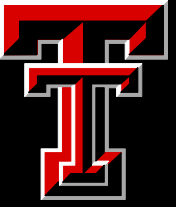# Texas Tech University

Engaged Scholarship as a Vehicle for Enhancing K-12 Professional Development

Presented by
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Tala Karkar Esperat, Ph.D
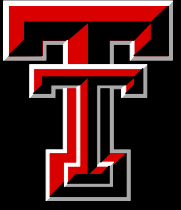Mellinee Lesley, Ph.D

PURPOSE OF THE WORKSHOP

- How are engaged scholarship partnerships formed?
- How are engaged scholarship partnerships sustained over time?
- How do you reach all of the stakeholders in engaged scholarship?
- How do you reach a level of democratization of knowledge and social change?

OVERVIEW

- **Partners**: Texas Tech University, a national non-profit educational organization and a junior high school in rural West Texas

- **Purpose**: To improve successful educational partnerships through a multi-year school-university and national educational nonprofit partnership

- **Goal**: To improve student achievement in literacy

- **Findings** : Four predominant barriers within the partnership

- **Barriers overcame**: Through a leadership team that identified and directly addressed the barriers

ENGAGED SCHOLARSHIP

In the last two years of the project the university partners initiated an engaged scholarship project, which helped foster better collaboration and shared decision-making. Specifically, engaged scholarship provided a vehicle to:

(1) initiate multi-perspectival research about best practices,

(2) "democratize" knowledge about literacy interventions,

(3) incorporate multiple stakeholders in the creation of a model of sustainable professional development for teachers, and

(4) emphasize the importance of providing a collaborative structure with teacher leaders engaged in research at multiple levels within the school to bring about school reform.
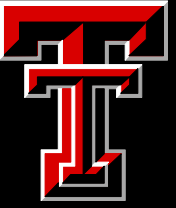
- **School-University Partnerships:**

   Draws upon emerging partnership models → (Ravid & Handler, 2001).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

EMERGING PARTNERSHIP MODELS (Ravid & Handler, 2001):

(1) collaboration between a university and a Professional Development School (PDS),

(2) consultation,

(3) one-to-one collaboration, and

(4) multiple collaboration project teams under one umbrella organization acting as the facilitator or umbrella model

RELEVANT LITERATURE
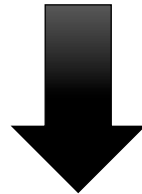
For **quality partnerships** to DEVELOP
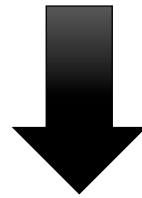
must center on a clearly established purpose that is relevant for both the school and university

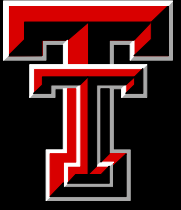(Lefever-Davis, Johnson, & Pearman, 2007; Teital, 2003)

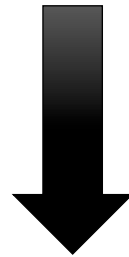Allowing university and school personnel to **work side-by-side**

construction of partnership goals and objectives

(Teital, 2003)

RELEVANT LITERATURE

For *Educational Reform* to be genuine, effective, and systemic,

school personnel must be empowered to articulate their vision and help structure their own reform
(Darling-Hammond, 2010; Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995)

