PDS Partners

Implementing a Physical Education Professional Development School Model

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DeKalb District 428 and the Physical Education Teacher Education (PETE) program at Northern Illinois University (NIU) initiated a PDS model, implemented first at Clinton Rosette Middle School (CRMS). Included is a rationale for the project and the processes in the first two years of the project - planning (i.e. year one) and implementation (i.e. year two). The district and university have held a strong partnership over the years; however, the intent for the PDS model was to broaden the school-university relationship to include physical education.

The more formal, deliberate implementation of the PDS required the PETE program to integrate more clinical experiences in university courses for teacher candidates. Specifically, the program believed an approach of long-term planning and identifying needs among district and university stakeholders would best inform a process to increase meaningful contact time in schools for teacher candidates. We wanted to develop a site for university students to see their methods classes come to life and where the school PE curriculum reflects similar values to the PETE program. Expanding upon an already established clinical program would allow new experiences to focus on specific priorities – and in this case bi-lateral professional development through planned school-university interactions. The PETE program believed taking the time to strategically expand involvement would provide a natural transition from university courses to a school-based program.

DeKalb District 428 has been a PDS District since 2007 with clear goals and an evaluation plan developed between the district and university. The PDS has been identified across the district by year-long co-teaching for student teachers in both elementary and secondary settings. The model also includes participation in outreach opportunities, early and late clinicals across approximately 25 licensure programs, and professional activities such as guest speakers, trainings, and school or university events. While there has been a collaborative connection, albeit program specific, it did not included middle school or physical education as its focus.

Rationale

Within District 428, CRMS was targeted as the

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT
Cindy Stunkard, Kutztown University

Recently, I have changed jobs. After 26 years in the classroom, I have moved into an assistant professor position. In this new position, I have the privilege of working with student teachers. Even though I supervised many candidates in my elementary school classroom and the dispositions for evaluations are relatively the same, the role of university professor proves to be a different type of challenge. The new goals, challenges, objectives, and a level of enthusiasm I set for myself as a classroom teacher have shifted.

Student teachers are, by and large, a passionate, focused group. Their enthusiasm is contagious and their energy is often boundless. I continue to be impressed by their professionalism and commitment to the field of education despite the often misrepresentations of the media. On a recent candidate visit, the cooperating teacher commented on the candidate's preparation including knowledge of the state standards, understanding the role of the general and special education teacher in regards to the Individualized Education Program (I.E.P.), and cooperative teaching.

This conversation leads me to believe that these teachers will be our best advocates for education's future. The professional dispositions modeled by these novice teachers will be a positive force in the building in which they are hired. For each teacher that has been prepared to conquer the classroom, the next five years are critical in retaining them in the work force. Any opposition they encounter will hopefully be balanced with pedagogy and strategies that have been engrained through their teacher preparation program.

Veteran teachers and college professors could "take a page" from their playbook. Think about the beginning of your career or change of career. What were your goals and objectives? How were you prepared to handle challenges? Has your level of enthusiasm diminished or is it still going strong? How are you adapting to the changes of the educational world?

As we prepare for our ten year celebration as a national organization, we will be looking back on where we have been. Folks will reminisce and possibly share a few laughs about projects that didn't work out as planned. Reminiscing is important to keep the past in mind, but more importantly, looking to the future can frame the goals and objectives of an organization that continues to improve and reinvent itself. Where will you be in five more years?

most appropriate site to initiate the PDS model in physical education at the middle school level because of a longstanding, positive relationship with the PETE program. An NIU alum along with a tenured physical education educator began to collaborate due to pre-existing interests in ongoing professional development. Timing for the conceptualization of the project seemed appropriate based on multiple shifts in teacher preparation, such as NCATE's Recommendations for Clinical Experiences (2010), the unveiling of EdTPA for assessing student teachers, integration of Common Core State Standards content in all teacher education programs, newly created Enhanced Physical Education statement from the Illinois State Board of Education, and the NIU PETE Program redesign.

Planning

Discussions began at the middle school with the physical education teacher in the fall of the first year. Supported by a PETE graduate student, they (a) completed a needs assessment for equipment, (b) evaluated the CRMS physical education curriculum, and (c) developed an equipment wish list that would help improve the delivery of existing programs. At the university, two faculty members co-planned possibilities for the project and identified sources of funding. Two hours were allocated for planning each week, conceptualizing a long-term plan and writing small grant proposals aligned with the needs assessment. An internal, university-supported proposal was submitted and received for preparing content packets while an external proposal was submitted and received Adventure Based Learning (ABL) equipment. By summer of year one, time was still spent conceptualizing the project. The PDS model and the overall structure of lessons and instructional units were established but day-to-day teaching would have to wait until the context was better understood in the second year.

Implementation

In order to move towards the goal of establishing a middle school site, university faculty became a daily presence in the school. In year two, university faculty began daily co-teaching in the PDS PE class. Co-teaching focused on Models Based Instruction (Metzler, 2011) using a range of content areas aligned to state goals and national standards. Instructional models taught included Sport Education and Fitness Education, each with their own set of distinct outcomes. Daily teaching continued for two full quarters and all lessons were recorded on video by a graduate assistant. After each class taught by the university faculty, the PDS team met to reflect and discuss changes to further enhance student learning. The PDS mentor then re-taught the lesson to all of her classes the following day with modifications according to grade level while maintaining the integrity of the instructional model. In effect, the process became daily professional development. The results of the project were disseminated in state presentations, faculty meetings and university methods courses.

At the beginning of the second semester in year two, the PDS mentor assumed the lead teaching role of all class periods with the university faculty providing daily assistance. The daily support ranged from assisting with instructions during a task, helping with classroom organization, equipment dispersal, leading small groups, or co-teaching. Daily planning before and after lessons still took place throughout the school year. The daily commitment by the PDS team allowed them to see students demonstrate behaviors and complete learning tasks aligned with outcomes of units that were co-planned. Students met new expectations aligned with instructional models at CRMS, such as the pedagogical concepts of the Five Finger Contract (Frank, 2004; Panicucci et al., 2002) and Fair Play Contract (Siedentop, 1994) used to manage and assess affective development.

Lessons Learned

Daily professional development and engagement among the three primary participants was more demanding than originally expected. The daily contact allowed the sharing of authentic middle school teaching experiences with university students, as well as preparing these future teachers for the complexities of teaching in a middle school. The realities of entering a school context, leading effective instruction based off plans done in advance, and acclimating to the context was a considerable task during the first half of the year. Time was necessary for working through holdups in instructional strategies, classroom management and lesson pacing. However, we believed successes experienced during implementation were due to deliberate measures in planning for a full year prior to implementation. Those measures included: (a) time spent by university faculty conceptualizing the scope of the partnership, (b) developing materials to infuse three instructional models, (c) troubleshooting scheduling distractions, and (d) drafting grant proposals all to support the advancement of a middle school PE program and university PETE program.

Implementation would not have occurred without the cooperation of several CRMS personnel (e.g. principal, assistant principal, PE colleagues) who have graciously hosted NIU faculty and students over the years. The mentor teacher has created new materials and new strategies for student learning. The university's vision is to improve relationships and improve teacher preparation. Improvements are multi-faceted, including earlier

> **"THE PETE PROGRAM BELIEVED TAKING THE TIME TO STRATEGICALLY EXPAND INVOLVEMENT WOULD PROVIDE A NATURAL TRANSITION FROM UNIVERSITY COURSES TO A SCHOOL-BASED PROGRAM."**

practicum experiences for PETE students at CRMS.

The PDS project between CRMS and NIU allowed common interests of enhancing physical education programming and common aims of increased and improved student learning to take priority. Planning and implementation was useful because of buy-in among the PE professionals supported by both entities' administration. Deliberate planning at NIU in year one and daily collaboration during the school day at CRMS during implementation in year two provided an opportunity for the NIU program to rethink our clinical experiences and how a PDS model could contribute.

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ACTION RESEARCH IN A PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SCHOOL: PREPARING SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHER CANDIDATES

Scott Scheuerell, Loras College

Teacher education is frequently criticized for failing to prepare teacher candidates for the classrooms they will be working in. Unfortunately, many new teachers are ill equipped to handle classroom situations which cannot be replicated on a college campus. There is a significant disconnect between the theory learned on college campuses and the skills needed to succeed in today's classrooms. As a result, new teachers are unprepared to meet the challenges they will face during their first year of teaching. Each year about 157,000 teachers, or about one-half of all new teachers, leave the profession because they are not prepared to deal with complex classroom situations for the first time (Alliance, 2008). Much of this is attributed to the fact that many new teachers are placed in some of the most difficult classrooms (Alliance, 2008). Many argue there is a need to rethink how we are preparing our teacher candidates.

