



**INTERNS & THE INTERNSHIP**  
*Sign Language as Classroom  
 Management: Action Research*

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# PDS Partners

## Incredible Ideas for Intern Induction

*Melisha Martin, Patty Otero, Sandra Vecera,  
 Howard County Public Schools*

The Howard County Public School System is located between Washington, D.C. and Baltimore, Maryland. We are a mid-sized preK-12 school system comprised of 80 schools with an enrollment of 55,000 students. Howard County is known for its diversity and academic excellence. Our PDS consists of 17 partnerships with six local universities. We place over 200 interns in at least 46 of our schools each year. Since we place such a large number of interns in our district, it is essential to provide interns with a high level of support to ensure a successful experience for all of our stakeholders.

Our commitment to intern induction is aligned with NAPDS Essential 2: A school-university culture committed to the preparation of future educators that embraces their active engagement in the school community. In Howard County, we

provide support for our interns both systemically and within partnerships. Some of our systemic supports include:

- Professional Development School Program Intern Orientation – At the beginning of each semester, interns are invited to attend an orientation welcoming them into the Howard County Public School System. Interns learn information about the Office of Human Resources and its services, as well as policies and procedures to ensure a successful start to their internship. In the fall, interns experience a face-to-face meeting where school system leaders greet them. In the spring, when fewer interns are beginning their internship, interns receive an orientation through a podcast delivered at each school by the school-based PDS site liaison.
- Office of Human Resources Intern Reception – Prior to the end of their

internship, each intern in our system is invited to attend a reception hosted by the Office of Human Resources. At this reception, interns are given information about the online application system, the hiring process, interviewing tips, and substitute opportunities. Interns are also able to clarify questions and hear from recently hired new teachers.

- County-Wide Professional Development – All interns in our district have the opportunity to participate in county-wide professional development with their mentor teachers.
- Curriculum Level Interviews – Interns in our school system are given the privilege of bypassing preliminary interviews and advancing directly to our second level curriculum interview.

The Professional Development Schools Program (PDSP) also supports interns at the



## A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Evelyn Perry, Northwood Appold Community Academy, MD

I am glad that my last "A Message From the President" comes to you not as farewell, but as my change from the position of President to Past President. This role change provides me an opportunity and the pleasure of continuing to work with a leadership team and members who are committed to improving our nation's schools; enhancing the preparation and continued development of teachers; and, elevating university and school professionals.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the NAPDS Leadership Team for all the hard work it put in during my 2013/2014 tenure as President. A special thank you to Judy Beiter, Doug Rogers and JoNancy Warren who will be concluding their 3-year terms on the Leadership Team. All three have been invaluable assets to the organization. In addition, congratulations to the incoming members President-elect Mary Keifer-Kennedy and Board member Rebecca West Burns.

I hope to see all of you at the 2014 Professional Development Schools National Conference in Las Vegas, NV, March 27th - March 30th. Our conference theme is, The Common Core of Professional Development Schools: Employing the Nine Essentials to Enhance Educational Growth. As always, the conference will address the interests, questions, and professional development needs of university, k-12 administrators and faculty, and pre-service teachers. This is a great opportunity to dialogue with other Professional Development School (PDS) partners about developing, adjusting and/or sustaining PDS fidelity in a climate of instructional and content changes as well as uncertainty surrounding standardized testing. Take time to review the NAPDS Nine Essentials and you will notice that as state standards, standardized testing and curricula change, the Nine Essentials will remain relevant. As a matter of fact, the Nine Essentials are at the core of high performing Professional Development Schools.

See you in Vegas!! Remember, "All the great things you learn in Vegas should be shared outside of Vegas."

## Congratulations to the newest members of the NAPDS Leadership Team!



Marcy Keifer Kennedy  
Ohio University  
President-Elect



Rebecca West Burns  
University of South Florida  
Board of Directors

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school and partnership level. In Howard County, our universities partner with specific school sites. Schools have a teacher leader, known as the PDS Site Liaison, who supports the program at each school site. Support is collaboratively developed based upon the needs of interns in each partnership. Examples of school-based support include:

- Greetings on the First Day –On the first day of school, site liaisons greet the interns, introduce them to staff, share school goals, and give a tour of the school. The purpose is to begin building positive relationships and establishing a sense of community with the interns.
- Regular Intern Check-Ins – During the internship, site liaisons connect with interns regularly through email or face-to-face meetings. The site liaison works to build trust and create an atmosphere of open communication.
- Professional Learning Opportunities and Involvement – Interns are encouraged to be highly involved in the school community. They participate in professional learning at each school site, which is determined by the school improvement plan initiatives. Interns are also invited to participate in a variety of afterschool activities that support family and community outreach.
- Mock Interviews – Our hope as a school system is to prepare our interns to become effective new teachers in our county. Many of our partnerships coordinate mock interview events to give interns an opportunity to practice interview skills. Mock interviews may include new teacher or administrator panels, speakers from the Office of Human Resources, and practice interview sessions with immediate feedback.

It is our belief that the supports we implement at the systemic and school-based level engage interns in the school community and create a culture of commitment in preparing our future educators.

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## Toolbox Essentials For The Next Generation of Educators

*Andrea Berry and Jan Faile, Lake Carolina Elementary School  
Margo Jackson, University of South Carolina*

Lake Carolina Elementary, in partnership with the University of South Carolina (USC), has a strong history of equipping its teacher candidates with “essential tools for success.” This exemplifies NAPDS Essential Two, a school-university culture committed to teacher preparation and active engagement. We believe that our teacher candidates will emerge from our program well prepared and excited about their futures as they evolve into master teachers. Currently, our focus is on student engagement and the work of Phillip C. Schlechty in designing work for students which is both challenging and relevant to them.

Four teacher candidates, the principal, the USC supervisor, and the clinical adjunct presented their perspectives on how our teacher candidates are equipped for meeting the needs of all learners at the PDS National Conference in New Orleans, Louisiana (February, 2013). Using the analogy of tools in their kits, multiple “tools” were shared with the audience from the teacher candidates themselves. The “essential tools for success” as a teacher include the following:

- Blueprint - design plan  
Every teacher should have a master design of where their students are and where they plan to take them.
- Tape Measure - used to measure distance covered or distance left  
Frequent measures must be taken to assess progress and deficiencies to achieve goals throughout the year.
- Saw – used to cut or trim as needed  
Sometimes the design has to be revised in order to meet the needs of students. Flexibility is tantamount to success.
- Tape – used to make things stick  
Teachers must employ movement, music, “being there” experiences, etc. to help students make connections and retain knowledge and information.
- Level – determines balance and alignment  
Not only do we need to achieve a balance of techniques to address student learning styles, we also need a balance in our personal lives in order to be the best that we can be professionally.
- Extension Cord – length of flexible, electrical power cable  
Teachers must extend the learning, particularly to reach the needs of advanced learners. This requires flexibility and results in powerful learning experiences.

As the teacher candidates presented each tool analogy, they also relayed an individual classroom experience to illustrate the connections they had made. This provided an opportunity for reflection and assimilation of the various aspects of teacher preparation and best practices that candidates have demonstrated and packed into their own personal toolboxes.

In an effort to demonstrate techniques that we use with our students, halfway through the session we asked our audience to assess and show us their levels of engagement using a ruler with a gator slide on it. After spotting a few levels that were not fully engaged, we chose to change our presentation by showing video clips of our students describing classroom learning experiences they have had and then assessing and sharing their levels of engagement and reasons for those levels. This practice affirms our belief that it is critical for teachers to employ not only formative assessments for academic standards, but also those for measures of student engagement. Consequently, they must have a vast array of strategies in their toolboxes to address the diverse needs of the heterogeneously grouped community of learners in their care. As we have learned through our research, best practice dictates that we use input from our students to inform not only what we teach, but, more importantly, how we reach them through a variety of engaging instructional techniques and strategies.

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## A Team Commitment: Teaching Methods Courses in a PDS

*Ann Adkins, Nancy Spalla, Ellen Spencer and Carolyn Wiezorek, Clarke University  
Chris Nugent, Fulton Elementary*

When a university and its two elementary PDS partners team up to provide experiences for future teachers designed to give them the necessary background to become exemplary teachers, it is a winning situation for all involved. Teaching methods courses within the elementary PDSs places the pre-service teachers in an environment that immerses them in the culture of the school and embodies NAPDS Essential 2—creating a school-university partnership committed to the preparation of these future educators. In the schools, the university students have extended opportunities for authentic learning that not only build their professional skills, but provide the elementary students with beneficial instruction. Delivering methods courses in this fashion is a hallmark of the education program at Clarke University in Dubuque, Iowa.

