

## **The Power of Partnerships in Becoming Accountable for the Impact of Teacher Candidates on P-12 Learning**

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### Abstract

The “Renaissance Partnership”, a consortium of eleven universities and their partner schools, was one of the first twenty-five Teacher Quality Enhancement Projects funded in 1999. The Project’s two primary goals, “to become accountable for the impact of teacher graduates on the students they teach” and “to institutionalize reforms in preparation programs,” to a great extent have been achieved. Successes are attributed to “the power of partnerships.” This paper provides a brief account of the development of the Renaissance Partnership and the struggles to achieve project objectives, a description of project achievements, a third party evaluator’s summary and, finally, a project director’s reflections and conclusions.

## **The Power of Partnerships in Becoming Accountable for the Impact of Teacher Candidates on P-12 Learning**

### **The Renaissance Partnership for Improving Teacher Quality**

The Renaissance Partnership consists of eleven universities and their partner schools directly involved in a five-year Title II Teacher Quality Enhancement project which began in October, 1999. These partner schools include California State University, Fresno; Eastern Michigan University; Emporia State University; Idaho State University; Kentucky State University; Longwood University, Virginia; Middle Tennessee State University; Millersville University, Pennsylvania; Southeast Missouri State University; University of Northern Iowa; and Western Kentucky University.

All eleven universities are members of the Renaissance Group, a larger consortium of about thirty teacher preparation colleges and universities across the country that together produce about one of every nine classroom teachers in America. The presidents, provosts, deans, and teacher education directors of Renaissance Group institutions have been meeting semi-annually since 1987 to share and encourage all-university strategies that produce quality teachers. Representatives of the eleven institutions that comprise the Renaissance Partnership had been meeting for about two years before Title II funding was received to design plans to become more accountable for the impact of teacher graduates on P-12 students' learning. Thus, the focus and communication structures among these eleven institutions began more than two years before the beginning of the five-year funded Title II Teacher Quality Enhancement Grant.

### **The Beginning of a Quest**

The seeds for the 1999-2004 Title II Renaissance Partnership Project were sown in the fall of 1997 when presidents, provosts, and deans from about twenty Renaissance Group universities met for their fall conference in San Antonio to consider new strategies for improving teacher preparation programs. The theme of the conference was "accountability for teacher preparation". A teacher educator who had been highly involved in Kentucky's school reform since 1989 offered a bold proposal: collect, analyze, and report data on the impact of teacher graduates on P-12 student learning and the world will turn their heads to Renaissance Group institutions. While there were skeptics present that thought the suggestion was a "pipe dream," the teacher educator (who authored this paper) was supported by the group and given a small grant to pursue this extremely challenging goal.

In subsequent 1998 spring and 1998 fall meetings of the Renaissance Group, representative faculty with expertise in assessment met to consider ideas and strategies for better ways to assess teacher candidate performance, especially with respect to evidence that graduates can facilitate learning of all students. Del Schalock from Western Oregon was invited to speak about the potential of teacher work samples, a concept he had been developing over the past decade. Also, during the 1998 year, a ten-institution study was conducted that revealed two startling facts: (a) our leading teacher preparation institutions used instructional time teaching methods compared to assessment of student learning at a ratio of about 7 to 1 and (b) none of the ten institutions had a performance assessment and data management system that included the quality components specified by the new NCATE 2000 standards.

All assessment representatives from the ten Renaissance Group institutions that met over the next two years agreed that more should be done to develop performance assessment and data management systems, but funding for any development at the local level simply did not exist. At a fall meeting in 1998 of the Renaissance Group assessment leaders, participants agreed that obtaining support for development programs would be absolutely essential if accountability programs were to become a reality.

In the spring of 1999, two actions were initiated that became the foundation for a five-year development effort toward performance accountability. First, a concept paper was developed entitled “Becoming Accountable for the Impact of Graduates on Students and Schools: Making Operational the Shift from Teaching to Learning” that was presented at the annual meeting of the American Association for Colleges of Teacher Education in February of 1999 (Pankratz, 1999). This discussion document expanded on proposals (Barr & Tagg, 1996) that we change our focus from teaching to producing student learning. While teaching was important, it had to produce learning and had to relate to results. This basic concept was applied to teacher preparation.

