Retaining and Revitalizing Educators

Alan J. Reiman,
Doris Terry Williams, and Sandra DeAngelis Peace

The issues of recruitment, retention, and revitalization of teachers and other educators continue to be in the forefront for school systems, universities, and the community at large. A collaborative approach to addressing these pressing needs appears to be essential as stakeholders look for systemic solutions. Thus we are aware of the potential of the partnership between North Carolina State University’s Model Clinical Teaching Program and North Carolina Central University’s Teacher Education Program, and the strong relationships that both programs have with public schools. Our two programs share commitments and a language for promoting students’ and educators’ knowledge, performance, and development (see “Integrated Learning Framework,” page 2, for our guiding principles.) The commitments include designing curriculum and offering new roles that revitalize experienced educators as mentors, mentor educators, and peer coaches, while supporting beginners—student teachers, interns, first-year teachers, counselors, psychologists, and social workers.

As part of our collaborative relationship, university representatives and school system leaders have planned the 2000–2001 network meetings and identified the theme “Educator Development across the Professional Lifespan.” In response to feedback from last spring’s meeting, which indicated a desire for even more opportunities for interaction and information, at this year’s meetings, we will offer a variety of sessions during a full day.

We are excited that the fall meeting will take place at NCCU’s School of Education building, a state-of-the-art facility that opened this fall. This issue features an overview of how NCCU’s School of Education is transforming its teacher education program and its links to school partnerships.

The N.C. State University Centennial Campus Middle School opened this fall as well. “Recruiting and Retaining Great Teachers” offers a glimpse of one of the school’s first-year teachers and captures some of his initial impressions. Retention and revitalization issues resonate in this piece.

This issue also includes updates on the Triangle East Partners in Education program and the new Coach2Coach Program. They provide insights about the different ways in which school systems are being supported in their goal of helping novices and mentors enhance student development.

A summary of collaborative action research follows, as another example of a revitalizing role for educators.
In closing, we want to welcome Kathryn Moore, new dean of N.C. State University’s College of Education and Psychology, to our network. Her commitment to recruitment, retention, and revitalization of educators already is apparent.

### Integrated Learning Framework

**Steps for Enhancing Knowledge and Performance**

- * Assess prior knowledge
- 1. Describe theory, provide rationale
- 2. Demonstrate
- 3. Practice with feedback
- 4. Adapt & generalize
- * Assess competence

**Conditions for Promoting Development**

- 1. Significant new experience
- 2. Guided reflection & analysis
- 3. Balance between experience & reflection
- 4. Support & challenge
- 5. Continuity


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**Promoting Development across the Professional Lifespan**

Sharon Spencer and Doris Terry Williams

WE’VE BEEN SUCCESSFUL in convincing our publics and our policy makers of the importance of recruiting good teachers for our nation’s classrooms. We face a tougher challenge, however, in getting them to understand that the retention and the revitalization of those teachers are every bit as important. This is why we are beginning to have much more conversation about improving the conditions of teaching and about an approach to the design of professional development that is, more often than not, teacher led and teacher driven. Although the most intense focus now is on the need for teachers, because of the current shortage of qualified teachers, the principle holds for school counselors, administrators, and others who work with children in our public schools.—Sammie Campbell Parrish, dean, School of Education, North Carolina Central University

The School of Education at North Carolina Central University has long demonstrated a commitment to using a collaborative approach with critical friends in the public schools to recruit, retain, and revitalize educators. However, in recent years, there has been a more concerted effort on many fronts and in many programs, both undergraduate and graduate. Following are five examples of that kind of collaboration.

**Cooperating Teacher Institute and Mentor Educator Program**

Dr. Sharon Spencer, Dr. Sheila Belfon, Mrs. Florine Moore (Pearson town Elementary School), and Ms. Ferdonia Brown (C. C. Spaulding Biosphere Magnet School)

Based on the N.C. State University Model Clinical Teaching Program, the four-day Cooperating Teacher Institute introduces participants to all the major components of the program: helping relationships, effective listening skills, instructional planning, adult development theory, clinical supervision, and cycles of assistance. Although this is a condensed version of the two-semester mentoring and supervision course and practicum, participants are actively engaged in practicing the skills necessary for effectively promoting growth in novice teachers.

The institute already has been offered twice, introducing 18 teachers to the model and increasing the pool of cooperating teachers who “speak the same language.” Additionally, about 5 teachers have received full mentor training.

