

Partnership Effectiveness Continuum

A research-based tool for use in developing, assessing, and improving partnerships

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Introduction

The Partnership Effectiveness Continuum (PEC) is a tool designed to help school districts and training program providers develop a clearer understanding of the indicators of effective partnerships, as described in research literature. It is intended to guide team reflections on partnerships using a set of concrete criteria to prompt discussions about ways to strengthen existing partnerships and form new ones. The PEC is part of a suite of Quality Measures™ tools and protocols, developed by EDC and funded by The Wallace Foundation to guide and support the collaborative self-assessment of program quality by school districts and their training provider partners.

As part of its broader Principal Pipeline initiative, The Wallace Foundation established a professional learning community of Pipeline school districts and principal training program providers to study the impact of their partnerships on improving principal preparation and training. A District Provider Partnership (DPPPLC) Professional Learning Community was launched in 2011 and charged with the task of identifying indicators of successful partner relationships between school districts and providers. The result of that initial PLC work produced a set of preliminary indicators along with a recommendation that a thorough review of the literature be completed to validate the initial set of indicators and identify additional indicators associated with partnership effectiveness. The DPPPLC further recommended that a tool be developed that could assist partners in assessing their existing partnerships and also provide guidance on things to consider when forming new partner relationships.

The following members of the DPPPLC are acknowledged for their valuable contributions to the initial vision for this tool and also for their ongoing feedback and guidance throughout the tool development process, as members of this project's advisory board.

We also acknowledge the contributions made by Nicole Breslow, an EDC research associate for this project. Her methodical review of the partnership literature, development of the annotated bibliography, and her support for the market research conducted by **Edge Research** were instrumental in bringing this project to completion.

**Partnership Effectiveness Continuum
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The Importance of Partnerships

Partnerships to address leader preparation are becoming increasingly common in response to criticism surrounding leadership preparation programs. Research on exemplary school leader preparation programs suggests that programs are more effective when school districts and training providers work together to improve principal performance. The literature further contends that school districts are uniquely positioned to influence the content and design of principal preparation programs and encourages districts to actively seek partner relationships with local training providers to redesign preparation programs to better respond to the leadership needs of urban school districts (Orr, King, & La Pointe, 2010).

While the impact of partnerships is not yet fully understood, there is a growing body of evidence that suggests that school districts that partner with local principal training providers are more likely to leverage programmatic changes that result in principals who are better equipped to lead schools to improve student performance. Both school districts and program providers recognize that if properly nurtured partnerships can provide fertile soil for improving the impact of preparation and training on school leaders performance.

Why this Tool is Important

Existing tools that we found in our search are designed mainly for evaluation purposes and used by external evaluators to make summative assessments of partnership strengths and weaknesses. These tools provide minimal guidance to partnerships interested in understanding the indicators and criteria of effective partnerships for the purpose of assessing their own partnerships on multiple dimensions as part of a continuous improvement process. The PEC aims to fill a gap in available resources designed to support school districts and principal preparation program providers working to build strong partnerships. It is designed to be a formative self-assessment tool and provides clear descriptions of indicators and criteria of an effective partnership that can be used to support the development of highly effective partnerships over time (see Figure 1).