The second important initiative taken by the Renaissance Group in the spring of 1999 was the development of a Teacher Quality Enhancement proposal submitted to the Title II Teacher Quality Enhancement Renaissance Program. The request for proposals of the Partnership Programs aligned with the goals of the Renaissance Group’s quest for accountability for P-12 student learning. The Renaissance Grant proposal involved ten universities and their partner schools and presented a five-year plan to (a) become accountable for the impact of teacher candidates and graduates on P-12 student learning, and (b) to improve teacher performance in key areas and show an increase in teacher’s ability to facilitate learning of all students. The proposal also presented a work plan for six project objectives that all institutions would address:

- develop an accountability system that regularly collects and reports data on the impact of their graduates on student learning;
- use teacher work samples in their teacher education programs as a means of improving teaching skills and increasing the teacher’s impact on student learning;
- implement a team mentoring model consisting of school practitioners, arts and science faculty, and teacher educators that facilitates the ability of teachers to impact student learning in partner schools;
- modify, revise, and improve teacher preparation programs to address teacher impact on P-12 learning;
- build an electronic network among all Renaissance institutions and partner schools to share information, materials, ideas, and data related to improvement of teacher quality and student learning; and
- design and conduct research programs that link teacher performance to P-12 student learning.

The Renaissance Partnership proposal was approved and a USDOE grant of \$5,730,011, supplemented with \$3,573,921 non-federal funds, was awarded in September of 1999. Western Kentucky University was the grantee with subcontracts to nine partnership universities.

Thus, on October 1, 1999, the Renaissance Partnership for Improving Teacher Quality officially began as a five-year development effort. Idaho State University, the eleventh institution, was added to the partnership in the third year of the project.

### **Building a Partnership to Reform Teacher Preparation Programs**

Forming a partnership of individual entities assumes that a collaborative endeavor and collective effort can achieve more when working together than operating independently. This was the position of the Title II Partnership Program with respect to colleges of education, colleges of arts and sciences, and partner elementary/secondary school programs. In the Renaissance Partnership this three-way collaboration effort occurred at eleven different sites in ten states across the country. These eleven sites prepared about 5,000 new teachers each year. Building a dynamic and functional program of teacher preparation reform among different entities with different purposes has been a most important but difficult challenge. The diversity of talent and experience across eleven project sites also has been a real strength of innovative synergy that contributed to project success.

The first year of the project began as a series of struggles to get a focus. While the six project objectives framed a clear project vision for the developers of the proposal, they were little more than professional platitudes to teacher educators, arts and science faculty, and school practitioners across eleven project sites who were expected to implement the project work plan. Getting “buy in” to a central project vision by different groups in different geographical areas, each with their own agendas, proved to be a difficult challenge. Commitment to accountability systems, the implementation of teacher work samples in all preparation programs, and forming mentoring teams for candidates was especially difficult because there were few operating models to examine and emulate.

Even though all Renaissance partner institutions were accredited by NCATE, none had systems of performance assessment, data management, and program evaluation that operationally met NCATE standards. And, even more discouraging, a search for operational models at NCATE institutions across the country that truly met Standard 2 - Program Evaluation came up empty.

A similar scenario was experienced with teacher work samples. Although Western Oregon University (Schalock & Schalock, 1997) had developed and used teacher work samples for the greater part of a decade, the processes and materials used locally among faculty at this institution were not directly transportable to Renaissance partners, especially for universities such as California State, Fresno and Eastern Michigan that each prepared nearly 2,000 teachers per year.

Most of Year One activities were directed at teacher work samples. Western Oregon University faculty were employed as consultants to share their ideas and experiences. Site representatives traveled to Western Oregon to review teacher work sample materials and talk to teacher candidates about their perceptions. Based on these initial interactions, project task force groups began to develop their own “Renaissance Partnership” processes for teacher work samples, including candidate performance tasks (prompts) and scoring guides (rubrics) that best met the needs of Renaissance Partner project sites. While Western Oregon had provided the basic theory and conceptual framework for teacher work samples, Renaissance Partnership members needed to develop both standards of performance for teaching processes they believed

were most important as well as instrumentation (teacher work sample prompts and rubrics) they “collectively owned” and understood.

