

Chapter 17

Partner Learning: The Power Source for Students, Schools, and Communities

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“If we take seriously the challenge to promote creative, collaborative learning models that empower students and teachers, continual refinement of partner learning approaches is essential.”

McNeil, 1994

An impressive database that recognizes partner learning programs as effective approaches to enhancing student learning in the classroom has been compiled over the past two decades.

“Partner learning is an eminent example of individualized instruction in which students work together to achieve educational objectives” (McNeil, 1994, p. 244).

PARTNERING FOR SUCCESS

Structured partnerships may take a variety of forms including peer and cross-age tutoring, as well as cooperative learning approaches. Several studies have provided solid evidence that peer tutoring is an effective way to “promote the individualization of instruction by increasing students’ time on task and their opportunities to respond and receive coaching and feedback” (McNeil, 1994; Villa & Thousand, 1996). As teachers have increasingly incorporated these techniques into their classrooms, extra assistance for students struggling with their learning has become an integral part of the classroom (LaPlant & Zane, 1994; Thousand, Villa, & Nevin, 1994).

Transformational Effects

Partner learning systems have the power to transform the teaching process. Teachers who engage in such programs understand that instruction “may come from people other than the adults with a ‘teacher’ label” (LaPlant & Zane, 1994). Teachers who have incorporated partner learning programs into their classrooms have reported that in addition to receiving more individualized instruction, students tend to learn at accelerated rates, enjoy the exciting opportunity of working cooperatively with classmates, demonstrate heightened responsibility for their learning and that of their partners, relish the association with the teacher as a member of the

instructional team, and are found to be more actively involved in creating a positive classroom learning environment (McAllister, 1990; Pierce & Van Houten, 1984a; McNeil, 1994, p.244).

Partner learning relationships have been found to offer a great deal to educators and students alike. Data collected by McNeil and her associates indicated that both tutors and tutees demonstrated increases in achievement, communication skills, and self-esteem (McNeil, 1994). Likewise, LaPlant and Zane (1994) reported, “for students who have few outside connections, partner learning may be a source of positive relationships” (p. 272).

There is much to be learned from the outcomes of recent research and the many activities involving the refinement of peer support structures and partner learning systems. Since the 1980s, several of these support structures and systems, including cross-age/cross-grade peer tutoring, same-age/same grade peer tutoring, peer mediation, social supports, and buddy networks, have established a remarkable foothold in our public schools. The literature yields many illustrations of specific programs (i.e., Fuchs, Fuchs, & Kazden, 1998; Gartner & Lipsky, 1997; Thousand & Villa, 1990; Villa & Thousand, 1992; Visoky & Poe, 2000; and Mortweet, et al., 1999), and they consistently report substantial benefits to those involved.

Academic and Social Growth

Structured partnerships between students continue to positively influence the academic and social growth of each partner - tutor or tutee. Thousand, Nevin, and McNeil (2000) tell us, “Students who teach concepts and procedures understand them at a deeper level” (p. 148). This phenomenon persists as a focus of studies looking at the effect of partner learning systems and peer support structures on people in education who represent a wide range of ages and positions, from preschoolers to teacher educators (e.g., Cushing & Kennedy, 1997; Gartner & Lipsky, 2000; Thousand, Nevin, & McNeil, 2000; Vaughn, Gersten, & Chard, 2000; Visoky & Poe,

2000). Their common findings support the advancement of partner learning as a best practice in education in general, and in inclusive education in particular.

Several studies of the effects of peer-assisted learning by school-age children have documented growth in academic skills. Fuchs, Fuchs, and Kazden (1999), for example, found that peer-assisted learning (PALS) showed some promise in its potential to increase literacy among some high school students who were seriously delayed in their reading. Previous examination of the effectiveness of the use of PALS at the elementary level by Fuchs, Fuchs, Mathes, and Simmons (1997) discovered a significant improvement in reading fluency among students involved in the program. Vaughn, Gersten, and Chard (2000) found that “the interactive dialogue between...students and proficient peers is critical for effective interventions in reading and writing” (p. 110). Peer-mediated instruction for children with mild disabilities has consistently been found to be an effective instructional strategy to improve spelling skills (e.g., Harper, Maheady, & Mallette, 1994; Harper, Mallette, Maheady, Parkes, & Moore, 1993).

Classwide Peer Tutoring

Classwide peer tutoring (CWPT) has also become an alternative instructional delivery model in general education classrooms. Mortweet et al. (1999) studied the use of CWPT for students with mild mental retardation who were included in general education classroom settings. Their study substantiated the effectiveness and feasibility of using CWPT in inclusive general education classrooms to improve academic achievement of students with mild mental retardation, as well as the academic achievement of all other students in the class. Their findings demonstrated overall “the positive academic outcomes...of the effectiveness of classwide peer tutoring as an instructional strategy for students with mild mental retardation and their typical peers...” (p. 533). Classwide peer tutoring programs have also improved reading and social skills

among students with autism and their general education classmates (Kamps, Barbetta, Leonard, & Delquadri, 1994; Sidideridis et al., 1997).

