as a teacher, and to see who you really can be.”

Lastly, the synergy of an effective partnership was evidenced by school leaders readily hiring their interns at the end of the academic year into permanent positions within the school or school district:

“So that’s why I’ve always embraced that kind of relationship. And it’s crazy. It’s like a farm system. You know, you have these rookies now, and you’re getting first pick. And if you’re doing your job as a principal and creating a really good atmosphere and trying to create the school that we want to have, they want to be there.”

School leaders expressed confidence in hiring a person who has shown, over the course of an extended internship, their competence as an educator and their value as an asset to the school:

“I’m just going to be straight up with it. I am a merciless recruiter. I want the best people in my building and I and I want to work hard to get them there. And having young students that are just fresh and coming out with the latest pedagogy and philosophies, although there’s work to get them up to speed (across the internship) they are wonderful hires, especially if they enter the building for a year and they have their year-long interview with us, right? And so, we really get to know them.

One administrator articulated how interns are seen as “known entities,” valued as potential hires across a district:

“Last year, I hired at least three, if not four people out of that partnership. And then they’ve also that they haven’t been hired here, but they have gained a greater access to jobs in our district and come with stronger recommendations because (the) principals have had intimate access and observational time with them. And so that’s been really great. So, this partnership, again, I think for the students, they know they’re staying within the district. I have hired students out of this partnership over hiring experienced educators.”

Lastly, one administrator expressed the value of the fruits of a partnership in terms of the importance of hiring the *right individuals* within their school to facilitate the realization of the school's mission and vision:

"I feel like when we're hiring, it's the most important job I have outside of just running the daily operations of our school and making sure kids are safe. When we add someone new to our staff, it can either help accelerate where we're going, or it can create a roadblock. And so, by having the opportunity to see these folks in action and see where they're going, you know, if we align with what *they* hope and view as their vision, then that's the opportunity right there. It's great."

Clearly, school leaders felt that effective partnerships provided benefits that exceeded merely providing clinical learning opportunities for an EPP's students. Effective partnerships were seen as generative relationships that could help provide participating schools with a continuous source of competent, enthusiastic and innovative personnel that help advance their school's mission.

The need to monitor and maintain the underlying structure and integrity of the partnership

Similar to the first theme, respondents indicated that partnerships must be developed over a bedrock of practices that develop and maintain the underlying structure and integrity of the partnership. This foundation influences the subsequent adaptability and responsiveness of the partnership. Respondents indicated several practices that facilitate this, including streamlining continuous and timely communication between the EPP and school to break down the "red tape" of initial placement, mentor pairing and feedback. One administrator expressed this sentiment in this manner:

"Can I be super transparent? Absolutely. I think it's red tape. I think it's the amount of bureaucratic red tape that both sides have to go through. I am afraid to be quoted in saying that. But I really think that that's what it is, is getting student teachers email addresses, working with some of the structures at (the EPP). I mean, it's all important as an administrator. I understand the importance of all of that red tape, but that is the biggest challenge, is that the amount of time it takes to check all of those boxes, by the time you do all of that work, you're like a month and a half down the road, and a month and a half in a school year is like a lifetime when you're talking about student and intern engagement."

Another school leader reiterated this perceived negative effect of impediments to the placement and pairing of an intern:

"You have to make sure that you're not truncating a student teacher's experience as a student teacher. So, none of those (administrative) steps could have been skipped and still had (generated) the outcome that we had, so I don't negate the importance of all of them. . . I just wish that there was a cleaner way to have that communication."

"Co-construction" of the internship is needed to "break down barriers," so that EPP personnel and school staff move past visits for "observation only" and become more immersed in how the school and classroom's culture can either help or hinder the transformation of the EPP's intern into an educator. For example, in order to maintain momentum and integrity within a clinical placement, school leaders articulated the importance of increasing the number of mid-program experiences to affirm or re-assess career choices for interns. School leaders expressed a desire to allow teacher candidates across grade levels more opportunities to assess whether a teaching role is the best path for them before engaging in an extended "capstone" clinical experience.

"And so (mid-program experiences) provide those students with *an out*, you know, a good way instead of waiting until their senior year, when at that point they have given that much money and that much time to this, and then all of a sudden, they have this full student teaching experience, they

feel they have to do it or and not waste it. But you don't have as many opportunities (in EPPs) to say, "you know what, this isn't for me". And to teach, you have to want it because kids can tell if you are not engaged and embedded in your work."