The first year of the project produced some rocky results. Assessment coordinators met in St. Louis to set parameters of measurement and key indicators of performances for teacher work sample prompts and rubrics. At times the debate over issues such as what constitutes evidence of P-12 learning, which teacher performances were most important, and the format of instrumentation became quite heated. While a visitor to the discussions might have perceived chaos, reflecting back on those early meetings we are certain they were the essential interactions between project representatives from eleven sites that were needed to build a strong partnership.

Assessment coordinators, teacher work sample coordinators, and mentoring coordinators from all ten project sites convened in St. Louis in January 2001 for a 3.5 day work session. Sites that had piloted the first draft of the Renaissance Teacher Work Sample Model brought teacher candidate exhibits to score. Most brought war stories of teacher candidate frustration with the work sample task and back-home faculty resistance to the idea of work samples. Several coordinators came to St. Louis with stories of real successes and exhibits of outstanding candidate performances. The stated purpose of the January work session was to review progress, revise the work sample prompt and rubric, and plan for the second semester of TWS implementation in spring of 2001. The work session exemplified the concept of synergy. The right people were in the right place at the right time and partners from ten institutions accomplished far more collectively than any delegation from each of the individual project sites could have done separately. The failures and successes from the fall semester of 2000 were used as learning experiences.

The teacher educators, arts and science faculty, and school practitioners who came to St. Louis in January of 2001 worked long and hard for more than three days and most said they left feeling professionally rewarded that progress had been made. All left with a set of teacher work sample materials they had helped to develop and which were much improved and more likely to produce results with teacher candidates. Their understanding of standards-based teaching and learning had grown, professional ownership of teacher work samples had increased, and confidence in the power of the partnership process was established.

The January 2001 work session by project teacher educators, arts and science faculty, and school practitioners from the ten partner sites established the structure and work standard for the remaining four years of the Title II project. Since that first 2001 event, 60 to 70 coordinators, faculty and school practitioners from partner sites in ten states have convened in St. Louis twice each year for three days of program development, sharing experiences, networking, and production of training and support materials. These intense three-day work sessions held on a Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday of mid-January and June have been the driving force of partnership support that enabled this project to exceed its original goals and achieve the results that will be described later in this chapter. Assessment, teacher work sample, and mentoring coordinators usually met on Wednesdays to report progress on the project objectives and work plan with respect to the development of performance data management and accountability systems, implementation of teacher work samples, and the establishment of mentoring programs. Key issues and concerns about project initiatives were brought to the semi-annual meetings and were addressed as a partnership effort. On Thursdays and Fridays, site coordinators were joined by colleagues from back home to work in cross-institution teams on specific development tasks.

In looking back at the project strategies that have enabled the partnership to achieve its goals and objectives, most project leaders would highly rank the value of our St. Louis work

sessions for a number of reasons. First, the partnership work sessions served as our primary vehicle for communicating expectations of the project work plan. Every work session began with an update of progress relative to the project goal and seven objectives, as well as the activities designed to achieve the objectives. Every three-day session ended with back-home planning to see what was developed or learned at each local project site. Second, the St. Louis events were a catalyst for communication and networking; professionals made connections to other people, ideas, and resources that could be followed up electronically back home. In addition, work sessions were occasions where both successes and concerns about project implementation were shared and discussed. The synergy of these events gave key project representatives a broader perspective that they were a valued part of teacher preparation and quality reform across the nation and that they were not alone in their quest to impact teaching and learning. A third recognized benefit of the St. Louis work sessions was the opportunity to assemble the best minds and talents of professionals from eleven universities and partner schools at one location for three days to design and develop reform strategies. The successes of the Renaissance Teacher Work Sample Standards, Prompt and Scoring Rubric document is a prime example of where sixty-six heads were better than six and the whole was more than the sum of its parts. Coordinators from the eleven project sites have often commented about the role St. Louis work sessions have played in the development of the Renaissance Partnership.