RELEVANT LITERATURE

SUCCESS

CHALLENGES

(Causton-Theoharis, et al., 2011; Dallmer, 2004; Kruger, et al., 2009; Miller, 1993; Norton, et al., 2002; Parkinson & Welsh, 2009; Ravid & Handler, 2001; Stephens & Boldt, 2004; Teital, 2003)
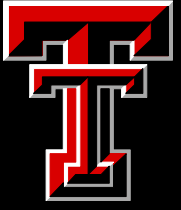
RELEVANT LITERATURE: Challenges
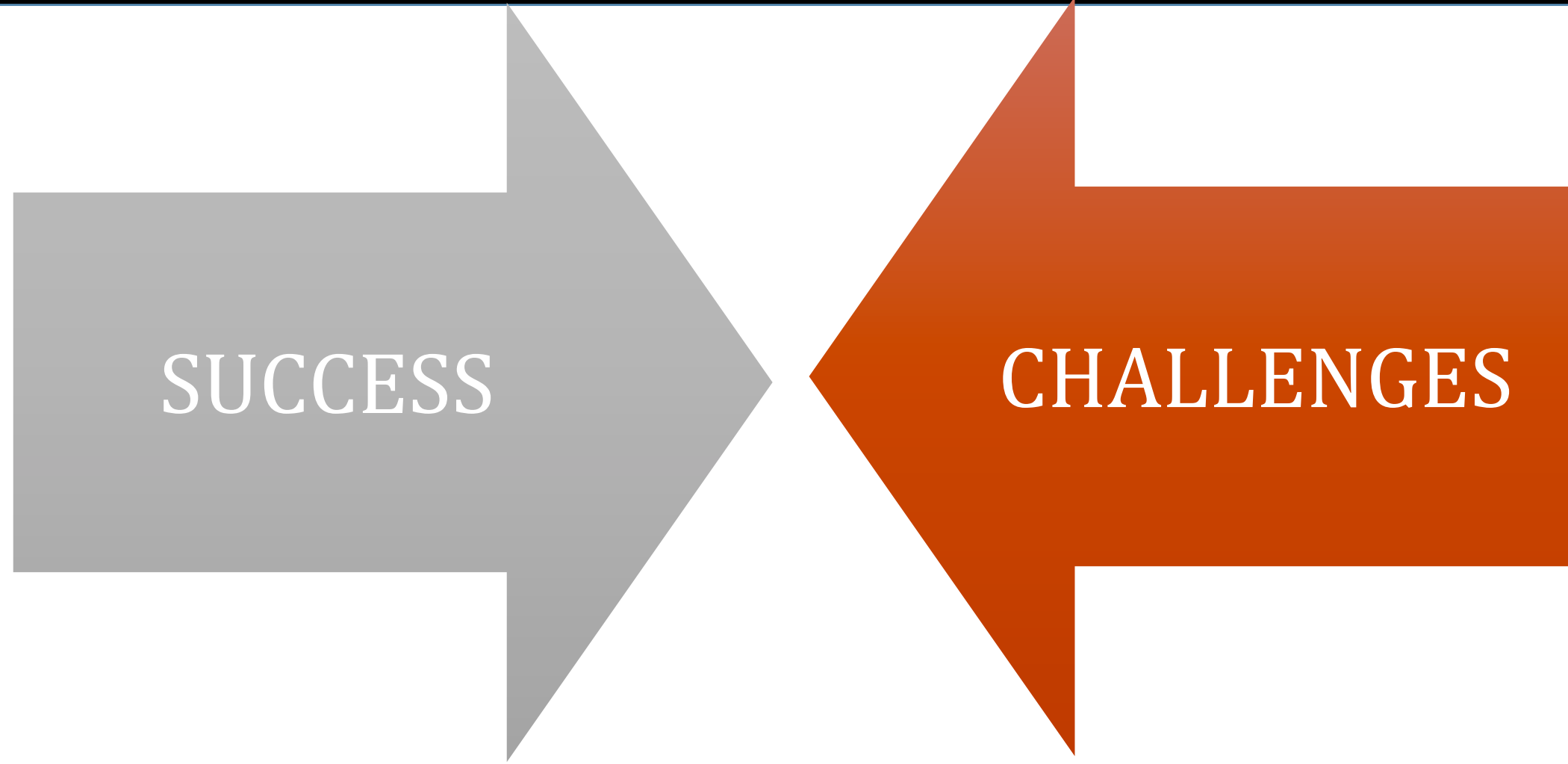
Not really knowing what issues PARTNERS will face until collaboration has begun and problems inevitably unfold (Stephens & Boldt, 2004)

Requires teams to actively interact to form relationships that emphasize collaboration and trust → Unless EVIDENT in the partnership, both partners will CONTINUE to STRUGGLE (Parkinson & Welsh, 2009)