Studies have also shown that improvement is demonstrated in other academic areas, such as math (e.g., Kohler & Greenwood, 1990) and social studies (e.g., Maheady, Harper, & Sacca, 1988). Peer-mediated instruction is now commonly used in inclusive general education classes in lieu of direct individualized instruction from the teacher, or the necessity of additional adult support, and again provides a meaningful opportunity for socialization among all students. Mortweet et al. (1999) report in their study, which was done to determine the effects of CWPT on the spelling skills of students with mild mental retardation and their classmates in inclusive classroom settings, the results for using such a strategy go beyond academic outcomes. “The social benefits of CWPT,” they report, “...may be one of the most important implications for practice that CWPT has to offer” (p. 534).

THE ZONE OF EMPOWERMENT

Maslow (1954) contended that we seek satisfaction through a sequence of needs. This “hierarchy of needs” explains what motivates individuals, and proposes that once the lower-level needs (physiological, and security and safety) are satisfied, they no longer motivate an individual. In accordance with the Circle of Courage (Brendtro & Van Bockern, 1994), we can assume that before students have a sense of belonging, mastery, independence, and generosity, they are isolated novices who are dependent and needy. What then transports individuals from that place of lower-level need to a place where their social needs (to belong, accepted and loved) and their ego needs (to be respected; to gain prestige, recognition, and status) are met?

Partner learning and peer relationships play an important role in this passage. They represent the power source in a *zone of empowerment* in which individuals become, through

positive interactions, teamwork, growth and support, welcome members of groups, masters of skills, independent in their academic and social accomplishments, and generous of spirit.

In Villa and Thousand's in-depth discussion of the potential benefits of peer support structures (1996), they focus on the enhancement of self-esteem, opportunities for practice with higher level thinking skills, and the progression toward content mastery. Peer empowerment strategies, they report, "... involve students as 1) members of the instructional team, 2) advocates for themselves and their peers, and 3) decision makers" (p. 173).

Partner learning and peer support processes yield immeasurable benefits for and from students, schools and communities. The reciprocal gifts harvested from the zone of empowerment can be observed in the looks of happiness, calm, and pride on children's faces; in the secure and dynamic atmosphere of successful schools; and in the surrounding peaceful, vibrant, and inclusive communities.

POWER SOURCES: LESSONS FROM MODELS IN THE FIELD

What children can do together today, they can do alone tomorrow. (Lev Vygotsky, 1962)

A whole host of partnership models exist in our nation's public schools, and the ways in which children support each other vary widely. From Head Start to high school, programs generally share a common goal: to build upon a cooperative relationship between students and create structures that facilitate the students' social or academic potential, thus empowering children who have been isolated, or who lack sufficient skills to succeed in school.

The Washington Elementary School Project

Washington Elementary School is located in rural Washington, New Hampshire and has a population of eighty-five students. A high percentage of students are eligible for participation in the government-subsidized lunch program. The small number of students attending the school has historically meant that children from two grades could be assigned to

the same classroom. However, the recent Washington Elementary School Project linked fifth grade students with “at risk” kindergarten children who were struggling with the acquisition of letter recognition skills, oral reading, and sight word acquisition. The main goal of the Project was for the “at risk” children to learn all the letters of the alphabet by the end of the school year. The fifth graders were made aware of the importance of their contributions to the future success of these children as readers.

The Superintendent of Schools for the District and the Washington School Board members were consulted and provided their enthusiastic support for the undertaking. Parents of all participants were contacted, provided with a description the project, and permission forms for their child to participate. All of the children were eager for the opportunity to be involved in this important endeavor.

The Project Tutors received extensive training and assisted in the preparation of materials (flashcards, data sheets etc.) from the Project Directors, Ellen Klein, principal and Jane Johnson, teacher. They made a set of flashcards with the upper- and lower-case letters and had a picture to use as a cue for the sound. The pictures were from the Stevenson Program and were the same cards the tutees used in their language group in the kindergarten classroom. This helped with the transfer of knowledge from the tutoring session back to the classroom. The Project Tutors practiced ways to greet their Kindergarten Partner, how to present material, give encouragement and problem-solve issues that might arise.

As part of the Project, the Tutors conducted the pre- and post-tests. They recorded the results, indicating their Partners’ responses to letters on flashcards. This was an essential component of the analysis of student learning and gave the Tutors a heightened sense of the role of the teacher. The tutoring sessions occurred three times per week at the start of the day and

lasted about fifteen minutes. The sessions took place in the multi-purpose room where the Tutors escorted their Partners from the kindergarten class, returning them when the session was over.

