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Derek Anderson
Northern Michigan University

Joe Lubig
Northern Michigan University

Stephen Smith
Northern Michigan University

Kim Parlato
Bothwell Middle School

Athena Stanley
Northern Michigan University Teacher Candidate

Grade-Level Content Expectations:
Inducing a Meaningful Middle School-University Partnership

Derek Anderson, *Northern Michigan University,*
Joe Lubig, *Northern Michigan University,*
Stephen Smith, *Northern Michigan University,*
Kim Parlato, *Bothwell Middle School,* **and**
Athena Stanley, *Teacher Candidate*

Abstract
This paper portrays a one-to-one collaboration partnership (Ravid & Handler, 2001) between a university elementary teacher education program and a public middle school. The authors, including three professors, a middle school teacher, and a teacher candidate, used multiple data sources, including meeting notes, interviews, lesson plans, and teacher candidate reflections, to analyze the partnership. The collaborative partnership, now in its eighth semester, was initiated by the classroom teachers' desire to gain help adopting new state-mandated grade-level contact expectations, as well as by the partner university's desire to provide elementary teacher candidates with opportunities to teach whole class lessons to middle school students. Results suggest that the various stakeholders find the partnership worthwhile. Though confronted with minor challenges, the partners have been able to sustain the partnership through effective communication and ritualized activities.

Introduction
It is widely accepted that field experiences that are part of teacher candidates' course work enrich the learning-to-teach experience and hold great potential to improve teacher education (Anderson, Lawson, & Mayer-Smith, 2006; Darling-Hammond, 2005, 2006; Ziechner, 2007). Teacher candidates who are exposed to authentic classroom experiences prior to the student-teaching practicum have opportunities to integrate theory and practice. Educational theory and practice are not distinct and separable, but rather intertwined and recursive. Effective field experiences appear to be vital to effective teacher preparation (Darling-Hammond, 2005). Candidates who participate in authentic classroom experiences prior to student teaching enter the teaching profession at higher levels of competency (Dadlez & Sandholtz, 2001; Paese, 2003; Ziechner, 2007).

Given the value of field experiences, the partnership described in this paper simulates authentic contexts in which teacher candidates will soon work as classroom teachers. Having candidates teach lessons to small groups of students is certainly helpful, but it is not the same as teaching a whole class. Neither is teaching lessons to fellow candidates. Tomorrow's teachers need opportunities to develop their skills and dispositions through authentic

classroom experiences. The one-to-one collaborative partnership we researched for this paper provided candidates with exposure to contemporary issues such as the rising pressure to teach state-mandated subject-area objectives. Specifically, this partnership involved university professors, middle school teachers, and teacher candidates in the design of standard-based lessons that the candidates delivered to seventh-grade students over the course of one week.

Despite ample literature on the benefits of field experiences to teacher candidates, less has been written about how to initiate and develop university-school partnerships, or the extent to which these partnerships might symbiotically benefit the university teacher education programs and the schools and classrooms in which the candidates are placed. The cooperating teachers and schools that offer placements to teacher candidates are usually viewed as mentors who give back to the profession through their work with candidates (Fairbanks, Freedman, & Kahn, 2000; Giebelhaus & Bowman, 2002). Yet the schools and cooperating teachers can also benefit from the partnerships. At a minimum, teachers and students benefit from having extra help in their classrooms. When teacher candidates deliver well-planned research-based instruction, students learn meaningful content and classroom teachers gain additional ideas and resources. What's more, effective partnerships allow opportunities for university faculty, teacher candidates, and cooperating classroom teachers to work through emerging demands of the professions, in this case, the rise of explicit content standards.

The study of school-university collaborative partnerships is embedded in interorganization theory, which provides a lens to examine how participants act voluntarily toward goals that cannot be attained individually (Huxham, 1996; Van de Ven, Emmett, & Koenig, 1980). Effective collaboration requires mutually beneficial interdependency — each partner must get more than it gives and must need the other to accomplish its goal (Powell, 1990). This paper describes a how a middle school and university teacher education program formed a mutually beneficial interdependent partnership to meet the needs of teacher candidates and their university teacher education program on the whole, as well as the arising curricular needs of cooperating teachers and students at a public middle school.

