

PDS Partners

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A Message From the President

Evelyn Perry, Morgan State University

For most colleges and schools, the academic year is about to end with the close of the 2013 spring semester. At the pre-k through 12 levels, summer will unofficially begin in four or five weeks; so, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of the school districts, school administrators and teachers who partner with a college or university teacher education program. These Professional Development School (PDS) partnerships make an enormous difference in the preparation of pre-service teachers. Also, PDS partnerships can positively impact the relationship between schools and universities. Over time, a PDS partnership can morph into a PDS relationship. I have had that wonderful experience with many of the Morgan State University school partners in the Baltimore, Maryland metropolitan area.

At first, such an evolutionary change went unnoticed until partners realized how much we enjoyed collaborating to develop quality teachers. Even though relationship building was not deliberate, I was able to identify several reasons why the professional/personal associations evolved in that direction.

- We established a foundation of appreciation and respect that went beyond title or degree. We learned to value each other's knowledge, experiences, and points of view. Each education entity had an equal voice in the structure and governance of the partnership.
- Clear, effective and ongoing communication was paramount. It was important that the partners listened to each other. Equally important was being honest and open when problems or differences occurred regarding interns, mentors, or the partnership itself.
- Building trust and proving the University was trustworthy was especially important in the development of meaningful partnerships for some pre-k-12 partners. Research has shown that trust is the basis for creating healthy work environments because it forms the foundation for effective communications, associate retention, motivation, and contributions of discretionary energy (Heathfield, 2002). It was clear that some of our partners had previous affiliations with other Institutions of Higher Education (IHE), resulting in skepticism about IHEs' ability to be transparent, accessible, or reliable. Over time, those doubts were dispelled.

There are numerous successful partnerships between universities and public and charter schools and it is important that we publicize this fact in order to inform others of the success of Professional Development Schools. As a former teacher assistant, elementary teacher, and school-based administrator, I recognize and have experienced the importance and benefits of university and public school alliances. I've seen marked improvements in the development and knowledge base of our pre-service teachers due to the collaboration between the university and school-based staff. I can attest to what I believe are the contributing factors to what I have observed and experienced; however, my observations, very much, need to be validated and organized in a systematic way. Relevant data needs to be assembled and critically examined. There is a dearth of research on the impact of PDS partnerships on teacher development and student achievement. We know, anecdotally, that professional development schools work. As we continue to move forward, we need to do more to prove the efficacy of PDS. We must “show them the data.”



“Top Ten” Ways to Boost School Internships

*Sally Catoe, David Holzendorf, and Pamela Powell, North Springs Elementary
Jeanene Varner and Bruce Field, University of South Carolina*

In 2007, NAPDS framed the “Nine Essentials” to delineate steps in which university and school partnerships should work together to reinvent teacher preparation. In November of 2010, the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) released its Blue Ribbon report titled “Transforming Teacher Education Through Clinical Practice: A National Strategy to Prepare Effective Teachers.” This report noted that the current model of teacher preparation needs to be “turned upside down” by moving away from a model that emphasizes academic preparation with little connection to schools to a model that is fully grounded in school-based practice, allowing teacher candidates to make critical links between professional knowledge and skills and authentic applications throughout their preparation process.

The University of South Carolina (USC) has been committed to such a vision for over 20 years. It developed its teacher education curriculum through two years of conversations involving university faculty and administration as well as representative P-12 school faculty and administrators. It is a model that has had continuous renewal through monthly meetings with university and school-based leadership. North Springs Elementary joined this partnership in 2004. The school has been a leader in these efforts ever since by participating every year in local and regional meetings, presenting annually at the PDS National Conference, and winning one of the first NAPDS Awards for Exemplary Professional Development School Achievement in 2009.

NCATE suggests using a new model of teacher preparation in which teacher candidates spend time in schools throughout their

program, immediately putting academic learning into practice. With student learning as the focal point, teacher candidates can grow in their understanding of how teaching and learning can best be accomplished in a school setting. By linking the university classroom to the school classroom, teacher candidates achieve deeper understanding on how learning takes place. NCATE identifies ten key strategies for designing effective teacher preparation programs. North Springs Elementary integrates these principles intentionally into interns’ experiences throughout the daily life of the school. As a public school in partnership with USC, we took the liberty of putting the ten key principles into a reversed David Letterman-style “Top Ten” list.

#10: It takes a “village” to raise an intern. *Strategic partnerships are imperative for powerful clinical preparation (NCATE).* NAPDS, in its “Nine Essentials,” suggests that interns spend part of each semester in a public school, putting theory to practice in every course. University professors work with classroom teachers to coordinate instruction so that it is linked in meaningful ways to what students in the classroom are studying. In this “village” model, all teachers are viewed as mentors to all of the interns. While each intern is assigned to a specific classroom, they also work within a grade level team of teachers and have access to all teachers in the school to observe and seek resources or information. In addition, North Springs conducts a “Celebration of Teaching” event where teachers at each grade level and in each subject area showcase a lesson for interns to observe. An after-school debriefing engages interns, teachers, and administrators in meaningful conversation. The Celebration gives interns a “big

picture” vision of what goes on in a school and provides them with valuable school contacts and resources.

#9: “It ain’t bragging if you can back it up.” *(Dizzy Dean)* *A powerful R&D agenda and systematic gathering and use of data supports continuous improvement in teacher preparation (NCATE).* Prior to starting at North Springs, interns have personal contact with their classroom teachers. Interns are encouraged to view the school report card on the South Carolina Department of Education web site which gives them a preview of school data. Interns quickly learn that our teachers use student data for planning lessons. During the final internship semester, the university requires teacher candidates to develop and complete a research-based inquiry project which they present and discuss with school faculty.

