

Introduction to the SUP Themed Issue: Re-Envisioning School-University Partnerships with Antiracism at the Center

Shamaine Bertrand
The College of New Jersey

Erin Quast
Illinois State University

Kyle Miller
Illinois State University

Abstract: This article is the introduction to the Themed Issue of *School-University Partnerships* entitled Re-Envisioning School-University Partnerships with Antiracism at the Center. The authors provide context as well as their own personal experiences related to antiracism and school-university partnerships work.

KEYWORDS: Antiracism, race, equity, school-university partnerships, professional development schools

NAPDS NINE ESSENTIALS ADDRESSED:

1. A PDS is a learning community guided by a comprehensive, articulated mission that is broader than the goals of any single partner, and that aims to advance equity, anti-racism, and social justice within and among schools, colleges/universities, and their respective community and professional partners.
2. A PDS embraces the preparation of educators through clinical practice.;
3. A PDS makes a shared commitment to reflective practice, responsive innovation, and generative knowledge.
4. A PDS makes a shared commitment to reflective practice, responsive innovation, and generative knowledge.
5. A PDS is a community that engages in collaborative research and participates in the public sharing of results in a variety of outlets.
6. A PDS requires intentionally evolving written articulated agreement(s) that delineate the commitments, expectations, roles, and responsibilities of all involved.
7. A PDS is built upon shared, sustainable governance structures that promote collaboration, foster reflection, and honor and value all participants' voices.
8. A PDS creates space for, advocates for, and supports college/university and P-12 faculty to operate in well-defined, boundary-spanning roles that transcend institutional settings.
9. A PDS provides dedicated and shared resources and establishes traditions to recognize, enhance, celebrate, and sustain the work of partners and the partnership.

School-University Partnership Work in these Particular Times

In Spring 2020, COVID-19 changed the landscape of education. From kindergarten to college, classes were abruptly shifted to distance learning. No longer able to engage face-to-face, school-university partnerships scrambled to navigate ongoing apprenticeships and collaborations. Educators of all levels wrestled with how to provide quality instruction while concerns about students' well-being weighed heavily. Although widespread, the impacts of the global health pandemic were felt hardest by schools serving communities of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC). With disproportionate rates of virus infection amongst their communities, higher percentages of parents employed in essential work, and less access to technological and health resources, longstanding racial inequities among BIPOC students were magnified.

While adjustments were made to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, many involved in school-university partnership and Professional Development School (PDS) work did not know how to respond to the racism pandemic impacting many, especially Black people. Streets around the world were filled with protestors that asserted, "Black Lives Matter!" School districts, universities, and colleges throughout the country posted statements on their websites acknowledging racism will not be tolerated. Some schools and universities participated in professional development that focused on antiracism and addressing race and racism. Some school districts, universities, and colleges sought consulting focused on equity and antiracism. Some educators began reading books, attending professional development, viewing online videos, and listening to podcasts in order to help them think about white fragility, privilege, equity, diversity, race, and racism.

While this is a great start, work around antiracism and addressing inequities---specifically racial inequities---must be ongoing. Recently, there has been a debate in school districts throughout the United States around Critical Race Theory and there not being a need to address this topic or topics associated with this topic in schools. This is evidence that there is more work needed to address the disparities and inequities within our education system.

Our education system as we know it needs to be dismantled and re-envisioned. We advocate for school-university partnerships to play a critical role in the creation of more equitable and just schools. This themed issue, "Re-envisioning School University Partnership with Anti-Racism at the Center " will bring together diverse voices across varied school-university partnerships that are committed to and engaged in antiracism work. Collectively, the issue highlights the need to address inequities in partnership work and offer ideas for cultivating more socially-just learning environments. Additionally, this themed issue provides an opportunity for PDS and school-university partners to re-envision equitable school-university partnerships using the revised NAPDS Nine Essentials. Below we share our experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic and times of heightened racism within schools, colleges, and universities.

.Our Experiences Centering Antiracism within School-University Partnerships

Shamaine: As a Black teacher educator and scholar who researches and teaches about equity, race, Blackness, and how to best support Black students, I strive to center antiracism within my teaching and partnership work. This past year was hard for me as a Black human being. I have

experienced racial battle fatigue and extreme exhaustion caused by racism and witnessing the constant murdering of innocent Black people. While I know this work around antiracism is important, I also realize that it is not the responsibility of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) to do this work alone. While it has been great to see white teachers and teacher educators educating themselves about issues of race and racism, there has to be some action and sacrifice of white privilege. This themed special issue provides the opportunity for readers to gain ideas and think about what taking action can mean for them. While I am dedicated to making sure Black students have equitable education opportunities and teachers have knowledge of how to create equitable learning environments, I am tired and believe that more can be accomplished if we work together. Co-editing this issue has been a lot of work, however it has been an opportunity to work alongside my colleagues to create a space that centers antiracism by highlighting PDS and school-university partnership work around antiracism.

