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Teacher candidates are a very important constituency within PDS, and school-university partnerships exist in large part to support their development as new teachers. This article explores ways to deepen teacher candidates’ participation by re-imagining their role through leadership opportunities that help them become stronger new teachers while strengthening the PDS organization as a whole.

The SUNY Buffalo State PDS Consortium began in 1991 with one school partner. Today, our PDS collaborates with over 40 schools in Western New York, New York City, and across five continents. Since its inception, the PDS leadership team has included undergraduate student representatives. The PDS Consortium’s first director, Leslie Day, describes the importance of their role in a 2008 PDS Partner article noting that these candidates offer support and insight to PDS in three important ways: serving as liaisons to the teacher candidate student body, representing the voices of teacher candidate to the college faculty and school partners, and assisting the director in monitoring the success of PDS action-based research initiatives (Day, Salzman, Bianchi, & Paterson, 2008, p. 6). A follow up report describes the results of a survey to determine the impact of the PDS student representative experience on their future work as educators (Barnard & Day, 2011). Graduate student, Kaitlyn Gardner, provides additional discussion of the insights, experiences, and perspectives gained by candidates working as PDS student representatives emphasizing representatives’ development as professionals (2015). This article seeks to offer an update on the SUNY Buffalo State PDS student representative program and to encourage other PDS’s to build similar programs that fully engage their teacher candidates.

The SUNY Buffalo State Professional Development Schools (PDS) Consortium is a partnership representing college faculty, school administrators, practicing teachers and teacher candidates. It is governed by the Teacher Education Unit Professional Advisory Council (TEUPAC). The TEUPAC bylaws provide for PDS student representatives to be nominated and voted into position by the PDS Consortium constituents. The bylaws also specify that PDS student representatives have equal privileges as full voting members and may participate in all discussions, bring forward motions for teacher education unit action plans, and vote on decisions. The student representatives provide...
As I finish writing this piece to the NAPDS membership, the Association’s leadership just completed two days of work at our summer leadership meeting in Pittsburgh, PA. I wish all of you could watch this group of seventeen people working for the Association. Sacrificing personal time, just as summer is ending and the push to prepare for the start of school begins, these individuals worked diligently for many hours prior to our meeting to prepare, submit, and review materials so that we could maximize our time together. As we reported to you at the membership meeting last year, the NAPDS leadership team is working from a strategic planning document that is helping us focus on critical issues for the Association. We accomplished a great deal, much of which we will be “rolling out” over the next several weeks and much that will support the Association’s long-term initiatives. I would like to highlight a few items so you can watch for them.

Significant work continued on the 2018 annual conference. Make plans to join us in Jacksonville, FL, March 14-18, 2018. The call for proposals is already out; and in an effort to provide an even better conference experience, our Conference Committee set our deadlines earlier than in the past. Our Communications Committee will be updating you as those new deadlines approach. Our plan is to launch registration in early September. In conjunction with our conference registration, we will also launch a new “membership portal” that will allow you to update your information online and to use a credit card to process membership payments and renewals.

A major goal in the strategic plan relates to our membership services and benefits. The “Members Only” portion of our website is now operational and our Membership Committee begin efforts to develop resources that will be restricted to NAPDS members, such as our online “thematic” issues of School-University Partnerships, the second of which will be released this fall. As a result of conversations with members, NAPDS now recognizes “Affiliates”—local and/or regional organizations dedicated to PDS work. We’ve received our first Affiliate group application from the Southern California PDS Consortium and we know another application is underway in Pennsylvania. Maybe you and your colleagues want to consider organizing an affiliate group in your state or region? The affiliate process will soon be added to the NAPDS website; and there will be a special conference session on affiliates at the 2018 conference in Jacksonville.

The strategic plan also includes initiatives to strengthen NAPDS’ presence within the profession and at the national level. Our Policy & External Relations committee is in the process of identifying official liaisons with other organizations; our first, with the American Educational Research Association (AERA), has already been identified. Our collaboration efforts with the Association for Teacher Educators (ATE) and with the American Association for Colleges of Teacher Education (AACTE) continue to grow. Watch for joint activities in the near future.