School leaders also indicated the need for a clear definition of a partnership's individual personnel roles to maintain the strength and structure of a partnership:

You need to look at the clear expectations of each person's role is in that partnership. And so, from that standpoint, to understand your role in that, it is a really important part going forward.

School leaders articulated the need to intentionally move beyond the intern-mentor teacher-EPP faculty member triad to maintain partnerships. In particular, school leaders expressed a desire for EPP faculty to immerse themselves more fully into the partnering school. For example, EPP faculty were valued for not just by acting within the role of intern-observers, but as potential sources of continuing professional development for larger teaching departments:

"I would like to see the professors have more opportunities to come to our staff or department meetings and talk about content here from and with our teachers, to talk about what instructional strategies are beneficial. So, I think breaking down those barriers so that they don't just come into the school to observe the student teacher. They're part of a department meeting."

School leaders themselves articulated their importance in being more involved in the intern-mentor teacher-EPP faculty member triad:

"Involving the leadership team! Instead of just seeming like everything was (being) related directly to the teachers. So, finding ways for us (school leaders) to establish those relationships. We're going to invest in these professionals, and they want to apply and work for us. They should either have the feedback to know (from us) that they're solid candidates, but we don't have that system in place."

In sum, school leaders articulated their visions for partnerships that are structured around clear and efficient processes to minimize administrative "red tape" as well as ones that have established clear structural roles for personnel. In addition, school leaders value partnerships that move beyond the traditional the intern-mentor teacher focus and expand the roles of EPP faculty and the involvement of school leaders.

The culture of interns as colleagues or interns as visitors

School leaders articulated that interns that were immersed in the school culture as peers, not visitors, were better able to engage in clinically rich practice within the classroom and contribute to learning in the classroom. In addition, school leaders voiced how interns were perceived, at least partially, as conduits and valued sources of new knowledge for seasoned educators in the building. School leaders articulated how interns can help build and implement stronger use of research-validated practices within their classrooms rather than wholly adopting the pedagogical status quo within a placement.

School leaders revisited the theme of mutual benefit in partnerships. They especially valued promoting the benefit for veteran school teachers in a partnership, by helping them to question why certain practices are adopted. School leaders recognized the dissonance between the university classroom experience and school site practices and encouraged EPPs to move beyond an intern-only support model to a model of building mutual benefit for the mentor teacher and the faculty at large within a school.

Moreover, participants expressed a need and a desire to welcome interns as peers within the school. By welcoming and supporting interns as co-constructors of classroom instruction and support rather than as temporary observers of existing practice, seasoned educators indicated that this opportunity for co-construction helps increase K-12 student learning.

School leaders clearly articulated the benefits of (a) welcoming interns to their school as *future colleagues*, not merely as visitors and by (b) recognizing the fresh perspectives and potential new ideas for practice that they can bring to their school. For example:

It was really cool to see all of their thoughts and ideas and new, innovative things (they) do. So, I mean, as much as they learned from us, I really felt and feel like there's a lot that we learn from (interns), even if it is just reflecting on your own practices.

In addition, interns can help other teachers in the building reflect on whether they are becoming instructionally "complacent":

I really think it strengthens the current teachers that we have to have student teachers who really are more reflective of your own practice. . . I mean, my student teachers had some amazing ideas, and I just thought of that because you get a little bit complacent in your own teaching practice.

One administrator likened their vision for their school to that of a "teaching hospital":

"I also see a huge benefit to my teachers. You know, any of the best hospitals in the world are teaching hospitals. And so, I want to be a teaching school that's teaching teachers because having an intern makes you constantly reflect on what you're doing and why you're doing it."

Conversely, school leaders noted that there remains a persistent need to continuously promote the integration of interns and facilitate mutually beneficial relationships with extant teachers within the building:

The (interns) were a little teaching force. How could we do a better job making sure they know that each other existed? They would have awesome feedback to give us about our building and our teaching

And:

"I think what I found was the student teacher wasn't a part of the community necessarily. The student teacher was the mentor teacher's assignment. And whether they got integrated into department meetings, faculty meetings really depended on the nature of the mentor teacher. So, we had very successful candidates that were at every faculty meeting. But (other) candidates didn't show up at all. And so those having clear expectations about the scope of the practicum experience would be useful."