Action research has a great deal of promise. In action research, teacher candidates learn how to solve the problems they will be facing as new educators. In a Professional Development School, teacher candidates can be given the opportunity to implement action research in a classroom. This helps to close the gap between theory and practice. I will present the findings of a case study that I conducted of teacher candidates in social studies, who used action research in a high school PDS setting. The findings demonstrate that teacher candidates became problem-solvers, felt they had improved their teaching skills, and gained a great deal of confidence in their ability to teach.

In action research, teachers are involved in a five step process. The steps encourage the teacher to: 1) identify a problem they are having in the classroom, 2) collect data pertaining to the problem, 3) conduct a literature review to determine what can be done to solve the problem, 4) develop a plan to solve the problem, and 5) implement the plan (Calhoun, 1994). The uniqueness of the PDS structure itself gives teacher candidates the opportunity to participate in action research. Darling-Hammond (1994) concurred saying a PDS helps future educators "to teach reflectively, to evaluate what they are doing; to assess what's working and why; to understand how to make better decisions" (p. 7).

Methods

The purpose of this study was to find out about the experiences of teacher candidates, in social studies, who used action research in a high school PDS setting. The study focused on the perceptions of social studies PDS teacher candidates to determine whether action research helped them. I decided to use qualitative research to answer the research question since it provided rich insights into the perceptions of the student participants themselves, which would have been impossible to replicate in a quantitative study. Patton (1988) also recommends qualitative research because it can "capture what people have to say in their own words" (p. 22).

I conducted the qualitative study in the fall semester, using information from three sources to triangulate the data. The use of multiple sources in qualitative research leads to more descriptive findings (Hatch, 2002), increased validity (Yin, 1998), and added trustworthiness of the results (Hatch, 2002). In the study, interviews were conducted of eight teacher candidates in social studies, who conducted action research during their PDS experience. Each interview lasted 30 to 60 minutes and allowed me to "understand the perceptions, feelings, and knowledge of people through in-depth, intensive interviewing" in regard to the aforementioned research question (Patton, 1988, p. 29). The students were given a list of questions prior to their interview with me. Each interview was taped and later transcribed. The action research plans submitted by the PDS teacher candidates and my field notes were also used as data sources.

I had the opportunity to take field notes of the teacher candidates when they were teaching at the high school in the PDS program. If I was unable to be on-site when a teacher candidate was scheduled to teach, I encouraged them to videotape the lesson so I could view it later and take the appropriate field notes. My goal was to see each teacher candidate –in the PDS-teach a lesson before and after implementing her/his action research plan. The field notes helped me see whether there was growth by the teacher candidates after they implemented their action research plan in the PDS program.

The setting for the study was Wahlert High School in Dubuque, Iowa. During the semester, there were about 600 students in grades 9-12 at the school. Wahlert is a Catholic high school located in northeast Iowa. The school is accredited by the Iowa Department of Education and the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools (WHS, 2010). Since the fall 2008 semester, Wahlert High School has been involved in a PDS with Loras College.

This qualitative study does have limitations, so the results cannot necessarily be transferred to any PDS setting. First, the study focused solely on the field of social studies education and may not necessarily correlate to other subject areas. Second, the case study took place at a parochial school in the upper Midwest and the results may be different at a public school or in a different geographic region. Third, the case study involved a high school setting so the findings may be different at an elementary or middle school.

Findings/Results

The data collected from each action research plan, interview, and field notes provided important insights into the experiences of the teacher candidates in the high school PDS program. In particular, there were three major themes which emerged from the data. The findings indicated the social studies teacher candidates, who used action research, perceived that they were able to: 1) problem-solve, 2) improve their teaching skills, and 3) gain more confidence in their ability to teach.

Problem-Solving Skills

Action research helped the teacher candidates develop problem-solving skills. The PDS teacher candidates were confronted with a variety of problems as novice educators. The issues ranged from classroom management, to working with special education students, to engaging students in class discussion. Yet, each of the PDS teacher candidates spoke about how they had become more skilled at solving problems in their own classroom. This can be attributed to the infrastructure provided by action research, which was used by each PDS teacher candidate to help them solve various problems. In the action research paper submitted, a teacher candidate spoke about how action research would help him in his future teaching career:

I will be in a new place and I'm sure I will have multiple questions. I'm going to have to engage the students with another thing or something, then I can easily just engage the action research method to find out how to solve that problem.

Improved Teaching Skills

The evidence from the case study suggests the teacher candidates perceived that they had improved their teaching skills due to their experience with action research. In particular, action research forced the teacher candidates to focus on an area of weakness, after they had taught a couple of lessons in the PDS. Using the action research steps, the teacher candidates developed a plan of action to address their weakness and implemented what they had learned from the literature. As a result, the teacher candidates improved their teaching skills from their first couple of lessons at the beginning of the semester, in comparison to the lessons they taught at the end of the semester. Drew, who focused his action research on classroom management, became more skilled in his ability to manage the classroom. In his action research plan, he wrote:

As a result of action research, I was able to improve my teaching abilities and become more knowledgeable in how to effectively manage a classroom where all students feel comfortable and confident to learn.

Gaining Confidence

Each social studies teacher candidate gained a great deal of confidence in their ability to teach, due to their experience of using action research in the high school PDS. The action research format, used in conjunction with the PDS setting, arguably increased the rigor for each teacher candidate. The teacher candidates were given the opportunity to teach, many of them for the first time. As a result, they learned from their mistakes. By reviewing the literature and developing an action plan, they addressed their shortcomings. Most importantly, they gained a great deal of confidence from teaching and seeing the positive strides they were making in class. Angela came to the conclusion that she had gained confidence in her ability to teach, due to her experience of using action research in the PDS. During her interview, she said:

Seven Strategies to Cultivate Strategic & Sustainable PDS Partnerships

Bradley Balch, Indiana State University
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Effective teaching remains a highly charged public debate and is at the center of larger education reform initiatives. Often, a negative narrative is associated with teacher effectiveness. Similarly, university-based teacher preparation programs have been criticized for graduating teachers who are unprepared for the realities of diverse students and the authentic needs of the schools and communities they will serve.

These persistent criticisms compel educator preparation programs to reflect on current approaches to teaching and assess impact on P-12 conditions of practice. Efforts such as FHI 360's (a nonprofit organization founded in 1971 and based in Washington D.C.) Teachers for a New Era Learning Network illustrate how universities and P-12 schools partner together for improved alignment between teacher preparation and the realities of P-12 teaching and learning needs (Dailey, 3013). These partnerships are anchored in extended clinical experiences in which there is a value-added benefit for the educator preparation programs as well as the P-12 schools. However, rich and sustainable partnerships of this nature are only possible when frameworks for support such as the Professional Development Schools (PDS) network are available. As such, the partnership elements described in this article align with several of the *Nine Essentials* codified by the National Association for Professional Development Schools. The strongest alignment may be found in Essential #2: A school–university culture committed to the preparation of future educators that embraces their active engagement in the school community.

Dailey (2013), with the support of FHI 360, recently released an issue brief focused on clinically based educator preparation that yielded seven elements of effective partnering (i.e. hereafter referred to as Effective Partnering Elements). These include:

1. Clear commitments and shared financing;
2. A common vision of good teaching and mutual responsibility for preparing good teachers;
3. Dedicated time in schools for university faculty and staff;
4. P-12 influence in university teacher preparation programs;
5. Stronger programs through complementary knowledge from research and practice;
6. Inclusion of teacher candidates as professionals in school communities; and
7. Collaboration to improve programs using data. (p.1)

These effective partnering elements illustrate that school−university partnerships require much effort and investment by all stakeholder groups. Ultimately, partnerships defined by these elements evidence mutual benefits far greater than the challenging investments needed to deepen partnership efforts. This brief also contributes strong evidence of the profession's commitment to excellence.