The format for the sessions was the following:

1. Drill using letter cards for the letters that had been presented in class.
2. Provide practice for letters by choosing 1 or 2 activities to complete.
3. Read a short book to their Partner to help them make the connection between letters and words, and foster the enjoyment of reading.
4. Repeat the drill using letter cards at the end of the session.

Klein and Johnson (1999)

The Tutors were provided with a *Daily Report Form*, on which they were instructed to record the day's lesson, keep track of the activities they did with their Partner, list the book they read, and to make notes and suggestions for further sessions. Letters learned and those needing further practice were recorded. This technique enabled the Tutors to review and prepare for the next session and provided a vehicle for the teachers to review progress and make suggestions.

Multi-sensory activities were part of the sessions and included such things as writing letters on white boards, playing "Bingo", "Go Fish", forming letters with "Sticky Wicks", matching lower- and upper-case letters, tracing letters in a salt tray, and using foam and magnetic puzzles. Tutors were asked to encourage their Partners to say the letters aloud while they were engaged with these activities.

The kindergarten teacher selected a number of books at the appropriate level, which were made available for the Tutors to read to the young children. Tutors chose books they felt their Partner would enjoy hearing. They also asked questions such as; "Where is the title of the

book?” and “Point to the letter_.” This was done to help the children make the connection from letters to printed matter in books.

The results of the Project were very encouraging for the Tutors, the Kindergarten Partners, the teachers, and the parents. After five weeks of intervention, half of the students had learned all of the letters (capital and small). The children who knew the least amount of letters during the pre-test made the greatest gains. When the Kindergarten Partners were asked about their experience, they reported that it was “fun”, “My partner is nice”, and they drew pictures of their Tutors in their journals. For one Kindergarten Partner, arriving at school on time had been a chronic problem. However, on the first day of the project she arrived a half-hour early and has not had a problem with tardiness since.

The Project Tutors reported being nervous initially. Comments at the conclusion of the Project included the following: “I wish it would never end”; “I hope I’ve made an impression on her; she seems more sure of herself”; “It made me feel like I am old enough to make a difference in someone else’s life”; “I want to go to the kindergarten graduation and bring him a present”; “He’s happy when I pick him up from his room”; “He is improving immensely”; and “I am more confident than I was at the beginning”.

The words of the Tutors helped to capture the flavor of the program. They were taking leadership actions to help younger students learn fundamental pre-reading skills. At the same time, they were connecting with young children in a mentorship/friendship fashion. Results of the Project were presented at a school district forum open to members of the community. Other teachers who were present have since designed their own partner learning programs and the Project co-directors have been sought as consultants to the new programs. This successful program continues to positively impact the lives of all involved.

Youth Reading Role Models

Youth Reading Role Models (YRRM) is a program of the Family Literacy Foundation, a community-based organization that was founded in San Diego in 1989. Its mission stems from the notion that “...the single most important activity for building the knowledge required for eventual success in reading is reading aloud to children” (Family Literacy Foundation, 2000, p. 23). Youth Reading Role Models was developed to facilitate supportive relationships between children in Head Start programs and the high school students who read aloud to them. The emphasis is on developing communication between the youth (as “extended family”) and the preschoolers. It further emphasizes the development of an empowering attitude in both groups. For the high school students, that attitude is on developing an improved sense of self-worth, competence, confidence, and service to community. For the children, the focus is on developing a positive attitude toward literacy, and an “I can read!” way of thinking.

Part of the success of Youth Reading Role Models is the “intergenerational” involvement in which hundreds of San Diego’s high school students have the opportunity to practice valuable citizenship, and transform their local communities by giving their time to read with preschool children. They become positive role models in their schools and communities, and they experience and realize the fun and importance of reading aloud to children.

During their two training sessions, the YRRMs are given a workbook that includes a Service Learning Agreement form (see Figure 17.1) and a detailed Job Description (see Figure 17.2). The YRRMs commit to reading at a childcare center, such as a Headstart Program, in their community for one hour per week for an entire school semester. At the end of the semester, the YRRMs are expected to write a reflective essay about their experience. They receive community service credit hours, which satisfy a high school community service requirement, they are

awarded a Family Learning Foundation certificate, and they receive a Letter of Commendation from their Mayor's office. Their work enhances college scholarship and placement applications, and they are able to add an important work experience to their résumés.

The YRRMs become a part of the solution to the significant numbers of children in their communities who might otherwise enter school ill prepared for learning. A high percentage of the preschool children who have participated in the YRRM program have been from homes in which the primary language is other than English, and for many of those children, hearing stories in English has been a new experience. As one YRRM reflected in his essay,

Most of the children who go to the Headstart Center are between the ages of three and five, and the majority have been born of a Hispanic origin and are therefore raised in a Spanish speaking environment. As a reading role model, I was able to give the children what was for many of them their first experience with books in the English language. But there are practical benefits to participation, as well.