### **Accomplishments: Working Together and Sharing Common Goals**

The Renaissance Partnership Project began with a central goal of accountability for teacher performance that results in P-12 student learning and six measurable project objectives. Of these, developing performance data management systems, implementing teacher work samples, and mentoring for high performance became the key reform strategies that directly impacted teacher candidate's ability to facilitate learning of all students. Business partnerships, networking, and research linking teacher performance to student learning were developed to support the three reform initiatives. By the end of year one of the project, it became evident that performance accountability, teacher work samples, and focused mentoring would drive significant changes in teacher preparation courses and experiences. Thus, a seventh objective (program revisions that improved the quality of graduates) was added. Except for the development of business partnerships, significant progress was made on all project objectives.

### ***Performance Data Management and Accountability Systems***

All eleven project sites developed data management systems that enabled universities to collect, analyze, and report performance data on their graduates that were not in existence at the start of the project. Five critical components were identified early in the project to measure progress toward accountability systems that met standards established by the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). Rubrics for each of the five components were developed to judge four levels of progress on each element. Table 1 shows the number of institutions reaching defined levels of development of accountability systems for each of the five critical components.

Table 1. Number of Institutions in the Renaissance Partnership at Various Stages of Progress on July 1 of 2005

Critical Component	Documented Stage of Development			
	Beginning	Developing	At Standard	Above Standard
Unit-wide commitment to accountability	0	0	9	2
Employed accountability system coordinator	1	1	2	7
Process for on-going performance assessment development	0	0	10	1
Electronic data management system	1	1	7	2
Process for reporting and using performance Data for program improvement	0	3	6	2

In comparison, when the project began in 1999, no institution had reached the “at standard” level on any of the five components and most were at the “beginning” level on all components.

***Implementation of Teacher Work Samples***

This component of the project has been the primary driving force for reform in teacher preparation. Teacher work samples require student teachers to (a) design standards-based unit of instruction; (b) design formative pre- and post-classroom assessments that measure content standards; (c) implement the unit over a three to six week period in a real school setting; (d) analyze and report achievement progress of all students; and (e) evaluate their teaching and student learning. Valid and reliable teaching tasks were developed early in the project along with scoring rubrics to judge teacher performance on each of the seven components of a teacher work sample. The project employed four dimensions by Crocker (1997) to establish validity as a performance measure and the generalizability formula proposed by Shavelson and Webb (1991) to establish scorer reliability. Table 2 shows the progress growth in use of teacher work samples with student teachers across the eleven sites over the duration of the project.

Table 2 Number of valid teacher work samples produced by student teachers and scored for performance.

Time Period	Teacher Work Samples Produced and Scored
Spring 2001	198
Spring 2002	964
Spring 2003	1,245
Spring 2004	1,575
Spring 2005	2,000 *

\*exact count not available

Performance standards for each of the seven components of the work sample were set at a high level. When teacher work samples were first introduced, less than 50% of student teachers scored at the “proficient” level. In the spring of 2004, all of the eleven institutions report more than 80% of student teachers achieving the proficient or above level of performance on teacher work samples.

***Team mentoring of Candidates by Teacher Educators, Arts and Science Faculty, and School Practitioners***

While the involvement of the three principal role groups has been achieved in this project, team mentoring models have been a challenge. Interaction among arts & science faculty, school practitioners, and teacher educators is important and essential. However, scheduling these collective interactions has been difficult but progress is being made through innovative strategies. Achievements toward the mentoring objective include the following:

- More than 150 arts & science faculty, 300 teacher educators, and 300 school practitioners across the project have been trained to mentor teacher candidates on developing teaching units that produce high levels of student achievement.
- A manual for teacher mentors and a manual for teacher candidates have been developed primarily to assist teacher candidates in producing high performance teacher work samples.
- Two project-wide studies of mentoring successes and challenges have been conducted and shared across sites to guide mentoring programs.
- Mentoring models (structures and processes) used at sites have been described, documented and shared with other partnership members.

***Program and Course Revisions Resulting from Implementing Teacher Work Samples***

Course revisions have been a by-product of introducing teacher work samples. Several of the work sample processes (i.e., use of context to design instruction, development of assessment plans, analysis of student learning and reflection on teaching and learning) have not been given much attention in traditional teacher preparation programs. Consequently, both teacher candidates and university faculty recognized the need to strengthen these important processes and have made additions and modifications to the curriculum.