When there is a successful integration of interns, school leaders were eager to promote them as part of the public face of the school. For example:

"Our student teachers, they become part of us. They're expected to be here and to be engaged. And so, therefore, our community sees that. So, you know, we have a pretty strong social media presence for our families. They enjoy seeing their kiddos posted all over Facebook, and they see our (interns) there, too. So, the visible part of our school and our community is important."

The need to innovate. Respondents repeatedly stressed the need for innovation in partnerships, both at the dyad level (intern, mentor teacher) and at the institutional level (school or EPP) contributing to creating a culture of lifelong learning. Respondents expressed the need to allow interns to "be more than interns". For example:

"I also think one of the challenges is that we aren't looking at how to expand the box. We're like, this is this. This is what the student teaching box looks like. . ."

One respondent wished that interns were given more opportunities for active roles within a school other than observation and capstone student teaching. The role of tutoring was articulated as an important and beneficial transitional experience:

"I think the number one thing is to be able to open this up. We're also bleeding tutors, (and interns) would also help our kids get the support that they need. So, selfishly, it would provide a trained group

of people who want to work with students in the classes, working and getting paid for it and getting paid for it and then taking classes outside of it on weekends or at night or leaving. Maybe they only work until three o'clock every day so they can take an (EPP) class at three thirty at the school.

In this statement, we see that the respondent's desire to innovate simultaneously addresses both compelling school student needs and expands the "box" of what a university student or beginning intern can do.

School leaders noted opportunities for innovation in the timing and location of EPP coursework:

Classes could happen outside of the hours of the school day their junior and senior years, we could hire them as tutors. They would get paid, we could hire them, they would be having experiences in our classrooms before and after class

And:

So, building and fostering this relationship is huge. We were actually talking about bringing the *student teaching classes into the school* so that the experience is not just the student teachers, but the early classes, the (EPP) teaching being delivered in the building

School leaders noted that there was a particular energy generated by inviting cohorts of interns into their schools rather than one or two isolated interns. They described the advantages of cohorts as such:

"But the reality I think what makes students stay is, I'll say the cohort. We've always had anywhere from four to seven students. More often than not, they all drive in together. So, there's all that time to debrief, prep, talk about the day. So, to be able to hear what the challenges are, success stories and the kind of, you know, *network* with each other, support each other and kind of informal but very natural ways. I think that's a huge strength by having and coordinating a cohort effect. On the flip side, that's a challenge for a school to accept and accommodate and be able to have that many. So, you know, that's the tradeoff."

Lastly, we noted that some school leaders described their schools and partnerships simply in historic or retrospective detail, that is, a re-capitulation of the history of the status quo. This was seen in direct opposition to school leaders who described how their partnerships with EPPs currently are either thriving and innovating or are straining and stagnating. We noted that the principles presented in the Conceptual Framework of student learning, adult lifelong learning and mutually beneficial partnerships which form the foundation for a high-quality school-EPP partnership can only flourish within a prospective, innovative disposition, rather than a retrospective, business-as-usual disposition.

In summation, one school leader succinctly captured both the transformative and generative effects thriving partnerships can have "setting the stage" for a beginning educator's career trajectory. This leader described a past intern who finished her internship and went back to her home state to begin her career but ended up regretting her decision and instead accepted a permanent position at her former internship site:

"I will share what a recent graduate from the program said. So, we were interviewing her for a classroom teaching position and she had student taught here this past year and left at the end of her program to go back home. And she said, you know, when I went back home, I thought it was going to be easier, but I wasn't valued. I wasn't seen as someone (who was) part of the team. I was there just to get that job done. And she said, so when people asked "where I was placed" for student teaching or "where I was placed" for methods (coursework), she said, "I don't say I was placed somewhere". She said, "I say my school was where I worked at." And so, I think it does speak to the partnership. It goes back to, her feeling as an undergraduate, working in a school with a wide variety of experienced teachers, that she was one of the groups, and that comes from being here and being part of the partnership, and a comfort level on her part. And the staff start to see you as a colleague. And so, I

think that was a very telling and a very reflective thing, and it was a very heartwarming thing that she could see that the culture at our school. We are not perfect by any means, but that we had a sense of belonging here.”

While we certainly do not presume that this level of collegiality and inclusion exists at every partnering school, the sentiment expressed by this particular school leader articulates the potential power of the generative role that a school has in fostering professional belonging within a partnership. Rather than seeing a partnership as a relatively passive placement arrangement that conveys opportunities for an intern to gain experience, this school leader has articulated the transformative role that a “sense of belonging” generated within a partnership can convey to beginning educators within our profession.

