



US-China Partnership Development Matrix

by Jeff Wang

The following *Partnership Development Matrix* is a roadmap for assessing and guiding partnership relationships. By referring to this matrix, a school community can assess where it falls on the development continuum by evaluating projects currently underway; then it can consider projects that bring either current activities to the next level or new activities to a new audience.

This matrix is by no means exhaustive, and we welcome your contributions.

Key Steps

Let's take a moment to conceptualize a typical partnership development process. Through this exercise, we can pinpoint some common issues.

- a. **Warm-up** This is the phase when the American school (usually teachers and the principal and/or superintendent) is introduced to and expresses interest in the idea of establishing a partnership. Information about the benefits, the potential partner school, and examples of what specific projects might look like are common ways to bring schools on board. It's commonly obvious to Chinese schools that an international connection, with a U.S. school in particular, is important. However, we should note that their objectives can be very different from those of American schools.
- b. **Establishment** This is the phase when the two schools conduct mutual visits, during which some form of an agreement or memorandum of understanding (MOU) may be signed. For some Americans, this may be their first time visiting China, and – more importantly – their first connection with Chinese educators. This is usually the first high point of a newly established relationship. The U.S. principal often leaves with an intense impression of China, the Chinese school and its students. Both parties confirm strong interest in working together, but the specifics are usually only vaguely spelled out in the agreement. Recognizing the importance of aligning the two parties' interest and willingness to carry out concrete projects in the future, schools should be encouraged and given the opportunity to candidly explore each other's objectives and capacity for possible projects.
- c. **Break-in** This is the phase when schools negotiate concrete programs based on their objectives and capabilities. "Break-in" is often the phase where many partnerships stagnate or even break down. Primarily, schools fail to establish next steps due to 1) the lack of effective communication

between the two schools, and 2) substantial differences in intention and capacity to carry out proposed projects. These two reasons lead to many “symptoms,” such as: “They never return my e-mails,” and “Our school simply cannot host 10 students for a whole semester, and we can’t send our teacher over there for a long period of time.”

- d. **Project Implementation** This is the phase during which negotiated projects for students, teachers, and school leaders are being carried out by both Chinese and U.S. schools. The key is to maintain reciprocity not only in form, but also in concrete achievements. Projects that engage and meet the expectations of both sides may stimulate further collaboration.

Many obstacles may stand in the way, from school-year calendar differences to vastly different levels of competency in language or certain subject areas (imagine a poorly adapted joint unit on trigonometry for high school freshmen in the two partnering schools).

- e. **Expanding Reach** This is the phase when existing participants start to think about how the partnership can benefit others in the school community. For example, a relationship that began with activities around the two schools’ Chinese and English language classes could be expanded to other subject areas in the school; or participants of a principal shadowing program may begin to involve more teachers in similar shadowing programs; or a school-to-school relationship may evolve into a more robust community-to-community relationship – all of which open new doors to support and opportunities.

US-China School Partnerships Development Matrix

	Students	Faculty	Leaders
Basic	<p>Engage in brief exchange activities, requiring little or no Chinese competency</p> <p>via technology</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> introductory videoconferencing join a group online community with students in China <p>in-person</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> short trip to experience China 	<p>Establish initial contact with partner school</p> <p>via technology</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> establish e-mail connection with teachers in China join online community <p>in-person</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> participate in a short-term study mission host short-term visiting teachers from China 	<p>Investigate a partnership</p> <p>via technology</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> establish e-mail connection with principals in China join online community <p>in-person</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> engage in initial contact with the partner school through mutual visit some communication with key contacts in the partner school
Intermediate	<p>Participate in short-term, well-structured projects with emphasis on language learning</p> <p>via technology</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> share media or laboratory projects with students in China <p>in-person</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> summer camp visits with home-stay 	<p>Maintain regular contact with partner school teachers, via online or in-person activities</p> <p>via technology</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> post instructional materials study and adapt materials posted by Chinese teachers <p>in-person</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> classroom shadowing joint professional training engage colleagues in other disciplines 	<p>Conduct regular/in-depth partnership activities with partner school leaders</p> <p>via technology</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> establish a school-to-school portal webpage that facilitates programs and activities <p>in-person</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> regular communication with the partner school host a principal shadow group from China organize community events
Comprehensive	<p>Regularly participate in longer-term collaborative programs that connect with student's curriculum</p> <p>via technology</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> identify, research, and propose solutions to a shared problem through online collaboration debates on relevant topics <p>in-person</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> joint projects joint seminars and discussion in-session visits community service 	<p>Conceptualize and organize activities that regularly connect the school's teachers and students</p> <p>via technology</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> creatively use technology to conduct joint units or project instruction <p>in-person</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> exchange curriculum co-direct a project for a specific unit organize a seminar on a topic of mutual interest 	<p>Organize and participate in regular structured partnership activities</p> <p>via technology</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> explore new technologies/resources to enhance school-to-school partnership overall <p>in-person</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> joint training with counterpart principals engage the community in convening resources for furthering of the partnership