Here, methods courses are blocked together and taught mornings on site at two elementary schools in the city. Two state-licensed teacher educators are assigned to each PDS where they share the responsibility for teaching the courses and supervising the university students. Typically between ten and fifteen junior level students are enrolled in each block; their presence is an important element in the culture of each school. Content of the methods courses is interwoven with opportunities to teach and interact with the elementary students, seamlessly connecting the theory of teaching with the actual practice of teaching.

The courses offered at each PDS and the demographics of each school are unique. St. Anthony is a small, parochial school serving a middle-class population. Methods courses in science, math, and reading in the content area are taught at this site. A recent decision by the university moved the music and health methods courses here as well. Fulton Elementary is a public school with an economically challenged, diverse (for the area) student body. Reading, language arts, and social studies methods are taught at this elementary school. Recently added were methods' courses in physical education and art. Students receive credit for clinical hours at each site as well.

Because every elementary education major spends a semester at each of these blocks, the students have multiple chances to experience the challenges of the classroom. Depending on additional endorsements, the pre-service teachers may spend up to three additional semesters in PDSs. By the time they have

progressed to their student teaching, they have spent hundreds of hours in the schools receiving modeling and mentoring from both university instructors and classroom teachers preparing them for this next step.

Why adopt a program design such as this? The reasons are linked to Clarke University's program philosophy and the PDS Nine Essentials which espouse learning that is contextual, integrative, and collaborative. Learners at both the elementary and university levels are central to the model and all members of the partnership reap the benefits.

Elementary students at both schools benefit from the presence of the university students. At Fulton Elementary, it is their daily interactions with the Clarke students that are significant. The university students infuse innovative and creative ideas into the classrooms and provide various perspectives on student needs. They support learning in the school with individual, small group, and whole class instruction. The

**“... IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT THE UNIVERSITY FACULTY AS WELL AS THE ADMINISTRATION AND TEACHERS AT THE PDS CRITICALLY CONSIDER HOW EACH OF THE INTERACTIONS AND ACTIVITIES IN WHICH THE PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS PARTICIPATE WILL HELP BUILD THEIR SKILL SET AS THEY WORK TOWARD TEACHER LICENSURE.”**

Clarke students and faculty are very much a part of the life of the school and participate in activities both during the school day and after school hours.

The students at St. Anthony also reap many benefits from their school's partnership with Clarke University. They receive greater individualized and specialized educational experiences as well as increased personal attention. The pre-service teachers plan and deliver hands-on instruction which further engages the students.

With this arrangement, it is essential that the university faculty as well as the administration and teachers at the PDS critically consider how each of the interactions and activities in which the pre-service teachers participate will help build their skill set as they work toward teacher licensure. At Fulton, the university students are assigned to specific classrooms and are mentored by these teachers as they prepare lessons in literacy and document student progress. Staff and faculty members alike share their expertise with the university students and increase their understanding of the contributions

each makes in their roles at the school. At St. Anthony, the university students are assigned to grade levels and classrooms as requested by the classroom teachers. Here, they have the chance to learn from these master teachers while deepening their understanding of both the content they teach in math and science and the pedagogy needed to teach these subject areas. Because St. Anthony School is a part of the parochial school system, they also learn about the culture, procedures, and purposes of teaching in this unique setting.

Also of import are opportunities for the university faculty and the faculty at both schools to engage in professional development as outlined in PDS Essential 3, which addresses “reciprocal professional development for all participants.” These opportunities are unique at each setting. At Fulton Elementary, the university instructors are present at relevant faculty development in-services. Attending in-service professional development, provide them with the knowledge of teaching strategies and approaches being used in the classrooms. This also affords the university faculty the chance to contribute to these professional conversations. St. Anthony's administration invites the Clarke faculty to plan and lead professional development workshops during the school year. In turn, through their work and interactions with the elementary faculty, the teacher educators become familiar with the school's curriculum and the teachers' approaches to teaching.

Together, the PDS partners and the university are working to provide the Clarke students with optimal learning experiences as they develop knowledge of what it means to be a teaching professional in an elementary classroom. Learning this through methods courses taught on site in an elementary school provides rich experiences for the pre-service teachers and gives them a depth of understanding that is not possible when a class is located on campus and professors are not in the field.

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# Sign Language as Classroom Management: Action Research

Ariel Levy, Johns Hopkins University  
Ron Siers, Jr., Salisbury University

Have you ever been in the middle of a lesson and thought a student had an important question, but it turned out he/she only had to go to the bathroom? Being able to communicate with students without disruptions is very important for the learning environment of classrooms. Professional Development School (PDS) partners at Fruitland Intermediate School were intrigued by the impact of sign language on classroom disruptions. Some mentor teachers expressed concern about the variance in student disturbances when implementing sign language within the elementary environment. Does sign language mitigate student disturbances? The purpose of our action research project was to help us better understand the relationship of sign language interventions and classroom disruptions of elementary students within a PDS.

Fruitland Intermediate (FI) is a small suburban school located in western Wicomico County, Maryland. The school has an enrollment of 392 students in grades 3-5. The student population of FI includes 62.8% white, 24.2% African-American, 5.1% two or more ethnicities, 4.6% hispanic, and 3.3% Asian-American. Over half of the students at FI are male (53.3%). The fourth grade student sample for this action research included 15 white, 3 African-American and 3 students of two or more ethnicities. The action research team consisted of one student intern and one mentor teacher (NAPDS Essential 5). The action research project began by observing the procedures of students within a 4th grade classroom when using the bathroom and getting a drink of water. Most of these students had no prior knowledge of sign language. Accordingly, they were anxious to learn. Prior to the introduction of sign language, the class routine was to hold up the numbers 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 on their hand when a student requested assistance. Each number represented a different need (i.e. bathroom, water, and question). Holding up the number 1 represented a request to use the bathroom, number 2 was to get a drink of water, number 3 was to sharpen a pencil, number 4 was to make a comment, and number 5 was to ask a question. During a lesson, students would raise their hand with a number representing their perceived need. The challenge for the student intern was to be able to quickly decode each number and provide each student the necessary requests. This was challenging and distracting. Since the students were already in the routine of holding up a symbol using their hands, the decision was made to continue the procedure, but change the actual signs that would be displayed.

We incorporated sign language into the classroom so that the students and teachers could distinguish between each need. When a student needed to use the restroom, they would hold up the letter T in the sign language alphabet. This represented that they needed to use the toilet and the teacher was able to distinguish their need. When in need of a drink

of water the students would make the letter W on their hand and hold it near their chin to represent that they would like a drink of water. Our favorite sign that was incorporated into the classroom was the 'Me too' sign. This sign was used when one student was called on, but the other students had their hands raised as well and wanted to also be acknowledged for having the right answer. To complete this sign, the students who were not acknowledged by the teacher made the letter Y on their hand while simultaneously moving it forward and backwards in front of their chest. This sign gave every student the opportunity to show the teacher that they also had that answer and would like the teacher to affirm their participation. This sign made all students feel acknowledged and engaged during the lessons.

During the beginning of the internship, observations were made and data was collected. The student intern observer used an off-task scale to determine the frequency of disruptive behaviors in the classroom for an entire week of class. Prior to the implementation of sign language, the students had 12, 10, 11, 9, and 11 disruptions. For purposes of the action research project, a disruption was operationalized as an interruption in the progress of classroom instruction. Figure 1 shows the number of disruptions in the first five days before implementing the sign language.

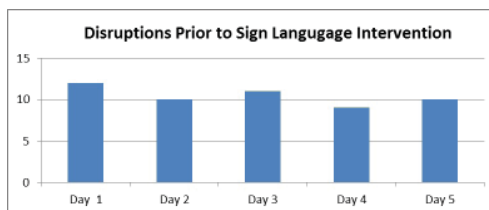


Figure 1: Disruption Frequency Prior to Sign Language Intervention

Students were educated and trained on the utilization of sign language. Following the intervention of sign language, students were observed and data was collected by the student intern. While leading a lesson, the student intern was able to ascertain the need of students quickly and provide a subsequent response in an efficient and effective manner. The need for verbal communication was mitigated and the disruptions began to decrease. Figure 2 illustrates the number of disruptions following the introduction of sign language. On days six through 10, the students had 5, 3, 4, 3, and 2 disruptions. Figure 2 illustrates the substantial decrease in classroom disruptions following the intervention of sign language.

