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MODELS OF STRONG PARTNERS

The Summer 2010 issues of Learning Forward's newsletters highlighted the work of schools and districts that collaborated meaningfully with an external organization to further existing goals. Funded by MetLife Foundation, the following issues offer examples of how educators established productive relationships with very different types of partners.

The Learning System, Summer 2010

This issue highlights work in Austin, Texas, schools that included collaboration with the New Teacher Center and its National Teacher Induction Network.

www.learningforward.org/news/issueDetails.cfm?issueID=303

The Learning Principal, Summer 2010

Schools around the country turn to New Leaders for New Schools and its EPIC Knowledge System to investigate and share best practices in school improvement.

www.learningforward.org/news/issueDetails.cfm?issueID=305

Tools for Schools, Summer 2010

The Asia Society's Partnership for Global Learning works with educators to expand and explore global competence in grades K-12.

www.learningforward.org/news/issueDetails.cfm?issueID=304

Teachers Teaching Teachers, May 2010

Students and teachers intentionally investigate what it takes to get really good at something with the support of What Kids Can Do and its Practice Project.

www.learningforward.org/news/issueDetails.cfm?issueID=301

CONNECTIONS LEAD TO INNOVATION

“Innovation is fostered by information gathered from new connections; from insights gained by journeys into other disciplines or places; from active, collegial networks and fluid, open boundaries. Innovation arises from ongoing circles of exchange, where information is not just accumulated or stored, but created. Knowledge is generated anew from connections that weren't there before.”

ideas

Source: Wheatley, M.J. (2006). *Leadership and the new science: Discovering order in a chaotic world* (3rd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler.



Almost any partnership benefits from a written agreement outlining the aims of the partnership and responsibilities of those involved. Whether the agreement is as formal as a contract, which will be required in many vendor relationships, a memorandum of understanding, or a simple letter, all partners will develop greater clarity and understanding. At its most fundamental, a written agreement will include:

- Overview of the purpose of the partnership;
- Names of the partners or organizations entering into the agreement;
- Key responsibilities of each partner;
- Expected outcomes of the partnership; and
- General timeline of tasks and outcomes.

Depending on the type of partnership, such agreements may also include details about ownership of anything produced as a result of the partnership, financial responsibilities, reporting or evaluation requirements, and other required legal arrangements.

Putting agreements in writing does not indicate a lack of trust. As with many of the guidelines suggested in the articles that follow, potential partners who are clear about their intentions are most likely to benefit from their experiences.

What I know about effective partnerships

The prospect of working with external partners can conjure a variety of images, some positive, some negative (Stephanie Hirsh mentions the idea of vultures in her column on p. 68).

Within and beyond your professional life, you have most likely been a partner or had a partner in many different contexts. As you read and share the articles in this issue of *JSD*, think first about what you know about partnerships. Answer these questions to remember past experiences, examine assumptions, and consider new possibilities. Reframe the questions from a team's perspective if that is appropriate.

• How do I define partner? What are the three or four defining characteristics I consider essential?

• What partnerships have helped me the most professionally? Why?

• What partnerships gave me unexpected frustrations? What could have happened differently to achieve greater success?

• What challenges am I facing now where a partner could be a real benefit? What would it take for me to pursue such a partnership?

• What are my greatest strengths as a partner?

• How do I need to grow to become a better partner?



Grantmakers for Education, a membership association for foundations that fund education initiatives, recently surveyed its members to understand their funding priorities for 2010 and to ask what they anticipated for 2011. More than 160 members responded; selected priorities are highlighted in the table below.

In terms of strategies that would help foundations achieve a greater impact, Grantmakers for Education members identified engaging in public policy and collaborating wisely with other funders as important. They see a wider range of grant-making roles as funders seek to improve education.

Finally, respondents indicated that professional development, teacher effectiveness and performance, and school leadership were among learning priorities for the funding field.

ANTICIPATED CHANGES

Priority	% that fund now	Up	Equal	Down
Teacher professional development	72%	27%	51%	6%
Effective school and/or district leadership	59%	17%	58%	7%
School turnaround/low-performing schools	47%	24%	53%	3%
Teacher preparation/certification	39%	13%	65%	3%
Data systems/performance management	38%	13%	63%	3%
Teacher performance and compensation systems	24%	14%	62%	2%

Source: Grantmakers for Education. (2010). *Benchmarking 2010: Trends in education philanthropy*. Available at www.edfunders.org/about/index.asp.