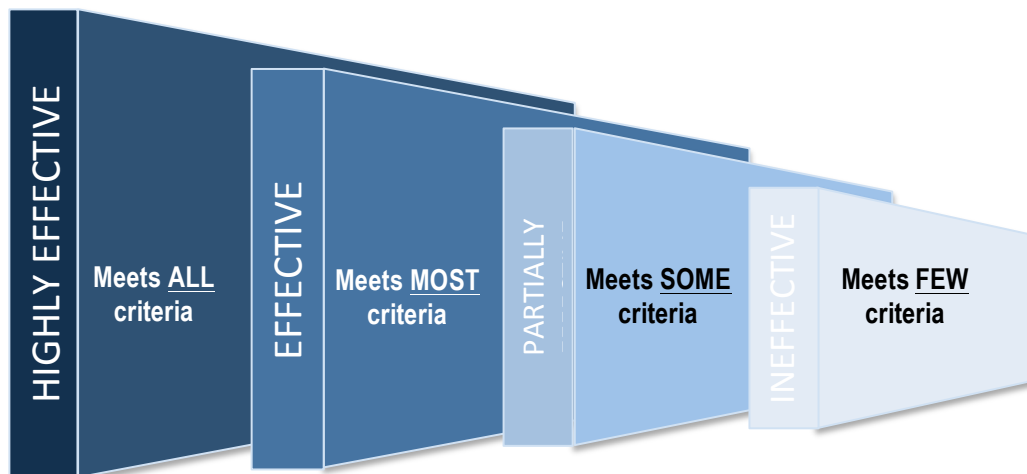


Figure 1: Continuum of Effectiveness

How the PEC Tool is Organized

The Partnership Effectiveness Continuum (PEC) is organized around six dimensions of effective partnerships identified in the literature: 1) partnership vision; 2) institutional leadership; 3) joint ownership and accountability for results; 4) communication and collaboration; 5) system alignment, integration, and sustainability; and 6) response to local context. Essential indicators and criteria for each dimension are described in the rubrics and give partnerships the opportunity to determine the number of indicators and criteria their partnerships meet and to locate their partnership on the developmental continuum provided for each dimension.

How to Use the PEC Tool

The PEC can be used to guide the self-assessment of an existing partnership, or to support the development of a new partnership. The evidence-based conversations that are prompted as a result of the PEC process can lead to a shared vision for the partnership that is based on the indicators and criteria of effective partnerships from the literature. The PEC can also be used to assist partners in building trust and leveraging scarce resources to focus on joint improvement strategies. This next section offers specific suggestions for conducting the process. Partners are encouraged to modify the process to fit their specific needs.

How often should we assess our partnership?

The tool can be used effectively at different times throughout a partner relationship. For example, in the beginning, it can be used as a start-up exercise to provide useful baseline information on each of the partnership features. Once a baseline is established, we recommend that a full assessment be conducted on an annual basis to assist partners in assessing progress and identifying areas of focus for continuous improvement. In addition to completing a full self-assessment annually, it may benefit your partnership to target specific areas of the tool identified in the baseline data as the focus of attention on a more frequent basis (e.g. monthly or quarterly).

Who should participate in the process?

It is critically important that leaders with decision-making authority from each partner organizations participate in the initial self-assessment process to establish a baseline and to emphasize the value of creating a shared vision for sustaining effective partnerships. It is also recommended that individuals responsible for implementing the various elements of the partnership also be invited to participate in the process.

How much time is recommended for completing the process?

In order to build a shared understanding of PEC terms, organization, and the rating process, we suggest that time be scheduled for a minimum of two 2-hour meetings, an orientation meeting and the actual self-assessment meeting. It is of course possible to combine both meetings into a half-day session, or optimally a full day session, if time permits.

Quality Measures™ Partnership Effectiveness Continuum

PARTNERSHIP VISION		LEVELS OF EFFECTIVENESS			
INDICATORS:	CRITERIA:	Highly Effective	Effective	Partially Effective	Ineffective
MISSION AND BELIEFS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An articulated mission and shared beliefs exist and serve as guides for the work of the partnership 				
SHARED GOALS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are clear, measurable, and feasible Address the common needs of the partnership Align with partner organization goals Mutually beneficial to partner organizations 				
JOINT REFORM AGENDA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is jointly created and supported by all partner organizations Addresses identified partnership needs and priorities with a strategic plan for accomplishing short and long term partnership goals Is fully resourced (time, people, finances) 				
STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Articulates concrete action steps for accomplishing partnership goals Includes timeline, roles and responsibilities, and expected outcomes 				
MEASURES FOR ASSESSING PROGRESS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use evidence-based protocols that promote continuous improvement Tightly align to partnership goals and strategic action plan Engage partnership members in assessing their own progress on a regular basis 				

Quality Measures™ Partnership Effectiveness Continuum

INSTITUTIONAL LEADERSHIP		LEVELS OF EFFECTIVENESS			
INDICATORS:	CRITERIA:	Highly Effective	Effective	Partially Effective	Ineffective
SHARED LEADERSHIP	Institutional leaders: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share accountability for achieving partnership goals • Encourage stakeholder engagement • Share partnership decision-making 				
LEADER ENGAGEMENT	Institutional leaders: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocate on behalf of the partnership • Attend and actively participate in partner meetings • Integrate partnership norms and values into the fabric of their respective organizations 				
RESOURCE COMMITMENT	Institutional leaders: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jointly identify resources needed to accomplish partnership goals • Contribute time, financial, and human resources necessary to accomplish partnership goals 				
PARTICIPANT INCENTIVES	Institutional leaders: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish an institutional expectation for partnership involvement Publicly acknowledge and reward collaborative action • Promote active participation in partnership activities • Provide incentives for partnership participation 				