AVID

Established in more than 1000 schools in 16 states and 13 countries, servicing more than 50,000 students, Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) is a program that began in San Diego in 1980 in response to the increasing number of low-income, minority students at a high school, which had previously been mostly middle-class and white. This reform program, generated by an English teacher, Mary Catherine Swanson, seeks to reach those underachieving, under-served students who have the potential to succeed at a four-year university. The participants are generally students who come from low-income backgrounds, whose grades are low or average, and who would potentially be the first in their families to attend college.

The mission of AVID is to ensure that all students, especially those with academic potential, will:

- succeed in rigorous curriculum
- enter mainstream activities of the school
- increase their enrollment in four-year colleges, and
- become educated and responsible participants and leaders in a democratic society

AVID, 2000

All AVID candidates and their parents sign a contract (see Figure 17.3) describing the goals and responsibilities of AVID participation. Swanson believes the key to success in AVID is the combination of rigor and support. “Rigor without support is a prescription for failure,” she says. “Support without rigor is a tragic waste of potential” (Wilkins, 2001).

There are three components of the AVID Program: academic instruction, tutorial support, and motivational activities. The key to the program’s success is that it is not a pull-out program – it is a classroom program. The AVID class is a regular, elective class scheduled into the school day for each year of high school. The class focuses on developing student learning patterns by using writing, inquiry, and collaborative grouping as tools for learning. The curriculum covers a variety of study skills and time management strategies; reading, writing, and presentation skills; and long-range planning and goal setting. Within the classroom, students experience a built-in support system where expectations are high, and success is common. As one student reported, “They said if we worked a little bit harder, we could get into a four-year college. No one ever told me I was smart before” (Morita, 2001).

The tutorial support comes from peers and college-level tutors who engage in inquiry

based, collaborative sessions of group problem-solving, group projects, work groups, study groups, and other interactive activities. Strong communication between students is encouraged, and students are constantly nurtured and challenged in a forum of collaboration and independent learning. On a poster in an AVID classroom, one of the four maxims of the AVID philosophy declares: “It is better for a student to be an apprentice at a tutor’s or teacher’s side for five minutes than a disciple at his or her feet for five months.”

Perhaps Marisa’s story captures best the power of AVID in the life of a young immigrant. Marisa was 11 years old when she came to the United States from Mexico. She was a bright child who spoke only Spanish. No one in her family had ever graduated from high school. When she entered seventh grade as a struggling reader and writer, a teacher recommended her for the AVID Program. She observed in Marisa a spark of self-determination. For the past five years, Marisa has thrived in AVID, and credits her progress in school to the AVID tutors, in particular. Their constant encouragement and support led her to reach higher and dream larger. Marisa is now a senior in high school who excels in the Advanced Placement English class. She is enthusiastically involved in school activities, is the student representative to her school district’s School Board, facilitates parent meetings for the high school’s many Hispanic families, is the school’s translator, and has been awarded early acceptance at several universities. Marisa aspires to be an AVID English teacher, and her bilingual skills and self-confidence ensure her of many job opportunities. She has chosen to attend a local state university and continue to live at home, where her parents will have time to adjust to the notion that their daughter is breaking the family tradition, and choosing to earn a college degree and pursue a career in teaching.

According to Francie Tidey, co-director of the Capital Region AVID Center at the

Sacramento County Office of Education in Sacramento, California, approximately 92 percent of AVID graduates attend college, and of those students, 60 percent attend four-year universities. Many of the students return to their high schools to become AVID tutors during their college years. Swanson's legacy appears to be ensured.

Project SUCCESS
(Students Understanding Communities and Cherishing Each Student's Service)

An integrated, inclusive national service-learning program, Project SUCCESS brings together students with and without disabilities who perform community service while applying academic lessons to the community beyond the classroom. The program was designed for middle and high school-aged youth, and is implemented in both school- and community-based settings. It is founded on a principle of partnering diverse youth who work as teams in service learning projects. Project SUCCESS helps to counter youth isolation by pairing young people as partners in service to become active and empowered members of their communities. It encourages them to forge lasting friendships with their classmates by providing opportunities for them to work side-by-side to create social change through community service. A curriculum of preparation, action, reflection and celebration has been developed that accommodates youth with multiple abilities, interest levels and learning styles.

In San Diego County, Project SUCCESS has two community-based sites, and six school-based sites. Participants are in grades 6 through 12, and their numbers have increased more than 150% in the past three years. More than 300 students have performed more than 3000 hours of community service with their partners. During a typical year in one Project SUCCESS Program, partners continued their annual holiday traditions of making holiday cookie baskets for the local police and fire departments, with hand-written thank-you notes for each member of those departments. At Mama's Kitchen, a grass roots, community-based volunteer program for the

needy, the Project SUCCESS partners have also prepared and served more than 400 hot meals to AIDS patients who live at home; and at Thanksgiving, the partners have made cards and placemats for Mama's Kitchen. Other service learning activities have included beach clean-ups, storm drain stenciling, graffiti "paint-outs", collections for Children's Hospital, arts and crafts projects at local convalescent homes, visits to the elderly, and holiday gift collections for struggling families.

