Effective and Sustainable University-School Partnerships
Beyond determined efforts by inspired individuals

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Victoria University
A NEW SCHOOL OF THOUGHT®

Teaching Australia
AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE FOR TEACHING AND LEADERSHIP (AILP)
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Preface to the report

Teaching Australia commissioned the Victoria University research team to undertake a research study into university-school partnerships with the following aims:

- to identify examples of effective and sustainable university-school partnerships as part of preservice teacher preparation programs, as well as research, induction and continuing professional learning for practising teachers
- to analyse these programs to identify the characteristics of effectiveness and sustainability.

Teaching Australia emphasised that, while the research needed to follow accepted methodological processes, any report emerging from the study must be sensitive to the audiences likely to read and act on it: teachers and school principals, parents and school community groups, school system authorities and governments, universities, their teacher education faculties and teacher educators. They also noted that the report might have industrial relations significance for teachers and teacher educators.

This report commences with a statement of findings and a discussion of their possible application in schools, school systems and universities. The first two chapters can be read in isolation from the remainder of the report. They are meant to be of interest to all participants in education. The intention is that Chapters 1 and 2 will also provide a substantial foundation for practical developments.

The subsequent chapters are intended for a more research oriented audience. Chapter 3 outlines the research stance adopted in the report and includes a discussion of the scan of the literature. It concludes with the methodology adopted and a brief report on the selection of the seven partnerships studied in depth. The discussion in this chapter emphasises the form of the collaborative practitioner research adopted for the study of each of the seven partnerships.

Chapter 4 describes the collaborative practitioner phase and presents descriptions of the seven partnerships. A concept map of each partnership was prepared as the culminating step in each of the seven practitioner research activities. Chapter 4 then summarises the characteristics of the partnerships reported.

Chapter 5 presents the detailed findings in a way that opens up the possibilities for practitioners in local school and university settings to move beyond the institutional. That discussion leads into Chapter 6 which presents a more detailed examination of the organisational and policy questions which have become evident in the research.
Executive summary

Introduction
Uniquely among more than 20 reviews of teacher education in the past 30 years, ‘Top of the Class’, the 2007 report of an inquiry into teacher education by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Vocational Training, proposed extensive funding for initiatives in teacher education. One of the most stimulating recommendations was for the Commonwealth to offer support for partnerships in teacher education through the establishment of a National Teacher Education Partnership Fund.

‘Top of the Class’ defined partnerships as the sharing by the stakeholders in teacher education in the responsibility for the partnership and ‘a willingness to work together with other partners’ (House of Representatives, 2007: 79). By recognising that existing partnerships were the result of ‘determined efforts by inspired individuals in universities, schools and systems’ (2007:79), the report sought to promote the adoption of partnerships as a condition of teacher education in Australia.

Project aims
Prompted by ‘Top of the Class’, Teaching Australia commissioned a study by a team from Victoria University into university-school partnerships. The investigation had the following aims:

• to identify examples of effective and sustainable university-school partnerships as part of preservice teacher preparation programs, as well as research, induction and continuing professional learning for practising teachers
• to analyse these programs to identify the characteristics of effectiveness and sustainability.

Intended project outcomes
In keeping with the emphasis on valuing the personal and local nature of university-school partnerships but also the need to strengthen institutional support, this report has sought to present three practical outcomes:

• a definition of effective and sustainable university-school partnerships
• a strategy for the evaluation and development of university-school partnerships by teachers, teacher educators and school system colleagues
• a proposal that the strategy be applied in the establishment of the National Teacher Education Partnership Fund proposed by ‘Top of the Class’.

The Fund might be set up as a national roundtable whose primary goal is to move beyond research and pilot studies to concerted and systematic action to encourage the development of authentic, effective and sustainable partnerships.

Project methodology
The methodology for this study was influenced by the project team’s desire to deliver a practical outcome from the project, clearly connected with the interests of the participants in partnership-based teacher education. Not only would the study present a constructive critique of partnerships in Australia, it would also provide inspiration for future innovation and research. These intentions required the team to:

• put practitioners at the centre of the research
• design an open analytical process
• collaborate in the generation of findings
• be ethical in the study, with data not identifying participants.

From the 81 partnership settings identified in an initial survey, 35 provided detailed outlines of the features and practices of their programs. Seven of those 35 partnerships were included in the collaborative practitioner research stage of the project.
Project findings

Partnerships are a social practice achieved through and characterised by trust, mutuality and reciprocity among preservice teachers, teachers and other school colleagues and teacher educators.

**Trust:** the commitment and expertise that each of the main stakeholders – preservice teachers, teachers, teacher educators – brings to the partnership in the expectation that it will provide them with the benefits each seeks.

**Mutuality:** the extent to which the stakeholders recognise that working together does lead to the benefits each esteems.

**Reciprocity:** each stakeholder recognises and values what the others bring to the partnership.

The condition for partnerships based on trust, mutuality and reciprocity is that the stakeholders can come together in ways which do not tightly define their expectations for and contributions to the partnership. A clear conclusion of this research is that successful partnerships bring the stakeholders together around personalised and localised interests in learning, and school student learning in particular.

The findings of the research are that effective and sustainable partnerships are characterised by three effects and three related resources.

**Partnerships effects**

An effective partnership has a **focus on learning** for all stakeholders. School students’ learning is the principal focus of the effective partnership, enabling links to be made between school needs and priorities and preservice teachers’ skills and interests.

An effective partnership leads all stakeholders to take on **altered relationship practices**. The practical core of the effective partnership is the professional relationships which the partnership initiates. The relationships are exemplified by the presence of and provision for conversations among preservice teachers, mentor teachers and teacher educators. These conversations will have the **learning of school students** at their core and will stimulate preservice teachers in building authentic learning relationships with school students.

An effective partnership constructs **new enabling structures** which span the boundaries of school and university. The partnership provides the space for stakeholders to initiate new learning relationships by valuing the contributions made by each partner and supports preservice teachers, school teachers and university teachers in forming the committed relationships.

**Partnership resources**

An effective partnership encourages each stakeholder to contribute **personal and professional resources**, in the form of passion, commitment and professional understanding and expertise. Preservice teachers value opportunities to work directly with school students by supporting their learning.

Because clear institutional supports are absent in many partnerships, the stakeholders contribute their professional understandings in a **shared language**. For preservice teachers, this shared language will support communication across the division between school and university, most importantly about the learning of school students.

**Institutional resources** are evident in partnerships which endure over time. The formal integration of partnership activity in university course and assessment requirements provides considerable incentives for preservice teachers to become engaged in the partnership. A critically important resource in partnerships is the extent to which schools and school teachers commit to the relationship, so that preservice teachers achieve a successful outcome of benefit to the school, its students and also to themselves.
Institutional conditions which support partnerships

By definition, the university and the school are the ever-present institutions in university-school partnerships. What is disappointingly evident in the data, however, is the absence or at best the passivity of system involvement. Despite the assertions of parliamentary and system inquiries which have urged teacher education faculties to take up the possibility, school systems have not made many practical investments in partnership-based reform in teacher education. It is difficult to see how the conditions needed to create enduring spaces spanning university and school borders might be formed without the direct participation of resourceful school/education system authorities.

Among the institutional conditions experienced within the university framework:

- partnership practice was often a formal component of university coursework
- assessment requirements were important attributes of formal university coursework
- university teacher educators were able to include university-school engagement activities in their acknowledged workload.

The institutional conditions available at schools for partnerships while easily defined appeared to have uncertain availability. When the conditions were present, partnerships could be established and sustained:

- The school principal is the partnership lynchpin. The principal’s role is to ensure that the partners fulfil their agreed obligations. They also encourage teachers to take up partnership opportunities.
- Connection to an agreed school need is critically important in securing teachers’ participation in partnerships. It seems that when the partnership activity is defined by the school and its teachers as much as by the university, the partnership possibility is considered, if not always adopted.
- Teachers’ workload pressure is an ever-present condition of partnership participation.
- In schools, the allocation of defined responsibilities to at least one member of staff appears to be important in the maintenance of partnership activity.

Engaging teachers in university-school partnerships

In order to reconstruct teacher education around the interests of school students, teachers and teacher educators will need to come to grips with two requirements for university-school partnerships.

Firstly, it will be necessary to address the concern expressed in ‘Top of the Class’ and elsewhere, that teachers with acknowledged understanding and expertise should have direct participation in teacher education. Teacher education reformed so that its partnership-based activity brings preservice teachers, teachers and teacher educators together around the interests of school students will lead to classroom mentors taking on leadership in the partnership.

Secondly, it will be critical to challenge the objection that involvement in a university-school partnership would take the best and most knowledgeable teachers away from teaching school students. University-school partnerships will flounder if they become additional work for teachers and deflect them from their primary interests. An appropriately resourced re-direction of teacher education to focus on the interests of school students would encourage teachers to see participation with preservice teacher learning as a regular part of their professional responsibilities and practices.

Where to from here?

The research has envisaged the setting up of a sponsoring and coordinating body responsible for the National Teacher Education Partnership Fund, proposed in ‘Top of the Class’. The partnerships to be funded will be those which are characterised by trust, mutuality and reciprocity among the stakeholders, resulting from their commitment that the focus of their participation is the learning of all stakeholders, but most importantly school student learning.
The coordinating body to manage the National Teacher Education Partnership Fund the ‘Education and Learning Collaborative’ will create the expectation the initiative is a bringing together of local stakeholders in partnerships within a flexible national coordinating framework: a distinctively Australian approach to partnerships.

To support university and school colleagues in the investigation of their partnership activities, the report has proposed two semi-structured inquiry tools:

• a responsive and dynamic framework applicable for the initiation of new partnerships
• a strategy for the self-evaluation and strengthening of existing university-school partnerships.

The place of systems in effective and sustainable university-school partnerships

The research has shown that the widespread adoption of university-school partnerships cannot be left to individual initiative. No finding is clearer in this study than the need for active contributions by school systems and governments. Encouraging policy will be one contribution but, alone, policy will be insufficient for local partnership teams to sustain their work. Encouragement will require targeted funding and the national coordination and accountability proposed in ‘Top of the Class’ located within a strategic framework supportive of local achievements.
The year 2007 marked a new approach to preservice teacher education in Australia. ‘Top of the Class’, the report of an inquiry into teacher education by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Vocational Training, made recommendations that prompted widespread acclaim from the teacher education community. Uniquely among more than 20 reviews of teacher education in the past 30 years, ‘Top of the Class’ proposed extensive funding for initiatives into teacher education. One of the most stimulating recommendations was for the Commonwealth to offer support for partnerships in teacher education through the establishment of a National Teacher Education Partnership Fund.

‘Top of the Class’ defined partnerships as the sharing by the stakeholders in teacher education in the responsibility for the partnership and ‘a willingness to work together with other partners’ (House of Representatives, 2007: 79). By recognising that existing partnerships were the result of ‘determined efforts by inspired individuals in universities, schools and systems’ (2007: 79) the report sought to promote the adoption of partnerships as a condition of teacher education in Australia. It opted for an approach in which partnerships were widely based rather than narrowly located in a single model such as the professional development school.

The representation by ‘Top of the Class’ of university-school partnerships as resulting from inspired determination – or is it determined inspiration? – recognises that partnerships are practitioner achievements. The proposal in ‘Top of the Class’ for the establishment of a National Teacher Education Partnership Fund to stimulate innovative and authentic developments indicates that its preferred partnership model is one in which practitioners are the principal agents. Nothing could be more hopeful in education than an investment in practitioners’ understanding and expertise!

Hope is the starting point for this Teaching Australia funded research project. University-school partnerships, at least from the evidence of the examples studied in this research, bring together teachers, preservice teachers and teacher educators in open, respectful, collaborative and hopeful inquiry and action about important educational questions. The combination of initiative, commitment and breaking down in these partnerships of hierarchical and institutionalised relationships and practices are qualities which are distinctively Australian. They are qualities to be nurtured and not to be lost in any effort to generalise university-school partnerships in preservice teacher education.

Partnerships constructed so that teachers, preservice teachers and teacher educators work together in a spirit of trust, mutuality and reciprocity, have the potential to transform teacher education. From the current more-or-less suspicious relationships existing between teachers, preservice teachers and teacher educators – and schools, school systems and university teacher education faculties – partnerships open up the possibility that teachers and teacher educators might actually desire to work together in support of preservice teachers in ways which respect each other’s unique contributions.

Building partnerships based on trust, mutuality and reciprocity among teachers, preservice teachers and teacher educators will not be accidental, however. What this research has demonstrated is that in partnerships which engage teachers, preservice teachers and teacher educators, their collective commitments are intentionally focused on learning, and most especially, on the learning of school students.

The research has shown just as clearly that the widespread adoption of university-school partnerships cannot be left to individual initiative. No finding is clearer in this study than the need for active contributions by school systems and governments. Encouraging policy will be one contribution but, alone, policy will be insufficient to ensure that local partnership teams are able to sustain their work. Encouragement will require targeted funding and the national coordination and accountability proposed in ‘Top of the Class’ located within a strategic framework supportive of local achievements.
It is appropriate, then, to commence with a teacher’s account which exemplifies the hopeful educational experiences possible in university-school partnerships. The description, however, also demonstrates the limitations of current partnership approaches.

One partnership among many

The outdoor education partnership was initiated to meet the growing demand for qualified outdoor education teachers in the local secondary schools. An innovative training regime involves participants working in a structured mentored role within a secondary college.

The partnership involves preservice teachers working in a small team over a period of three years to gain a range of skills, knowledge and experience during formal training sessions and while participating in the Year 11/12 secondary college outdoor education program. Preservice teachers are assessed in an active learning environment with secondary students and under mentor supervision. Throughout this process preservice teachers provide invaluable role modelling and mentoring to secondary students.

I initiated the initial informal program and led the development of the conceptualisation of the formal program and the development of consultation and document formulation from the school and Department of Education point of view. This involved extensive negotiation and consultation with Department legal advisors. This negotiation covered topics like privacy of information, insurance for teacher trainees, roles and responsibilities of the agencies, details and terms of the agreement etc.

While doing this I facilitated the informal program over the past 5 years, provided some formal and informal training and assessment of teacher trainees. Throughout this process I have worked closely with Anne from the university. As a team we have formalised this program. At the moment I am working with Anne to form the first formal team to undertake the program. I provide training, mentoring and assessment of the participants.

Anne and I have both been involved in outdoor education for a long time (20+ years each) and share a common passion for improving its safety and quality in the region.

We initially worked together at an outdoor education school where I was working about 15 years ago as a teacher and Anne did some relief work. About 10 years ago we were part of a small group that established the regional Outdoor Education Association and since then have both been committee members and president on and off. Anne and the Association became involved in the formulation and rewrites of the Outdoor Recreation Training package. We have both been part of the initial writing and several review teams of the Department’s policy and procedures for Outdoor Activities. With the Association we have worked on gaining funds and facilitating extensive PD for Outdoor Ed teachers in the region.

Anne has acted as a volunteer assistant staff person on a range of College outdoor education excursions - most recently an 11 day caving trip with a mixed group of teachers, parents and students. Anne has convened the undergraduate unit for the university teacher trainees which addresses outdoor education and VET. As part of this unit the university students are initially trained by my College students. As part of this unit the university also borrows lots of equipment from our Skills Centre. Occasionally Anne and I meet socially eg last weekend our families shared dinner at my house to mix and also to drink champagne to celebrate signing of the outdoor education MOU.

On a typical partnership experience, I will do a day of training with the outdoor education team at the coast focusing on snorkel diving. The team will complete theory study individually or in a group. As an example, we are doing a caving training session on Saturday with 6 outdoor participants only. They will then participate singly or in small groups of 2 or 3 in upcoming caving trips with the College with myself and another volunteer assistant staff person and approx 12 students. Later in term 2 we will have another outdoor team only caving day where
Beyond determined efforts by inspired individuals we will do assessment of skills. On Friday they are doing their own 2 hour kayaking session adjacent to the College. This will be a typical pattern from now on.

The trainee teachers will then spend a day at the coast doing their own snorkelling under the guidance of their most experienced member. They will then each participate as assistant staff on a College snorkelling trip at the coast of 3 days duration. During this College trip they serve as role models, gender balance of staffing and snorkel guides under supervision. During this College trip their leadership of snorkelling will be further developed through ongoing mentoring and they will be assessed and if competent will gain a snorkelling guide qualification from the university RTO. One of the teacher trainees may be extending the outdoor education program by undertaking a prac teaching internship at the same time.

In partnerships such as this one, the participants – school students, teacher, preservice teachers and teacher educators – are active in and essential to the practice. Each is contributing and each is benefiting. The partnership has resulted from the respectfully professional conversations which the teacher and teacher educator have conducted over many years. What impelled the teacher to pursue the partnership was a pressing local and personally experienced school student learning challenge which could only be met by the teacher educators’ and preservice teachers’ direct involvement.

The partnership may be effective, but to what extent is it sustainable? What would happen if either or both the teacher and teacher educator left the partnership? The teacher’s account points to a five year effort to take the initiative from concept to some kind of formal program. One reflection on the experience is to have the highest regard for the committed struggle to establish the outdoor education partnership. But another is to be disappointed at the apparent reluctance to provide the institutional support which might have led to a less demanding pathway to successful practice.

Here is the purpose of this report. The creation of effective and sustainable partnerships in Australian preservice teacher education should continue to encourage professional collaboration by teachers, preservice teachers and teacher educators on important school student learning challenges. But this personal and local effort needs to be located within flexible organisational and resource structures in which the participants are able to construct the less institutionalised educational spaces needed to sustain collective commitment to the learning of school students and to each other’s learning.

The following sections present the report findings. Chapter 2 applies these findings in a set of helpful tools for colleagues seeking to establish partnerships or to strengthen existing relationships.

In keeping with the emphasis on valuing the personal and local nature of university-school partnerships but also the need for strengthening institutional support, the report presents the three practical outcomes of the research:

• a definition of effective and sustainable university-school partnerships
• a strategy for the evaluation and development of university-school partnerships by teachers, teacher educators and school system colleagues
• a proposal that the strategy be applied in the establishment of the National Teacher Education Partnership Fund proposed by 'Top of the Class'.

The Fund might be set up as a national roundtable whose primary goal is to move beyond research and pilot studies to concerted and systematic action to encourage the development of authentic, effective and sustainable partnerships.
A definition: partnerships – not mandated but achieved by working in partnership

Partnerships are a social practice achieved through and characterised by trust, mutuality and reciprocity among preservice teachers, teachers and other school colleagues and teacher educators:

**Trust:** the commitment and expertise that each of the main stakeholders – preservice teachers, teachers, teacher educators – brings to the partnership in the expectation that it will provide them with the benefits each seeks.

**Mutuality:** the extent to which the stakeholders recognise that working together does lead to the benefits valued by all partners.

**Reciprocity:** that each stakeholder recognises and values what the others bring to the partnership.

The condition for partnerships based on trust, mutuality and reciprocity is that the stakeholders – preservice teachers, teachers and teacher educators in particular – can come together in ways which do not tightly define their expectations for and contributions to the partnership. Partnerships are less institutionalised spaces and enable the stakeholders to work together in ways that are consistent with their interests and expertise. What this research has shown is that the partnerships which appear to be the most effective in bringing stakeholders together are those where the learning of school students is the direct focus of the partnership. Partnerships in which school students are active participants have produced the clearest and most vital representations of the possibility that reformed university-school relationships have for preservice teacher learning. A clear conclusion of this research is that successful partnerships bring the stakeholders together around personalised and localised interests in learning, and school student learning in particular.

Conceptualised as three key characteristics of effective partnerships and three characteristics of sustainability in partnerships, the findings of the research are that effective and sustainable partnerships are evidenced by:

- a focus on learning which is sustained by the participants contributing their personal and professional knowledge, understanding and expertise
- altered relationship practices which are sustained by communication about shared concerns
- new enabling structures which are sustained by institutional resources.

Each of these dimensions can be seen in the combined efforts of preservice teachers, teacher mentors, teacher educators and educational leaders as they work together in partnership. Figure 1 below depicts these three dimensions and shows how each dimension is created through the combined actions of the participants.

Figure 1 presents a total view of partnerships, as seen from the standpoints of the stakeholders. None of the seven partnerships in this study included all of the dimensions depicted in the Figure; but all demonstrated some.

The research team, at this point, interjects a caution. Figure 1 is not a checklist! It is conceived as an aid to thinking through partnership possibilities which might present themselves in the local circumstances which bring stakeholders together. The logic of the partnership is the principal intent of Figure 1. Partnerships which form around shared interests in learning, and school student learning in particular, produce the conditions for trust, mutuality and reciprocity among stakeholders, which enabling structures are needed to sustain.

In a similar spirit, this report makes no attempt to set out how partnerships should be integrated into teacher education course curriculum and program organisation. Inquiry into partnership possibilities together with the provision of adequate institutional resources will be a sufficient basis for teacher educators and teachers to think through and propose new course arrangements.
Effective and sustainable university-school partnerships support school student learning through...

- a focus on learning sustained by personal and professional contributions
- altered relationships sustained by communication about shared concerns
- new enabling structures sustained by institutional resources

Preservice teachers are...
- enhancing school student learning
- taking responsibility for student learning
- learning about student learning
- demonstrating professional commitment

Mentors are...
- facilitating preservice contributions to student learning
- learning to articulate their professional knowledge
- modelling exemplary practices
- providing support and guidance

Teacher educators are...
- focussing on authentic classroom concerns
- improving their practice through involvement with preservice teachers

Educational leaders in university and school settings are...
- ensuring a connection to school priorities
- linking preservice to school identified needs
- linking school needs with preservice skills and interests

Preservice teachers are...
- exploring the scope of teachers’ work
- working both individually and in teams
- developing collegial relationships with mentors
- building learning relationships with students

Mentors are...
- connecting preservice teacher practice and school student learning needs
- responding to preservice teachers’ learning needs
- sharing a common language with preservice teachers
- articulating a justification for partnership using educational theories

Teacher educators are...
- inducting preservice teachers into partnership practices
- setting the conditions for preservice teachers’ work
- orienting preservice teachers to school expectations
- providing opportunities for reflection
- extending discussions from practical issues to holistic discourse

Educational leaders are...
- participating in discussions about the purpose and practice of partnerships
- making connections between partnerships, professional learning and student learning
- committing to partnerships over time

Teacher mentors are...
- valuing everyone in the partnership
- advising preservice teachers on professional practice
- assessing preservice teachers
- participating within explicit workload arrangements
- adopting a framework of roles and responsibilities

Teacher educators are...
- valuing everyone in the partnership
- incorporating partnerships into teacher education
- linking partnership activity & assessment practices
- encouraging discussion about assessment within the partnership

Educational leaders are...
- valuing everyone in the partnership
- ensuring partnership leadership
- recognising partnership workload
- recognising partnerships as teacher education
- organising a whole-of-program focus
- ensuring partnership activity in teacher education
- ensuring activity is formalised in electives
- funding research and development
- connecting partnership activity with research output
- seeing partnerships as negotiated, focused activities

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Figure 1: Effective and sustainable university-school partnerships
An inquiry framework for the evaluation and development of university-school partnerships

Two initial enabling prompts appear to be essential if a partnership / national coordination approach is to be developed. He first is that local partnerships should be accorded the authority to inquire into their own practices and achievements. The research team proposes that Figure 1 can be the basis for a loosely structured self-evaluation by local partnerships as they proceed to make a claim to be considered for funding from the National Teacher Education Partnership Fund. That self-evaluation will be included in the second stimulus for the strengthening of partnerships in Australia: a methodology providing the conceptual resources to support partnerships.

Figure 2 presents the framework proposed for the establishment of the proposed Partnership Fund. The methodology expresses the nature of effective and sustainable partnerships emerging from this project. It defines the work of the Fund as supporting the self-evaluation and development of partnerships and emphasises that research, especially practitioner research, will be critically important in advancing university-school partnership interests. Finally the methodology will provide authentic and congenial ‘tools’ by which partnership stakeholders can work together to translate their local efforts into a credible and nationally significant claim for funding from the Partnership Fund.

Where to from here?
A national roundtable: getting started with university-school partnerships

5.46 ...the time has come to move beyond research and pilot studies to concerted and systematic action to encourage the development of authentic, effective and sustainable partnerships.

5.47 The Australian Government should establish a National Teacher Education Partnership Fund controlled by a board representing all key stakeholders. Universities, schools and employing authorities would be invited to submit joint proposals for funding initiatives in delivering quality teacher education. While collaborative approaches to practicum arrangements should be a priority, the Fund could also support other partnership activities in research, induction and on-going professional development. The Board would establish guidelines and criteria under which applications would be assessed.

(Top of the Class 2007:79-80)

By proposing that one result of its deliberations would be the development of authentic, effective and sustainable partnerships, ‘Top of the Class’ acknowledges university-school partnerships will be the outcome of local practitioner creativity and informed effort – no matter how much they are supported by national policy. From its outset, the organisational settings for the National Teacher Education Fund will need to leave room for the diversity of local partnerships to be expressed within an overall national initiative. What will be needed, in the establishment of a locally responsive Australia-wide project, is a means by which local partnerships can communicate intelligibly within an inclusive, national organising body.

Two related elements can contribute to the formation of a national university-school partnership organisation to ensure that it is responsive to local diversity while operating nationally. The organisation, which might be termed the Education and Learning Collaborative, could be established as a roundtable. The term conveys the meeting of different equals whose respective local distinctiveness, explicitly included, strengthens the achievements of the whole.