#8. A-Twitter with technology! *Technology applications foster high-impact preparation (NCATE).* Interns need to have the opportunity to develop instruction that utilizes a variety of technologies. Interns at North Springs are included in ongoing staff development for technology, and are encouraged to complete projects using tools such as iPods, iPads, flip cameras, chrome books, internet resources, and SmartBoards. North Springs’ students produce school newsletters and the school news show. These kinds of experiences help our future teachers learn about developing authentic learning and assessment.

#7: Who’s your “Sugar Daddy?” *Specific sites are designated and funded to support embedded clinical preparation (NCATE).* Funding is a major dilemma for both universities and schools in this difficult economy. NAPDS proposes an articulation agreement

“The University of South Carolina has been committed to such a vision for over 20 years ... shared research and dialogue between universities and schools is critical.”

between schools and universities, delineating the roles and responsibilities of each partner. The University of South Carolina formalizes each partnership with a 3-year contract that both parties sign. This encourages school partners to re-evaluate their commitment, which is especially important when changes in leadership or faculty occur.

#6: “Be Picky.” *Clinical educators and coaches are rigorously selected and prepared and drawn from both higher education and the P-12 sector (NCATE).* NAPDS encourages partnerships to formalize roles and to provide professional development for all participants guided by need. Teachers and interns in our partnership are asked to complete questionnaires to make better matches. At NSE, the PDS Committee considers both coaching teachers’ skills and the interns’ interests to maximize the potential for successful placements. USC uses candidate surveys and teacher feedback to measure program effectiveness.

#5: Swapping Places. *Candidates learn in an interactive professional community (NCATE).* Interns at North Springs gradually take on responsibility as teachers, designing and implementing lessons, attending meetings, supervising during non-instructional times, and communicating with parents from the beginning of the semester, increasing the amount of instructional time until they reach full responsibility of the class. As interns increase their time as

lead teacher in the classroom, teachers increase their time as observers. Additionally, interns are expected to participate fully in team meetings and to utilize all the resources the school has to offer, allowing them to become fully-integrated members of the faculty.

#4: The Full Monty Programs.

Prepare teachers who are expert in content and how to teach it and are also innovators, collaborators and problem solvers (NCATE). To be prepared for their first year of teaching in a school, teacher candidates must be exposed to the total education picture. By creating an overall program that allows candidates to be in classrooms observing and teaching lessons every semester, USC’s future teachers are given multiple experiences in different schools and grade levels so that they can develop both content and delivery skills—as well as flexibility and innovation. Through collaboration with professors, colleagues, mentors, administrators, and staff in the school, interns learn to solve problems while keeping a focus on student learning.

#3: “...and the Oscar goes to...”

A candidate’s progress and the elements of a preparation program are continuously judged on the basis of data (NCATE). Program standards must be aligned with both the Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (InTASC) and Common Core Standards. The evaluation of teacher candidates should include student data, artifacts, a variety of assessments, and data from formal and informal

observations as assessed by the university supervisor and the classroom teacher. Mentor and intern surveys provide information to the schools and the university about the structure of the overall program and the degree to which it is meeting the needs of teacher candidates. Inquiry projects developed and presented by interns provide data about what they have learned and data that is useful to the school’s faculty and administration. Formal observations by mentors and supervisors provide immediate feedback to each intern throughout the internship.

#2: The Sponge Bob Method.”

Clinical preparation is integrated throughout every facet of teacher education in a dynamic way (NCATE). Teacher candidates need multiple opportunities to “soak up” the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to be effective teachers. The integration of university study and classroom experience allows content and pedagogy to be absorbed throughout the program. Coaching teachers facilitate these experiences daily, while other school faculty and staff members provide informal experiences working with children, exploring resources, and sharing ideas. The variety of experiences insures that candidates will access a wide variety of strategies that can be employed in different circumstances.

#1: Get the Picture?

Student learning is the focus (NCATE). Linking early university classes to

School-University Partnerships Submissions

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P-12 experiences is an important step in developing this priority. Interns at North Springs take part in district and school professional development sessions, discussions with mentors and supervisors, and seminar meetings with faculty and fellow interns to explore questions about student learning. Interns develop specific methods to know their students and to obtaining feedback from them. This produces engaging lessons woven with student interests.

Never in the history of teaching has it been more important for

schools and teacher preparation programs to collaborate. Early and continuing classroom experiences can enhance this, but shared research and dialogue between universities and schools is critical. Both NCATE and NAPDS are aligned in this effort. It is now up to individual partnerships to make that collaboration happen.

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Teacher Clinical Preparation Project – Synchronous Online Teaching and Learning

*Li-Wei Peng and Kathy Miller, West Liberty University
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This article aims to present the local and global works conducted by the West Liberty University faculty and P-12 teachers. The National Association for Professional Development Schools (NAPDS) Essential 1 and 2 will be addressed within the narrative.

With the Professional Development School partnership, future educators incorporated a variety of innovative and interactive teaching technologies to enhance content instruction. Instructional technologies were used to offer science and social studies lessons to fifth-grade students at the local elementary Professional Development Schools (PDSs). By means of synchronous online connection, West Liberty University education students presented science and social studies courses as supplements to the classroom teachers' activities. They developed strategies, including SmartBoard interactivities, iPads, worksheets, experiments, skits, videos, and songs, to teach children the subject matters (e.g., planets, cells, motors and magnets, three branches of government, the American Revolution). Through the distance learning connection,

students enjoyed being able to interact with their teachers as they recited the concepts of the planets and other topics.