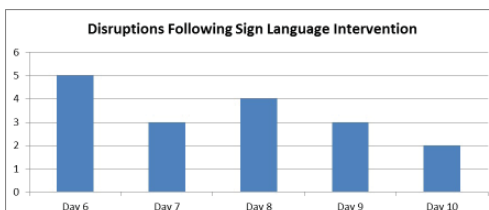


Figure 2: Disruption Frequency Following Sign Language Intervention

The data collected reflected a relationship between sign language interventions and classroom disruptions. The three primary findings were as follows: (1) Incorporating sign language into the classroom limits disruptions since the teacher and students are communicating using the same silent system. (2) Sign language gives all students the opportunity to be heard and voice their opinions as well as their needs. (3) Sign language helps keep students consistently engaged in lessons by quickly affirming their request and efficiently meeting their needs.

The research findings were presented to PDS partners at the 17th annual Regional Professional Development Schools Conference at Salisbury University on May 9, 2013 (NAPDS Essential 5). The results from the research influenced the pedagogy of the student intern in a variety of ways. In the future, the student intern will plan to incorporate a variety of different signs into her own classroom in order to foster classroom management skills through the mitigation of disruptions. On the first day of school, the student intern will teach students the signs that will be used in the classroom. In the future, the student intern will also choose a different sign to teach students each week. The research taught PDS partners how important classroom management really is within a classroom and the value of effective and efficient communication between the students and teacher. While researching sign language in the classroom, the student intern was able to show the mentor teacher how useful it can be and how much the students enjoy utilizing the different signs. If each teacher at Fruitland Intermediate used the same signs in their classrooms, the potential for reduced disruptions and increased efficiency could become institutionalized. Teachers at Fruitland Intermediate can use the data from this action research project to foster their classroom management skills and keep their students engaged with minimal disruptions. Faculty can request professional development on the efficacy of sign language in the classroom. After conducting the action research, the student intern began to think of research questions that could be explored in the future. Can sign language in the classroom increase the desire for students to learn more signs outside of the classroom? Ideally, it would be wonderful if students go home and teach their families the sign language that they learned within the classroom. This also enables the students to be a teacher in the home environment while showing their family something that they learned in class.

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# Content Area Reading and Writing: Integrating Common Core State Standards into Everyday Instructional Practices

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Brittany Osborne, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools

A quick scan of the educational environment today with changing standards for students, teacher evaluation methods linked increasingly to student test scores, changing technologies, and diminishing resources due largely to smaller budgets for education at the national, state and local levels suggests both the need and challenges for improved teacher professional development. It is in this context that a partnership between James Martin Middle School (JMMS) and the Center for Adolescent Literacies at UNC Charlotte took shape during the 2011-2012 school year.

Building on existing partnerships between the Center for Adolescent Literacies and James Martin and in response to Common Core State Standards and state and district initiatives that sought to integrate reading and writing into all content areas, a Professional Development School partnership was established with the goal of helping teachers incorporate rigorous literacy strategies inside all classes utilizing the school's Professional Learning Community (PLC) structure where possible—key elements of the School Improvement Plan (NAPDS Essential 3). UNC Charlotte faculty worked with JMMS administration, teachers, and district

## **“The structure of our approach allowed for greater participant input and collaboration than other forms of professional development in which we have engaged.”**

personnel and resources to determine topics that were appropriate to the curriculum and learning needs in an effort to improve the literacy skills and overall performance of students. To support this effort, monthly full-staff professional development sessions as well as monthly sessions for subject area and grade level PLCs were implemented. Big picture ideas were introduced in whole-staff workshops, followed by more in-depth discussion and implementation at the small-group level. High-need topics identified by faculty became the focus of workshops which included a broad introduction to adolescent literacy followed by sessions on comprehension, classroom discussion and questioning, and vocabulary development in all disciplines.

UNC Charlotte faculty matched the needs identified with research-based strategies to support the development of students' literacy skills while building content-area knowledge. Each of the strategies was modeled for the teachers during workshops. Of all the strategies

shared over the course of the year, most teachers responded that writing-to-learn opportunities were the ones most often implemented in their classrooms. Those introduced to the faculty were 3-2-1 (Zygouris-Coe, Wiggins, & Smith, 2004), GIST (Cunningham, 1982), and a variety of double-entry journals. PLCs worked together with UNC Charlotte faculty to modify these strategies to best fit the needs of the curriculum and the abilities of their students. Blogs and other technological resources, such as class/course websites, were created to facilitate the development and quick implementation of these resources in the classrooms.

Based on feedback from teachers, both student engagement and performance increased as a result of the use of modified research-based strategies developed during the professional development. One teacher noted the decrease of language and comprehension issues for ESL students, stating they finished class “with an idea of the big picture” of the material covered in class. Another commented the strategies “forced [students] to really think about what they are reading and writing.”

Technology was another component that aided our work together. The leadership team set up a website using Wix.com to document the professional development work, provide access to strategies and other content, and foster communication through blog discussions. This website allowed us to refer to material shared in earlier sessions and, as a new school year approached, to build a foundation for new and returning teachers for future work.

While our PDS partnership took into account all nine of the PDS Essentials, this approach emphasized the importance of two in particular: NAPDS Essential 3; Ongoing and reciprocal professional development for all participants guided by need, and NAPDS Essential 4; A shared commitment to innovative and reflective practice by all participants. We defined participant needs in two ways—the needs of students identified by teachers, administrators and student learning data, and the needs of teachers reported via discussions and surveys. The approach to include both whole-staff and small-group workshops also allowed us to be flexible and tailor sessions to the needs of individuals and small groups of teachers. For example, social studies teachers sought additional help with vocabulary instruction, while English language arts teachers collaborated to enhance student participation and accountability for reading.

The structure of our approach allowed for greater participant input and collaboration than other forms of professional development in which

we have engaged. Traditionally, professional development has come as top-down, large group sessions that foster little engagement on the part of teacher participants. While our approach included some large-group sessions, these were used primarily to introduce topics and set the stage for small-group working sessions in which big-picture topics like comprehension and vocabulary development were adapted to particular subject area teaching and learning. This move also allowed us to work with teachers to plan for and integrate new standards emerging from the Common Core State Standards movement that was under adoption in North Carolina. The focus of the Common Core on literacy across subject areas provides a common language for all teachers at James Martin engaged in professional development.

As we move forward with professional development at James Martin, we see several challenges as we reflect on our work. First, the kind of change envisioned by the NAPDS and other advocates for high-impact professional development takes time. Our work at James Martin, while substantial, can only impact teaching and learning if sustained for a period of time—time for teachers to try new approaches, to talk with colleagues and make adjustments in their teaching. Second, professional development must be both top-down and bottom-up. While much in education is driven by standards and policies created at the district, state and national levels, teachers must be deeply involved in decisions about putting those into practice. It became clear early on in our work that, while useful, whole-faculty workshops did not create substantive change in teaching and learning. That work happened in small-groups (subject area and grade level teams) and at those times when through our work we were invited into teachers' classrooms to help implement a new strategy.

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# Engaging Teacher Candidates in Reading Intervention: PDS Partners Reinvent Clinical Practice

*Christopher Kennedy, Ohio University  
Heidi Mullins and K. Penny McDowell, Morrison-Gordon Elementary School*

When school leaders at Morrison-Gordon Elementary School in partnership with The Center for PDS Partnerships in The Patton College of Education at Ohio University identified the need for reading intervention, the PDS team was quick to respond. Together, the partners established a successful program that provided intervention to struggling readers, contributed to a school environment committed to the preparation of teachers (NAPDS Essential 2), and encouraged reflective teaching practices by all the parties involved (NAPDS Essential 4) (Brindley, Field, & Lessen, 2008).

The intervention plan was created as a result of the mission of the PDS Center. To meet the needs of the partnering schools, The Center required each partnering school to develop an Annual Plan of Work. The plan helped schools identify the best way to use the PDS Partnership to benefit K-3 student learning in each school. The goal of the plan was to insure the reciprocal relationship of the partnership. By providing an intense experience, the plan allowed the candidates to develop a sense of ownership toward the partnering school. The plan of work for Morrison-Gordon Elementary School focused upon reading intervention.