The NAPDS leadership team is comprised of seventeen members—some elected and some appointed, but what struck all of us as we worked together this weekend is that there are so many more people involved in the work of the Association. Each of our standing committees (Conference, Membership, Communications, and Policy & External Relations) have NAPDS members working together to make the Association work! Likewise, our journal and magazine editors have NAPDS members working as reviewers and section editors. We plan to publish the rosters of these groups soon. We are grateful for their service to the Association. But there is always more that needs to and can be done. I look forward to sharing more developments with you in the future. In the meantime, watch your email, the NAPDS.org website, and your Association colleagues want to consider organizing an affiliate group in your state or region? The affiliate process will soon be added to the NAPDS website; and there will be a special conference session on affiliates at the 2018 conference in Jacksonville.

Join us in Jacksonville •
a vital and necessary viewpoint for the various TEUPAC discussions and decisions. Clarifying the student representative role in our by-laws sends an important message to all constituents that we recognize the value placed on the teacher candidate perspective and involvement in our PDS organization.

We also continuously seek ways to involve student representatives in the day-to-day operations of PDS. In addition to participation on TEUPAC, student representatives have many responsibilities which include helping to prepare and deliver our annual retreat (attended by over 200 educators in Western New York), quarterly consortium meetings (attended by approximately 60 educators at each event), and a Teacher Tailgate to encourage all teacher candidates to become involved with the numerous professional opportunities available on campus. The student representatives also run the PDS office; conduct research; and spread the word about PDS through social media, bulletin boards, and face-to-face interactions. Moreover, several student representatives sit on the International PDS Committee which links SUNY Buffalo State to our international school partners through short term educational travel. (See http://schoolofeducation.buffalostate.edu/teach-and-study-abroad for more details.) Additionally, the student representatives are often called upon by the campus leadership to sit on committees, meet with visiting dignitaries, and provide guidance when a student perspective is needed.

A great deal of work goes into preparing for the annual retreat, quarterly consortium meetings, and the Teacher Tailgate so the student representatives participate in planning meetings to review feedback on prior events to improve programming, assign duties, and create (many!) checklists. Some of the tasks include creating PowerPoint presentations to report on various aspects of the PDS Consortium, making copies of the materials for the meeting, organizing and packing the necessary supplies, and creating raffle baskets to raise funds to send the PDS representatives to the NAPDS annual conference. During each event, the representatives arrive early to set up the materials and then greet student representatives on the first day of the academic semester and usually one summer. The PDS graduate assistant serves as their direct supervisor to model and mentor throughout the year.

The PDS student representative position is voluntary; however, there are many perks associated with the position. We hold numerous celebrations during the year for representative accomplishments. Other benefits include the opportunity to build a strong relationship with education faculty, staff, and administration because of the many informal and formal interactions student representatives have over the course of the year. Additionally, student representatives are given many opportunities to develop leadership skills such as public speaking, running the PDS office, professional communication, action research, and conference travel. Student representatives also participate in the planning, delivery, and evaluation of all professional development provided by PDS. Each student representative completes a research project with a faculty mentor and then presents the research at the NAPDS conference and at one or more local conferences. Most importantly, the student representatives are usually the most sought after candidates when the job search begins because of the extensive resume they have built through their PDS work.

While the student representatives experience many benefits, the PDS Consortium also profits in important ways from their participation. The student representatives voice the concerns and interests of fellow teacher candidates when decisions related to clinically rich practice are being made. They offer very helpful insights for ways to make our website more appealing and informative for teacher candidates while also managing our social media sites such as Instagram and Facebook. Their youthful enthusiasm and idealism bring important energy to the Consortium and their added hands "make light work" when there are more mundane tasks to accomplish. They are the group we call on first when the dean, provost, or president calls for student representation at open houses, orientation sessions, and community events. When we underwent our NCATE review last year, the student representatives were able to speak eloquently and knowledgeably about our programs and clinically rich partnerships. In fact, they were cited in the final report as being an important factor leading to our successful reaccreditation.