This school-university partnership augmented NAPDS Essential 4 within the innovative method of pedagogy. With the consistent and collaborative school-university relationship, the local teachers were able to enhance their science and social studies instructions by observing how the West Liberty University teachers incorporated emerging technologies and interactive activities into lessons. Mrs. Miller, a fifth grade teacher, noted, "I enjoyed facilitating the collaborative teaching project. I have actually also learned some creative teaching activities from the university faculty members and P-12 pre-service teachers" (K. Miller, personal communication, September 11, 2011). The local teachers were excited at seeing the West Liberty University teachers provide the P-12 students with a variety of role models for students with different learning styles. As Mrs. Miller described, "Students enjoy having someone in the class explain a process or concept; it breaks up the class

and re-gains attention. The use of co-teaching would help the students stay attentive when they have a variety of voices and teaching styles to listen to during the class" (K. Miller, personal communication, September 11, 2011). The future educators, on the other hand, appreciated the hands-on teaching experiences gained in the Professional Development School partnership. With the field experiences and veteran teachers' feedback, the future educators could apply theories and principles to real classroom settings and expand their professional skills within their personal reflections. Mr. Stewart, a pre-service teacher, stated, "We had to interact with actual students and familiarize ourselves with their unique learning needs by working with them. The students were interested in the idea of interacting with us to learn the online instruction while sitting in their classrooms. This teaching model gave me a good transition before directly facing students. I think it was a great opportunity for both the students and myself. We all learned something new that we can use in the future" (P. Stewart, personal communication, September

11, 2011). The Professional Development School partnership played a vital role for university faculty and P-12 in-service teachers in sharing resources and committing to the preparation of pre-service teachers by embracing their dynamic engagement in the school community.

The international synchronous online teaching and learning project fostered the comprehensive Professional Development School mission that furthered the education profession and outreach opportunities for the broader community. This cross-country project enabled West Liberty University education students to deliver online courses to students of the Military Academy of Republic of China in Taiwan by Skype and Adobe Connect platform. Professors at both schools played a role of mentoring while modeling the synchronous online teaching and learning approaches. The project allowed students at both institutes to apply knowledge in technology integration, pedagogical methods, learning strategies, second language acquisition, and diversity of cultures across countries. Students used tools, such as webcams, online microphones, whiteboards, text chat, notes, polling, screen and file sharing on Skype or Adobe Connect to exchange the cultures and languages in the U.S.A. and Taiwan. Various topics included food, fashion, educational systems, music, sport, symbols, holidays, idioms, slang, and formal and

informal discourse. Besides the technological pedagogical content knowledge, the participants acquired knowledge of teaching and learning through different backgrounds. The Professional Development School connection allowed each participant to make reciprocal efforts on professional development across institutional settings. This project formed a structure that participants could develop through governance, reflection, and collaboration. Mrs. Montgomery, an in-service teacher, expressed, "After participating in this project, I think that knowing and understanding various cultures and the different perspectives that people offer is extremely important. It is incredible that technology now allows us to create an environment where students from around the world can connect. I hope to implement the similar teaching model in my classroom one day" (T. Montgomery, personal communication, November 16, 2011). Undergraduate and graduate education students were eager to apply the experience gained through distance learning projects to their classrooms. It was meaningful for the education students at West Liberty University because they might otherwise not have the chance to interact with other cultures.

The project formed a school-university support system promoting 21st century outcomes for today's pre-service and in-service teachers and P-12 students in terms of:

- Practical technology, pedagogy, and curriculum integration experiences
- Social and cross-cultural skills
- Global awareness
- Creativity and innovation
- Critical thinking and problem solving
- Leadership and responsibility
- Communication and collaboration

With feedback from all participants, the researchers have collected valuable resources to help utilize instructional technologies in preparing future teachers. In the future, the researchers plan to conduct studies on the next generation of educators' self-efficacy on teaching and learning with multimedia and emerging technologies. The findings could provide evidence of practical strategies that are helpful for preparing new educators to integrate themselves into the P-12 Professional Development Schools locally and globally.

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"The international synchronous online teaching and learning project fostered the comprehensive Professional Development School mission that furthered the education profession and outreach opportunities for the broader community."

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Professional Development to Increase Quality Field Placements

*Rachelle Meyer Rogers & Douglas Rogers, Baylor University
Belinda Rubio, University High School*

“The partnership created three professional development opportunities to address the identified needs.”

Each Professional Development School (PDS) in the Baylor-Waco ISD partnership is staffed with a University Liaison (UL), a university faculty member serving as primary contact for the campus; and a site coordinator, a part-time district employee hired to work with faculty, teachers, and candidates on the campus. Initially, the UL served as instructor of record for all candidates on campus, regardless of candidates' content certifications. This staffing pattern resulted in candidate seminars focused on general pedagogy with limited attention to content or content pedagogy. As the partnership matured, it became apparent that middle and secondary candidates needed additional interaction with university content faculty in the field.

As content faculty supervised candidates in field placements, faculty grew more discerning about the qualities of a good placement. Classroom management was critical, but not enough; in-service teachers mentoring candidates needed exemplary pedagogy, deep content knowledge, and sound content pedagogy. Expectations for in-service teachers grew, as did the number of candidates in the program. Consequently, the need for additional high-quality placements became a major focus for the secondary PDS.

The secondary PDS is considered a “low performing” school. Raising student achievement and increasing the number of quality placements created a context for the PDS to address NAPDS Essential 3, “Ongoing and reciprocal professional development for all participants guided by need” (Brindley, Field, and Lessen, 2008). The PDS partners discussed ways the campus could grow, especially

in the areas of best instructional practices and quality mentoring skills. The partnership created three professional development opportunities to address the identified needs.

