

If we are serious about excellence in education, every high school should have a "university in the school" program.

The relationships between public education and higher education: Neutrality, symbiosis or antagonism

by Richard E. Ishler

Current situation

In describing the relationships which currently exist between the public schools and higher education, neutrality, symbiosis and antagonism are all applicable.

1. **Neutrality**—one of the dictionary definitions is "a state of disengagement." This probably is the best definition of the current relationships. We don't pay much attention to one another. The schools do their own thing and higher education tends to ignore them except for "college nights" when we try to entice "their" students to become "our" students. Conversely, public schools tend to think of higher education folks as "ivory towerish," unapproachable, steeped in theory and totally unfamiliar with the real world of the classroom.
2. **Symbiosis**—The dictionary defines symbiosis as the living together of two dissimilar organisms in close association or union, especially where this is advantageous to both. Clearly, schools and universities are dissimilar organizations, and this term

cannot be used to describe the current relationships between lower and higher education. I will make the case later that this could and should be the type of relationship which we must strive for and one which would be advantageous both to the public schools and to higher education.

3. **Antagonism**—Webster defines antagonism as the state of being in active opposition to someone or something. This term may be a little too strong to adequately describe the current relationships between schools and universities, primarily because the opposition to one another is more passive than active. Dr. Richard Lyman, until recently the President of the Rockefeller Foundation, said "One reason why the dividing line between schools and universities in this country so often seems more like a grand canyon than a grade crossing is because secondary school teachers and scholars have so little sense of being involved in a common enterprise." Therein lies the problem. Today with more than 50 percent of all high school graduates going on to college, an antagonistic relationship between schools and universities is detrimental to our youth.

Relationships between schools and universities for teacher education programs

Most formal relationships which exist today between schools and universities are for the purpose of providing laboratories for field experiences for teacher education programs. While these arrangements are useful and beneficial for teacher training programs, they leave much to be desired, i.e., they are necessary but not sufficient. Most are not really "cooperative" arrangements, but rather they are controlled by the schools. While the schools could, and some do, benefit greatly as a result of having college students at various levels of training (observers, participants, student teachers, interns) available to assist in the educational process, the following conditions prevail:

1. University students and university professors are considered to be "guests" in the school and are not treated as partners.
2. Many public school teachers view university students, particularly observers and participants, as a nuisance and do not take advantage of their expertise to assist them in teaching the children in their classrooms. There are few efforts to recognize that these people can make a contribution to the teaching/learning process. But teachers do complain about not being able to individualize education for their students.
3. Many "excellent" teachers will not accept student teachers because they perceive them as liabilities rather than assets in their classrooms. This is particularly appalling because research clearly indicates that the cooperating teacher is the single most important influence in shaping behaviors of student teachers. Furthermore, student teachers adopt the teaching behaviors of cooperating teachers and, thus, it behooves us to place student teachers with the best teachers in the school.
4. University supervisors of student teachers spend a great deal of time in the public schools, but if they give advice or are in any way critical of curriculum

Richard E. Ishler is dean of the school of Education and Psychology at Emporia State University.

or teaching methodologies, they are not very welcome in the school. School people often resent being told how to do something in a different and perhaps better way.

Need for cooperative working relationships

Most public universities have an open admissions policy. This means that any student who makes it through high school has the right and indeed the privilege to enter a public university. Today nearly 80 percent of the students finish high school. Hence, we receive students of all abilities and of all degrees of preparedness to do college work. We can take one of two different positions regarding this reality:

1. We can take their money, or their parents' money, maintain our standards, and say "tough" if they don't succeed. And, of course, many will not succeed even if we provide remedial education for all who are in need of it.
2. Or we can establish collaborative programs with public schools to improve the education of college-bound students. It's such a simple point—and yet in recent years this school/college relationship has been essentially ignored. We've pretended that we could have quality in higher education without working with the schools which are, in fact, the foundation of everything we do.

My premise is that schools and universities must begin to work together to improve the educational system—elementary school through graduate education. But, the relationship must be truly cooperative because the University people cannot simply tell the elementary and secondary teachers what to do.