RELEVANT LITERATURE: Challenges

Differences in the nature of the organizations involved (McLaughlin & Black-Hawkins, 2007)
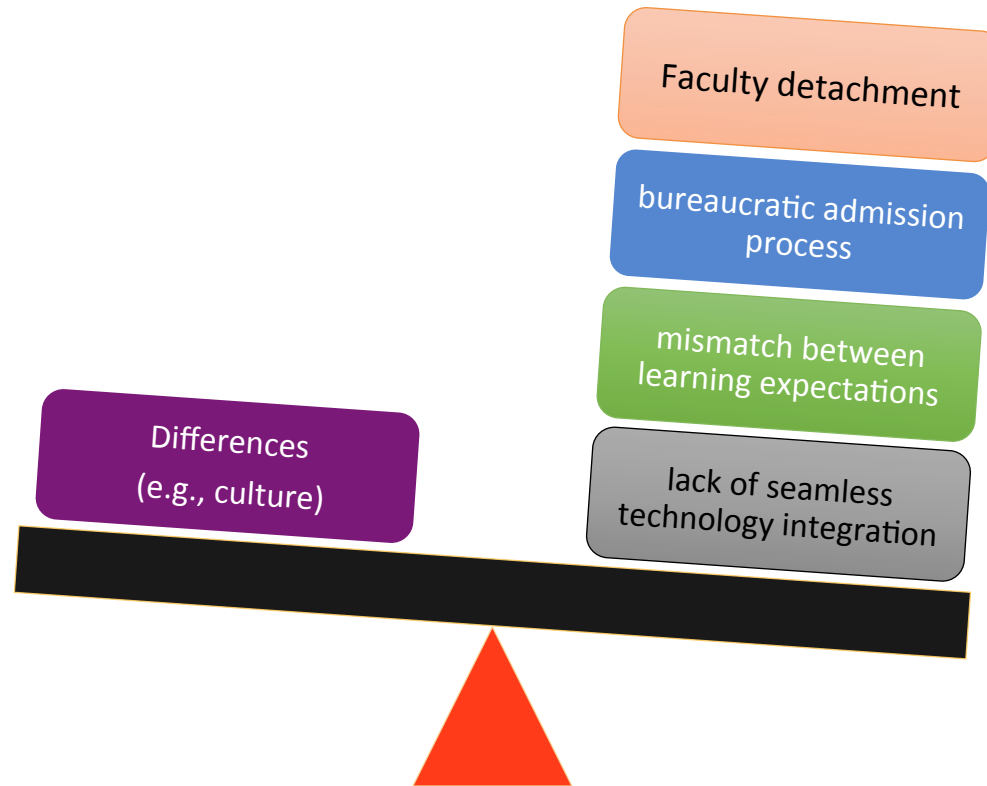
Purpose
Functions
Structures
Clientele Served
Existing Reward Systems
Rules and Regulations
Ambiance
Ethos
(Goodlad, 1988;
Munoz et al., 2006).

Differences

Barriers

Faculty detachment

bureaucratic admission process

mismatch between learning expectations

Differences (e.g., culture)

lack of seamless technology integration
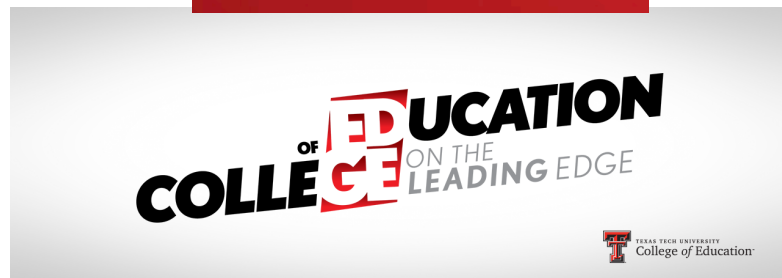
CONTEXT OF THE STUDY
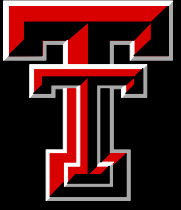
CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

- University involved in this study received a U.S. Department of Education SEED grant in partnership with a national educational nonprofit organization

- Created 3 graduate certificate programs → literacy, STEM and leadership.