- More than one hundred pedagogy and fifty content courses that prepare teachers have been modified or revised to address expectations in teacher work samples, especially with respect to designing learning goals aligned with content standards and developing assessment tools to measure student learning.
- A study of eighty-six representative faculty across the eleven partnership sites relative to actual course changes was conducted and published in 2003 to show how course revisions relate to the seven processes of teacher performance.

The 86 faculty selected for the study identified 122 major changes, 229 significant changes and 162 minor changes in courses and program preparation experiences resulting from the teacher work sample initiative. In June of 2004, university coordinators from across the partnership



reported a collective total of 189 identified courses in teacher preparation programs revised to address one or more teaching processes introduced and assessed by the teacher work samples.

***Networking of People, Ideas, and Resources***

Network and communication across eleven project sites has been a prime vehicle for innovation and change in this project. Two- and three-day work sessions were conducted twice each year for between fifty and seventy representative teacher educators, arts and science faculty, and school practitioners to (1) design and develop materials, (2) train faculty in the use and scoring of teacher work samples, and (3) share implementation successes and concerns.

Table 3 shows the primary developmental activity for each of nine networking events between June 2000 and June 2004.

Table 3. Networking Activity Events that Supported Renaissance Partnership Initiatives

Date	Primary Activity of Work Session
June 2000	Initial training for teacher work samples (TWS)
January 2001	Revision of TWS Prompt and Rubric
June 2001	Benchmarking and scoring, revision of prompt and rubric
January 2002	Advanced scoring training, inter-rater reliability check
June 2002	Sharing successes and problems, advance training, materials development
January 2003	Sharing successes and problems, assessment tools manual development, mentoring manual development
June 2003	Sharing successes and concerns, credibility manual development, revision of mentoring manual
January 2004	Sharing successes and concerns, revision of assessment tools manual, identification of twenty-four TWS exemplars
June 2004	Reporting and celebrating of project achievements, forward action planning (institutionalization)

A second major vehicle for networking has been the project web site <http://fp.uni.edu/itq>. This web site has provided project information, descriptions of project activities and project resources to thousands of project participants and non-project educators since the start-up of the Renaissance Partnership. Teacher work sample prompts, rubrics, and exemplars for various disciplines, as well as training manuals and PowerPoint presentations, are available for downloading free of charge from the web site.

***Research and Dissemination***

During the first three years of the project, formative data was collected on program practices related to management data bases, teacher work samples, and mentoring teams to guide the

development of these initiatives. Also, data on candidate performance was collected to provide a baseline for evaluating the effects of program initiatives.

Over the past two years, studies have been completed at Idaho State University, Longwood University, Western Kentucky University, and Emporia State University, linking teacher work sample performance to other factors, including course grades and perceptions of candidates about their instruction. Also, over the past year studies have been completed that measure the validity and scorer reliability of the Renaissance teacher work sample performance instrument. These studies are published in a chapter of the Association of Teacher Educator's yearbook in press (Denner, Pankratz, Norman & Newsome, 2003).

In addition to the above research efforts, project personnel have been extremely active in dissemination activities. From January 2003 to July 2004, more than eighty formal presentations were delivered to state, regional, national, and international audiences based on project initiatives and the experiences with and results of these initiatives. Eighteen articles related directly to project initiatives have been submitted to professional publications. A number of these presentations have been placed on the project web site and are available to view or download.

### ***The Results of a Third Party Evaluation of the Renaissance Partnership Project***

In the fall of 2002, the Renaissance Partnership contracted with Appalachia Education Laboratory (AEL) of Charleston, West Virginia, to conduct an independent evaluation of the eleven-site Title II Project. AEL conducted the evaluation over a one-year period from August of 2001 to August of 2002 (Cowley, Finch & Meehan, 2003). A multi-method research approach suggested by Brewer and Hunter (1989) was employed to corroborate data from different stakeholders to address evaluation questions. Data sources included in-depth interviews with presidents, provosts, and deans of the eleven universities as well as completed surveys from institution coordinators, assessment coordinators, teacher work sample coordinators, institution faculty, project school practitioners, and student teachers who completed teacher work samples. At the end of the fourth year of the project, AEL reported the following findings:

- The teacher work sample project objective was “clearly the most advanced and the mentoring objective met to a high degree.” To some extent, the project objectives for accountability systems, course revisions, and networking have been achieved showing marked differences across institutions. The least progress was found with respect to business partnerships and research linking teacher performance to P-12 student learning.
- The project is clearly aimed toward the goals and expectations of the Title II Teacher Quality Enhancement Partnership Program. Some activities seem to have more widespread support across institutions and so more time is being spent in these areas.
- Across program objectives there is a strong leadership component, faculty commitment and buy-in and collaboration both within and across institutions. For teacher work samples, respondents note that it is of professional interest, it is not too expensive to implement, and it improves service delivery. As a result, faculty are more interested and willing to complete activities pertaining to this objective.
- The ability to learn from each other, problem solve and discuss how to adapt or adopt systems or methods was seen as one of the major strengths of this project.
- Barriers to progress most often identified were resistance to change, faculty turnover, and the lack of resources for employing additional staff to implement project

initiatives. Also, lack of technical support and faculty time to develop the various components of a performance data accountability system was often cited as the chief impediment to progress toward this objective.

Key recommendations for greater effectiveness and project productivity based on the findings of AEL included (a) achieve full implementation of teacher work samples, (b) expand mentoring programs for higher performance, (c) initiate and conduct more research studies that link teacher performance to student achievement, (d) accelerate progress on data management systems, (e) fully integrate project initiatives into each university's culture, and (f) seek continued funding for key initiatives and research.

While the value of teacher work samples as a tool for teacher preparation, performance, and assessment was cited by the AEL evaluators as a most important outcome of this project, the experiences of partnering and networking were viewed by most project participants interviewed and surveyed as the most helpful and effective strategies for developing, implementing, and institutionalizing teacher quality reform initiatives (Cowley, et al., 2003)

In the fall of 2004, two years after the first third party evaluation, AEL was contracted for an in-depth study of the implementation of accountability systems and teacher work samples at four partnership universities (Cowley, et al., 2003). The purpose of this second study was to determine (a) the extent of institutionalization of these two key reform initiatives in four more successful project sites and (b) factors that contributed to adoption and institutionalization of performance accountability systems.

Six institutions were asked to submit project implementation data and four were selected based on criteria of comprehensiveness, organization, and available information on the two target reform initiatives. Emporia State, Longwood University (VA), University of Northern Iowa, and Western Kentucky University were selected as the four study sites.

Study protocols were developed, two-day site visits were made to each of the four universities, and 209 people were interviewed in 65 individual and group sessions. These included 18 university and project administrators, 79 faculty members, 85 teacher candidates and recent graduates, and 27 cooperating K-12 school practitioners. Electronic data materials, training protocols, implementation data, and records of development efforts were collected.

From the data collected, the researchers concluded that "The concept of teacher work samples as both a process and product has become firmly embedded in the culture of each of the four universities." The completion of teacher work samples as measures of teaching performance were required for all candidates at three universities, and it would become mandatory at the fourth institution in the fall of 2005. Key factors that researchers found contributed most to the institutionalization of teacher work samples were

- Strong administrative commitment and support that backed the efforts of individuals involved in development and implementation;
- The "right" individuals were identified that had both the ability and respect to promote and lead a new initiative;
- Adequate training in the use of work samples for all stakeholders;
- Involvement of university councils and decision making bodies that approved policies that institutionalized teacher work samples; and
- Connecting the work sample initiative with other reform efforts (i.e., NCATE standards, state accountability demands, NCLB).

- Contributing factors to the development and institutionalization of accountability systems also were identified
- External “drivers”, such as NCATE standards, state accountability mandates, and K-12 data-based instructional improvement and decision making;
- Strong leadership and support for performance accountability systems – i.e., the employment of half-time assessment coordinators to lead and coordinate development efforts; and
- External resources of the Title II grant for start up and development costs, as well as the sharing of expertise and technical information on accountability systems by institutions “leading the pack.”
- In addition, AEL researchers concluded that based on the data and experience at the four universities visited that both accountability systems and teacher work samples had contributed to improving teacher quality through four processes:
- Teacher work samples and accountability systems shifted the teacher preparation focus from textbook-driven instruction which focuses on “material coverage” to data-driven instruction to meet state and local content standards;
- Teacher work samples helped teacher educators become more accountable for their own performance through standards-based teaching, learning, and assessments;
- Teacher work samples prompted all universities to modify their preparation curriculum because of observed needs of candidates in areas, such as assessment and reflective writing; and
- Both teacher work samples and accountability systems have increased conversations and cooperation across departments within colleges of education and across to colleges of arts and sciences (Cowley, Voelkel & Finch, 2005).