Principles for building bridges between public school and higher education

The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching is undertaking a major project in school/college partnerships, and Ernest Boyer, (1981), President, says the following principles are absolutely crucial if we hope to build bridges between secondary and higher education:

1. **Educators at both levels must agree that they do indeed have common problems.** Knute Rockne once said to his football team at Notre Dame at their first practice, "We are going to start with the basics. Gentlemen, this is a football." This is how basic this principle is!
Since the mid 1960s, the verbal and mathematics SAT scores have gone down; as have ACT scores in English, social science and mathematics; the Iowa test scores have declined in all areas for grades nine through twelve; National Assessment for Educational Progress data show declines in science at each age level and a decline in writing skills at ages 13 and 17. Ironically, a recent Kettering Foundation survey revealed that 50 percent of the students in the elementary grades and 25 percent of the high school students feel that they are not being asked to work hard enough in school.
2. **The traditional academic "pecking order" must be overcome.** For many years colleges and universities have had a "plantation mentality" about the schools. Higher education set the ground rules and the schools were expected to passively go along. Consider, for example, that teachers, principals

and superintendents are rarely consulted when admission requirements (or graduation) are set even though they may have an impact on the public school curriculum. Ways must be found to bring educators at all levels together and break down the ivory tower vis-a-vis workers in the vineyards attitudes.

3. **If Collaboration Is To Succeed, The Projects It Fosters Must Be Sharply Focused.** It is important that goals be clearly delineated and that projects initially be limited to one or two. Some of the successful collaboration efforts have started with curricular areas like English and calculus where courses in the last year of high school and the first year of college overlap.
4. **Those who participate in collaborative activities must get recognition and rewards.** Such rewards for successful projects include giving adjunct professor status to certain high school teachers, tuition reduction and university personnel receiving service credit toward tenure, promotion and salary increases.
5. **Collaboration must focus on action, not machinery.** The most successful school/college programs are those for which people see a need and find time to act, with little-red-tape or extra funding. Consider the powerful impact on schools and on public attitudes if each college across the land were to have at least one department work with a high school or two on upgrading some program activity in music, in language, in science, or in the visual arts. And much of this can be done without elaborate arrangements and extensive funding.

Examples of collaborative efforts between schools and universities

The following are examples of possibilities for schools and universities to begin their collaborative arrangements:

1. Personnel from school districts and universities work together to develop curriculum in the various subject areas, articulation of curriculum K through college.
2. A university could "adopt" a school which sends large groups of students to it particularly if those students are not generally well prepared. They can collaborate to improve the skills of college-bound students.
3. Universities can teach freshman level courses to college-bound high school students in the local high school. This can become an honors program at the high school.
4. Project Advance at Syracuse University (1981) is the largest program in the U.S. offering the high schools regular college courses for credit, taught by high school (not university) faculty. SUPA was initiated in 1973 in six Syracuse high schools but in 1980-81, served 76 high schools and 4,000 students in New York, Massachusetts, Michigan and New Jersey. High school students take courses in biology, calculus, chemistry, English, psychology, religion and sociology which are transferable to any college or university. These courses are taught by high school teachers trained by Syracuse University and supervised by professors of appropriate

departments. Evaluations have shown that these students who are generally in the top 20 percent of their class, do as well as or better than college freshmen who take the same course on the university campus. This program has been so successful that Syracuse is getting calls from high schools across the country wanting to participate. If we are truly serious about excellence in education, there should be a "university in the schools" program in every high school; and the local college or university should be directing them. Such programs would not only help gifted students but would also bring recognition to gifted teachers.

5. Exchange of Consultants or Resource Personnel. University faculty could be available to schools and public school teachers could be available to universities to serve as resources or consultants. Semester exchanges could even occur, i.e., a high school English teacher would teach at the university and the Professor would teach in the high school. This would facilitate understanding and cooperation.
6. Bay Area Writing Project—This University-School project began at Berkeley in 1978. It has succeeded precisely because the partners agreed to solve one specific problem. Simply stated, the purpose of the project is to help high school teachers improve their teaching of writing. Summer institutes and in-service training led by university faculty and by high school teachers are used to achieve this goal.

Those selected are named "University Fellows." They become consultants to other schools in the district and receive release time. This project is funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities, Carnegie Foundation and the California State Department of Education. The most recent evaluation of the project shows that students who are taught writing by teachers participating in the project, perform on the average about twice as well as those taught by non-project teachers.

In summary, there is a tremendous need for schools and universities to work together to provide educational programs which will ultimately be beneficial to both lower education and higher education. The climate is right for such relationships to be established. Who will take the initiative to begin the talks which are necessary to break the ice and the barriers, real or perceived, which exist? I challenge the leaders in institutions of higher education to make the first moves. Cooperation is in the best interest of all of us.

References

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