Ravid and Handler (2001) suggested there are four general school-university collaboration models, each determined by how the partnership is initiated, the factors related to its continuation, the roles and expectations of the collaborators, and the success of the collaboration. The partnership described in this paper is best categorized as a One-to-One Collaboration Model. In one-to-one collaborations, the university faculty members and classroom teachers work as equal partners, often originating as result of a previous relationship (Ravid & Handler). Though university faculty and K–12 classroom teachers have different missions and expectations (Slater, 1996; Trubowitz & Longo, 1997), previous relationships allow one-to-one collaborations to overcome initial barriers as well as conflicts and tensions that arise throughout the process (Ravid & Handler). Moreover, one-to-one collaborations hold great potential for sustainability as those relationships often strengthen over time.

The one-to-one collaborative partnership described in this paper explores how elementary teacher education candidates gain experience teaching middle school students and classroom teachers receive assistance with mandates from the Michigan State Board of Education that all public schools adopt Grade Level Content Expectations (GLCEs). An existing relationship between two faculty members and teachers at the site school provided the impetus for the partnership. Because universities and schools tend to "each protect its own capital, the school system by supporting the ready-to-wear school, and the college by supporting innovation, research, and the production of knowledge, often in the form of critiques about the status quo," existing personal relationships and trust were a vital component of the partnership (Slater, 1996, p. 19). What's more, throughout the partnership the

relationships have strengthened, making the partnership routine and part of the culture of both organizations. A combination of personal relationships and explicit articulation of each organization's goals are paramount in sustaining the partnership, now in its fourth year.

Background

Northern Michigan University (NMU) is known for its rich, field-based teacher education program. NMU's elementary education program consists of three phases. In Phase One, candidates take introductory education courses. One of the courses in Phase One meets at an intermediate (fourth–fifth grade) school where candidates observe classroom teachers for two hours each week. In Phase Two, candidates take 10 methods courses divided over the two semesters preceding a student teaching practicum, which is considered Phase Three. During the first semester of Phase Two, two of the methods courses are held in local elementary (K–3) schools where the candidates plan and teach weekly lessons in small groups. Similarly, one of the second semester Phase Two courses (Language Arts Methods) meets at a local intermediate school, during which candidates teach small groups of students. This partnership is NMU's first foray into creating a middle school field experience for its elementary teacher candidates.

Bothwell Middle School (BMS), the sole middle school in Marquette, the largest city in Michigan's largely rural upper peninsula, houses approximately 650 sixth-, seventh-, and eighth-grade students. The student population is 95 percent white, 4 percent native American, and 1 percent black. BMS is a typical middle school with components such as teaming, advisory periods, and multiple elective courses.

Methods

We gathered copious data from which to analyze the genesis, implementation, continuation, and assessment of our partnership. Each of us brings a unique lens through which to view the data and events. Derek Anderson, an assistant professor of education, previously taught at the partner middle school. Joe Lubig, the director of NMU's field experiences, also taught at the host middle school. Stephen Smith is an associate professor in the mathematics and computer science department. Kim Parlato is a teacher at the partner middle school. Athena Stanley is a teacher candidate.[1] Collaboratively, we analyzed the data, made suppositions, and drew conclusions. Moreover, we challenged each other iteratively, only including in this paper what we all agreed upon — investigator triangulation. It is important to note that though the five of us analyzed the data and collaborated on this paper, many more voices appear, since eight professors, 10 middle school teachers, and more than 200 teacher candidates served as data sources.

The research methodology that best describes this project is a single-site case study (Stake, 1995). We drew on multiple data sources in order to describe and analyze our partnership. Countless e-mails served as a chronological record of the process, from our initial brainstorming sessions up through our current regular logistical communications associated with maintaining our partnership. Each of us consulted our own compiled notes and documents. We also considered information from meetings between the university faculty and the teachers, some of which consisted of formal minutes while other information came from our collective memories of those exchanges. The NMU faculty also conducted semi-structured interviews of the BMS teachers each semester.

The largest volume of data on the partnership came from the teacher candidates. We required extensive reflections throughout the semester, stemming from a variety of prompts related to the planning process, initial classroom observations, and their teaching. In addition to requiring candidates to submit formal plans for every lesson they taught, the candidates assessed the extent to which each student met the objectives they taught.

[1]Throughout this paper we use "candidate(s)" to refer to NMU students and "student(s)" to refer to K–8 students.

Data analysis was ongoing and iterative. To search for themes, we analyzed multiple data sources collected at different times. We used a general coding process, searching for recurring regularities or emergent themes (Guba, 1978). We tested the emergent themes recursively, repeatedly challenging and analyzing the centrality and usefulness of the data (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Our triangulated data collection and analyses increases our confidence that our findings capture the essence of our partnership. What follows next is the chronology behind our partnership.