The plan for the 2011-2012 school year identified reading intervention as the primary need of the school. The school did not qualify for Title I funding. Thus, there were no monies to hire extra hands to conduct the necessary intervention needed to meet student needs. Utilizing candidates enrolled in field experiences during the junior year seemed to be a good solution to the problem of how to have extra intervention personnel. Candidates enrolled in methods courses with field experiences were available to intervene all semester, all year, every Tuesday and Thursday.

Adoption of an intervention program that would provide guidance for the candidates was the next item needed. The teacher liaison researched and consulted with representatives from other schools to help select a program. Funds for the program were the result of a collaborative effort between the university and the school's Parent Teacher Organization (PTO). The Patton College provided funds through a mini-grant, while the PTO pulled the additional funding needed to purchase the program and provide initial training.

During the school year, candidates provided reading intervention to approximately fifty children. Thirty minute intervention sessions occurred every Tuesday and Thursday during the school day for most of the school year.

Teachers at each grade level (K-3) identified students who were in need of the intervention services. Discussion of the needs of each child helped to determine the student grouping so that individual needs were met. Once groups of three were formed, teachers worked together to decide which candidates would work best with each group. These constant conversations not only allowed teachers to reflect on their students' needs, but also the needs of the partnership candidates. The collaboration provided the best possible scenarios for all parties.

**“CANDIDATES WERE ENCOURAGED TO MAKE DECISIONS REGARDING THE PIECES OF THE PROGRAM THAT WERE NEEDED TO MEET THE NEEDS OF THE STUDENTS. THEY WERE ENCOURAGED TO COLLABORATE WITH CLASSROOM TEACHERS ABOUT THE STUDENTS. THEY REFLECTED ON DIFFERENCES AND MADE DETERMINATIONS ABOUT LEVELING AND PROPER INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES.”**

Two seminar times were set aside to provide training in the reading intervention program. The program provided a guide for instruction and constant assessment. Candidates were encouraged to make decisions regarding the pieces of the program that were needed to meet the needs of the students. They were encouraged to collaborate with classroom teachers about the students. They reflected on differences and made determinations about leveling and proper instructional strategies. Thus, candidates were given experience using a program and were encouraged to make adaptations as needed. The opportunities for assessment provided a venue for candidates to reflect on their instruction and make necessary changes.

In its third year, the Morrison-Gordon intervention programming provided the simultaneous renewal that is the cornerstone of PDS partnerships. With K-3 learning at the forefront, the needs of the school provide an ideal opportunity for learning by all involved.

At the school level, intervention gave readers who were struggling more individualized instruction from a research based program. Intervention was adapted to the proper instructional level and focused on individual skills that were needed. Working with small numbers of children allowed

teachers to meet the needs of all of the children in their class. Constant data collection provided insight into the needs of the children and benefited instruction.

At the university level, candidates received valuable teaching experience that better prepared them for the classroom. Candidates tracked students. They were able to assess, plan, and teach using a program as a guide. They were given more opportunities to reflect on their practices and collaborate with teachers. This reflection provided more opportunities for

mentoring. The experience allowed for better connections between theory and practice. Course discussions were richer and kept instructors in tune with schools.

The intervention programming at Morrison-Gordon was identified as a valuable experience for school leaders, university instructors, teacher candidates, and students. Other schools in the district have inquired into the possibilities of implementing similar plans. During year three, the effectiveness of the model will be tested with research that will investigate the effectiveness of the programming.

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## Editors' Corner

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

Our editorial team is excited to bring you the January 2014 edition of *PDS Partners*. Articles submitted and reviewed for this edition come from South Carolina, Maryland, Ohio, Indiana, Iowa, North Carolina, and Hawaii. The ability to augment our understanding and focus in Professional Development Schools (PDS), ourselves, others, and our communities undergirds all solutions to challenges we will face in 2014. Daniel Goleman (2013) posits that the ability to sharpen our focus in the complexity of the world today enables individuals to achieve lasting success. Each of the authors in this edition of *PDS Partners* offers foresight on how to be consistently mindful of our awareness in order to transform PDS learning organizations.

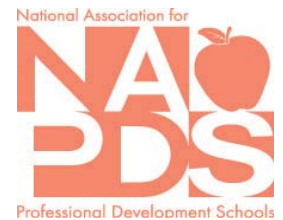
Great PDS leaders are relentlessly looking for ways to improve their system for the benefit of the largest majority of stakeholders. The persistent challenges of educational inequities, privilege, access to opportunity and oppression require all PDS leaders to utilize their heightened self-awareness to make a difference. The new year offers each of us the opportunity to increase our own focus and attention so that future generations within PDS organizations benefit from our deliberate strategies.

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

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## 2013-2014 NAPDS Executive Council & Board of Directors

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# Working Together to Build You, Me, and the Bee: Collaboration Between the University and Museum-Based Professional Development Sites

Carolyn Walker Hitchens, Ball State University

## Introduction

This article describes the creation and development of a children's exhibit focusing on the honeybee and the ways in which students, including elementary education majors, an associate professor in the Elementary Education department, and two museum professional development sites collaborated to develop and share the exhibit. First, background information is given to provide a context for understanding the project. Then, a description of the process of bringing the exhibit from conception to completion is given. Lastly, reflections are provided, including the ways in which professional development partners worked together on a project that impacted the community.

## Background Information

Ball State University Teachers College has a Professional Development School (PDS) network that includes a number of K-12 schools as well as two museums (NAPDS Essential 1). I have worked with both school and museum PDS sites as a faculty member. I was a PDS liaison at two schools, and I taught a university course in PDS museum space over the course of several years.

My interest in the connections between museum spaces, which are often referred to as informal learning environments (Pumpian, Fisher, & Wachowiak, 2006), began while I worked on a separate project with The Children's Museum of Indianapolis, which is a PDS site in our network. I assisted in the development of a unit titled "Book Power" and made presentations for a museum and literacy workshop. Over this time I gained awareness about the value of the relationships between exhibit materials, spaces, content and literacy in those spaces. Investigations of literacy behaviors, both in classrooms and in exhibit spaces, indicated the potential value in purposeful literacy engagement (Pumpian, Fisher, & Wachowiak, 2006; Eakle, 2009). During this time, I also began teaching the undergraduate corrective reading course at a cultural center near the university that includes exhibits for adults and children. I also began to consider the development of an exhibit that included literacy activities and opportunities for reading and writing.

## Developing the Exhibit

The opportunity became available to develop and share a children's exhibit when I was awarded a fellowship from the Virginia Ball Center on the Ball State campus. This fellowship provided monetary assistance and an opportunity for me to work with undergraduate students from several majors to develop a children's exhibit about the honeybee. In addition to the exhibit, students

developed an instructional unit and a related website.

The honeybee was chosen as the focus for the exhibit because many honeybees were disappearing and there was a potential for great impact on their population and humans. Concurrently, as the exhibit was developed, a number of media outlets reported on this as an intriguing topic. The Virginia Ball Center also required that topics were relevant to the region where the university is located, and this topic is. As a literacy educator and researcher, I was interested in the intersection of exhibit space focusing on a science topic and content literacy use in such a space.

As the faculty member and developer of the project idea, I served as a guide and manager, and the 15 undergraduate students who were selected to participate were the designers of the content and physical features of the exhibit. Six of the 15 undergraduates were in the Department of Elementary Education. The other students were from a variety of majors, including graphic design and communications.

Experts were asked to work with students in the development of the exhibit. One group of experts was the exhibit designers from The Children's Museum of Indianapolis. We traveled there to learn about developing an exhibit. We also conferred with other experts, including an entomologist from Purdue, an exhibit specialist who worked at the Smithsonian, and a local beekeeper. After intensive sessions designing and refining the exhibit, including size, colors and items to be included, the students built the exhibit.

During this time the elementary education majors participating in the project worked with a third grade class at the Burriss Laboratory School on the Ball State campus to get feedback about the content of the exhibit. These children in this class were excited to participate and demonstrated a great degree of ownership in the process. They also taught lessons from the unit they developed at Burriss and an after-school program in Muncie to learn about the effectiveness of the lessons and activities.

The exhibit was opened to the public in the lobby of Minnetrista in the spring. There was an opening celebration that included university participants, children from Burriss who participated, and friends and family. Over 200 people came to the opening. After the opening, the exhibit stayed open and was free to the public for the next two months.