Clinically based partnerships also serve to challenge the negative narrative surrounding educator preparation and P-12 schools. Public school parents, business leaders, teachers, administrators and even students often share that P-12 "standards and expectations must be higher" (Hart Research Associates & The Winston Group, 2006, p. 1). This pressure to improve has contributed to morale among the

> **"Our Partnership stakeholders believe strongly that the seven strategies should be viewed as a bounded framework in which all must be addressed."**

nation's teachers being at its lowest in more than 20 years (Santos, 2012). Similarly, Walsh (*Education Reforms*, 2011) indicated during her remarks to the United States House of Representative Committee on Education and the Workforce that "selectivity of teacher preparation programs, the knowledge they require teaching candidate to master, and the way these institutions prepare teachers for the rigors of the classroom is, at best, uneven, and often, woefully inadequate" (p. 3). Regarding faculty who prepare teachers, the Council of State Chief School Officers (CCSSO; 2012) noted,

> We continue to prepare teachers much the same way veteran educators were prepared. And, we continue to teach much the same way we were taught. Despite research and promising practices, we have failed to implement changes in preparation that are systemic and universal, and

produce the desired results in student achievement necessary for success in college and careers. (p. 5)

Amid these competing challenges, the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE; 2010) wisely indicated that "the 21st century has become a watershed in recognizing the importance of high-quality clinical programs in teacher preparation" (p. 3).

Our clinically based partnerships exist between a state university and an urban/metropolitan school district. Both the university and school district share in financing the stipend support for participating faculty and teachers as well as action research projects (Effecting Partnering Elements #1, #5, #7). Only Title-wide PDS schools (i.e., poverty as defined by free and reduced meal counts is at or above 40%) were selected for partnership participation to ensure the nationwide challenge of poverty could be addressed and the mission of serving all students was furthered (Effective Partnering Elements #2, #4, #5). Both the university and partner schools share in each other's professional development throughout the year with open invitations to participate (Effective Partnering Elements #3, #4, #5).

Other key components of our clinical practice programs include a distinctive early field experience internship program (Effective Partnering Elements #3, #5, #6). Prior to student teaching, all elementary and special education teacher candidates spend a semester becoming fully immersed and actively engaged in school building activities including teaching, professional development, assessment, and administrative tasks. There is a structured, growth-oriented support model in place with this immersion program underscored by continuous feedback from cooperating teachers, administrators, and faculty.

Additionally, we have developed an immersion experience for secondary and all-grade programs that pairs teacher candidates with a classroom teacher (Effective Partnering Elements #3, #5, #6). Over the course of five weeks, candidates are engaged for one instructional period a day, five days a week. The candidate acts as a classroom aide and then takes on the role of teacher for a 5-8 day unit of instruction. The candidate plans, delivers, assesses, reflects upon outcomes, and provides remediation for the instructional unit.

Introduction to Student Impact Studies: Merging Action Research Principles with Student Learning Objectives

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Today's teachers are faced with numerous educational changes, one of which is incorporating student learning objectives (SLO's) into classroom assessment practices. It is essential that interns are exposed to these practices as well so they are prepared for the realities they will face in their future classrooms. In an effort to continue to support interns and foster the Professional Development School (PDS) partnership with mentor teachers, Salisbury University interns are charged with a new project called a "Student Impact Study" (SIS). This project combines the practices of action research with the assessment strategies of SLO's. Through collaboration with his/her mentor teacher, interns focus on an academic problem seen in his/her internship, develop a plan for action, collect and analyze student assessment data, and ultimately share findings with his/her school and the greater Salisbury University PDS community.

The authors of this article represent a variety of Student Impact Study "hats," each bringing a different perspective about the project at Salisbury University. Seminar instructors, supervisors, liaisons, mentor teachers, Regional Professional Development School (RPDS) coordinators, and interns are represented in disseminating their knowledge and insights about the new initiative through sharing the project's rationale, a clear break-down of the project components, how it is introduced to interns and mentors, strategies and suggestions for implementation of the SIS study at other PDS sites, and first hand examples of SIS projects that were conducted in the Fall of 2013.

Background about the Student Impact Study Project

At Salisbury University, the Student Impact Study project is viewed as a combination of action research principals and student learning objectives. Early in the semester, seminar instructors spend an entire class session on the project while introducing the principles surrounding its completion. Interns learn how action research is a method for educational practitioners to engage in the assessment and improvement of their own practice, a tool for a teacher to reconsider their pedagogy or to adapt in order to solve a problem, and a activity for a school community to help teams of educators to assess problems in their schools, enact changes, and reassess (Tomal, 2010).

Following the work of Johnston (2006), a simple process was highlighted to get interns thinking about questions or problems they see happening in their internships. First, what are your questions, problems, and interests? What will be your plan of action? What data could help you study your plan of action? What did you learn from your data and what questions follow from the data analysis? It is this process and the collaboration with his/her mentor teacher, that every intern selects an academic problem to focus on for his/her SIS project.

Another key component of the SIS project is that interns follow similar practices that current mentor teachers are required to do for their SLO's in Maryland. Through resources from the Maryland State Department of Education (2014) and Wicomico County (2013), interns use the same academic language as mentor teachers. Interns are charged with collecting current student data surrounding learning that is aligned to current curriculum standards. Each intern's SIS project is connected to an instructional goal for a specific group of students over a specified time interval. All of this aligns to the same principles that mentor teachers are using within the PDS.

Interns use a graphic organizer to help navigate them through the required components of the SIS project. Key components of the project include collaboration with his/her mentor teacher to select an academic problem, exploring academic resources to assist in selecting appropriate instructional strategies to implement with students, closely examining the student population connected to his/her SIS project, collecting baseline data to analyze, developing a detailed plan of action, collecting and analyzing student work samples and data to evaluate student learning, and guiding reflection questions to assist intern thinking about the process and implications.

Aligning the Student Impact Study Project to the PDS Essentials

In addition, every intern is required to share the results of their Student Impact Study on two levels. This is in direct alignment with *NAPDS Essential #5* (National Association for Professional Development Schools, 2008). First, at their Professional Development School, each intern must share their research findings in some kind of format. Some choose to share at grade level meetings, staff meetings, or through a one-on-one meeting with their principal. Other PDS sites have disseminated the findings through school newsletters and blogs on the school websites. Salisbury University also hosts an Intern Gallery Walk where all interns showcase their Student Impact Studies. Each intern creates a poster of his/her Student Impact Study project to display. This also serves as a venue for all foundations and methods candidates to see the work of the interns. Faculty participate and have an opportunity to interact with interns as well. Site coordinators, mentor teachers, liaisons, and administrators are invited. This allows Salisbury interns to share at their individual school level and the greater PDS and local school communities to contribute to the ongoing educational dialogue about teaching best practices.

Perspectives from Various PDS Stakeholders

One of the main areas of concern regarding the action research was the alignment with current educational change. Accordingly, it was important that the SIS project align with the practices happening in the classrooms. What better way to evaluate a university project than through collaboration with our PDS partners. Stakeholders across our PDS network were asked to highlight the accomplishments and areas for growth in the SIS project.

From the PDS Coordinator

The SIS project was a value-added component of our PDS partnerships. Mentor teachers found it beneficial to host an SU intern because the intern was versed in Common Core language, expectations, collaborative scaffolding. In some cases, interns helped mentors develop their own SLO's for the year and the interns assisted mentors with data collection and the instructional process. Overall, the SIS project was a win-win for students, teachers and SU interns. In addition, since the interns were creating their own SLO's on a smaller scale, the mentors felt as though this project added validity to the interns' experiences and provided them with real world preparation for their profession.

From the Mentors

Mentors saw it as helpful to have an additional educator working with the students who had not met his/her academic goals. This allowed the mentor teacher to reach his/her SLO goal as well as assisting the intern in reaching the goal that he/she had set. In addition, mentors and interns were able to create and use multiple approaches to augment student success. Since there were two educators working together in the classroom, the teaching team was able to analyze student data and create modifications to lesson plans more frequently. This also fostered intern practice for researching proven intervention programs

We're in this Together: How a PDS Initiative helped Reconnect Middle School Students with Books

Chrystine Mitchell, Pennsylvania State University: Berks Campus
Michael Mitchell, Schuylkill Valley School District

Professional Development School (PDS) programs offer unique opportunities for theory and practice to forge together to help students in meaningful ways. One such opportunity was afforded when a middle school principal and a university PDS teacher educator collaborated to help cultivate the act of reading for middle level students over the summer months. The shared commitment toward helping connect young adolescents to text reaped rewards for the students, teachers, administrators and the community. The initiative was sparked by an idea held by a school board member that digital readers may be an incentive for students to read. This idea resulted in a catalyst for positive change throughout the building. It began with fundraising efforts to purchase Barnes and Noble Nooks for students to read over the summer in order to see if students would read. Not only did students read over the summer, but the positive impact bled into the school year. The ripple effect caused the school to enact a bring-your-own-technology policy to enable students to utilize their own digital devices to support and enhance learning.