Although some changes in faculty at the sites have actually decreased the number of fully trained mentors, the exciting news is that we will be offering the two-semester mentoring and supervision course and practicum beginning in Spring 2001. The course and practicum, called Teachers as Leaders I and Teachers as Leaders II, respectively, are part of our new master’s degree program. We believe that Teachers as Leaders is a fitting name for the high level of professional growth and development that comes through the Model Clinical Teaching Program.
Professional Development Schools—Continuing to Grow

Pearsontown Elementary School and C. C. Spaulding Biosphere Magnet School

Most elementary education interns are placed at two professional development schools (PDSs), Pearsontown Elementary School and C. C. Spaulding Biosphere Magnet School. University faculty members are on site approximately two days per week. There has been training of mentors at the sites through the four-day Cooperating Teacher Institute described earlier. This training helps redefine the role of cooperating teacher as more mentor than evaluator. On-site educators with the full mentor training also are used as cooperating teachers, liaisons, and site-based seminar leaders. Working closely with the cooperating teachers and site-based liaisons and seminar leaders provides a stronger support system for the interns in the school.

Additionally, at Pearsontown Elementary School, which is a year-round school, interns provide a valuable service while honing their own teaching skills by teaching enrichment classes during intersession and conducting a Saturday Academy for Level I and Level II students. Data on Saturday Academy students show significant improvements in mathematics and reading, evidence of the positive impact of preservice interns on student achievement.

Governor Morehead School

NCCU’s Visual Impairment Program faculty spend most of their time at another PDS, Governor Morehead School, as an integral part of the school environment. One faculty member is on site 100% of the time this semester; the other faculty member is there approximately 75% of the time. All courses in the Visual Impairment Program are taught at the PDS on Fridays and Saturdays because this PDS meets statewide needs for preparation in working with visually impaired students.

Teacher Work Samples

Dr. Laura Onafowora

The Teacher Work Samples Project reflects a continuum of collaboration and support for teachers in five low-performing schools. Under the guidance of Dr. Laura Onafowora, classroom teachers meet regularly to review the work and the assessments that they give their students and to use the results of their assessments to improve their teaching. Assessment tools, including benchmark tests based on the Standard Course of Study, are analyzed against Bloom’s taxonomy with the view of determining if teachers are challenging students to engage in higher-order thinking.

Middle School Achievement Program

Dr. Pamela George

A partnership among a faculty member, a middle-grades team of teachers, and a principal, the North Carolina Middle School Achievement Program (NCMSAP) provides an effective, research-based model for teaching and learning. The model demonstrates that all students can learn, regardless of learning styles, differences, and needs. Further, it demonstrates how whole schools can reach higher levels of student achievement and move to a higher level of performance as defined by the State’s Accountability Model. This project is particularly exciting because the teachers and the administrator who have partnered with NCCU faculty member Pamela George are all graduates of NCCU’s teacher education program. The North Carolina Middle School Association has published the work of the team in Beyond the Topic of the Month: The Exemplary Middle School (North Carolina Middle School Association Monograph No. 11).
Community Partners

*Dr. Ellen Bacon*

In partnership with Durham Public Schools and the Wright Re-Education Program, the Community Partners project developed five schoolwide programs for students diagnosed with emotional behavior disorder and students who may have behavior problems but have not been diagnosed as having emotional behavior disorder. These plans now are being implemented with schoolwide instruction in discipline, conflict mediation, parent involvement, and student involvement in the community.

In conclusion, NCCU continues to transform teacher education through collaborative approaches and strong public school partnerships. Classroom teachers play significant roles in our partnership work, whether through teaching, service and support, or research and scholarly activities. It appears that NCCU really is bridging the gap between schools of education and education in the schools. The examples cited here do not reflect all the work that NCCU is doing, but they are representative of our vision and the quality of the programs.

Now we are proud and excited to offer a spacious new facility, the School of Education building, to host partnership activities. We opened the doors in fall 2000. The Teacher Education Wing houses a Partnership Office for the use of teachers and other school partners. As partners with the N.C. State University Model Clinical Teaching Program and Mentor Educators Network, we are especially pleased to host the Mentor Educators Network Fall 2000 Conference in our new building.

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** Recruiting and Retaining Great Teachers **

*Alan J. Reiman*

**It is early September. The leaves on the trees are fringed with gold and vermilion.** The summer heat has surrendered to milder temperatures. And the public schools are in full swing.

In a classroom at Centennial Campus Middle School in Raleigh, North Carolina, the perennial debate about what can be done to improve schools is being answered during third period. It doesn’t matter that the children in this classroom are all new to the school, or that some blue-ribbon education commission in Washington, D.C., is unveiling a new plan for transforming the public schools. What matters is that the teacher, Daniel Trimpey, cares about students and has a commitment to become a great teacher.