The exhibit, titled "You, Me, and the Bee," is still in use at another location and includes five main areas. These are: The Bee Market, The Hive and Bee Models, The Beekeeper, The Bee Dances and The Pollination Pathway. Each area with the

exhibit provided a number of visual and textual references to the content they presented. The Bee Market includes objects that are pollinated by bees and an interactive computer game to determine whether certain objects are pollinated by bees or not. The Hive and the Bee Models share information about the different types of bees, their life cycles, and the jobs they have. The Beekeeper provides information about what the Beekeeper does and the tools used to collect honey and care for bees. The Bee Dance Station includes technology that project the two dances bees do. The Pollination Pathway illustrates through role-play how bees stop at flowers to collect pollen.

## Working collaboratively and innovatively to build the exhibit

Two museum PDS sites worked as community partners with Ball State students and Ball State Teachers College during this project. Without the collaboration of all three entities, the project would not have occurred. The collaboration with The Children's Museum of Indianapolis provided important support and information for students. Early in the project we visited their facility. In addition to touring the facility, including the exhibit building area, the students met with carpenters, designers, and exhibit developers and discussed the process of developing an exhibit. During this visit, students became aware that a central concept or idea relating to honeybees was needed for the exhibit.

During one of the talks with the students, an exhibit developer shared a phrase their staff used when developing exhibits. This phrase: "Keep the main thing, the main thing" became our phrase. Her words helped us realize that the seemingly concise topic of the honeybee was actually a huge topic that could be approached in a number of ways. It was necessary to continue to narrow the topic and the focus.

Minnetrista, a Ball State PDS site, provided us the space, time, and flexibility to bring our exhibit to completion. While in the midst of their own schedule and educational projects, including exhibits, they provided something critical to our project, a place for exhibition. On the first day of the semester, students went to Minnetrista and examined the area where our exhibit would be displayed. They measured the space and examined it for its visual qualities. Our group continued to have access to the space and had a two-day period to install the exhibit prior to its exhibition. Their willingness to open the exhibit and allow it to be there for the next two and a half months was also significant. Because the exhibit was in the lobby area, we were able to share it with the public without cost to them.



# Community Connections: Interns and Students Making a Difference

*Sally Catoe, David Holzendorf and Pamela Powell, North Springs Elementary School  
Jeanene Varner, Danielle Bartnovsky, Eric Nord and Stephanie Wehrum, University of South Carolina*

Community connections are an important part of school work these days. There are four major reasons that these connections are vital to school work: students need to connect learning to the real world, students need intrinsic rewards for their work, the school needs to foster positive community connections, and the local community needs to be aware of the positive results emanating from the schools. NAPDS Essential 2 states that each Professional Development School partnership must develop a culture committed to the preparation of future educators that embraces their active engagement in the school community. Service learning is a vehicle to accomplish all parts of this. It is a concept that is important in schools because it creates a meaningful link between students and the community, making learning meaningful while teaching civic engagement. Further, it allows PDSs to extend themselves to the community outside the school/district and college/university gates. Ultimately, local businesses, agencies, and policymakers can become participants in the work of a PDS and how their involvement is delineated becomes an expression of the PDS.

Involving student interns in the school community helps them learn how to impart knowledge and skills in a manner that empowers students and gives them a true feeling of accomplishment as a citizen of their community. PDSs create a school-wide culture that incorporates teacher candidates as full participants of the school community. For example, incorporating a “theory to practice” model will necessitate discussion as well as shared decision-making among the participants. In addition to routinely examining best practice, PDS participants also share their work with others, both within and outside of their PDS, as a way of contributing to the educational dialogue. This sharing can take many forms, including, but not limited to, conference presentations. When interns use service learning to provide meaningful and engaging learning experiences for the children in their classrooms, they are extending a thread from their studies at the University of South Carolina as well as taking new ideas back to share with interns from other schools. Service learning at USC evolved from a variety of initiatives originating both from the campus and from the community. Over time, a definition for service learning that requires a balance of both service and learning was adopted. A new initiative, USC Connect, offers both faculty and students options and support for service learning from introductory to intensive experiences that enrich professional learning and understanding of the community.

In the College of Education, practicums and

internships include many options for service and learning ranging from creating student math materials to conducting classroom research on specific curriculum practices. Three student teachers at North Springs Elementary took this concept further and, in collaboration with teachers and administrators in the school, developed service learning experiences for their own students to deepen their engagement in meaningful ways. One fifth grade study of lunchtime food waste let children apply research techniques to data gathering and problem solving skills to address a real concern. The class developed a project that included research design, data collection, organization, and presentation. Throughout the process, they

**“Involving student interns in the school community helps them learn how to impart knowledge and skills in a manner that empowers students and gives them a true feeling of accomplishment as a citizen of their community. PDSs create a school-wide culture that incorporates teacher candidates as full participants of the school community.”**

collaborated with classmates, other teachers, classes, and cafeteria staff. These fifth graders applied their growing knowledge of data collection and graphs to a real life situation, and they effectively communicated their data analysis to the cafeteria manager. Through this project, the class covered many fifth grade academic standards and helped other students as well as the cafeteria staff through meaningful data collection and graphic presentation. Fourth grade students created virtual vacations for members of the retirement home neighboring the school. When the fourth graders realized that many of the people in an adjacent nursing home had always wanted to travel somewhere but had missed the opportunity, they set out to create PowerPoint presentations of popular vacation destinations. In the presentations, they featured restaurants, hotel accommodations, and popular attractions. By presenting their virtual vacations to the retirement community, students learned the value of establishing a relationship and an appreciation for their elders. They were able to incorporate technology and provide an irreplaceable experience. Through this project, the teaching intern was able to incorporate students' research skills, organization of information, and connections with members of the community. A third project allowed kindergartners to write a book to give to children at the Richland Children's Hospital. The project was introduced by discussing wants versus needs with the students. Students became authors and illustrators over a period

of three weeks in order to provide original stories for handmade books. This project gave meaning to the students' learning. Not only did they actually want to write during writing time, but they were actually excited about it. They showed a real sense of pride in their work.

Such examples demonstrate that interns are connecting educational skills to real world needs, giving students an authentic purpose for learning. The self-value that students gain from such experiences enhances their ability to retain the knowledge and skills gained through the experience. After completing the individual projects in their classrooms, the student interns took part in a service learning presentation at the

2013 PDS National Conference in collaboration with a teacher, their university supervisor, and two administrators. They stepped into professional leadership roles and deepened their understanding of the education community, bringing their experience of service learning full circle. They learned the importance of attaching knowledge and skills to authentic needs in order to help children retain the concepts taught. Interns were able to communicate this valuable experience to others. This is the true benefit of introducing interns to service learning as a strategy for teaching, and it reflects an outreach and scope broader than that of the school or the university, while extending school learning to the wider community.

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# What I Did During My Summer Vacation...Prepared Me For Teaching

Jon Yoshioka and Vail Matsumoto, University of Hawaii at Manoa

Kelli Gima and Justin Kanemoto, Waipahu High School

Summer: popularly depicted as a time of fun, soaking in the sun, laughter, attractive people in Ray Bans, sipping Capri Sun, relaxation, and all things associated with enjoying life.

Or as Kelli Gima, 2014 Master of Education in Teaching (MEdT) Teacher Candidate, described it:

*"Summer school for a rookie teacher: probably more realistically depicted as intense planning, soaking in sweat in the sweltering Waipahu heat, disheveled people with bloodshot eyes and large eye bags, tanking coffee, running around like a chicken with no head, and all things associated with heightened levels of stress. Well, at least that somewhat sums up my first week of summer school. Of course, I did leave out the numerous positive aspects that summer school has provided me within only a week, such as getting to know some amazing students and their aspirations, learning how to cope in difficult situations, and realizing things about myself that I probably would not have if I had not undergone this process."*

As long as the MEdT program at the University of Hawaii at Manoa has been in existence, it has followed a traditional two-year scope: beginning in the fall, working through the spring, breaking for the summer, and continuing through the fall and spring of the second and final year. The students in each cohort complete fieldwork that begins with observation and assisting in the first semester, followed up by teaching lessons and taking on more responsibility as a student teacher. The program culminates in an internship, which is most often a full-time, paid teaching position.

