Teachers often think of university professors as lacking knowledge of the real world of public schools or—even worse—as never having worked in the schools, as operating from a distant and calm world of research and theory-building. And university people often describe school personnel as being uninterested in new information from research, as satisfied with training and predispositions acquired many years earlier, as operating solely in response to day-to-day pressures. Though extreme or stereotypical, these descriptions indicate a need to open the flow of useful communication between public school and university and to increase the effectiveness of both in improving public school education.

A possible explanation for the lack of school-university collaboration, even though teachers and professors share many interests, is the remarkable lack of alternative models for such collaboration. Traditional patterns have been limited to student teaching supervision, field research, and consultant services. These have often been weighted in favor of the needs of one or the other of the institutions and thus have been limited in their capability to promote a mutually supportive collaborative process which equally serves the related needs and interests of both the school and the university.

In an effort to promote such a collaboration, the Teacher Corps Project of Herbert Hoover High School in San Jose and the School of Education at Stanford University developed and implemented a model for school and university cooperation. Stanford faculty, graduate assistants, Hoover staff, and Teacher Corps interns formed work/study teams. Teachers had a voting majority in the teams and Stanford participants provided resources and adapted research to help solve specific problems related to school improvement, in-service education, and field-based research. During the first project year, work/study teams were in operation in mathematics, language arts, social studies, physical education, multicultural, bilingual, open space, and community involvement. The work of the teams incorporated key steps in problem solution: assessing needs, defining problems, setting priorities, reviewing related research and practitioners' experience, developing solutions, obtaining support from relevant groups, implementing likely solutions, and evaluating their effectiveness.

The positive experiences of the first year suggest that collaboration is possible, but that recognition of certain ground rules by both parties is needed. One such ground rule is that final decisions must be made by the school people. They, unlike university participants, have long term and legal commitments to students. Second, the collaborative relationship can be unsettling to one's established role and reputation; time in which to develop mutual feelings of trust and security is required. Third, there must be a willingness to assume new roles; the well-known scholar is an untested commodity in the world of the school. University people must participate in some way in classroom life, be doers as well as talkers. Teachers have to become seekers as well as dispensers of information, be receptive to new ideas, feel a need for professional development. The best way to get started is through small steps that address concrete, immediate problems.

We feel the work/study team holds promise as a model for strengthening ties between school and university. We hope its development will encourage still other models for school-university collaboration.

I. Is a Work/Study Team for Your School Staff?

1. You should have a problem or cluster of problems shared by at least three people working at the same school site. If you, your colleagues, the students, and the community are satisfied with your current situation and perceive no important problems, you don't need a work/study team.

2. The problem should have the following characteristics:

   - Is specific and concrete enough to be capable of solution. (How to motivate the kids is much too general; how to keep the lowest third of the students in your reading classes satisfyingly engaged and learning is about the right level of specificity.)
   - Is beyond your current capability to solve alone without assistance.
   - Is capable of being solved or at
least lessened by study and thought leading to a tentative solution which can then be tried and assessed.

- Is widely recognized by those most directly involved and affected as a problem and an important one.
- Is substantial enough to require at least a significant part of the school year to resolve. (Brief efforts are not worth the trouble of developing the many working relationships involved in a work/study team.)
- If solved, will improve the education or the educational opportunities of the students in your school.

3. Do you or others involved already have what you are convinced is a solution to the problem? If so, you may wish to mount a work/study team to deal with the problems of implementing your solution on a trial basis and evaluating your efforts.

4. Can the problem be solved in an easier, less time-consuming, more direct, and less costly manner? In particular, can it be solved by:

- Hiring an expert as a short-term consultant to help you find a solution.
- Holding a series of school or departmental planning or action meetings on the problem.
- Reading a book or article on how others have dealt with the problem.
- Enrolling in a course or undertaking some other kind of formal study.

5. Are the outside resources (expertise, skill, knowledge) available to be incorporated into your work/study team? (If the nearest specialist on hearing problems is 200 miles away and too busy to work with you, a work/study team that needs this expertise is probably impossible.)

II. How Do You Start a Work/Study Team?

1. Speak informally with persons who will need to be part of the team, present the problem as currently understood, demonstrate your interest and the interest of others involved in collaborating on work toward a solution, and size up the degree of their enthusiasm.