The PDS student representative position also provides opportunities for innovative ways to address challenges that are facing education. For example, New York State is experiencing declining enrollments in teacher education programs despite data that indicates we will experience a teacher shortage in the near future due to new and costly certification requirements, concerns about changes to teacher evaluation processes, and negative media attention to the field. First, our student representatives are often the best spokespeople to address these sorts of concerns as noted in a radio interview of first author, Brianna Ware (http://news.wbfo.org/post/declines-reported-those-seeking-careers-elementary-education#stream/0). Additionally, we are working on developing a Future Teachers Club in collaboration with one of our high school partners. Our idea is to name members of the Future Teachers Club "Junior PDS Student Representatives" and match them with a current SUNY Buffalo State PDS student representative who will mentor them. Additionally, these junior representatives will be invited to PDS activities and events on campus and with our school partners. We are excited about the possible ways this new use of student representatives can enrich our PDS.
Saint Martin de Porres and Saint Louis: An International Professional Development School Partnership

Jillian Baldwin Kim, Saint Louis University

Communication and reciprocal respect are key elements of any professional development school (PDS) partnership but, when the partners are separated by 4000 kilometers along with their cultural and institutional differences, these elements become vital. Saint Martin de Porres School in Belize City, Belize and Saint Louis University in St. Louis, Missouri have a professional development school partnership under the project Operation: Toucan. In this relatively young partnership, the educational institutions share a commitment to ongoing and professional development for all participants.

Located on the eastern coast of Central America and neighboring Mexico and Guatemala, Belize is famous for its snorkeling and diverse wildlife. It also has the world’s third highest homicide rate (Phillips, 2014). The southern section of Belize City, where Saint Martin de Porres School is located, is an impoverished and violent neighborhood where community members struggle with a variety of extreme stresses (Phillips, 2014; Project Belize Task Force, 2014). Saint Martin de Porres Parish established the school in 1966 in order for local students to maintain their education throughout the rainy seasons when flooding made travel on local roads difficult. The school currently services approximately 770 students and has a student to teacher ratio of 30:1, which is above the Belize Ministry of Education’s recommendation of 25:1 ratios (Ruhl, 2014, August 4).

Saint Louis University (SLU) is located on the eastern side of Missouri, in the Midwestern section of the United States. A Catholic Jesuit university, SLU prides itself on its academic programs, dedication to local and global research and commitment to community service. SLU and Saint Martin de Porres School are both in the Jesuit Central and Southern Province and their partnership was formed as a response to requests from the Belizean and St. Louis communities (Project Belize Task Force, 2014).

Operation Toucan, as the partnership is called, consists of four main areas: education, community outreach, facilities and fundraising/management/communications (Operation Toucan, 2014). Figure 1 illustrates the organizational structure of Operation Toucan and highlights the school-university partnership in bold.

After an initial visit to Belize by SLU faculty and staff in May 2014, a delegation of Belizean faculty and officials traveled to St. Louis for a three-day Belize Summit in August 2014 (Project Belize Task Force, 2014). These in-person visits were essential for creating a partnership based on mutual respect and cooperation. Neither party wanted to enter into a cooperative with unequal priorities or authority. In fact, the question was often raised in discussions and at the Operation Toucan Summit, “what can SLU do for Belize and what can Belize do for SLU.” Tom Nolan, the founding principal of Loyola Academy and volunteer with Saint Martin de Porres School, stated, “There are educational opportunities on both sides, as well as the chance to learn about different cultures” (Phillips, 2014).

The Operation Toucan Summit also provided for each of the four main areas of the project to meet in person to further develop task and priorities. Focusing on education and the school-university partnership, the PDS taskforce created the SLU-Belize Professional Development School Plan with Task 1 centered on ongoing and reciprocal professional development for all participants:

“SLU-Belize PDS participants will plan an environment that simultaneously supports the learning of St. Martin students and educators, SLU preservice teachers, SLU faculty, and other professionals. The plan includes the creation of field experiences and clinical practice which will provide SLU preservice teachers with opportunities for full immersion in the learning community, professional development opportunities for SLU faculty/St. Martin faculty and other professionals, and an inquiry orientation to improve student learning” (SLU-Belize, 2014).

Professional development opportunities include small group learning communities consisting of Belizean and SLU faculty and focused on math and literacy strategies, practicum experiences for SLU students in Belize, graduate assistantships for Belizean special education educators studying at SLU, an alliance with St. John’s Community College in Belize to develop a Bachelor’s degree in early childhood and a Master’s in Catholic leadership, as well as an in-service special education workshop by SLU faculty for the Belize Ministry of Education (SLU-Belize, 2014). Although the Operation Toucan Summit was in August 2014, progress has already begun in these PDS activities. By the end of December 2014, the first group of SLU students along with faculty and staff will be in Belize at Saint Martins de Porres School addressing previously identified needs and furthering the discussion of ongoing needs and future priorities (Project Belize Task Force, 2014). Around the same time, the first graduate assistant from Belize will begin their studies at Saint Louis University. One challenge that has delayed progress for the learning communities is the cost and infrastructure limitations on getting Internet services to Saint Martins de Porres School. Overcoming these challenges will be part of the duties assigned to the December delegation.