Secondary Summer Summit

The first shared professional development experience was the Secondary Summer Summit-- offered to in-service teachers interested in working with candidates. The UL and site coordinator of each PDS, as well as university content faculty, jointly planned the two-day summit focused on high quality mentoring and mentoring in specific content areas. First day topics dealt with being a PDS, understanding program expectations, mentoring, and providing feedback. Participants viewed sample candidate electronic portfolios, clarified each program benchmark, and described classroom-based evidence that would support meeting benchmark standards. Participants also viewed videotaped lessons from past candidates then role-played debriefing sessions. These tasks strengthened mentors' understandings of the program and solidified the expectations for and the nature of high-quality feedback. Brandy Cooper, a summit participant reflected that, “All of the knowledge that I gained during the day about the portfolio and how to provide feedback that would support the benchmarks was quite good for me.”

Content faculty worked with in-service teachers in their fields of expertise on the second day. For example, the Baylor mathematics education faculty explained that all math lesson plans are required to address the 5Es: Engage, Explore, Explain, Elaborate, and Evaluate. Many in-service teachers were

unaware of the 5Es and how a lesson would address them. Summit experiences helped teachers recognize activities that support each of the 5Es, the teacher's role and students' roles in each. Content faculty explained other content-specific assignments expected of candidates. The jointly planned Secondary Summer Summit was so effective in raising both the classroom teachers' understandings of and confidence in the university faculty's expectations that all partners requested more content-related interactions. This shared desire generated additional professional development experiences.

Content Academies

Out of the shared need identified in the summit, university content-area faculty collaborated with district content specialists to develop week-long content-based academies. These professional development experiences were designed to help in-service teachers learn the most current instructional strategies in their particular disciplines and to understand what the candidates were experiencing and learning in their college methods courses. Daily activities in the academies exposed participants to emerging technologies that could be used in the discipline; for example, mathematics candidates are expected to plan lessons using calculator-based rangers (CBRs), so in-service teachers participated in numerous activities using this technology in preparation for supporting and assisting candidates in their classrooms. Likewise, candidates are expected to use resources that support instructional strategies taught in methods courses; therefore, in-service teachers were provided materials supporting these strategies, worked

through multiple lessons and discussed instructional approaches, which strengthened and enhanced their own pedagogical knowledge. Finally teachers were exposed to rich, challenging topics that pushed their own content knowledge in order to increase their conceptual understanding so they could answer the “why” questions when candidates experienced content challenges while planning instruction. One teacher stated, “It was a refreshing experience to gain new ideas and approaches and it rejuvenated me to teach beyond the textbook.”

PDS Release Days

Both the summit and the academies occurred during summer prior to the start of school each year, but PDS partners realized a need for additional contact throughout the academic year. PDS release days were created. Each semester, the PDS principal authorizes one or more release days for teachers who mentor candidates to meet with the

UL and site coordinator to engage in PDS work. Content faculty and candidates join the PDS teachers to discuss content-specific expectations related to lesson plans, content pedagogy, and instructional expectations. While the PDS release days continue the collaboration between the PDS partners and reinforce the concepts learned during the summit and the content academies, the ultimate goal of all PDS work is for students to be engaged in fun and exciting lessons that support understanding and achievement, as articulated by one PDS high school student, “When the intern collaborates with our UHS teacher, I think it makes the learning experience more fun and exciting.”

The Impact

These activities: the summit, the content academies, and PDS release days, demonstrate that NAPDS Essential 3 is a critical factor in developing and maintaining high-quality

placements for candidates. “Ongoing and reciprocal professional development for all participants guided by need” (Brindley et al., 2008) helped our PDS identify more in-service teachers willing to implement best practices and to support candidates as they implement strategies learned in their content courses. All partners feel that expectations are clearer and that candidates are receiving helpful feedback that is consistent across the university classroom and the field experience placements.

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The REST of the Candidate Placement Story: Recruiting, Evaluating, Supporting, and Training Effective Mentor Teachers

*Kathleen Allen, Saint Martin's University
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When it came to finding mentor teachers, like most universities, we relied on persistent communication, paperwork, and pleading. As the use of high stakes testing and the push for accountability rose, we found fewer and fewer “willing mentor teachers”- and those mentors were not always the best mentors for our teacher candidates. Therefore, we came to the conclusion that we must develop a system to build a cadre of effective teacher mentors in our partnership schools. The components of this system are guided by two of the National

Association for Professional Development Schools’ Nine Essentials: Essential 3, Ongoing and reciprocal professional development for all participants guided by need and Essential 4, a shared commitment to innovative and reflective practice by all participants. Our shared school-university commitment is to have teachers with exemplary mentorship skills and attributes become part of our PDS program. “Recruited, Evaluated, Supported and Trained” is our program which fosters a mutually beneficial environment that maximizes the

learning of P-12 students and nurtures excellence in future teachers.

Recruiting experienced teachers begins with the identification of highly effective mentors. To help select the best mentors for our teacher candidate interns, we have created a recruiting system that utilizes a list of desired skills and characteristics (Darling-Hammond, Hammerness, Grossman, Rust & Shulman, 2005; National Council on Teacher Quality, 2011). Evaluating mentor teachers on these skills and

characteristics occurs via a Likert scale questionnaire (see Table 1).

Table 1

	Strongly Agree 5	Agree 4	Neutral 3	Disagree 2	Strongly Disagree 1
1. Has the ability to have a significant impact on attitude and performance (Yamashita, 1991)					
2. Is receptive and supportive of teacher candidate (Conno & Killmer, 1995)					
3. Takes time to work collaboratively (Freese, 1999; Norman & Feiman-Nemser, 2005; Schneider, 2008)					
4. Able to give frequent and valuable feedback to teacher candidate (National Council on Teacher Quality, 2011; Schmidt, 2008)					
5. Has the capacity to help a teacher candidate reflect on their teaching practice (National Council on Teacher Quality, 2011)					
6. Respects the candidate as an individual and provides encouragement (Maynard, 2000)					
7. Has the ability to make their thinking about instruction visible (van Velzen, Volman, Brekelmans, & White, 2012)					
8. Is a successful model of effective instruction and classroom management (Dinkelman, 2003; Okan & Yildirim, 2004)					
9. Models and encourages ethical and professional behavior (Allen, 2005).					

