

UNDERSTANDING COLLABORATION

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As Mickey Rooney so famously said, “Let’s all get together and put on a show.”

The idea of people and groups working together to achieve a shared objective is not new; the pirates of the Caribbean, the builders of the transcontinental railway and the Allies of World War II were “collaborating” (although obviously not with each other) long before that term became part of our organizational literature.

Nonetheless, collaboration is a concept that is difficult to define and even more difficult to implement. This paper is designed to support a greater understanding of collaboration through a description of its distinguishing characteristics; an examination of collaboration as a continuum; consideration of Professional Development Schools as the penultimate model of P-20 collaboration; a review of issues associated with the success of collaborative efforts; and perspectives on the development of collaboration. As appropriate, these discussions are linked to collaboration within the P-20 environment and to the BHE Title II grant requirements.

Defining Collaboration

The precise meaning of “collaboration” is elusive, at least in part because the term has been used as a catchall to signify just about any type of inter-organizational or interpersonal relationship.

Moreover, the word “collaboration” has been used interchangeably with many other terms, such as partnerships, alliances, joint ventures, and consortia, any of which may be different in nature and intent. As an example, a series of planned meetings between a university professor and a local curriculum director may be called “collaboration” even though it may more accurately be a “consultation.”

The definitional problem is further complicated by the question of whether “collaboration” is a process or a product, a journey or a destination. Rebecca Gajda, an assistant professor at the University of Vermont, describes the collaborative effort as

the primary method for achieving ideal short and/or long-term goals that would not otherwise be attainable as entities working independently.

Her emphasis is on the collaborative *process*. Kagan defines collaboration as

organizational and inter-organizational structures where resources, power and authority are shared and where people are brought together to achieve common

goals that could not be accomplished by single organization or individual independent.

In this definition, collaboration is a structure, a new and identifiable entity created for a specific purpose.

Most collaboration theorists emphasize the process aspects and warn against pursuing collaboration as an end rather than a means. However, the process of collaboration takes place within a structure that did not otherwise exist and such structures must be recognized and nurtured. Thus, collaboration can and should be considered as both a process and a structure.

The definition of collaboration is also muddled by the fact that the term is used for both inter-organization and intra-organization initiatives. Gajda and Koliba write that

Nearly all major educational institutions, foundations, bargaining units, accrediting bodies and educational sponsors at all levels of schooling openly endorse *interpersonal practitioner collaboration* (emphasis added) as the most powerful strategy for sustained, substantive school improvement.

However, they also differentiate between strategic alliances among organizations and those among individuals.

Organizations form strategic alliances in order to achieve outcomes that could not be reached as independent agencies working alone (Austin, 2000); in parallel fashion, school-based CoPs (communities of practice) form between individual educators with the purpose of improving outcomes related to student learning.

For the purposes of this discussion of P-20 collaboration, the focus will be on collaboration between, among and within organizations. For ease of reference, these will occasionally be called “partnerships.”

Distinguishing Characteristics

A review of the literature on organizational collaboration makes it possible to identify ten distinguishing characteristics.

- 1) *Collaboration is intentional, planned and structured.*

Collaboration does not happen accidentally or without a specific commitment to do something. The formality and complexity of the structure may vary (see discussion of collaboration as a continuum in the next section), but there is an intentional decision to collaborate that precedes the actual “doing.” This has been described as “the time before the beginning....”

- 2) *Collaboration has one or more specific purposes that are carefully defined and commonly understood.*

Organizations decide to collaborate with others to achieve objectives that are important to them and that they could not achieve by acting independently. Those goals are to be clearly defined so that everyone involved will have a common understanding and shared acceptance of the *raison d'être* for the collaboration.

The requirements for P-20 collaboration funded through Title II establish four broad goals:

- a) Improving student academic achievement;
- b) Providing high-quality professional development for in-service teachers;
- c) Improving teacher preparation and the skills of new teachers; and
- d) Informing the understanding of collaboration as a means for achieving shared goals.

The goals specific to an individual P-20 collaboration are to be designed within that context, and they are to be aligned with locally identified needs and the local school improvement plan. The goals and priorities of the higher education partners should also be taken into consideration.