Initiating the Partnership

There is little disagreement in the profession with the contention that quality field experiences are a vital component of developing quality teachers (Anderson, Lawson, & Mayer-Smith, 2006; Darling-Hammond, 2005, 2006; Ziechner, 2007). The NMU teacher education program has always provided students with abundant and authentic field experiences prior to student teaching. As a common definition of culture asserts, "It's the way things are done around here." Since its inception as a Normal School in 1899, NMU has been partnering with local schools. An analysis of the established culture of partnerships with local schools must acknowledge the role of faculty who had worked in the K–12 local schools prior to working at NMU. Of the 16 full-time faculty members in the NMU School of Education, five had been teachers in local schools. Four of these faculty members earned doctorates while teaching and then took positions at NMU. It is clear that the relationships formed between these faculty and their former K–12 colleagues have provided profound ties and credibility upon which our field experiences continue. Then it should come as no surprise that since two of us (Derek Anderson and Joe Lubig) came to NMU after teaching at BMS for 10 and 13 years respectively, this middle school field experience partnership was created. Effective partnerships, however, are not a product, but rather a process consisting of sustained interactions with each partner taking on new qualities of mutuality and cooperation (Slater, 2001). What follows is a description of the process that began four years ago and has since lead to a sustained collaboration, now part of the culture of the students and teachers at BMS and the teacher candidates and faculty at NMU.

Though NMU's elementary education program provided ample field experiences (in five different education courses over three semesters) prior to student teaching compared to other institutions in the region, the faculty identified limitations in the program. For one, even though the candidates taught more than 30 lessons prior to student teaching, all of their teaching episodes involved teaching small groups of students rather than an entire class. Second, NMU's elementary program lacked a field experience at the middle level. In a previous study of 145 teacher candidates at NMU over five semesters, Anderson (2010) found the median number of hours candidates spent in middle school classrooms as part of their teacher education was zero, compared to 30 hours in K–2 classrooms and 31 hours in 3–5 classrooms.

Elementary teacher candidates at NMU, like most elementary candidates across the United States, acquire their certifications to teach at the middle level without specific middle level preparation. Rather, the candidates add to their K–6 certificates a middle level endorsement in the content areas of their chosen academic majors and minors. Although supporters of specialized middle-level teacher preparation are ardent about the unique and detailed standards they believe should be required of middle-level teachers, most states do not require middle-level teachers to receive specialized training (Conklin, 2008; Cooney & Bottoms, 2002). Prior to this partnership, it was possible, and at times common, that elementary teacher education candidates at NMU would have completed their entire teacher education program with dozens of hours of classroom field experiences and 16 weeks of student teaching, none of which were at the middle level; yet, most would graduate with a middle school endorsement.

With the desire to provide NMU elementary teacher education candidates with opportunities to teach whole

classes of middle school students, Derek Anderson and Joe Lubig approached some of their former colleagues at BMS about a possible partnership. Remembering their overwhelmed feeling from teaching nearly 100+ middle school students with only one prep period not long ago, Anderson and Lubig planned to entice the BMS teachers to participate with the allure of time. In other words, they thought they could sell the teachers on the idea of having extra planning time while the NMU teacher candidates taught the seventh-grade students.

From the beginning, the BMS teachers were excited about the idea of the partnership. Somewhat surprising to the NMU faculty, however, was that the BMS teachers were not especially allured by the idea of having time off while the NMU candidates would teach. Though they recognized extra planning time as a bonus, their greatest desire was to have the candidates create, deliver, and assess lessons based on the new state-mandated content expectations.

Michigan has had content standards since the early 1990s, even before passage of the *Goals 2000 Act* in 1994 which required all states to develop standards and curriculum frameworks. Like most states', Michigan's content standards and curriculum framework were broad and identified what students should learn over a period of several grade levels. However, beginning in 2005 and concluding in 2008, Michigan created Grade Level Content Expectations (GLCEs) that include specific and numerous objectives for mathematics, science, social studies, and language arts in each grade from kindergarten to eighth grade. At the middle school level, the number of GLCEs range from 42 to 81 per subject and "provide a set of clear and rigorous expectations for all students, and provide teachers with clearly defined statements of what students should know and be able to do as they progress through school" (www.michigan.gov/mde/0,1607,7-140-28753_33232---,00.html).