Erin: Over the past year, I found teacher candidates had plenty to say when it came to discussing the impacts of the global health crises on their lives and K-12 students. When asked about the four-hundred-year plus racial pandemic, however, they had much less to say. Silence quickly fell over my Zoom classroom when racism was brought up, many teacher candidates anxiously awaiting for someone else to speak. Teacher candidates are not alone in their discomfort and unwillingness to notice, name, and take action against racism. Education, both historically and presently, has a troubled relationship with racial equity and accountability. From K12 to college, educational systems frequently enact violence against BIPOC communities. This pattern of silence and violence is very much reflected in my own story as a white former early childhood teacher serving BIPOC communities. While I was winning teaching awards, I taught through colorblind racist perspectives that upheld eurocentric ways of knowing. I pushed BIPOC students out of the classroom through institutionalized systems such as special education referrals, progress monitoring, and zero-tolerance policies. My own story speaks to the grave consequences of failing to center antiracism in our conceptualizations of “good” pedagogy, practices, and partnerships. It is my hope that this themed issue supports us in taking a hard look in the mirror, as we take actionable steps to reimagine and recreate a system that was not designed for all to succeed.

Kyle: As a teacher educator who is engaged in various school-university partnerships and clinical supervision, I see the wide range of pedagogical practices and mindsets that shape instruction, teacher-student relationships, and student wellbeing. In the past year, I have been encouraged, discouraged, confused and inspired by how schools have embraced or rejected antiracist practices. The articles in this issue have prompted me to think more critically about what I am observing across schools and my role in the process. While positive relationships within and across schools is essential to work in teacher education, we must also be brave in truth telling when we see practices that challenge antiracism and reflective in ways that challenge our own practices. I like to think that antiracism is core to the work that I do, but there are certainly times when maintaining a positive relationship with a school or classroom teacher compromises that commitment as I attempt to cultivate and preserve partnerships. These articles pushed me to recognize the gap between my ideal self and actual self when it comes to putting antiracist pedagogy into action. I hope these articles will inspire some of the same critical reflection and recommitment to action for our readers.

The process of reviewing and editing the selected pieces has helped us reflect and evolve as teacher educators and scholars. We hope the five articles included in this issue will encourage deep reflection on current practices and engagements with school partnerships, as well as inspire educators to (re)center antiracism in their work as an educator.

Our two invited articles bear witness to the harm BIPOC students, teacher candidates, staff, faculty, and communities experience when antiracism is not at the center of school-university-partnerships. In *Working Toward Racial Justice and Equity in a Predominately White Professional Development*, Dr. Husband invites readers into the experiences of a Black male faculty member within a school-university-partnership. The article speaks to the pressing need to diversify the teaching force, highlighting the role school-university-partners might play in diversification efforts. Dr. Husband's autoethnographic research boldly brings to the foreground the deficit perspectives and racial microaggressions Black people face in educational settings. It affirms the challenges Black colleagues and students navigate daily that may not be voiced or recognized within existing SUPs. While readers, particularly white readers, initial reaction to Dr. Husband's veracious accounts may be to distance themselves (e.g., "I wouldn't do that), we encourage readers to read with the goal of analyzing their existing efforts, revealing the systemic systems at play that push BIPOC people out of education.

In our second invited article, *#THEWORK before community-engaged teacher preparation*, Dr. Porcher demonstrates the power of the pedagogical tool Photovoice in helping teacher candidates unpack their personal identities and better understand the strengths of an urban community. By asking teacher candidates to visually document spaces in an urban neighborhood and use those images to critically reflect on their identities and perceptions of communities and students of color, teacher candidates demonstrated movement toward an asset-based mindset about students and communities. Dr. Porcher presents a compelling case for the effectiveness of Photovoice in helping to reduce the harm that is often imposed by teacher candidates in urban spaces. Her article is a testament to trying new approaches with teacher candidates and working collaboratively with schools and communities to prepare teacher candidates for antiracist teaching.

Article three presents an ethno-case study involving two researcher-practitioners who centered antiracism through a collaborative evaluation of how Black voices are included or excluded in teacher education coursework and professional development opportunities. *Unsilencing the silenced Black voice in education courses and professional development: Partnering with educators to create equitable environments* is an article that offers a critical take on how whiteness continues to shape the curriculum, discussions, visual images, and relationships in teaching and learning spaces. Most importantly, it highlights the consequences of teacher education programs and associations neglecting to do the deep, difficult work of rejecting the status quo and transforming practices. Ms. Thigpen and Dr. Reinking share their reflective research journey and recommendations for putting antiracist pedagogy into action.

In our fourth article, we read about how a group at Rowan University conducted a yearlong virtual reading group that met virtually to discuss selected readings with a focus on topics that

supported the schools' PDS goals. For three participants, a decision was made to focus their reading on a specific text with one goal being to revisit how the National Association of Professional Development Schools (NAPDS) Nine Essentials were integrated into the university-school partnerships. Specifically, what essentials address the partners' antiracism, social justice and equity work?

Article five is likely to resonate with any teacher educator whose teacher candidates intended to return home after graduation and teach where they went to school. In the article, *For and with the community: Forging a school-university-community partnership focused on civic engagement*, Dr. Kang and Ms. Mayor push their teacher candidates out of their comfort zone by co-facilitating a civics engagement cohort, and providing an immersive, asset-based experience in an urban context. They present the core principles and activities of their cohort model, which include establishing rapport and relationships, intentional course alignment, critical self-exploration, individualized projects, and a deep understanding of community. The description of their partnership and reflections of teacher candidates shows the transformative nature of centering diversity, equity and social justice.

As co-editors, we shared in the process of not just reviewing articles, but also co-reflecting on who we are and what we envision for schools as it relates to centering antiracism. We ask that as you read through the articles within this special themed issue that you reflect and begin taking action on centering antiracism within PDS and school-university partnership work.