The summer between the two years that compose the MEdT program has long been a period of rest and respite for the students. The cohort coordinators, along with some of our students, decided that rest was overrated. Instead of accepting the summer vacation as a break in learning, we chose to tap it as an uninterrupted and intense set of field hours that would prepare our candidates for student teaching and beyond. Teacher candidate, Kelli Gima, commented, "It is simple and safe to sit in a college classroom and discuss the perils of teaching, but there is no replacement for actually being in the field for five hours straight, five days a week."

Working closely with our PDS partner, Waipahu High School, we designed a course that blended hands-on fieldwork in a real world setting with seminars focused on curriculum development. This allowed the course to continue its school-university culture committed to the preparation of future educators that embraces their active engagement in the school community even during summer break (NAPDS Essential 2).

Each MEdT candidate enrolled in our summer course

accepted the challenge of serving as a summer school co-teacher at Waipahu High School. Being paired up with a fellow cohort member allowed each teacher candidate time to teach, design curriculum, engage in collaboration as a co-teacher, observe other teachers, and do meaningful reflection.

One of the objectives of this summer course was to better prepare secondary teacher candidates for student teaching through experience in each of their respective subject areas. We found that the course met this objective and also had additional benefits that the teacher candidates found invaluable. These benefits included classroom management practice, appreciating the art of co-teaching, learning the importance of flexibility, testing differentiation strategies, and enjoying the daily reminders of why they chose to enter the teaching profession. Teacher candidate, Justin Kanemoto, summed up his experience with:

*"I've never enjoyed a job so much in my life... meaning I probably have some kind of disorder. I WILL help my students and they WILL do well in our class. I joke with Alvin (co-teacher) about how we're pretty much pulling our students out of the void because many of them won't be able to graduate if they don't pass our class. And we won't pass them if they can't do the math. So we have to make sure that they learn the math. Easy, right?"*

While the benefits were numerous, any veteran teacher will tell you that it takes a special skill set to successfully teach (or survive) summer school. As rookie educators, our teacher candidates were thrown into the fire, forced out of their comfort zones, and were in survival mode for much of the time. Teacher candidates quickly learned that not everything that looks good on paper works well in practice. They were compelled to question all that they had learned- from lesson planning to attendance policies- when putting things into actual practice. Justin added, "Although this may work in an ideal world, I've learned that this does not accurately reflect reality." Teaching summer school offered these candidates a dose of reality and the opportunity to rise to the challenge of working within their reality, as all real teachers do.

This shared venture between PDS partners concluded as a win-win-win situation for all stakeholders. MEdT teacher candidates were able to learn on-the-job skills and gain real-world experience. On the post-course evaluation, 100% of them noted that they would recommend the course to others. University coordinators were able to teach curriculum design in a seminar setting and see immediate practice in the field. The value of the course was rated a 9.44 out of 10 on the post-course evaluation. Finally, our partner school, Waipahu High School, was able to offer sections of summer school courses in English, math, science, and health taught by co-teachers who not only brought enthusiasm and passion, but also designed new curricula for the school to use in future summer school courses. The curriculum redesign involved MEdT teacher candidates working

together with PDS teachers to develop a standards-based curriculum compendium with assignments and assessments tailored to the students' needs. The summer school experience also gave our PDS administration additional opportunities to see our teacher candidates teaching every day, which resulted in the hiring of four of the candidates in the following year. While it wasn't exactly sipping on Capri Suns and soaking in the rays, it was a summer to remember.

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## Committee Chair Search

Are you ready to make a difference in partnership work? If your answer is yes, the NAPDS leadership team would like to hear from you.

This year, we will be replacing two committee chairs: Membership and Elections as well as Policy and External Relations.

For further information, please contact Karen Hassell at karen.hassell@icloud.com or JoNancy Warren at jonancy@comcast.net. Or visit the NAPDS website at [www.napds.org](http://www.napds.org) and look in the Bylaws for more information about the work of each committee.



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## Reflections

The development and exhibition of 'You, me, and the bee!' is an example of how professional development partners can work together to create a product that is beneficial to the individual groups but also to the larger community. This work demonstrated the first of the nine required essentials of a PDS. That is: A comprehensive mission that is broader in its outreach and scope than the mission of any partner and that furthers the education profession and its responsibility to advance equity within schools and, by potential extension, the broader community. Not only was the exhibit available for viewing while at Minnetrista; it was later acquired by the Muncie Children's Museum.

Participants benefited from this collaboration also. For the museums, participation in the project provided an opportunity to demonstrate the value of their spaces and the process that goes into providing experiences to the public. Pre-service teachers had opportunities to gain understanding of the education value of museum exhibits and their links to classroom instruction, as well as how to make the most out of their resources and services available there. Opportunities such as these can help partners and the community to benefit from the resources created and shared.

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solving school related problems. All our content methods courses introduce and model PBL to our interns in Residency I. Our positive experience with PBL in our PDS was reassuring and has given us more confidence in modeling PBL before Residency II (student teaching). Our joint effort resulted in a stronger collaboration and professional development for all involved (NAPDS Essential 3). Our partner schools have been supportive of our PBL effort and the higher expectations for our future teachers. Our future plans include providing continuous professional development on PBL for our PDS mentors and supervisors and using our PDS alumni as resources since most of them are teaching in our PDS districts. The Center for Project Based Learning, Assessment, and Teaching, recently established in our department of Curriculum and Instruction, will assist in providing professional development for our PDS partners. Issues related to "managing the project" and classroom management need to be addressed in professional development. Moreover, we need to ensure that, while our interns are engaged in PBL, they are also developing teaching competencies aligned with the state standards. Finally, reliable instruments need to be developed to determine whether embedding PBL across our PDS curriculum improve critical thinking among PDS interns and their students as well.

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get to work.



# 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](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. Articles are typically narrative in style, co-authored by school- and university-based teams, and address any aspect of PDS efforts. Articles are typically 1000-1500 words. All articles are reviewed by the editor and assistant editor, as well as by the appropriate section editor team. Current sections of the magazine include "Interns and the Internship," "PDS Partners and Partnerships," "PDS Researchers and Research," "PDS Inquiries and Ideas," "Professional Development and PDS," and "PDS and Alternative Schools/Community Settings." Authors are asked to identify at least one of the NAPDS "Nine Essentials" addressed by the information on which they are reporting. Article authors do not have to be NAPDS members, but members and school-/university-based teams of PDS constituents receive priority when publication decisions are made. Most articles are invited (the magazine is classified as an "editorial-reviewed" rather than "peer-reviewed" publication), and all article submissions are acknowledged via email by the editors. Authors receive letters of acknowledgement and complimentary copies of the magazine in which their articles appear. Submission of an article indicates that the authors have not submitted substantially similar reports to any other journal or publication. Exact publication dates of accepted articles cannot be guaranteed. Submissions must be prepared using Word and adhere to APA 6th Edition format. Text should be double spaced, 12-point Times New Roman font with any tables, figures, or visual images attached as separate documents. Photographs of the authors and PDS site are encouraged. Submission must include a cover page (title of article, date of submission, authors name(s) and position or rank with complete mailing address, and email address). Articles are only accepted electronically and should be submitted to the magazine's editor, Ron Siers, Jr. at Salisbury University, at [rsiers@salisbury.edu](mailto:rsiers@salisbury.edu).

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# Ready, Set, Action! Beneficiaries of Action Research in the PDS Setting

Gray Jack, Salisbury University  
Stephen Rorke, Buckingham Elementary

The plan, act, observe, reflect cycle of Action Research in the Professional Development School (PDS) setting represents the synergistic union of enthusiastic university interns (mentees) and practicing professionals (mentors). This synergistic effort offers the intern the opportunity to experience firsthand the data-informing-instruction feedback loop while the mentor continues to develop problem-solving capacities at the classroom or school level (NAPDS Essential 5). Action Research is complimentary to the PDS experience of all parties involved and simultaneously serves as both a formative project and a culminating event (in the sealing off of the Action Research, and completion of the study).

Action Research puts ideas into practice for the purpose of self-improvement and increasing knowledge about curriculum, teaching, and learning for all PDS stakeholders. The ultimate result is "improvement in what happens in the classroom and school" (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1982, p. 5). From its beginnings, educational Action Research has been merged with collaborative, participatory planning and collective inquiry of educators, and, as such, has multivariate definitions. Action Research has evolved to become a multi-step procedure: "identification of problem, analysis of problem, formulating ideas or hypotheses to solve the problem, gathering and interpreting data about the problem, implementation of action to remedy the problem, and evaluation of the results of action" (Taba & Noel, 1957, p.12). Many scholars advocate an Action Research approach for improving practice. At Salisbury University, all Early Childhood and Elementary Education majors are required to complete an Action Research project during their 80-day internship. Even though the interns are asked to only tackle a modest inquiry question during the internship, their results can provide valuable information for all PDS stakeholders. Interns, mentors, the school, and university can all benefit greatly from Action Research projects which often see inquiry, empiricism and intervention while revealing understandings about teaching, learning and effective modalities of instruction, classroom management and school improvement.