These GLCEs added a tremendous sense of responsibility and accountability for the BMS teachers. Because the BMS teachers had textbooks that did not match the over 60 specific GLCEs per subject, they were looking for any help they could get — not just time to meet with each other, but also examples of GLCE-based lesson plans and resources prepared by the NMU candidates. Unlike the classroom teachers who have to prepare multiple lesson plans daily, the NMU candidates have the benefit of time to prepare extensive lesson plans, often with multiple resources and extension activities. In addition, as Trubowitz and Longo (1997) pointed out, candidates have "a wider latitude for mistakes than the schools," and the "consequences are neither as dire nor as immediate" (p. 140). In other words, the NMU candidates were able to take some risks in their lesson designs, and the BMS teachers cherished that.

Planning the Initial Field Experience

Once we agreed to form a partnership, we met a couple of times to determine the general framework and schedule. We agreed upon a four-day unit. Both partners thought it would be best for the candidates to teach several days in a row, yet we decided against a full school week after talking with the candidates about the idea. At NMU, education students do not have classes on Fridays and many have jobs, so we arrived at a Monday through Thursday schedule.

Another discussion centered on the schedule for the day, both for the middle school students and for the candidates. We opted to have the candidates teach only one group of seventh-grade students for all four academic courses throughout the four days. In addition, we left the course scheduling up to the candidates; part of their planning would include creating a scope and sequence for the experience. The candidates, in groups of two or three, would be responsible for all aspects of planning, teaching, and assessing students for four full days. Additionally, we decided to allow Derek Anderson's methods course to meet at BMS for the three weeks preceding the field experience, whereby the candidates would observe for an hour each week in order to gain a sense of the behaviors, content-level understanding, and expectations of seventh-grade students.

Most importantly, the NMU faculty needed the BMS teachers to determine the objectives, or GLCEs, the candidates should teach. Though it took some time and deliberation for the BMS teachers to anticipate what they might be teaching 12 weeks later, they were able to concur on two or three GLCEs per subject. With the plan in place, it was time for the NMU faculty to get the candidates ready for the field experience.

It was no surprise to the NMU faculty that the candidates were nervous about the proposed field experience. In a study of 145 candidates over five semesters, only 51.7 percent of the candidates said they would accept a middle school teaching position when asked at the beginning of the Block Two semester (Anderson, 2010). Candidates were nervous primarily about content knowledge and the supposed behavior of middle-level students. Despite the candidates' nervousness, the NMU faculty did not want the entire semester to consist of planning for the BMS field experience. Though they committed a little time each week to planning, the faculty still needed to teach other course objectives, some of which couldn't be integrated easily into the field experience.

Having the candidates observe at BMS a few times was vital to lessening many of their fears. After an initial observation, one candidate reflected, "I am so glad we were able to observe seventh graders. They weren't so bad. In fact they seem kind of fun. I can't wait to teach them." In a reflection after the field experience, one candidate noted, "It was key to have us observe ahead of time. I can't believe how different middle schoolers are from elementary kids. I would have been lost if I hadn't observed them first."

The Initial BMS Field Experience

By most accounts the field experience was a resounding success. The NMU faculty were pleased with the candidates' ability to make critical reflections and subsequently make adjustments to their planning, delivery, and assessment. One professor commented, "I often wonder if (the candidates) make the connection between what I teach in my methods course and what they should be doing with students. After watching them in action, it was flattering to see them applying what I taught them." Initially faculty was worried about asking the candidates to spend so much time at BMS during the field experience. Many candidates had jobs, and the BMS experience lasted four full days, much longer than if the candidates were back on campus in class. Most groups, however, came early and stayed late. One professor noted, "It was inspiring to the faculty to see many groups staying after school for more than an hour reflecting on their day and adjusting plans for the next day."

Overall, the BMS teachers were satisfied with the quality of lessons and the extent to which their students were on task. The candidates presented lessons in a variety of creative formats, which tended to be more student-centered than typical. One BMS teacher commented, "(The candidates) used a lot of cooperative learning, which I don't do enough of. The students loved it though." Another BMS teacher stated, "It was neat to see (the candidates) use so many different approaches. I learned a couple of ideas from them."

As expected, however, the students were more active than normal and attempted to test the teacher candidates at times. One professor noted, "As the candidates found out, teaching a whole class of students is much different than working with a group of five or six." One BMS teacher suggested, "My students had fun and seemed to learn a lot but seemed to struggle with the lack of structure at times." Not surprisingly, most of the candidates reflected on their struggles with classroom management. One candidate wrote, "I thought my plans were perfect, but I took so long to get them into groups and get them quiet, I couldn't get through much of my lesson." Another candidate reflected, "Discipline was the hardest part, but I guess we knew that would be the case." Thankfully, the classroom teachers remained in their classrooms for most of the time to help with classroom management. It wasn't the intent of the experience to provide the candidates with a "sink or swim" middle school teaching experience.

