

**Testimony before the Little Hoover Commission
provided by
Nancy Lourié Markowitz, Ph.D.
Professor of Education
San Jose State University**

**Improving Teacher Recruitment, Preparation, and Retention
Through University/District Collaboration**

My testimony addresses teaching as a career, which includes the issues of recruitment, preparation, retention, and renewal. I provide the perspective of a university professor who has been involved in education since 1972 – as a teacher, administrator, and teacher educator in both the public and private sectors.

My comments in this testimony are based on my experience over the past twelve years working in different projects designed to link the university more closely with the public schools, which we serve. These partnerships have included individual schools, school districts, private foundations, and local businesses. For the past six years I have directed The Triple “L” Collaborative, a partnership between the SJSU College of Education and the Oak Grove and Campbell Elementary School Districts. This is a Professional Development District (or PDD) model that continues to thrive and grow, unlike previous collaborations in which I have participated. Currently two new districts have expressed interest in replicating our model. Stanford University’s Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy (CTP) recently issued a report on its investigation of the role of school districts in developing and supporting quality teaching and learning, including a study of the Campbell ESD. The researchers found that “the district’s Triple ‘L’ Collaborative with San Jose State University and Oak Grove represents one of the more comprehensive and unique professional development partnerships that we at the CTP have encountered.”

Before describing needed changes and recommendations to the commission, I will provide a context by describing the status quo.

The current status of university/district work related to the improvement of teacher recruitment, preparation, and retention:

Recruitment:

- Universities generally attend to the recruitment of candidates for the profession independent of the participation of any local school districts.
- The pool of individuals interested in pursuing a teaching credential yet able to spend a full year at the university with little or no compensation is primarily limited to white, middle class females.
- Few resources are given to the CSU system to attract people of color into the profession.

Preparation:

- Typically, the interaction between the schools and the university is often restricted to identifying and providing student teaching placements for candidates, with little or no discussion or agreement about
 - a common vision of teaching and learning,
 - common standards for teacher performance assessment of candidates,
 - common understandings of desirable teacher preparation, or
 - a common commitment to work together to support beginning and experienced teachers.
- Pre-service programs generally do not serve to challenge the beliefs, values, attitudes, and assumptions prospective teachers hold toward children and families of color and others whose backgrounds differ from their own. Consequently, candidates often leave their programs with unchanged attitudes which can mitigate against their having high expectations of these students or their parents.
- Most university/school collaboration occurs primarily within the area of teacher preparation and has focused on the Professional Development School (PDS) model. This model, while powerful in terms of the possibilities for better training of candidates, does not go far enough in two ways:
 - 1) promoting the continuous renewal of both the universities and the schools; and
 - 2) engaging the entire school district, not just individual school sites, in the development of a coherent professional development system that supports teachers from the time they start thinking about entering the profession until the time they retire.

Retention:

- While Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment programs (BTSA) stipulate that universities must be involved, the nature of that involvement is usually on paper only.
- Once placed in classrooms, most teachers are very much on their own (unless they are fortunate enough to work in a school district using the model of support provided by the UC Santa Cruz New Teacher Center).
- Experienced teachers who work full time in their own classrooms cannot provide the kind of support needed by beginning teachers who require someone in their classroom on a weekly basis observing and coaching them.
- Districts do not generally consider aligning their BTSA programs with pre-service programs in their service area, nor do they consider using university Masters programs to support retention and school reform efforts.
- Masters degrees, offered by universities and pursued by most teachers to increase their knowledge base and/or advance on the salary schedule, typically have little if any connection to the school districts from which these teachers come. Efforts to link advanced degree program participation are seldom considered as part of university/district collaboration and school reform.

Renewal:

- The university typically does not conduct follow-up studies of its graduates in order to evaluate quality of the beginning teachers' work, retention rates, job satisfaction, or perceived quality of program preparation.

- There has been a severe lack of resources to fund such fact-finding.
- In the CSU system, the kind of inquiry related to program research and evaluation--- that the professors both need and want to engage in---is not manageable, given the instructional load.
- Teacher educators at the university live in a parallel universe to the teachers with whom they work: neither set of practitioners works in a context that values and supports on-going inquiry into instructional and programmatic practice as a means of educational reform.
- The university and the schools view each as the “other,” rather than as a partner who is needed to change the way in which initial preparation and on-going support of teachers is conceived and delivered.

What needs to happen and how it could be accomplished:

Reframe the problem:

- We need to take a systemic approach to the addressing our state’s education problems rather than focusing on discrete, seemingly disconnected elements of the system. That is, if we focus on improvement of retention rates or change the standards for preparation of teachers or provide higher quality of beginning teacher support all separately and in isolation from the other components, our system as a whole will continue to suffer.
- The problem is not one of school reform or university reform, but of educational reform. In order to prepare and retain highly qualified teachers, we must change the way universities and schools work with one another.
- When we frame the problem as one of school reform, the focus is on individual schools, and the university is relegated to the role of support provider. The direction of change is one way.
- For schools to have the necessary number of well-prepared, well-qualified teachers (and not devote their limited resources to the remediation of poorly-prepared teachers) we need to view the university as one of the partners in the reform process.
- If we frame the problem as one of educational reform, the issue becomes a cross-institutional, both university and school district support each other in making changes in the way they do business. To cast the problem as one of educational reform changes how the agenda is built, who builds it, and for what purposes. As the university examines its programs in collaboration with the school districts, so will the school districts strive for greater coherence with the university, and together both institutions will build a professional development continuum that meets the needs of teachers in today’s classrooms.