- 3) *Collaboration involves strategic activities specifically designed to achieve the goals and purposes.*

Collaboration is not intrinsically successful as a way to achieve identified goals and objectives. Instead, success largely depends on the appropriateness of the strategies or activities chosen by the collaboration partners. The activities engaged in through collaboration should be selected based on their probable impact on the goals and the extensive research about “what works.” They should also reflect best practices in the target area, such as professional development for inservice teachers.

The collaboration’s activities should address all of the goals, and each goal should be aligned with actions designed to achieve it. Prior Title II grants have focused on strategies for improving student performance and providing high-quality professional development. Although those goals will continue, the new emphasis on improving teacher preparation and informing state and local understanding of collaboration will require identification of strategies/activities that are specifically designed to achieve those goals.

- 4) *Collaboration involves multiple participating organizations and entities.*

By design, collaboration involves more than one organization or entity; the challenge is to engage the “right” participants. There is a tendency in education to involve almost

anyone with an interest in a topic or goal. Although the “big tent” approach may have some benefits, it is essential to the success of the collaboration to assure that all of the key players are identified and involved. This means those who have a vested interest in the outcome and who can have an impact on achieving the goals.

The participants in the proposed P-20 collaborations must include, at a minimum, a teacher education department in an institution of higher education, a school of arts and sciences, and a “high-need” school district. Federal regulations authorize a number of other potential participants and each collaborative will need to determine which of those may be equally critical to the success of the effort. As an example, the goals of the collaboration may make it necessary to involve the local community college.

5) *Collaboration involves shared responsibility for achieving the purposes or goals.*

The decision to collaborate with others to achieve shared or common goals is also a decision to share responsibility for the work and for the outcome. This in turn means a willingness to share the risks involved in the initiative, including the risk of failure.

The sign-offs on a grant application are often regarded as evidence that the respective participants have accepted the idea of shared responsibility for the project. However, that acceptance is superficial for the individual partners unless it reflects a belief that the goals and objectives are important and potentially beneficial to each of them. In other words, it is important for each partner to “have a horse in the race.”

One of the significant challenges for the proposed P-20 collaborations will be to engage the arts and sciences departments in these projects, as required by the grant specifications. The commitment of these departments to teacher preparation or inservice teacher professional development is often secondary to their other goals, and it may be difficult to obtain their full participation and involvement.

6) *Collaboration is based on parity among the participants.*

All of the participants in a collaborative should be equals in the enterprise. Although there should be differentiation of roles to take advantage of different perspectives and talents, the collaboration should be structured and operated in ways that acknowledge and support parity among the participants, each of whom has a stake in the outcome.

The parity issue is particularly important in relation to planning and decision-making. All partners need to be involved in decision-making about critical matters such as the goals and strategies for the initiative.

P-20 collaboration faces the historical perception that K-12 is “lower” education and college and universities provide “higher education.” This hierarchical relationship may be exacerbated by the fact that only a higher education institution may serve as the fiscal agent for the project. Achieving common goals will be difficult if this historical and hierarchical view is built into either the structure or operation of the collaboration.

7) *Collaboration involves interpersonal interaction.*

Although “collaboration” occurs between and among organizations, its implementation involves interaction among individuals who represent those organizations. Many collaboration theorists suggest that the nature of this personal dimension is the most important factor in determining the success of the initiative.

8) *Collaboration involves sharing of resources.*

Sharing of resources is a fundamental tenet of collaboration and one of its primary benefits. In a time of limited resources, pooling money, time and talent can extend their impact and avoid duplication of effort. The extent to which resources are to be shared should be determined in the planning stages, and resource commitments may be different in kind and degree.

9) *Collaboration develops in stages.*

The literature on organizational change indicates that the work of a collaboration or strategic alliance will pass through four or five relatively predictable stages. These developmental stages have been characterized as “form, storm, norm and perform” and, alternatively, as “assemble, order, perform, and transform.”

According to Gajda, participants gather during the first stage to ask about the value of the proposed enterprise and come to agreement on its purpose(s). The second stage is typically the most interpersonally intense, as each member of the collaboration seeks to establish his or her role and the norms and strategies of the collaborative effort are determined. During the third stage, participants perform the work of the collaborative, and in the fourth stage, they use evaluation and assessment data to determine what modifications need to be made. At some point thereafter, the collaboration is transformed or adjourned.

10) *Collaboration is unique to the context.*

Although collaborations may be developed or replicated around successful models, the character and design of each collaborative depends on its goals, its participants, its environment and a myriad of other variables. Each collaboration should be one-of-a-kind.

