

**PORTRAITS OF SECONDARY PARTNER SCHOOLS
IN THE
NATIONAL NETWORK FOR EDUCATIONAL RENEWAL
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PROVO ORIGINAL PORTRAIT:

Provo High School in Partnership with Brigham Young University

By Patti Harrington, Provo High School

Background and Theory

School-university partnerships operate under the assumption that teaching and learning can best be advanced through cooperation of school and university personnel. Mutual cooperation, it is believed, is best spent in four key domains of schooling: preservice (preparing teaching candidates), in-service (improving the skills of teachers), curriculum development (improving the materials used to teach), and inquiry (research to understand and improve teaching and learning).

In 1996, Provo High School (PHS) entered into a formal partnership relationship with Brigham Young University (BYU) with desires to attend to each of the four domains of partnership work. We identified two key projects to focus our work: 1) establish ninth-grade interdisciplinary teaming, with teachers meeting to coordinate curriculum that “makes sense” for ninth-grade students; and 2) revise the student teacher/cooperating teacher agreement and seek additional ideas to enhance the process. The first project involved in-service and curriculum development and, with a thorough evaluation in place, added to the body of inquiry regarding teaming, curriculum mapping, and methods of increasing academic success for ninth-grade students. The second project primarily involved preservice but also offered spin-off value to in-service, both at BYU and at PHS. This portrait will capture the ideas and information that have been generated in the first year of this partnership.

Provo High School is an urban ninth-through twelfth-grade high school serving 1,850 students. We have dozens of AP and honors classes and we serve 12 percent in

special education classes. Our minority population is 14 percent of the student body, primarily Latino. We serve students whose families own multiple computers as well as those who are living out of motel rooms and cars. Provo High School is located in Provo, Utah, across the street from Brigham Young University. BYU is owned and operated by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints and serves 30,000 students, most of whom are members of the Church. BYU is reestablishing its early roots – those grounded upon the preparation of teachers. Their College of Education was just renamed a School of Education, and the entire university is being reorganized in order to create a Center for the Improvement of Teacher Education and Schooling (CITES). CITES will be a primary focus for the university in the years to come.

The PHS-BYU partnership, heretofore, has been one that primarily revolved around relationships between PHS teachers and BYU instructors. That is, due to close friendships and relationships and the proximity of our campuses, informal partnership projects have existed between PHS and BYU for many years (for example, science field trips and studies, dance camps, equipment donations, etc.). Further, student teachers from BYU have been trained on the campus of Provo High School for more than twenty-five years. With our extensive history and good relationship with the informal partnership with BYU, we at Provo High felt comfortable dealing with sensitive issues, have worked toward two-way resources and responsibilities, and felt that we had as much to contribute to BYU as the university may

contribute to PHS. While the partnership efforts were not new to PHS, the formalizing of them was. Sensing the opportunity for growth for each partner, we immediately went to work.

Our team consisted of one from Brigham Young University and four from Provo High School. Team members included: Dr. Chris Crowe, professor of English, BYU; Janet Cooper, science teacher, PHS; Darren Hirsche, geography teacher, PHS; Betty Clark, PE teacher, PHS; and Dr. Patti Harrington, principal, PHS, and also Chair of the BYU-PHS Partnership Committee. Provo High School organized the work, the committee, and wrote the grant for funding. Chris Crowe was asked to be involved because he and Patti were associates together in a former partnership inquiry group. All others were involved due to their responsibility and/or background for the identified projects. Darren directed the ninth-grade study, Betty had extensive background in working with student teachers, and Janet had brainstormed and utilized some innovative ideas in enhancing both preservice and in-service in the partnership.

Project One: Preservice and In-service through Improved Student Teaching/ Cooperating Teacher Arrangements

In the summer of 1996, immediately upon receiving an Arthur Vining Davis Foundations Secondary Partner School grant from the Institute for Educational Inquiry, Provo High School convened its partnership committee to initiate its work. Chris Crowe was unable to meet throughout that year, but the committee forged ahead. Provo High convened its department chair committee to review the Cooperating Teacher Agreement with BYU. Several dissatisfactions were noted, including having too many student teachers on campus at any one time who were lacking adequate supervision by some PHS teachers and BYU instructors. We spent three different meetings revising the Agreement. The document was then

reviewed by the faculty-at-large for further modifications. Finally, it went to the school's site-based Decision-Making Committee (DMC) for final approval, which it received.