You see, Daniel is a first-year teacher. Having completed an undergraduate degree in the Department of Math, Science, and Technology Education at N.C. State University, Daniel is beginning what he hopes will be a long and rich career as a technology teacher.

“We need to discuss the expectations of this next assignment,” he begins. “As you know, I want you to use the graphics package to produce a computer copy of the floor plans you drew yesterday.”

Daniel then launches into an introduction of the assignment, pacing, demonstrating, checking to see if the students understand. His presentation is clear, succinct, and focused. It is obvious that he has given some careful thought to this lesson.

“At the end of this lesson,” he says, “you should be able to use your computer to complete a house design.” He asks if there are any questions. Several hands shoot up. A student asks for clarification: “Would you repeat how we install the program?”
Daniel smiles and then provides the needed information. His lesson and his directions are clear and purposeful. At one point he asks a student to help him pass out written copies of the assignment.

“Okay,” he says, “you can now begin to develop your designs on a computer.” The students move to the computers and begin to work. Daniel monitors their progress, commenting on different aspects of their designs. He feels gratified as he observes how engaged and how competent the students are.

Down the hall and upstairs, seven other teachers are starting their careers at the school. According to Cindy Privette, they are an inspired lot, committed to making a difference in middle school students’ lives. Principal Ken Branch readily acknowledges that these teachers have worked very hard to make the opening a smooth one filled with purpose, commitment, and learning.

There is much debate about the essential ingredients of a good school, and the litany of proffered possibilities seems endless in this election year: more parent involvement, more and better computers, more and higher standards, school vouchers, smaller class sizes, more testing, and on and on and on. But expert opinion and research now are converging. Everyone appears to agree that good schools have good teachers. Unfortunately there still is a lack of consensus about what constitutes good teaching.

Although colleges are increasing the number of quality field experiences, and states are increasing the expectations and the standards for teachers, there is too little acknowledgment of other essential teacher dispositions. The society doesn’t do enough to reward passion, creativity, flexibility, empathy, or principles. But the tectonic plates are shifting.

The Centennial Campus Middle School has a cadre of highly skilled mentor teachers to assist and coach new teachers such as Daniel. “I have received a lot of support from my mentor, as well as the principal,” says Daniel. “My mentor has helped me prepare lessons, and she gives me a lot of ideas about classroom management. I write reflections weekly. My mentor has observed my teaching and given me helpful feedback.”

Yet a number of the mentor teachers at the school are working with two beginning teachers. Their capabilities are stretched to meet the needs.

North Carolina is one of only a handful of states that support mentoring. As well, North Carolina is pioneering a performance-based licensure program for beginning teachers. Teachers will submit a compilation of authentic teaching tasks during their second year of teaching. They will include videotapes of lesson segments. They will include their own thoughtful analyses and reflections on these teaching episodes. In all of this, they will focus on learners, analyzing learners’ work and considering alternative methods that are more effective for some students than for others.

Assessing these beginning teacher products will be a daunting task. Some educators believe that the products will highlight learning, preparation, instruction, and the teachers’ passionate commitment to their learners. However, mentoring programs and performance-based licensure programs are expensive and labor-intensive. Yet in states that have committed resources to both programs, more teachers are being retained. As the profession and the public are learning, it is not enough simply to recruit new teachers to the profession. The profession also must retain and revitalize them. Right now Daniel says, “I feel fortunate to be in an environment where I can help kids.” North Carolina wants to keep teachers like Daniel in the profession.
Triangle East Partners in Education (TEPIE), a collaboration among N.C. State University, Cary and Smithfield Selma High Schools, Bunn and Cedar Creek Middle Schools, and the science departments of Apex High School and Martin Middle School, experienced an eventful 1999–2000. After a brief summer hiatus, the partnership is under way for 2000–2001. TEPIE looks to the future with renewed energy and commitment.

The 1999–2000 year began with new leadership as I became the TEPIE coordinator. Coming fresh from the classroom after a 23-year teaching career, I clearly understood the position of the classroom teachers involved in the partnership.

One of the most significant projects of the 1999–2000 year was the awarding of more than $30,000 in minigrants to the six partnership schools. Carryover funds from 1998–99 made these awards possible. Site coordinators and their committee chairs wrote proposals, an ad hoc committee reviewed the proposals, and the schools were able to move forward on their various projects.

Projects ranged from a one-day conference at Bunn Middle School, to a mobile computer station for the mathematics and science department at Martin Middle School, to a tutoring program for English and mathematics at Cary High School. The funds were well spent, and teachers and students at each site now are enjoying the benefits of the projects.