Teachers are often trying to connect students to text, yet researchers contend that young adolescent motivation to read diminishes as each year passes (Unrau & Schlackman, 2006). Motivating students to read is a challenge that exists for middle level teachers during the school year (Baker, Dreher, & Guthrie, 2000). Yet, as motivation decreases opportunities for middle school students to engage in independent, authentic reading in authentic contexts declines (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006). The decrease in motivation during the middle school years combined with the lack of interesting texts available to students in the classroom makes the act of reading less enticing (Worthy, Moorman & Turner, 1999). Teachers at the middle level typically use novel units for reading and often time students lose interest because of the lack of student interest and autonomy. Cultivating the art of students reading for pleasure is the opportunity cost of teacher-led novel units. Miller (2009) contends that, "Teachers lose credibility with students when they ignore the cultural trends and issues that interest them and instead design instruction around books that are 'good for you' (p. 85). Coupled with less student autonomy is the issue of competing technological distractions.

Students live and function in the 21st century, yet most schools still use textbooks and traditional ways of teaching to engage students in the act of learning so the role of the middle level teacher is forced to adapt to the changing school climate. Reading print now takes on different forms and formats. For instance, the Internet has changed the way educators and researchers think about reading (Leu, Kinzer, Coiro & Cammack, 2004). Students often search for and read print in an effort to get needed information. Young people between the ages of 13 and 24 spend and an average of 16.7 hours per week online (Weaver, 2011), so we need to help adapt the tools we are using to engage students in the act of reading. Students are immersed in a 21st century world manipulating technological devices regularly. Having a means to access texts digitally is simply an extension of what they already do. By initiating and supporting a Nook summer reading

"THE SHARED COMMITMENT TOWARD HELPING CONNECT YOUNG ADOLESCENTS TO TEXT REAPED REWARDS FOR THE STUDENTS, TEACHERS, ADMINISTRATORS AND THE COMMUNITY."

program, the school aim of this summer reading initiative was to help reconnect students with books and reading.

It Began with a Partnership
The project was initiated to ensure that students were reading independently over the summer with the intent of then incorporating the devices into classrooms. The Nook summer reading program was a two-year initiative that began at the school level the first summer and when the principal and researcher joined forces, they were able to look more closely at student outcomes and dramatically enhance the program. The suburban middle school is comprised of grades five through eight with a building population of approximately 600 students. During the first year of the initiative, a committee was developed to look at the research surrounding the initiative, to create a plan to determine which devices to purchase, and to outline fundraising efforts. The group decided to focus on the fifth grade population of students because of the decline in motivation to read that was noticed by the teachers. The committee reached out to parents, teachers, and the school community to raise money, and as a result of their school-wide fundraising efforts they raised over $10,000, which enabled the team to purchase 60 Nook digital readers. This number of eReaders equated to two complete class sets if they began incorporating them into classrooms. The first summer the school had 48 participating fifth-grade students from varying levels and the teachers grouped the students into 6-person homogenous groups. The goal was to load similar-level titles onto the devices so student-reading level could be minimally controlled. They also created an online web link for students to record their completed eBooks. As a result of the first summer program students had access to approximately 30 eBooks. According to a brief locally created survey, the students identified the summer reading program as a

positive experience and enjoyed using the digital readers. A preliminary observation was that less proficient readers tended to prefer reading with the devices to their skilled peers.

Using that first year as a way to pilot the initiative, and with a need for a narrow focus to determine program outcomes and to seamlessly work digital readers into middle school literacy programming, the principal collaborated with the teacher educator who had already been working with the school. The teaming was an effort to understand student perceptions of digital readers, their use in classes, and use of the readers over the summer. It also offered the school assistance in professional development to integrate devices into school without putting added pressure on teachers. After a meeting with the superintendent, who advocated that the summer reading program should be focused on the non-proficient readers, the program was revised to meet school needs and develop measures to understand students' summer reading behaviors and the outcomes of the program.

In the spring of the second year, the students were surveyed about their reading preferences, favorite authors and texts they would like to read if given the opportunity. Using the results of the reading inventory and in an effort to expand the students into other genres like non-fiction and poetry, eBooks were selected for purchase to be loaded on each of the Nook digital readers. Each device had the same 75 eBooks available for the 24 participating non-proficient fifth-grade readers moving into sixth-grade. The students were categorized as non-proficient based on their placement in a remedial reading course during their year in fifth grade. The 24 students were given the Nooks to read independently over the 11-week summer from June through August. The students were asked to again log their eBooks using an online web link available on the district web page as well as communicate with one another about the eBooks using a blogging instrument.

Following the summer reading program, data was collected using a questionnaire, which included survey statements with Likert scales, checklists for students to respond to, and open-ended questions that allowed for students to provide details about their experience. Focus

Editors' Corner

Ron Siers, Jr., Salisbury University
Cathey Ramey, Mardela Middle & High School

Our editorial team is excited to bring you the Fall 2014 edition of PDS Partners. Articles submitted and reviewed for this edition come from Maryland, Pennsylvania, Texas, Iowa, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, and California. We hope that each of you has experienced a refreshing and transformative fall in our Professional Development Schools.

Professional Development Schools (PDSs) provide a wonderful opportunity to add value to the lives of others each day. We are in the business of purpose maximization. When you have a value grade that supersedes your pay grade, you become an invaluable resource within your PDS (Ross & Salyers, 2013). By aligning our PDS values within each of our organizations, we can create a substantial amount of energy and momentum. Accordingly, discretionary energy is willingly expended for the greater good of the PDS.

PDSs seek to create and foster value among all stakeholders. To maintain and consistently create value, each of us must leverage our passion and strengths for PDSs. We are in the student business delivering educative pedagogy. The superior advantage within our PDSs is found within our movements for greatness. Our challenge this fall is to purposefully develop a transformational culture of value creation within our PDS. By accepting this challenge, our authors provide you with a substantial amount of value in this edition of our magazine. We hope you enjoy their work while gleaning substantial insight into the world of PDSs.

We welcome your thoughts, comments, concerns, and ideas for our magazine and look forward to seeing you at the PDS National Conference in Atlanta, Georgia in 2015.

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Congratulations and Welcome to the 2015-2016 elected members of the Executive Council & Board of Directors

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Because of PDS….SUNY Buffalo State Teacher Candidates Gain Unique Insight, Experiences, and Perspectives

Kaitlyn Marie Gardner, SUNY Buffalo State

The SUNY Buffalo State Professional Development Schools Consortium offers its teacher candidates a unique opportunity as active members of the PDS Consortium and Teacher Education Unit Professional Advisory Council (TEUPAC). With these volunteer positions come numerous responsibilities, but also exclusive insights into the inner workings of the Consortium and the college. Moreover, representatives build relationships with Buffalo State faculty, administrators, and professionals in the field. Finally, representatives gain valuable experience, which not only builds their resumes, but also impacts both their teaching philosophies and their personal outlooks. The extensive involvement of student representatives in the SUNY Buffalo State Professional Development School Consortium highlights the importance of PDS Essential #2, which stresses "*A school-university culture committed to the preparation of future educators that embraces their active engagement in the school community*" (Brindley, Field, & Lessen, 2008).

personally.

The job assignments for PDS student representatives are numerous. On campus, representatives perform typical office duties including copying, filing, and maintaining databases, in addition to designing bulletin boards and event flyers and organizing our large collection of donated books. Representatives act as liaisons between the Consortium and other students, disseminating information through our PDS Facebook page, PDS website, the Department of Elementary Education and Reading newsletter, and simple word-of-mouth. Before Consortium and Advisory Council meetings, representatives prepare business reports, compile minutes from previous meetings, and organize meeting supplies. At these meetings, student PDS representatives make presentations, take minutes, run raffles, and provide student perspectives on important Consortium matters. Finally, each PDS representative chooses a research question to study throughout the year. These research projects are shared at the Professional Development Schools annual

helps prepare, mail, and process partner school payment vouchers. All representatives assist with First Year and Transfer Student Orientation and Registration, as well as PDS Orientations. At Consortium and Advisory Council meetings, representatives learn about the PDS governance structure, current and upcoming PDS Consortium developments (such as the establishment of our first Exceptional Education partnership, new certification programs, and new international partnerships), and the perspectives and experiences of members at each level of the Consortium. Moreover, representatives understand the amount of time, effort, and money that goes into establishing and maintaining these priceless Professional Development School partnerships.