Quality Measures™ Partnership Effectiveness Continuum

COMMUNICATION AND COLLABORATION					
INDICATORS :	CRITERIA:	LEVELS OF EFFECTIVENESS			
		Highly Effective	Effective	Partially Effective	Ineffective
COMMUNICATION TOOLS AND PROTOCOLS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Processes for documenting and disseminating partnership meeting minutes and following up on partner action steps are in place An agreed upon schedule of meeting dates, times, and locations is established at the beginning of each year to support regular attendance 				
INFORMATION DISSEMINATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mechanisms for regularly disseminating partnership news and progress updates in a timely manner are in place 				
PARTNERSHIP ADVOCACY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partners share responsibility for actively advocating on behalf of the partnership to gain visibility, support, and resources to support partnership goals 				
COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIPS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategies to promote collaboration are intentionally embedded in partnership activities Collaboration among partner organizations is characterized by deep trust, mutual respect, and regular and effective interaction. Collaborative relationships extend beyond the boundaries of partnership meetings and are sustained over time 				
DECISION MAKING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The process for partnership decision-making is clearly articulated and involves all partners 				

Quality Measures™ Partnership Effectiveness Continuum

JOINT OWNERSHIP AND ACCOUNTABILITY FOR RESULTS					
INDICATORS:	CRITERIA:	LEVELS OF EFFECTIVENESS			
		Highly Effective	Effective	Partially Effective	Ineffective
ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES	• Partnership roles, responsibilities, and expectations are clearly defined				
	• Partnership roles, responsibilities, and expectations are understood				
	• Partnership roles, responsibilities, and expectations are operational				
BOUNDARY-SPANNING ROLES AND STRUCTURES	• Partnership roles, responsibilities, and expectations cross organizational boundaries				
PERFORMANCE-BASED ASSESSMENT	• Partnership goals are assessed using performance-based measures that demonstrate program improvement				
BENCHMARKS AND OUTCOMES	• Partners agree on performance measures that will be used to assess progress				
	• Partners are held accountable for accomplishing partnership goals				
USING DATA	• Data is strategically used to guide partner decision making				
	• Data is used to assess partnership effectiveness				
	• Data is collected and analyzed using both formal and informal processes to guide continuous improvement				
SHARING PROGRESS	• Partners share data and information with stakeholders and				
	• Regularly communicate partnership progress toward collective goals				



Highly Effective = Meets **all** indicator criteria
 Effective = Meets **most** indicator criteria
 Partially Effective = Meets **some** indicator criteria
 Ineffective = Meets **few** indicator criteria

Quality Measures™ Partnership Effectiveness Continuum

SYSTEM ALIGNMENT, INTEGRATION, AND SUSTAINABILITY

INDICATORS:	CRITERIA:	LEVELS OF EFFECTIVENESS			
		Highly Effective	Effective	Partially Effective	Ineffective
ALIGNMENT	• Partnership roles and responsibilities are aligned and cross organization boundaries to accomplish collective goals				
	• Organization systems for partnership communication, resource allocation, and progress monitoring are aligned				
INTEGRATION	• Partner organizations select skilled and committed staff with complementary skill sets and decision making authority to serve as partnership members				
	• Partnership activities are integrating in to the work of the organization and not considered to be “extra-curricular”				
SUSTAINABILITY	• Memorandums of understanding exist between partner organizations that ensure the sustainability of the partnership				
	• Processes for filling partnership vacancies are agreed upon and in place				
	• Strategies for building organizational capacity through leadership development, succession planning, and an intentional induction protocol are in place				
	• Funding strategies are ongoing to ensure the partnership continues to be a viable option for partner organization				

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RESPONSE TO LOCAL CONTEXT							
INDICATORS:		CRITERIA:		LEVELS OF EFFECTIVENESS			
				Highly Effective	Effective	Partially Effective	Ineffective
COMMUNITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partnerships are inclusive 						
PARTNER RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partners continually explore new opportunities to expand the partnership to ensure its effectiveness and sustainability 						
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partnership has a well developed process for recruiting and inducting new partners 						
POLICY ENVIRONMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partnership understands its role in influencing the policy environment 						
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partnership strategic plan includes political action steps that are aimed at broadening the impact of its work 						

An Annotated Bibliography

Introduction

Researchers conducted a review of the literature to identify key papers that describe the characteristics of effective district-level partnerships. Despite the large literature about partnerships, there is very limited empirical research about their impact and what makes a partnership effective. This bibliography intends to provide guidance for district and preparation providers who are designing and implementing partnerships for the purpose of preparing and supporting school leaders. However, we do not limit our review to articles focusing exclusively on partnerships for leadership development given the relevance of partnership research from other domains, particularly teacher preparation and support.