Note. Survey is filled out by teacher candidates, university supervisors and used as a self- rating for mentor teachers.

In partnership schools, university faculty assigned to the school work with principals to select willing mentor teachers who would have scores of 4 or 5 in all attributes, and are good matches for specific teacher candidates. Teacher candidates and university supervisors also fill out this survey on the designated mentor teacher at the end of the teacher candidate internship. In all cases, the university field directors investigate any scores lower than a “3”. This investigation could involve further professional development or the suggestion that the teacher not be used for a mentor in the future.

Although the mentor teachers do not see their evaluations by teacher candidates and university supervisors, they do fill out a self-rating on the same traits. This allows for a unique triangulation of data. For example, in the Spring 2011 survey data, teacher candidates and supervisors generally rated their mentor teachers higher in “making their thinking visible” than the mentor teachers rated themselves. This could be due to a “disconnect” in perception or understanding of the concept. The evaluation data can also be looked at on an individual level. When there is a problem between the mentor teacher and candidate, the evaluation can give focus for further discourse. Discourse and “disconnects” can be addressed through NAPDS Essential 3 via ongoing professional development of teacher candidates, university supervisors and mentor teachers. Supporting mentor teachers with ongoing professional development involves identifying an experienced teacher in each school that embodies the needed skills and characteristics and paying them a stipend to set up a professional learning community. During monthly meetings, a protocol is used where the other mentor teachers in the building have the ability to reflect upon their mentorship in a cooperative environment and receive feedback to help them identify and develop strategies for continued professional growth. At the request of the lead mentor teachers, assigned faculty can attend several of the meetings and are always available for help with problem solving and planning brief trainings.

Training is required for every mentor teacher, candidate, and university supervisor. This four hour training takes place before the start of each semester. It is team taught by a university faculty member, a former mentor

“... it is important that all stakeholders have a shared vision and understanding of the expectations and logistics of the teacher candidate’s internship.”

teacher and a former teacher candidate. The large goal of the training is NAPDS Essential 4: “shared commitment to innovative and reflective practice by all participants”. The training includes the co-teaching model (Heck & Bacharach, 2010), collaboration, time and feedback expectations, as well as relationship building. Like all good relationships, mentoring requires time, commitment, communication, and confidentiality (Williams & Grant,

2012). The mentoring process often breaks down due to a lack of understanding of the process (Long, 1997). Therefore it is important that all stakeholders have a shared vision and understanding of the expectations and logistics of the teacher candidate’s internship.

This shared vision and understanding has had the outcome of an improved internship experience coupled with the mentoring required to guide

candidates in the process of becoming successful teachers. Consequently, in the words of Paul Harvey, “Now you know the REST of the story”.

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Conducting Empirical Research in Professional Development Schools: It Can Be Done?

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An important aspect of doing Professional Development School (PDS) work is “Engagement in and public sharing of the results of deliberate investigations of practice by respective participants” (National Association of Professional Development Schools, Essential 5, 2008, p.3). These deliberate investigations often describe the complex, context-specific interactions

of PDS settings and impact of practices that take place within those settings. In an effort to better understand empirical research and how it can inform our work in a PDS context, we formed a research team comprised of faculty, graduate assistants, district resource teachers, and students. Our PDS research team meets weekly to define and understand what empirical research

is, familiarize ourselves with methodological and theoretical perspectives that ground our work, collaboratively design empirical studies, and brainstorm ways that data collection and analysis can be incorporated into our already full schedules. In this article, we share our current understandings of empirical research and how we came to meld conducting “deliberate investigations” with

our PDS work.

During our initial meeting, we discussed some of the challenges we face as teacher educators working in PDS sites. Of primary concern was balancing the publication demands placed on tenure earning faculty with the intense engagement required of PDS work. Because we concluded that our research and peer-reviewed publication demands must overlap with our PDS work, we turned our focus to the rigor of our investigations. We also recognized the challenge of maintaining flexibility with our research given the context specific nature of our work. This ultimately highlighted a need to familiarize ourselves with various theories, methodologies, and methods necessary in designing rigorous, empirical studies that are flexible enough to meet the realistic needs of PDS work.

After identifying some of our challenges, we set out to define and create a clear understanding of what empirical research is. We concluded that empirical research is (1) placed within the literature, (2) grounded by theory, (3) characterized by a match between the methodology employed and the research question asked, (4) includes systematic data collection and analysis, and (5) reported. Each of these is described in more detail below.

In order for our work to be placed within the literature, we concluded that we need to conduct a systematic review (Kennedy, 2007) of whatever problem of practice we wish to examine. A systematic review of the literature reveals what has previously been studied about a given topic, and what has not been examined. For example, one problem of practice we concern ourselves with is how pre-service teachers make sense of their field experiences. A common term associated with this idea is reflection. A systematic review of the literature revealed

that researchers have primarily focused on levels of reflection evident in pre-service teachers' journals. However, whether or not those reflections inform future overt action has not been reported. One can see how the systematic review sets the stage for rigorous, empirical study by mapping what has been done and what remains to be investigated.