As a graduate PDS representative, I have had opportunities to make connections and nurture relationships with important, knowledgeable, and interesting people. Because of my position, I met Principal Fran Paskowitz, who made my research for NAPDS possible by welcoming me into her school. I have had several professional and personal conversations with Dr. Wendy Paterson, Dean of the School of Education at SUNY Buffalo State. Additionally, I have met Buffalo State's interim President, the principals and mentor teachers from a number of our partner schools, and faculty from Buffalo State and Niagara County Community College. In addition, I have become lifelong friends and colleagues with our PDS Co-Directors, Leslie Day and Pixita del Prado Hill.

"… HEARING FROM TEACHER CANDIDATES, ONE OF THE PRIMARY STAKEHOLDERS IN THE PDS, PROPELS THE PDS CONSORTIUMS FORWARD, KEEPS OUR PROGRAMS RELEVANT, AND HELPS ALL THE PARTNERS ACCOMPLISH THE PDS CONSORTIUM MISSION."

Aside from making connections and building resumes, working as a PDS Representative also serves to enhance one's teaching philosophy and professional perspective. With access to many professionals with varying backgrounds and viewpoints, it is easy to pick up pointers to implement during field placements, student teaching, and on the job. Witnessing copious methods and conversing with multiple teachers and administrators helps student representatives develop the most effective and appropriate teaching style for them. Because student representatives have heard the perspectives of mentor teachers and principals, college faculty and administration, they are better equipped to approach professional issues from all sides, thereby making more well-rounded and informed decisions. The professional development that student representatives receive ultimately makes them better educators and better people.

To become an undergraduate or graduate PDS representative, each candidate must undergo a competitive selection process which requires professional applications, resumes and references, and panel interviews. Undergraduate representatives are interviewed by the PDS Co-Directors and outgoing representatives; graduate representatives are interviewed by a number of faculty from various departments. Once selected, PDS representatives must agree to work a certain number of hours for, as we often jest, "cake." In all seriousness, though, representatives work for the unique opportunities the position affords, opportunities which will forever impact them both professionally and

conference. Furthermore, representatives have the opportunity to share their research projects at other venues, including the Buffalo State Student Research and Creativity Celebration and the SUNY Brockport Master's Level Research Conference. The opportunity to give a professional presentation is invaluable and unforgettable, cultivating well-spoken and professional candidates.

Buffalo State PDS Representatives learn how the college and the Consortium function. Under the direction of the PDS Co-Directors, the representatives take on many insider tasks. For example, the Graduate Representative

By involving and valuing student representatives in the Consortium, SUNY Buffalo State embodies PDS Essential #2. However, teacher candidate involvement does not simply benefit student representatives. Including student representatives in the Consortium and Advisory Council provides other Consortium members with

Now looking back from my first lesson to my fifth one, I feel so much more confident being up in front of the classroom, making lesson plans, just knowing kind of how an actual lesson goes because it is a lot different than writing it down on paper.

Recommendations

Action Research in a PDS

Each teacher candidate in social studies should be given the opportunity to conduct action research in a PDS setting. The framework utilized in action research prompts teacher candidates to be reflective about their own teaching. Action research helps teacher candidates to learn an inquiry process, which will later help them solve problems in their future classroom whether it is during student teaching or their first year teaching. During the PDS experience, teacher candidates can use action research to solve problems that they encounter dealing with classroom management and issues related to their own teaching practice. Yet, none of this would be possible if the teacher candidates were not given the opportunity to spend valuable time in the classroom, using action research, to reflect and adjust their teaching as necessary.

Teacher Candidates Need PDS Experiences.

Teacher candidates need a PDS experience where they will have meaningful opportunities to practice the craft of teaching. The evidence from the case study suggests teacher candidates need several opportunities to teach lessons, in a semester prior to student teaching, to better prepare them for their highly rigorous and high-stakes student teaching experience. An opportunity for them to teach lessons using a variety of strategies is most helpful. It is also much more relevant for them to plan lessons that they will actually implement with students and this helps to close the gap between theory and practice. There are many teaching and learning strategies the teacher candidates can use for the first time in their PDS experience. Some of these include: problem-based learning, discussion, lecture, cooperative learning, and reading strategies in the content area. The teacher candidates can then integrate action research to improve their teaching practice in each of these areas. In summary, giving teacher candidates a chance to use action research, during their PDS experience, helps them to improve their teaching skills and gain confidence in their ability to teach social studies.

Identifying Partner Teachers

In a PDS, teacher educators need to identify partner teachers who are willing to serve as mentors to teacher candidates. In fact, partner teachers play a pivotal role in helping the teacher candidates improve their teaching skills. In a high school PDS, each teacher candidate in social studies can be paired up with a partner teacher in their content area. By using this type of arrangement, each teacher candidate is able to receive feedback from an experienced teacher of social studies who is an expert in their content area and pedagogy. This helps to close the gap between what is taught on campus and what actually happens in the classroom. Action research can also help to address this issue.

During the PDS experience, partner teachers can help teacher candidates identify a problem for action research. In most cases, a partner teacher has multiple opportunities to observe the teacher candidate instructing the class. This provides a unique opportunity for the partner teacher to provide feedback to the teacher candidate. In particular, to identify a problem the teacher candidate is struggling with. This can then be the focus of an action research study for the rest of the semester. Using this approach, teacher candidates can become problem-solvers and equipped to handle issues that may arise in their future classroom. These are frequently issues that cannot be taught on a college campus or in a teacher education textbook. Most importantly, partner teachers provide critical mentoring needed to make action research work.

Flexibility is Needed

Flexibility is critical to making a PDS work. In this case study, the PDS involved a large number of teacher candidates in social studies. This provided some challenges. First, the teacher candidates had different teaching schedules. In most cases, the teacher candidates were placed in a classroom with their partner teacher during the same class period each week. However, in some instances, their partner teacher had a planning period at that time. Therefore, an alternative time was arranged for the teacher candidate. Of course, this proved challenging for the college supervisor, but was necessary to make the PDS experience a success for all parties involved. If the college supervisor was unable to attend the teacher candidate's lesson, they were sometimes encouraged to videotape the lesson. Second, unanticipated events sometimes unfolded. This forced PDS teacher candidates to teach a lesson at a different time than previously planned. In the upper Midwest, snow days happen frequently and they can interrupt the flow of a PDS for everyone involved. This has happened on more than one occasion in our PDS. Yet, they provided a teachable moment for the teacher candidate. Third, partner teachers sometimes worked with more than one teacher candidate due to the large number of students seeking social studies certification in a single semester. Their dedication to the PDS makes this unique initiative possible.

Conclusion

Increasingly, new teachers of social studies are confronted with many challenges during their student teaching experience and first year of teaching. Action research is a promising tool to help these new teachers handle the complex issues they will be facing. The findings from this study indicate action research should be introduced to teacher candidates during a PDS experience prior to student teaching. Thus, giving teacher candidates a meaningful opportunity to identify a weakness in their own teaching and use action research to solve these problematic areas, especially if this is done under the guidance of a partner teacher and college supervisor.

The use of action research, by teacher candidates in a high school PDS, can have a positive impact on those pursuing certification in social studies. Evidence suggests the teacher candidates can become problem-solvers, improve their teaching skills, and increase their confidence in their ability to teach. It is important to remind readers that it is necessary to find PDS settings where teacher candidates will be given multiple opportunities to teach, prior to student teaching, in order to see the specified results discussed in this particular case study. By identifying these types of PDS settings, in conjunction with the use of action research, teacher candidates in social studies can make important strides prior to their student teaching experience. In summary, social studies teacher candidates can become more equipped to handle new situations, by using action research in a Professional Development School.