### ***A Project Director’s Analysis, Reflection, and Conclusion***

As a thirty-five year veteran of writing proposals for federally-funded projects and directing development programs in teacher preparation, I have always tended to promise more than I could deliver and expect more than can reasonably be achieved over the life of a project. However, I can truthfully say that with the Renaissance Partnership for Improving Teacher Quality, we will come nearer achieving and, in some cases, exceeding the objectives of any project I have directed. I attribute the higher level of success in this project to five key factors.

### ***Use of Sound Concepts and Strategies***

The relentless focus on P-12 student learning of content; the seven teaching processes that comprise the teacher work sample; directed mentoring for higher performance, partnering between teacher educators, arts and science faculty; and school practitioners and accountability for performance all represent concepts and processes that have a strong conceptual base and are supported by standards-based teaching and learning across the nation. In other words, the project was designed to advance teacher quality initiatives that had a high probability of working. However, in the case of teacher work samples, the strategy has certainly exceeded all expectations.

### ***Development of User-friendly Materials***

The development, revision, and wide distribution of the Renaissance Teacher Work Sample Standards, Prompt and Rubric document and the Renaissance Teacher Work Sample

Scoring Guide has been key to communicating the seven teaching processes to teacher candidates, teacher educators, arts and science faculty, and school practitioners. All are on the project website for anyone to download along with about thirty candidate-produced teacher work samples. This effort was based on previous research on adoption of educational initiatives and I believe the wide distribution of materials served as a primary factor in the growing use of teacher work samples (Hall et al, 1973).

### ***Availability of Outstanding Professional Talent***

The teacher educators, arts and science faculty, and school practitioners who were leaders at each of the eleven project sites (especially those sent to the work sessions in St. Louis), were the most talented, hardworking, and professional group I have had the privilege of working with in my educational career. They truly were the top performers from each project site, and working together became a powerful force for development and implementation of project initiatives.

### ***A History of Collaboration among Renaissance Group Institutions***

The ten years of collaboration and communication and interaction between presidents, provosts, and deans prior to the startup of this project gave the Renaissance Partnership for Improving Teacher Quality a real advantage over any partnership formed in 1999. Also, the fact that I, as director, had worked with most of the deans and some of the provosts of the eleven institutions prior to the Title II project aided our efforts to collaborate as did the coincidence that Western's provost was the former education dean at California State, Fresno and served on the Renaissance Group board of directors.

### ***Learning from Past Experience***

As the director of this project, I admit that the saying "you learn from past experience" truly captured what we experienced in the Renaissance Partnership. Since the late 1960s, I have had the opportunity to direct Head Start training projects, Teacher Corps projects, Career Ladder projects, school reform projects, and research. Consequently, I had the opportunity to make a lot of mistakes and to learn from some. My professional contribution to this project as its director had a lot to do with the rich set of experiences that have come my way and the competent mentors whom I was privileged to interact with over the past thirty-five years.

### ***A Concluding Comment***

Over the past four years I have been privileged to be part of a community of learners that I believe is making a difference in how teachers are prepared and mentored. Also, it has been my good fortune to have had the support of the U. S. Department of Education, eleven universities, and their partner schools to pursue a passion to improve learning for all children. The documented accomplishments of this project and reports from hundreds of professionals who are using ideas and resources developed by the Renaissance Partnership certainly are gratifying. The eleven universities in ten states along with their partner schools have been a powerful force for the improvement of teacher quality. By working together, we have been able to achieve far more than what each of the sites could have produced alone. However, achievement of the primary goal of the Renaissance Partnership – to show accountability for the impact of teacher graduates on the students they teach – is just beginning to surface. While we have some evidence that teacher graduates have the skills and abilities to produce learning, years

of teaching and learning, data collection, and analysis will be required to fully realize the fruits of our efforts in this project. Toward that goal we must remain diligent.

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