The second characteristic of empirical research is that it is grounded in theory. During our research meetings we share and discuss theories that are associated with the problems of practice we wish to investigate. Understanding theory helps us to explain what it is we do and helps us to make sense of our experiences. For example, when investigating how pre-service teachers make sense of their experiences in a way that informs future overt action, we turned to Dewey and revisited his writings about reflection (Dewey, 1933). We found aspects of his theory particularly helpful as we framed our investigation and engaged in field-based work with pre-service teachers. In this way discussing theory not only helped us to design rigorous studies but also helped us to engage with our students in nuanced ways. Some other common theorists whose work helps to inform our practice and research designs are Vygotsky (1962), who writes about scaffolding, language, and concept formation, Noddings (1984), who writes about relationships, ethos of care, and moral education, and Freire (1970), who writes about dialogue, working with, and praxis.

After we identify a problem of practice, become familiar with the literature, and discuss relevant theory, we begin to design empirical studies by choosing a methodology that matches our question. There are many quantitative and qualitative research methodologies useful in addressing the types of questions we ask. A few include:

- quasi-experimental design

that is useful when asking how much?, how often?, what are the effects of?

- truth and reality-oriented correspondence design that is useful when asking, "What is really going on in the real world? What can we establish with some degree of certainty? What are plausible explanations for verifiable patterns?" (Patton, 2002, p. 91)
- formative design that is useful when asking what happens when?, what are the effects of this intervention or interaction? (Reinking & Bradley, 2008)
- social constructivism that is useful when asking "How have people in this setting constructed reality? What are their reported perceptions, "truths," explanations, beliefs, and world-view? What are the consequences of their constructions for their behaviors and for those with whom they interact? (Patton, 2002, p.96)
- phenomenology that is useful when asking "What is the meaning, structure, and essence of the lived experience of this phenomenon for this person or group of people?" (Patton, 2002, p.104)
- narrative inquiry that is useful when asking What was this person's experience in relationship both to the other and to a social milieu? (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), "What does this narrative or story reveal about the person and world from which it came?" (Patton, 2002, p.115)

Another characteristic of empirical research is the systematic collection and analysis of data. The data collection and analyses employed are dependent on the methodology chosen for the research design. We found that many designs use data such as transcribed interviews, documents, transcribed videos of conferences or lessons. So much

of our daily work, if transcribed and analyzed, can be rich data for empirical research. Content analysis, a common method of analysis, is defined as "...any qualitative data reduction and sense-making effort that takes a volume of qualitative material and attempts to identify core consistencies and meanings." (Patton, 2002, p. 453). This analysis can be both inductive (discovering themes) or deductive (using an existing framework). We discovered that much of our data collection occurs in the context of our daily PDS work. Transcribing

and analyzing is time consuming, but if we devote regular time each week to this endeavor it can be done.

We noticed that conducting systematic empirical work opens up opportunities for publication in peer-reviewed journals--one of our initial concerns within our PDS work. We assert when we connect our "deliberate investigations" with the literature, ground them in theory, select and describe appropriate methodologies that match our questions, and systematically collect and analyze

data, we establish trustworthiness. This level of rigorous engagement in the research process can make evident the value of our PDS work.

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"... when we connect our 'deliberate investigations' with the literature, ground them in theory, select and describe appropriate methodologies that match our questions, and systematically collect and analyze data, we establish trustworthiness."

"Editors' Corner"

Ron Siers, Jr., Salisbury University

Cathy Ramey, Mardela Middle and High School

Our editorial team is excited to bring you the May 2013 edition of PDS Partners. Articles submitted and reviewed for this edition come from South Carolina, West Virginia, China, Texas, Washington, Georgia, Florida, and Indiana. It is inspiring to read about the vitality and health of our Professional Development Schools throughout the world. Each of our authors in this edition of PDS Partners provide energy and vision for all members of the National Association for Professional Development Schools (NAPDS).

Patrick Lencioni (2012) posits that all great leaders within organizations must be a Chief Reminding Officer (CRO). Each author within our magazine advocate for the core values of the NAPDS by reminding us in a variety of ways of the importance and value of Professional Development School partnerships. Our NAPDS communication is subsequently cascaded throughout our organization in order to provide consistent and authentic information. We hope that our magazine has provided each of our readers a powerful and critical lens for establishing and augmenting healthy and robust school-university partnerships. We welcome your thoughts, comments, concerns, and ideas for our magazine and look forward to learning with you during the 2013-2014 academic year.

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Development of Professional Learning Communities to Strengthen Professional Collaboration for Student Learning

*Susan L. Ogletree and Gwendolyn Benson, Georgia State University
Gwendolyn Williams, NET-Q Grant
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“High-need urban and rural schools rarely close the achievement gap because they never close the teacher quality gap.”

The development of professional learning communities started at Georgia State University in collaboration with five of the largest high needs urban school districts in the state through the Professional Development Schools Deliver Success grant. The Network for Enhancing Teacher Quality grant (NET-Q) established professional learning communities known as Cross Career Learning Communities (CCLC). CCLCs seek to improve student achievement in high-needs schools by enhancing the skillsets of pre-service and new teachers while increasing new teacher retention so they remain to become confident, skilled instructors. CCLC members support one another in improving instructional practices and untangling professional dilemmas within a supportive and safe environment.

High-need urban and rural schools rarely close the achievement gap because they never close the teacher quality gap. This breach remains constant because they are constantly rebuilding. Vast human and financial capital is consumed hiring and replacing teachers who leave their field before mastering the skills to succeed in these classrooms.

In Cross Career Learning Communities teachers encourage discussion around common dilemmas faced by new and experienced teachers. CCLCs include novice and experienced teachers, administrators, and university faculty. Drawing on participants' expertise, structured conversations focus on student work, challenges of practice, and data from individual classrooms

and the school. The result of this collaboration is focused professional development through reciprocal mentoring. This type of mentoring has proven to increase teacher skills and student achievement. When Georgia's statewide student examination pass rates were compared in the Professional Development School network between schools with CCLCs, and those that matched but did not have CCLCs, there was improvement in 3 out of 5 areas on the Georgia High School Graduation Test. Middle Schools showed improvement in 14 out of 15 criterion-referenced tests, and elementary school showed improvement in 10 out of 21 criterion-referenced tests. In addition, Professional Development Schools showed reduced teacher attrition: The retention rate climbed from 63% to 86% (Black & Neel, 2008).