The Education and Learning Collaborative roundtable will also need an agenda for communication: one which sets up a flexible but common means for local partnerships to explain their features across state, territory and sector boundaries. A semi-structured documentation format, using the inquiry process adopted in this research, provides one way for local university-school-system teams to communicate the practices of their partnerships to colleagues.
Applying the elements of Figures 1 and 2, Chapter 2 presents a set of tools for local partnership teams to inquire into and report their practices. By situating the inquiry within the kind of practitioner research methodology adopted in this investigation, the research team intends that the tools in Chapter 2 are not recipes or checklists, but prompts and resources to stimulate local and national conversations about the potential of partnership-based teacher education.

Whatever propositions the national roundtable makes for the establishment of the Teacher Education Partnership Fund, the intention that it should support authentic, effective and sustainable partnerships will need to find its motivation and rationalisation in the published, analysed and debated accounts of practitioners. The National Teacher Education Partnership Fund would be a powerful starting point for the strengthening of university-school partnerships in teacher education. But it will need to be complemented by new resourcing strategies if it is to have a lasting effect.
Plan action based on the knowledge that effective and sustainable partnerships are supported by and generate trust, mutuality and reciprocity.

Effective and sustainable partnerships are focused on LEARNING and sustained by personal and professional contributions. In particular:
- school student learning is central
- everyone is learning.

Effective and sustainable partnerships are built through ALTERED RELATIONSHIPS and sustained by communication about shared concerns. Relationships are built between:
- preservice teachers and school students
- preservice teachers and their mentors
- preservice teachers and their peers
- preservice teachers and teacher educators
- mentor teachers and teacher educators.

Effective and sustainable partnerships are supported by ENABLING STRUCTURES and sustained by institutional resources. Significant characteristics include the extent to which:
- the partnership is a formal component of university coursework
- preservice teacher assessment tasks bridge the university - school divide
- participation is recognized in the workload of all partners
- partnership opportunities are identified, supported and coordinated by educational leaders both in schools and universities
- the focus of the partnership is connected to an agreed school need.

Establish an Education and Learning Collaborative committed to:
- SEEKING FUNDING to support the development of existing university-school partnerships and the establishment of new university-school partnerships
- SPONSORING ONGOING RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT related to school students' learning, preservice teachers' learning and university-school partnerships
- EXPANDING THE SCOPE OF INQUIRY to include a focus on learning for beginning teachers, teacher mentors, principals, teacher educators
- FACILITATING COMMUNICATION between governments, universities and professional organizations to develop policies and program initiatives resulting in EDUCATIONAL INNOVATION in the interest of IMPROVED OUTCOMES for school students, teacher education and therefore economic growth and social inclusion.

Pursue a program of inquiry designed to increase understanding and achieve improvement in university-school partnerships.

Explore partnerships through COLLABORATIVE PRACTITIONER RESEARCH by:
- articulating and analyzing personal accounts
- creating partnership snapshots
- building collaborative understanding through concept mapping.

MAKE CONNECTIONS between local and national inquiry by:
- engaging in professional dialogue
- evaluating the effectiveness and sustainability of current practice
- using new knowledge to inform improvement.

Support exploration with INQUIRY RESOURCES including:
- examples of evidence that indicate the characteristics of effective and sustainable partnerships
- research findings that highlight what has been learned about effective and sustainable partnerships
- questions about effective and sustainable partnerships.

WHICH CAN BE USED TO:
- explore the dimensions of practice in partnerships
- evaluate existing partnerships
- assess proposals for new partnerships initiatives
- examine the roles of preservice teachers, teacher mentors, teacher educators and educational leaders in schools and universities
- provide pointers for improvement
- establish goals or find a focus
- identify a target for improvement
- shape planning for future partnership development
- plan for further research
- work towards the development of new policies and programs.

Figure 2: Where to from here?

Plan action based on the knowledge that effective and sustainable partnerships are supported by and generate trust, mutuality and reciprocity.

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Effective and sustainable partnerships are supported by ENABLING STRUCTURES and sustained by institutional resources. Significant characteristics include the extent to which:
- the partnership is a formal component of university coursework
- preservice teacher assessment tasks bridge the university - school divide
- participation is recognized in the workload of all partners
- partnership opportunities are identified, supported and coordinated by educational leaders both in schools and universities
- the focus of the partnership is connected to an agreed school need.

Establish an Education and Learning Collaborative committed to:
- SEEKING FUNDING to support the development of existing university-school partnerships and the establishment of new university-school partnerships
- SPONSORING ONGOING RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT related to school students' learning, preservice teachers' learning and university-school partnerships
- EXPANDING THE SCOPE OF INQUIRY to include a focus on learning for beginning teachers, teacher mentors, principals, teacher educators
- FACILITATING COMMUNICATION between governments, universities and professional organizations to develop policies and program initiatives resulting in EDUCATIONAL INNOVATION in the interest of IMPROVED OUTCOMES for school students, teacher education and therefore economic growth and social inclusion.

Pursue a program of inquiry designed to increase understanding and achieve improvement in university-school partnerships.

Explore partnerships through COLLABORATIVE PRACTITIONER RESEARCH by:
- articulating and analyzing personal accounts
- creating partnership snapshots
- building collaborative understanding through concept mapping.

MAKE CONNECTIONS between local and national inquiry by:
- engaging in professional dialogue
- evaluating the effectiveness and sustainability of current practice
- using new knowledge to inform improvement.

Support exploration with INQUIRY RESOURCES including:
- examples of evidence that indicate the characteristics of effective and sustainable partnerships
- research findings that highlight what has been learned about effective and sustainable partnerships
- questions about effective and sustainable partnerships.

WHICH CAN BE USED TO:
- explore the dimensions of practice in partnerships
- evaluate existing partnerships
- assess proposals for new partnerships initiatives
- examine the roles of preservice teachers, teacher mentors, teacher educators and educational leaders in schools and universities
- provide pointers for improvement
- establish goals or find a focus
- identify a target for improvement
- shape planning for future partnership development
- plan for further research
- work towards the development of new policies and programs.
CHAPTER 2

An inquiry kit for university-school partnerships

This chapter presents a set of tools that might be used by those who are seeking to understand, design or improve university-school partnerships. The chapter is divided into three sections:

- Section 1: Studying partnership through collaborative practitioner research
- Section 2: Connecting local inquiry to the national study
- Section 3: Inquiry resources.

The first section, *Studying partnerships through collaborative practitioner research*, provides a set of activities to guide and support partnerships through a collaborative inquiry process. The activities mirror the research methodology used in this study. Working through this process at the local level allows practitioners to gain a deeper understanding of their practice. The activities are:

- creating a partnership summary
- creating personal accounts of partnership
- sketching
- threading
- theorising
- partnership conversation
- collaborative concept mapping
- finding the future.

The second section of this chapter, *Connecting local inquiry to the national study*, provides four collaborative activities which allow people working in university-school partnerships to make a connection between their local inquiry and this national study. The collaborative activities are:

- connecting local and national research findings
- exploring the nature of partnership engagement
- considering partnerships
- action for improvement.

The third section in this chapter, *Inquiry resources*, provides a series of inquiry resources including proformas and other kinds of working documents that can be used in conjunction with the activities in the first two sections of this chapter. These resources were developed during this study or shaped by what has been learned in this study. The resources are:

- Inquiry Resource 1: Sketch, thread and belief
- Inquiry Resource 2: Research findings
- Inquiry Resource 3: Partnership engagement
- Inquiry Resource 4: Considering partnerships
- Inquiry Resource 5: Action for improvement.

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1. A version of this chapter can be accessed separately as an ‘Inquiry Kit’ on the Teaching Australia website - www.teachingaustralia.edu.au
Section 1: Studying your partnership through collaborative practitioner research

The activities in this section of the report have been trialled in this study. The research team found that they engaged participants in the research through all stages of data collection, analysis and generation of findings.

These inquiry tools have been designed to support local research that:

- puts practitioners at the centre
- adopts an open analytical process
- generates findings collaboratively
- is ethical when studying partnerships.

The process begins with an invitation to generate personal accounts of partnership experience and continues with authors considering the significance of their own accounts. This analysis then provides a foundation for conversation, collaborative theorising and planning for improvement of partnership.

The following tools have been designed to encourage reflective inquiry through a process of:

- documenting partnership characteristics
- analysing and theorising partnership characteristics
- imagining possibilities that might guide the initiation or development of new partnerships.

Eight activities loosely shape the process. Each one suggests a possibility for inquiry.

| Activity 1 | Creating a partnership summary |
| Activity 2 | Creating personal accounts of partnership |
| Activity 3, 4 and 5 | Sketching, threading and theorising personal accounts |
| Activity 6 | Partnership conversation |
| Activity 7 | Collaborative concept mapping |
| Activity 8 | Finding the future |
INQUIRY ACTIVITY 1: Creating a partnership summary

Question
What are the basic details of our partnership?

Inquiry steps

- Draft a summary of the partnership including information such as the university details, the number of schools involved, the duration of the partnership, the number of people involved, the focus of the partnership and the participants in the study.
- Document information about the stakeholders including preservice teachers, preservice teacher coordinators, teacher educators, practicum coordinators, school systems, school students and any other partners/organisations.
- Draft a statement about the purpose and activities of the partnership.
- Share the summary with all members of the partnership, checking that there is a shared view.

Inquiry outcome
A summary of the partnership.

INQUIRY ACTIVITY 2: Creating personal accounts of partnership

Question
As participants in this partnership what do we have to say about the partnership experience?

Inquiry steps
This activity is based on an exchange of emails.

1. Identify a small group of questions to shape the electronic interview. Selecting the questions might be done collaboratively using the following INQUIRY RESOURCES as prompts.
2. Email the questions to participants in the inquiry.
3. Invite participants to respond to the questions and to report personal knowledge about effective and sustainable university-school partnerships.
4. Nominate one or more people to respond to the initial accounts.
5. Using a different coloured text, the responder types directly into the account asking questions of clarification with the goal of developing rich descriptions of practice. Questions might include: ‘Can you give some more detail about…?’ or ‘What did you mean when you said…’
6. This process continues until both parties are satisfied with each account.
7. Collect interviews together.

Inquiry outcome
At the end of this process a number of personal accounts will have been created which when combined constitute a body of professional knowledge about partnership activity. These accounts of partnership provide a basis for the analysis of partnership characteristics and development of personal and collaborative theories which might lead to change and improvement in university-school partnerships.
INQUIRY ACTIVITY 3: Sketching

Questions
What are the most important aspects of our partnership?
What is the main message in our account?

Inquiry steps
Here the focus is on each personal account and identifying the key descriptive phrases, sentences and paragraphs.
1. First cut and paste each personal account into a grid: Inquiry Resource 1: Sketch, thread and belief.
2. Each person reads their own personal account and highlights the most important phrases, sentences and paragraphs.

Key points
- focus on the words and ideas
- make the sketch reflects the views and ideas described in the account
- notice how connecting the phrases in the sketch ‘tells a story’

Inquiry outcome
Highlighting the most important sections of the account creates a sketch of partnership practice. This provides a foundation for subsequent analysis and theorising.

INQUIRY ACTIVITY 4: Threading

Question
What are the most important characteristics, key words or key ideas in our partnership?

Inquiry steps
2. Focusing again on the personal accounts examine the highlighted sections (the sketch) and identify the key words/ideas.

Key points
- focus on the words and ideas highlighted in the sketch
- make the sketch and thread reflect the intentions and ideas of the individual
- provide a brief explanation for each segment of the sketch
- review the sketch and thread to ensure strong connections
- note that sometimes the stories involve a train of events while in others multiple observations about a single event might be made

Inquiry outcome
When considered together these key words will provide a thread of ideas which can be presented graphically, as a thread of events, ideas, concerns…together they provide a foundation for crafting research propositions and statement.
INQUIRY ACTIVITY 5: Theorising

Questions
When I look at my personal account, what do I think makes an effective and sustainable partnership? What are my beliefs about effective and sustainable partnerships?

Inquiry steps
2. Using the sketch and thread for inspiration, write statements that indicate what has been learned in this partnership.

Key points
- ensure that the focus remains on the words and ideas articulated in the sketch and thread
- be sure that the sketch and thread accurately reflect the ideas in the account
- produce statements of understanding or beliefs which have been explicitly or implicitly identified in the personal accounts

Inquiry outcome
This activity will produce a set of practitioner generated beliefs about effective and sustainable partnerships. These statements will provide the basis for discussion and collaborative concept mapping.

INQUIRY ACTIVITY 6: Partnership conversation

Question
What ideas about effective and sustainable partnerships do I want to share with my colleagues in the partnership?

Inquiry steps
1. Using the sketch, thread and statements report your thinking to the rest of the group.

Key points
- each person has a say without being interrupted
- everybody listens to what the others have to say
- at the end of each report other members of the group have a chance to ask questions of clarification

Inquiry outcome
The group will have familiarised themselves with other people’s experiences and ideas and be prepared for the process of collaborative concept mapping.
INQUIRY ACTIVITY 7: Collaborative concept mapping

Question
What is our shared view about effective and sustainable university-school partnership?

Inquiry steps
1. In this session work together to create a concept map that depicts shared knowledge and views about what makes an effective and sustainable university-school partnership.
2. Based on the personal account (sketch, thread and belief), each person will write each of their key ideas onto a post-it note...make as many as necessary to represent all the ideas that have emerged...use a different colour for each person.
3. Bundle related ideas together.
4. Make connections between bundles by drawing connecting lines and describing the nature of the connections.

Key points
- audio/video record the interpretations and theorising articulated by practitioners
- include all of the statements of belief from all participants
- reveal and bundle the connections and distinctions between accounts and explore assumptions
- aim for a detailed picture of the interests and concerns of the all participants in the partnership to form a rich understanding of thought and activity and to identify areas of agreement and difference

Inquiry outcome
By the end of this session the group will have produced a concept map that gives a visual/graphic representation of matters relating to the effectiveness and sustainability of the partnership.

INQUIRY ACTIVITY 8: Finding the future

Question
Given what we have learned, how might we improve our partnership?

Inquiry steps
1. Using the sketches, threads, statements of belief and the concept maps develop ideas for improving the partnership.

Key points
- focus on the evidence
- look for patterns, tensions, strengths and possibilities

Inquiry outcome
By the end of this session the group will have produced a set of ideas for finding the future.
Section 2: Connecting local inquiry to the national study

The second section of the Inquiry Kit comprises four activities that provide an opportunity to connect local inquiry with this national study. The activities are designed to use the inquiry resources compiled in the last section of this chapter.

The activities are based on a view that partnerships can be improved by:

- seeking local-national connections
- engaging in focused dialogue
- forming new professional relationships
- engaging in a constant process of inquiry involving reflection, evaluation and planning.

The activities are:

- Inquiry Activity 9: Connecting local and national research findings
- Inquiry Activity 10: Exploring the nature of partnership engagement
- Inquiry Activity 11: Considering partnerships
- Inquiry Activity 12: Action for improvement.

These activities are not designed to be undertaken in any particular order but might be used according to the situation and need of each partnership.

The activities are indicative only and are provided here to suggest possible uses for the Inquiry Resources in the final section of this chapter.
### INQUIRY ACTIVITY 9: Connecting local and national research findings

**Question**
How do our local experiences link with the findings of the national study into the effectiveness and sustainability of university-school partnerships?

**Inquiry steps**
1. Consider your analysis of local partnership activity.
2. Read Inquiry Resource 2: Research Findings - the pamphlet about effective and sustainable university-school partnerships.
3. Consider the connections, differences and assumptions that underpin your local perceptions and the national findings.

**Inquiry resources**
Inquiry Resource 2: Research Findings

**Key points**
- focus on the evidence
- look for patterns, tensions, strengths and possibilities

**Inquiry outcome**
By the end of this session connections will have made between the local and national experiences.

### INQUIRY ACTIVITY 10: Exploring the nature of partnership engagement

**Question**
How does the quality of our engagement connect to or differ from the national study?

**Inquiry steps**
1. Consider your analysis of local partnership engagement. What are the main themes?
2. Depending on the participants in this activity, use the appropriate section of Inquiry Resource 2.
3. To explore the engagement of each person/role in the partnership: preservice teacher, teacher mentor, teacher educator, educational leaders in schools, educational leaders in universities.

**Inquiry resources**
Inquiry Resource 3a-e: Partnership engagement

**Key points**
- focus on the evidence
- look for patterns, tensions, strengths and possibilities

**Inquiry outcome**
By the end of this session connections and distinctions will have identified between the local and national experiences. The understandings about effective and sustainable university-school partnerships gained can be used in the process of assessing new or existing partnerships.
INQUIRY ACTIVITY 11: Considering partnerships

Question
How does our partnership connect to or differ from the national study in relation to: a focus on learning, relationships and enabling structures?

Inquiry steps
1. Consider your analysis of partnerships in relation to learning, relationships and enabling structures.
2. Use the three sets of questions that make up Inquiry Resource 4 to consider each dimension of partnership: learning, altered relationships and enabling structures.

Inquiry resources
Inquiry Resource 4: Considering partnerships. Each of the three sections begins with a set of overarching considerations, followed by questions that focus on the different partner types. Depending on the task at hand, one or more groups of questions might be used. These questions might also be used in a range of situations to evaluate existing partnerships or assess proposals for new partnerships initiatives.

Key points
- focus on the evidence
- look for patterns, tensions, strengths and possibilities

Inquiry outcome
By the end of this session connections and distinctions will have been made between local and national experiences.
INQUIRY ACTIVITY 12: Action for improvement

Question
Given what we have learned about our partnership what action might we take to improve our partnership?
Given the findings of the national research what action might we take to improve our partnership?

Inquiry steps
1. Using your concept map and Resource 5: Action for improvement as prompts for discussion, consider possible options for partnership action.

Inquiry resources
Inquiry Resource 5: Action for improvement provides another set of prompts that might be useful at the planning stage when the group is establishing goals, a focus or plans for improvement.

Key points
• focus on the evidence
• look for patterns, tensions, strengths and possibilities

Inquiry outcome
By the end of this session the group will have identified possible goals, foci or plans for improvement.
Section 3: Inquiry resources

The following pages contain inquiry resources developed on the basis of what has been learned in this study of about university-school partnerships. It includes:

Inquiry resource 1: Sketch, thread and belief
This resource provides an example of a working grid to organise the documentation of personal accounts and then the process of analysis.

Inquiry resource 2: Research findings
This handout provides a summary of research findings that might be used for a number of purposes to:

- initiate and promote professional dialogue
- shape inquiry
- guide evaluation.

Inquiry Resource 2 might also be used to publicise the findings of this study (as a press release, in professional publications), in conjunction with consultations with governments and professional organisations or in expressions of interest for funding.

Inquiry resource 3: Partnership engagement
This resource comprises five sets of exemplars sorted by role in the partnership. The resource provides ideas relating to the:

- preservice teacher
- teacher mentor
- teacher educator
- school leader
- university leader

Inquiry Resource 4: Considering partnerships
This inquiry resource provides three sets of questions to support the exploration of three dimensions of partnership:

- considering learning
- considering altered relationships
- considering enabling structures.

Inquiry Resource 5: Action for improvement
This set of action prompts provides a tool for partnerships to work towards improvement by:

- focusing on learning
- focusing on relationships
- focusing on enabling structures.
INQUIRY RESOURCE 1: SKETCH, THREAD AND BELIEF

1. Cut and paste your personal account of partnership into the column on the left. It makes the next steps easier if you divide your account into paragraphs.

2. Using a fluoro pen, highlight the most important words/phrases. Combined, the highlighted sections will provide a ‘sketch’ of partnership practice.

3. In the second column list the key words or concepts from each paragraph. This will convey a ‘thread’ of partnership activity.

4. Looking at the account, sketch and thread, consider what you have learned about partnerships. List your beliefs in the third column making connections across the page: account – sketch – thread – belief.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal account - Sketch</th>
<th>Thread</th>
<th>Statements of belief</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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</table>
INQUIRY RESOURCE 2: RESEARCH FINDINGS

Effective and sustainable university-school partnerships

A recent study by Victoria University into teacher education and university-school partnerships found that effective and sustainable partnerships are supported by and generate trust, mutuality and reciprocity. As a result of inquiring into the practices of seven different kinds of partnerships from around Australia, three broad themes emerged.

1. Effective and sustainable partnerships are focused on LEARNING and sustained by personal and professional contributions.

   In particular:
   • school student learning is central
   • everyone is learning.

2. Effective and sustainable partnerships are built through ALTERED RELATIONSHIPS and sustained by communication about shared concerns.

   Relationships are built between:
   • preservice teachers and school students
   • preservice teachers and their mentors
   • preservice teachers and their peers
   • preservice teachers and teacher educators
   • mentor teachers and teacher educators.

3. Effective and sustainable partnerships are supported by ENABLING STRUCTURES and sustained by institutional resources.

   Significant characteristics include the extent to which:
   • the partnership is a formal component of university coursework
   • preservice teacher assessment tasks bridge school and university
   • participation is recognised in the workload of all partners
   • partnership opportunities are identified, supported and coordinated by educational leaders in both schools and universities
   • the focus of the partnership is connected to an agreed school need.
**INQUIRY RESOURCE 2a: PRESERVICE TEACHERS**
in university-school partnerships

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preservice teachers are…</th>
<th>This is evident when preservice teachers are…</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Focused on learning sustained by personal and professional contributions | • working on projects to enhance school student learning  
• accepting responsibility for school student learning  
• learning about student learning and articulating their developing understanding and skills as teachers  
• demonstrating professional commitment and motivation |
| Engaged in altered relationship practices that are sustained by communication about shared concerns | • exploring the broad curriculum and pedagogical scope of teachers’ work  
• working both individually and in school-based collaborative professional learning teams  
• developing collegial relationships with mentors  
• building learning relationships with school students |
| Creating/participating in new enabling structures that are sustained by institutional resources | • working in classrooms and then using the currency of this authentic practice to increase the relevance of teacher education courses  
• integrating their school-based and university-based learning |

**INQUIRY RESOURCE 2b: MENTOR TEACHERS**
in university-school partnerships

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mentor teachers are…</th>
<th>This is evident when mentor teachers are…</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Focused on learning sustained by personal and professional contributions | • facilitating preservice teacher contributions to school student learning  
• learning to articulate their professional knowledge  
• modelling exemplary practices  
• providing support and guidance to preservice teachers |
| Engaged in altered relationship practices that are sustained by communication about shared concerns | • planning, reviewing and reflecting on preservice teacher practice in addressing agreed school student learning needs  
• responding to preservice teacher learning needs  
• developing a common language with preservice teachers focused on student learning and connected to their respective institutional settings  
• justifying the partnership using educational theories consistent with partnership practice |
| Creating or participating in new enabling structures that are sustained by institutional resources | • providing preservice teachers with advice on professional practice  
• contributing to the formal assessment of preservice teacher skills  
• participating in partnership activity within explicit workload arrangements  
• participating in partnerships within the framework of recognised roles and responsibilities |
### INQUIRY RESOURCE 2c: TEACHER EDUCATORS in university-school partnerships

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher educators are...</th>
<th>This is evident when teacher educators are...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Focused on learning sustained by personal and professional contributions | • including authentic classroom concerns in the formal university program  
• improving their practice through involvement with teachers and preservice teachers in current curriculum challenges |
| Engaged in altered relationship practices that are sustained by communication | • collaboratively inducting the preservice teacher into partnership practices and goals  
• collaboratively setting the conditions for action for preservice teacher work  
• collaboratively orienting preservice teachers to school expectations  
• providing opportunities for reflection on practice  
• extending discussions from planning and implementation issues to theoretical, intellectual and holistic dialogue |
| Creating or participating in new enabling structures that are sustained by institutional resources | • working in partnerships which are a formal component of the teacher education program  
• making preservice teacher partnership activity coherent and connected to teacher education via assessment practices which link partnership activity to units of study  
• making discussions about assessment prominent within the partnership |

### INQUIRY RESOURCE 2d: SCHOOL-BASED LEADERS in university-school partnerships

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School-based leaders are...</th>
<th>This is evident when school-based leaders are...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Focused on learning sustained by personal and professional contributions</td>
<td>• linking preservice teachers’ skills and interests with opportunities to improve school student learning in line with school identified needs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Engaged in altered relationship practices that are sustained by communication about shared concerns | • participating in discussions about the purpose of the partnership and the practices to be encouraged  
• promoting partnerships as a type of professional learning and a direct contribution to student learning  
• committing to the partnership for an extended period of time |
| Creating or participating in new enabling structures that are sustained by institutional resources | • assigning responsibility for partnership coordination and leadership  
• recognising the workload associated with teacher education partnerships  
• seeking funding that supports partnerships  
• recognising that partnership activity can contribute to measurable research outputs  
• seeing partnerships as activities in which dedicated teachers and teacher educators are working on mutually agreed and carefully defined projects |
**INQUIRY RESOURCE 2e: UNIVERSITY-BASED LEADERS: in university-school partnerships**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University-based leaders are…</th>
<th>This is evident when university-based leaders are…</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Focused on learning sustained by personal and professional contributions</td>
<td>• linking preservice teachers’ skills and interests to opportunities to enhance school student learning in line with school identified needs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Engaged in altered relationship practices that are sustained by communication about shared concerns | • participating in discussions about the purpose of partnership and practices to be encouraged  
• promoting partnerships as a type of professional learning and a direct contribution to school student learning  
• committing to the partnership over an extended period of time |
| Creating or participating in new enabling structures that are sustained by institutional resources | • assigning responsibility for partnership coordination and leadership  
• recognising the workload associated with teacher education partnerships  
• recognising that partnership activity is a formal component of coursework  
• organising partnerships with a whole-of-program focus  
• making partnership activity a part of teacher education programs at every year level  
• funding research and development projects that support partnerships  
• recognising that partnership activity can contribute to research outputs  
• seeing partnerships as activities in which dedicated teachers and teacher educators are working on mutually agreed and carefully defined projects |
INQUIRY RESOURCE 3a: CONSIDERING PARTNERSHIPS: A focus on learning

Consider the
- evidence of school student learning
- evidence of learning for all participants
- evidence of personal contributions
- evidence of professional contributions
- evidence pointing to trust, mutual benefit and reciprocity.