The effects of Project SUCCESS have been far-reaching (see Figure 17.4). The community's relationship with the high school is certainly strengthened, and parents of the participants notice positive changes in their children. But perhaps the most important effect has been the active relationships that have developed between the partners as they join forces for the benefit of their community. As one student interviewed reported, "Finishing those projects really makes you feel like you've done the right thing, And now when I see (my partner who has a disability) at school, I really see *her* first. We've even been to the mall together after school."

A NEW SPIN ON THE CIRCLE

The Circle of Courage (Brendtro & Van Bockern, 1994) proposes an integration of "the practice wisdom of great European pioneers... with a Native American child-rearing system that create(s) courageous, respectful children..." (p. 4). The empowerment values (belonging, mastery, independence and generosity) are the goals of education embodied in a "Circle of Courage", as conceptualized in a medicine wheel by a Lakota Sioux artist, George Bluebird.

Extending the Goals of the Circle of Courage

The Zone of Self-Actualization

Based upon their research, the authors propose a "new spin" on the Circle of Courage (see Figure 17.5) that extends the outcomes of attainment of the goals of education. They contend that peer

support structures (a power source for the Zone of Empowerment) lead to goal attainment, and through the process (Zone) of Self-Actualization, an outer field is created – a higher level of possibility – from which a new sense of worth is affected.

In a democratic society, transference to the fields of outreach, expertise, interdependence, and service (aspired to by individuals who have developed a true sense of belonging, mastery, independence and generosity) are made possible because the *Zone of Self-Actualization* fosters reflective practices. Each of the partner learning programs includes in its structure many opportunities for participants to engage in written and oral reflection. It is through this periodic thoughtful consideration of their activities and their personal growth, and the affects their participation have had on their partners, their communities, their families, and their schools, that the students recognize their value to society as a whole. For many of them, this empowering realization is the very impetus for making decisions about which path their lives will take next. Students interviewed spoke of continuing in a field where they would help others, be role models, and encourage others to participate in service activity.

Belonging and Outreach: The Socially Healthy Side of Schooling

While schools are certainly institutions of academic learning, they are also important social systems in our society. “At schools that are socially ‘healthy’, students feel a sense of belonging. They forge friendships with their peers and maintain respectful relationships with adults.” (ASCD, 1999, p.1) Educators who take seriously the social side of schooling can do much to promote the positive social behaviors that enhance school climate and foster healthy and caring environments for ALL learners.

The authors have discussed several models of partner learning in this chapter and have

noted that “teachers who availed themselves of these partner learning arrangements in their classrooms have discovered that their students receive more individualized instruction, tend to learn at an accelerated rate, enjoy the exciting opportunity of working cooperatively with classmates, demonstrate heightened responsibility for their learning and that of their partners, ... and are found to be more actively involved in creating a positive classroom learning environment” (McNeil,1994, p. 224). These are the very elements that lead to happy memories of school and often to lifelong friendships.

The students we have observed and interviewed through our research have shared their sense of personal growth and belonging resulting from the partner learning opportunities they have experienced. For many, this sense of belonging has brought them to a point of wanting to reach out to others, inviting them to belong as well. One student wrote,

My experience as a youth reading role model has allowed me to recognize the importance of being dependable, enhanced my ability to communicate with other individuals, and has increased my own interest in reading for schoolwork and pleasure. My service as a volunteer has been especially beneficial to my younger brother. As a reading role model it was necessary that I visit the public library on a regular basis to choose and check out books appropriate to the age level of the children at the Headstart Center, and also that I take the time to prepare reading the books I choose for the children. My little brother helped me choose the books that would interest the young children, and then I was able to take those books I choose and read them to my own brother, who is at the age where it is extremely crucial that he hear the English language and be able to enjoy the experience of reading.

Tutors have recruited new volunteers, gone on to design new partner learning programs, taken on leadership roles in their programs, and selected careers in education and other related fields. In his reflective essay, another YRRM student reported, “My goal in life is to become a teacher and this program has made me realize that this is what I really want to do.”

This desire and commitment to outreach is evident in another student’s comment. “I cannot think of a better way to spend my time than volunteering my services for kids. I gain experiences for my future and get the chance to help kids have fun and learn new things.” Comments such as these lead us to believe that human relationships can have a very powerful impact on learning. Children who feel they belong are free to enjoy friendships as they learn and grow without the fear of isolation. This social component of schooling has the potential to afford children some of the best gifts available—wonderful friendships and fond memories of their educational experiences.

The lessons learned from the programs we reviewed and the words of the students have led us to an understanding of the importance of new partnership roles for schools and communities. The Youth Reading Role Model Program has provided an excellent example of school-community partnerships at work.