Seven years ago, CCLC meetings met in real time on school campuses. With the addition of a rural component to the NET-Q grant, online communities are now a reality. Because many rural school systems have only one school at each level, access to physical and human resources is limited. Online professional learning communities allow teachers access to resources and support systems 24/7. They can offer multiple mentors and opportunities for guided reflection in an alternate “safe space” for professional growth – outside the workplace.

With the help of the National Commission on Teachers and America's Future (NCTAF), a national learning community

for teacher residents has been established. Teachers Linking in Networked Communities (TLINC) has been effective in building teachers' confidence as practitioners and leaders. It values teachers as professionals, brings a new dimension to the work of CCLCs, provides collaborative opportunities designed through research-based models and is extremely cost effective. Through TLINC teacher residents connect with mentors and peers, access support as challenges arise, and develop habits of teamwork and community from the beginning of their careers.

Currently, the NET-Q CCLC/TLINC programs have supported the establishment and maintenance of 37 CCLC groups across 6 Metro Atlanta School Districts and one District's Department of Professional Learning. Additionally, NET-Q has supported the establishment of 13 additional CCLC groups through the NET-Q rural university partners. In sum, a total of 88 CCLC groups were established and supported through the NET-Q partnership during the 2011-12 school year, serving a total of 608 certified teachers, administrators, and support personnel at the elementary, middle and high school levels.

What happens during a Five Day CCLC Institute?

In CCLC Institutes, professional learning communities practice dispositions and skills that facilitate the development of school learning communities. These interactions support work to make their connections with students more meaningful. Group

facilitators verbally describe a task such as examining data, then model it and solicit questions before encouraging participants to try themselves.

The anticipated outcome of the institute is using protocols effectively. The School Reform Initiative's (SRI) guide, Resource and Protocol Book, is the main tool used during the five days to promote learning. Protocols create a safe environment where dialogue becomes rich and meaningful. By the end of the institute, the participants have engaged in reflective talk, practiced giving and receiving productive feedback, examined work together, and considered an equity stance on varying educational issues. Embedded in the protocols are structures that facilitate ways that participants can ask challenging questions, yet honor equity. The core of the protocol is the need to listen to the presenter so that the issue or dilemma is heard and can be addressed by the group.

Three protocols which have provoked rich conversations in institutes at both the Atlanta and Albany, Georgia, CCLC communities have been World Café, Text Rendering, and Chalk Talk.

World Café Protocol

The World Café was used as an icebreaker to connect participants:

- Why am I here? What do I hope to learn this week?
- What would it look/feel/sound like in your school if everyone believed that his/her expertise was valued as much as anyone else's?
- What would it look/feel/sound like in your school if everyone considered her/himself a learner?
- What would it look/feel/sound like in your school if everyone believed that together, we can achieve outcomes better than any of us could achieve alone?

After returning to home tables, participants debrief and entertain more questions such as: How did this experience support our development as a learning community? How might we use this strategy in our classrooms? More information about World Café is on its website (www.theworldcafe.com)

Text Rendering Protocol

Another protocol, Text Rendering, establishes community norms early in the Institute. This process began with participants reading the article, *Willing to be Disturbed* by Margaret Wheatley, which talks about the need to draw upon our humanity and think critically with each other. Discussions from the text of this article prompted inner reflection which led to the forming of norms to govern themselves and to ensure mutual respect within the group.

Participant norms suggested were:

- Be fully present (physically, emotionally, and in spirit)
- Step up (participate, volunteer, share the air)
- Seek wisdom (question, listen)
- Make room – (be open minded)
- Expect and tolerate non-closure (okay to wonder and change, use no names)

The group divided to discuss what the norms meant to them so they could work better together. Each took one norm to describe, chart, and interpret. They then focused on agreements – ways they would act within the community. The list was posted to serve as guide.

Chalk Talk Protocol

The protocol Chalk Talk is used by Critical Friends Groups as a process for “looking at student work” and engaging in reflective practice. In this protocol, participants stood quietly around the white board as the facilitator wrote a phrase, then they randomly, silently, responded

to the phrase in writing. Next, the group enhanced its responses by connecting them to other phrases and elaborating their ideas.

Chalk Talk added a new dimension to “The Danger of a Single Story,” a video that was viewed. (http://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story.html) After watching the video, participants questioned their adherence to one story, wondered in writing about the stories of their students, made connections with each other's musings about dangerous stories, and linked their thinking with comments on the white board, which enhanced the sense of community among learners.

CCLCs are changing the way teachers think about engaging students in critical thinking in their classrooms. Participants' words best explain how participating in a CCLCs renewed their call to teach. One CCLC member stated, “Today's workshop gave me ideas of how to be an effective teacher. Working together in a collaborative manner can be a strength in helping students reach their highest potential throughout their school career.” Another participant expressed her skepticism anticipating the workshop, “I was hesitant about attending this workshop because I am completing the last few days in my present job. I asked for today as an annual leave day to see how the workshop would go. I now plan to request the remainder of the week off. My experience with workshops is me sitting in my seat fighting to stay awake.”

Not only does CCLC work support and encourage pre-service and beginning in-service teachers, it renews and revitalizes teachers with many years of experience. It is an exemplary model of NAPDS Essential 3 and 4. The NET-Q CCLCs provide an ideal space for experienced teachers to share real-life teaching methods while pre-service and early career teachers

contribute the newest theories, experiences and technologies. CCLC's shape a safe space apart from students and administrators where participants can openly present dilemmas and receive feedback without fear of judgment. Recommendations can then be implemented in the classroom with results shared with the CCLC during the next meeting. In short, CCLCs nurture the continuous collaboration needed to become a master teacher while continuously

renewing a love of teaching and learning.