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No More Cooperating Teachers

Bernard Badiali and Nicole Titus, Penn State University

Shakespeare first raised the question through one of his most famous characters when he had Juliet ask the rhetorical question, "What's in a name? That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet." (R&J Act II, Scene II)

We would do well to remember that Juliet was a thirteen year old, intoxicated with her first love. She may have had reason to ask such a naive question, but in most cases, names matter.

In the Professional Development School (PDS) Community many partnership sites have very deliberately changed what they call educators whose roles are critical to maintaining a successful PDS. For example, most PDSs no longer use the term "student teacher." They have instead chosen terms like teacher candidate or intern not only to better describe this role, but also to use language that sets PDS apart from those in traditional field placements. Other terms commonly associated with PDSs include *clinical faculty, liaison, professor in residence and hybrid educator* just to name a few. Labels and acronyms abound.

We would argue that it is time that the PDS community comes to some agreement about the term we use to describe classroom teachers who volunteer to become part of the teacher preparation curriculum by opening their classrooms to teacher candidates. We should no longer refer to them as "cooperating teachers," but mentors. Why? Because they do much more than simply cooperate; they are teacher educators of the first order.

Anyone who has worked on the clinical side of teacher preparation realizes that mentor teachers provide the major part of an intern's education in the final capstone experience. They go well beyond cooperating. They teach, support, assess, encourage, correct and inspire teacher candidates. Mentors take on most of the day to day responsibilities for the capstone experience, often seeing a university supervisor only several times throughout the semester. No, these professionals do more than "cooperate," they mentor. We should be thankful they do.

Calling these special classroom educators *mentors* also gives that role a renewed set of expectations. More than a name change, mentors in the PDS not only provide feedback for interns, they actively coach, collaborate, co-teach and participate in classroom inquiry with their intern. What differentiates mentors in a PDS from cooperating teachers in a school district is their willingness to learn alongside the teacher candidates. In a PDS, the expectation is that everyone learns. Therefore, the role of mentor includes an expectation for job embedded professional development. The title of PDS mentor changes their identity.

Why? Why should a classroom teacher agree to become a mentor given all of the additional work it can be to bring a new teacher into the profession? We believe there are three main reasons. First, classroom teachers understand there is potential benefit for students when they have two teachers working side by side in the classroom. Second, mentors report how beneficial it is for them to have another adult to interact with throughout the day. Third, and perhaps the most important reason to become a mentor, is that good PDSs rely on mentors to help design as well as deliver the teacher education program. It is this last reason that keeps mentors involved and invested in PDS work. Given the conditions facing teachers today, any teacher who agrees to open her classroom to an intern should insist on having a voice in the teacher preparation program.

Finally, we would like to mention a controversial point with regard to mentors and mentoring. The goals in our PDS, and perhaps in yours, go well beyond teacher preparation. In our PDS we have four goals. 1. Work to enhance learning for all students. 2. Ensure high quality teacher induction. 3. Engage veteran teachers in furthering their own professional growth. 4. Educate the next generation of teacher educators. It's the third goal we wish to touch on briefly. In our PDS, we invite any teacher with three years of experience and the permission of their principal to become a mentor. This practice runs counter to pundits who claim that mentor teachers should be selected based only on the quality of their teaching (Moir, Barlin, Gless, and Miles, 2009).

Our PDS is pledged to work with *all* teachers and we have found that those who have the **will** to mentor make the best mentors. We have also found that some thought to be excellent teachers do not necessarily perform well as mentors in the PDS community. Given our goals to provide job embedded professional development and to enhance the learning of all students, we welcome any classroom teacher who has a passion for lifelong learning and who is willing to sign on to the expectations for becoming a mentor.

As the PDS movement continues to grow, we hope that others will share their research and practices (and language) about mentors and mentoring. These dedicated teachers deserve the attention since they do much more than cooperate.

A more reflective Shakespearean character once said – "Suit the action to the word, the word to the action." (Hamlet, Act 3 Scene 2) Mentor is a word and an identity that the teachers who work with us deserve.

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valuable information about student perspectives which can be used to refine teacher education programs, thereby improving P-12 education. Still not convinced that student representatives should be active members in your PDS Consortium? Here's what some of our Advisory Council Members have to say:

"As one of the PDS Co-Directors, I am delighted to have teacher candidate representation on the Teacher Education Unit Professional Advisory Council (TEUPAC)! Teacher candidates bring a fresh perspective to the Council that invigorates veteran thinking and often challenges the status quo. Innovation and reflection go hand in hand; hearing from teacher candidates, one of the primary stakeholders in the PDS, propels the PDS Consortiums forward, keeps our programs relevant, and helps all the partners accomplish the PDS Consortium mission."
-Leslie Day, PDS Co-Director, Professor at SUNY Buffalo State

"Having teacher candidates on the Advisory Council demonstrates that the Council values the perspective of all members—especially those for whom the PDS serves. What's more, the teacher candidates offer insight into the courses, the exams, etc., that would not be possible unless the teacher candidates were present. For example, when we talk about the edTPA, it's invaluable to have the teacher candidates there to share what the exam looked like, the questions that were asked, how long it took, and so forth. They have also acted as liaisons between the PDS Council and pre-service teachers since they are the ones who have managed the PDS website and Facebook page. In short, having teacher candidates on the Council is not just a nice bonus, it is a necessary service."
-Dr. Heather Lyon, Principal of Enterprise Charter School

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Our Clinical Faculty Associate (CFA) model is another signature attribute of the PDS partnership (Effective Partnering Elements #1, #4, #5). The CFA model provides unique opportunities for P-12 colleagues to work as full-time special faculty in our elementary, secondary, and all-grade programs, joining other university faculty responsible for the elementary or secondary teacher education program. CFAs are allowed a one-year sabbatical and return to their positions in the school corporation with tenure intact. CFAs supervise interns and student teachers, work with veteran teachers, co-teach with regular university faculty, provide professional development for teacher candidates, and coordinate professional development opportunities for in-service teachers. In some cases, CFAs teach the introductory elementary or secondary education course, which exposes our teacher candidates to current classroom practice early in their course of study.

Several policy briefs (e.g., AACTE, 2010; CCSSO, 2012; Dailey, 2013) focus on increased clinically based educator preparation. AACTE's President and Chief Executive Officer, in her welcoming letter introducing *The Changing Teacher Profession* (AACTE, 2013) wisely shared that "state and federal policy makers must adapt policies that promote research-based reforms and partnerships that are critical to success" (p. 4).

As it relates to successful collaborative practices, our school−university PDS partnership was recognized by peer institutions in 2005 through the *Teachers For A New Era–Learning Network* in an effort to promote shared learning among teacher preparation institutions. In 2011, we were one of three educator preparation institutions selected to host site visits focused on innovations in clinical practice programs through our PDS partnership. These visits allowed us to offer diverse perspectives on building effective clinical experiences, sustainable PDS partnerships and contribute new knowledge about how these partnerships are changing schools and universities for the better. From these visits, the seven strategies for effective partnering were realized. Our partnership stakeholders believe strongly that the seven strategies should be viewed as a bounded framework in which all must be addressed. Picking and choosing among the elements for implementation while disregarding others will ultimately not provide the mutual support and deepened relationship needed to sustain a PDS partnership over time.

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group interviews and individual interviews were also used to understand more about reader perceptions and reading behaviors. The collaboration enabled more data to be collected to determine if the program had value and if the devices should be incorporated into both classroom use and further develop the summer independent reading program. It also helped to decide the professional development needs and any other directions to help support student independent reading.

Reaping the Rewards of the Partnership
As a result of the partnership, the school team was privy to information they could use to determine whether they felt the summer reading program was successful. The information gleaned from the students shed light on what transpired over the summer and what kinds of activities might be beneficial for the school to consider in an effort to cultivate reading opportunities for the middle school students. The investigation had numerous positive findings about digital readers, access to text, social influences of reading, and readers in general. To understand the ramifications of the summer program, it is necessary to share some of the findings from the investigation which are outlined below.

