

Sustaining Successful Collaborative Partnerships in a Shifting Educational Environment

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Community Partners' Principles of Good Practice

- Ensure that academic credit earned by students is for quality learning.
- Expand students' sense of social responsibility, as well as community and civic engagement.
- Provide structured opportunities for students to reflect critically on their service experience.
- Articulate clear service and learning goals for everyone involved.
- Address needs identified cooperatively by the community and the university.
- Facilitate trust in partnerships through genuine, active and sustained organizational commitments.
- Include training, supervision, monitoring, support, recognition, and evaluation to meet service and learning goals of faculty, students and community partners.
- Ensure that the time commitment for service and learning is flexible, appropriate, and in the best interest of faculty, students, and community.
- Capitalize on opportunities to include participation by and with diverse populations.

• *[Draft adapted from Honnet and Poulsen, (1989), Johnson Foundation and Howard (1993) Praxis I.]*

The project

- THTR 1021—Introduction to Theatre, Honors
- Students learn about theatre and then apply concepts to make theatre
- The “theatre event”—original performance
- Portfolio
- Journaling on topics related to theatre and community partner

Polk Elementary School (2001-2004)

- Initial partner
- Students worked as classroom helpers
- Learned students' favorite cultural references
- Crafted “theatre event” that combined that information with learning goals
- Performed event for students

McKinley Middle Magnet School (2005)

- Post-Katrina stopgap
- LSU students served as directors, playwrights, and designers
- MMM students were performers
- Events centered around dramatic themes (Greek tragedy, musicals, etc.)
- Issues of distance and time for rehearsals, etc.

University Terrace Elementary School (2006-present)

- Introduced through Kids Hope USA
- LSU students go into UT classrooms and teach units on theatre
- Created theatre event from text(s) UT students had studied over the semester
- Performed event for students, integrating them into performance when possible

Issues preventing long-term partnerships

- Standardized curriculum implementation
- LEAP testing
- Teacher turnover from year to year
- Preconceived notion that theatre is superfluous to elementary education
- Teacher's inability to link the event to larger learning goals in his/her classroom

Potential strategies for sustaining partnerships

- Use umbrella agencies with ties to school (VIPS, Kids Hope)
- Develop curriculum aides for teachers to use in helping to connect performances and presentations to learning goals
- Connect with administration members--principal, librarian, etc.—who might be less likely to change schools mid-year

Your Turn!!!

- Discuss current/past S-L partnerships
 - Your role—partner, institution, participant
 - Were they successful?
 - Why/why not?
 - Strategies tried/modifications made

Questions to ponder

- What are some of the factors that affect the success of partnerships?
- How can those factors be overcome or mitigated?
- In these economic times, how can community partners and universities be made to see the value of long-term partnerships?