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The Impact of Teacher Evaluation and Merit Pay on Professional Development Schools: Will Schools Still Accept Student Teachers?

*Nancy Armstrong Melser, Ball State University
Rhonda Turner, Orchard Park Elementary School*

We saw it coming in 2001, with the legislation of No Child Left Behind. We heard about it again when President Obama called education reform, and at the state level, the terms Merit Pay, Teacher Accountability, and High Stakes Testing appeared more and more in the local newspapers. However, we were not quite prepared for the anxiety and concerns that would impact our Professional Development Schools (PDS) when a revised teacher evaluation program became a required part of teaching in Indiana.

During the 2012-2013 school year, the state of Indiana began the implementation of a teacher evaluation process. The process was to evaluate teachers based on classroom performance, professional aspects, and test scores from students in our classrooms. The overall ramifications of this evaluation meant that teachers would (1) receive merit pay based on the improvement of their students from year to year, or on

the opposite end of the spectrum, (2) ineffective teachers could be removed from their classrooms after a period of two years with no noticeable improvement. The idea of increasing one's pay or worse yet, losing one's job, created an atmosphere of worry around the subject of student teaching placements for the upcoming year. Would schools still accept student teachers in light of the teacher evaluation changes? Would teachers still host student teachers if it could impact test scores and ultimately their paychecks? The following will describe the process of one school – university partnership, as well as the agreement that is now in place for accepting student teachers into the school.

At Ball State University, a Professional Development School Network has been in place since 1997. With fifteen schools ranging from p-12, student teachers and interns had a variety of placement options for their student teaching

experience. Schools readily accepted student teachers, and teachers were very excited to serve as mentors to those about to enter the teaching profession. The challenge of placements was one that we dealt with each semester and the majority of students who applied to Professional Development Schools were accepted and had successful teaching experiences. However, with the implementation of a new teacher evaluation system, concerns about accepting student teachers started to emerge. After all, why would we leave the potential test scores of our children in the hands of a rookie?

Seeing the uncertainty about placements and the worry about whether to accept student teachers into PDS classrooms caused school – university partnership to examine policies, many of which had been in place since the early 1990's. The aspect of NAPDS Essential #6, "An articulation agreement developed by the respective participants delineating

the roles and responsibilities of all involved” seemed important in the new policies surrounding teacher evaluation. Therefore, careful meetings with central office administrators, university faculty members, and classroom teachers were held a year prior to the new teacher evaluation process to determine our primary concerns and more importantly, what could be done to keep student teachers in our PDS sites. After many meetings and conversations, the following plan was created.

First, the school decided to no longer accept any student teachers with a GPA lower than 3.0. While the university requirement was a 2.5, the school partnership and administration felt strongly that a 3.0 would better benefit our children and would ensure that the student teachers placed in the PDS were stronger teacher education candidates. In the past, students with GPA’s that were close to the minimum were still allowed to student teach, providing they could pass an interview process. However, with the new teacher evaluation process coming into the schools, administrators felt that the higher GPA’s would provide better prepared student teachers who were ready to teach in classrooms. (As a side note, the university has since listened to this suggestion and will require the 3.0 minimum GPA for ALL student teachers in the very near future).

A second agreement made between the school and the

university was that the interview process for being placed in a PDS would be more rigorous and more meticulous. In current interviews, future student teachers are interviewed with questions that are created by classroom teachers and each candidate has three separate interview sessions. While, the interviews typically went well, we sometimes accepted student teachers that we had some concerns about. However, with the new agreement, we will no longer accept student teachers who do not do well in the initial interview process. We realize that this may exclude some qualified applicants but in the past, we found that our “gut feeling” about the interviewee was usually correct!

The third agreement accepted by both the school and university was that co-teaching would be widely used in the student teaching process. Co-teaching is now a required element in the PDS partnership schools and veteran teachers do not leave the room as much during the student teaching process. Instead, teachers and student teachers are more involved in co-planning and teaching of lessons and both the teachers and administrators feel better knowing that the standards are being taught by a “team approach”.

Finally, an agreement was reached about how to handle students who are not meeting minimum expectations in the student teaching process. Although the decision to dismiss a student teacher is

used very infrequently at our university, sometimes issues such as unprofessional behaviors occur and a student must be removed from a classroom. The central office administration asked that if this does occur in a PDS setting that the student be dealt with swiftly, so as not to endanger the learning of children in classrooms.

Overall, the Teacher Evaluation Process still causes some anxiety for teachers. However, we now feel that the placement of student teachers is a stronger, more rigorous process and will in the end benefit children and hopefully raise test scores in the process. While the system is too new to see the results of merit pay decisions, we feel that this practice will not be impacted by placing student teachers in classrooms. We all know that two heads are better than one, and in this PDS partnership an evaluation process for teachers is not going to change the student teaching placements. Having an agreement in place and working in advance to confront the issues can help alleviate the fears and concerns associated with a “rookie in the room”!

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“... we know feel that the placement of student teachers is a stronger, more rigorous process and will in the end benefit children and hopefully raise test scores in the process.”

PDS Partners Call for Submissions

PDS Partners is published three times per year (in January, May, and September) by the National Association for Professional Development Schools (NAPDS). Past issues can be viewed at http://www.napds.org/pds_partners.html. Magazine article submissions are welcomed from all school, university, and community constituents of Professional Development Schools (PDSs) from the United States and beyond. Manuscript submission requirements can be found on the NAPDS website.

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