One of the most important findings was that each of the 24 students reported reading over the summer. Some students read more than others and for the most part it was the students who had already identified an interest in reading who read more; however, even the less interested students reported reading over the summer. All of the students also reported starting several eBooks, not just one. Text availability and reader interest were identified as major influences impacting student reading behaviors during the voluntary summer reading program. The students shared their perceptions about the availability of the texts and whether the kind of reading they did was influenced by the texts that were accessible. Although the students in the summer reading program had access to a wide array of texts, they still only had access to the finite amount of texts that were purchased for the devices. The students had access to about 75 eBooks that were preloaded on their digital readers and whatever texts they could access in their homes. Seventy-five percent of the students indicated they were able to find interesting eBooks to read. Interestingly, the social aspect of reading became evident as a result of this work. Since all the digital readers had the same eBooks loaded onto the devices the students were able to have discussions about the books they read independently. This is not something that would typically happen in a classroom because there are not always multiple copies of a single text available. The students enjoyed discussing the texts and making connections about the books they read.

Another important finding was that 80% of the students reported preferring reading with a digital reader to reading traditional books. The students overwhelmingly support and desire the use of technology being used in their classrooms. The students utilized digital readers as a means of providing access to text. The students revealed how important the piece of technology was in their reading and their overall desire to read. First, the digital readers were equipped with tools to help them read. The built-in dictionary, highlighting feature and ability to take notes enabled the students to get

definitions of unknown words and interact with the text. Also, the students optimistically commented on how helpful it is to be able to carry around one tool with all of their texts instead of being weighed down by a heavy load of books. They liked that they could access a large number of eBooks, even some they may never have read had they not been available to them through the devices. It allowed for the students to read more since they could just page through different eBooks until they found one they liked. The students were surveyed about their top three motivators for reading over the summer and their responses are outlined below in Figure 1.
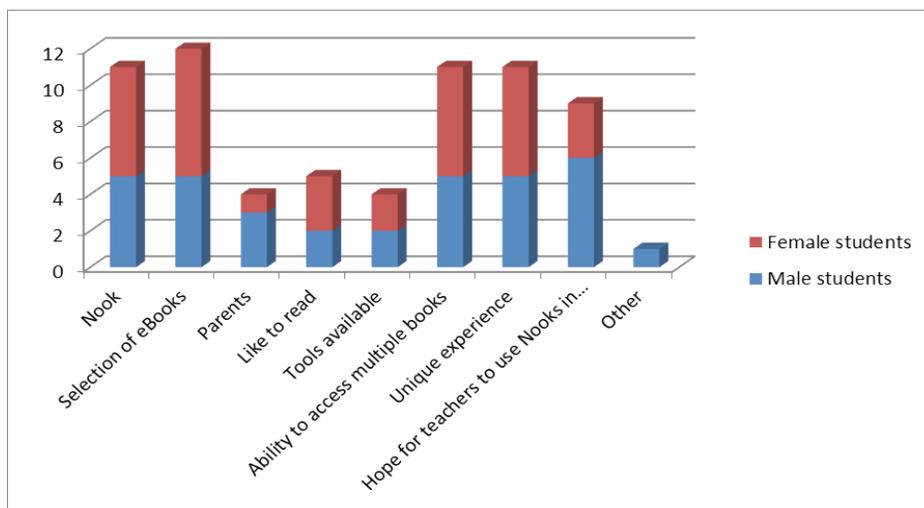
The students were clearly influenced by technology and access to (multiple) texts. By identifying that all students read and that the majority of the students did so as a result of the summer reading program, the program can be considered a success for the school and the students.

Collaborative Efforts to Move Forward
Integrating technology into classrooms can sometimes seem like a daunting task for teachers and administrators. With the help of the PDS model and a collaborative effort, this middle school was able to accomplish an integration of access to text and technology. It was important to understand how the team could continue working together to help this growing relationship and endeavor to flourish. By understanding that students genuinely preferred reading in school, that multiple copies of the same text are important to students, and that access to technology and text can enhance reading and reading behaviors, the school was able to work toward revising their school programming. For instance, the success of the summer reading program enabled the school to integrate digital readers into classrooms and create buy-in among school staff members that helped to begin to implement other technology initiatives. As such, the school had adopted a bring-your-own technology policy. Also, a library independent reading initiative began using digital readers. Finally, pre-service teachers are now utilized to support teachers and the new technology initiatives. These steps toward enhancing reading opportunities and improving student learning were a result of the collaborative effort.

It has often been said that more can be accomplished when two heads work together. This summer

reading program was one such illustration of that concept. The PDS partnership allowed the school administrator, staff and teacher educator to work together in such a way that they were able to understand more about student reading behaviors, integrate technology initiatives in a seamless way, and create understanding among staff, parents and community members. The program continues to blossom and all stakeholders are hopeful that the initiative will be a vehicle to promote reading and help to prepare students for the 21st century.

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PDS Network Signature Programs: What We Have Learned

Eva Garin, Bowie State University

The Bowie State University Professional Development Schools (PDS) Network is comprised of nine schools, including a high school, middle school, early childhood center, and six elementary schools across two school districts. In the years before our accreditation visit, we created a list of our Signature Programs. Although the process began as an academic exercise, it became valuable in defining who we are as a Network and has now been integrated into our ongoing collaborative work.

What is a Signature Program?
Signature Programs are those programs that epitomize an institution's mission and define its distinctiveness. For the Bowie State University PDS Network, identifying Signature Programs facilitated PDS partners' identification of the network's programming strengths and non-negotiable elements (Kelly, 2008). The list of Signature Programs has been revisited biannually at each Network meeting with site-based PDS coordinators and university faculty. Furthermore, each summer our Signature Programs are discussed and refined with the greater community of site-based PDS coordinators, mentor teachers, school administrators, student teachers, and university faculty.

Network Signature Programs evolved from discussion to print to reality through a five-year process. To advance the vision of our PDS Network, new programs are added and those that are no longer needed are omitted. The process of identifying and refining our Signature Programs is a collaborative effort between all PDS stakeholders, all of whom work together for the greater good of the Network and the PreK-12 students who we support. While each Signature Program stands as a unique initiative, they each share several underlying characteristics. Specifically, these programs:

- Build on existing strengths
- Work on interdisciplinary and interagency levels (Maryland State Department of Education, Prince George's County and Anne Arundel County school districts, Bowie State University)
- Support the development and growth of PDS teachers, university faculty, and students
- Offer potential to tap into external and internal funding opportunities
- Distinguish our PDS Network from others
- Possess tremendous potential for development and start-up ventures
- Support the Maryland State Department of Education PDS Standards (MSDE, 2003) and the National Association for Professional Development Schools Nine Essentials (NAPDS, 2008)

Identifying and Evaluating Signature Programs
Five years ago at a PDS Network meeting, partners examined and discussed a list of non-negotiable items for the partnership. For approximately two years, this list was revisited and modified through collaborative discussions and voting once a year. It was agreed that each PDS program would support and implement these non-negotiable elements of the Network. This simple list eventually transformed into the branding of our Signature Programs, and became a strong indicator of our partnership work and a representation of our vision.

During the Network's 2014 Summer Strategic Planning Session, attended by representatives of all PDS sites, our Signature Programs were reviewed through a more formal approach. An alphabetical list of the Signature Programs was distributed to each attendee. Using a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 signifying that the program is an essential aspect of the PDS partnership, and 1 signifying that the program is not in any way an essential aspect of the PDS partnership, each Signature Program was rated by participants. The following brief descriptions describe the rating system and the *NAPDS Nine Essentials* that are supported by each signature program.

PDS Signature Programs: Descriptions, Ratings, and NAPDS Essentials

Action Research Mini-Grants
Each academic year, action research mini-grants are offered to PDS site teachers. Applications are submitted via a Request for Proposal (RFP) format, and must support School Improvement Goals and address student achievement. While submissions can be generated by individual teachers, collaboration between teachers is encouraged. Applications are accepted from any teacher in a PDS site, not only mentor teachers. We believe that the entire school is the PDS. This Signature Program received a Network Rating of 4.3 out of 5, and addresses NAPDS Essentials 3 and 4.

BSU PDS Research Conference
Each spring a Bowie State University PDS Research Conference serves as a forum where teacher candidates, PDS faculty, and university faculty share their research in breakout sessions, round tables, and poster session formats. This conference is held at the university and is a showcase for university/PDS faculty research, intern action research, action research mini-grants, and inquiry groups. This Signature Program received a Network rating of 4.2 out of 5 and addresses NAPDS Essential 5.