Questions that focus on preservice teacher activity
- What kind of projects are preservice teachers working on?
- How do preservice teachers express their responsibility for school student learning?
- How do we know that preservice teachers are learning about student learning?
- How do preservice teachers demonstrate their professional commitment and motivation?

Questions that focus on mentor teacher activity
- How do mentor teachers facilitate preservice teacher contributions to student learning?
- How do mentor teachers describe their professional knowledge?
- What are mentor teachers modelling?
- How do mentor teachers provide support and guidance to preservice teachers?

Questions that focus on teacher educator activity
- How do teacher educators incorporate authentic classroom concerns into the formal university program and into teacher educator planning?
- Is there evidence to show that teacher educators improve their practice through involvement with preservice teachers in current curriculum challenges?

Questions that focus on school leadership
- How do school leaders provide for a school-defined and supported contribution by preservice teachers towards the school’s curriculum and teaching priorities?
- How do school leaders link preservice teachers to opportunities that will improve school student learning in line with school identified needs?
- How do school leaders link school needs with preservice teacher skills and interests?

Questions that focus on university leadership
- How do university leaders enable a contribution by preservice teachers towards the school’s curriculum and teaching priorities?
- How do university leaders link preservice teachers to opportunities that will improve school student learning in line with school identified needs?
- How do university leaders link school needs with preservice teacher skills and interests?
INQUIRY RESOURCE 3b CONSIDERING PARTNERSHIPS:
Altered relationships

Consider the
• focus on school student learning
• focus on altered relationships
• communication about shared concerns
• evidence of trust, mutual benefit and reciprocity.

Questions that focus on preservice teacher activity
• What kind of learning relationships are preservice teachers building with students?
• How do preservice teachers explore the broad curriculum and the pedagogical scope of teachers’ work?
• How do preservice teachers work both individually and in school-based collaborative professional learning teams?
• How do preservice teachers develop collegial relationships with mentors?

Questions that focus on mentor teacher activity
• How do mentor teachers plan, review and reflect on preservice teacher practice in addressing agreed school student learning needs?
• How do mentor teachers respond to preservice teacher learning needs?
• How do mentor teachers build a common language with preservice teachers?
• How do mentor teachers justify the partnership using educational theories consistent with partnership practice?

Questions that focus on teacher educator activity
• How do teacher educators induct preservice teachers into partnership practices and goals?
• How do teacher educators set the conditions for preservice teacher work?
• How do teacher educators orient preservice teachers to school expectations?
• How do teacher educators provide opportunities for reflection on practice?
• How do teacher educators move discussions from planning and implementation issues to theoretical, intellectual and holistic dialogue?

Questions that focus on school leadership
• How do school leaders connect partnerships, professional learning and student learning?
• In what circumstances do school leaders participate in discussions about the purpose of partnerships and the practices to be encouraged?
• How do school leaders commit to the partnership over an extended period of time?

Questions that focus on university leadership
• How do university leaders participate in discussions about the purpose of partnerships and the practices to be encouraged?
• How do university leaders promote partnerships in relation to professional learning and student learning?
• How do university leaders commit to the partnership over an extended period of time?
INQUIRY RESOURCE 3c: CONSIDERING PARTNERSHIPS:
Enabling structures

Consider the
• focus on school student learning
• enabling structures that support university-school partnerships
• allocation of institutional resources
• evidence of trust, mutual benefit and reciprocity.

Questions that focus on preservice teacher activity
• How do preservice teachers value mentors, teacher educators and all other people in the partnership?
• How do preservice teachers work in classrooms and then bring the currency of this authentic practice into the university setting to increase the relevance of teacher education courses?

Questions that focus on mentor teacher activity
• How do mentor teachers value preservice teachers, teacher educators and others?
• How do mentor teachers provide preservice teachers with authoritative advice on practice?
• How do mentor teachers contribute to the formal assessment of preservice teacher skills?
• How do mentor teachers participate within explicit workload arrangements?
• How do mentor teachers participate within a framework of recognised roles and responsibilities?

Questions that focus on teacher educator activity
• How do teacher educators value preservice teachers, mentors and all others?
• How do teacher educators work in partnerships which are a formal component of the teacher education program?
• How do teacher educators ensure that preservice teacher partnership activity is coherent and connected to teacher education via assessment practices which link partnership activity to units of study?
• How do teacher educators ensure the prominence of discussions about assessment within the partnership?

Questions that focus on school and university leaders
• How do school and university leaders value mentors, preservice teachers, teacher educators and all other people in the partnership?
• How do school and university leaders assign responsibility for partnership coordination and leadership?
• How do school and university leaders recognise the workload associated with teacher education partnerships?
• How do school and university leaders recognise that partnership activity is a formal component of teacher education coursework?
• How do school and university leaders organise partnerships to integrate them into teacher education courses?
• How do school and university leaders include partnership activity in teacher education programs throughout the course?
• How do school and university leaders fund research and development to support partnerships?
• How do school and university leaders recognise that partnership activity contributes to measurable research outputs?
• How do school and university leaders see partnerships?
These possibilities are based on a belief that effective and sustainable partnerships are focused on learning and sustained by personal and professional contributions.

**Working collaboratively**
- on projects to improve school student learning.

**Learning**
- about student learning and finding ways to describe developing understanding and skills as teachers
- to describe professional knowledge.

**Modelling**
- exemplary practices.

**Finding ways to:**
- take responsibility for school student learning
- demonstrate professional commitment and motivation.

**Facilitating**
- preservice teacher contributions to student learning.

**Providing**
- support and guidance.

**Focusing**
- on authentic classroom concerns included in the formal university program.

**Improving**
- practice through involvement with preservice teachers in current curriculum challenges.

**Developing**
- a school-defined and supported contribution by preservice teachers to a component of the school’s curriculum and teaching priorities.

**Linking**
- preservice teachers to school student learning in line with school identified needs
- school needs with preservice teacher skills and interests.
INQUIRY RESOURCE 4b: ACTION FOR IMPROVEMENT:
Focusing on relationships

These possibilities are based on a belief that effective and sustainable partnerships are built through and in altered relationship practices that are sustained by communication about shared concerns.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exploring</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• the broad curriculum and pedagogical scope of teachers’ work</td>
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<tr>
<td>• the conditions of action for preservice teacher work.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Working</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• individually and in school-based collaborative professional learning teams</td>
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<td>• through a process of planning, reviewing and reflecting on preservice teacher practice in addressing agreed school student learning needs</td>
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<tr>
<td>• to move discussions from planning and implementation issues to theoretical, intellectual and holistic dialogue.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Developing</th>
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<tr>
<td>• collegial relationships with mentors</td>
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<td>• learning relationships with students.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Responding</th>
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<tr>
<td>• to preservice teacher learning needs.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Sharing</th>
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<tr>
<td>• a common language with preservice teachers focused on student learning and connected to their respective institutional settings.</td>
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<th>Explaining</th>
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<tr>
<td>• the partnership using educational theories consistent with partnership practice.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Inducting</th>
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<td>• the preservice teacher into partnership practices and goals.</td>
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<th>Orienting</th>
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<td>• preservice teachers to school expectations.</td>
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<th>Providing</th>
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<td>• opportunities for reflection on practice.</td>
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<th>Participating</th>
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<td>• in discussions about the purpose and practices of partnership.</td>
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<th>Promoting</th>
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<tr>
<td>• partnerships as a type of professional learning and a direct contribution to student learning.</td>
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</table>
INQUIRY RESOURCE 4c: ACTION FOR IMPROVEMENT:
Focusing on enabling structures

These possibilities are based on a belief that effective and sustainable partnerships involve creating and participating in new enabling structures that are sustained by institutional resources.

Valuing
- school students, preservice teachers, mentors, teacher educators, educational leaders and all other people in the partnership.

Working
- in classrooms and then bringing the currency of this authentic practice to the university to increase the relevance of teacher education courses
- in partnerships which are a formal component of the teacher education program.

Providing
- preservice teachers with authoritative advice on professional practice.

Contributing
- to formal assessment of preservice teacher skills.

Participating
- within explicit workload arrangements
- within the framework of recognised roles and responsibilities.

Promoting
- preservice teacher partnership activity as coherent and connected to teacher education via assessment practices which link partnership activity to units of study
- discussions about assessment within the partnership
- partnership activity in teacher education programs at every year level
- partnership activity in electives.

Funding
- research and development projects that support partnerships.

Assigning
- responsibility for partnership coordination and leadership.

Recognising
- the workload associated with teacher education partnerships
- that partnership activity is a formal component of coursework
- that partnership activity can contribute to measurable research outputs
- that partnerships are small scale activities in which dedicated teachers and teacher educators are working on mutually agreed and carefully defined projects.

Organising
- partnerships with a whole-of-program focus for teacher education courses.
CHAPTER 3

The Project

Overview

Australian teacher education, for all its travails, is in a hopeful condition. A national report into teacher education (House of Representatives, 2007) has recommended increased funding for teacher education and national project funding for this research into partnerships in teacher education has been awarded to a research team with commitment to change in teacher education. Little wonder then, that this project and its report are optimistic about the possibility that partnership-based teacher education is an achievable goal. The researchers’ expectation was that the study would lead to identified benefits beyond an instrumental improvement in the ‘training’ of teachers, without being mandated by governments or by elite institutions such as universities.

Accordingly, the report of this investigation into the nature of effective and sustainable university-school partnerships has adopted an approach which seeks underlying practical explanations rather than an arms-length and theorised critique. The report has relevance for practitioners in schools and universities and also for school system authorities and policy makers.

In its presentation, the report has departed from conventional research formats. By commencing the document with the findings of the research, the report seeks to engage colleagues in changing practice, questioning taken-for-granted assumptions about structural constraints and envisaging possibilities. While the findings and practical supports contained in Chapters 1 and 2 can be read formally and might open up program-level action, they are directed as much at stimulating informal conversations in staff rooms and corridors, places where a good deal of educational inspiration occurs.

Chapter 3 returns to research reporting convention with a brief discussion of the recent partnership literature and an outline of the project’s collaborative practitioner methodology. Both express the project’s standpoint that university-school partnerships are best understood and developed as social practices and not as organisational entities.

Chapter 4 presents descriptions of the seven partnerships selected for extended study in the project. Each of the snapshots of partnership practice has been generated from the stages of the collaborative practitioner research summarised at the conclusion of Chapter 3. At the conclusion of Chapter 4 is a summary of the characteristics of the partnerships studied in the project. The collaborative practitioner research also identified the key themes which have been incorporated into the report of the analysis on Chapter 5. Those themes, bundled and organised, form the basis for the consideration of practical and system-wide action if teacher education is to be transformed through university-school partnerships.

The intention of the final chapter is to set a challenge for colleagues in schools, school system authorities and university teacher education faculties. The report’s propositions might also provide the nation’s education political leaders with a pathway of possibility. More a vision than a recommendation, the final chapter sets out a first step in the development of a distinctively Australian approach to partnerships if, by happy coincidence, the Commonwealth Government decided to establish and fund a National Teacher Education Partnership Fund as recommended by the House of Representatives Standing Committee (2007: 81).

Project aims

The project aims were to:

• identify examples of effective and sustainable university-school partnerships as part of preservice teacher preparation programs, as well as research, induction and continuing professional learning for practising teachers
• analyse these programs to identify the characteristics of effectiveness and sustainability.
For the researchers, those project objectives led to a set of *analytical aims*. The project has sought to propose:

- a set of criteria for the evaluation of the effectiveness of university-school partnerships
- a set of criteria for the evaluation of the sustainability of university-school partnerships.

The analytical aims became the basis for *methodological goals*. The project aimed to:

- scan the university-school partnership literature with an emphasis on the examination of the experience of university-school partnerships rather than an evaluation based on pre-determined assumptions about partnership characteristics
- survey teacher education programs in Australian universities on the nature, if any, of their partnership relations with schools
- use the survey data to identify possible university-school partnerships for in-depth study (selection criteria were negotiated with Teaching Australia and took into account clarity of survey response, program type, system characteristics and demographic and geographic criteria)
- apply a process of ‘collaborative practitioner research’ requiring an extended profiling of seven partnerships, with data to include program documents, narratives such as case writing, proceedings of group meetings and personal/group interviews
- involve the direct stakeholders in data collection and analysis – school teachers and principals, preservice teachers, teacher educators and system leaders
- explore the ways in which university-school partnerships were conceived by the stakeholders in university-school partnerships: preservice teachers and their mentor teachers and teacher educators and also school students and system authorities
- examine the effects of university-school partnerships and the resources deployed by stakeholders in support of those partnerships
- propose methodologies for the evaluation of university-school partnerships consistent with best practice
- propose a responsive and dynamic framework by which Teaching Australia might support the development of new programs.

**Literature scan**

The idea of partnerships in teacher education is not new. In Australia, the university-school partnership entered the formal discourse of teacher education in the early 1990s, prompted by the then Federal Government’s National Program for the Quality of Teaching and Learning (NPQTL). The National Schools Network and the related Innovative Links Project were the most overt expression of the partnership ideal in those years.

Elsewhere, the university-school partnership became a structural mandate in English teacher education (Furlong et al, 2000). In the United States of America, the professional development school model, referred to in ‘Top of the Class’, has received prominence. Such modern developments were not the first examples of practices which would now be regarded as partnerships.

Australian teacher education for its first 100 years was characterised, at the primary level in particular, by close relations between teachers’ colleges and schools. Following apprenticeship-like models of teacher education in the early stages of compulsory education, the establishment of ‘training schools’ led to the direct involvement of schools and practising teachers. What should also be acknowledged is that many teachers and teacher educators throughout Australia have worked together in collaborations where preservice teachers have worked in schools as a component of their university program. These activities are the unheralded and undervalued precursors of the partnerships reported in this research.

That nearly two decades after NPQTL, the university-school partnership concept continues to be a recommendation in parliamentary reports, signifies separation between the significance accorded to partnerships in policy documents and the commitment invested by schools and universities in their practical accomplishment. Building university-school partnerships is either not very important to many universities and schools, or the task is just too hard, demanding too many resources with insufficient return for one or both sides of the relationship. Ramsey’s (2000: 29) conclusion that partnerships were still largely unfulfilled promises is an example of commentary on this disjunction.
Yet the attention of policy makers to the value of university-school partnerships cannot be ignored, especially when it is accompanied by recommendations for additional funding. Most recently, the Education and Training Committee of the Victorian Parliament (Parliament of Victoria, 2005) and the Federal House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Vocational Training (House of Representatives, 2007) have published reports on the quality of teacher education in Australia. The reports of both committees, respectively entitled ‘Step Up, Step In and Step Out’ and ‘Top of the Class’ were in agreement about the importance of partnerships in teacher education. Importance may be too restrictive a term. ‘Necessity’ more closely matches the significance that both reports accord to the university-school partnership. Each report proposed increases in funding for the practical component of teacher education within a university-school partnership arrangement.

What are partnerships?
The House of Representatives Committee gave prominence to the promotion of partnerships. In approving the development of university-school partnerships, ‘Top of the Class’ noted evidence of

…outstanding partnerships…particularly around the provision of the practicum. These partnerships are often the result of determined efforts by inspired individuals in universities, schools and systems. Key ingredients in these partnerships are the awareness that teacher education is a shared responsibility and a willingness to work in partnership with other parties to fulfill that responsibility (2007: 79).

‘Top of the Class’ made no effort to define what such partnerships might look like other than to collect the evidence presented to the Standing Committee in an Appendix.

On the other hand, a Victorian Parliamentary Report was more certain on the form and significance of partnerships, in which teacher education programs…

…have been successful in forging stronger links with schools, generating increased involvement of schools in (the) university’s programs, enhancing the reflective engagement of preservice teachers in the learning and teaching process and increasing the satisfaction of preservice teachers and their commitment to the course. Furthermore, the Committee received evidence that … the benefits of partnerships extend to all involved: the preservice teachers, university staff, principals and teachers, school children and the broader community (2005: 57).

From the perspective of policy, partnerships appear as a distinguishing characteristic of those teacher education programs with practices linking school teachers, preservice teachers and teacher educators in more direct and ongoing ways than the conventional teacher education practicum. The nature of the partnership is that its impact is in the participation and learning of the individual participants but also that the enhanced university-school relationship needs to be organised at the level of the institutions. Clearly, that is the intention of ‘Top of the Class’ which recommended funding for innovation in partnership-based teacher education, where partnerships comprised schools, school systems and universities.

What are the failings in teacher education that partnerships are perceived to overcome?

‘Top of the Class’ lists the ‘problems with the provision of practicum’ as the shortage of placements, the weak connection between practice and theory, the quality of supervision and inadequate funding to sustain high quality placements (2007: 70-74). Geographical location was also a factor for the House of Representatives Committee which identified rural and remote settings as problematic environments for high quality teacher education. For the Committee, the establishment of strong authentic partnerships between all parties would be an effective antidote for the division of responsibilities for delivering teacher education and the lack of a sense of shared responsibility between the major parties’ (p.75) which is the principal cause of the practicum’s problems.

‘Step Up, Step In, Step Out’ catalogues the gaps in teacher education contained in evidence presented to the Victorian Parliamentary Committee. Not all of the failings are practicum related but many are and can be seen as being solved by enhanced partnership relations between university teacher education faculties and schools. For example, the Victorian report (2005: 112) notes that two of the ‘greatest barriers to achieving a better balance between theory and practice in teacher education, and thus to improving the suitability
of current courses’ are that teacher educators are out-of-touch with school classroom practices and that teachers are not asked to contribute to teacher education course design.

The foreword to ‘Top of the Class’ notes that teacher education in Australia is not in crisis. Yet, the implication in both the Federal and Victorian reports is that the learning of teachers about teaching and their competence in teaching are substantially less than ideal. Therefore, regardless of how much research and development in university-school partnerships focuses on the relationships between institutions, the fundamental question to be studied and to be worked on is the learning of preservice teachers in initial teacher education. However the potential of partnerships is that teachers in schools and teacher educators in universities will also derive learning benefits from working together.

**Sustaining effective partnerships over the long term**

‘Top of the Class’ recommends research into the ways in which partnerships can be made effective and sustainable. It is an interesting question – and not just because it is educationally significant. If partnerships are as valuable in improving teacher education as both the Federal and Victorian reports assert, then the simplest approach to the establishment of partnerships would be for government to mandate them as has been required in England. In the United States, university-school partnerships have become mandatory in some locations through concerted action by university and school district leaders (for example, see Arizona State University, 2007).

But in its proposal for research into partnerships, the House of Representative Committee has recognised that a likely consequence of mandated partnerships is that they are examples of contrived collaboration, what Furlong et al (2000) have called ‘complementary partnerships’ characterised by strict division of educational responsibility and with only minimal efforts at education-based communication between the university and the school. Table 1 presents a summary of the differences between collaborative and complementary partnerships. The significance of the table and the research conducted by Furlong et al is that close learning-based relationships between preservice teachers, teachers and teacher educators are not guaranteed, even under the mandated conditions in English teacher education.
Table 1: Collaborative and complementary university-school partnerships

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Areas/Key Features</th>
<th>Collaborative</th>
<th>Complementary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Planning</td>
<td>Emphasis on giving all tutors and teachers opportunities to work together in small groups</td>
<td>Broad planning of structure with agreed areas of responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher education visits to schools</td>
<td>Collaborative to discuss professional issues together</td>
<td>None or only for ‘troubleshooting’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Documentation</td>
<td>Codifies emerging collaborative practice</td>
<td>Strongly emphasised, defining areas of responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content</td>
<td>Schools and HE recognise legitimacy and difference of each others’ contribution to an ongoing dialogue</td>
<td>Separate knowledge domains, no opportunities for dialogue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentoring</td>
<td>Defined as giving students access to teachers’ professional knowledge-mentor ‘training’ as professional development, learning to articulate embedded knowledge</td>
<td>Mentoring comes from knowledge base of school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment</td>
<td>Collaborative, based on triangulation</td>
<td>School responsible for teaching assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contractual relationship</td>
<td>Negotiated, personal</td>
<td>Legalistic, finance led with discrete areas of responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legitimation</td>
<td>Commitment to value of collaboration in initial teacher education</td>
<td>Either principled commitment to role of school or pragmatic due to limited resources</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[After Furlong et al, 2000]

Through its selection of exemplars, the House of Representatives Committee has signalled its preference for partnerships which are ‘collaborative’ (Furlong et al, 2000) typified by university and school colleagues and preservice teachers working together in teams, discussing professional issues and negotiating the practices of the partnership.

Collaborative partnerships which are effective and sustainable require substantial investment. The reference in ‘Top of the Class’ to ‘determined efforts by inspired individuals' is unlikely to be a convincing recommendation for the widespread adoption of collaborative partnerships by teachers and teacher educators. Collaborative partnerships do exist as ‘Top of the Class’ demonstrates, but the report’s evidence does not provide information on the effects of such partnerships although it does offer insight into their critical role in advancing Australian teacher education and on the investments required to sustain them.
Reading the literature

Recent research by the project team on teacher professional learning has provided the foundation for a coherent framework within which the practices implicit in the partnership concept can be opened up for examination, understanding and improvement (Kruger et al, 2002; Cherednichenko et al, 2005). The framework, applied to the experiences of school teachers, preservice teachers and university teachers in university-school partnerships, shows that they adopt practices which are:

- personalised, emerging from and connecting with the specific demands of each teacher’s practice and each teacher’s commitment to students
- localised, in the ways teachers interpret their own shared interests and those of their students
- Instances of professional learning where innovation and development depend on how well schools provide environments supportive of professional conversations and professional collaboration e.g. as in mentoring practices
- an accomplishment dependent on groups or teams of teachers and preservice teachers with professional relationships whose characteristic is one of professional trust: that participating teachers, preservice teachers and teacher educators can be open about their own practices and understanding and be ready to receive feedback from colleagues
- structured by the decisions taken by universities and schools on the curriculum and pedagogy which is regarded as appropriate for students, teachers, preservice teachers and teacher educators. Teachers and preservice teachers too are active in constructing those decisions and the ways in which they are enacted in schools
- implicated in institutional structures and system power which provide enabling conditions and resources for teachers’ learning, system guidance and support including, in teacher education, standards for teacher registration and processes for teacher education course accreditation. At the core of this organisational characteristic are institutional agreements: most certainly involving universities and schools, and ideally school system authorities too.

The strength of this analytical framework is that it presents a basis for the evaluation and understanding of the contributions and practices of all of the direct stakeholders in teacher education. Importantly, the stakeholders include school students, the advancement of whose interests will be the commitment of all participants. By using this inclusive framework, an investigation could commence in one domain and make connections with all other components of the framework, avoiding the omission, for example in a policy study, of the practical considerations recognised in local partnerships.

Judging the effectiveness of a university-school partnership within the framework is then a question of assessing the effects of partnerships on the individual participants, on how they work together and how the participating university and schools are affected by the relationship. Sustainability suggests a cost-benefit analysis of the relationship. If all that drives partnerships are the inspiration and determined effort of individuals as ‘Top of the Class’ claims, then it is likely that the university-school partnership will continue to be unusual, something of a novelty in Australian teacher education.

Recent research

A striking feature of the recent literature on university-school partnerships is the increase in the number of research-based accounts of the effects of partnerships. Ten years ago, the partnership literature was largely descriptive and often consisted of reports of what particular partnerships intended to achieve. Since 1998, a number of research studies have been published, with some including quantitative investigations of relatively large-scale programs.

The personalised nature of partnerships appears in the emphasis in the research on participants’ perceptions (e.g. Scharman, 2007; Edwards and Mutton, 2007). Evaluating the support of teachers, preservice teachers and teacher educators for partnerships appears to be an important research strategy. Of course, that support is also critically important in the practices of the partnership. The studies by Davies, Edwards, Gannon and Laws (2007) and Norman (2006) demonstrate the dependence on teacher commitment if a well-intentioned partnership is to succeed. A partnership can easily erode if a participant group perceives little benefit in the relationship.
An interesting term used to describe the level of involvement in partnerships is the extent to which teachers and teacher educators are ‘boundary spanners’ (van Zandt, 1998; Edwards and Mutton, 2007; Borthwick, Stirling, Nauman and Cook, 2003; Firestone and Fisler, 2002). Mutton and Butcher (2008:60) have quoted Wenger’s (2002) similar term ‘broker between communities’. The positive experience of teachers seconded on short term contracts to work in a teacher education faculty (Russell and Chapman, 2001) points to an effective boundary-spanning practice.

More often attached to the practices of school teachers and leaders who desire to work within a university environment/discourse, boundary spanning also is an appropriate descriptor for the uncertain commitment of teacher educators to university-school partnerships (Scharmann, 2007; Peters, 2002). The university-focused work of academics, with its emphasis on measurable research outputs for example, is at odds with the time demands of the school-focused work of teacher education in building strong relationships with colleagues in schools and supporting their reflective inquiry into practice. For both teachers and teacher educators, successful participation in a university-school partnership might relate to the extent to which they favour an inquiry-based approach to teacher professional learning (Carroll, 2006).