Though it is not possible to remove management matters from teaching, having extra people in the room, including the regular classroom teacher, seemed to lessen classroom management issues so the candidates could focus on lesson delivery and assessment.

As part of a related study on this field experience, Anderson (2010) collected attitudinal and self-efficacy scores from the candidates before and after the field experience. Though many of the elementary candidates were apprehensive about teaching at the middle level prior to the experience, by the end of the semester candidates expressed a significantly more positive attitude about middle-level students. Candidates' perceptions changed significantly suggesting middle school students are fun to teach, $t(144) = -9.91$, $p < .001$, no longer as intimidating, $t(144) = 9.85$, $p < .001$, and cooperative, $t(144) = -7.52$, $p < .001$. Whereas barely half of the candidates expressed an interest in teaching middle school students prior to the experience, 70.3 percent noted they would like to teach middle schools students after the experience.

The Partnership Solidified — Where We Are Today

This partnership, now in its eighth semester, has become an established and anticipated part of NMU's elementary teacher education program. Candidates come to Block II with stories and advice from previous cohorts. In fact, the experience has been dubbed, "BMS Week" by the candidates. Like most nicknames, "BMS Week" wasn't our desired choice, but that hasn't stopped the candidates from using the moniker. Regardless, the field experience has become part of the culture of both NMU and BMS. Whereas initially the candidates often complained about the experience, few do now. A professor noted, "The candidates used to refer to 'BMS Week' as something they 'had to do.' Now they talk about how it is something they 'get to do.'"

Since the field experience has become encultured, it has become easier for the candidates, faculty, and classroom teachers. Each cohort of candidates talks with the previous cohort and consequently comes to Block II with both positive and negative conceptions. One professor noted, "I used to take two full class periods to explain the BMS experience, now they pretty much know all about it before the course starts." In general, the candidates tend to worry about the BMS experience, often unnecessarily so. For example, one candidate commented, "All we heard from last year's groups was about how big of a deal 'BMS Week' was. I think we were over-worried. It was a lot of work, but we were totally ready for it." Though it was never the intent of the faculty and classroom teachers to create anxiety in the candidates, both groups noted the seriousness with which the candidates approached the experience. One classroom teacher remarked, "It kind of pains me to see them so serious and nervous about teaching these kids, but I don't think that's such a bad thing. [The candidates] aren't taking the role of teacher lightly."

Discussion

Grade Level Content Expectations as Glue

The greatest challenge for the faculty stems from trying to get from the BMS teachers the list of Grade Level Content Expectations the candidates will teach. This is particularly difficult during the fall semester since BMS begins a week or two later than NMU, and often, there are changes in the teaching assignments and configurations of the BMS teachers. The candidates, in anticipation of the experience, want to begin working on their units, but the BMS teachers haven't figured out what GLCEs the candidates should be teaching three months later. One professor commented, "It's awkward because I don't want to bug the BMS teachers when they are just starting out their school year, particularly since some of them are teaching different subjects and with different partners, and they don't have a good handle on their curriculum." Likewise, a BMS teacher noted, "It's a bit tricky at the start of the year to try to anticipate what we will be teaching in November when some of us don't know what we will be teaching the next day." This has been less of a problem during the winter semester since the faculty and BMS teachers can meet and plan during the fall BMS

field experience. During the fall semester, however, the candidates have been assigned the GLCEs as late as five weeks into the semester, yet still six weeks away from the field experience.

It is important to note that the emphasis on lesson objectives directly related to the GLCEs has evolved over the seven semesters. Though the partnership was formed predominantly to give the candidates opportunities to practice teaching whole class lessons to middle school students, the appeal of having the NMU faculty and candidates help the BMS teachers navigate the "new" state-mandated GLCEs at the onset was a key incentive for the BMS teachers to collaborate in this partnership. Early in the partnership, there was a sense of uncertainty surrounding the GLCEs and the extent to which the GLCEs would dominate curriculum and instruction. One BMS teacher noted, "To be honest, when [the NMU faculty and candidates] first started working with us, I had no idea how much the GLCEs were going to change things. Now I can't do anything if it isn't directly related to the GLCEs. Basically, [our administrators] tried to tell us that, but I guess I was in denial."

