

PARTNERS IN EDUCATION

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Partners in Education: *How Colleges Can Work with Schools to Improve Teaching and Learning* (1988), a new book by Theodore L. Gross, presents a blueprint for increased cooperation between colleges (particularly colleges of education) and the public schools. I have long thought that Kennesaw State College could benefit greatly from just such programs as Gross advocates; I now find that the College of Education has begun its own analysis and development of these ideas. My review may, then, serve to publicize an aspect of KSC cooperative education which has not been widely known.

Theodore L. Gross is highly qualified to write of cooperative higher education. His academic degrees are in English and Comparative Literature (B.A. University of Maine, and M.A. and Ph.D. Columbia University); he has written fourteen books on American literature and on professional education. He has served in a number of academic and administrative positions at City College of New York (chairman of the English Department, dean of humanities, and vice-president for institutional advancement), dean of letters and science at State University of New York, Purchase, and chairperson of the steering committee of the SUNY Purchase Westchester Partnership. His work with the Westchester Partnership provides the insights for the recommendations that the current book provides.

Gross observes that "since the appearance of *A Nation at Risk* (1983) . . . the clamor for school reform and higher academic standards

has led to benefits for teachers and some modest improvement in student achievement, but the American school system cannot accomplish the required educational reform on its own. Only by involving other constituents of our society—colleges, corporations, communities, and governmental agencies—will we be successful" (xi). *Partners in Education* "calls on institutions of higher learning to assume a leadership role in forming collaborations that will create for the field of education what Gwendolyn Brooks once invoked for the society as a whole — a mutual estate" (xi). Gross presents a blueprint for that leadership role.

His book is divided into three sections: a background section on the "Origins and Goals of Educational Partnerships," a section on "Developing and Administering Partnerships," and a section on "Program Approaches and Strategies." While admitting that "a history of collaborations between colleges and secondary schools in American education would be very brief indeed" (1), Gross indicates that some collaborative efforts have been made during the past fifteen to twenty years, many of them sponsored by national foundations and by prestigious universities. The most pervasive of these collaborations has been the Advanced Placement Program, administered by the Educational Testing Service under the sponsorship of the College Board. Gross notes that "about 29 percent of secondary schools participate nationwide, serving 16 percent of their college-bound students," and continues "it is one of the few programs that bridge college and high school work without threatening the schools" (6). The program which Gross advocates, however, develops active teacher-training partnerships.

One such program is the Bay Area Writing Project (founded by James

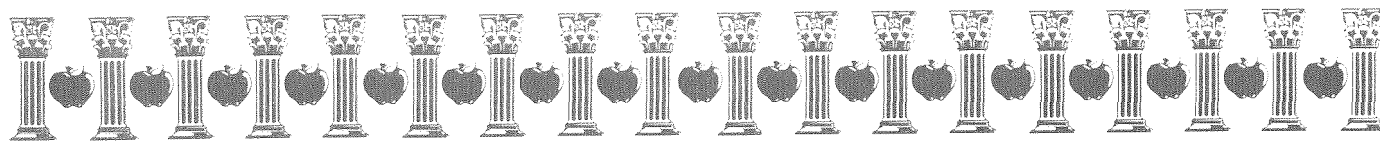
Gray of the School of Education at Berkeley in 1973); the program continues under the name National Writing Project with Gray as coordinator. The project, as Gray develops it, has some basic assumptions which Gross also assumes in his model. Among them are these:

1. The writing program affects both the universities and the schools. This common problem can best be solved through cooperatively planned university-school programs.
2. Programs designed to improve the teaching of writing should involve teachers at all grade levels and from all subject areas. (10-11)

The assumptions of the National Writing Project are put into practice in five-week invitational summer institutes; those instructed in the summer institutes develop the methods in their home institutions.

One of the more influential of the collaborative groups is The National Faculty, sponsored originally (1968) with a six million dollar grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. The National Faculty is now directed by Benjamin Ladner, who has offices at Emory University. More than 700 college and university faculty members in "English, history, science, art, mathematics, and foreign languages" (13) work with school teachers. This program is a two-year project designed by teachers in a particular school; the project is directed by a core group from The National Faculty.

Another elaborate and ambitious program is the National Network for Educational Renewal, directed by John Goodlad at the University of Washington. Gross quotes Goodlad: "We must lessen the gulf between higher education and the schools, but at the same time we must recognize that both must be improved" (18). The improvement can be achieved only if the collabora-



tion is structured as a partnership. Goodlad says that each partnership must be self-supporting, and must have the endorsement and support of the institutions' chief executive officer. (18).

We can see from the models Gross's interest in English and in writing, but we also see his insistence that such studies and such projects must involve teachers from all disciplines — that the improvement in the preparation of college-bound students must begin in the high schools, but that the subject preparation must not be limited to colleges of education. He states that in his book he has developed a model which "can be replicated or adapted by any college or university" (24). He devotes the remainder of his book to a presentation of his model.

Gross insists that "within the college, a chief academic officer must assume authority and responsibility for the partnership and make it central to all activities" (26); he next asserts that the operational control of the program must be in schools of liberal arts and sciences, and that the operational director ought to be the dean of liberal arts and sciences. It is the dean who fashions the philosophical connections and mutual advantages with superintendents of school districts, but after that function has been agreed upon, the next most important person is the Executive Director of the partnership — who must be a full time director. Gross says that "a partnership is scarcely possible without a full-time director who is in total control of all administrative details" (39).

Even so, Gross admits, his model will not work without outside financial support; in most instances initial support will take the form of direct grants from some national or local foundation, but continuing funding often must come from internal sources. He also admits that "if one is truly serious about institutionalizing a partnership, the costs must be dispersed among the participating school districts and the college.

Gross summarizes his argument and his recommendations (155):

1. A donor (probably a foundation)

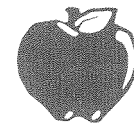
must provide significant funding for a three-to-five year launch period. "A partnership that involves a college and school districts with 20,000 to 30,000 students will require at least \$200,000 as catalyst support".

2. The college should be the administrative home of the partnership. School districts would pay annual dues for continuing support after the original grant.

3. "The dean of liberal arts and sciences ought to be the chairperson unless his or her counterpart in a strong education program is eager to assume leadership and work with the liberal arts disciplines" (155). The practical working out of the project would require an agreement between the dean and school superintendents, would require an executive director of the partnership to supervise project directors and teachers, and a process evaluator to work primarily with the dean and executive director.

Ernest Boyer (quoted by Gross), also asserts the great advantages of such a partnership as Gross advocates: "Today with all the talk about educational excellence, schools and colleges still live in two separate worlds. Presidents and deans rarely talk to principals and district superintendents. College faculty do not meet with their counterparts in public schools, and curriculum reforms at every level are planned in isolation. It's such a simple point — the need for close collaboration — and yet it is a priority that has been consistently ignored. Universities pretend that they can have quality without working with the schools, which are, in fact, the foundation of everything universities do" (xii).

A project such as Gross develops is ambitious and difficult to set in place (as he admits), but it is one which could be of the greatest benefit to Kennesaw State College. It would, it seems to me, draw the public school teachers of the college region into a closer bond with the college and it would benefit the college faculty by providing us with increasingly better prepared students with whom to work. 🍏



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