Discussion

This study builds on earlier studies by [Wasliewski et al. \(2021\)](#) and [Connelly et al. \(2021\)](#) where surveys and interviews documented the viewpoints of EPP faculty and school leaders about school–EPP partnerships. Insights from school leaders about these partnerships were examined in this study. Themes were generated and successes, challenges, limitations and aspirations were identified. The interviews of school leaders provided a unique vantage point for interpreting partnerships as most research is from the perspective of the EPP students, faculty and administration.

A statewide framework for partnerships provided the lens for interpreting the insights from school leaders ([Institutions of Higher Education Network, 2016](#)). The emphasis of this framework is on K-12 student learning, creating a culture of adult lifelong learning, bi-directionality and mutual benefit. Additionally, it is important to note that the interviews took place during the early stages of the pandemic which heightened the need for school–EPP partnerships in a bidirectional and mutually beneficial way ([Darling-Hammond & Hyler, 2020](#); [Rosenberg et al., 2021](#)). The pandemic elevated the need for nurturing and developing school–EPP partnerships and set a tone for the importance of these partnerships and supporting the development of an educational community, creative thinking about learning opportunities, new roles and collaboration ([Darling-Hammond & Hyler, 2020](#)).

Partnerships between schools and EPPs are complex as was highlighted in the responses from the school leaders, acknowledging the importance of investing in relationship building. The dynamic nature of partnerships, especially during the pandemic, was an important theme in this study. It was clear from the interviews that partnerships are not a “one size fits all” model and each partnership has its unique strengths, barriers and needs. The importance of school leaders’ willingness to address these needs and move forward to an improved model was evident throughout the themes.

Challenges to the traditional model

Although the interview responses were mixed, it was clear overall that the traditional model focused narrowly on the placement of students in schools with little collaboration with the EPP is no longer is functional to providing the experience that educator preparation candidates need to be successful ([Beck et al., 2020](#); [Darling-Hammond & Hyler, 2020](#); [Dresden and Thompson, 2021](#)). This is also exemplified by [Burroughs \(2020\)](#) who described the traditional approach as “Level 1: Taking from schools” and “Level 2: Borrowing from Schools” (p. 125). This movement away from the traditional model is also evident in the Council for Accreditation Educator Preparation ([CAEP, 2021](#)) programs Standard Two: Clinical Partnerships and Practice and in the established Nine Essential Principles by the [National Association for Professional Development Schools \(2021\)](#). Respondents also acknowledged the disconnect between what is taught in the college classroom and what is

taught in the partner school. These challenges were also recognized by [Beck \(2020\)](#) and continue to need to be addressed. These partnerships and EPPs play a central lead role in creating that connection and bridging that disconnect.

As exemplified in this study, the need for EPPs to develop consistent models within and across programs is critical as we move to improve the quality of these partnerships. The statewide conceptual framework presented here, or the [NAPDS \(2021\)](#), essential principles could be formally adopted across EPPs as well as within the various licensure program offered by an EPP to address the need for consistency. Furthermore, state departments of education could examine ways to integrate consistent school partnerships across their administrative rules, thereby providing a statewide structure for partnership development. Further research could involve a systematic review of state department of education EPP rules related to clinical practice and partnerships to gain insights about the range of partnership requirements and to establish exemplars and models for policy consideration.

Mutually beneficial for whom?

The importance of mutually beneficial partnerships was identified as a challenge in this study, but progress is being made on this front. This is one of the most difficult aspects of partnerships as they are often viewed as one-sided in favor of the EPP, even though it is important that K-12 schools' needs and expertise are embraced and that school and EPP partners are learning along with teacher candidates ([Burroughs, 2020](#); [CAEP, 2021](#); [Institutions of Higher Education Network, 2016](#)).

A formal structure was identified as a key aspect of partnerships by school leaders as this is foundational to developing successful partnerships. Others have noted the importance of having articulation agreements and memorandum of understanding outlining the values, beliefs and mission of the partnership as well as the important administrative structure necessary for problem-solving and decision-making ([CAEP, 2021](#); [NAPDS, 2021](#)). Within this formal structure there also must be room for innovation. This was noted as an area of need by school leaders and as schools and EPPs move forward in developing partnerships it will be important for all stakeholders to move beyond the partnership and engage in larger discussion about how to innovate in schools in the context of the partnership. Interview findings suggest that there appeared to be an appetite for School-EPP partnerships to move to innovation versus stagnation although some school partners expressed the status quo.