The ubiquity of the GLCEs is hard to deny. In a relatively short period of time, the GLCEs evolved from being "just another trend" to an expectation teachers and administrators alike mention in conversation. There have been two principals at BMS since our partnership began, both of whom were supportive, yet both made it clear that they expected meaningful, content-rich lessons linked to the GLCEs. The new BMS principal reminds us each semester, "We love having [NMU faculty and candidates] here. Just make sure the lessons match the curriculum in case I get a comment from a parent or board member."

Incidentally, this adherence to teaching the GLCEs has led to the sustainability of the field experience. Though BMS has purchased new textbooks in every subject since the state released the GLCEs, many GLCEs aren't covered in the textbooks. To help solve this problem, the BMS teachers typically plan to have the candidates teach those GLCEs. This creates a mutually beneficial situation. The BMS teachers benefit by having their students taught lessons that might otherwise be difficult for the BMS teachers to plan and teach themselves, given their limited textbook resources and frenetic schedules. In addition, at the end of the field experience, the BMS teachers receive from the candidates copies of extensive lessons plans with resources and assessments included. When handed a three-inch thick binder full of more than 30 lesson plans on World Religions, one BMS teacher remarked, "This is awesome! I would have paid $50 for a book of lessons this great, especially since our textbook doesn't have much on this topic."

The NMU faculty also emphasizes lessons related directly to the GLCEs since it helps to prepare candidates for the emerging field in which national standards appear to be inevitable. One professor remarked, "It doesn't matter if I like the idea of specific mandated state or national standards, or if I think they are best for kids. The bottom line is, we have an obligation to prepare these candidates to be tomorrow's teachers, and tomorrow's teachers need to be able to plan and deliver lessons on mandated objectives." What's more, the BMS experience requires candidates to find additional resources and lesson ideas not found in traditional textbooks.

Unanticipated Challenges

A few challenges have arisen over the past seven semesters, some unanticipated, though none insurmountable. One theme that tends to reoccur each semester involves complaints from parents. Though few in number, the complaints seem to generate substantial concern and reaction from the classroom teachers and school administrators. For example, one semester the BMS teachers asked the candidates to teach a GLCE related to a contemporary scientific debate. Together with the science methods professor, the candidates planned lessons on global climate change. During the week, two parents e-mailed their children's classroom teachers to complain that the candidates were presenting a liberal slant on the climate change issue. Though the candidates and faculty perceived

the lessons to be evidence-based and intellectually honest, the classroom teachers asked the candidates to be sure to include ample rationale and evidence commensurate with climate change skeptic perspective.

Additionally, we have had to adjust to the perception of some parents that the "BMS Week" is not academically rigorous, but rather a "blow-off week." While the faculty and candidates tend to take offense to such comments from parents, typically communicated to the faculty via the principal to the classroom teachers, we have asked the candidates to make some adjustments. For example, the candidates often want to begin the week with "energizer" activities or group initiative games. Though the academic and community-building benefits of such activities can be rationalized at length, we now ask the candidates to minimize or eliminate those types of activities. However, we have been unwilling to reduce the amount of cooperative learning activities the candidates use in their lessons. Some parent complaints referenced group work, often in classrooms that typically don't employ cooperative learning, in their assertions that the "BMS Week" is not academically robust. Many candidate reflections referenced students' unfamiliarity with cooperative learning. For example, one candidate noted, "All of my professors drilled into us the need to do cooperative learning, so I made sure I did a lot of it in my lessons, but the students weren't used to it."

As our partnership has evolved, we anticipate these issues and plan accordingly. Though the candidates still use cooperative learning practices, they are sure to explain expectations and begin with simple group tasks requiring interdependence before progressing to more complex cooperative group tasks. Similarly, the faculty and candidates discuss potentially controversial issues and how to preemptively reduce opportunities for parental complaints. Perhaps, most noteworthy was absence of parental complaints last semester when our social studies GLCE involved world religions. Incidentally, the GLCEs, which were the catalyst of our partnership, have provided us with a shield behind which to stand up to criticism. In essence, if the candidates are teaching and assessing GLCEs, the partnership is defensible. As the BMS principal noted in a conversation about planning for next semester, "I love having you all in my building. Just make sure you are teaching the curriculum, in case anyone has an issue."