- Graduate certificates → teachers, school leaders and administrators received job-embedded professional development through university coursework designed around districts' stated needs.

METHODOLOGY

QUALITATIVE

Exploratory multiple case study design
(Creswell, 2013)

Nine interviews with Key Partners at Conclusion of study

=

4 Males

5 Females

6 = university,
3 = national educational non-profit organization
4 → faculty
2 → school administrators

METHODOLOGY : Data Sources

FOCUS GROUPS → 3 cohorts of K-12 teachers who were involved in the graduate certificate program

29 TRANSCRIPTS → weekly meetings between the collaborators on this project

ARTIFACTS → observation field notes from visits to school districts, course syllabi, enrollment information, recruitment material, professional development presentation materials, and course learning modules

METHODOLOGY: Data Analysis
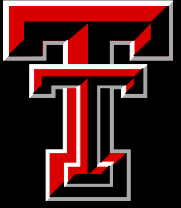
Grounded Theory
(Strauss & Corbin, 2008)

Data were read several times and provisional labels were created

Open coding was conducted with a 3-column table with the headings (data excerpts, open codes, axial codes, selective codes)

Making connections among the codes.

TRUSTWORTHINESS

- To ensure trustworthiness of the study, the following criteria were established:
- **Credibility:** The researchers used multiple sources of data collection
- **Confirmability**: The researcher established an audit trail from the beginning of the data collection
- **Transferability**: The researcher provided thick description of the participants and the setting, "An inquiry is judged in terms of the extent to which its findings can be applied in other contexts or other respondents" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 290).

FINDINGS

Lack of connection between faculty and students

BARRIERS	HOW BARRIER WAS OVERCAME
Systemic issues → caused students to feel that there were no communication and interactions with their university faculty	By removing several people involved in the enrollment process (the middle man)
The difficulty of setting up synchronous meetings → led to limited interaction with teacher participants.	Used a different approach of using Twitter to conduct live but easily accessible discussions Also, moved to a face-to-face model for instruction based on feedback from teachers
Multiple leaders from multiple school districts needed to meet on a regular basis →but they were all busy and exhausted	The university faculty member drove to their schools once a week, even if it was out of town, and met them before 5 o'clock - met with the master teacher to discuss plans, met with the principal individually, and made walkthroughs with the assistant principal
Due to changes each semester in faculty teaching loads → university faculty did not consistently attend the weekly leadership team meeting phone calls	Gave university faculty more of a leadership role.

Difficult university bureaucracies

BARRIERS	HOW BARRIER WAS OVERCAME
Communication issues (LOGISTICS) → delayed the process of enrolling eligible candidates into coursework at the university	Revised the recruitment approach → started with those who have a big need in areas of STEM and Literacy, then move to those who were high fliers in the campus because they were the ones who truly wanted to be in the coursework
District teacher participants were often unaware of university registration guidelines.	Representative from the national educational nonprofit organization designated herself as the resource to answer questions and the person who would make contact with other people; also created infographics etc.
Not communicating correctly about the transferability of current coursework to future graduate studies	A brochure and registration materials were created to clarify the issue of course transfers
Courses brought uncertainty in terms of what teacher participants needed for their practice.	Two significant steps: (a) all parties agreed that each module would have interactive components, discussion forums, and synchronous meetings where new learning beyond required readings was presented, and (b) all class assignments should connect and relate to the required practices of teachers enrolled in coursework that could be immediately applied to their classroom practice

Competency-based learning not always aligned between the university and schools' norms