If we address the problem across institutions, then recruitment, preparation, retention, and renewal look something like the following:

Recruitment:

- Districts and universities together engage in the recruitment and selection of candidates for teacher preparation programs.

- They agree on the most important characteristics for entering candidates, including an emphasis on attracting those candidates interested in working with diverse student populations and open to examining their own belief systems.
- Districts could partner with a university to implement a two-year gradual induction, partial internship program (such as the Triple L's Teacher Education Collaborative Internship program) and intentionally and explicitly connect this program to the districts' program for beginning teacher support.

Preparation:

- District and university personnel together engage in the development and implementation of pre-service programs and focus these programs on how to address issues of equity in the classroom.
- Candidates are a part of a cohort so that they become socialized to sharing their practice publicly within a professional community. This initial cohort would act as a support system during and beyond the preparation phase.
- The state provides full scholarships that pay for living expenses and monthly stipends to assist candidates trying to “survive” the first year of preparation.

Retention of teachers:

- If they are prepared well, given strong support to assist them in reflecting on their teaching practice, provided the opportunity to engage in discussions of practice within a community of other professionals, and treated as professionals, they will stay in the profession longer.
- Teachers need a variety of on-going opportunities both to enrich their professional lives and to develop expertise in teacher leadership skills by acting as support providers and/or mentors to other teachers.

The key to improving the recruitment, preparation, and retention of teachers in California lies in the establishment of effective partnerships between and across institutions of higher education and the school districts with whom they work.

Within the Triple “L” Collaborative we have identified seven conditions that underlie successful university/district partnership work. They include the following:

- 1. Common vision of teaching and learning across universities and schools.** The vision comes out of the talk around planning and assessing the professional development programs together. This leads to the second condition, the importance of...
- 2. Individual relationships** between people in the school districts and university with whom they are partners. Partnerships depend on the willingness and commitment of individuals to working across institutions for educational change. It is critical to build on-going opportunities to communicate with one another face to face around issues important to everyone. In order to foster such communication, the Triple “L” convenes monthly leadership team meetings and provides twice-yearly 1 1/2 day

retreats. What comes out of the building of individual relationships is the third condition, a sense of...

3. **Shared responsibility** for the planning and implementation of professional development by the university and the school districts. When there is shared responsibility, the fourth condition necessarily follows...
4. **Shared accountability.** The district, together with the university identifies what to assess and then looks at the data together, and makes decisions accordingly.
5. **Multiple points of linkage across programs and people.** This means that the modus operandi of the district/university partnership is to always look for ways to connect people and programs across the institutions.
6. **Coherence in professional development across institutions.** If school districts in are implementing strategies to eliminate the academic achievement gap, they need to collaborate with university faculty to ensure that those same strategies are introduced and developed in pre-service preparation and masters programs. This would provide a comprehensive and coherent approach to the problem.
7. **Alignment of assessment practices and performance expectations.** The district and university need to agree on the performance standards against which teachers (student teachers, beginning teachers, veteran teachers) are assessed as well as the means by which they are assessed. We have data to support the assertion that new teachers who learn about portfolio development and are assessed during pre-service preparation against same standards as those used in the district, are far ahead of those who have not.

Recommendations:

1. Provide state funding to support university-district partnership work for coherent professional development across the entire career continuum (e.g., continue funding for the Comprehensive Teacher Education Initiative [CTEI]).
2. Provide state funding to enable school districts to offer and participate in partial-internship programs (such as the TE Collaborative) that can provide gradual induction into the profession.
3. Provide funding for scholarships (covering full tuition plus a monthly stipend for living expenses) to recruit candidates (particularly candidates of color) to CSU.
4. Encourage BTSA programs to make explicit connections to pre-service programs. Promote the BTSA model provided by the UC Santa Cruz New Teacher Center.
5. Provide funding and support for districts and schools to restructure daily/weekly school schedules to increase the professional development time available to teachers to participate in school-site inquiry groups. Promote models of changed schedules that support ongoing, embedded professional development in the daily life of the school (e.g., Sherman Oaks School in the Campbell ESD and Sakamoto School in the Oak Grove ESD).

6. Support the development of blended programs (that combine undergraduate and graduate education) at institutions of higher education and provide scholarships for students to enroll in them.
7. Offer a state-level performance-based assessment of teacher candidates to determine the quality both of the candidates and of the preparation they have received. Provide institutions of higher education with greater autonomy in designing preparation experiences for potential teachers.
8. Reinstate SB 813 so that professors of teacher education can spend a semester every three years working in classrooms.
9. Encourage pre-service programs to emphasize skills of inquiry, collaboration, and self-examination of candidates' values, attitudes, beliefs, and assumptions about issues of race and equity.