Fall 2000 has seen more transition for TEPIE. Julie Dwyer, assistant coordinator, completed her two years as Educator-in-Residence in May. Before her departure, TEPIE formed a search committee for a successor and, on the committee’s recommendation, hired Kelly Taft, former science teacher at Martin Middle School. Julie and Kelly worked closely together in the early summer to achieve a seamless transition in the TEPIE office. The partnership welcomes Kelly, who now is fully immersed in teaching ED 310 (a tutoring course) and working tirelessly for the good of the partnership.

With the new school year under way, TEPIE plans to expand its membership and to refocus on several of its original goals. Centennial Campus Middle School, which opened in July 2000 on N.C. State University’s Centennial Campus, will likely become a partnership site in the second semester. Early in 2000, Julie and I met with Ken Branch, principal, to lay the groundwork.

At its September meeting, TEPIE’s Coordinating Council agreed on two foci for this year. One will be to increase the level of collaboration, not only between the school sites and N.C. State University, but also among school sites. The partnership wants to tap the wealth of expertise in the schools. Cary High has begun a Student Teacher Institute; we hope that this idea will spread to other schools. The cooperating teachers at Smithfield Selma High will enter into a dialogue with the university field supervisors to increase the value added for both the school and the university programs.

The second focus will be to promote action research. Anna Wilson, faculty member in curriculum theory, will assist the schools in seeking answers to curriculum issues through action research projects. Although teachers constantly assess their methods and the results they produce, they often do so informally. Action research provides the means for teachers clearly to see evidence that should influence their choices of teaching strategies.

Clearly, TEPIE’s recent past, present, and future are filled with energy and change. The partnership is strengthening the close ties between the university community and the public schools and continues to commit itself to preparation of preservice teachers, support for inservice teachers, and most important, achievement of public school students.
Coach2Coach Teacher-in-Residence Program
Judy Lassiter and Rita Hagevik

As a result of a Federal Title II grant, The University of North Carolina General Administration and the State Department of Public Instruction have established the Coach2Coach Teacher-in-Residence Program. Its primary purpose is to support the continuum of professional development in teaching, from the preservice level through career status. Based at most University of North Carolina universities with teacher preparation programs, Teachers-in-Residence serve as liaisons between the universities and public schools and provide services in the universities’ service areas.

We are the Coach2Coach teachers based at N.C. State University. Some of the services that we can provide are as follows:

- Mini-sessions for school districts on support topics (effective teaching strategies or coaching skills)
- Mentor update training
- Consultation with school systems to support mentors and cooperating teachers
- Training for cooperating teachers
- Guest appearances in college classes related to education
- Resources to college faculty on topics related to mentoring

Activities currently taking place in area counties are mentor training in Franklin, Vance, Wake, and Warren counties and mentor update training in Johnston and Wake counties. Update training is planned for Granville and Moore counties.

Readers interested in information about performance-based licensure, including the product, should check this Web site: www.ncpublicschools.org/pbl.

Reviews of Books on Action Research
Paul Keene, Granville County

The spring issue of Connections will describe collaborative action research and its application to teacher professional development and mentoring. Following are short annotations of two recent books that examine a form of collaborative action research with applications to teaching.


This book is primarily aimed at preservice teachers. Chapter 8 is devoted to action research, in which a teacher “attempts to link public theory with her teaching practice” (p. 184). The authors point out that action research differs from other models of research by “seeking to directly link theory and practice” (p. 179). Action research, a cycle of action and reflection in which teaching and inquiry are one and the same, is an “integrative methodology” because it provides a vehicle for all previously discussed methodologies (p. 181). Bullough and Gitlin lament that action research doesn’t extend into inservice teaching; this deficit makes “a continuing conversation about theories embedded in educational practice difficult” (p. 181).

The authors outline an action research project in three parts:

1. Concern or issue identified, data collected, problem reformulated, problem statement written
2. Action plan written and implemented, data gathered

3. Plan assessed, recommendations made

Data collection methods can include peer observation, audiotaping, videotaping, and review of student work/feedback. The authors mention the challenge of identifying a problem that is not too broad (managing the classroom) or too trivial (saying “um”), and they provide examples of projects. Although the authors don’t use the language of adult development, the limitations of action research when used with student (and novice?) teachers could easily be put in developmental terms. “Action [r]esearch represents, formally, what reflective teacher researchers do informally, and that is study their own practice” (pp. 200–201).


This publication contains reports of four studies conducted over ten years by a university researcher and a classroom English teacher. The authors’ stated focus is the intersection of theory and practice, and they augment the studies, which tell stories from the classroom and the collaboration, with theoretical and philosophical discussions.