Collaboration as a Continuum

One of the best ways to understand collaboration is to recognize that, in practice, it occurs along a continuum.

Gajda writes that

Literature on strategic alliance development strongly supports the notion that there are varying degrees and types of linkages that develop between agencies that seek to work together. Most collaboration theorists contend that collaborative efforts fall across a continuum of low to high integration. The level of integration is determined by the intensity of the alliance's process, structure and purpose.

This view of collaboration as a continuum means that the distinguishing characteristics described above are present to varying degrees --- or may not be present at all.

Peterson has identified three distinct states of interaction among organizations:

<u>Cooperation</u>	<u>Coordination</u>	<u>Collaboration</u>
Fully independent groups share information that supports each others organizational outcomes	Independent parties align activities and cosponsor events or services that support mutually beneficial goals	Individual entities give up some degree of independence in an effort to realize a shared goal

This differentiation is based on the degree of partner autonomy or integration in working together and it provides a useful way to examine relationships between and among the partners. Are they working with each other or parallel to each other?

This view supports the idea that there may be significant differences in the degree of integration from one collaborative group to another. Hogue and others have proposed four-stage typologies based on the collaboration's purpose, structure for decision making and the nature of leadership. Gajda's level-of-integration model uses five stages – networking, cooperating, partnering, merging and unifying – to differentiate according to the collaboration's purpose, tasks and organizational strategies, leadership and decision making and type and frequency of communication. Figure 1 depicts these levels in operational terms.

Figure 1

Strategic Alliance Formative Assessment Rubric (SAFAR)

Level of Integration	Purpose	Strategies and Tasks	Leadership and Decision Making	Interpersonal and Communication
Networking (1)	<p>Create a web of communication</p> <p>Identify and create a base of support</p> <p>Explore interests</p>	<p>Loose or no structure</p> <p>Flexible roles not defined</p> <p>Few if any defined tasks</p>	<p>Non-hierarchical</p> <p>Flexible</p> <p>Minimal or no group decision making</p>	<p>Very little interpersonal conflict</p> <p>Communication among all members infrequent or absent</p>
Cooperating (2)	<p>Work together to ensure tasks are done</p> <p>Leverage or raise Money</p> <p>Identify mutual needs but maintain separate identities</p>	<p>Member links are advisory</p> <p>Minimal structure</p> <p>Some strategies and tasks identified</p>	<p>Non-hierarchical decisions attend to be low-stakes</p> <p>Facilitative leaders, usually voluntary</p> <p>Several people form “go-to” hub</p>	<p>Some degree of personal commitment and investment</p> <p>Minimal interpersonal conflict</p> <p>Communication among members clear but may be informal</p>
Partnering (3)	<p>Share resources to address common issues</p> <p>Organizations remain autonomous but support something new</p> <p>To reach mutual goals together</p>	<p>Strategies and tasks are developed and maintained</p> <p>Central body of people</p> <p>Central body of people have specific tasks</p>	<p>Autonomous leadership</p> <p>Alliance members share equally in decision making</p> <p>Decision making mechanisms are in place</p>	<p>Some interpersonal conflict</p> <p>Communication system and formal information channels developed</p> <p>Evidence of problem solving and productivity</p>
Merging (4)	<p>Merge resources to create or support something new</p> <p>Extract money from existing systems/ members</p> <p>Commitment for a long period of time to achieve short and long term outcomes</p>	<p>Formal structure to support strategies and tasks is apparent</p> <p>Specific and complex strategies and tasks identified</p> <p>Committees and sub-committees formed</p>	<p>Strong visible leadership</p> <p>Sharing and delegation of roles and responsibilities</p> <p>Leadership capitalizes upon diversity and organizational strengths</p>	<p>Possibility of interpersonal conflict high</p> <p>Communication is clear, frequent and prioritized</p> <p>High degree of problem solving and productivity</p>
Unifying (5)	<p>Unification or acquisition to form a single structure</p> <p>Relinquishment of autonomy to support surviving organization</p>	<p>Highly formal, legally complex</p> <p>Permanent reorganization of strategies and tasks</p>	<p>Central typically hierarchical leadership</p> <p>Leadership capitalizes upon diversity and organizational strengths</p>	<p>Possibility of interpersonal conflict very high</p> <p>Communication is clear, frequent prioritized, formal and informal</p>

Richard W. Clark avoids the definitional dangers of other classification systems by describing professional development school partnerships as simply Types I – IV. He notes that three variables – purpose/function, structure and support mechanisms – are central to the functioning of a partnership and that there is significant variation with regard to the breadth, complexity and quality of each of these elements and the relationships among them.