While most of the research on partnerships is single case studies, we sought to identify literature that provides a broader evidence base drawn from multiple sources. We selected articles that described cross case analysis, literature reviews, and other synthesis pieces. Researchers searched the ERIC and Education Research Complete databases as well as Google Scholar. The search was limited to full-text articles published 2002 –2012, using the following search terms: interagency partnerships, effective partnerships, partnership AND preparation AND school district, partnership AND (district or LEA) AND (university or IHE or college), partnership AND (evaluation or efficacy). References included in the literature selected were also reviewed to identify additional relevant literature.

Key Literature

American Association of State Colleges and Universities & National Association of State Universities and State Land-Grant Colleges (2004). Crossing boundaries: The urban education imperative. Washington, DC: American Association of State Colleges and Universities & National Association of State Universities and State Land-Grant Colleges.

This report was developed by the Joint Task Force on Urban/Metropolitan Schools through a partnership between the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) and the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges (NASULGC). The task force included 10 leaders from higher education and public K-12 education and was co-chaired by Nancy Zimpher and Marlene Springer. Through a survey of 150 urban institutional members, the task force sought to identify innovative examples of boundary crossing roles that link universities and school districts in a process of simultaneous renewal. The report challenges college and university presidents and chancellors to lead new systemic partnerships between higher education and school districts that will support “boundary spanners” and describes six dimensions that characterize these partnerships: levels of leadership, attention to context, shared responsibility, ambitious goals, shared accountability, and systemic redesign.

Clifford, M., & Millar, S. B. (with Smith, Z., Hora, M., & DeLima, L.). (2008). K-20 partnerships: Literature review and recommendations for research (WCER Working Paper No. 2008-3). Madison: University of Wisconsin–Madison, Wisconsin Center for Education Research.

The authors conducted a systematic literature review to determine how K-20 partnerships are defined in the literature and what is known about their form, function, and achievements. 36 studies were selected and analyzed that met criteria for inclusion in the review, including 25 single-case studies, 3 multi-case studies, and 8 survey studies. Through the analysis of these studies, 62 factors associated with K-20 partnership success were identified and organized into 4 categories: input factors, process factors, process outputs, and outcomes. The most frequently cited features included leader will and endorsement, shared purposes and goals, open communication, established governance structure, adequate resources, and trust.

Darling-Hammond, L., LaPointe, M., Meyerson, D., Orr, M. T. & Cohen, C. (2007). Preparing school leaders for a changing world: Lessons from exemplary leadership development programs. Stanford, CA; Stanford University, University, Stanford Educational Leadership Institute.

This study examines eight exemplary pre- and in-service leadership programs to identify the qualities and outcomes of effective programs and determine how state, district, and institutional policies influence these programs. Chapter 4, which describes the features of the effective programs, addresses the issue of partnerships, focusing particularly on how program design is being influenced by the needs and context of the partner district. The report also discusses financial models partnerships have used to fund their programs.

Domina, T., & Ruzek, E. (2012). Paving the Way: K-16 Partnerships for Higher Education Diversity and High School Reform. Educational Policy. 26(2) 243–267.¹

The authors conducted a quasi-experimental evaluation of partnerships between universities and school districts in California to evaluate the effects of K-16 school reforms on student high school success and college access. Researchers first catalogued all district-level K-16 partnerships in California and paired it with annual panel data from each public high school district in the state between 1990 and 2005. Fixed-effects time series models were estimated to compare changes in student high school and college access outcomes in districts with K-16 partnerships and those without. Findings indicate that comprehensive K-16 partnerships substantially increase student graduation and university enrollment rates in participating school districts. Positive effects however, were not immediate and it may require many years of partnership work to produce these outcomes.

¹ While this article does not focus on the features of effective partnerships, it is included in this bibliography because it is the strongest evidence we found on partnerships and its outcomes.