For the interns, the purpose of the project is to help them understand the importance of this type of educational research (i.e., Action Research). This endeavor requires interns to use critical thinking about ways to improve education for students, target areas of need for disciplined inquiry, and consider the larger context of the school they are serving. For many interns, this PDS Action Research is the first opportunity to complete an Action Research project of consequence that truly contributes to their own understanding of the classroom or school they are working in as an intern. The

project teaches interns the different steps they need to follow in order to be successful with their investigation. Specifically, interns learn to start with the identification of problems or challenges worth investigating, identify a researchable question, collect data, and implement their idea. Through this project, the interns see the importance of collaboration and how effective it can be to talk with others such as mentors, peers, and supervisors in order to help them complete a goal. Being able to reflect on their discoveries will make them more curious about other questions coupled with insight on what they can do to improve their teaching in the future. Interns are given the opportunity to test their own ideas about education and to see if these ideas are effective in the classroom setting. As a result, this Action Research often leads to improving education for students and making a positive impact on the classroom and interns alike. The Action Research project also lays the foundation for completing more elaborate investigations in future graduate level educational courses.

Not only do PDS interns gain valuable information from these projects, but the mentor teachers do as well. The mentor teacher could work collaboratively with the intern to research different challenges or issues that may be happening within the classroom. Other areas that could be helpful to investigate include classroom management techniques, reading and math strategies, and individual behavioral management tactics (Earl, 2003). Researching these topics could provide the mentor teacher with valuable information to be able to teach more effectively in the future (Sutton, 1995). For some mentor teachers who may also be pursuing continuing educational courses that may require a more intensive research project, this could serve as the investigative portion of their research. Mentor teachers take advantage of this educational tool and use it to implement new strategies, improve best practices, and partner with the PDS intern as a colleague during the plan, act, observe, reflect steps of the Action Research cycle in the PDS setting.

Along with interns and mentors, PDS schools and universities can use Action Research projects to make modifications within their school and programs. Depending on the inquiry question, PDS schools can use the data that was found in a project to help inform and guide changes in their school improvement programs, after school programs, incentive programs, and curriculum. If a school feels there is a need or a concern, the teacher or an administrator can conference with the intern and help to craft a researchable question conducive to research for their project (i.e., one that is open-ended and allows for deeper investigation than a 'yes' or 'no' response). Salisbury University dedicates portions of coursework to prepare the intern for the research design phase of the Action Research project. This initial step is very

important, because the classroom teacher and intern devise "the formal plan for conducting the action research study- it is the 'blueprint' that specifies exactly how the study will be carried out" (Mertler, 2012, p. 89). Likewise, a supervisor or liaison could work collaboratively with the intern to devise a plan and investigate what value is added to P-6 learning through intern-mentor collaboration. The intern can look at the role of PDS in the school and how effectively it benefits students' learning. In the end, the schools and universities can use the findings to make positive changes for future students.

Essentially, Action Research in education improves personal and professional growth, student learning, and the teaching profession via research methods that include a procedural approach and empirical measurement (Johnson, 1995). Carr and Kemmis (1986) asserted one of the most important reasons for conducting Action Research: "It is a form of self-reflective inquiry undertaken by participants (teacher, or principals, for example)" (p. 182). Self-reflective teacher-leaders are the most capable problem solvers in the educational setting (Johnson, 2005). Thus, the 'plan, act, observe, reflect' cycle of Action Research in the Professional Development School setting benefits interns and mentors and can lead to valuable changes in the PDS setting.

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# Value Added Benefits of a Strong PDS Partnership

Tonya Balch, Indiana State University  
Laurie Setliff, Deming Elementary

The State University (TSU) has an exemplar PDS partnership with 19 schools in 5 districts across Indiana, including Indiana's fifth largest school district, The County School Corporation (TCSC). The partnership is focused on two core needs: pre-service education students gaining real life experience and schools having access to research on best practice and assistance with improving the learning environment for all students. The strong collaborative partnership has provided value-added benefits that positively impact all partnership stakeholders.

Mentoring programs are increasingly prevalent in the middle school setting. Schools are focused on increasing graduation rates and educators have discovered that waiting until high school to address the dropout problem simply is not working. Consequently, school counselors, teachers, and administrators are identifying at-risk students in the middle grades who would greatly benefit from a mentoring experience. Research indicates that, overall, mentoring positively impacts students' self-esteem, strengthens relationships, improves academic performance and reduces substance abuse, violence and other risky behaviors (Cavell, DuBois, Karcher, Keller, & Rhodes, 2009). Positive changes were also noted in attendance rates, number of students pursuing postsecondary education, and overall attitude

is only 66% in Indiana, the lowest rate for any ethnic group (Indiana Department of Education, 2010). TSU secured a grant through the AT&T Foundation to facilitate SAAB members mentoring African American male students from The Middle School. Throughout the school year, eight members of SAAB mentored fifteen students on a weekly basis for 1 hour. This was a highly successful program for both the students and members of SAAB.

SAAB members participated in mentor training prior to working with the students. The middle school students that were chosen for the program, by the middle school principal, were chosen for discipline referrals, attendance, grades and family life. They met as a group and initially focused on building rapport and establishing a sense of trust with The Middle School students. As the year progressed, more personal concerns were shared, including family life, future aspirations, fears, and goals. SAAB principles, accountability, proactive leadership, self-discipline, and intellectual development, were incorporated throughout the year. The mentors were also connecting with the students because of their involvement in community activities such as the local football program and the adolescent community centers. Seeing each other out of school kept the confidence level high and a reminder to the mentees to keep up their good work in and out of school.

Over the course of the 2009-2010 academic

have male role models in their lives. The SAAB members helped reach the students and bring to them the idea of opportunities outside of their neighborhood. We were all proud of the growth and development our students made to become young men.

The impact on SAAB members was significant as well. Members reported a stronger sense of self an increased understanding of the role of mentors and the impact they have on students. Mentors reported "I lived up to what I was telling the boys." Understanding that young men were observing all their words and actions at all times, not just during mentoring sessions, was sobering and created a sense of "I need to live my words." Mentors stated it was more work than they anticipated but was worth every minute.

SAAB mentors had the opportunity to take students to leadership training in Indianapolis. Mentors reported this as a powerful moment. Many students had never left town nor been in the company of so many students who looked like them. Mentors stated a sense of pride that they were able to facilitate this experience for the students. This professional development opportunity for both mentors and mentees is reflective of the school-university commitment to professional development, sharing of resources, and providing reward and recognition for hard work (NAPDS Essentials 3 & 9).

This program has been so successful during the inaugural year that plans have been made to expand next year. SAAB members will receive mentor training annually and the hope is to expand to other middle schools in the district. Additionally, the Student African American Sisterhood has begun mentoring with African American girls at the middle school level. PDS Partnerships provide "Value Added Benefits!"

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## "THE STUDENTS BEGAN TO DISCUSS FUTURE ASPIRATIONS AND THE IMPORTANCE OF CONTINUING THEIR EDUCATION TO MEET THEIR GOALS."

towards school (National Mentoring Partnership, 2010). Literature also supports that length of mentoring is critical; the longer the relationship, the more impact on the student (Jekielek, Kristin, Moore, Hair, & Scarupa, 2002).

This research was confirmed in the mentoring program between The Middle School and Student African American Brotherhood (SAAB) at TSU. Through the PDS partnership, a mentoring program for African American adolescent males was initiated as a dropout prevention measure. The Middle School (i.e. grades 6-8) has 515 students, 71% white, 16% multiracial, and 12% African American; 75% of the students qualify for free/reduced fees (Indiana Department of Education, 2010). SAAB, recently formed on TSU's campus, expressed an interest in mentoring young African American adolescents. The graduation rate for African American males

year, students in the mentoring program showed gains in attendance and lowered their discipline referrals. Collectively, the 13 students were in attendance 30 days more during 2009-2010 as compared to 2008-2009. Equally impressive was the reduction in discipline referrals, a collective reduction of 30 referrals. At this time, there is little change in grade point average; however, given the changes in attendance and discipline referrals, it is anticipated that this will improve over time as well.