Mastery and Expertise: From Knowledge to Wisdom

The celebration of students’ success is a common occurrence in today’s classrooms. The intrinsic and extrinsic rewards can be readily observed at any level of public school. Positive reinforcement, token economies, and class parties have secured their place in the daily and weekly plans of teachers. Students’ comments and facial expressions give teachers insights into the satisfaction level that students feel for a job-well-done.

The value of Mastery has become very high, as students compete for class rank, grades, scholarships, and college acceptance. It is no surprise, then, that the external support structures, such as individualized instruction, tutoring, and partner learning have become entrenched in the classroom environment. This has been particularly advantageous to the many struggling learners who are for a variety of reasons, are challenged by the pace or scope of the curriculum. Their positive response to partnership relationships has increased the opportunity for Mastery, and led many to realize their actual Expertise.

Generosity and Service: Partners in Learning

For students and educators, Service is the natural outcome of Generosity. Once empowered with gifts that have been nurtured, developed, honed and practiced, passing them on is the logical next step. Perhaps this is most clearly illustrated in this anecdote from one of the authors:

Ann (Nevin) and I were taking a morning walk through the charming city of Limerick, Ireland. We had come there with Mary McNeil to the Association of Teacher Educators Europe (ATEE) Conference to present our work on Alternative Instructional Delivery Systems. As we were walking, Ann was convincing me that I should pursue a doctoral program, and outlined for me a potential agenda of steps to follow to facilitate that journey. So much of what I was doing was a direct result of Ann's constant Generosity. She had invited my participation in the development and delivery of an on-line teacher education course (Nevin, Thousand, & Hood, 1998), in writing a proposal - and then a presentation (Nevin, Hood, & McNeil, 1998) - for ATEE, and a chapter about our work for an international text about changing contexts and challenges in teacher education

(Nevin, Hood, & McNeil, in press). Now she was giving me just the nudge I needed to begin my doctoral work. Her words and wisdom were so constantly timely and effective, and I was filled with gratitude. “How can I ever thank you...,” I began. She hastily replied, “Don’t you realize that is my responsibility – and yours, too – to pass it on. That is how you will repay me. Pass it on.” Ann’s generosity pushed me through my Zone of Self-Actualization, and from that moment I knew that doing Service in the field of education was the only possible course to follow.

Hood, personal communication, August, 1998

Feeling empowered, a child who has acquired the ability to read can often be observed spontaneously coaching others whose reading skills are still developing. Based on the authors’ experiences, for many students, along with the satisfaction that comes from sharing one’s knowledge, skills, and talents comes an exponential desire to continue to share, prompt potential, and perform duty and service.

In his article about Service Learning activities of his middle school students (Jennings, 2001), the author discovered that his students were “anxious to participate in something of genuine value” (p. 475). In response to his students’ desire to help others, Jennings developed the “We C.A.R.E.” (Weekly Cross-Age Reading Experiences) program, in which his students were trained to read to younger students. In his G.R.O.W. (Great Reading, Oral language and Writing) with Grandfriends service-learning project, Jennings students were paired with senior citizens. The purpose of the program was for the high school students to discover, through an interview process, the similarities that exist between the senior citizens and themselves. They wrote biographical essays about their partners, and presented their work at a special gathering. Again,

Jennings' students were able to "discover their talents and interests, develop their skills, and experience the rewards of participating in activities that benefit others" (p. 475). In these partnerships, they gained confidence in their skills, a sense of pride and belonging in their community, and "the knowledge that they are valued and can indeed make a difference" (p. 474).

In many secondary schools, students are required to do Service Learning projects as a requirement for graduation. The accelerated responsibility for learning that many experience during their earlier grades often leads students into making decisions about Service Learning projects in which they will work with other students in partnership or peer support formats. The Youth Reading Role Models Program and Project SUCCESS are exemplary illustrations of such Service Learning projects. In these programs, students have the opportunity to encounter authentic circumstances and become involved in the problem-solving process required to address the social, economic, environmental, and multicultural needs within their own communities. Student reflections about their involvement reveal that once their Zone of Self-Actualization is reached, their projects proceed with ease, and they willingly and joyfully engage in these service activities.

Independence and Interdependence: The Freedom to Depend

Most schools have developed mission statements that are reflective of the larger community's vision of the outcomes of education, typically, graduation from high school. One example comes from Merced, California, a multicultural community with one of the largest concentrations of Southeast Asian refugees in the United States and a Hispanic American population representing about 40% of the population. Many families faced significant economic challenges and high school drop out rates were high. Educators and community members alike were concerned for the education and welfare of all of the students who would be attending the

community's new high school. They came together to create the following mission statement and hopes for its graduates:

Through a collaborative effort of students, staff, and the community, the mission of Golden Valley High School is to provide academic and real life learning experiences so that its graduates will be creative and innovative; self-aware and self-directed; adaptable problem solvers; respectful, friendly and cooperative; technologically adept; successful in career and life skills; effective communicators; and active contributing members of society. (Thousand, Nevin, and McNeil, 2000, p.154)