Symbols and Sustainability

Our partnership has become encultured for a number of reasons — Derek Anderson's and Joe Lubig's prior relationship with the BMS teachers, the BMS teachers' need for planning time, and quality GLCE-based lessons taught by the teacher candidates, to name a few. Throughout our analysis of partnership, one seemingly incidental activity had become a powerful, unifying tradition: lunch. Most teachers will attest that their lunch period is too short, typically less than 30 minutes, and often consists of bland cafeteria food, or competition at the microwave to heat either leftovers or a lean-cuisine-type processed meal. Since the first "BMS Week," and with the utmost intention of enticement, the NMU faculty has used departmental discretionary funds to provide the BMS teachers with a catered luncheon the final day of the practicum each semester. The value of this experience cannot be overstated. The teachers look forward to extended time to eat delicious food, ordered from various favorite local restaurants. The lunch provides an informal opportunity for the teachers and faculty to reflect on the week and to plan for future semesters. Recently, the NMU School of Education underwent a budget cutting process and identified perceived non-necessities such as color copying and office supplies. It is telling that when the BMS luncheon was mentioned, all NMU faculty involved unwaveringly resisted the cut.

Authors' Reflections

Athena Stanley (student teacher):

At first I was nervous about planning my lessons around the provided GLCEs, especially the social studies GLCE for world religions. Prior to planning the social studies

lessons we designed for Bothwell week, I was entirely unknowledgeable about the five major world religions; however, I was able to gain enough understanding to feel comfortable about teaching the seventh-grade students on a basic level. I was worried about getting the students to discuss world religions in class, a relatively touchy subject when considered in relation to public school instruction. I also worried the students would be too self-conscious to contribute to discussion, preoccupied with how their peers might interpret their speech. However, I was delightfully surprised at the level of participation in classroom discussion. The students were willing to share their thoughts to a much greater degree than anticipated. While the student responses were not necessarily reflective of higher order thinking, the students were at least willing to participate.

I learned more from my teaching experience at BMS than I ever could have imagined. I never once felt like the students were disrespectful or challenged my authority. They were attentive, compliant, and well-behaved throughout a solid majority of instruction. I attribute the success I had regarding classroom management to the fact that I strove to present myself as a "real teacher," requiring respect from all students. This was illustrated in both my posture and tone. I wore a professional face while working at Bothwell and made no mistake about demanding the students treat me as such.

During the break between the BMS experience and my student teaching, which I've just begun, I reflected on the BMS experience quite a bit. It definitely helped me in my student teaching. I was much more confident and effective starting student teaching because of it.

Derek Anderson (social studies professor):

I can't express enough how poignant it is to have my teacher candidates apply in a classroom what I tried to teach them all semester. From my perspective, the BMS experience is a win-win. The candidates get to teach lessons to a full class prior to student teaching. What's more, they get to teach middle school students, which most candidates are intimidated by initially, but not at the end of the week. In addition, the candidates gain experience designing and assessing lessons around the state-mandated objectives (GLCEs).

The BMS teachers receive some well-researched lesson plans with supporting materials. Additionally, the teachers gain some much-needed time to plan with each other while the candidates are teaching their students. The partnership has added to my credibility, as a former middle school teacher, with both the candidates and the teachers. The BMS experience allows me to show my candidates that my ideas and suggestions work, and the experience allows me to show the BMS teachers that I am teaching practical, effective techniques to future teachers. The results of this partnership far outweigh the costs.

Joe Lubig (field experiences coordinator):

The NMU-BMS partnership has reinforced my belief that we are smarter in a group. The interdependency required to pull this task off year after year is foremost in my mind as the director of field experiences. That obligation is only outweighed by my desire to assure that the school I spent 13 years of my teaching career in, and the one in which I place dozens of teacher candidates and student teachers each year, maintains the high-quality teaching and learning I participated in while a member of that team.

After each of the BMS teaching weeks is completed, I find myself coming across several articles that insist we must have performance-based assessments for candidates that are situated in school settings built around authentic teaching and learning tasks. This partnership models those assertions. The relationship established among the candidates, classroom teachers, university faculty, the administration, and the community through this type of experience exemplifies what it means to collaborate through authentic partnerships. We all benefit from this experience, and the weight of the high expectations for this type of teaching in a public forum has made us stronger. Each one of us is rooted in the other's world and has gained an actionable understanding of what we can accomplish as a teaching and learning community.

