School-University Collaborative Research: Summary*

Research partnerships can be very effective and work best when they involve an ongoing effort by all partners based on mutual respect and mutual learning over time.

School-university collaborative research is conducted by school educators and university researchers working as partners, with the goal of producing knowledge that is meaningful and useful both for educators’ practice and for academic purposes.

Recent research identifies the following factors supporting collaborative research:

- mutual interest
- clear expectations
- shared goals
- respect and trust in the other party
- flexible research design
- willingness to experiment with research roles
- adequate allocation of time and resources
- long-term commitment
- support and recognition from the administration
- shared power and ownership of research

The literature suggests that the following strategies can be helpful in overcoming challenges associated with building research partnerships:

**Fighting stereotypes**

- All participants should alter their perception of research and the roles that they have played in research in the past and should be ready to experiment with new research roles;

**Providing political and financial stability**

- School boards and universities should emphasize long-term commitments to the research partnership by allocating sufficient resources to the partnership’s agenda;

**Implementing reward and recognition systems**

- Top administrators should demonstrate their full support of research partnerships;
- Intrinsic rewards of collaborative research for teachers, such as increased knowledge and efficacy and enhanced collegial interaction, should be emphasized;
**Negotiating agendas and improving collaboration**

- Regular and ad hoc meetings should be explicitly built into the research process to provide opportunities to deal with issues, check on current needs or perceptions, etc.;
- Regular communication between the participants can be achieved through meetings and events, exchange of papers, telephone and e-mail conversations, and access to shared data;
- Liaison positions for large and complex partnerships can help improve communication and coordination between the parties;

**Dealing with lack of experience and training in conducting research**

- Graduate study opportunities or workshops can be offered for teachers;
- Collective research design and data analysis encourage individual and collaborative learning;

**Dealing with time constraints**

- Schools can use pre-service teachers to support in-service teachers’ research activities;
- University students can be paired with teachers to serve as research assistants;
- Sharing of tasks in research teams can decrease time commitments for teachers;

**Disseminating knowledge**

- Academics and teachers can contribute articles to journals and conferences;
- They can also report findings to school boards, local educational groups, and peers or build them into professional development and graduate study;
- Teachers should also apply newly created knowledge to their instructional practice.

* This paper was commissioned by the OERP and prepared by Anna Yashkina and Ben Levin, OISE. It may be reprinted or shared freely provided the original source is recognized.

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*The Ontario Education Research Panel (OERP) was established by the Ministry of Education in 2006 as part of its overall research strategy. The Panel is made up of members from various education communities including university faculty, school board researchers, and researchers from other education organizations. The purpose of the OERP is to promote education research and evaluation activities that contribute to the advancement of education in Ontario.*