Figure 1: Operation Toucan: Organizational Structure with school-university-partnership responsibilities
Father Matt Ruhl, the pastor for Saint Martin de Porres Parish, summed up the Operation Toucan Summit in his blog,

“The Summit in St. Louis University succeeded in uniting hearts and minds in a very worthy labor. Three days of meetings with plenary sessions, small groups, talks, though tiring, yielded what I had hoped: mutual respect, confidence, and desire for the task at hand” (Ruhl, 2014, August 18).

As the project enters the activity stage and the school-university partnership begins its professional development of faculty and students from Saint Martin de Porres School and Saint Louis University, communication and respect will continue to play vital roles in the partnership. Despite the vast geographic area that separates the two educational institutions, this partnership will continue to lessen the distance as it brings the two groups together because, as the name of the project suggests, two can (toucan) do more than one.

**References**


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**Creating Stakeholder Buy-in When Creating a PDS Partnership**

_Sybil A. Keesbury, Morgan Mitchell, Mercer University_

**About This Research**

To meet the needs of the children in an impoverished, culturally diverse, and low performing school it is sometimes difficult to get the buy in from a high performing less diverse upper middle class university. In order to do so, the University Liaison and University Students discussed the issues and how to address them to create a stable and successful partnership. Data was collected in Spring 2016 from current students, class of 2016 and 2017, and graduates, classes of 2015 and 2014, of the Holistic Child Program at Mercer University. All of these cohorts have been a part of the Professional Development School Partnership between Mercer University and Ingram Pye Elementary School. A focus group of thirteen students was held for the class of 2017. A Survey was sent to 46 alumnae and 28 responses were received. All of the collected answers remained anonymous. This information was collected to receive helpful and honest feedback and to help make changes to create stakeholder buy in for students involved in the PDS partnership.

The researches came up with 13 questions to ask each of the respective groups, these questions ranged from prior knowledge of the placement/partnership to perceptions of support and climate of the partnership school (Appendix A).

**Summary Response of Alumni and Class of 2016**

The overall sense of the alumnae and class of 2016 is that they often felt unwanted, unsupported, unheard or unappreciated while at Ingram Pye. The majority expressed that they felt they were unsupported in the classroom by Ingram Pye’s administration, by Mercer’s faculty when they reported their concerns, or by their cooperating teachers at Ingram Pye. Some of the discomfort and concerns from the Mercer students came from a clear disconnect in culture. A Mercer student stated, “I do not enjoy being at Ingram Pye. The students come from a culture that I do not understand.” Disconnect between Ingram Pye’s community and the communities that Mercer students typically came from created many of the Mercer students’ frustrations. These Mercer students made it clear that above all, they desired to be heard and understood as they went through their experiences at Ingram Pye. Many were disheartened by their student teaching experience at Ingram Pye, but even the most resentful Mercer students found benefits of being placed at Ingram Pye. They expressed forming strong relationships with their students and the tears that came when they had to leave them. A Mercer student stated, “Another benefit of Ingram Pye is expanding the ‘Mercer Bubble. It amazes me that my students live in poverty when literally across the street is a wealth of prosperity. This has allowed me to begin advocating for this community and my students, even if it is just reminding my housemates that across the street is a whole different world.”

**Summary Response of Class of 2017**

The class of 2017 expressed concerns with their lack of knowledge about Ingram Pye Elementary, but most remained hopeful of their future experience. Mercer students said that they felt unprepared, weak and unsure how to teach their future students. They worried that if it is as negative as the previous Mercer students have expressed to them then they will no longer want to be teachers anymore. One student stated that it was “disheartening to hear some of the seniors and some of the people who have already graduated” and another said, “Hearing some of the stuff has influenced what grade I want to do.” The negative stories and comments made them feel that with the upper grades “there is no way I could handle that” and another said, “I physically can’t handle to work in that environment because I’m too sensitive” after what she has heard about Ingram Pye. However, only three of the thirteen focus group participants had even seen the building of Ingram Pye. Many of the concerns came from the lack of understanding as to why Mercer and Ingram Pye have this partnership, how the partnership was formed, what the
partnership means and mostly from the negative comments of the older students. With the many concerns the group also remained hopeful for building strong relationships with their students, growing as a teacher in the next year, new experiences that they have not encountered before and preparedness for their future careers as teachers.