This Mission Statement reflects the community committee's eagerness to produce graduates who demonstrated Independence. They were mindful of the diversity and the economic, social, and cultural challenges facing the community. Not only did they value successful in career and life skills, they also wanted graduates who were respectful, friendly and cooperative, and active contributing members of society. The authors view this as a desire for individuals who are not only Independent but also Interdependent. Once a person had become sufficiently self-reliant, he or she is then able to experience the freedom to enter relationships where each member is able to depend on the other. This could be a marriage arrangement, a business partnership, a team teaching situation, or a collaborative, contributing member of a community. One of the Youth Reading Role Model Tutors put it this way:

My consistent visits to the library and hours of reading made my creativity visible. I learned to lose my shyness and let the story come to life through me. I enjoyed making voices and facial expressions but most of all, the acceptance of the children. I became a more patient person, which helped a lot the first few days of reading. The children taught me to be outgoing and always try new things.

Once I actually danced in the middle of a group as we were playing a game. I would have never guessed I would be brave enough to do that in front of a group of people. Yet it was all because I spend time with the children of my community.

When educators and community members come together around the goals of education for that community, children and youth are afforded opportunities to experience a carefully planned and supportive move from Dependence to Independence and then to Interdependence. Listening to the voices our students is key to ascertaining the success of our efforts.

The Fields of Hopes and Dreams

In our diverse society, the interrelationships among our youth, our communities, and our schools are quite complex. Yet the daunting challenges to create safe and productive communities, live generous and confident lives, and continually improve the social landscape of our nation must remain at the forefront of our efforts. Partner learning and youth service programs weave a strong and significant thread through our country's social fabric. The empowering opportunities they afford students, schools, and communities make us hopeful that life can and will be better.

The dream of an intentional, wide-scale implementation of these and similar programs in our schools and communities makes the future look very promising.

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS FOR EDUCATORS

The authors are often asked, "How does one get started in designing partnership programs that academically, socially, and personally benefit children and youth?" In addition to the programs highlighted in this chapter, and based upon our years of experience and research, we would like to make the following suggestions:

- Begin today!
- Remember that sometimes the best models are in you own backyard.

- Look for teachers' stories in your local newspaper.
- Talk with local school officials.
- Arrange to visit local programs.
- Interview project leaders, students, teachers, and parents.
- Read professional and popular journals and magazines for ideas.
- Contact your local university.
- Look for announcements of community volunteer opportunities.
- Search the World Wide Web (e.g., keywords: peer tutoring, mentorships, partner learning).
- Look for features on your local news stations.
- Attend lectures, conferences, and workshops to obtain knowledge and materials.

Contact community-based service organizations supporting youth activities (e.g., YMCA, Boys and Girls Clubs, scouting organizations, and preschool and after-school programs).

We have also included here Partnership Planning Guides A and B that may assist you in making decisions about your own partnership projects (see Figures 17. 6 and 17.7).