Type I partnerships have a single, narrow purpose, few participants, and few support resources.

Type II partnerships have moderate purposes, several, and modest but sufficient support systems.

Type III partnerships have broad purposes, many partners and considerable support.

Type IV partnerships are mixed, with levels of support or structures that differ from the level of their purpose or function.

Over time, collaboration among universities and P-12 schools in Illinois has usually been at the two lower ends of the continuum. Clark provides an important caveat, noting the following.

The purpose or function of a collaboration can be achieved only if structure and support mechanisms of the partnership are of equal or greater breadth; in other words, partnership structures and support mechanisms must provide a scaffold sufficient to support the vision, purpose and function of the partnership.

Partnerships that begin as one type can change to a different type but will succeed only if they conform to the idea that a structure should be aligned to the goals.

Professional Development Schools

Professional Development Schools are widely regarded as the gold standard for P-20 collaboration, with multiple purposes, complex structures and a high level of integration among the partners.

Professional Development Schools (PDS) are innovative institutions formed through partnerships between professional education programs and P-12 schools. They are a product of the 1980's and are often described as the educational equivalent of the teaching hospital used in the medical school model. In fact, the initial emphasis of PDSs was on providing an environment in which preservice teacher candidates would have an exceptional and often extended clinical experience. However, as PDSs have evolved, they have increasingly focused on the integration of theory and practice. They are now designed to simultaneously support preservice education, inservice teacher professional growth and development, continuing professional development of university faculty, and the use of inquiry to promote the improvement of teaching and learning.

The NCATE Standards for Professional Development Schools include “collaboration” as a condition for accreditation.

Standard III: Collaboration

PDS partners and partner institutions systematically move from independent to interdependent practice by committing themselves and committing to each other to engage in joint work focused on implementing the PDS mission. They collaboratively design roles and structures to support the PDS work and individual and institutional parity. PDS partners use their shared work to improve outcomes for P-12 students, candidates, faculty and other professionals. The PDS partnership systematically recognizes and celebrates their joint work and the contributions of each partner.

When this standard is met, “the mission of the PDS partnership is integrated into the partnering institutions, PDS work is expected and supported, and reflects what is known about the best practices.” However, the NCATE Developmental Guidelines for Professional Development Schools reflect awareness that this condition cannot be achieved without a substantial amount of time and effort. At the “beginning” stage, “beliefs, verbal commitments, plans, organizations and initial work are consistent with the mission of the PDS partnerships.” At the “developing” stage, “the PDS partners pursue the mission of a PDS partnership with partial institutional support.”

Over the past decade, several of the major teacher preparation institutions in the state have initiated one or more PDSs; these represent a variety of models based on institutional and local school district needs and interests. The Governor’s new education plan, as represented in SB 0001, calls for the State Board of Education and the Board of Higher Education to jointly develop a pilot program to establish high quality Professional Development Schools in compliance with NCAE standards and guidelines developed by the two state agencies. The legislation emphasizes collaboration by indicating that

University and prekindergarten through grade 12 educators shall share governance of Professional Development Schools through collaborative planning and decision-making to address the needs of prekindergarten through grade 12 programs and teacher preparation programs.

Professional Development Schools are at the far end of the collaboration continuum, and there is no expectation that every P-20 partnership in Illinois will move in this direction. However, data collection mechanisms provided for in the legislation can be expected to inform the state about the nature of exemplary collaboration where ever it may occur on the continuum.

Considerations for Successful Collaboration

Several authors have examined the factors that appear critical to making collaboration work. The findings of one of these studies, a meta-ethnography of twelve Professional Development Schools, are particularly relevant to an understanding of P-20 collaboration.

That review identified the following factors as having a significant effect on the success or failure of a collaborative effort.

1) Willingness to collaborate

In a collaborative effort, participants have to abandon their traditional roles and work together in new ways. It takes time and the initiative may be seen as just one more thing being forced upon them. Participants who volunteer or are selected for participation through some sort of competition are more likely to be willing to collaborate.