Inquiry Groups
While action research is the most recognized type of teacher research, another lesser-known and less formal type of teacher research is the inquiry group (Garin, 2005). Inquiry groups are defined by the Maryland State Department of Education as "a group of PDS stakeholders who collaboratively examine and assess their practices and the outcomes achieved," and who "raise specific questions related to teaching and learning, seek to systematically answer these questions (often in a study group format), use their findings to inform practice, and relate their findings to others" (MSDE, 2003, p.20). MSDE expands the scope of this type of research by recommending that inquiry groups "might include teachers, university faculty, and teacher candidates and may be designed to affect practice in the classroom, in school-wide or system programs, and in teacher preparation programs" (MSDE, 2003, p. 20). In the PDS Network at Bowie State University, inquiry groups include teachers and teacher candidates (supported by their university faculty) who choose a topic of interest and meet regularly to discuss research literature and examine instructional practice, both theoretical and actual, as they implement new instructional strategies in their classrooms and collect data to analyze collaboratively. This Signature Program received a Network rating of 4.4 out of 5 and addresses NAPDS Essentials 2, 3, and 4.

Intern Action Research
Interns conduct action research in their mentor teachers' classrooms during their full-time internships. Intern action research focuses on the needs of the students in their classrooms and is an exit requirement for graduation. Each intern shares his/her action research with a panel comprised of PDS teachers and university faculty who use a rubric to provide feedback. This Signature Program received a Network rating of 4.2 out of 5 and addresses NAPDS Essentials 2, 3, and 4.

Mentoring Workshop
Each January a four-session mentoring workshop that is developed collaboratively by PDS faculty and university faculty is offered to Network teachers. Mentor teachers are strongly encouraged to take this workshop for credit or curriculum workshop pay provided by the school district. Experienced mentor teachers lead the workshops, and the location of the workshops is rotated between each PDS site. Our PDS Network has identified the need for an Advanced Mentoring Workshop to serve as an extension of this program. Once developed, this opportunity will be open to any teacher who has completed the mentoring workshop and wants to delve deeper into the mentoring experience. The advanced workshop is still a work in progress, and will include mentoring strategies, action research, and co-teaching approaches to mentoring. The pilot workshop was offered last January and will undergo some restructuring based on PDS partner input.

This Signature Program received a Network rating of 4.8 out of 5 and addresses NAPDS Essential 5.

Mentor Teacher Task Force

The Mentor Teacher Task Force was established during our 2007 Summer Strategic Planning Session to address the needs and concerns expressed by mentor teachers. This task force comprised of PDS teachers and university faculty developed the initial mentoring workshop, a toolkit for mentor teachers, and a meeting schedule for site-based PDS meetings, all of which were designed to enhance communication and collaboration between mentor teachers, university supervisors, and teacher candidates This is an example of a Signature Program that accomplished its mission and will be removed to make room for both an advanced mentor teacher workshop and a leadership workshop. This Signature Program received a Network rating of 2.9 out of 5 and addresses NAPDS Essential 3.

The following three items were not rated by PDS partners but are being considered for inclusion as BSU Signature Programs.

On-site Methods Courses (PDS Reading Clinic)

Most of BSU's methods courses are offered at a PDS site to enable greater collaboration, more opportunities for classroom visitations, and co-presentations between PDS teachers and university faculty. The reading assessment course, which is taught during the methods semester, has been transformed into a PDS Reading Clinic where university students work one-on-one with a struggling reader and have ongoing collaboration with the referring teacher. This Signature Program addresses NAPDS Essential 5.

Publications and Conference Presentations

An important aspect of our PDS Network is that we collaborate on local, state, and national PDS presentations. Partners have co-presented at our state PDS conference sponsored by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) and at the PDS National Conference. University faculty and PDS faculty co-author articles and book chapters for publication. This Signature Program addresses NAPDS Essentials 3, 4, and 5.

Review Panels and Campus Committees

PDS teachers are included in review panels for teacher candidate interviews, action research presentations, and exit portfolio presentations. University faculty and PDS teachers collaborate on instructional and curricular issues as co-members of BSU's Teacher Education Council. This signature program was not included in the rating exercise and addresses NAPDS Essential 5.

Next Steps

This article will be used as a discussion starter at our next PDS Network meeting that will include university and PDS faculty. In addition, we will share the Signature Program ratings so that site-based PDS meeting participants can use these data to more fully understand the diverse and shared perspectives within our Network.

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and instructional strategies. Overall, it was a team approach, with both the mentor and intern creating measurable academic goals, discussing student data, and implementing educational intervention plans.

From the Seminar Instructors and Supervisors

From the viewpoint of the seminar instructors and supervisors, it allowed individuals to truly learn a great deal about the interns and mentors. They saw an eagerness and desire for interns to create an effective study that would give useful data on each student and to be able to help their students grow in a particular academic area. The experience gave a first-hand opportunity for interns to gain an understanding of how to write an SLO, look at data, and use that data to inform instruction. The process also highlighted the importance of collaboration with other teachers. For example, some interns saw how a particular intervention was unsuccessful and through collaboration he/she was able to learn about another strategy to implement.

From the Interns

Interns viewed the project as an opportunity to pinpoint an issue and goal in the classroom. It gave them the opportunity to analyze data in order to meet the needs of his/her students coupled with evaluating the effectiveness of their teaching. The SIS project also provided an opportunity to have a chance to get experience with the SLO components of teaching while having the support from his/her mentor teacher, supervisor, and seminar instructors.
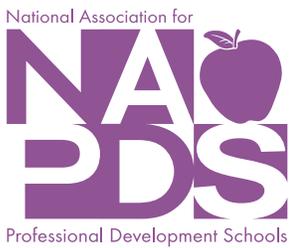
Take Away Points

Overall, when creating a new project that will take place during internship, it is most important that it is a meaningful process for interns and mentor teachers. Through informal assessment of mentor teachers, an overwhelming majority felt that the Student Impact Study project resulted in a constructive collaboration between themselves and their intern. In addition, this viewpoint was also shared by the majority of interns. Nearly all mentors and interns reported that they either "strongly agreed" or "agreed" that the project provided a "real-life" experience. Through even just a few short semesters of implementation during interns final full-time internship, With just a few short semesters of implementation, the Student Impact Study has facilitated a rewarding collaboration and learning process for interns and mentors in our PDS network.

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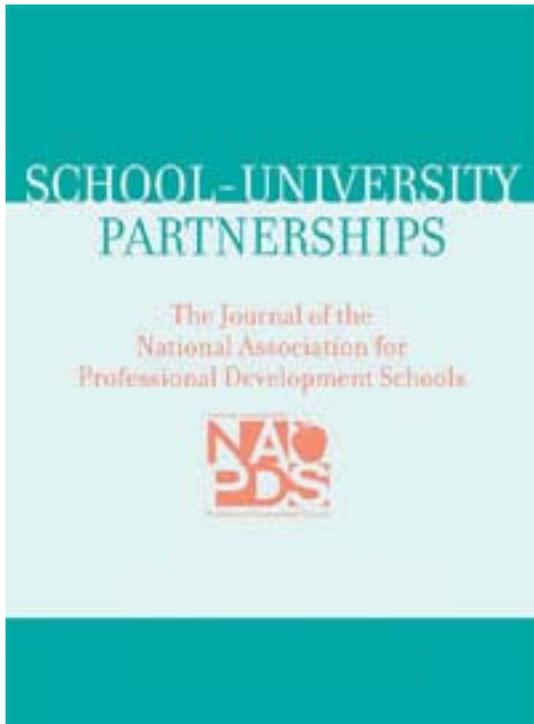Wicomico County Public Schools. (2013). Teacher and principal evaluation training. Salisbury, MD. Author.

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The Journal of the
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School-University Partnerships Submissions

Kristien Zenkov, Senior Editor, George Mason University

School-University Partnerships is committed to advocating for collaborative ventures across the PreK-12 and college and university communities as vehicles for the discovery and sharing of knowledge that shapes educational best practices. Honoring the voices of both school-based and university-based educators is central to the mission of the National Association for Professional Development Schools (NAPDS), and *School-University Partnerships* seeks manuscripts that represent partnerships across stakeholders. The journal strongly encourages submissions that reflect collaborative partnership initiatives. Submissions may focus on (but are not limited to) original school-university research designed and implemented collaboratively, descriptions of effective pedagogies and content delivery in PDS contexts, explanations of successful partnership models and structures, examples of measures of assessment and results of evaluative processes, and analyses of the professional development of all constituents involved with school-university partnerships.

Complete Submission Guidelines can be found at www.napds.org.

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