This document, dated November 1996, is now final from the perspective of Provo High School, though still labeled "draft." It remains as a draft with an invitation to BYU to dialogue about or negotiate its contents, although this has not yet been done. One of the puzzles this document has created is, to whom is it sent? Currently, there is no one person identified on the BYU campus who can speak for the entire student teaching placement issue, regardless of subject area. As things stand now, it would take full BYU campus involvement on the part of Provo High to inform all stakeholders regarding the revised Agreement. Thus, while PHS has incorporated this document into its operations, there is no such incorporation at BYU except as it must oblige, given the nature of changes that have been initiated at PHS. Further, as individual members of the BYU community have seen the document, they, too, are not in the position of influence or power to approve or negotiate the document. That is, neither Chris Crowe nor even the dean of the School of Education himself has the power to control the BYU variables regarding student teaching placements. We are hopeful that the reorganization of teaching and learning on the BYU campus will resolve this dilemma.

The second piece of the preservice goal was to enhance current practices in preservice and in-service and provide innovative ways to train one another. This work is still in development with ideas coming from Janet Cooper, who has worked extensively and informally in partnership with her science colleagues on the BYU campus. She has developed a list of potential ways we could share ideas, students, and experiences to enhance partnership work. This is a beginning, one which views partnership experiences as those which involve students and teachers at all levels: doctoral, master's, and bachelor's degree candidates as well as ninth- through twelfth-graders and their

instructors on both campuses. The ideas in this document, if implemented in conjunction with many others that could be generated by thinking creatively about the entire university experience as it relates to public schooling, could well lead to a total restructuring of preservice and in-service activities.

Project Two: Curriculum Development and Inquiry through Ninth-Grade Interdisciplinary Studies

Provo High School's historical statistics indicate that ninth graders are the most likely students to drop out of high school. In order to address this concern, in 1995-96 Provo High piloted a ninth-grade teaming project that required specific class placements of students and teachers in a four-subject plan. The pilot had many benefits, primarily involving consistent and meaningful planning by teachers together. It also had some major drawbacks in "forced" scheduling of teachers and students. Further, it only included one-half of the ninth-grade class.

After a careful evaluation, PHS decided to retain the strengths of the pilot and eliminate the drawbacks. As a result, in 1996-97, as part of our partnership plan for curriculum development and continued inquiry, we formulated another teaming concept, one that did not require tight scheduling but rather allowed and encouraged close teacher planning to benefit all ninth graders. Thus, in this past year, all ninth-grade students have had the benefit of mutual planning by their Geography, English, and SEOP (Student Education Occupation Plan Business) teachers. It is now common for students to receive content assignments for major papers from their Geography teacher, receive help on the structure of that paper in English, and work on the format of the paper in their SEOP class, where computer use is required. In this way, education becomes more meaningful, cohesive, and less confusing for the ninth-grade student, while s/he is still held for appropriate outcomes in learning. We believe

it should lead to greater success for ninth graders (fewer dropouts, better grades) and we are in the process of evaluating the project to gauge its effectiveness.

As a part of this second thrust for ninth graders, we also have increased our technology options for all students. We established a full-time "drop-in" computer lab in our English area for students to access technology help all day, everyday. We have a schedule that permits drop-in use and we require that all major papers are computer-driven. We have Internet services for home use by students who may be ill, homebound, suspended, or just desire home study. We also have acquired tutoring software to enable students to continue their studies at home in language arts, math, and science.

Emerging Dilemmas

This experience has been successful in some respects, as noted in the narrative, but has also brought to light several dilemmas:

- Those people representing a school or university in a partnership must have the authority and/or power to accomplish the various goals of the partnership, or the goals of a partnership must be limited to reflect that authority/power held by the individual members of the partnership. Our PHS-BYU Partnership is struggling in that the goals require more authority or power than is offered by BYU partner members, and partner members from BYU do not have the authority or power to influence or change the university to meet the needs of the PHS-BYU Partnership.

- A university is a large, loosely coupled system. In order to make changes that involve many content areas of the university, a public school faces a daunting task. Who is the contact for making substantial changes in the way student teaching is done? Who is the audience? How would we begin to implement major changes in the way teacher training is done for undergraduate students,

not to mention doctoral and master's students who are seeking graduate degrees in education-related fields? Who might control the selection of doctoral studies such that those studies became action research pieces, with research being done in our partner school classrooms, adding to the body of "real life" public school issues? If we are to see real reform in these areas, assuming it is desired by BYU as it is by PHS, then we need to alter the locus of control such that reform is stimulated and aspects of reform controlled.