Additional research is necessary to document authentic models where mutual beneficial partnerships are evident and where innovation is mutually supported and nurtured. Both EPP and school leaders will need to engage in change leadership. Leaders who are intentional about addressing change, embrace innovation and risk and are able to design creative ways to partner and support the learning and development of K-12 learners and effectively address the problems facing public education today together ([Anderson & Ackerman-Anderson, 2010](#); [Fullan, 2011](#)).

Conclusions

The desire for innovation in school-EPP partnerships is certainly understandable given the pressures confronting districts to find and retain qualified educators and for EPPs to attract and recruit teacher candidates. School district leaders regularly faced multiple and persistent position vacancies. Filling vacant positions is an annual high priority for many school districts, particularly those in high-poverty areas ([Garcia & Weiss, 2019](#)). Continued innovation in partnerships is especially appropriate, given the compelling needs that districts face.

Working toward this goal, partnerships would be well-served through an examination of the changing nature of the emergent workforce in innovation efforts. Looking forward, the

next generation of educators will come from Generation Z (i.e. individuals born between 1997 and 2012). Having grown up in the years following the Great Recession, members of Generation Z witnessed first-hand the negative impact of some higher education decisions on Millennials, many of whom were saddled with “crippling student debt” (Stahl, 2021). Clearly, attracting and retaining members of this generation to the profession is an essential task for school–EPP partnerships. For members of Generation Z, a realistic cost-to-benefit analysis remains the most important consideration in evaluating higher education and subsequent employment opportunities (Stahl, 2021).

Clearly, the re-design of innovative partnerships would require a recognition and emphasis on responding to the needs of both schools and the emergent Generation-Z workforce. For example, by forging paid opportunities for interning students, some of the cost burden of preparation can be shifted from students. Expanded collective impacts involving the convergence of stakeholders should be sought in school–EPP partnerships. Through innovation in a context that prioritizes relationship building and partnership maintenance, school–EPP partnerships will need to triangulate with the needs of the members of the next generation of educators in order to be effective.

By using the Conceptual Framework as a lens through which to examine the lived experiences of school leaders with EPP partnerships, we are confronted with the reality that yes, change is constant. However, these situational demands of schools and EPPs need not hinder our efforts nor distract us from our efforts to provide highly skilled beginning educators who can improve educational outcomes for K-12 students. We can find solace in knowing that K-12 school–EPP partnerships are as pertinent as ever. Collaboration between school leaders and EPP leaders is imperative in cultivating and providing a foundation for these partnerships as they play a crucial role in supporting the culture in our schools and preparing teachers for the challenges of tomorrow.

References

- American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, [AACTE] (2018). *A pivot toward clinical practice, its lexicon, and renewing the profession of teaching*. Washington, DC: AACTE American Association of State Colleges & Universities.
- Anderson, D., & Ackerman-Anderson. (2010). *Beyond change management*. San Francisco, CA: Pfeiffer.
- Beck, J. S., Lunsman, C., & Garza, T. (2020). “We need to be in the classroom more”: Veteran teachers’ views on teacher preparation and retention. *Professional Educator*, 43(1), 91–99.
- Boyle-Baise, M., & McIntyre, D. J. (2008). What kind of experience? Preparing teachers in PDS or community settings. In M. Cochran-Smith, S. Feiman-Nemser, D. J. McIntyre, & K. Demers (Eds.), *Handbook of Research on Teacher Education: Enduring questions in changing contexts* (3rd ed., pp. 307–330). New York: Routledge.
- Burns, R., Jacobs, J., Baker, W., & Donahue, D. (2016). Making muffins: Identifying core ingredients of school-university partnerships. *School-University Partnerships*, 9(3), 81–95.
- Burroughs, G., Lewis, A., Bатtey, D., Curran, M., Hyland, N. E., & Ryan, S. (2020). From mediated fieldwork to co-constructed partnerships: A framework for guiding and reflecting on K-12 school-university partnerships. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 71(1), 122–134. doi: [10.1177/0022487119858992](https://doi.org/10.1177/0022487119858992).
- Connelly, V., Wasielewski, L., Bigaj, S. & Birch, M. (2021). Statewide perspectives on developing and sustaining partnerships for clinical experiences. Book Chapter, In Jenlink, P. M. (Ed.). *Teaching as a Clinical Practice Profession: Research on Clinical Practice and Experience in Teacher Preparation*. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield.