As a school counselor for the middle school, I did see a significant impact in the middle school students' sense of pride for themselves and their community. The students began to discuss future aspirations and the importance of continuing their education to meet their goals. The SAAB members were important role models for the young students that more often did not

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# Infusing PBL in a PDS Program with Rural School Partners

Sylvia Taube, Karen McIntush, Tiffany Forester, Audrey Gomez, & Tori Junco, Sam Houston State University

for this PBL was an interdisciplinary unit with high use of technology and multiple assessments.

## Background

Our Professional Development School (PDS) at Sam Houston State University was launched in fall 2011 with 19 content methods interns through the leadership of Dr. Joan Myer-Ickes (now retired) who had extensive PDS experience during her tenure at another Texas university. Our PDS is committed to helping rural school districts nurture and retain teachers living in the same community in East Texas. Our school partners hoped to “grow their own” teachers who understand the contextual factors of their schools. Several meetings with five initial partner districts were held in order to articulate partnership agreements, PDS goals, and other governance issues. We serve as methods instructors and field supervisors for the PDS every semester. We teach our content methods courses (math, science, social studies) in one of the partner districts (New Waverly ISD). Our interns during this semester participate in the after-school tutorial program at the elementary campus of New Waverly and engage in other co-curricular activities, such as organizing field trips and other content-based activities (e.g., Rodeo Day, Trash Day) for both elementary and intermediate campuses in New Waverly ISD. These teaching-learning opportunities for our interns are well integrated into our content methods courses.

## Project Based Learning and 21st Century Learners

In meeting the needs of our students in the 21st century, educators (e. g., Newell, 2003; Thomas, 2000) advocate for teacher preparation programs that develop teachers who can apply teaching practices that support communication, critical thinking, and collaboration among the young learners (NAPDS Essential 4). Teacher preparation programs need to emphasize teaching strategies that help future teachers use school data, examine contextual factors, identify problems related to practice, and provide possible solutions. Project based learning (PBL) could be instrumental in achieving this goal if implemented early in the program. In PBL terms, “projects” are means by which learners learn how to learn, learn about the world, and learn about themselves (Newell, 2003, p. 5). Studies on PBL as a methodology indicate more in-depth learning, more student autonomy and engagement in students’ learning, learner-centered classroom, and meaningful connections to real problems (Cameron, 2010). In this paper, PBL refers to “project based learning” as a methodology that engages future teachers in identifying and solving problems of practice using collaboration, technology, and communication.

## PDS Full-Year Residency Model

One of our goals for implementing a PDS-Residency model is to engage our interns in applying and assessing their instructional decision making knowledge, skills, and dispositions to solve real problems associated with teaching the content areas: mathematics, science, and social studies. In Residency I (content method semester) interns complete 200 hours of field experience in one classroom and receive feedback from both mentor and supervisor. The interns also use campus data to gain more understanding of contextual factors that impact the learning of diverse students as interns teach from their lesson plans. The following semester (Residency II) our interns return to the same classroom ready to teach for 16 weeks and to conduct an action research, among other program assessments. Teaching PBL is not a requirement in Residency II. PBL was adapted early in our teacher preparation program in an effort to model a constructivist teaching methodology and to implement a rigorous curriculum that is relevant and focused on building relationships between young learners and adults (Newell, 2003). Every semester, the content methods instructors collaboratively plan and implement one PBL as a common major assessment for our courses. For example, one PBL assessment for our interns in Residency I was to identify problems and solutions associated with the campus they are placed in. Interns used contextual factors, campus data, state assessment results, and further research to articulate solutions to a specific problem (e.g., poor performance on the science state assessment) on their campus. They then presented their solutions to an authentic audience (principals, teachers, instructors) and responded to questions. They also reflected on their experiences with PBL as a process and identified professional competencies gained. The finished “product”

## Interns’ Implementation of PBL in the Real Classroom

After experiencing PBL as learners during Residency I, two interns used PBL in teaching a learning unit during Residency II although this was not a program requirement. These two interns (Audrey and Tori) were placed in the same district where the content methods courses are taught. Proximity allowed us to observe Audrey and Tori during their full year residency and to meet with their mentors. In this section Audrey and Tori share their thoughts about implementing PBL in their teaching during Residency II.

**Audrey** completed Residency I and II in a fifth-grade classroom, graduated in May 2013, passed all Texas certification exams, and accepted a position in a rural district in Livingston, Texas. She completed an action research on a science unit in which she adapted PBL. Results showed Audrey’s students improved significantly on three learning objectives using pre and post assessment. The following excerpt is Audrey’s account of her PBL journey:

*At the beginning ... I had very little faith that I could implement a PBL lesson because I was still trying to figure out what “Project Based Learning” looked like in the classroom. ... the more I tried to implement pieces of PBL in everyday lessons, the more it became second nature in my planning. I learned to find one leading question that will drive my unit and then list smaller questions that fit within the leading question. I try to visualize a final project that allows the students to show their knowledge in a variety of ways. Although these projects appear elaborate, students seem to love being responsible for their own learning. PBL is effective, exciting and allows the students to own their learning. It helps them become problem solvers for life.*

Behind Audrey’s success was a supportive mentor who had attended a PBL workshop at Sam Houston State University but had not implemented it herself. Her mentor used “labs out of books and worksheets,” according to Audrey. After observing Audrey teach the unit on landforms, the mentor had expressed how much she learned about PBL. She then realized she “could not go back to her old way of teaching because it now seemed boring.” Feeling validated, Audrey gained more confidence in her PBL teaching approach. In terms of her students, Audrey recalled: “They seemed to love coming to class every day because we were going to be doing “fun” activities.”

**Tori** had one mentor in a third-grade class during her one-year residency. According to Tori, her mentor mainly used direct teaching, paper-pencil assessment, and, occasionally, engaged the students in activities like learning centers. At first, Tori’s mentor hesitated when Tori presented her plan to use PBL. The mentor was concerned about upcoming state assessments. However, she was pleased to see her students engaged in higher thought processes and discussions. When the state test results arrived in May 2013, these third graders performed remarkably well. Having taught three short science units using PBL during Residency II, Tori shared the following thoughts on her journey:

*I found that engaging students in PBL kept them interested and excited. The students came to school asking, are we doing something fun today? Students found these more difficult, higher-level thinking type activities to be fun because they were allowed to be creative, work collaboratively, explore new ideas, and take risks. They soon learned that it was more about how they worked to solve the problem and being able to explain their work to their peers and to me ..... Ultimately, that is what project based learning is all about: giving students the opportunity, the courage, the desire, and the will to explore, create, try, fail, discuss, reflect, and critically think.*

## Lessons Learned and Future Work

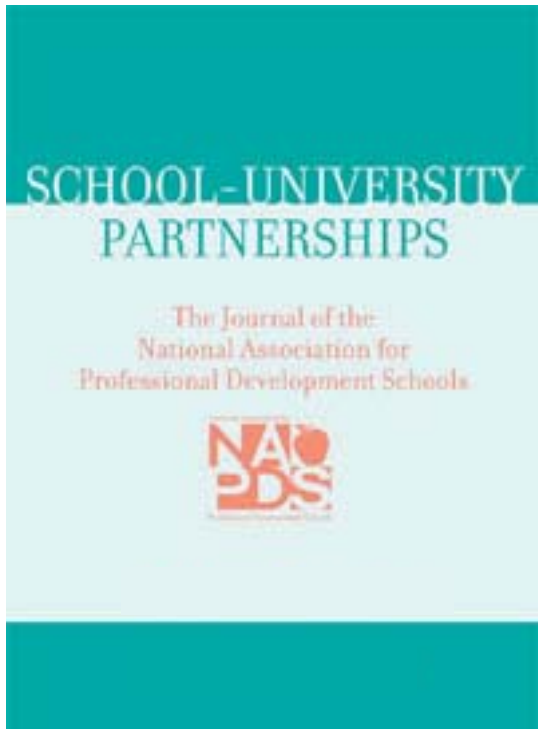
We have presented a snapshot of our PDS with PBL built into its structure. Our PDS’ main goal is to help interns develop critical thinking in order to effectively use school data, research, and communication for identifying and



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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](http://www.napds.org).

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