Howey, K. & Zimpher, N. (2007). "Creating P-16 Urban Systemic Partnerships to Address Core Structural Problems in the Educational Pipeline." In Wehling, B. (Ed.) (2007). *Building a 21st Century U.S. Education System*. Washington, DC: National Commission on Teaching and America's Future.

To improve teaching, the authors argue, universities and school districts need to support a consistent vision of teaching and collaborate on efforts to align preparation and teacher working conditions with this vision. Howey and Zimpher assert that the lack of integration and interdependence between universities and school districts is a "deep structural flaw" and that boundary spanning roles must be established and supported to develop the bold new partnerships that are needed. Six "essential conditions" for successful partnerships are identified: (1) Success for all students must be at the core of the mission; (2) partners must share responsibility and accountability; (3) accountability must be public and progress shared regularly; (4) partners must make a long-term commitment; (5) an organization leadership structure must be in place to sustain partnership beyond leadership changes; and (6) partnership must have a tiered or layered structure to support regular collaboration across institutions and boundary-spanning roles.

Lauer, P. A., Dean, C. B., Martin-Glenn, M. L., & Asensio, M. L. (2005). *Teacher quality toolkit (2nd ed.)*. Aurora, CO: McREL.

This Teacher Quality Toolkit is designed to provide IHEs, districts, and schools with tools and resources for improving preservice and inservice teacher education. The fourth chapter provides resources for designing exemplary school-university partnerships. Six exemplary school-university partnerships are described as potential models for designing partnerships. The authors also identify and describe 13 key factors that influence the success of school-university partnerships, based on the lessons learned from the six model partnerships and a broader review of the literature: organization; vision and values; cultural differences; relationship; leadership; structure; communication; tenure; continuum of learning; standards; evaluation; resources; and policymakers. The toolkit also provides a Partnership Audit tool the authors developed for assessing the extent to which a partnership has addressed these 13 key factors.

Myran, S., Crum, K.S., & Clayton, J. (2010). *Four pillars of effective university-school district partnerships: Implications for educational planning*. *Educational Planning*, 19(2), 46-60.

The authors used an iterative coding process to analyze qualitative data from multiple partnerships and developed a model for successful partnerships. The model is based on four key themes – "pillars" – that provide a foundation for instructionally- and leadership-focused university-school district partnerships: (1) Take a developmental view, (2) find a balance between theory and practice, (3) maintain an effective communication system, and (4) instructionally focused leadership. These pillars and sub-themes within the pillars are discussed.

Orr, M. T., King, C., & La Pointe, M. M. (2010). *Districts developing leaders: Eight districts' lessons on strategy, program approach and organization to improve the quality of leaders for local schools*. Newton, MA: EDC.

This report examines eight districts receiving Wallace Foundation support that have taken on new roles to redesign or influence the redesign of leadership preparation. The authors present their findings from case studies of these districts, and a cross-case analysis, addressing three research questions: (1) How are districts using their influence as consumers of university preparation programs to create needed changes in curricula, internships, selection, and recruitment? (2) To what extent do Wallace-funded leadership preparation programs reflect the core quality features of effective leadership preparation described in the research literature? (3) How do tightly coupled relationships between districts and universities affect the quality of preparation programs being developed and implemented, the quality of leaders, and the creation of a continuum of leadership development? Chapter five discusses the nature of the district-university relationships in the case study districts, including the planning, decision-making, and governance processes; financial and in-kind resources; and the relationship of the leadership preparation program to the district and the university as a whole.

Orr, M. (2012). When districts drive leadership preparation partnerships: Lessons from six urban district initiatives. AASA Journal of Scholarship and Practice, 9(3), 3-17.

Drawing on case study research from six district-university partnerships, researchers conducted a cross-case analysis to identify themes in the organizational relationships between districts and universities that are working together on leadership preparation. The author identified four factors shown in the literature to enable and sustain district-university relationships and used these factors to organize her analysis: (1) shared commitment and complementary goals, (2) appropriate roles and clear responsibilities, (3) clear processes for decision making and problem solving, (4) shared resources. The benefits and challenges of loose and tight coupling arrangements were also discussed.