Kim Parlato (seventh-grade teacher):
When I first discovered I would be *relinquishing* my classroom to elementary education methods students from NMU's program, I suspected the only group to benefit would be the teacher candidates themselves. I was skeptical, yet "NMU Week," as we called it at Bothwell, was a long-standing tradition in the seventh-grade classrooms. Early in the week, I observed the new dynamics in my classroom with some discomfort; however, I quickly realized that my students were incredibly engaged and showing aspects of their personalities — endearing, unique, affable aspects — that they had not been comfortable sharing with me. I immediately began to pay more attention.

I watched in awe as atypical learners thrived. I discovered strengths and interests I didn't realize my students had, which in turn helped me reflect on my own practice and discover a pattern of teaching to my own learning style and strengths. The importance of risk-taking teaching and knowing my students became even more apparent, as did the value of community. Because the methods students were being coached by experts in the field and were working in teams, and because they had extended time to develop interdisciplinary lessons that appealed to diverse learners, even as novice teachers their teaching elicited deep learning. Some of that deep learning was my own; in order to reach my students more completely, I needed to go outside my comfort zone and teach in new ways.

Additionally, I cherished the opportunity to observe my students learning in other disciplines. Typically, I teach English and science. The methods students teach science, social studies, and math content, and integrate English into the other disciplines. Some students who struggled in my English classroom were mathematically gifted; they were comfortable and confident in school, just not in my classroom.

Stephen Smith (mathematics education professor):
I admit to having been somewhat resistant to the "BMS Week" at the start. I was concerned about losing both a class session (equivalent to a week of class) and continuity. Further, the mathematics education faculty had had a relationship with a local K–3, and later a 4–5, school. While this was in hiatus because of scheduling issues, I was hopeful for its renewal.

After many iterations, I am long since sold on its value for several reasons. In the elementary mathematics methods class I use content teaching to motivate reasoning about pedagogical approaches. Many of the students are nervous about their content knowledge, especially at the middle school level. The GLCEs chosen by the BMS faculty provide a "real world" basis for exploring content (something previous students have objected to in a "methods" class). Many students now comment favorably in their reflections or course evaluations and on their enhanced content understanding. They seem to better appreciate the inextricability of content and pedagogy.

As Athena Stanley and Derek Anderson have noted (above), the students express far less trepidation about middle school teaching following the BMS experience. True, many still indicate a preference for lower elementary grades, but most say they profited from the experience by teaching whole classes and engaging with older students. They express more openness to alternative ideas and situations. This alone makes it a worthwhile experience.

Conclusion

Using interorganizational theory as a lens through which to analyze our school-university partnership, we were able to identify how our partnership was initiated, grown, and ultimately made sustainable. Best categorized as a one-to-one collaboration model (Ravid & Handler, 2001), our partnership contains many elements identified in the literature (e.g., Borthwick, Stirling, Nauman, & Cook, 2000; Clark, 1998; Su, 1990; Thorkildsen & Stein, 1996) as essential to effective educational partnerships, including clear goals and outcomes, defined roles and responsibilities, adequate resources, effective communication, group decision-making and planning, regular feedback, and commitment to improvement.

However, after thorough analysis of the data collected from our single-site case study and extensive reflection on our partnership, a few factors stand out as key to building and sustaining successful partnerships.

First, participants should leverage existing relationships. Trust is nearly always a barrier to forming partnerships, as building trust takes time and requires repeated interaction (Axelrod, 1984; Thompson, Perry, & Miller, 2006). When participants have interacted previously, the trust-building process is expedited. Second, partners need to make clear and explicit what they hope to gain from the partnership. Trubowitz and Longo (1997) warned that participants in school-university partnerships often find it easy to state broad goals but struggle to clarify intent. We feel that having been explicit, and seemingly selfish, about our goals contributed to the success of the partnership. When stakeholders make it clear what they intend to gain from partnership, misunderstandings and disappointments are reduced. Finally, participants should take seriously the symbolic and ritualistic behaviors of the partnership that serve to build the cultural network. Deal and Peterson (1999) suggested that culture plays the dominant role in school performance and that shared experiences give meaning to what participants believe and how they act. Those looking to build sustainable one-to-one collaborations should search for symbols, artifacts, rituals, and traditions that strengthen the cultural bond.

As we enter our eighth semester of the partnership, we find ourselves proud of the success of our partnership yet also cautious of oft-noted complexities and tensions that plague many partnerships we've read about in the literature. Furthermore, we are committed to not losing sight of our ultimate goal: developing better teachers. Through our personal and professional relationships, clear expression of our goals, and shared ritualistic experiences, we intend to strengthen and maintain our partnership for years to come.

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