BARRIERS	HOW BARRIER WAS OVERCAME
Teachers and administrators discovered → classes were not aligned to what the teachers and administrators were doing, and the assignments were behind to where they were in school curricular expectations	Coaching plan was was developed: (a) coach university instructors in interpreting school reports pertaining to standardized test scores, and (b) coach one teacher or a school leader at a time to address specific goals
Lack of understanding from the university faculty → what teachers and administrator participants do with prescribed curriculum and their focus on standardized testing.	Adjustments to the delivery of the coursework → courses were taught face-to-face or on site at the campuses where university faculty could directly interact with teachers and administrators within the context of their school.
Partners were sometimes not on the same page and have different perspectives about competency-based learning (e.g., interventions)	Partnership leadership team agreed → any coordinated school visits should be conducted when all representatives from the partnership are together, coordinate time with the principal and the master teacher, and place visits in the calendar for the semester.
Participants lacked understanding →purpose of video capture	To encourage teachers to use video capture, university faculty had to: (a) model the video capture experience by scoring videos together with their students, and (b) assure teacher participants that there would be individualized feedback from the video capture.

Integration of technology in curriculum and instruction not clearly negotiated in the partnership

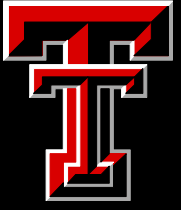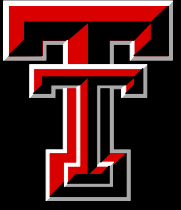| BARRIERS	HOW BARRIER WAS OVERCAME
Difficulty in uploading videos into an online platform → time–consuming and navigation was tricky	Ask the leadership teams from each school to identify where they want their support to be → compromise with school districts gave schools ownership and adjusted their plans to get more traction in the video uploading
Ineffective virtual support → there was no district resources to assist teacher participants	Identify an expert at each school campus to assist teachers with just in time support in using the online platform; collaborate in planning these courses
Video capture was ineffective → due to untimely feedback from both the university professor and national educational nonprofit organization	(a) district calendars and testing dates were looked into and planned for the team; (b) four video capture per course were carefully considered and how those fall out on the calendar; (c) enforced the idea of asking teacher participants to reflect on their own practice (as it was discovered in the file uploads that they did not look at them); (d) urged teachers to identify videos they wanted the professors and national educational nonprofit organization staff to look at; and (e) urged the national educational nonprofit organization to view the videos for inter-rater reliability
Negative mindset toward technology → considered dropping out of the courses	Once teachers were getting the technical help from the university faculty and the national educational nonprofit organization, teachers stayed on the program.

ENGAGED SCHOLARSHIP AS A VEHICLE FOR FOR ENHANCING K12 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

VEHICLE FOR...

- provided a role for university faculty to become embedded in a school
- gave voice to the needs of school teachers and their particular culture

VEHICLE FOR…

- **Elevating** the role of a historically marginalized population who have traditionally been cast as consumers of research as opposed to producers of research.

- **Equal footing** of all participants in the study led to shared decision-making, which led to improved educational partnership.

- **Democratization** of knowledge

VEHICLE FOR...