Rosenberg, M.S., Brownell, M., McCray, E.D., deBettencourt, L.U., Leko, M., Long, S. (2009). Development and sustainability of school-university partnerships in special education teacher preparation: A critical review of the literature. (NCIPP Doc. No. RS-3). Retrieved October 10, 2012, from University of Florida, National Center to Inform Policy and Practice in Special Education Professional Development Web site: http://ncipp.org/reports/rs_3.pdf

The authors conducted a literature review on how partnerships between LEAs and IHEs influence the preparation of general and special education teachers, and the characteristics and contextual factors of these partnerships. The review focused on two types of partnerships: professional development schools and alternative route to certification programs. For each partnership type and for both general education and special education, the authors describe the evidence base and identify common partnership characteristics and contextual supports. The authors also discuss the limitations of the research base, focusing particularly on the lack of studies linking partnership characteristics or contextual supports to outcomes.

Scherer, J. (2009). Understanding the Role of Partnership Configuration in the NSF MSP Program. Journal of Educational Research & Policy Studies, 9(2), p1-21.

This study examines partnerships developed through the National Science Foundation's Math and Science Partnership Program, which promotes the development, implementation, and sustainability of exemplary inter-institutional partnerships among institutions of higher education (IHEs), local education agencies (LEAs), state education agencies (SEAs), and other for-profit and nonprofit entities to improve K-12 math and science education. The study examines how partnership configurations – whether there is one or multiple school districts and IHEs included in a partnership – may influence the nature of the partnership and the activities it undertakes. Findings suggest that partnership configuration does not impact the quantity and types of activities the partnerships carry out and accomplish. The partnership activities and characteristics are also described.

U.S. Department of Education, Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development. (2006). Partnerships for Reform: Changing Teacher Preparation Through the Title II HEA Partnership Program, Final Report, Washington, D.C.

This evaluation report of the 1999 cohort of the Title II partnership grants program describes a comprehensive four and a half year study (conducted between 2000-2005) of the 25 program grantees. The evaluation addressed four questions: “(1) Did partnerships fulfill the program mandate, encouraging colleges and universities to partner with and address the teacher-preparation needs of high-need districts? (2) Did partnerships undertake activities designed to improve the academic content knowledge of new or veteran teachers? (3) Were changes in the student teacher internship component associated with partnership efforts to improve teacher preparation? (4) Did partnership initiatives address the accountability concerns about teacher preparation?” (p. 1). The report described key partnership features related to partner relationships and organizational changes, teacher preparation reform efforts, partner schools and districts, and institutionalization and sustainability.

Vandal, B. & Thompson, B. (2009). State Partnerships for Quality Teacher Preparation. Education Commission of the States and the National Center for Teacher Transformation.

This issue paper is based on a meeting of state education leaders convened in April 2008 by the Education Commission of the States and the National Center for Teacher Transformation. The meeting explored how states can support stronger collaboration between districts and universities for the purpose of linking teacher preparation to increased student achievement. The paper includes descriptions of promising state policies and practices that support partnerships to improve teacher quality. It also identifies key policy elements that can contribute to the development of effective partnerships to improve teacher preparation based on a review of the literature and promising examples of state initiatives.

Waschak, M. & Kingsley, G. (2006). Education Partnerships: Defining, Observing, Measuring and Evaluating. Atlanta, GA: Georgia Institute of Technology.

This literature review addresses concepts and measures used to study education partnerships. The authors summarize a variety of approaches to defining the term

partnership in the literature, observing that differences in how the term is defined has created a lack of consistency in the unit of analysis and analysis model in studies that examine partnerships. They also discuss the structural elements and relationships that govern and control partnerships and how the level of cross-organizational integration can exert influence. Finally, the authors review factors related to partnership formation and implementation, and approaches to assessing and evaluating partnerships.

Wildridge, V., Childs, S., Cawthra, L. & Madge, B. (2004). How to Create Successful Partnerships – a Review of the Literature. Health Information and Libraries Journal, 21, pp. 3–19.

This literature review draws on resources available in the King's Fund Library in the UK and aims to provide guidance for those in the process of developing a new partnership or re-evaluating an existing partnership. Although the authors focus on the health field as context for their review, they contend that the principles for creating and maintaining successful partnerships are generic and apply across sectors. The authors describe various definitions of partnerships in the literature and identify critical success factors that are cited in the literature as essential to partnership success. They also summarize multiple frameworks found in the literature that identify developmental stages for partnership work as well as tools for partnership evaluation and assessment.

QUALITY MEASURES

Measuring Quality In School Leadership Systems and Programs