Localised advantages appear to be an important consideration for teachers who have become active participants in university-school partnerships. The prospect of working on a valued curriculum program of benefit to the school and classroom practice can engage teachers (Scharmann, 2007). For preservice teachers, the authenticity of the specific practice setting is important in an experience which encourages the deep integration of practice and theory (Elmer, 2002). But the localised nature of teacher education is also to be observed in the ways in which partnership schools shift the intentions and practices of the partnerships so that the curriculum, pedagogies, staffing and organisational systems in the school are not greatly affected by the work with the university (Edwards and Mutton, 2007). Unmet teacher expectations that collaborative research would lead to practical professional development is an example of the problems which occur when teacher and teacher educator intentions are incongruent (Davies et al, 2007). It is in the local school setting that partnerships develop through the building up over time of relationships, strong communication and shared understandings among the participants (Beck and Humphries, 2000).

The cost of voluntary and mandated partnerships is the extent to which the relationship might be a component of a long-term development of a school or teacher education faculty, or whether a forced partnership is directed to an immediate concern such as lifting a school’s test scores (Borthwick, Stirling, Nauman and Cook, 2003).

Partnerships, it seems, are dependent for their success on the micropolitics of the participating institutions (Firestone and Fisler, 2002). A useful insight into the micropolitical complexity in partnerships is the ways in which they lead to ‘interruptions’ in the taken-for-granted local practices of both universities and schools (Grundy et al, 2001). Success appears to be dependent on the extent to which partnerships are given time to develop in schools and to which the participants are able to trial and improve practices (Sealey, Robson and Hutchins, 1997).

Reflective inquiry in professional conversations is the ‘methodology’ of teacher professional learning in partnerships. The research reports that professional conversations in successful partnerships are a planned and supported partnership activity (McLaughlin and Black-Hawkins, 2007; Carroll, 2006; Borthwick, Stirling, Nauman and Cook, 2003; Cole and Ryan, 2001; Martinez and Coombs, 2001; Grundy et al, 2001). Similarly, partnerships are less successful if ‘working together’ is not an explicitly organised practice (Firestone and Fisler, 2002). The discussion of professional conversations in the literature points to purposeful and collaborative planning by partners and reflection about practical improvement and not so much to the critical reflection linking broad areas of knowledge and understanding which might be the quality preferred in the university setting (Furlong et al, 2000). This last question would appear to be important if partnership-based teacher education is not to reduce to a form of apprenticeship in which practice is again separated from theory (Wubbels, Korthagen and Van der Valk, 1998).

Associated with the professional conversations involving the partners is that the partnership in a school is frequently organised as a collaborative team, in which the university teacher educator and the school coordinator have substantial leadership responsibilities (Scharmann, 2007; McLaughlin and Hawkins,
Effective and Sustainable University-School Partnerships

Effective and Sustainable University-School Partnerships

Wenger’s ‘community of practice’ (Wenger, McDermott and Snyder, 2002) and ‘community of inquiry’ (Cochran-Smyth and Lytle, 2001) signify the ideal types of settings for teacher professional learning. Two recent papers (Le Cornu and Ewing, 2008; Gorodetsky and Barak, 2008) have applied the idea of the community as the appropriate domain for professional learning about practice in teacher education. Importantly for this research, the former authors defined reciprocity as an essential practice of such learning communities.

An interesting feature of the partnership literature in recent years is the relative paucity of studies of the importance and role of the mentor in preservice teacher education. An explosion of advocacy and ‘how to’ mentoring monographs accompanied the mandating of partnerships in teacher education in England in the 1990s. Perhaps the mentoring literature reflected a loss-of-control concern from teacher education as substantially increased time in schools was a requirement of the shift to partnerships in English teacher education. However the emphasis on mentoring also signifies the importance of the quality of the interactions between teachers and preservice teachers in practice-based settings.

Discussions about the viability of partnerships inevitably turn to the organisational arrangements and decisions made by universities and schools. These institutional structures provide the enabling conditions for teachers, preservice teachers and teacher educators to engage in partnership teams and in the professional conversations which are the educative work of the partnership. Without clear agreements and supportive arrangements, partnerships may just be assimilated into existing school arrangements (Edwards and Mutton, 2007) or dissolved (Norman, 2006) as the ongoing everyday work of teachers and teacher educators is perceived to have greater professional and career importance than boundary spanning partnership collaboration. Edwards and Mutton (2007) and Carroll (2006) have pointed to the formation of new ‘identities’ in partnership-based teacher education. If partnerships are to be an ongoing feature of teacher education, they will be dependent on the extent to which universities and schools can find ways for teacher educators and teachers to take on the identities of ‘boundary spanners’ in ways which provide professional and career rewards. What appears essential is that the participants in partnerships invest value in what each brings to the relationship. This is a cultural shift requiring altered structural arrangements supporting cross-institutional collaboration through high-level management support (Walkington, 2007).

While the literature notes the effective elements of developing university-school partnerships, it also identifies a number of factors which influence sustainability: teacher commitment; teacher educator time and resource management; employment reward and promotion structures for teacher educators; structural barriers such as the timetables in schools and university; the role of leadership of each system (see for example Borthwick et al, 2003; Carroll, 2006; Davies, 2007; Firestone and Fishler, 2002; Grundy, 2001; Peters, 2001; Russell and Chapman, 2002). These matters need to be considered if effective university-school partnerships are to have an extended existence.

Partnerships will not be sustainable if they result only from ‘the determined efforts by inspired individuals’. Enduring institutional support will be an essential ingredient in the successful transition of teacher education from a program with a perceived practice-theory split to one in which the work of teaching is regarded as integrated praxis, and learning about education and learning to teach are the outcomes of institutional cooperation and professional collaboration across institutions.

An inquiry into the practices of partnerships in teacher education leads the research to an examination of the structural as well as the personal agency dimensions of educational practice. The analytical framework adopted in the research will allow the personal and local achievements of teachers to be recognised and understood. It will also take account of the interpersonal and collegial nature of much of education practice. The analytical framework also takes account of the multiple and intersecting institutionalised policy and funding locations in which university-school partnerships are set.
Methodology
The methodology for this study was influenced by the project team's desire to deliver a practical outcome from the project, clearly connected with the interests of the participants in partnership-based teacher education. Not only would the study present a constructive critique of partnerships in Australia. It would also provide inspiration for future innovation and research. These intentions required the research team to:

• put practitioners at the centre of the research
• design an open analytical process
• ensure the collaborative generation of findings
• take an ethical approach to the study ensuring that data would be de-identified.

The methodology by which data were collected and analysed was designed to enable the research team to meet the elements of the project:

• identifying a limited number of programs around Australia in a range of different contexts, from the perspective of schools, universities and employers, that demonstrate effective and sustainable partnerships
• documenting the characteristics of the identified partnerships
• analysing the partnerships and identifying the characteristics evident in each case
• proposing possibilities that might guide the development of new programs and constitute a framework for examining the quality of existing programs.

Nomination of partnerships
The project team mailed a letter outlining the project to school system authorities, university education faculties and other professional and educational organisations. The letter sought nominations of university-school partnerships for inclusion in the latter stages of the research. Eighty-one partnership nominations were received.

Expressions of interest
The research team contacted each of the 81 nominated partnerships by email with an invitation to express their interest in participating in the research project. The invitation was accompanied by an electronic questionnaire which asked the respondents to:

• provide details of the characteristics of the partnership program (with a particular focus on effectiveness and sustainability)
• provide any related partnership documents (e.g. policy documents, course/program outlines, agreements, statements of procedure, assessment).

Thirty-five of the nominated partnerships returned completed Expression of Interest questionnaires. An analysis of the written responses and documentation was conducted to establish evidence of effective and sustainable university-school partnerships. The partnerships identified as having submitted evidence of effectiveness and sustainability were classified by program type and specified demographic and geographical characteristics. Criteria used in the classification included: partnerships of varying size; remote, rural and metropolitan locations; Indigenous locations; and both secular and non-secular settings. The 35 responses to the Expression of Interest are summarised in Table 2.
Table 2: Summary of data from expressions of interest

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lead Institution</th>
<th>Single School</th>
<th>Multiple Schools</th>
<th>Preservice Teacher Focus</th>
<th>Professional Learning Focus</th>
<th>System Involvement</th>
<th>Sustainable?</th>
<th>Effective?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Began 2003</td>
<td>Enhances school student &amp; pst learning &amp; meets system need</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Began 1995. Varied funding for specific aspects of project</td>
<td>Improvement in teaching practices linked to improved student outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Began 1997</td>
<td>Won awards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>System</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Began 2003. Funded</td>
<td>Partnership focus has broadened</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Began 2000. Transient staff impacts on sustainability</td>
<td>Successful teacher &amp; teacher aide professional development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Began 2005 with system support</td>
<td>Effective for pst &amp; mentors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Began 2006</td>
<td>Positive experience for pst, teachers &amp; university</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Began 2003. One academic &amp; one school leader</td>
<td>Effective for school students, pst &amp; mentors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Began 2004</td>
<td>Win-win for school &amp; uni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Difficult to maintain level of lecturer liaison</td>
<td>Enhanced PST knowledge of schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Began 2007</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Workload is barrier to sustainability</td>
<td>PSTs rate program well</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Began 2000 Requires commitment</td>
<td>PSTs value ‘real life’ component</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Began 1994. Voluntary</td>
<td>Effective research network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Began 2004 as pilot. Workloads a barrier</td>
<td>PSTs value collaboration with teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lead Institution</td>
<td>Single School</td>
<td>Multiple Schools</td>
<td>Preservice Teacher Focus</td>
<td>Professional Learning Focus</td>
<td>System Involvement</td>
<td>Sustainable?</td>
<td>Effective?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>Project not continuing, but links will continue</td>
<td>Valuable shared pst/teacher learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td>Began 2004</td>
<td>Highly effective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td>Equipment &amp; space limitations</td>
<td>Effective for school students &amp; teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Coordination difficult</td>
<td>Effective for psts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>System, university &amp; school support</td>
<td>Effective for school students &amp; teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Teacher workload a barrier</td>
<td>Effective for school students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>System</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>Funded 2005 - 07</td>
<td>Staff confidence increased</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>System</td>
<td>105</td>
<td></td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>Been operating 8+ years</td>
<td>Focus is religious dimension of practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Began 2007</td>
<td>Effective for school students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Began 1997</td>
<td>Effective for school students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Began 1997</td>
<td>Effective for school students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>International funding</td>
<td>Effective for preservice teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Funded by university</td>
<td>Effective for preservice teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>2+</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Dependent on individuals</td>
<td>One program approved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td>Valued by school students and teachers and preservice teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>40</td>
<td></td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>Planned for 2008 - 10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>35</td>
<td></td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>Funded 2005 - 09</td>
<td>Effective for preservice teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>400+</td>
<td></td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Began 1994</td>
<td>Many successful partnerships</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The researchers selected seven partnerships for further investigation. Once identified each selected partnership was then invited to nominate the members of the partnership who would participate in the study. Table 3 shows the number and role of participants from each partnership.
Collaborative practitioner research

Partnerships imply collaboration and for this research the implication in the research brief was that collaboration should characterise the research methodology. A form of inquiry was needed that retained the participants in the research in all stages: data collection, analysis and generation of findings. Collaborative practitioner research (Kruger et al, 2002; Cherednichenko et al, 2005) provided the research team with an inclusive strategy flexible enough for application in a bounded funded project. Proceeding from simple description to an open analytical engagement by participants with their own data and then to final agreement on findings, each of the seven selected partnership groups presented theorised reflections on their partnership experiences and reflections.

Data collection: personal accounts

Once the partnerships and participants in the study had been identified, the first step in the collaborative practitioner inquiry was the writing of a personal account of partnership practice from each participant. Each participant was invited to participate in a series of elaborated electronic interviews with a member of the research team. In the first instance each participant was asked to:

- confirm the description of the partnership provided in the expression of interest
- describe their experience of the partnership.

Using a set of questions designed for each partnership, the participants were prompted by the project team member to describe and interpret key aspects of their experience in partnerships and to report their knowledge of effective and sustainable university-school partnerships. The coordination of this process was complex, requiring initial communication and follow-up with every participant and an up-to-date database for the tracking the progress of the 50 developing personal accounts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Partnership</th>
<th>Teacher educators</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Preservice teachers</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Outer University</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plains University</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>River University</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional University</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western University</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local University</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City University and Beachside PS</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td><strong>12</strong></td>
<td><strong>16</strong></td>
<td><strong>12</strong></td>
<td><strong>10</strong></td>
<td><strong>50</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This electronic interview approach was conceptualised as an interpretation of the case writing methodology (Wassermann, 1993) which is now a common feature of practitioner inquiry in the education field. The elaborated online interviews were designed to lead each research participant to:

• compile a public body of professional knowledge through descriptions of partnership activity
• explain the outcomes of thorough reflection on experiences
• identify and generalise the underlying principles arising from individual events within university-school partnerships
• provide a basis for the development of personal theories and identification of strategies which lead to change and improvement in university-school partnerships.

Elaborated profiles of each partnership

At the conclusion of the writing of the personal accounts, the research team collected each partnership’s personal accounts into a single document, preceded by the summary of the partnership presented in the Expression of Interest. The focus for this part of the research was to develop an initial profile of each partnership that provided a rich, multi-perspective description of activity and engagement. Each profile included:

• a summary including the university details, the number of schools involved, the duration of the partnership, the number of people involved, the focus of the partnership and the participants in the study
• information about the stakeholders including preservice teachers, preservice teacher coordinators, teacher educators, practicum coordinators, school systems, school students and any other partners including universities and other organisations
• a statement about the purpose and activities of the partnership
• each of the personal accounts.

The research team took care at this point to take a light-handed approach to editing the personal accounts with the drafts remaining in their original state except for alterations that would facilitate communication of the ideas to other members of the partnership.

Once these documents had been compiled the research team sought permission from the contributors to share their accounts with the other participants in the partnership.

These elaborated profiles were the documents that became the basis for validation and analysis at the seven roundtables.

Roundtable validation: from annotated profiles to theorised concept maps

The project team provided the participants in each selected partnership with its collected elaborated profile which became the basis for collaborative analysis within an on-site research roundtable validation meeting. The purpose of the validation meetings was to analyse partnership effectiveness and sustainability from the perspective of each stakeholder and also from the perspective of the partnership.

Each roundtable meeting used the initial profiles to stimulate further inquiry and explanation. Important outcomes of the validation process included:

• confirmation of partnership descriptions provided in the personal accounts
• personal explanations achieved through reflection on personal accounts
• personal theorising based on the personal accounts
• collaborative theorising based on the combined accounts.

The analysis involved the participants reflecting on their personal accounts by sketching, threading, identifying statements of belief and in some instances developing personal concept maps to depict the partnership experience (Kruger et al, 2002; Cherednichenko et al, 2005). By the end of this process each roundtable participant had annotated their personal accounts and when combined had produced an annotated profile.

Following the individual process the focus turned to the whole partnership group with participants reporting to each other on their perceptions. In working with the group the participants were able to construct a concept map which brought the range of ideas and experiences together in a collaborative view of effective
and sustainable partnerships. Audio recordings made during these reports and the discussion during the construction of the concept maps documented the collaborative analysis.

The concept mapping stage sought to engage the participants in a personal and collective theorising of their partnership practices. The questions that underpinned this activity were:

- Based on your experience, what do you think makes an effective and sustainable partnership?
- What is the opinion, interpretation or theory that you see being expressed in the personal account?

In this activity the research team sought to produce a set of practitioner generated statements about effective and sustainable partnerships. These statements provided the substance for discussion and formed the basis for collaborative concept mapping. The concept maps are reproduced in this report in their original forms as developed by the partnership groups.

From the research perspective the project aimed to:

- ensure that the focus remained on the words and ideas articulated in the sketch and thread
- be sure that the sketch and thread accurately reflected the ideas of the individual participant
- produce statements of understanding which could be explicitly or implicitly identified in the personal accounts and therefore connected with the descriptions and explanations of partnership practice.

The following chapter presents the products of the collaborative analysis summarised in the concept maps for the seven partnerships, together with a brief description or snapshot of each partnership, written by the project team from the outcomes of the elaborated profile preparation and the data analysis. In working through the participant generated data and the snapshots, the project team was able to identify the principal characteristics of the partnerships in preservice teacher education.
CHAPTER 4

Analysis of partnerships

Partnership practices emerge from the direct investments made by the key participants in responding to the questions, challenges and opportunities which confront them in their engagement across educational settings. Of the 35 Expressions of Interest received in the research, most were driven by university demands and initiatives, although one was initiated by a school and some others had clear outcomes for schools and demonstrated responsiveness to school needs.

All of the Expressions of Interest appeared to have developmental possibilities with none arguing that their partnerships were as yet fully embedded and sustainable under current arrangements. Indicative of the condition of partnerships in Australian teacher education, none of the seven partnerships selected for inclusion in the collaborative practitioner research phase of the project displayed anything other than challenge and problematic status. An absence of any mandatory requirements, or other formal institutional infrastructure and support, renders the university-school relationship an outcome of mainly personalised and localised activity by teacher educators and teachers.

While the data collection in the research emphasised current partnership activity, each of the cases presented indications or traces of the personalised contributions and localised conditions which prompted the formation of the university-school and teacher educator-teacher relationships. In the case of the City University-Beachside Primary School partnership, the relationship traces back to 1994.

Chapter 4 describes the seven partnerships from the standpoints of the partnership participants. In preparing the seven snapshots, the project team considered that it was important to value the contribution of each participant in the project. That is a necessary condition of research about, in and for partnership-based teacher education. Accordingly, the snapshots employ the different vocabularies through which the participants have come to agreement about the purposes of each partnership and the practices which they have adopted.

Another point of distinction is that each of the snapshots has been written by a different member of the project team. That indicates another characteristic of Australian partnerships: that they draw out the particular understandings held by each participant and the educational practices which those understandings underpin. To establish coherence across the snapshots, the project team has organised them so that each concludes with an analysis written within the framework proposed in the literature scan - that is, the extent to which partnerships are:

- personalised and localised
- contained within relationships and conversations associated with professional learning
- located within structural or institutional arrangements which provide both opportunities and constraints for partnership participants.

The analysis leading to the writing of each snapshot involved:

- creating digital versions of the concept maps from each partnership
- using the concept maps to construct an analytic grid for each partnership
- working from the concept maps and the analytic grids to craft the snapshot for each partnership
- constructing a table of partnerships characteristics which has formed the framework for the detailed discussion of the outcomes of the collaborative analysis presented in Chapter 5.
Snapshots of partnerships

Outer University Partnership

The schools in this university-school partnership are two of approximately 400 schools that provide preservice teachers with opportunities to develop practice within either the Bachelor of Education or the Graduate Diploma in Education (Secondary) courses at the university. These university-school partnerships are designed to enhance the learning of school students and preservice teachers. They provide opportunities for curriculum inquiry, curriculum development and teaching practice for preservice teachers.

These partnerships also provide preservice teachers with opportunities to work with mentor teachers on a negotiated applied curriculum project or initiative. From 2006 – 2007, the Forrest Secondary School program involved the preservice teachers in planning, implementing and evaluating an applied curriculum project that focused on supporting selected school students who exhibited low levels of literacy. Using a multiliteracies/photostory approach, each preservice teacher supported a selected student in developing a photostory telling a personal story based on 5 student selected photographs. The preservice teachers and students worked together building their knowledge, skills and familiarity with the software, developing scripts of dialogue (voice over) and text for their digital presentations. In the second year of the project, Year 10 students initially worked with the preservice teachers and then, using a peer mentoring approach, supported Year 7 students in developing their own photostories.

The Sheoak Primary School program has involved university preservice teachers in a broad range of applied curriculum projects from 2003 – 2008. These projects have included the development of a DVD related to the building of middle years student relationships and learning outcomes; the production of a Years 1 and 2 visual and performing arts performance; a Year 5 and 6 maths trail and the adoption of digital portfolios to support students’ reporting of academic progress.

The university conducts units of study that support preservice teachers in making the critical links between their work place learning in schools and their academic studies at the university. Preservice teachers typically spend one day per week and a series of consecutive or block days in the schools (length varies between 1 and 6 weeks depending on the year level of their course). Teachers in these schools act as mentors to the preservice teachers, providing a range of learning opportunities in both the applied curriculum projects and in classroom teaching activity. Mentor teachers are remunerated for this work: approximately $25 per preservice teacher per day of attendance. They are required to complete a mid year and final year assessment report based on the preservice teachers’ completion of the applied curriculum project and demonstrated teaching competency as it relates to the state-wide quality standards.

Key themes reported by the participants in this partnership included the development of school professional learning teams of mentor teachers, preservice teachers and a university teacher educator. These teams took on the responsibility for negotiating the applied curriculum project and facilitating a collaborative practitioner research process to evaluate the outcomes of the project. Features of these professional learning teams were the explicit communication and committed relationships between members of each team. The leadership of individual preservice teachers, teacher mentors and university teacher educators was evident throughout the projects. The relatively small amounts of funding that supported these school based partnerships facilitated opportunities for additional teacher mentor time to support preservice teacher reflection. Preservice teachers were able to access relevant school professional development activities and purchase resources to support the applied curriculum projects.

The personalised and localised characteristics of these partnerships can be seen in the ways that preservice teachers developed an understanding of the learning needs of the school students. As one teacher mentor stated: “As the preservice teachers gained an understanding of students, they were able to fully appreciate the challenges faced by the school and make informed contributions in response to such challenges”. Building on the knowledge and strengths of the members of each professional learning team increased the capacity to focus on the key teaching and learning needs of school students and members of the team. The localised nature of the projects was important as it focused the team’s work and research on identified teaching and learning priorities within each school. It also provided preservice teachers with opportunities to demonstrate in practice their professional capacities in authentic settings.
These applied curriculum projects facilitated professional learning opportunities for all members of the collaborative research teams and thus strengthened the university-school partnerships through the development of professional relationships and professional communication. One mentor teacher stated: Both preservice teachers and mentors have encouraged one another to establish and continue to build a culture of professionalism by designing powerful learning experiences. Time for discussions, observations and reflection are key components of these active learning communities. The commitment, shared vision, mutual accountability, collaborative engagement and effective communication between team members enhanced the effectiveness and sustainability of each partnership.

Importantly, the institutional and structural arrangements of these partnerships were ones that met the needs and intent of both the university and the schools. One mentor highlighted some essential features of her partnership that enabled it to be both effective and sustainable: “Identify what we want to achieve, look at ideas from different perspectives, a willingness to try something new, persistence, an ability to communicate, make the project a priority, establish achievable goals, establish clear decision making and strategic planning processes and develop a community learning culture within the team”.

The role of the university teacher educator within the professional learning team is an important one. One described it as follows: “I work on projects that focus on innovative practice that connects and supports the team, with the expectation that everyone will be learners and will regard reflection on teaching and learning with students, teachers, preservice teachers and university colleagues as vital”. This partnership work is included in the university’s workload model.

These partnerships are effective and sustainable when individuals form collaborative research learning teams that are committed to improving the learning opportunities of not only the school students, but also the members of the team. Maintaining sufficient flexibility within the university and the schools provides opportunities to engage in collaborative work that meets the needs of all involved.
Effective and Sustainable University-School Partnerships

Figure 3: Outer University concept map

**LEARNING**
- Everything is for learning
- Assessment - as, of and for learning
- Indirect link to VET
- Expectations that all will be learners
- New knowledge and building on personal goals and connectedness

**RESEARCH**
- Cater to learning needs of all key stakeholders
- Educational perspective
- Parallel - research and development
- Learning community
- Learning with, for on behalf of each other
- Enjoyable
- Tangible outcomes

**COMMUNICATION IS CENTRAL**
- Ongoing communication for all involved
- Trust, candour and withholding of judgement
- Good relationships between all stakeholders
- Trust and open communication
- Collaboration
- AVES (Avenues of communication between stakeholders)
- Communication
- Regular feedback from schools and mentors to student teachers
- Reflection and feedback
- Feedback - Input
- Constant feedback - university - school - PST - school students
- Highly explicit use of reflection
- Collaborative
- Making public / Describing practice
- Articulation
- Vision
- University reps need to be empowered to act

**RELATIONSHIPS**
- Positive relationship - university - school - PST
- PST developing meaningful relationships with students
- Strong relationship
- Active participation
- Build relationships based on trust and commitment
- Supportive atmosphere - school - PST
- Relationship with university
- Values
- Alignment of values
- Shared objective and goal
- Develop a professional identity as a partnership
- Leadership - university - school - PST - Yr 10 - Yr 7
- Leadership
- Knowing teachers

**BUILDING CULTURE FOR SUSTAINABILITY**
- Key stakeholders
- Commitment to improve
- Commitment to partnership
- Recognition of potential contribution of PST’s
- School must gain something from it - students, new methods, funding
- School applied curriculum projects - project objectives
- Implementation
- Imperative - Action
- Clear goals of learning philosophy
- Vision of equitable partnership
- Continuity of personnel
- Trust
- Shared vision
- Capitalise and build upon each others’ strengths
- Experience different schools and school cultures
- Prioritise the partnership - make it part of your work
- Professional energy
- Fluid and flexible
- Cyclic process with an aim of building on learning process
- Conducting similar / simulation applied curriculum project focus over 2 years helped develop / roll out program
- Research as a component of the partnership enhanced the partnership
- Collaborative and cultural shift
- PST spending a year in the school enabled / enhanced familiarity / stronger relationships / contribution to school
- University colleagues play a key role in clarifying expectations with PST / school personnel
- High expectations
- Belief in the project partnership
- Accessibility and cultural knowledge
- A culture of risk taking - going beyond - different paces - Actively seeking / creating
- Performance & development ... for learning

**LEADERSHIP**
- Footprint / Legacy
  - ‘It’ factor. What is it?
- What do we bring?
  - Disposition
  - Self confidence
  - Personality
  - Professional
- What do we leave behind?
  - Lifelong learning
  - Shared learning
  - Enriching profession

**START HERE ...**
- Technical Practices
- Capacity
- Space / Time
- Leadership and facilitation
- Mobilise ideas
- Embedded practice
- Develop scope / opportunity
- From best practice to next practice
- Systems and organisation
- Management support
- A team of facilitators
- Whole school approach
- Flexibility of approach
- Recording and document practice can be forgotten

**Facilitates**
- is a conduit for
- is blended
- Balance
- Tension
- No significant moment
- Accountability to each other
Plains University Partnership

The Plains University partnership was initiated to meet the growing demand for qualified outdoor education teachers in government secondary schools and to complement the existing modest Outdoor Education program offered within the Bachelor of Education (Secondary), Physical Education at the university. As an innovative training regime, Plains University Partnership involves preservice teachers working in a structured, multi layered mentor program within a government senior secondary college.