- Provo High School has changed the way it does "business" with regard to student teaching, including implementing controversial changes with the potential to harm teachers (i.e., not allowing student teachers to team with mediocre teachers, limiting the number of student teachers allowed to any one PHS teacher, etc.). We are monitoring our changes to ensure their positive effect. Brigham Young University has not made any changes. Tradition, though questionable in its effectiveness, marches on. We somehow need to jerk the status quo into consciousness for improved practice to occur. This may be true on both campuses.

- University professors are under- or unrewarded for partnership work. (Chris Crowe was unable to join our partnership meetings all year.) Understandably, professors may have less interest in such work than they do for their other responsibilities given the placement of rewards in promotion and salary. University instructors must receive reinforcement for partnership work in the form of salary or promotions. Likewise, public school teachers are under-rewarded for their work with student teachers. No business professor would expect an eight- to sixteen-week business internship for a student for the mere cost of \$75.00 (approximately the payment given to cooperating teachers). The entire reward system for public school/ university partnerships needs careful review.

- Finally, a third-party evaluation of what

we do and how it impacts our learners on both campuses is clearly needed.

Next Steps

1. The leadership change at Provo High School will require commitment by the new principal who must develop the collegiality that typifies this relationship.

2. The School of Education at BYU needs to become a reality, with people and resources clearly identified to focus on public schools and how relationships with public schools can increase the effectiveness of real-life instruction on the campus of BYU for teaching candidates. Within this school, authority and power for teaching placements/graduate studies needs to be monitored for consistency and congruity. There must be a group established to deal with public school reform and issues of preservice, in-service, curriculum development, and inquiry. This group must include some public educators—teachers, not just administrators—who will address these issues and make action research a reality.

3. A process of evaluation for both BYU and PHS (or public schools, in general) needs to be identified for continued partnership work. It may be useful to identify and hire a third-party evaluator who can look at specific BYU-Public School Partnership issues with an objective eye, citing strengths, weaknesses, and areas of confusion.

4. The reward systems for university faculty and public educators need careful scrutiny and revision so that educators in both public and university settings are encouraged to dialogue and work toward positive academic reform and greater student success.

PROVO UPDATE:

Provo High School/Brigham Young University Partnership

Sam Jarman, Provo High School

School Background

Provo High School (PHS) is an urban, 9-12th grade high school serving 1,900 students. We offer dozens of Advanced Placement and honors classes and also serve a significant number (12 percent) of students through resource classes. The minority population is approximately 14 percent and growing. Our major ethnic groups are Hispanic and Polynesian, but we also have students from many other cultural backgrounds attending the school. The socioeconomic status of our students varies widely from affluent to the poverty level (390 students qualify for fee waivers). Provo High is located across the street from Brigham Young University. The university is privately owned by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, with a student enrollment of approximately 30,000. Due to the close proximity of the two schools, partnerships, both formal and informal, have existed for many years.

Accomplishments of Year One (1996-97)

Provo High School (PHS) accomplished two key projects in 1996-97. The first project was the establishment of a ninth-grade interdisciplinary team consisting of English, geography, and SEOP (Student Education Occupation Plan) teachers. The second project was the creation of a student teaching agreement between PHS and Brigham Young University (BYU). A team from the PHS/BYU partnership attended the NNER

meetings in Provo, Utah, and Phoenix, Arizona.

Accomplishments of Year Two (1997-98)

Patti Harrington, principal of PHS when this project began, was appointed to serve as assistant superintendent for the Provo School District. The appointment necessitated hiring a new principal who would be committed to the PHS/BYU partnership and would provide opportunities for educational improvement and renewal.

The partnership between PHS and BYU was significantly strengthened by continuing efforts to modify and improve the existing student teaching agreement. PHS joined in numerous conversations and workshops with BYU through the Center for the Improvement of Teacher Education and Schooling (CITES) to discuss ways of improving the teacher preparation programs at the university. These conferences took place throughout the 1997-98 school year.

PHS staff, along with staff from three other high schools (Alta, Orem, and Wasatch), joined with BYU in an Associates Cohort program. The discussion themes for the year were: Moral Dimensions of Teaching, Enculturating the Young in a Democracy, Access to Knowledge, Pedagogical Nurturing, and Stewardship of Schools in Educative Communities. A number of texts were read, which provided a continuous "renewal" opportunity throughout the year and provided discussion topics at the monthly meetings.

Visits were made to each of the schools,

providing the participants with many opportunities to see and learn about the best programs at each high school. The time spent in the cohort meetings provided teachers, administrators, and university staff a tremendous opportunity to talk, debate, and discuss how to improve our schools and how to establish a high level of trust between the schools and the university.