-
- Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation, [CAEP] (2021). Council for the accreditation of educator preparation revised 2022 Standards Workbook. Washington, DC: Author.
- Darling-Hammond, L. (2015). Darling-Hammond, L. (2015). Strengthening clinical preparation: The holy grail of teacher education. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 89(4), 547–561. doi: [10.1080/0161956X.2014.939009](https://doi.org/10.1080/0161956X.2014.939009).
- Darling-Hammond, L., & Hyler, M. E. (2020). Preparing educators for the time of COVID . . . and beyond. *European Journal of Teacher Education*, 43(4), 457–465. doi: [10.1080/02619768.2020.1816961](https://doi.org/10.1080/02619768.2020.1816961).
- Dresden, J., & Thompson, K. F. (2021). Looking closely at clinical practice: A clear-eyed vision for the future of teacher education. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 96(1), 8–21. doi: [10.1080/0161956x.2020.1864242](https://doi.org/10.1080/0161956x.2020.1864242).
- Dresden, J., Kittleson, J., & Wenner, J. (2014). Clinically rich practices in teacher education. In J. A. Ferrara, J. L. Nath, & I. N. Guadarrama (Eds.), *Creating visions for university- school partnerships* (pp. 43–60). Information Age Publishing.
- ECMC Group (2021). Generation Z career plans and expectations. Available from: <https://www.ecmcgroup.org/news/group/generation-z-career-plans-and-expectations>
- Farnan, S., Seeger, V. N., Smith, L. G., & McBride, M. (2019). What's in it for us? How a mutually beneficial partnership changes the landscape of educational practice. *Planning and Changing*, 49, 20–36.
- Farrell, R. (2021). The school–university nexus and degrees of partnership in initial teacher education. *Irish Educational Studies*, 42(1), 21–38. doi:[10.1080/03323315.2021.1899031](https://doi.org/10.1080/03323315.2021.1899031).
- Fullan, M. (2011). *Change leader: Learning to do what matters most*. Hoboken, NJ: Jossey-Bass.
- Goldhaber, D., Xu, Z., & Mihaly, K. (2022). *The Louisiana believe and prepare educator preparation reform: Findings from the pilot and early implementation years (REL 2023– 147)*. U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Regional Educational Laboratory Southwest, Washington, DC. Available from: <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/rel/Products/Publication/104928>
- Garcia, E., & Weiss, E. (2019). *The teacher shortage is real, large and growing, and worse than we thought*. Washington, DC: Economic Policy Institute.
- Gruenert, S., & Whitaker, T. (2015). *School culture rewired: How to define, assess, and transform it*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD).
- Heafner, T., McIntyre, E., & Spooner, M. (2014). The CAEP standards and research on educator preparation programs: Linking clinical partnerships with program impact. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 89(4), 516–532. doi: [10.1080/0161956x.2014.938998](https://doi.org/10.1080/0161956x.2014.938998).
- Institutions of Higher Education Network (2016). *Clinical practice and partnership conceptual framework*. Manchester, NH: New Hampshire IHE Network.
- Jacobs, J., & West-Burns, R. W. (2021). *Instructional leadership in (Re)designing programs: A vision for equity centered teacher preparation*. Charlotte, NC: Instructional Age Publishing, Inc.
- Jenlink, P.M. (2021). *Teaching as a clinical practice profession: Research on clinical practice and experience in teacher preparation*. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Jones, M., & Ryan, J. (2014). *Successful teacher education: Partnerships, reflective practice, and the place of technology*. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.
- Kuter, S. (2010). *Developing a collaborative partnership in initial teacher education: A multi- level model*. Riga, Latvia: VDM Verlag Dr. Müller.
- Mercado, E. M., Bowers, J. P., & Pennello, E. M. (2023). Stakeholders' perceptions of developing and sustaining school–university partnerships: A multiple case study. *Journal of Music Teacher Education*, 33(3). doi:[10.1177/10570837231203018](https://doi.org/10.1177/10570837231203018).
- National Association for Professional Development schools (2021). *What it means to be a professional development school: The nine essentials* (2nd ed.). [Policy statement]. Author.