Preservice teachers work in a small team over a period of three to four years to gain a range of skills, knowledge and experience during formal training sessions and while participating in the senior secondary college outdoor education program. Preservice teachers are assessed in an active learning environment with senior secondary students under mentor supervision. Throughout this process, preservice teachers provide invaluable role modelling and mentoring to senior secondary students.

The partnership developed out of the shared professional passion of a secondary teacher and a university educator for improving the safety and quality of Outdoor Education. Initially, the partnership was developed informally with preservice teachers working with school students on outdoor adventure trips and gaining experience, skills and limited qualifications.

In parallel with this informal process, the university, the university Registered Training Organisation (RTO), school and Department of Education worked over five years towards formalising the partnership. This involved support from the school and university leaders and advice from the Department Solicitor who drafted the final Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed by the school, university and university RTO. At the same time, the school developed and introduced a VET course for secondary students in Outdoor Education and established an Outdoor Education Skills Centre.

In 2008, a group of preservice teachers was recruited to participate in the formal Plains University partnership program. It is not part of their coursework but an added layer of training, experience and certification linked to an extensive range of formal qualifications.

In a typical partnership experience, the preservice teachers have a day’s training at the coast focusing on snorkel diving. The team completes theory study individually or in a group. Later they participate singly or in small groups of 2 or 3 in school trips supervised by school staff. During this school trip their leadership of snorkelling is further developed through ongoing mentoring and they are assessed and if competent gain a snorkelling guide qualification from the university RTO.

Key themes reported by participants in the research include the reciprocal benefit to all participants in the partnership. The secondary students benefit from the very powerful role modelling and mentoring process involved in them working closely with dynamic young adults in leadership roles. The preservice teachers access accredited Outdoor Recreation training and develop their skills, experience and knowledge in a real setting with real clients within a safe and supervised environment. The school benefits from the participation of the Plains University Partnership preservice teachers who increase the student to adult ratio and often provide gender balance of adults. From the university’s point of view the partnership provides an opportunity not widely available for its students to gain experience and qualifications in Outdoor Recreation.

The personal and localised characteristics of the partnership are reflected in its formation by two outdoor education practitioners to address a perceived need for an outdoor leadership preparation pathway which includes a blend of mentoring, academic and industry related learning. Mentoring is also personalised and localised in that it is embedded in the delivery of the outdoor education curriculum at a specific senior secondary school.

Professional Learning, Professional Communication and Professional Relationships. Participants emphasised the critical importance of all partners working together and sharing information throughout the process. They said that the development of strong working relationships was based on mutual professional respect, role clarity, the small size of the education community, large amounts of good will and confidence in the value of the Plains University Partnership model.
Located within a three-way partnership between the school, the university and the university RTO, the mentoring program begins with university staff inviting preservice teachers with an interest in outdoor education to apply to join the program. Once enrolled in the Plains University Partnership, preservice teachers meet with school and university staff to develop a learning plan which incorporates their prior skills, experience and interests and the school’s outdoor education program. The preservice teachers commit to the school sessions they can participate in and additional training sessions with the school teacher or their peers. During the program, preservice teachers participate in the secondary school outdoor education program as learners who are trained in new technical skills by the teacher (and sometimes by the secondary students), as mentors to the secondary students when they have the technical skills to act in this role and as organisers and planners of adventure activities as their skills and experience grow. In this way, the mentoring program is pointing to a new model of teaching and learning in teacher education in which students are teachers and mentors as well as learners. Moreover, it is the school’s outdoor education program which drives the preservice teachers’ learning of practical outdoor education skills, facilitation of group learning, group management, organisational skills and leadership skills.

The program is embedded in the institutional arrangements and power structures of each setting. The formal partnership involving the school, the university and the university RTO ensures that course accreditation, administration, quality assurance and risk management issues associated with the program are addressed. The university has enrolment processes in place for preservice teachers to participate in the course, the RTO ensures administrative oversight and quality assurance of the Outdoor Recreation training and the school implements the program because it enhances their students’ outdoor education experiences in a safe and stimulating environment.
Plains University Partnership participants believe that effective and sustainable partnerships...

- Shared passion for subject area that is vital for planet
- Preservice teachers
- Program interest
- Professional expertise and passion (for developing outdoor leaders)
- Personal commitment and innovation

are prepared to work through and develop institutional arrangements ...

- Formalised relationships
- Formalising process time
- Sustainability, staff expertise
- Disheartening, stalling legalities
- Risk management practices
- Institution, quality assurance
- University - mission to allow programs
- Relationships between institutions
- Sustainability - admin time
- Formal communication
- Very supportive school university administration
- Institution, admin process, academic/admin
- Communication
- Strategic vision
- Clear vision
- University-school partners collaborating - working together
- Physical resources
- New form of collaborative endeavour
- Coordination and management of Plains
- University Partnership
- Review and development
- $$$
- Quality of university students
- Quick approval from university

create programs with these features ...

- Casualised uni staffing is a disadvantage
- Integrated experiences: personal, social, professional
- Plains University Partnership program: extra to degree
- Developing outdoor leaders is rewarding
- Active support for ideas and goals
- Innovative programs: rewarding, exciting, satisfying
- Blended, mixed model of the program
- Practical avenue for research partnerships
- Maintenance of important connections, specific colleagues
- Ownership of program
- Revitalising, energising
- Shared peak experiences is best form of education: students, staff in Plains University Partnership
- Partnership
- Maintenance of long term commitment
- Multi-layered mentoring

which provide these outcomes ...

- Models for learning
- Collaborative learning
- Experience
- Teamwork
- Leadership
- Role model
- Professional learning/experience
- Mentor
- Skills, knowledge, experience
- Developing experience, understanding
- Co-development of learning plans
- Quick development of learning programs
- Older young people
- Vital, meaningful
- ... and these learning experiences
- Celebrate successes
- Stakeholder engagement
- Win, win for all stakeholders/parties
- Template for other partnerships

... for all the stakeholders:

- University: teacher educators
- Lakeside Secondary College: parents, college, students (present and future), staff
- Plains University RTO
- Plains University Partnership students
- Ed Dept: experienced teachers, future teachers

which result in support for students and ...

- Recognition of learning/work participation
- Accreditation
- Support
- Useable qualifications
- VET, course qualifications
- Curriculum, accreditation (VET!)

Beyond determined efforts by inspired individuals.
River University and Indigenous Communities Partnership

In this partnership River University works with more than 30 schools in remote communities. The partnerships were initiated by teacher educators who wanted to enhance Indigenous students’ mathematics learning in remote communities. To this end they work with mathematics teachers and teacher aides to improve teaching practices. Because the non-Indigenous teachers are transient the university focuses on providing Indigenous teacher aides with effective content and pedagogy knowledge with respect to specific mathematical concepts. This innovative practice is designed to change the cycle of school students’ poor numeracy skills.

Teacher aides are staying longer with the school because the program sends out clear messages that teacher aides are valued. It is the first time that there has been a professional development activity for teacher aides and this is a source of pride for individuals and the community.

The teacher aides are committed firstly to improving the children’s life chances and secondly to improving their own education levels. This programme offers them a variety of strategies to help the students’ numeracy levels. The concepts and methodology behind the project also improve their own learning of numeracy. This empowers teacher aides in their positions within the school. The effectiveness of the project has been inhibited where there has been a lack of opportunity for the aides to implement and use the knowledge they have gained through professional learning.

The program also helps to change the culture of the students and their parents’ expectations of them. The school was able to send lots of maths certificates home and people in the community began discussing what certificates their children had achieved. These increased expectations had a marked effect on the students. The school's results in state-wide tests have improved significantly since 2005 as a result of the increased rigour in the planning and teaching of maths and because the teachers have higher expectations of the students. The teachers also had the skills to implement strategies that would engage the Indigenous students who are very hands-on in their learning. These strategies worked, and teacher aides have the confidence to become involved in the maths activities.

The training program for teacher aides revolves around providing professional learning experiences across four consecutive days in each school. This is a serious commitment for the teachers within these schools. There is also an after-school meeting with the teachers to outline what the professional learning is focusing on and to leave them a copy of the training materials that have been developed. Each of the four days has a training component with the aides and then a trialling component where the aides work with students using the ideas and activities that were included in the training component. The day concludes with a discussion with the aides about what worked in the trial, what didn’t and why. The training sessions are based on ten principles of Professional Learning. These include taking into account social principles as well as Maths, pedagogy and professional learning principles. Thus, to account for the social principles, morning tea and lunches are provided, preferably in a space outside the school, which others in the Community are able to attend.

The role of the preservice teachers in this partnership is to assist the university staff to prepare and implement aspects of the program. On site, their primary role entails working closely with individual teacher aides who have difficulty processing some of the information. They may also intervene, offering alternative methods of approaching an area, if the concept is complicated or not working for the teacher aides. During the lunch breaks the preservice teachers may sit with the teacher aides and discuss everything else but the professional development, making fluid connections. Preservice teachers also undertake general research assistant duties including project coordination, community liaison, preparation of materials for professional development and training.

Considered from a personalised and localised perspective, this partnership is driven by the passion of two university Maths educators for improving mathematics education in remote communities. Setting up partnerships with remote communities requires a lot of trust on both sides, often developed across many years. This normally involves the university staff meeting with the Mayor and Council to inform them of the project and the anticipated outcomes and to obtain a signed letter of support. For each visit, separate permission to visit is sought and then the Mayor and Council are kept up to date on progress. The researchers also establish informal, long-term relationships with key members of the Community and other
Beyond determined efforts by inspired individuals

residents. Every time there are staff changes in the school, however, the partnership has to be re-negotiated at the school level.

The partnership draws strength from multi-layered professional relationships and professional learning. The central focus of the program is helping teachers and teacher aides to work as a partnership in classrooms – achieving outcomes for school students. To do this both parties need knowledge of strategies to engage Indigenous students. This was made possible because the university had two programs running in the school. One focused on skilling teachers and the other on teaching mathematical concepts to teacher aides. The two programs operated separately, but were brought together through reflection.

The personal accounts provided evidence of institutional arrangements designed to support the program. For instance at each school the teacher aides were released from their normal responsibilities to participate in the program and a teacher also participated in the program. At the school which was the focus of this study, the teacher who participated in the training became deputy principal. So, when there was a triennial school review, she and the principal wrote Mathematics into the school’s strategic plan for the next three years. This means that the Maths program is not an add-on, but part of the school’s core business, and that teacher aide and teacher development needs to be continued. This will enable the partnerships that have been forged between the university and the school and between the teachers and teacher aides do not slip away. It also enables the very good resources left with the school to be used because the strategies and maths activities are embedded in the school’s teaching.

In other schools, however, the university staff felt that the transience of school staff brought the sustainability of the program into question. The piecemeal nature of the partnership funding also makes sustainability problematic. This raises the need for the partnership, to be sustainable, to be between the university and the State education system or the Regional education office. Such a partnership could ensure funding so that each new principal in schools in remote communities is informed of the program and makes it available to teachers and teacher aides on an on-going basis.
Figure 5: River University concept map

River University Indigenous Partnership Concept Map

- **Personal attributes**: Optimism, Expertise, Restarting, Commitment, Tenacity, Trust, Respect, Instigators
- **Both attributes and challenges**: Never give up, Never know when it really works, Two or more views, Success, attention may bring fragmentation
- **Challenges**: Sustainability, Who’s the driver?, Change: how do we handle it?, Spiral to nowhere?, Communication, Disrespect
- **System support**
- **Funding**
- **Relationships**: Both sides gaining, Two way strong, Networks
- **Fluidity between people**: Connections, Social bonding
- **Lack of participation**: Who’s the partner? People? School? Community?
- **Serendipity**, *(lidy bidy)* little steps, Good Connections

- **A good solid base**
  - Professional learning in practice
  - Vision
  - Focus
  - Having a goal
  - Shared interest
  - Good mathematicians …poor arithmeticians
  - High expectations
  - Collaboration
  - Organisation
  - Alternative methods
  - Unwitting barriers
  - Learning spaces
  - Materials
  - Long term …short term
  - No cultural safety … needs to be challenged
The Regional University Mentoring Partnership was initiated to offer a range of curriculum specialisations for students by using experienced teachers as mentors to deliver the practical curriculum components of the course. Mentor teachers fulfil an academic role in the provision of small group tutorials addressing educational theories in practice, philosophies and professional performance and effective teaching strategies. The mentor teachers have a role throughout the year and provide another opportunity for reflective practice for the preservice teacher beyond the practicum.

In this town, the regional education authority was concerned about the lack of secondary teaching graduates from the regional campus of the university’s Faculty of Education. The education authority consulted with secondary school principals who expressed their support for the university campus to offer the Graduate Diploma of Education (Secondary).

Because of the course’s relatively small student load (30 students) the university Faculty of Education indicated it would have difficulty in offering a wide range of curriculum specialisations, especially in the science field. The senior officers of the regional education authority decided to approach the university with a proposal that suitably qualified and experienced teachers in local secondary schools would share in the responsibility of teaching the course’s curriculum specialisations.

Academic staff at the university deliver a 1 hour lecture and each mentor contributes 2 hours of mentoring for 10 weeks of each semester. An important feature of the program is that the regional education authority pays each teacher for their mentoring of preservice teachers. The remuneration is at least a partial compensation for the mentors’ additional workload. The mentoring takes place after school hours, eg from 4-6 pm. As the year progresses, the preservice teachers become active in deciding the content of the mentoring sessions with the mentors who are valued by the student teachers for their flexible responses.

Key themes reported by participants in the research include the importance of the mentoring being carried out by current practitioners whom the preservice teachers regard as having more practical credibility than university academics. The relationships and quality of communication between the mentors and university staff are important in establishing connections between the discussions in the school settings and university coursework. A notable outcome is the learning that all participants achieve in the program. This reciprocity is highly valued, including by the mentors who have come to recognise that the demand to explain their practical understanding to the student teachers is an effective form of professional development.

The personal and localised characteristics of the partnership are reflected in its formation as an initiative involving the regional education office, secondary school principals and staff in the university’s Faculty of Education. Mentoring is also personalised and localised in the small numbers of preservice teachers who work with the mentors in schools as they bring the credibility of immediate classroom experience and understanding to their discussions.

Professional learning, professional communication and professional relationships are significant characteristics of the Mentoring program. Located within the three-way partnership involving the regional education office, secondary school principals and staff in the university’s Faculty of Education, Mentoring is also personalised and localised in the small numbers of preservice teachers who work with the mentors in schools as they bring the credibility of immediate classroom experience and understanding to their discussions.

The formal partnership involving the regional office of the education authority, the university and local schools has conferred considerable authority on the mentoring program. The program is embedded in the institutional arrangements and power structures of each setting. School principals are critically important in securing high quality mentors from among their teaching staff. The initiative of the regional education office in the financing of the mentoring program has ensured that mentors are compensated for additional work responsibilities. A vital contribution of the university Faculty of Education was the writing of the course so that the mentoring was an explicit component and the adoption of course review processes which were inclusive of the mentors.
Effective and Sustainable University-School Partnerships

Figure 6: Regional University concept map

Regional University Mentoring Program Concept

New models of Partnership "System Authority and University partnership is important. School, System Authority/University remuneration for mentor teachers."

**RELATIONSHIPS**
- Connections
- Collaboration
- Symbiotic relationship
- Importance of university colleagues' support for mentor teachers
- Strength in the personal and small scale of the partnership
- Mentor and lecturer relationship
- Relationship between lecturer and mentor
- Safety/openness of relationship

**WORKLOADS**
- Workloads on school mentors
- Staff availability
- Time

**COMMUNICATION**
- Feedback
- Place for discussion
- Communication (effective)
- Mentors important in providing

**OUTCOMES**
- New models of teaching and learning
- Leads to new initiatives
- Value in continuing mentoring relationship after preservice teacher graduates i.e. a mentor-graduate relationship

**LEARNING**
- Learning from practitioners
- Current practitioners
- Professionals in the field
- Learning in situ
- Access by preservice teachers to resources (in schools)
- Relevance of CURRENT practice/theory
- Schools are ideal settings
- Realism and credibility
- Real-life teaching issues
- Formality of mentoring sessions
- Passion of lecturer/mentor
- Commitment
- Identifying good mentors
- Theory - practice link is invaluable

**STAFF DEVELOPMENT**
- Staff professional development
- Sensational PD
- Professional development
- Orientation to university policies
- Professional development for mentors
- Assessment and standards meetings are helpful
- Benefit in own mentor practice/development.

**ORGANISATION**
- Consultation
- Course reviews
- Course evaluations
- Course development
- Interaction
- Responsive to community needs
Western University Partnership

Situated in an outer urban area, the partnership enables second-year preservice teachers to spend a day a week for 10 weeks in primary schools in which they have already completed formal teaching rounds under separate arrangements. It has been in place for 10 years and one of the school principals interviewed has been working with the partnership since it began. Most other participants have been in the project less than 1 – 2 years. The explicit focus of the partnership is the application of university theory in practice and improved preservice teacher learning. The project is situated within a substantive discipline based subject and a general education subject at the university.

The project is part of a wide range of initiatives from the university to increase preservice teacher time in schools, strengthen their substantive discipline based knowledge and their knowledge of primary school organisation as well as to extend their understanding of young people and their learning.

Prior to this partnership experience, preservice teachers have had a formal teaching round when they spent time in a single classroom. For the university, the innovation is to enable preservice teachers to build substantive content knowledge through working across the school in developing teaching resources and conducting activities for students. In other words, one explicit academic imperative is to stimulate preservice teacher learning through both traditional lectures and tutorials at the university and then through application of that knowledge within the context of an authentic environment. The associated assessment tasks are assigned at the university and negotiated by the teachers and preservice teachers at the school, but restricted to the designated curriculum or knowledge area. Preservice teachers must work in teams in the school. The tasks these teams undertake include the completion of a whole school project in the discipline area and the development of a tangible resource which becomes the property of the school.

Alongside this task, a similar larger but more school focused project is also negotiated and the team produces another set of resources which respond to a specific need identified by the school and in any part of school operations and curriculum. This project is well defined by the university assessment, but is overseen by the school based co-ordinator and the university academic who visits regularly to meet with the co-ordinator and preservice teachers.

As its central achievement the partnership reports that preservice teachers work across the school, observe a wide range of teacher and student engagement around learning, focus on specific tasks that apply knowledge presented at the university and develop resources which connect with that knowledge and to the school.

The project is university driven and directed with input and oversight at the school level. While all partners are keen to improve teacher quality, there is little or no capacity for renegotiation at the school beyond the specific topic and exact nature of the project products. The conceptual work is already in place and schools service the university program. This results in a low level of ownership by the school personnel.

The project sustainability appears to depend on developing clear and shared goals and directions which are negotiated locally at the school. School based negotiation of the projects and possible integration of the two distinct assignment tasks is identified as having potential to respond purposively to the needs of school students, enable the engagement and development of teachers and the potential for preservice teachers to work effectively alongside the most appropriate teachers in the school. The relationships and mentoring which result from the partnership and designing of the project tasks are significant learning opportunities for preservice teachers and are deliberate goals of the partnership from the university perspective.

Barriers to development of the project and the achievement of authentic engagement which enable practice to be enhanced include:

• the rigidity of the university program and system which does not allow for individual preservice teachers to develop differently, from a different experiential base and in the different contexts of schools, classrooms and individual students with whom they are working
• workload models in schools and universities that do not fully acknowledge time and outcomes from school based teacher education
• the resulting limits on both teacher and academic time and capacity to work closely at the school to develop effective professional learning outcomes from the partnership.
This partnership identifies **personalised and localised** characteristics present in the management and development of the project tasks locally, as well as through the relationships and mentoring which result from the long term engagement at the school and on school focused resources development. The strong commitment to interpreting and applying theory through practical tasks at the school is valuable for preservice teachers. While school teachers are keen to be involved in preservice teacher education, there is limited capacity for interpretation of the university tasks to enable them to respond to the needs of the school. In this context preservice teacher learning is strengthened although the value to school teachers is less clear, and there is very little account of impact on school student learning.

**Professional learning, professional communication and professional relationships** are evident for preservice teachers. Implicit mentoring is identified as a valuable addition to the expectation of the partnership. As well, considerable learning outcomes are identified for preservice teachers about how to work in professionally focused teams, build relationships and improve communication within and across the school and the profession. There is limited opportunity for school teacher professional learning as a component or outcome of the partnership, although it is highly desired by the school. For academics, the partnership is a time-consuming but valuable contribution to the program, but this time commitment is a source of professional conflict as this type of work does not normally contribute to academic advancement or promotion opportunities.

The **institutional arrangements and power structures** of each setting both enable and complicate the partnership. Both the schools and the university are keen to actively work together to graduate quality teachers who are ‘school-ready’ and the partnership is seen as adding significant value to this outcome. There is capacity for stronger communication and deeper relationships to be constructed which support and enable improved school based experience and which build explicit career outcomes, not only for preservice teachers but also for school teachers and university academics. University structures and systems are seen as a major inhibitor to achieving the increased flexibility which would allow the partnership to respond to the learning needs of the professional partners and to begin to address the potential learning outcomes for school students.
Western University Partnership

THE MAIN IDEA is...

THEORY and PRACTICE are linked when the following aspects intersect:
- Explicit linking of theory to practice
- Opportunities for personal development
- Professional challenge
- Teacher and learning resources have a focus/goal
- Authentic context
- Opportunities for professional development
- Professional support

RELATIONSHIPS are...

University based manager for the project
University students (preservice teacher) = team
Students work as teachers to solve problems
Support from university
Support from school
Relationships between preservice teachers and mentors
Relationships between preservice teachers and whole school staff
Relationships between preservice teachers, school staff, and school students

PARTNERSHIPS are...

School provides support for preservice teachers
Mentoring
Whole school perspective
Time
Commitment
Experienced role models
Collaboration in the partnership
Relevance

COMMUNICATION is...

Interviews - preservice teachers and teachers
Clear direction
Clear communication
Shared/limited understanding of roles for everyone
Organisation
Discussion -> reflection
Towards common goal
Observation and reflection

Western University concept map

Beyond determined efforts by inspired individuals
Local University Partnership

A prep teacher, who was concerned about the substantial number of ‘at risk’ students in her school, approached the Faculty of Education at the Local University Campus (LUC) with a proposal that undergraduate Bachelor of Education preservice teachers might work collaboratively with the school’s teachers to provide individual programs for the students who were falling behind in their learning. Subsequently, the LUC Faculty of Education has employed the prep teacher who has developed the Local University Partnership as a formal, elective component of the Bachelor of Education program. The Partnership was designed to enable each participating preservice teacher to work on a regular basis with a child who requires additional learning support within a Local University Partnership school. While improving the learning achievement of each child is the primary aim of the program, the goals of the Partnership also involve the development of preservice teachers’ understanding of students with additional learning needs and knowledge of the practical classroom strategies which can support these students.

At the beginning of the year, the university lecturer contacts local school principals to invite their schools’ and colleague teachers’ participation. The expectation for the preservice teachers is that each must work in a classroom for 1½ hours per week for a period of 8 weeks. A third year theory unit in the Bachelor of Education involves research about a specific learning difficulty or disability as well as some planning for a child or sometimes a small group of no more than 4 children. The preservice teacher’s focus is on a particular child though they might plan for a small group of children. In the fourth year of the course, the lecturer usually organises two guest speakers choosing a speech therapist, occupational therapist, guidance officer or social worker depending on the needs of the group and the professionals’ ability to attend. In their fourth year, the preservice teachers assume a higher degree of autonomy in planning, delivery and assessment of activities. The numbers in the elective unit vary from 20-50 students, or 1-2 tutorial groups.

At the commencement of the semester, students are provided with a hard copy of the elective unit outline which provides an overview of the unit, and requirements of the Local University Partnership. Students also receive a handbook outlining the structure and key dates for the unit. The program does not receive particular funding nor do the teacher educators receive any financial payments; their participation is entirely voluntary but their participation and contribution is recognised in an email. The program is now part of the undergraduate coursework and thus receives the same funding allocation available to other electives in the course. During the semester undergraduates attend two learning contexts, one at the university and the second setting, in the classroom. In the tutorials delivered at LUC the preservice teachers are provided with both theoretical and practical resources that may be of assistance to them in the Local University Partnership classroom.