Discovery

Emotional /mental

Gradual trust

School Identity
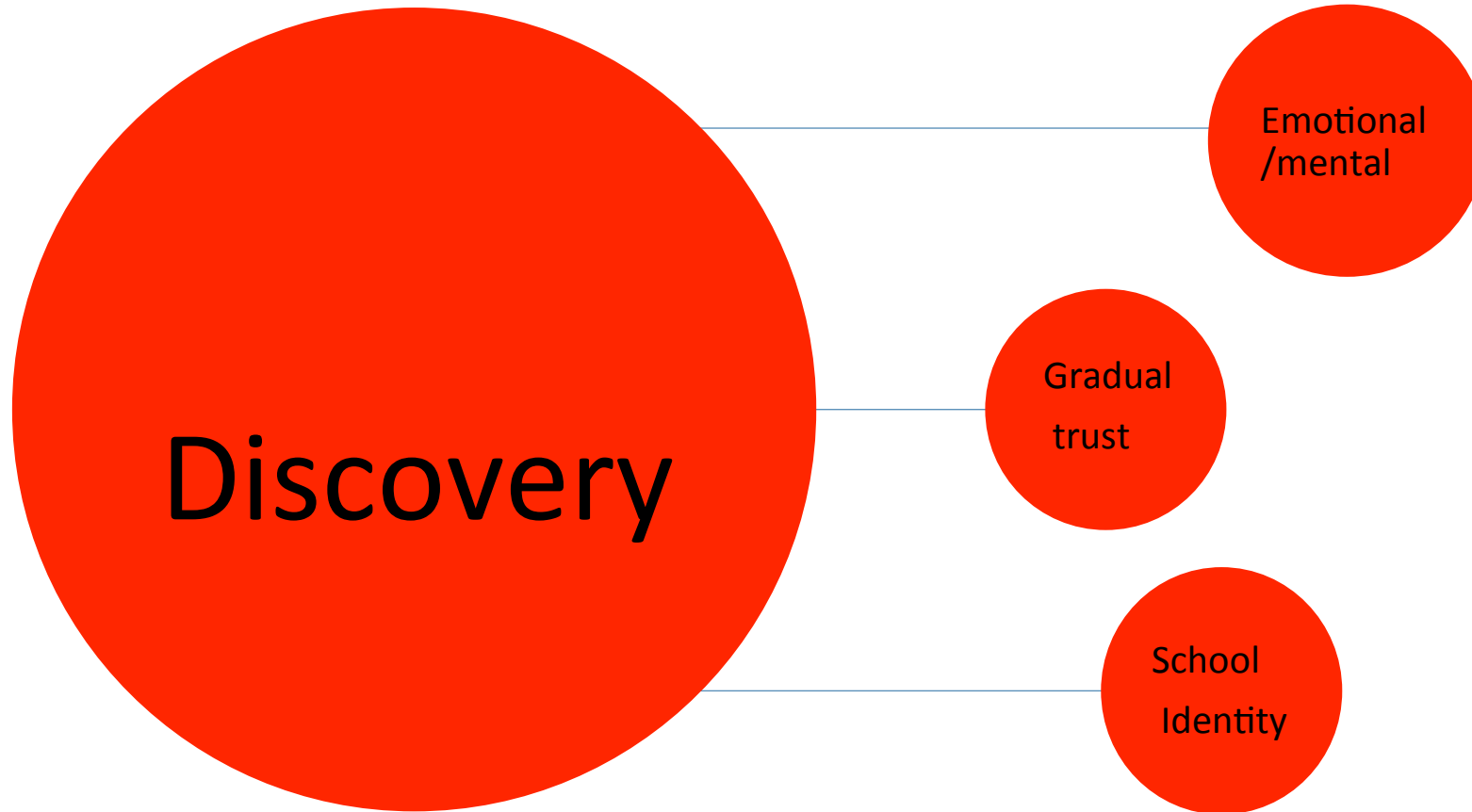
IMPLICATIONS FOR UNIVERSITY PARTNERSHIPS

- The role of the university partner as an "outside expert" did not serve to create systemic change in the early iterations of the project.

- Thus, the project became more collaborative through giving partners more equal roles,

- knowledge was "democratized," and

- social action toward improving the quality of school experiences for adolescents

- Community Engaged Scholarship is a powerful vehicle for enacting school reform

IMPLICATIONS TO FUTURE RESEARCH

- Community Engaged Scholarship is a powerful means through which to address the unmet needs of students.
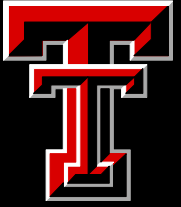
Discussion and Conclusion

- Professional development activities and courses should be customized.

- Participants can also receive the right coaching to improve in their craft.

- K-12 teachers and administrators should be given the responsibility and be held accountable for their commitment to their craft.
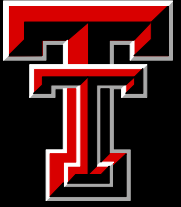
Discussion and Conclusion

- K-12 teachers and administrators should also be made aware of how to to fulfill these requirements

- Enabling participants to monitor their progress in their classroom

- Over-all, the mismatch/mis-alignment between student and university learning expectations is an issue that can be communicated openly.

- K-12 teachers and administrators can work hand in hand in improving the learning process
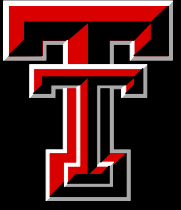
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