2) Prior relationships and attitudes

Organizations and individuals enter a collaborative relationship with a history – even if it is a history of limited interaction. The prior relationships and attitudes of the participants can significantly shape the degree to which they engage in or resist the collaborative process.

3) Sustaining funding

Education is an environment of budget uncertainty, with changing priorities and budget modifications the norm for most P-20 institutions. The uncertainty of being able to sustain funding for an initiative can color the view of participants about the future of the collaboration and the value of spending time and effort on it.

4) Lack of formalization

A collaboration is a new structure that needs some kind of formal structure. Policies, rules and regulations are needed to assure that expectations are shared and behaviors are consistent with the direction or goals.

5) Issues of parity and control

Universities often have trouble letting go of the control and power that is inherent in their traditional relationship to the P-12 system. Faculty also finds it difficult to change from their roles as “instructors” who expect their “students” to complete work “as assigned.”

6) The importance of the principal

The attitudes and activities of the principal of participating local schools can have a dramatic impact on the success of a collaboration. A supportive principal typically allows leadership to be shared and makes the work of the collaborative group a priority. A principal who is not supportive tends to be passive and uninvolved, positions which can undermine the collaboration.

7) Communication

Virtually all analyses of the factors that contribute to the success of a collaboration emphasize the critical importance of formal and informal communication. The development of a collaborative creates expectations and often leads to assumptions that may or may not be true. Throughout the life of the collaborative effort, participants must communicate with one another to assure that these expectations and assumptions do not undermine the work. As one teacher said, “If you don’t have a chance to talk and be together, then you can have misunderstandings that take the collaboration apart.”

Communication is important on an interpersonal level as well as a cognitive one. Communication can build trust and confidence among the participants.

8) Intra-organizational stress

Although the focus of attention in a collaboration is between and among organizations, the attitudes and actions within the separate systems can be equally crucial to the success of the collaborative effort. Individuals and groups (e.g., schools, departments) who are not participating in the collaboration may be threatened by the initiative, or they may see it as in conflict with other priorities or long-standing commitments. The collaboration never starts with a blank slate, but is instead created against a background of issues within the separate systems.

9) Conflicting goals between organizations

Traditionally, universities are primarily interested in training teachers and utilizing best practices in education. P-12 schools are primarily interested in the learning of their students and school-specific initiatives that influence their standing with other schools. Bridging that basic difference in goals is essential to creating a common purpose.

10) Initial distrust and skepticism

Participants in a collaboration often feel a lack of trust in the beginning, as well as a sense of skepticism about the need and/or value of the project. The talking and planning that is intended to create a direction for the effort can be perceived as wheel-spinning and a lack of progress.

11) Importance of key individuals

“Boundary spanners” are those individuals who, regardless of title, can motivate and communicate others. They can facilitate relationships and make or break the operation of the collaboration. It is important that these people be identified and involved.

12) Importance of informal meetings

The existence of planned but informal meetings is an important complement to the formal activities of the collaborative partnership. These events – a potluck dinner, monthly breakfast meetings, etc. – promote relationships, trust and communication and therefore should be nurtured.

Another review of the research literature (Mattessich and Monsey) identified 19 factors that contribute to the success of collaboration (see Figure 2). Some of these factors are similar to those identified through the PDS meta-ethnography study, while others represent new dimensions to an understanding of collaboration.

The authors of this study organized the success factors according to six categories: environment, membership characteristics, process/structure, communications, purpose and resources. These categories provide useful points of reference for organizing and evaluating the status of collaboration.

The authors also designated the number of studies in which the respective factors had been identified. These numbers are represented by an asterisk in Figure 2. Although the authors warn not to judge the importance of a factor by the number times it has been identified in the included studies, it is apparent that most studies have examined issues related to communication and interpersonal relations.

A third source of information about factors important to the success of collaboration is Richard Evans' book on Professional Development Schools. The following points in that book either supplement or give added emphasis to the factors previously identified.

- Partnerships succeed only when participants have the same clear understanding of the collaboration's purpose and function.
- There must be a sufficient number of individual participants who are thoroughly familiar with the agenda of the partnership in order to achieve the goals and sustain the work in the face of the inevitable turnovers in key positions.
- Individuals engaged in partnership activities must be engaged in authentic ways. Of particular importance is the involvement of teachers in the planning and delivery of professional development.
- Partnerships that move beyond the initial stages tend to have effective mechanisms for evaluating their progress and use these evaluations to help them make corrections.