The dominant themes reported in the collaborative analysis related to the learning of the school students and the professional learning of the preservice teachers. Critical to the learning were the frequent conversations about the children with whom the preservice teachers were working. Assessment of the preservice teachers’ participation was a noteworthy element of the Local University Partnership. For assessment, the preservice teachers were required to maintain journals which contained their reflections on their work with the child/children whom they were teaching. That is, each preservice teacher was working with the classroom teacher in support of students’ learning. Their relationship was different from that occurring in supervised teaching practice where the supervising teacher is required to make a formal judgement on the practical competence of the preservice teacher. In the Local University Partnership, the practices of the preservice teacher were the focus for discussions with the classroom teacher. The distinctive quality of those conversations, however, is that their focus is on an authentic teaching challenge for the classroom teacher who has welcomed the contribution of the preservice teacher.

The personal and localised characteristics of the Local University Partnership are evident in its initiation by a university lecturer with recent experience in local schools. She contacted local schools with a proposal which appeared to provide the possibility that classroom teachers might be able to support school students who would benefit from additional assistance. Not all schools accepted the opportunity to participate and only some teachers in each school have been prepared to work with the preservice teachers. The teachers who have worked in the Local University Partnership made explicit reference to the need for preservice teachers to show professional commitment in the ways in which they worked with the school students.
The Local University Partnership requires the preservice teachers and their school colleagues to have strong professional relationships and engage in frequent professional conversations about the students who are the focus of the preservice teachers’ classroom work. All participants in the research pointed to the professional learning for the preservice teachers which resulted from the discussions about their work with students with specific learning needs.

Throughout the collaborative analysis, the research participants communicated the importance of the university staff who initiated and sustained the Local University Partnership. Their careful work enabled the preservice teachers to negotiate differing institutional arrangements and power structures by locating the Partnership activity within a course elective unit of study. An assessment based on reflective practice and not on supervisor judgement appeared to invite the preservice teachers to take on the elective on the basis of professional commitment to school students, rather than to satisfy of a course requirement.
**Effective and Sustainable University-School Partnerships**

**COMMUNICATION**
- Communication between all participants
- Regular communication
- Communication and interaction with all stakeholders
- Feedback on teaching and learning from all stakeholders
- Communication to support and guide pre-service teachers
- Communication and shared discussion
- Ongoing discussion between university, pre-service teachers and teachers
- Communication between pre-service teachers and colleague teachers
- Shared understanding of program
- Shared information - in order that learning needs of student is met
- Clear needs from university to focus on
- Constructive feedback
- Clear goals and aims
- Information sharing
- Feedback
- Support - from university academic and teacher
- I knew what, why and how before I entered the classroom

**PROFESSIONALISM**
- Willingness to be involved in other aspects of classroom program
- Commitment and support
- Positive and supportive
- Stakeholders motivated and positive
- Positives gained by all stakeholders
- Motivated and well organised enthusiastic pre-service teacher
- Commitment from all involved
- Support and guidance on all levels
- Motivated pre-service teachers
- Importance of professionalism from colleague teacher and pre-service teacher
- Positive experiences for all concerned: pre-service teachers, teacher colleague and school student

**TEACHING AND LEARNING**
- Formative assessment - feedback, informs subsequent planning
- Assess student understanding
- Celebrate student success
- Explicit interaction and scaffolding
- Careful planning
- Focused learning
- Links to real world and relevance to today's society
- Evidence of learning
- Prior knowledge by pre-service teachers of student need / focus
- Student focused teaching and learning
- Planning allowed the child to reach his full potential
- Social and emotional needs
- Specific learning needs identified
- Extra resource for the teacher
- Maths assisted the child to make connections with his world
- New ideas and approaches
- Evaluating teaching practices
- Learning sharing knowledge and skills
- Continued skill building with schools, pre-service teachers and students
- Focussed time on task
- Reflective
- Ongoing planning and reflection
- Improved outcomes for the child
- Reflection on program and each sequence
- Plan implement assess re-plan

**OTHER IMPERATIVES**
- Stakeholders needs and requirements are clear
- Flexible - changing to meet needs
- Flexibility and adaptability
- Well resourced - time, money, personnel
- Time was a challenge
- Important role played by university academic

**Figure 8: Local University concept map**
City University and Beachside Primary School Partnership

This partnership, which began as a professional learning initiative, originated when a teacher educator and a principal met through a mutual acquaintance. The partnership has continued for more than ten years. Together, university teacher educator and school staff have taken a research approach to their partnership using qualitative and quantitative approaches and in some instances teachers have reported their professional learning and changes in pedagogy within the school and to the wider education community. This has broadened teachers’ horizons and taken them out of their own school to view what others are doing and share their own learning. Other strategies for sharing their work and learning have included publishing in professional journals and collecting resources in a web environment accessible through links between the school and university website.

In this partnership, teacher educators are able to stay in touch with the ‘coal face’ instead of being in the ‘ivory tower’; there is the capacity to discuss system initiatives and for schools to provide written information about them to teacher educators; teachers have access to a research base to inform innovative classroom practice; teachers are able to have questions answered; and resources are identified.

The teachers are keen to explore ways of improving their teaching and they feel that their concerns lead the partnership. They are committed to working with the teacher educator even though it is sometimes seen as a difficult and challenging journey. Teachers see their collaboration with the teacher educator as incorporating planning, implementation, evaluation, reflection, refocusing and sharing. They observe that more time for planning and implementing would be good. Viewing the practice of others has been a feature of this partnership. Most significantly, the experienced teacher educator has been seen by the teachers as an expert who has worked in the classroom, co-teaching and modelling fresh ideas and approaches. The teachers trust the teacher educator and are able to confide their concerns about their own pedagogy in the knowledge that she will advise and assist them. As a result teachers feel that this partnership has led them to attempt things that they would not otherwise have tried.

In effect there is a two way mentoring with the teachers being mentored by the teacher educator while they in turn act as mentors for the preservice teachers. The teachers connect their own learning with a commitment to the development of the profession and the provision of practical and professional experiences for preservice teachers through the practicum, internships and observation days and also through a virtual classroom and links to the school website. The work in the classroom has also led to the provision of university courses at the school and these have been attended by both preservice and experienced teachers.

There is a strong belief that the partnership must be symbiotic – the academic partner must benefit as well as the teachers. This belief is accompanied by an awareness that it takes time to build a relationship where both teachers and mentors are prepared to be honest and take risks – to be critical friends. This partnership is built on a commitment to sharing with others, sharing goals and sharing expertise. The principal endeavours to build a culture where mutual trust and respect are hallmarks of the relationship with the university: communication is central, goals are regularly revisited and ‘professionalism’ is modelled.

Throughout, these two initiators have continued to play a key role by creating systems and establishing institutional arrangement and power structures with the principal ensuring that the many organisational elements come together and the teacher educator acting as a mentor in multiple contexts. The process has not been linear and there is a commitment to embedding changes.

In order to support the partnership the principal organises regular meetings that build relationships, maintain the momentum of the program and establish realistic goals, action plans, time lines and evaluation and or reporting mechanisms. From her perspective it is too easy to be diverted by day to day concerns so that developmental work is always on the back burner or drops off the agenda completely. In addition she encourages the involvement of staff and identifies staff members, especially new staff, who will benefit from mentoring support. In recent years, as she has approached to retirement, she has planned for sustainability by encouraging independent leadership by project leaders. She also takes responsibility for maintaining
the documentation of the partnership and supporting the writing of applications for grants. The teacher educator’s role at the school has evolved and with large amounts of professional energy she has worked alongside teachers and preservice teachers as a mentor, critical friend and advisor. She has responded to identified needs in order to support professional learning and enhance student learning outcomes. The longevity of the teacher educator’s commitment to the school means that they have established, and been able to maintain, a culture of continuous improvement within the school learning community.

The partnership is dependent on funding. A series of grants have enabled the partnership to pay some consultancy fees to the teacher educator and to purchase resources and teacher time for professional learning and planning. There is an ongoing need to apply for grants to pay for the time needed to continue the program and fund the work with the university. The teacher educator is an enormous help in preparing funding applications and it is felt that without this input the partnership might not be so successful with its submissions.

The personalised and localised characteristics of this partnership are evident in the classroom. Here they have adopted a model in which academic partners work with teachers in the classroom and then follow up with the opportunity for professional dialogue which is beneficial for both teachers and students. Having an academic partner has meant there have been many opportunities for teachers to build on and improve their practice and engage much more successfully with system initiatives. Action learning drives the educational programs and much of the work has related to the use of quality texts and the creative arts, especially drama, to enhance student knowledge and understanding. More recently they have used action learning together with a quality teaching framework to shape projects related to science and mathematics.

In the City University – Beachside PS partnership the preservice – experienced teacher professional learning continuum is highly valued. The partnership characteristics which shape the professional learning, professional communication and professional relationships are evident in this model for teacher professional learning which is built on sharing of knowledge and skills between teacher educators and classroom teachers. This is mutually beneficial and in the interests of improved teaching and learning. The partnership has kept the teacher educator at the cutting edge in relation to teacher concerns about curriculum and quality teaching. Having regular contact with teachers and primary school children has meant that her work with preservice and postgraduate teachers was always current and as a result she recognised she was a better teacher educator.

**Partnership characteristics**

When observed within the framework applied to write the snapshots, the essential characteristics of partnerships become practically apparent. The participants are those whose activities are described in each elaborated profile. What is important, however, is that each participant is not written about in some kind of individualised location: preservice teachers are in conversation with mentor teachers; teacher educators are meeting with teachers and preservice teachers; and in many of the partnerships the preservice teachers and teachers and teacher educators are working directly with school students. Even when school students do not appear in the narratives, their presence is one step away as all partnership participants were working together for improvements in their practices, their setting-specific curriculum and their pedagogical provision.

Table 4 summarises the characteristics of the partnerships as they have been manifested in the analysed elaborated profiles, associated concept maps and snapshots. The characteristics have been organised so that they open up the discussion of the practices which will form the introduction to Chapter 5. At this point, the focus of the research on the nature of effective and sustainable university-school partnerships becomes the reference point for the structuring of Chapter 5 as it shifts from presenting the analysis to the proposition of what can be seen as a theory of Australian partnership-based teacher education.
Beyond determined efforts by inspired individuals...

City University and Beachside Primary School Partnership

The Green Room of Optimal Partnership
DNA partnerships not personality partnerships

POSITIVE AND CONSTRUCTIVE RELATIONSHIPS...
- Collegial, collaborative
- Work collegially, working collaboratively
- The school is a learning community
- Continuous improvement managed
- Dialogue with writers and researchers
- Reflecting leads to refocussing
- Mutual trust and respect central
- Partnerships
- Teacher reflection
- Develop imagination
- Expertise
- Engagement
- Partnership
- Collaborate
- Empathise
- Team
- Outside perspective
- Understanding the teaching and learning cycle
- Professional trust
- Trust enables risk taking which enables learning

CREATING SYSTEMS...
- Teacher control of change
- Teacher concerns led
- Cognisant of system requirements
- Advice for submission writing
- Symbiosis
- Time - SOS!
- Sharing with pre-service teachers
- Early to experienced career professional learning continuum
- Communication
- Time - Planning
  - Implementation
  - Sharing
  - Evaluation
- Raised interest and skill level
- Experienced mentors
- Applying for grants
- Grants applications
- Experts need to be credible
- Model for other schools
- Sharing sessions
- Momentum can be lost - can’t take for granted
- Resources
- Funding needed for resources and time - good
- Beneficial for both parties
- Symbiotic relationships
- Mentoring pre-service teachers
- Co-mentoring
- Mentor guidance
- Critical friend
- Pre-service and In-service professional learning
- Being mentored by teacher educator
- Easy to lose the plot

IN THE CLASSROOM...
- Change in teaching / learning activities
- Fresh ideas approaches (Pedagogy)
- Children achieve outcomes
- University units taught in school
- Practical activities
- Some outcomes not measurable
- Implement quality effectively
- Substantive communication
- Students at the centre
- Improve and change practice
- Modelling
- She’s a (teacher) MODEL and she’s in demand
- Teacher educators need to play as well as coach
- Thoughtful leadership
- Reflect on teaching practice
- Planning, planning activities
- Collaborative planning
- Co-planning
- Teaching after modelling
- Changing practice
- Embed learning into practice
- Collaborative teaching
- Collaborative learning experience
- Co-teaching
- Motivation
- Post graduate studies
- Sharing
- Quality teaching and learning
- Search for opportunities
- Viewing the practice of others
- Conferences with colleagues and partners
- Understanding and using quality framework
- Practical experiences

KNOWLEDGE AND LEARNING...
- Deep understanding
- Professional learning
- Connections
- Commitment
- Difficult and challenging journey
- Professional discussion
- Apply knowledge
- Internalise knowledge
- Improved understanding
- Performance
- Theoretical understanding
- Visiting City University for presentations
- Professional development leads to change
- Using qualitative and quantitative research
- Analysis of student work
- Improving student outcomes
- Evaluation
- Longitudinal study
- Develop professionally
- Sustain engagement with professional learning
- Empathise

Figure 9: City University concept map
Table 4a: Partnership characteristics (relationships)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Outer University Partnership</th>
<th>Plains University Partnership</th>
<th>River University &amp; Indigenous Partnership</th>
<th>Regional University Mentoring Partnership</th>
<th>Western University Partnership</th>
<th>Local University Partnership</th>
<th>City University and Beachside Primary Partnership</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td>PST - relationship with school student learning</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PST - relationship with mentor/teacher</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PST - relationship with teacher educator</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PST - relationship with other preservice teachers</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PST - other relationship</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>✓ TAFE/RTO</td>
<td>✓ With teacher aides</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Partnership relationships - other</td>
<td>✓ Research colleague</td>
<td>✓ TAFE/RTO</td>
<td>✓ Communities</td>
<td>✓ System</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓ Placement Coordinator &amp; critical friend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Partnership initiated by ….</td>
<td>Uni/school</td>
<td>School/uni</td>
<td>Uni</td>
<td>System</td>
<td>Uni</td>
<td>Uni/school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Personal/collegial dimension to partnership initiation</td>
<td>✓ Sometimes</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4b: Partnership characteristics (resources)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Outer University Partnership</th>
<th>Plains University Partnership</th>
<th>River University &amp; Indigenous Partnership</th>
<th>Regional University Mentoring Partnership</th>
<th>Western University Partnership</th>
<th>Local University Partnership</th>
<th>City University and Beachside Primary Partnership</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>P (School/Uni)</td>
<td>✓ Uni</td>
<td>X System dependent</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>✓ uni</td>
<td>✓ Prin/Uni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partnership dependent on significant individuals</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal expertise of partnership initiator/s</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal commitment of partnership participant/s</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short term funding e.g. grants</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓ School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long term funding/resource allocation</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>System</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>Uni–component of 2 uni courses</td>
<td>Uni elective. No extra funding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional support for partnership</td>
<td>✓ Uni</td>
<td>✓ School/uni/system</td>
<td>✓ Release for TAs</td>
<td>✓ System/uni-School</td>
<td>✓ Uni</td>
<td>✓ Uni</td>
<td>✓ School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional support – p/ship is a formal component of teacher education program</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional support - partnership activity is written into workloads of staff in unis</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X Research activity not teacher education</td>
<td>✓ Coordination</td>
<td>Partially</td>
<td>Partially</td>
<td>X Grant activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional support - partnership activity is written into workloads of staff in schools</td>
<td>✓ Preservice teacher co-ordination</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X Extra paid work</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other institutional support</td>
<td>✓ Teachers financially rewarded</td>
<td>✓ MOU and RTO – accreditation</td>
<td>✓ In strategic planning in some schools</td>
<td>✓ System funding</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>✓ Included in elective</td>
<td>X Prioritised by school but not funded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4c: Partnership characteristics (learning and other benefits)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Outer University Partnership</th>
<th>Plains University Partnership</th>
<th>River University &amp; Indigenous Partnership</th>
<th>Regional University Mentoring Partnership</th>
<th>Western University Partnership</th>
<th>Local University Partnership</th>
<th>City University and Beachside Primary Partnership</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learning &amp; other benefits (reciprocity/mutuality)</td>
<td><strong>PST learning evident?</strong></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teacher/s’ aide learning evident?</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teacher educator learning evident?</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School student learning evident?</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Connected to school/system need</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓ Teacher supply</td>
<td>✓ System</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>✓ Teacher PL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Is there a research relationship to partnership?</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Is there evidence of conversations between teachers &amp; teacher educators?</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓ Mentor input into course review</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>✓ Email exchanges</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Curriculum focus</td>
<td>Various</td>
<td>Outdoor Education</td>
<td>Maths Indigenous education</td>
<td>Various</td>
<td>Various</td>
<td>Special needs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
|                                       | Other                          | Size/scope of partnership      | University 400+ schools                 | University 30+ schools                   | University 6 schools         | University 26 schools         | University 20 schools           | University single school
Crossing the border: the practices of university-school partnerships

Partnerships – a less institutionalised space

In collaborative partnerships, the institutional domains of preservice teacher education show an opening up of taken-for-granted structures associated with the participants initiating new personal/professional practices. Partnership practices set up a less institutionalised space spanning the borders of university, school and (in the best of worlds) school systems. Within the partnership space, preservice teachers, teachers and teacher educators have scope to establish the justifications for the partnership and to create and trial practices for the integration of partners’ interests in previously distinct institutional domains. These practices are clearly evident in all of the partnerships studied in the Project. For example, the Local University Partnership shows how even a relatively modest change in course arrangements leads to altered ways of working.

During the one semester-long partnership activity, undergraduates from Local University attend two learning contexts, one at the university and the second in the school classroom. In the tutorials delivered at the university, undergraduates are provided with both theory and practical resources that may be of assistance to them in the school classroom.

In the school classroom, undergraduates are required to research, plan, deliver and provide a learning program for a student, or small group of students with a specific learning focus. Planning for the focus student/s is undertaken in collaboration with the colleague teacher and the university lecturer responsible for overseeing the university unit/program. The undergrads spend 1½ hours for 8 weeks in schools. Individual timetables vary according to undergrads’ and colleague teachers’ needs.

(University lecturer)

The partnership space at this university extends from the university campus where students take an elective unit of study which directly introduces them to the challenges they will confront in their partnership activity with school students, to the school classroom where each of the preservice teachers will work with the classroom teacher in supporting the learning of a student with special learning needs, and back to the university classroom. In this space, the practical demands on preservice teachers are quite different from those they experience in supervised teaching practice. Under the conditions of the practicum, the surveillance attention of the supervising teacher is on the adoption of effective classroom practices by the preservice teacher. The partnership-based classroom is also a place where the focus is on the improvement of teaching, but it now has a renewed purpose where both the teacher and the preservice teacher are planning and working together in the interests of school students and their learning.

What appears in this collaborative partnership space is that preservice teachers, teachers and teacher educators have a mutual interest in school student learning. This mutuality initiates reciprocities that are evident as each stakeholder in the partnership is called on to contribute in ways not experienced within conventional teacher education. The reciprocities can comprise the inclusion of authentic classroom interests in the formal university program and teacher educator’s planning, with additional time and responsibility demands on preservice teachers and a readiness of teachers to work with the preservice teachers in the expectation of their contribution to learning by school students, but without the marginal, if desirable, benefit of supervised teaching payments.
Not all partnerships included in this research were as explicit in their concerns for the learning of school students as the Local University Partnership was. What is clear, however, is that those partnerships which had generated justifications and practices based on the learning of school students were the partnerships which impressed as having best established the conditions for effectiveness and sustainability. In those partnerships, principles for the partnership, its improvement and continuity had emerged without the external stimulus of system funding or policy command. The border spanning spaces in those partnerships depended as much on participant initiative and creativity as they did on institutional resources and power.

This chapter will set out the practices of partnership-based teacher education encountered in the research. It will map the border-spanning partnership space (Tables 4a-4c) through an examination of the distinctive and interactive relationships between:

- preservice teachers and school students
- preservice teachers and their mentor teachers
- preservice teachers and their peers
- preservice teachers and teacher educators
- mentor teachers and teacher educators.

The discussion of altered relationships within personalised and localised partnership space will lead to a consideration of the institutional conditions which participants encountered within their partnerships. One key outcome of the research is that the role of school systems in the university-school partnerships is generally absent and if present it is only with restricted agency.

In conclusion, the chapter will summarise the findings of the research in definitions of the effects of and resources used to sustain university-school partnerships. The loose specification of effects and resources will culminate, in the final chapter, in a speculation on the nature of the effective and sustainable university-school partnership in which all stakeholders benefit.

**Practices of the partnership space**

**Preservice teachers and school students**

Three partnerships required preservice teachers to work directly with school students. In two of them, Outer University and Local University, partnership activity was a formal component of the university course. In the third partnership, involving Plains University and Lakeside High School, the preservice teachers worked in the school’s outdoor education program as volunteers but were also able to seek TAFE credit for the development of some of the adventuring and leadership skills they were acquiring through their participation.

Authenticity is the best term for describing the interactions which characterise the preservice teacher – school student relationship in a partnership such as those at Plains University. When preservice teachers are liberated, at least partially, from the constraints of the unquestioned assumptions about their involvement in school settings, they become active in the formation and outcomes of partnership practices in ways which serve their developing professional interests. Authentic practice develops in the preservice teacher the personal responsibility the teacher has for the school student and the understanding and practical accomplishments which support students’ learning. Significantly, in taking some responsibility for student learning, preservice teachers in the research were able to articulate how they were applying their developing understanding and skills.

I worked with the student from 9:30 till 11:00 once a week for eight weeks. The only previous experience I have had was the regular literacy activities at university over the last two years in particular. I have also experienced regular literacy activities with my eldest daughter and I used a lot of resources from home which I use with her e.g. board games, books etc. Practical experience has also allowed me to take literacy with students and has allowed me to observe the particular levels that students would be at. I felt comfortable with this module and I had plenty of time to plan and from week to week on what was working and what wasn’t working. My peers were always available to talk, my university lecturer was always available and very helpful and my colleague...
At Outer University (OU), partnerships are integral to a large scale teacher education program which is located in more than 400 schools and education settings. One component of partnership activity is an applied curriculum project which each school proposes for small teams of preservice teachers. An applied curriculum project at Sheoak Primary School involved OU preservice teachers in working with students in the development of digital portfolios leading, in the way that ICT seems to stimulate, to the school students, preservice teachers and classroom teachers being side-by-side as teachers and learners together. In another project at Forest Secondary College, the school had considered how the applied curriculum project needed to extend the previous year’s achievements.

Having experienced each component of the story writing process the Year 10 students were guided by the preservice teachers to reflect on their personal learning as a way of preparing them for their future role in the project. Each Year 10 student was assigned three Year 7 students who were considered suitable to benefit from the use of multiliteracies approach to story writing. The challenge was to improve the literacy skills of twelve Year 7 students as compared to the four participating students in the first phase of the project. The preservice teachers demonstrated some similar challenges to those of the previous year.

The embracing of the need/opportunity to operate outside of their selected teaching area, the confident use of ICT, a relatively high degree of autonomy in a realm that was quite new to them were just some of the common conditions that were identified, articulated and I believe responded to, as part of the learning for each preservice teacher.

(Forest Secondary College leading teacher)

The requirement to contribute directly to the learning of school students in an activity which has an acknowledged priority in the work of classroom teachers and a school’s program can place each preservice teacher at the limit of their pedagogical and curriculum capabilities. In working with students at Lakeside Secondary College “the opportunity to extend myself”, for a preservice teacher, was a clear incentive for her to develop enhanced group management understanding and skills. In such situations, teachers express the belief that preservice teachers need to show the kind of commitment, dedication and motivation which are expected of professionals. For the preservice teachers, making a tangible difference to the participation and learning of school students confers a connected and up-to-date quality on the teacher education program which preservice teachers discern may be lacking in university coursework.

Preservice teachers and their mentor teachers

The professional conversations between preservice teachers and their school mentor teachers are the clearest expression of the value imparted by collaborative partnerships in teacher education. In working together around an important practical challenge, the preservice teacher and mentor adopt shared language which each needs to connect to their respective institutional settings. Commonly, preservice teachers and their mentors participate in planning activities, reviewing and reflecting on their experiences in and the outcomes of those activities and in discussing how to improve learning and teaching.
In the Plains University-Lakeside High School partnership, the mentor teacher emphasised the importance of the induction of the preservice teachers to the outdoor education program. While the preservice teachers were university undergraduates with physical education qualifications, they had limited backgrounds in the kinds of adventuring activities – snorkelling or caving for example – which are typical in outdoor education programs. During the outdoor field trips the mentor teacher and preservice teachers made time to debrief their experiences. At times, the mentor was involved in formal assessment of the preservice teachers’ outdoor skills.

Mentor teachers in the Local University Partnership were similarly active in working with preservice teachers in their contributions to the learning of children with special needs in their classrooms.

The student teacher spends several weeks (1 session per week) observing and working alongside the colleague teacher with the focus child. The student teacher develops a teaching plan/sequence in conjunction with the colleague teacher and university lecturer and visits the school for 1 session a week and takes the lessons he/she has planned. After each lesson the student teacher reflects on the lesson and the student’s responses/learning in conjunction with the colleague teacher and refines and adjusts the program accordingly and where it is necessary. The university lecturer visits the school once during this time.

(Local University mentor teacher)

The mentor teachers emphasised how important it was for the preservice teachers to be committed to the work as the learning of the school students was at stake. Mentor teachers took on additional workload in participating in the partnership and they needed assurance that the preservice teachers they had would be professional about what they’re doing to ensure that the program doesn’t fall down around everybody’s ears.

(Local University mentor teacher)

While the Regional University relationship with schools had the character of a less-developed complementary partnership, its core was the communication between mentor teachers and preservice teachers. Preservice teachers valued the program because it dealt with the ‘real’ circumstances in classrooms and not the ideal types which they claimed were presented in the university lecture theatre. They greatly esteemed being given authoritative advice on how to organise teaching and professional practice successfully.

