

Introduction

Particularly in these tumultuous times, as educators and leaders, we have a responsibility to identify the purpose of education and to then be guided by the precepts of which it is comprised. *scholarlypartnershipsedu* provides a forum for dialogue, collaboration, and mutual reflection and thus, we hope, is one means of nurturing authentic teaching and leading. It rejects the distinct separation of ideas and action limited by position and the resulting isolation of educators, as well as members of the community. Ultimately, the scholar-practitioner theoretical frame melds theory and practice and nurtures the flow of creative ideas. All six articles featured in this issue demonstrate how, through the scholar-practitioner frame, binaries can be eliminated, boundaries erased, and deeper learning and teaching occur.

Deniston and Gerrity in their article conclude that elementary teachers overwhelmingly reject *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) because of the legislation's deleterious effects on children, teaching, and learning. They note the impact of NCLB on morale, pointing out that 80 percent of teachers in the four schools in this study indicated they considered leaving the profession as a result of NCLB. Using their study as the foundation, the authors encourage educators to be collegial in effectively implementing holistic education and addressing children's needs, while supporting fellow teachers. The authors view collegiality as a means of reducing the negative morale that has accompanied NCLB.

The other five articles in this issue all demonstrate the effectiveness of the scholar-practitioner lens in promoting

authentic collaboration at all levels — early childhood through higher education. The Anderson, Lubig, Smith, Parlato, and Stanley article discusses a middle school/university partnership that has been in place for eight semesters, thus proving its sustainability. It addresses how universities can develop more effective field experiences that are equally beneficial to teachers and preservice teachers. The partnership provides teachers with increased pedagogical learning and a sense of support in implementing Michigan's Grade Level Content Expectations. The initiative also guides elementary teacher candidates through a field experience at the middle school level, an experience preservice teachers traditionally have lacked. The authors' reflections are insightful and demonstrate the value of the scholar-practitioner frame — mutual learning that far exceeds individual learning.

The Patel and Herick manuscript also addresses a middle school/university partnership. This partnership consists of a middle-school teacher joining the faculty at the university and coteaching with one of the professors. They begin with what they think will be a "mentor-mentee" relationship and journey instead to the scholar-practitioner frame of equal partners, concluding their learning has been much deeper than they had originally imagined.

Early childhood education and the traits of quality preschools are the subjects of the Slutsky and Pistorova article, depicting the vision of both a university professor and a practitioner. The authors analyze the components of a quality preschool and provide vignettes as examples

of such a school. Pointing out the increasing number of children who attend preschool, the authors emphasize that *authentic* early childhood experiences are critical. They reject checklists and seek deeper scholar-practitioner partnerships, which also include the parents, to identify quality practices that place the young child first.

The Willis and Wolph article addresses another school/university partnership — this one centered on developing effective teachers of writing using what educators had learned through the National Writing Project. The focus is on developing teacher capacity to teach writing at the elementary, middle, and high school levels of the Jefferson County Public Schools, the largest district in Kentucky, in partnership with the University of Louisville. The authors point out the improvement in student writing and the additional value of this partnership in responding to the increased writing achievement demands and the concomitant pressure experienced by teachers.

The Thomas-Brown, Brunvand, Luera, Hentrel, Barlow, and Wood article analyzes through narrative inquiry the partnership of a university and an urban public school, specifically in the design and implementation of an after-school program in which university faculty work directly with students. It thus keeps faculty in touch with the purpose of their teaching. This partnership focuses on the goals of being mutually beneficial, empowering both entities, and including the voices of both partners — goals reflective of the scholar-practitioner frame.

The authors in this issue articulate that the benefits of the emerging scholar-practitioner frame in each of their partnerships have exceeded those of more traditional and narrow roles, such as consulting and mentor/mentee relationships, representing the old dichotomy of the *ivory tower* and the *trenches*. The authors discuss the deeper learning that has resulted from the authentic partnerships of educators and the respect that has developed for the different, but invaluable expertise of each partner. These powerful relationships indeed represent the melding of theory and practice, the foundation of the scholar-practitioner frame.

We encourage you to similarly dismiss superficial boundaries, e.g., between levels of education, and to explore the scholar-practitioner theoretical framework in your own journey of creating new and powerful learning communities within the school and within the broader community. Collaboration is both a source of developing authentic reform and, in today's culture of blame for educators and education, a means of providing mutual support. We hope that you will use *scholarlypartnershipsedu* as a forum for future dialogue and reflection about your own forays into collaborative partnerships to strengthen education and to nurture a growing professional learning culture.

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