Three members of the PHS team and one district office staff member (Patti Harrington, former principal) attended the February AVD team meeting in New Orleans, Louisiana. The conference was considered a tremendous success by all team members, who were able to learn from other schools' experiences and focused on what was determined to be the future direction of the PHS/BYU partnership.

Objectives

Three objectives were established for the 1997-98 school year:

1. Strengthen social studies instruction through university-level coordination, in-service and preservice, as well as through an investigation of social studies technology applications.
2. Align and integrate social studies and English at Provo High School so that students take American Literature and U.S. History the same year. The world history and world literature classes will also be taught simultaneously.
3. Improve student teaching experiences and mentor teacher connections as we build a future of better learning opportunities for both PHS students and those student teachers from BYU.

Summary of 1997-98 Projects

Objective #1: Talks were initiated with Dr. Garn Coombs, BYU professor of social studies. He committed to help strengthen the

PHS Social Studies Department. Dr. Coombs was invited to be a guest teacher at PHS during the 1998-99 school year. Preparations were made to add him to the master schedule. Dr. Coombs is planning to conduct research projects while at Provo High.

Objective #2: Discussions took place throughout the year regarding the integration and alignment of English and social studies curricula. The English Department was in full support of the idea from the beginning, while the Social Studies Department was very careful to discuss all aspects, positive and negative. The two departments finally agreed to make the switch and move U.S. History from the sophomore year to the junior year. This will necessitate a year (1998-99) when a very limited number of U.S. History sections will be taught. The master schedule was adjusted to allow for the unusual curriculum offerings. Information was communicated to the students and parents regarding the change. Dr. Coombs was helpful providing counseling and guidance during the process.

A significant amount of money was used to purchase new textbooks for the Social Studies Department to meet the needs of the World History and World Geography courses. English teachers have coordinated which literature books will be read and when they will be assigned to coincide with themes in the Social Studies Department. We look forward to the 1999-2000 school year, when nearly all English and social studies courses will be integrated in one way or another.

Objective #3: The student teaching agreement was updated and ratified by the PHS department chairs. The document was then discussed with a number of professors from the university, including a personal discussion with Dr. Winn Egan, chairman of the Department of Teacher Education at BYU. Some of the requested incentives need to be reviewed and accepted by the university. One example is to allow cooperating teachers to be considered as adjunct faculty with limited campus privileges. Other incentives need to be approved by the district office

staff. One option is to allow lane-change credit for participation as a cooperating teacher. The key is to provide some worthwhile incentives to the teachers for their efforts while holding them responsible for providing a memorable experience for the student teacher. With this agreement, the cooperating teachers must be responsible to be true mentors in helping the student teacher and communicating with the supervising university representative.

Priorities for Year Three (1998-99 and 1999-2000)

1. Provide a teaching assignment for Dr. Garn Coombs, BYU professor, at Provo High School. Dr. Coombs will spend time not only teaching high school students but will work to strengthen social studies instruction through coordination of in-service and preservice activities with the Social Studies Department. Dr. Coombs will help with the integration of English and social studies courses at PHS. He will also have the opportunity to bring some of his BYU students into PHS and provide them with class observation and teaching opportunities.

2. Continue to implement the integration and alignment of English and social studies courses. This year, only one section of U.S. History and one section of Advanced Placement U.S. History are being offered so as to align the subjects to be taught during the junior year. Next year, the "shift" will be completed and students will be able to experience the integration of coursework. The integration will take on different forms. Some teachers are talking about team teaching some units. The English teachers have a large selection of books to choose from and are committed to teaching whichever books will best align with the Social Studies Department. We are optimistic that next year will be a success and that students will find a greater degree of relevancy in their learning.

3. Introduce a "Reading for Professional

Renewal" in-service activity for PHS staff members. Four books will be read during the year, with weekly discussions regarding the previous week's reading assignment. The four books to be read are: *Change Forces* by Michael Fullan; *Improving Schools From Within* by Roland Barth; *The Manufactured Crisis* by David Berliner and Bruce Biddle; and *Breaking Ranks: Changing an American Institution*, the report of the National Association of Secondary School Principals. Nearly one-third of the staff has signed up to participate. This in-service is a direct result of the experiences with the BYU Associates Cohort program.

4. Continue to support and participate in the BYU/CITES project to improve the university preparation of prospective teachers.

5. Continue to support and participate in the BYU Associates Cohort program. Two teachers from PHS will participate in the cohort during 1998-99.

6. Finalize the Cooperating Teacher Agreement incentives with both university and district office officials. Follow through to ensure that all parts of the agreement are met by Provo High School, Provo School District, and BYU.

7. Full participation in the 1999 *In Praise of Education* National Conference to be held in Bellevue, Washington.