I found the program very effective in that it exposed me to the school environment early on in my course. As I hadn’t really been at school for over 20 years this was invaluable. Both my mentors were clever and dynamic teachers who were very positive and motivating role models. The program also gave me a chance to learn and practise the practical aspects of teaching such as how to organise practical activities in the classroom and how to develop a unit of work.

I feel that I would have been quite under-prepared for prac teaching if I did not have the mentor program. It gave me a repertoire of teaching techniques and also some ideas on behaviour management. The conventional teaching program focused on the theory of learning and developmental psychology. I also appreciated having contacts with practising teachers as some teachers at uni had not taught [in schools] for quite a while. I guess for me the mentor teacher’s advice was more credible.

Another strength of the program was that the mentors were able to change things to meet the needs of the students to a certain extent. For example, I really wanted to do lots of experiments in science because I wanted to familiarise myself with some of the equipment I would be using. My mentor then arranged for us to do lots of experiments because other members of the group were keen to do this as well. Our mentor asked us what we would like to get out of the program. Initially we didn’t really know but after 5 or 6 weeks we were quite definite and our mentor responded.

(Regional University preservice teacher)
Less well defined in the pattern of preservice teachers – school teacher relationships was the contribution made by each school's partnership (student teacher) coordinator. In the Outer University partnerships, the school partnership coordinator had the responsibility for explaining the priorities of the school and the school's expectations to the preservice teachers.

Preservice teachers and their peers

In many of the partnerships, preservice teachers were required to work cooperatively in meeting with mentor teachers, teacher educators and completing partnership tasks. When located within the university program, as in the Western University and Outer University partnerships, the preservice teachers found that they were working in groups or teams in meeting expectations for school-based work. At Western University, one partnership group worked to create

... a corner shop to be used in the kindergarten classrooms. This involved creating actual items to be placed in the shop, as well as developing several scenarios and worksheets that the students could use in the shop if it were being used for Structured Play. As a group we strove to incorporate as many different KLAs into the various scenarios the students would be able to act out in the shop (eg. English, Mathematics, P.D.H.P.E) in order to make the project more meaningful in the classrooms. In order to successfully complete the project we had to work in close conjunction with the teachers at the school, particularly the kindergarten teachers, who more than willingly guided us through the decision-making process.

(Western University preservice teacher)

In partnerships such as these, preservice teaching takes on the character of the curriculum practices of teachers when they are introducing innovations in their classrooms. The challenge of satisfying expectations of school colleagues stimulates a sense of professional responsibility as the preservice teachers in the Western University partnership recognised that their work would result in a product which would make an enduring contribution to the learning of children in the school. It was also important that the partnership products and activities connected with professional practice after graduation.

In science we actually did science experiments, practised parent phone calls and interviews and went through various school protocols such as how to go about organising an excursion. We also developed a unit of work and actually delivered a session to the science club students. This was reviewed by our peers.

I think the peer review was done by each student in the group observing and filling out and evaluation form at school. This was then collated by the mentor and handed back in a written form. I think it was useful as each person picked up different things.

(Regional University preservice teacher)

The partnership activity of preservice teacher teams can mirror teachers’ professional activity in other ways. One of the preservice teachers at Forest Secondary College in the Outer University partnership found that she had become a group leader.

Due to the fact we had not decided on delegating responsibilities, our organisation of tasks was done on a voluntary basis. However, as time went on and our work load increased, our priorities shifted. This was when I found myself taking on Project Management responsibilities such as drafting up time-lines, delegating roles to other students, organisation of rooms, software, stationery and equipment, liaison with FSC partnership co-ordinator and staff as well as OU Colleague and recording logs of meetings between preservice teachers and FSC students.

(Outer University preservice teacher)

Partnership spaces, when organised to meet important school priorities, create opportunities for preservice teachers to explore the broad curriculum and pedagogical scope of teachers’ work in ways which may not be available within conventional practicum arrangements.
Preservice teachers and teacher educators

From the perspective of the practices of preservice teachers working in partnerships, unsurprisingly, the university program and the activities of teacher educators set the conditions of action for preservice teachers. Teacher educators ‘switch on’ preservice teachers to the expectations of the schools and their mentor teachers and provide opportunities for explicit reflection on practice by the preservice teachers. In those partnerships whose practices are formally written into university course practices (at Local, Outer, Western and Regional Universities), the teacher educators also figure in the assessment of preservice teachers’ understanding.

As if the institutional separations between university and school were not enough, the geographical spread of partnerships and attendant travel time demands are substantial barriers to the formation of relationships between preservice teachers and teacher educators within partnership settings. Faced with limited time to work with preservice teachers, teacher educators opt to induct the preservice teachers into partnership goals and practices, and as much as possible, to maintain encouraging and reflection-prompting communication, but only sometimes face-to-face in the partnership settings. The Outer University partnership program was noteworthy for its highly organised support for preservice teachers in their practice. But even there, the discussions which occurred on about a three-weekly cycle were restricted as the teacher educators were responsible for multiple schools and had limited scope for partnership activity in their workload arrangements.

Course-based support was clearly a priority in some partnerships. The Western University partnership was distinctive for the systematic requirements for course participation by preservice teachers. An important consideration was that assessment tasks connect partnership activity to unit of study or course assessment criteria. At Western University,

…lectures each week were coordinated to ‘dovetail’ with suggested activities listed in the partnership handbook for each of the 2 units. On campus tutorials/workshops in Semester weeks 1, 5, 9, 10, 11 and 12 were designed to supplement lecture material and school-based learning. Within the Science and Technology unit the tutorials were mostly hands-on practical workshops to do with aspects of ‘energy, matter and designing and making’.

(Western University teacher educator)

The partnership with the largest scale examined in the project was at Outer University. Partnership activity is contained within specific units of study at each year level in all courses, including its 4 year undergraduate degree programs. An important component of the Outer University partnerships is the Applied Curriculum Project, a school-defined and supported contribution by preservice teacher teams to a component of the school’s curriculum and teaching priorities. With the stimulus of some research funding, the partnership at Forest Secondary College engaged a team of preservice teachers and school mentors in a multiliteracies innovation. The Outer University teacher educator – the ‘university colleague’ – was active in supporting the Applied Curriculum Project.

I visited the school at least once every 3 weeks. I kept in contact with the preservice teachers [PST] and the SPC via email. I coordinated a guest speaker to attend one initial meeting in 2006 to talk about multiliteracies and how we could focus and build on what the students could do rather than what they could not do. I was also responsible for conducting debriefing sessions with the PSTs about their teaching and learning activities in classrooms. All but 2 of the 8 PSTs were from the Grad Dip in Sec Ed program and were in need of time to share and discuss issues related to lesson planning and classroom management in particular.

During the first month of the project, I was in regular (weekly) contact with the PSTs and school personnel clarifying the planning of the project (email, phone and face to face meetings). I spent more time initially in 2006 than in 2007 supporting the project planning. This planning enabled the 2007 team to commence the project more quickly, based on the experiences of the previous year.

(Outer University teacher educator)

Levels of interaction and communication on that scale were rarely evident in the partnerships studied. In a hint about the nature of effectiveness and sustainability in university-school partnerships, the most consistent and richest contributions made in partnerships by teacher educators were in funded research and development projects. With project funding for example, teacher educators were able to employ preservice teachers as co-teachers to support the River University partnership with remote Indigenous communities.
Mentor teachers and teacher educators

All but one of the partnerships investigated in this project required, in varying degrees, that university and school colleagues generate justifications for partnerships as they worked together to explore how to put their partnerships into practice. The more complex the setting up of the partnership, the more explicit was the need, it seems, to articulate a reasoned basis for the collaboration. In partnerships such as those at Regional and Western Universities, which had a segmented or complementary character, there was little evidence of collaboration between teachers in the school and teacher educators beyond discussions about agreements on the expectations for schools and school teachers. For example, a teacher at Regional University sought advice from a university teacher educator.

In the partnership I initially worked closely with the Science lecturer at the uni, to discuss what she thought I should do. Essentially we just made sure that I was aware of what she was covering so that I didn’t double up and she then left me to devise my own program. We also had to discuss the type of assessment that I would give the students and its weighting within the course. This went quite smoothly and I give the students one assessment piece worth 30% of their mark for the science unit that they study. Now that I am doing the program for the third time I simply touch base with the lecturer at the beginning of the semester via email. She leaves me to my own devices and the things that we do with the students largely stand alone.

(Regional University teacher)

In contrast, the partnerships at Outer University, Local University and the outdoor education specific partnership at Plains University with Lakeside High School had prompted teacher educators and school colleagues – including school principals, school partnership coordinators and mentor teachers – to participate in intense conversations over time about the reasons for the partnerships’ existence and the practices to be encouraged in the partnerships. Notably, the research prompted the teacher educators and teachers to advance justifications for the partnerships using educational theories, such as experiential learning, which they regarded as being consistent with partnership practices. At Sheoak Primary School, the school’s partnership coordinator defined the nature of the partnership with the teacher education program at Outer University as one where the partners would work flexibly...

...identifying what we wanted to achieve, looking at ideas from different perspectives, a willingness to try something new, persistence, willingness and ability to communicate, making the project a priority, establishing achievable goals, consistency, seeking the development of a learning community for all parties, agreement about how decisions will be made, strategic planning to continually guide and improve the project with the idea of doing the best for our students and assisting in the education of the preservice teachers.

(Sheoak Primary School teacher)

Her Outer University teacher education colleague, in recalling the setting-up of the partnership arrangements at Sheoak Primary School, noted the importance of conversations over a substantial period of time in coming to agreement about the intentions and consequences of the university-school collaboration.

The meetings routinely involved members of the primary school team and the university colleagues. The communication followed the course of the agenda. Systematic groundwork for the partnership project was specific and considered. Navigating through the workings of the project involved addressing various elements at many levels. The most strenuous mental activity however, came after the meeting in a general discussion. The movement from meeting to theoretical, intellectual and holistic discourse provided something of a new space. The bodies of thought and the ‘group talk’ evolved beyond the context of the partnership perspective. This reflective conversation appeared to have a momentum all of its own, whereby topics of authentic learning, experiential learning, accountability, cultural shift, and improving student learning were questioned and analysed.

(Outer University teacher educator)

Teachers and teacher educators recognised that partnerships were educationally significant for their own practices. In all of the partnerships, the participating teachers and teacher educators reported benefits resulting from working together. In many cases, the opportunity to work together led to opportunities for teachers and teacher educators to reflect on their practices. For teachers, the partnership enabled them to craft explanations for decisions about classroom practice in their conversations with preservice teachers.
Less clear was the form of benefit that teachers received in working with teacher educators. One reason for this uncertainty was that contacts between teachers and teacher educators were at best sporadic in most of the partnerships investigated. For many teachers and teacher educators, partnership activity was additional work and opportunities for professional conversations were few. At Local University for example, the teacher educator, in working with teachers in more 20 schools, was able to make contact with teachers only by telephone and email. The absence of deeper and more meaningful contacts was regretted by the Local University Partnership participants.

One partnership – at Beachside Primary School - stood out for the clarity of the purposeful relationship between teachers and teacher educators. It was an enduring relationship, resulting from collaboration between the school principal and the City University teacher educator over many years. Its practices were similar to the US Professional Development School model, in that the school engages the teacher educator to work with teams of teachers on school-based research and innovation. Professional learning is the focus of the partnership. The City University teacher educator works with the classroom teachers, for example by modelling and reflecting on literacy pedagogies.

With the teacher educator’s guidance we have used action learning to drive educational programs. Much of our work has related to the use of quality texts and the creative arts, especially drama, to enhance student knowledge and understanding. In addition we have used action learning and the Quality Teaching Framework in projects related to Science & Maths. The teachers trust her (the teacher educator) and are able to confide their concerns about their own pedagogy in the knowledge that she will advise and assist them. As previously indicated, part of the reason that teachers are comfortable in discussing their professional needs is the fact that [the university colleague] actually teaches in their classrooms, modelling the teaching and learning strategies embodied in the advice she gives them. Professional learning is mutual, however, at Beachside Primary School. The teacher educator was grateful too…

…I have benefited greatly as the academic partner. The projects have kept me at the cutting edge re teacher concerns over curriculum change in the state. In addition I have regularly been involved in teaching primary children so my work with preservice and postgraduate teachers is always current – I feel this has made me a better teacher educator.

(School professional development coordinator)

A shadow over the Beachside Primary School – City University Partnership is that it has relied on the teacher educator and the school principal to nurture the relationship. While it has been successful in attracting specific program funds over the years, the partnership’s reliance on two dedicated colleagues from the school and university led to some of the participants expressing uncertainty about the future sustainability of the partnership.

Institutional conditions encountered in partnerships

The methodology adopted in the research sought to describe and interpret each of the partnerships from the perspective of the principal agents in the partnership: the preservice teachers, school teachers and university teacher educators. If partnerships were ‘determined efforts by inspired individuals’, then the work of those individuals needed to provide the primary data. As they presented their work, each of the participants referred to the organisational and institutional conditions, which at times supported partnership activity, but which for many impeded it.

By definition, the university and the school are the ever-present institutions in university-school partnerships. What is disappointingly evident in the data, however, is the absence or at best the passivity of system involvement. Despite the assertions of parliamentary and system inquiries which have urged teacher education faculties to take up the possibility, school systems have not made many practical investments in partnership-based reform in teacher education. It is difficult to see how the conditions needed to create enduring spaces spanning university and school borders might be formed without the direct participation of resourceful school/education system authorities.
A number of institutional conditions were experienced in the different cases studies within the university frameworks:

- **Partnership practice** was a formal component of university coursework. The integration of partnership practice in an elective at Local University secured the participation of preservice teachers and their commitment to the learning programs of school students. On the other hand, the outdoor education partnership at Plains University and Lakeside High School was a voluntary activity and relied on a small number of preservice teachers being prepared to contribute to the partnership activity.

- **Assessment requirements** were important attributes of formal university coursework. They engaged preservice teachers and provided the basis for the discussions with their teacher educators. At Regional University, where the partnership was formed around mentor teachers in schools in formal curriculum-based activities, the assessment tasks associated with the partnership were prominent in discussions among all of the participants.

- University teacher educators were able to include university-school engagement activities in their acknowledged **workload** only when the partnership was formally integrated into university coursework. In the Plains University and Lakeside High School case, the university teacher educator volunteered her time. This committed teacher educator was also only employed as a sessional member of staff at Plains University. Arguably, the case for partnerships in university teacher education needs to refer not only to workload issues but also to explicit academic **position descriptions**.

The institutional conditions available in schools for partnerships while easily defined appeared to have uncertain availability. When the conditions were present, partnerships could be established and sustained.

- The **school principal** is the partnership lynchpin. Part of the principal’s role is to ensure that the partners fulfil their agreed obligations. School principals also encourage teachers to take up partnership opportunities. The project research team was impressed by the direct participation by four school principals in the research. In some cases, the principals welcomed the partnership because it supported school teachers’ professional development. In other cases, the principal recognised that the partnership offered direct possibilities for students and teachers at the school.

- **Connection to an agreed school need** was critically important in securing teachers’ participation in partnerships. It seemed that when the partnership activity was defined by the school and its teachers as much as by the university, the partnership possibility was considered, if not always adopted. The high quality professional support by the senior teacher educator who worked with Beachside Primary School was highly esteemed because the teachers recognised that her pedagogical insights contributed directly to the improvement of their teaching practices. Outer University’s extensive partnerships with schools were formed to address school priorities around the enhancement of student learning.

- **Teachers’ workload pressure** is an ever-present condition of partnership participation. The additional activity associated with partnerships at Western University was a source of teacher dissatisfaction. The potential for disengagement by teachers was also evident at Local University where the participating teachers made clear that their continuing participation in the partnership was conditional on preservice teachers demonstrating the commitment and skills needed to support the learning of students with special learning needs.

- In schools too, the **allocation of defined responsibilities** to at least one member of staff appeared to be important in the maintenance of partnership activity. The partnership coordinator at Forest Secondary College in the Outer University partnership program was a powerful influence on the success of the partnership. His work in support of preservice teachers was a component of his assigned professional responsibilities in the school.

Uniquely, the Regional University partnership relied directly on the local system authority for its initiation and its ongoing support. It was the only partnership with direct financial input into the university-school arrangements. The Plains University – Lakeside High School partnership also had interactions with the local system authority. The system interest related to the approval of the partnership, especially in dealing with risk in outdoor education settings.
It is difficult to see partnerships between universities and schools becoming common in teacher education in Australia without concerted and substantial education system engagement. Only one case studied in the research – that at Outer University – was organised around whole of program partnership participation for preservice teachers. Its model might be replicable elsewhere, but the possibility must be faced that the historical and organisational conditions which led to its formation might render it one of those examples that prove the rule that partnerships, under the current institutional conditions in Australia, generally are a large-scale impossibility. Small scale partnerships in which dedicated teachers and teacher educators can work on mutually agreed and narrowly defined projects might be the most sustainable possibility in many settings.

A radical shift in system support for university-school partnerships, with all of the system’s inevitable accompanying accountability demands, appears to be the only way for partnership-based teacher education to become more prevalent. But those surveillance and accountability requirements can easily put at risk the trust relationships which encourage teachers and teacher educators, in particular, to cross institutional dividing lines into the less institutionalised partnership spaces.

The underlying impediments to the establishment of effective partnerships are the industrial conditions in which teachers and teacher educators work. In even the most successful partnerships studied in this research, the contributions of teachers and teacher educators were truncated versions of what might have been. If partnerships are to be the condition of teacher education in Australia, then a way must be found to inscribe work in the border-spanning university-school partnership space into the formal position and job specifications of teachers and teacher educators.

Including partnership activity in teachers’ work is a challenging demand for schools. One interpretation of a teacher spending valuable time in working with preservice teachers is that a highly skilled professional is not focusing attention on the learning of school students. Perhaps the commitment in the Local and Outer University partnerships to school students’ learning may overcome likely objections by school principals and parents that some teachers are not devoting all of their attention and resources to school students.

University teacher educators face another challenge in taking on partnership responsibilities. Reward and prestige in university settings accompany formal research and teaching achievements. Spending time in schools supporting preservice teachers in their partnership activity, while professionally fulfilling, is not the basis for measurable advances in research output for example. Without the kind of targeted program and research support as proposed in ‘Top of the Class’, teacher educators are likely to restrict their partnership activity to the minimum. As a result, effective and sustainable university-school partnerships will continue to be curiosities explicable only by reference to the personalised and localised conditions which prompted their establishment.

Effects and resources in university-school partnerships

The discussion so far in this Chapter has emphasised the participants’ standpoints in partnership-based practices in preservice teacher education. In the less institutionalised or more uncertainly structured partnership space, school students, preservice teachers, mentor teachers and teacher educators are encouraged to shift from habitual responses to each other to more open and negotiated relationships. The changes are not leaps into the unknown but result from collective recognition that what partnerships offer is effects or outcomes which are worth working for. However the partners also need to recognise that they must contribute resources to the partnership if it is to be successful and if it is to endure.

Throughout this research, consistent evidence in multiple settings has emerged about the nature of the features and resources which sustain partnerships. In words frequently cited in the roundtables, effective and sustainable partnerships are characterised by **clear benefits for all stakeholders** in teacher education: school students, mentor teachers, preservice teachers and teacher educators. These benefits also relate to the institutional interests of each stakeholder.

**Partnership effects**
An effective partnership has a **focus on learning** for all stakeholders. School students’ learning is the principal focus of the partnership, shown for example in the support that preservice teachers provide school students in classroom programs. The critically important contribution the partnership makes is the enabling of links between school needs and priorities and preservice teachers’ skills and interests.

In coming together to support student learning, the mentor teachers, preservice teachers and teacher educators are challenged to enhance their curriculum and pedagogical understandings. Through their work in effective partnerships, preservice teachers come to reflect on and understand a young person’s learning by recognising their learning characteristics and learning how teachers design educational programs. They are also able to evaluate the effect of particular teaching practices on students’ learning.

Importantly, partnerships focusing on school student learning demand that the preservice teacher expresses the kind of responsibility for young people expected of the classroom teacher. Making a contribution to the teaching of the school students is important in itself and not just because the work in schools is part of the university course.

Student learning in such partnerships is no longer a coursework abstraction but a personal and practical challenge for each preservice teacher. Currency and relevance in university coursework are highly valued by preservice teachers and confer substantial credibility on the teacher education program. An important characteristic of an effective partnership for the preservice teacher is a direct link with either their coursework or their developing professional interests, for example via the inclusion of partnership activity formally in university coursework requirements.

The effective partnership engages all stakeholders in generating new knowledge and skills. In their support for preservice teachers, teachers (mentors) are encouraged to reflect on their own understandings and consider the evidence about and articulate the justifications for their curriculum and pedagogical practices. Teacher educators who work in partnerships maintain current knowledge of the discourses and practices of school education. Teacher educators also find in the partnership a basis for exploring the possibilities and limitations of their educational assumptions and theoretical stances.

An effective partnership leads all stakeholders to take on altered relationship practices. The practical core of the effective partnership is the professional relationships which the partnership initiates. The relationships are exemplified by the presence of and provision for conversations among preservice teachers, mentor teachers and teacher educators. Working both individually and collectively in school-based collaborative learning teams leads preservice teachers to develop constructive collegial relationships with their mentors. Conversations in effective partnerships are focused on learning and teaching; and they have the learning of school students at their core. As a result, preservice teachers also build the kind of authentic learning relationships with school students that are required of classroom teachers.

Preservice teacher, school teacher and university teacher learning emerge from the evidence-based and critical inquiry resulting from partnership practices. Partnerships which expect preservice teachers to work in support of school student learning encourage discussions about the learning of young people, how preservice teachers learn and the educational theories which underpin the curriculum and pedagogical practices used in schools and universities.

In effective partnerships, the professional communication between preservice teachers, mentor teachers and teacher educators leads participants to commitment to the partnership over an extended period of time, allowing for the development of deeper understandings, mutual agreements about practice and the potential for ongoing improvements in practice. In this communicative environment, the teacher is able to induct the preservice teacher into the professional responsibility that classroom teaching requires.

The extended relationships which appear to develop in effective partnerships also present stakeholders with opportunities for collaborative research leading in some cases to funding for specific elements of partnerships. Success of this kind generates ongoing commitment to the partnership.

An effective partnership constructs **new enabling structures** which span the boundaries of school and university by rendering problematic the frequently contested interfaces between schools and universities. Effective partnerships provide the space for stakeholders to initiate new learning relationships by valuing the
contributions made by each of the stakeholders to the partnership. A condition of this new enabling structure or space is that it supports preservice teachers, school teachers and university teachers in forming the committed relationships whose primary concern is the learning of school students.

The altered practices initiated by effective partnerships threaten the neat assumptions about the authority levels, positions and work of the preservice teacher, classroom teacher and teacher educator, at least temporarily. At any time, each of these stakeholders can become learner, teacher, curriculum change agent or researcher, and in each other’s educational settings. In effective partnerships, the value of each stakeholder is acknowledged in the other institutional space(s).

The institutional space of the partnership leads each of the participants to be public about their justifications for their practices. Stakeholders experience effective partnerships as spaces where they are able to express and work on personal interests with the respectful and collaborative support of colleagues from other settings. An important element of the new partnership space is that stakeholders draw on the highly valued and often scarce resources available in the other partnership domains.

**Partnership resources**

An effective partnership encourages each stakeholder to contribute personal and professional resources, in the form of passion, commitment and professional understanding and expertise. For preservice teachers, the primary resource is access to current practice in classrooms, with school students and with mentor teachers. Preservice teachers value opportunities to work directly with school students by supporting their learning.

The time that mentor teachers spend in professional conversations, in planning and feedback about teaching, is a vital resource. Not all school teachers are prepared to be mentors. Those who do participate in the partnership’s activities recognise that their contributions may involve additional workload. An important contribution that teachers and teacher educators make is the leadership needed to initiate partnerships and to sustain them, especially when things go wrong.

Because clear institutional supports are absent in many partnerships, the stakeholders contribute their professional understandings in a shared language to the partnership relationships in rationalising aims, outcomes and practices. For preservice teachers, the significant condition of this shared language is that the mentor teacher and teacher educator are able to communicate across the division between school and university discourses about education and most importantly about the learning of school students. Mentor teachers will be encouraged to describe their professional knowledge and understanding in ways comprehensible to preservice teachers.

The partnership location will mean that teachers’ explanations will be enhanced convincingly for preservice teachers by being modelled in practice. Agreements about the definition and significance of teaching as practice lead teachers and teacher educators to present educational justifications which value the direct participation of preservice teachers in school-based support of school students, even if the preservice teachers’ work is not formally recognised in coursework and assessment requirements. In fact, when institutional support is less formal, there is a greater requirement for stakeholders to demonstrate leadership as they construct supportive discourses transcending the constraints which inevitably confront educators located in bureaucratically controlled institutions. Time to meet and engage in altered relationship practices is clearly an essential resource to which each stakeholder commits.