2. If this informal review shows widespread interest and support, identify a small, manageable group (three-seven) of most interested, excited, committed people to serve on a work/study team planning and
organization committee. (Don't exclude any really interested people but don't seek out hesitant or lukewarm supporters at this stage.) Let each member of this committee accept responsibility for leadership, initiative, and effort in their own defined areas of responsibility. For example, one person might interview possible university collaborators; another might talk with the principal and relevant members of the central office staff; another might work on budget and sources of funds. Do not proceed to the subsequent steps without reasonable confidence you will be supported and assisted by others most directly involved and affected.

3. Draft a tentative agenda for the work/study team, emphasizing tentative; encourage others to add their own suggested items.
   - List the major tasks that will need to be accomplished.
   - Place major tasks on a time-line to indicate the extent of sustained effort called for.
   - List “What’s in it for ______” (teachers, students, university professors, community volunteers; all whom you expect to serve on the work/study team and all whom you expect to be directly affected by it.)
   - List “What it will take from ______” (teachers, and so on, as before) so that everyone will see what kind and scale of effort is required of them so they can judge whether they are willing to pay the price.

4. Determine what sort of outside expertise you will need.
   - Make appointments with nearby specialists (from the central office, local universities, other agencies), mailing your preliminary documents in advance.
   - Discuss with them how to get the expertise you need. Are there books or papers you should read and study? Are there courses you should take? Are there certain experts you should consult regularly? Would they be willing to consult with you from time to time?

5. Once your tentative agenda has been revised to gain the support of those who will constitute the work/study team, you are almost ready to begin. What you need now are clearance and access to the necessary resources.

6. Get clearance first from your principal. You can ask for either released time to be made available to those most centrally involved or for extra pay for work after school hours. If you wish to donate your time, be sure to point out that you are making this investment and ask for help in getting the other resources you need to carry out your work.
   - You will find the really essential resources are usually small, at least in the beginning. Once you have a success to show for your low budget efforts, you are in a stronger position to seek funds elsewhere.

III. Becoming and Remaining Effective

1. Attend closely to vital details.
   - Time—if key participants have trouble finding time to do what is required of them, consider this a most serious problem and address it directly. Do whatever is necessary to get the time you need. For example, you may schedule common prep periods for members of the work/study team, revise the school schedule to leave last period free for work/study team business, request administrators or substitutes to cover classes for regular meetings.
   - Money—if you are truly unable to proceed with important parts of your work without more money, assign someone to seek funds. This person should become familiar with funding sources at the district, state, and federal levels and may need the assistance of a grants expert.

2. Distribute leadership responsibilities and assign them clearly. Specialize!
   - If your work/study team is large (more than four members), you should consider electing a permanent chairperson or rotating chair responsibilities among members every month or quarter.

   - Regardless of your decision to appoint a permanent or rotating chairperson, you will need several task leaders (someone to arrange for consultant selection and visits, another to negotiate with administrators, another to order all materials needed for your efforts). Appointing task leaders helps distribute responsibility as well as save time and effectively use individual interests and talents.
   - Once a task is assigned to a specific individual, set a date for completion and include a report from him or her on your agenda.

3. Do what you can to maximize everyone’s incentives to participate.
   - In addition to the basic incentive of intrinsic satisfaction, college credits or district salary increments can frequently be arranged.
   - The chance to travel to a nearby school or university as part of work/study team business will be rewarding to many.
   - Use your imagination and be alert to discover what participants find rewarding.

4. When you’ve accomplished your objectives as well as you think you can, quit! Go out of business. If there is more business ready at hand, organize another team to go after it. The reshuffling will permit those who are tired to sit one out and encourage fresh, enthusiastic involvement; it will guard against stanelness and empty ritualism; it can magically create another “honeymoon period” of excitement and anticipation.

1 For more information about the Work/Study Team concept request “The School and University Work/Study Team” by Hilma Hagberg and others; “Down From the Ivory Tower: A Model of Collaborative Inservice Education” by Roper and Nolan, from the Publications and Dissemination Unit of the Stanford Center for Research and Development, School of Education, Stanford University, Stanford, CA 94305.