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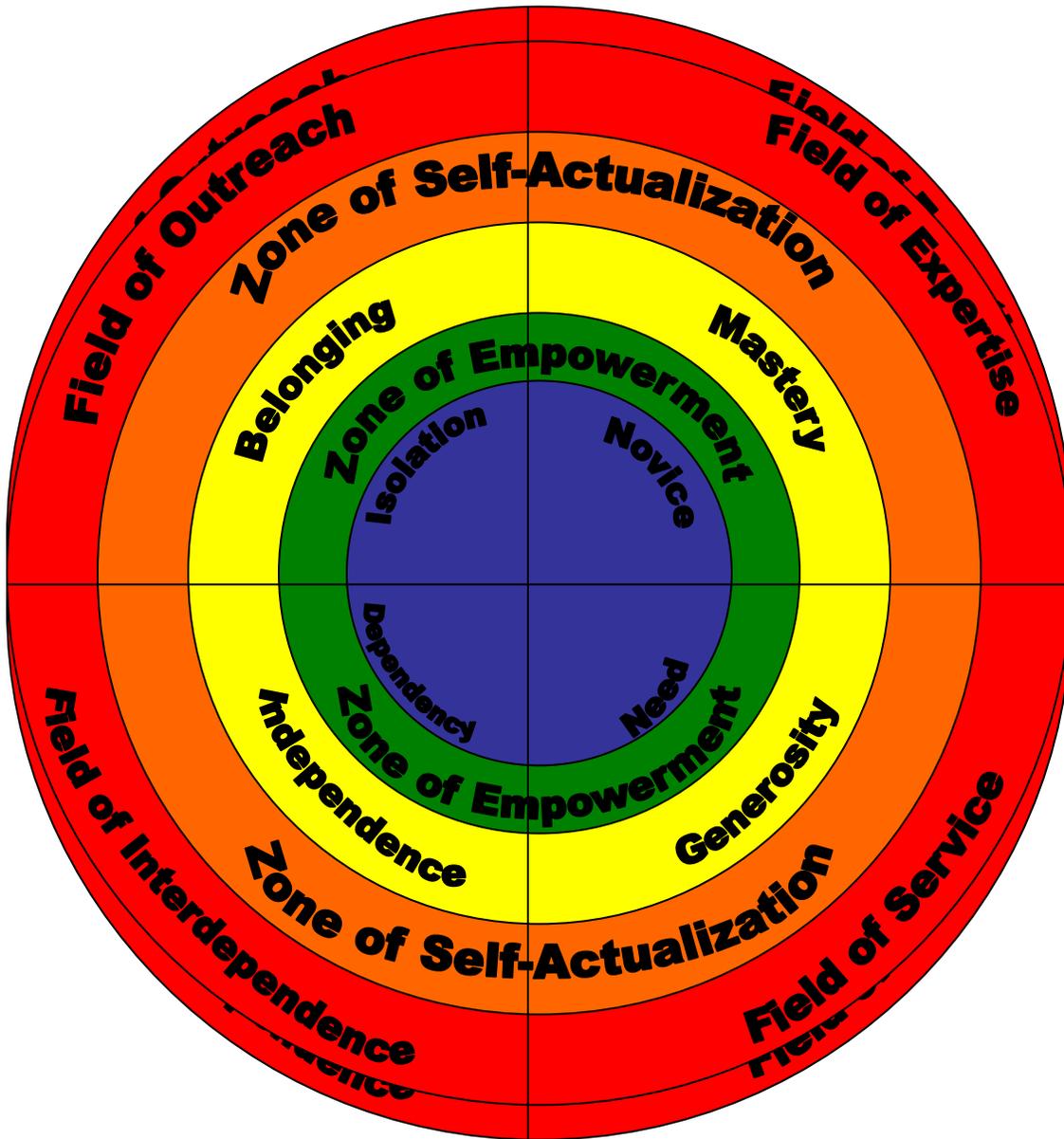
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Figure Legend

- Figure 1 Youth Reading Role Models Service Learning Agreement Form
- Figure 2 Youth Reading Role Models Job Description Form
- Figure 3 AVID Contract
- Figure 4 What People Are Saying About Project SUCCESS
- Figure 5 Extending Beyond the Goals of the Circle of Courage
- Figure 6 Partnership Planning Guide A
- Figure 7 Partnership Planning Guide B

Extending Beyond The Goals of the Circle Of Courage



Partnership Planning Guide A

| Type of Program | Possible Resources | Potential Benefits |
|--|--|--|
| <p><u>School-Based</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peer tutoring • Cross- age tutoring • Buddy networks • Peer-assisted learning • Cooperative learning • PALS • Class-Wide Peer Tutoring • Circle of Friends • AVID | <p><u>Professional Books & Journals</u></p> <p>ASCD, CEC, Kappan</p> <p>AVID Student Handbook</p> <p><i>Creativity and collaborative learning: A practical guide to empowering students and teachers (Thousand, Villa, Nevin, Eds.)</i></p> <p><i>Restructuring for caring and effective education: Piecing the puzzle together (Villa & Thousand, Eds.)</i></p> <p><i>Inclusion: A guide for educators (Villa & Thousand, Eds.)</i></p> | <p><u>Personal Outcomes</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Increase self-esteem, sense of personal responsibility ✓ Ability to identify/celebrate individual strengths, talents and interests ✓ Willingness to accept new challenges, try new experiences, adopt unfamiliar roles ✓ Capacity to consider community interests over one’s individual interests ✓ Ability to value diversity |

Partnership Planning Guide B

| Type of Program | Possible Resources | Potential Benefits |
|---|---|---|
| <p><u>School-Community Based</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Project SUCCESS ▪ Youth Reading Role Models ▪ Service learning ▪ GROW | <p>United Cerebral Palsy www.ucpsd.org</p> <p>Family Literacy Foundation-YRRM www.read2kids.org</p> <p>AVID http://fims.k12.ca.us/avid/evidence.html</p> | <p><u>Social Outcomes</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Increased awareness of other’s needs ✓ Ability to promote inclusive environments ✓ Ability to cooperate and work with others to achieve mutual goals ✓ Improved interpersonal, leadership and communication skills ✓ Ability to demonstrate empathy and acceptance for others ✓ Improved perception of youth by peers and the community at large |
| <p><u>Community-Based</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Scouts ▪ YMCA ▪ Boys and Girls Clubs ▪ Library | <p>Local newspapers and television</p> <p>Organization newsletters</p> | <p><u>Academic Outcomes</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Ability to consider new ideas, values, solutions ✓ Improved skills to draw upon ✓ Improved resourcefulness and creativity ✓ Ability to locate community resources ✓ Expanded knowledge base of community issues ✓ Ability to use community as a resource |