-
- National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education [NCATE] (2010). *Transforming teacher education through clinical practice: A national strategy to prepare effective teachers*. Washington, DC: The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE).
- Nettleton, K., & Barnett, D. (2016). Gatekeeper or lynchpin? The role of the principal in school-university partnerships. *School-University Partnerships*, 9(1), 20–30.
- Parker, K., & Igielnik, R. (2020). On the cusp of adulthood and facing an uncertain future. In *What we know about Gen Z so far*. Washington, DC: Pew Research Center.
- Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Robinson, S. P., & Darling-Hammond, L. (2005). Change for collaboration and collaboration forming teaching through school-university partnerships. In L. Darling-Hammond, & L. Darling-Hammond (Eds.), *Professional development schools: Schools for developing a Profession* (pp. 203–219). NY: Columbia University, Teachers College.
- Rosenberg, M. S., Mason-Williams, L., Kimmel, L., & Sindelar, P. T. (2021). Addressing teacher shortages in the COVID-19 landscape: Viewing teacher candidates as assets. *Excelsior: Leadership in Teaching and Learning*, 13(2), 86–95. doi: [10.14305/jn.19440413.2021.13.2.01CCBY](https://doi.org/10.14305/jn.19440413.2021.13.2.01CCBY).
- Skoglund, K. (2022). Social interaction of leaders in partnerships between schools and universities: Tensions as support and counter balance. *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, 25(5), 747–766. doi: [10.1080/13603124.2020.1797178](https://doi.org/10.1080/13603124.2020.1797178).
- Snyder, J. (2005). Perils and potentials: A tale of two professional development schools. In L. Darling-Hammond (Ed.), *Professional development schools: Schools for developing a profession* (pp. 98–125). New York: Teachers College.
- Stahl, A. (2021). How Gen-Z is bringing a fresh perspective to the world of work. Available from: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/ashleystahl/2021/05/04/how-gen-z-is-bringing-a-fresh-perspective-to-the-world-of-work/?sh=606991df10c2>
- Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1998). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Tracz, S. M., Beare, P., & Torgerson, C. (2018). A longitudinal case study of a school- university partnership for training teachers. *Journal of School Administration Research and Development*, 3(1), 42–56. doi: [10.32674/jsard.v3i1.1931](https://doi.org/10.32674/jsard.v3i1.1931).
- Wasliewski, L., Birch, M., Bigaj, S. & Connelly, V. (2021). From placements to partnerships: The state of clinical practice and preparation. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 96(1), 1–11. doi: [10.1080/0161956x.2020.1864245](https://doi.org/10.1080/0161956x.2020.1864245).
- Wepner, S., Gómez, D. W., & Quatroche, D. (2021). School-based leadership perspectives on university partnerships. *Excelsior: Leadership in Teaching and Learning*, 13(3), 232–245. doi: [10.14305/jn.19440413.2021.13.3.04](https://doi.org/10.14305/jn.19440413.2021.13.3.04).
- Zeichner, K. (2021). Critical unresolved and understudied issues in clinical teacher education. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 96(1), 1–7. doi: [10.1080/0161956x.2020.1864241](https://doi.org/10.1080/0161956x.2020.1864241).

Appendix

Interview Guiding Questions.

- (1) We are interested in learning more about the school-teacher education program partnerships at your school. Please describe the history of school-teacher education program relationships at your school – What are some of the most meaningful and impactful partnerships that you have implemented?
- (2) What is the status of your partnership at this time?
- (3) What types of teacher education programs and/or IHE's has your school worked with in the past?

-
- (4) How do the various stakeholders work together in these partnerships? What roles do stakeholders play? How are decisions usually made?
 - (5) What are some of the roadblocks or barriers that make forming and/or sustaining partnerships difficult for your school?
 - (6) What kind of resources would be helpful from an IHE or teacher education program to support the development, sustainability or growth of partnerships?
 - (7) What do you need to understand better from IHEs to further develop, sustain or grow your school's partnerships?
 - (8) How do your collaborations with K-12 schools enhance and support the capacity of educators to prepare all learners?
 - (9) Is there a question we did not ask regarding partnership or anything else you want to share with us?

K-12 school
leaders'
perspectives

Corresponding author

Kimberly Bohannon can be contacted at: kbohannon@keene.edu

For instructions on how to order reprints of this article, please visit our website:

www.emeraldgroupublishing.com/licensing/reprints.htm

Or contact us for further details: permissions@emeraldinsight.com