**Institutional resources** are evident in partnerships which endure over time. The formal integration of partnership activity in university course and assessment requirements provides considerable incentives for preservice teachers to become engaged in the partnership. Even where partnerships are not formally included in the university program, practical, intellectual and status ‘goods’ can be important resources which contribute to the enduring commitment of stakeholders to the partnerships. What appears to be a critically important resource in partnerships is the extent to which schools and school teachers commit to the relationship, for example by providing the leadership needed to support a project which provides the opportunity for preservice teachers to achieve a successful outcome of benefit to the school and its students as well as for themselves.
Sometimes, less tangible institutional resources are insufficient to sustain the partnership. In those cases, financial support appears to secure the engagement of teachers and university lecturers. Funding can initiate partnerships, for example through system support where there are clear areas of teacher shortage. Partnerships may also provide the rationale for school and university colleagues to secure short-term project funding. Formal, informal or financial, the institutional resources applied by stakeholders lead them to find the time available to sustain the partnership. That is, a significant institutional resource is the extent to which partnership-based activity is accorded priority in position descriptions and workload calculations and is not just an after-normal hours and commitment-draining addition to existing responsibilities.

The inescapable conclusion from this analysis is that the commitments, expertise and resources of the partners in teacher education should be re-structured so that the learning of school students becomes the unifying purpose of teacher education for preservice teachers, teachers and teacher educators.

In order to reconstruct teacher education around the interests of school students, teachers and teacher educators will need to come to grips with two requirements for university-school partnerships.

Firstly it will be necessary to address the concern, expressed in ‘Top of the Class’ and elsewhere, that teachers with acknowledged understanding and expertise should have direct participation in teacher education. Teacher education that is reformed so that its partnership-based activity brings preservice teachers, teachers and teacher educators together around the interests of school students will lead to classroom mentors taking on leadership in the partnership. They will contribute to the decisions made about preservice teacher learning and competence and negotiate with the other stakeholders on preservice teacher activity in schools and curriculum content in university coursework. One long term consequence would be that mentor teachers would increasingly become actively involved in teaching in the university program.

Secondly, it will be critical to challenge the objection that involvement in a university-school partnership would take the best and most knowledgeable teachers away from teaching school students. University-school partnerships will founder if they become additional work for teachers and deflect them from their primary interests. In the increasingly evidenced-based accountability and reward environments in schools and school systems, teachers need a good deal of convincing that participating in teacher education is worth the effort. An appropriately resourced re-direction of teacher education to focus on the interests of school students would encourage teachers to see participation with preservice teacher learning as a regular part of their professional responsibilities and practices.

Effective and sustainable university-school partnerships

That all stakeholders benefit from university-school relationships was an emphatic theme in the research roundtables. The assertion points to a distinctive condition of the educational and professional space spanning the university-school-system borders which an effective partnership should establish. That space should be one from which not only do stakeholders benefit, but to which they all contribute. The sharing in benefits needs to be matched by investments of the resources available to each partnership participant.

The research has not concluded that there is a singular prescription for the nature of the effective and sustainable university-school partnership. ‘Top of the Class’ could have sought to require all Australian faculties of education to take on partnerships. Intelligently, it eschewed specification in favour of research into possibilities. This research has shown that effective and sustainable partnerships will not be uniform and systematised objects. They may be whole-of-program practices in courses, or existing only within certain aspects of courses. They may also be created to serve highly specialised interests in one school and with a small component of a university program.

‘Top of the Class’ described existing partnerships as no more than ‘determined efforts by inspired individuals’. It does appear to be a kind of critique. But does anyone want any area of education, teacher education included, to be anything less than ‘determined efforts by inspired individuals’? If university-school partnerships are to be the condition of teacher education in Australia then the resources need to be available
for dedicated teachers and teacher educators to do inspired work. What is now the specific character of some university-school relationships needs to be the condition of teacher education. The least desirable result is that the widespread occurrence of partnerships could lead to preservice teachers, teachers and teacher educators becoming complacent about this practice.

For practitioners, inspiration in education comes from local and personalised challenges and not generalised and abstract interests. Finding ways for education systems, universities and schools to support preservice teachers, teachers and teacher educators in their construction of altered relationship practices is the pathway to authentic and effective partnerships. On one hand institutional resources will be needed to sustain effective partnerships; resources well beyond those currently being deployed. But institutional resources – increased funding for example – will not be sufficient for effectiveness. The essential condition for effective and sustainable university-school partnerships is the focus they have on learning and most importantly, how the participants – the preservice teachers, teachers and teacher educators in collaboration – contribute to the learning of school students, and as a result how they learn from each other.

When the partnership space is defined by the stakeholders as collaboration in the interests of school students, it becomes distinctly different from the conventional teacher education environment, including that in supervised teaching practice or the practicum. Intentional or not, teacher education is commonly experienced as sets of hierarchies: the university and the school; the teacher educator and the teacher; the teacher and the preservice teacher; and the teacher educator and the preservice teacher. Partnerships weaken or even completely dissolve the power relationships which bedevil teacher education and which come to be accepted pragmatically as the way things are.

The effects and resources presented in the previous section summarise the practices of collaborative partnerships: effects bringing benefits to ‘all stakeholders’ resulting from the resources contributed by ‘all stakeholders’. As an ideal teacher education space, the partnership requires that stakeholders acknowledge and value what others bring to the relationship and are careful to ensure that the each stakeholder takes from the partnership the effects or benefits relevant to their respective settings.

Arguably, the best formulation of a partnership is that it is a set of relations and practices characterised by trust, mutuality and reciprocity (Cox, 1995). Trust, the capacity to recognise that others will act as they promise; mutuality, the acceptance that ‘we’ can achieve more than ‘I’; and reciprocity, acknowledging that each partner is different, each partner has a distinctive contribution and that each partner should receive an authentic benefit from the relationship: these appear to be the qualities of an effective and sustainable partnership.

Extending the findings of this research to dense concepts like trust, mutuality and reciprocity may seem to shift the research vocabulary back to some kind ‘academic speak’. That is not the intention. Certainly Eva Cox did not intend that. For Cox, trust, mutuality and reciprocity are the ingredients of social capital building. And social capital is the key to current attempts to transform Australian institutions so that they recognise how they contribute to social division and how they can shift their practices so that they become socially inclusive.

Partnerships in teacher education can be constructed as a technical solution to a perceived inability of universities to graduate high quality teachers. But partnerships in teacher education have significance beyond the training of practitioners. They should be seen as part of a generalised social movement which seeks to question taken-for-granted assumptions about practical possibilities and to dissolve entrenched expectations about what particular groups are able to contribute.

Teacher education which is reformed around the interests of school students, teachers and schools will require a new and cooperative institutional space which spans the borders of university and school. This is not a far-fetched idea. The formation of new institutional arrangements is at the heart of ‘Top of the Class’ in its proposals for the national accreditation of teacher education courses and for new funding arrangements, including a new research funding body separate from the Australian Research Council, a $20 million per annum Diversity Fund and the three year $20 million per annum Partnership fund.

What better way would there be for justifying the new expenditure envisaged in ‘Top of the Class’ than for it to so transform teacher education so that it becomes an activity that teachers in schools welcome?
Marking out the partnership space

Partnerships into practice – the need for practical leadership

The culmination of this research is a confident assertion: teacher education can be re-invigorated if it takes as a starting point the formation of partnerships with schools and their students and teachers. University-school partnerships, constructed around the learning of school students, will create the conditions for active participation by school colleagues in teacher education and for school systems to contribute the structural and financial resources needed to sustain partnerships in the long term.

For nearly 20 years, the university-school partnership has been a discussion point in Australian education. Partnerships have also been practical achievements in some local settings. Only when supported by government, have partnerships been large-scale projects covering multiple universities and schools. The research team fears that, without substantial investment by Governments and education system authorities, the history of teacher education will be repeated. Current emphases on university-school partnerships will be forgotten and at some point in the future their absence will become yet another opportunity for the criticism of university teacher education faculties. The time has arrived to move from political thought to national accomplishment based on the personalised and localised experiences of teachers and teacher educators who have come together around school student learning challenges which neither can meet without the contribution of the other.

The project research team considers that ‘Top of the Class’ presents an unprecedented opportunity for teacher education in Australia. Its recommendation for the establishment of a National Teacher Education Partnership Fund is a unique starting point which recognises the need for teacher education faculties to do better, but also that they cannot construct partnerships by themselves.

Beyond research and pilot studies

5.46 …the time has come to move beyond research and pilot studies to concerted and systematic action to encourage the development of authentic, effective and sustainable partnerships.

5.47 The Australian Government should establish a National Teacher Education Partnership Fund controlled by a board representing all key stakeholders. Universities, schools and employing authorities would be invited to submit joint proposals for funding initiatives in delivering quality teacher education. While collaborative approaches to practicum arrangements should be a priority, the Fund could also support other partnership activities in research, induction and on-going professional development. The Board would establish guidelines and criteria under which applications would be assessed.

(Top of the Class, 2007:79-80)

Top of the Class’ proposed the formation of a consortium through which the Australian Government would invest significant financial resources into supporting partnerships (ibid: 80). Participation in the consortium would demand that the stakeholders, comprising teacher educators, schools and system authorities, would research and evaluate their partnership activities. The final chapter of this investigation will use the suggested establishment of a National Teacher Education Partnership Fund as the context for the proposition of an Australia-wide initiative leading to the transformation of the way in which teachers are prepared and supported in this country (ibid: 80).
Chapter 6 presents one way in which an Australian consortium of the kind proposed in ‘Top of the Class’ can generate a national approach to partnership-based teacher education while ensuring that the personal and local achievements of individual partnership teams continue to be the building blocks of teacher education - and not only preservice teacher education. Although the initial concern of the consortium will be preservice teacher education, a national university-school partnership consortium will need to include other partnership domains: teacher and teacher educator professional development; school practitioner involvement in university teaching, course review and development advice; and in research, especially in practitioner research.

This chapter applies the findings detailed in Chapter 5 to propose a practical way to move beyond the inspired and mostly small-scale initiatives included in this investigation. The proposals present the outcomes of this research in a way which does not close off options for dedicated colleagues in schools and universities.

In keeping with the data collection and collaborative analysis strategies applied in the research, the findings accord the greatest prominence to the key stakeholders in partnerships: school students, preservice teachers, teachers and teacher educators. This emphasis is not intended to dismiss the place of school system authorities. It does, however, point to the low level of system participation in the partnerships studied. ‘Top of the Class’ envisions school systems as active participants in partnerships. The research team considers that school systems can offer more than simplistic funding/accountability conceptions of partnership involvement. The problem is that in none of the examples studied were school systems sharing in the educational leadership and activity of the partnerships. Their part in the university-school relationship is a matter of speculation – hopefully informed speculation.

For the vision in ‘Top of the Class’ to be realised, considerable impetus will be needed to bring school systems, schools and universities together in local partnerships within a national sponsoring consortium. If the possibilities of university-school partnerships are to be realised, the less institutionalised spaces of local partnerships will need to be replicated at a national level. The most effective and open way of achieving that goal will be for each of the initial gatherings of the consortium – possibly a national roundtable – to be based around a reporting of the practices that partnerships have found to be effective.

To support university and school colleagues in their partnership, the report proposes two semi-structured inquiry tools:

- a responsive and dynamic framework applicable for the initiation of new partnerships
- a strategy for the self-evaluation and strengthening of existing university-school partnerships.

These two tools, fully elaborated in Chapters 1 and 2, are designed so that collaborating teams of teachers, preservice teachers and teacher educators can report their achievements coherently while respecting system, state/territory and sector differences and priorities. In itself, the national consortium will need to present itself as an Australia-wide expression of the less institutionalised spaces in local partnerships. Leadership in the consortium will be based on two principled interests: system responsibility for funding and policy, and the authority of practitioners who have constructed effective and sustainable partnerships.

**Partnerships – not mandated but achieved by working together**

In framing the work of the consortium, consideration should be given to its philosophical foundations. From the perspective of the partnerships studied in this research, the consortium’s rationale and goals will need to balance system demands for effectiveness with practitioners’ commitments to the quality of the educational relationships with students and preservice teachers. A starting point for such a meeting of interests is to recognise that partnerships are a social practice achieved through and characterised by trust, mutuality and reciprocity:
Trust: the commitment and expertise that each of the main stakeholders – preservice teachers, teachers, teacher educators – brings to the partnership in the expectation that it will provide the benefits each seeks.

Mutuality: the extent to which the stakeholders recognise that working together leads to the benefits each esteems.

Reciprocity: that each stakeholder recognising and valuing what the others bring to the partnership.

The condition for partnerships based on trust, mutuality and reciprocity is that the stakeholders – preservice teachers, teachers and teacher educators in particular – can come together in ways which do not tightly define their expectations for and contributions to the partnership. Partnerships are less institutionalised spaces and enable the stakeholders to work together in ways that are consistent with their interests and expertise.

This research has shown that the partnerships which appear to be the most effective in bringing stakeholders together are those where the learning of school students is the direct focus of the partnership. Partnerships in which school students are active participants have produced the clearest and most vital representations of the potential of reformed university-school relationships have for preservice teacher learning.

Chapters 4 and 5 reported the main features of university-school partnership practices by focusing on the activity and contributions of each group of participants. Conceptualised as three key characteristics of effective partnerships and three characteristics of sustainability in partnerships, the findings of the research are that effective and sustainable partnerships are evidenced by:

- a focus on learning which is sustained by personal and professional contributions
- altered relationship practices which are sustained by communication about shared concerns
- new enabling structures that are sustained by institutional resources.

Each of these dimensions can be seen in the combined efforts of preservice teachers, teacher mentors, teacher educators and educational leaders as they work together in university-school partnerships. Figure 1 depicts these three dimensions and shows how each is created through the combined actions of the participants. The figure attempts to present a total view of partnerships, as seen from the standpoints of the stakeholders. None of the seven partnerships in this study included all of the dimensions in the figure. But all demonstrated some.

The research team, at this point, offers a caution. Figure 1 is not a checklist. It is conceived as an aid to thinking through partnership possibilities which might present themselves in the local circumstances which bring stakeholders together. The logic of the partnership is the principal intent of Figure 1: partnerships which form around shared interests in learning, and school student learning in particular, produce the conditions for trust, mutuality and reciprocity among stakeholders, which need to be sustained by enabling structures.

In a similar spirit, this report makes no attempt to set out how partnerships should be integrated into teacher education course curriculum and program organisation. Inquiry into partnership possibilities together with the provision of adequate institutional resources will be a sufficient basis for teacher educators and teachers to think through and propose new course arrangements. But the call in 'Top of the Class' (p.80) to the need for concerted and systematic action to encourage the development of authentic, effective and sustainable partnerships, suggests that Figure 1 might encourage the strengthening of partnerships through open inquiry and practitioner innovation rather than through policy mandate.

The conditions for the establishment of the national university-school partnership consortium itself, then, will need to be trust, mutuality and reciprocity.
The Education and Learning Collaborative: a nationally sponsored and coordinated partnership consortium

In proposing the setting up of a sponsoring and coordinating body responsible for the National Teacher Education Partnership Fund, the research team makes the assumption that the kinds of partnerships to be supported by the Fund are those this research has identified. Partnerships to be funded will be those which are characterised by trust, mutuality and reciprocity among the stakeholders, resulting from their commitment to the learning of all stakeholders, most importantly school student learning.

The consortium which manages the Fund should itself work as a partnership among the stakeholders. Australian projects over the last twenty years can be used as starting points for thinking through the form of the consortium. Those examples provide some organisational structures and processes to be emulated but also others to be avoided.

Calling the coordinating body to manage the National Teacher Education Partnership Fund the ‘Education and Learning Collaborative’ will create the expectation that the initiative bring together local stakeholders in partnerships within a flexible national coordinating framework: a distinctively Australian approach to partnerships.

Where to from here? A strategy for the evaluation and development of university-school partnerships

Figure 2 presents the strategy proposed for the initiation of the Education and Learning Collaborative and the National Teacher Education Partnership Fund. The strategy expresses the nature of effective and sustainable partnerships as established in this project. It defines the work of the Collaborative as supporting the self-evaluation and development of partnerships and emphasises that research, especially practitioner research, will be critically important in the work of the Collaborative. Finally the strategy will provide authentic and congenial ‘inquiry tools’ by which partnership stakeholders can work together to translate their local efforts into a credible and nationally significant claim for funding from the Partnership Fund.

Together Figures 1 and 2 are the starting points for the practical outcomes of the research - the inquiry tools presented in full in Chapters 1 and 2, which also summarise the project findings.

One shortcoming in the research is the relative lack of attention given to the place of school systems in university-school partnerships. This chapter will conclude with a speculative discussion on the ways in which school system authorities can become active participants in partnerships and directly share in their benefits.

Other absences in the report include a consideration of the participation of the teacher unions and the implications of partnerships in the industrial relations agreements in both schools and universities. Another highly significant omission is the broader school community, especially the parents of school students, who have direct interests in the quality of schooling and the professionalism of the teaching profession. Both of these groups should be invited to be active participants in the national consortium.

The place of school systems in effective and sustainable university-school partnerships

Without concerted system and national support, university-school partnerships in Australia will continue to be what they are now: mostly localised with uncertain benefits and with problematic futures. While the National Teacher Education Partnership Fund will initiate substantial expansion of partnerships in preservice teacher education, it will be limited in its impact, even with a $20m per annum budget. Any national re-generation of teacher education will require the kind of finance and policy settings as proposed in ‘Top of the Class’: increases in the underlying funding of teacher education and an enabling national framework for
The development and accreditation of teacher courses which takes into account local priorities. But these advances, too, will have limited effects without explicit and ongoing system involvement.

The university teacher education faculty appears in ‘Top of the Class’ and similar documents as the ‘problem’ in teacher education. This current research, however, has shown that the provision of conditions for active school and teacher participation is also a constraint on the formation of effective and sustainable partnerships. Finding a formal means for teachers to take on the mentoring of preservice teachers and other kinds of partnership activity, within their assigned normal hours of work duties, is a critical necessity in the acceptance of partnership possibilities by schools. Two consequences follow:

- that school systems provide schools with additional staffing allotments for teachers’ formal partnership participation
- that schools and school systems discern a substantial benefit from this additional funding.

The near absence of school systems in this research, together with the obvious need for their participation in partnerships, demands speculation on the benefits that they might derive and the resources they would bring to the university-school educational relationship. The Chapter 5 framework for the characterisation of university-school partnerships enables a presentation of system related partnership effects and resource contributions.

System related effects

Focus on learning
In addition to the need for the entry of highly qualified graduates to the teaching profession, university-school partnerships have the potential to improve school learning outcomes through the partnerships’ focus on student learning. Further, the mentoring of preservice teachers undertaken by school teachers has substantial professional development potential for teachers, too.

Altered relationship practices
Working in teams with preservice teachers and teacher educators on issues related to school learning priorities will encourage teachers to include research and reflective inquiry in their classroom practices, contributing to practitioner-driven improvements in curriculum and pedagogical arrangements in schools.

Enabling structures
Effective and sustainable partnerships will lead school systems to have a direct relationship with teacher education faculties. The teacher education curriculum and pedagogical practices, caricatured often as a theory-practice separation, would become connected to system and school priorities and strategies.

System resources and investments

Personal and professional resources
System curriculum leaders and developers are highly capable and many already have close involvement with university education faculties, for example through participation in joint research projects. The advanced professional understanding and expertise possessed by system curriculum leaders, as well as their awareness of system priorities, will bring significant benefits to their participation in university-school partnerships.

Shared language
Communication across school, system and university domains will contribute substantially to the dissolution of the most insidious critique of teacher education: that it is characterised by disconnections from authentic practice in schools and is staffed by out-of-touch academics. System contributions to the professional language of partnership practice, especially around the learning of school students, will be an important investment in the development of coherent school and university experiences for preservice teachers and the other stakeholders.
Institutional resources

For university-school partnerships to be effective and sustainable, systems will need to make financial and related investments in workload provisions for participating teachers. The requirement may not need to be massive: equivalent perhaps to up to no more than one or two days per week for a senior teacher in each school. Universities would also continue to make the usual practicum payments. Supporting the partnership with resourceful system authority would be an emphatic boost to partnership sustainability.

A less institutionalised space: final reflection

Proposals for direct system participation in university-school partnerships are likely to be contentious. As expressed in this research, the open negotiation which characterises university-school partnerships, formed through collegial inquiry into and reflection on the personal and local challenges confronting stakeholders, may be at odds with perceptions of system emphases on surveillance, control and accountability. University colleagues may also express concern about the weakening of university teacher educators’ independence and academic freedom.

In response, the project team suggests that there have been many local, state-wide and national partnerships in which systems have worked closely and productively with university and school teams. The research team also notes that ‘Top of the Class’ recommended national approaches to the accreditation of teacher education programs. Better, the research team calculates, that systems be drawn into the formation of the partnerships which national accreditation expectations are likely to require, than to be outside the partnership space and neither contributing to nor benefiting from its opportunities.

Partnerships construct uncertainly structured and less institutionalised settings for preservice teachers, teachers and teacher educators to work together on matters of mutual interest as local communities of inquiry. The challenge for an Education and Learning Collaborative will be to enable national coordination and system involvement to encourage local initiative and participation. In this way, the Collaborative will not only be an instrument of educational policy. It will also be a model by which the national initiatives on social inclusion can be interactively informed by local practices.

Cross institutional agreement is one of the fundamental requirements for successful partnerships. Partnerships formed around collective dedication to learning, and school student learning in particular, will encourage stakeholders to find ways to align their interests, expertise and resources in a spirit of trust, mutuality and reciprocity. Those characteristics are also essential ingredients in participants from different institutional settings working together.

Effective and sustainable partnerships in teacher education are characterised by enabling institutional supports which inspire the determined commitment of the stakeholders to school students and their learning. Finding those supports will initiate substantial changes in university teacher education and in the relationships between preservice teachers, teachers and teacher educators. In the spirit of partnership, this report avoids specification of the form of any structural change which universities, schools and school systems might need to undertake if partnerships are to be generalised throughout Australian teacher education. But change there would need to be.
Authors’ note

Looking back over the past 25 years, one initiative stands out in the evolution in Australia of university-school partnerships in teacher education. In the early 1990s, the National Project on the Quality of Teaching and Learning (NPQTL) promoted the idea of the university-school partnership for the first time in a formal way in Australian education and teacher education. It was the NPQTL’s vision of the university-school partnership which impelled Victoria University (VU) to explore and eventually adopt the discourse and practices of partnership-based teacher education. Not that we at VU would present our achievements as any kind of unimpeachable model for colleagues to imitate. A visit to the wrong school at anytime or the right school on the wrong day would not provide convincing evidence in favour of university-school partnerships. But these situations are not common in our experience.

Two related developments associated with the NPQTL have been crucial in the formation of partnerships at Victoria University. The first was the establishment of the National Schools Network (NSN), which for six or more years achieved what had then been unthinkable in Australian education: a respectful and constructive relationship of equals involving schools and their teachers, the teacher unions, school systems and university teacher education faculties. The NSN was a model with learning at its core: school student learning, school teacher learning, university teacher learning and institutional learning. Its work has been evaluated widely. A useful international assessment of the NSN is that of Furlong, Barton, Miles, Whiting and Whitty (2001) in their discussion of teacher education in England.

The second prompt for the development of Victoria University’s partnerships model was its participation in the Innovative Links Project (1994-1996). More focused on the contribution of the university role than the NSN, the Innovative Links Project provided the teacher education program at VU with specific tools for the support of partnership-based preservice teacher education and professional learning. In her reflection on the Innovative Links Project, Judyth Sachs (2003) argued that within Innovative Links, school and university colleagues experienced their collaborations in the Project as highly significant for their professional learning and for their efforts in educational change and innovation.

The awarding by Teaching Australia of the tender to investigate the formation of effective and sustainable university-school partnerships in teacher education needs, as a result, to be contextualised by the evident commitment of the VU research team to partnership-based teacher education. Finding successful partnerships, working with colleagues to establish their effects and what sustains them is a kind of mutual appreciation of valued work. This standpoint admits the VU’s team interest in the research – interest in the sense that the desirability of partnerships is not being questioned. What is also of note is what makes partnerships work in different locations and how they have come to exist at a time when institutional forces are so much against their formation. Emerging from its own problematic efforts, the VU research team brings alertness to the substantive questions which confront any universities and schools seeking to establish partnerships in teacher education.

Inevitably, in the opinion of the VU team, the formation of effective and sustainable partnerships will emerge from and will create new institutional forms. There can be no other reading of the proposals for teacher education contained in ‘Top of the Class’. The nature of teacher education constructed within the framework of ‘Top of the Class’ is so different from the meagre conditions experienced now by preservice teachers, teachers and teacher educators that it can only be interpreted as a new and hither-to unexperienced domain of collaboration, change and innovation.

This report is an attempt to burrow into the largely unacknowledged partnership spaces constructed from the ‘determined efforts of inspired individuals’ in Australian teacher education. For the VU team, the traces of understandings and practices first made explicit by the NSN and the Innovative Links Project come to the surface in any partnership-based teacher education setting. But this research is no nostalgic return to a fondly recalled golden age. The language of ‘effectiveness’ and ‘sustainability’ demands a location for the project within the uncompromising strictures of evidence-based research. The VU team doubts if its
methodology possesses the qualities which are commonly associated with politically significant evidence. But the collaborative inquiry methods adopted in the project have connected the researchers in an intimate way to the practices of partnerships which are currently subsisting in the often insensitive inter-institutional terrain existing between Australian universities and schools.

The research team hopes that its proximity to and familiarity with VU’s partnerships have not dulled the critical inquiry focus needed for the research and most certainly have not privileged its own work over colleagues’ efforts throughout Australia. Their work in establishing working university-school partnerships should prompt respect from all who understand their complexity and instability. The more-or-less approving evaluation of existing partnerships by ‘Top of the Class’ is deserved by each partnership studied in this project, even if that approbation is coloured by the disappointment that they are not the common and valued experience of teacher education in Australia.

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References


Beyond determined efforts by inspired individuals