Perspectives on the Development of a Collaboration

Research and experience have demonstrated that collaboration is difficult; it takes thoughtful planning, sensitive implementation, and an investment of that most precious of educational commodities – time. To make it work and be worthwhile, potential partners need to consider three issues related to the continuum of collaboration.

- 1) What level of collaboration – particularly integration – is necessary to support the purposes and goals of the partnership? What would it look like?
- 2) What actions are needed to bring about or maintain that ideal level of collaboration/integration?
- 3) What evidence would indicate that the desired level of integration has been reached?

Potential partners in a collaborative effort also need to do the following.

- Focus on the purpose of this collaboration, even while learning from other partnerships.
- Analyze the history of inter-institutional relationships – what worked? What were the challenges? What else is happening at same time as this initiative?
- Review the organizational mandates and cultures of the participating organizations.
- Define roles within the collaboration, particularly those crossing organizational boundaries.
- Address potential operational challenges such the consistency of commitment and the timelines for action.
- Recognize that each participating organization and each individual participant is part of many other partnerships, with concentric rings of relationships; plan how to inform and engage others in various organizations of the alliance.
- Determine realistic costs for alliance management, staff time and communications.
- Develop common communication strategies such as branding, joint publishing protocols, etc.; identify audiences, messages, vehicles and tactics for alliance work.

Existing partnerships that want to strengthen their collaboration will need to “formalize the informal,” using the suggestions for launching or developing collaborations (above) and the collaboration overview (Figure 3) as points of reference.

Figure 2

Factors Influencing the Success of Collaboration

Factors related to the Environment

1. History of collaboration or cooperation *****
2. Collaborative group seen as a leader ***
3. Political/social climate favorable ***

Factors related to Membership Characteristics

4. Mutual respect, understanding and trust *****
5. Appropriate cross-section of members *****
6. Members see collaboration as in their self-interest *****
7. Ability to compromise ***

Factors related to Process/Structure

8. Members share a stake in both process and outcome *****
9. Multiple layers of decision-making *****
10. Flexibility ****
11. Development of clear roles and policy guidelines ****
12. Adaptability ***

Factors related to Communication

13. Open and frequent communication *****
14. Established informal and formal communication links *****

Factors related to Purpose

15. Concrete, attainable goals and objectives *****
16. Shared vision ****
17. Unique purpose ***

Factors related to Resources

18. Sufficient funds *****
19. Skilled convener *****

Figure 3

Collaboration Overview

Collaboration Factors	Collaboration Characteristics
Purpose and Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearly stated • Include required and desired objectives • Aligned with local and institutional plans and priorities • Commonly understood and accepted • Provide perceived benefit for all
Membership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Includes required organizations • Includes other organizations necessary for success • Involves key players who can impact the outcome and/or the process
Structure and Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal written structure and policies are developed and observed • Parity exists among members, particularly for planning and decision-making • Roles are defined, especially across organizational boundaries • Includes formative and summative evaluation
Strategies/Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aligned directly to purpose and goals • Reflect research about what works and best practices • Comprehensive/inclusive of the goals • Modified and adapted as appropriate
Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledges factors and circumstances unique to the initiative • Recognizes complementary and competing factors
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal and informal • Planned and monitored for effectiveness • Acknowledges breadth and depth of interested parties
Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dedicated and continuing • Sufficient for activities • Shared by participants based on plan

Summary and Conclusions

Collaboration is a process and a structure which organizations use to work together toward goals the partners could not achieve by themselves.

Collaboration has identifiable characteristics that are present with varying degrees of complexity and sophistication, creating a continuum of collaboration models. Although there is broad agreement that the Professional Development School model is the gold standard for P-20 collaboration, many other high-quality collaboration models can and have been developed to respond to the uniqueness of each situation.

Collaboration can be extremely challenging; however, the factors that contribute to the success of a collaborative effort have been well documented and can be built into the structure and process adopted by the partners.

P-20 collaboration is filled with special challenges resulting from the desire to bring together organizations with a common framework – education – but differing histories, purposes, cultures and norms. At the same time, P-20 collaboration offers important opportunities to address system reform, the improvement of student achievement and the improvement of teacher preparation and continuous professional development. These potential benefits make the difficult effort worthwhile.

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