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There are many valuable insights in Partnerships for New Teacher Learning: A Guide for Universities and School Districts. This text is informative and well written and makes a valuable contribution to the literature on how to form and sustain effective school partnerships to support teacher development. The authors’ involvement in partnerships has led them to question the lack of knowledge about how partnerships are formed (Woods, 2001), and they seek to fill the gap by directly addressing many questions concerning teaching standards, the motivation that leads to building a partnership, and the processes that would sustain partnerships. Having taken a cursory look at existing literature on school partnerships, it is my view that this text is instructive and can serve as a handbook for higher education institutions, school districts, and other organizations seeking to form partnerships.

The authors provide a framework for developing successful partnerships by sharing principles and practices from their work with school districts and universities. They also provide many examples and resources from their work in the New Teacher Center, a national organization dedicated to the improvement of student learning by sharpening the effectiveness of teachers and school leaders.

Practices indicative of what really happens in partnerships and the degree of success experienced based on specific principles are detailed in this text, along with guidelines for planning and implementing different configurations of partnerships. The content of each chapter considers a particular piece of the puzzle grounded in the literature and informs the reader of major principles and premises on which to hinge effective partnerships. The text is organized in a sequential manner and begins by defining partnerships, followed by the examination of personnel, purpose, leadership roles, and how to create and sustain good partnerships. The effort to ground this work in the community is evidenced in Chapter 7. Illustrations of different leadership styles provide some insight into effective and ineffective models. The authors attempt to provide a framework for evaluation to choose the right leader. Useful evaluative tools such as the continuum of teacher development, a midyear review, and a self-assessment summary are clearly described and displayed in charts that can be copied by other partnerships.

The authors propose the characteristics of the “community of practice” (Wenger & Snyder, 2000) as a necessary condition for establishing partnerships for new teacher support. This community of practice includes a joint enterprise, mutual relationships, and a well-honed repertoire of ways of reasoning with tools and artifacts. They cite the New Teacher Center’s collaboration with the school districts as having a common set of standards and a common set of tools that guided discussions of teacher development and institutional accountability. These two conditions correlated to the successful result of 90% new teacher retention for their partnership (Strong & St. John, 2001). The community of practice is worthy of replication to provide support for new teachers and boost teacher retention.

An examination of who should form a partnership leads to some important guiding principles regarding thinking about relationships, engaging people, starting small, and avoiding lopsided engagement. The authors give the important advice that institutions must define a desire and then find another institution that shares that desire to form a partnership. The strengths and challenges of different types of partnerships are explicated with examples of constraints and opportunities of both programmatic and strategic partnerships. The authors make the case that the vision, mission, and values must align with an institution’s own philosophy, and they feel that it is also important for a common purpose across institutions. They share the example of how the New Teacher Center developed trusting relationships, a common framework and language, and collaborative inquiry, and shared data with the K-17 partnerships. The alignment of the continuum of teacher development, with its levels of beginning, emerging, applying, integrating, and innovating, serves as a guide for reflection, assessment, and conversation.