Summary
As a result of this study, the university is meeting with key students as well as partnership school officials. One of the major discussions is on increasing both teacher and teacher candidate morale in the partnership school, with this both the partnership school and the university are undergoing administration change for the upcoming school year, which we believe will improve morale. Another topic of discussion is preparation of the teacher candidates; tours and meetings of the partnership school will now be given during the spring semester prior to the fall placement. The hope with this is to alleviate some fear and misunderstanding of the atmosphere of the partnership school. A recommendation was made to continue this research with future classes to ensure the needs of the teacher candidates are being met.

Appendix A
What did you know about Ingram Pye before beginning your placement?
Why do you think Mercer has a partnership with Ingram Pye?
How do you feel about teaching at Ingram Pye?
What were your fears of teaching at Ingram Pye?
Are you fears being realized and supported by Mercer?
How can Mercer support you?
Typically coming from middle and upper class and going to schools in those areas, do you think that it impacted your views or fears about Ingram Pye?

What are you learning from Ingram Pye?
What do you think Mercer should be doing for Ingram Pye?
What are the benefits of being at Ingram Pye?
Has this placement influenced your future career? If so, how?

Coming into Mercer and the Tift College of Education, you knew that you would be placed at Ingram Pye for your senior year. How did this effect your decision when choosing Mercer? Choosing a major?

What are your hopes for Ingram Pye?

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Eliminating Boundaries: Seamless Teacher Education in the PDS

Gordon Eisenman & Elizabeth Pendergraft, Augusta University.
Cheri Ogden, Sue Reynolds Elementary

Teacher education has come under increased scrutiny in the past ten years. Criticism for the separation of university coursework and P-12 field experiences has grown. There has been an expanding chorus of voices calling for more clinically based components that allow learning in the context of practice and an increased focus on P-12 student learning. Professional Development Schools (PDS) have been seen as “a superb laboratory for education schools to experiment with the initiatives designed to improve student achievement” (Levine, 2006, p. 105). Professional Development School models have been spreading across the country. Zeichner (2007) noted that there are more than 1,000 PDS models across the nation.

Within the national PDS movement, there is a call for current school– university partnerships to define the nature of those partnerships, and to consider whether the partnerships fits within the defined “essentials” for true PDSs (NAPDS, 2008). There have been many PDS models that deliver coursework on site and intensify the collegial interaction during student teaching. Some models extend the student teaching experience to a full year. The model discussed here extends the experience for preservice teachers to an onsite two-year PDS model.

Professional Development Schools are designed to better support the growth of the teacher candidate through innovative teacher education practices. Studies reported more positive outcomes in the use of instructional techniques for teacher candidates educated within a PDS partnership (Castle, Fox, & Souder, 2006; & Ridley, Hurwitz, Hackett, & Miller, 2005). In addition, Latham and Vogt (2007) reported that the PDS model resulted in improved teacher retention. Studies have also shown that teacher candidates prepared in PDS settings were rated superior on numerous factors related to teaching in comparison to those in a traditional teacher education control group (Castle et al., 2006; Cobb, 2000; Connor & Kilmer, 2001; Paesce, 2003; Ridley et al., 2005; Sandholtz & Wasserman, 2001;Wallig & Lewis, 2000). The models examined in these studies compare preparation in PDS for a student teaching semester or in some cases a one-year student teaching model. The model being employed in the current setting extends the beneficial aspects of the PDS culminating experience throughout the two-year program.

By working collaboratively across university preservice courses, educational sites, and faculty, one partnership is working to create a seamless collaboration in the preparation of preservice teachers. University faculty are teaching through a faculty in residence arrangement with local elementary schools and working with preservice teachers, classroom teachers, building administration and university personnel to maximize the learning opportunities for all involved. This article will enumerate the lessons learned along the way, the multiple ways learning is impacted, and the ways in which all partners are working to ensure equity for all involved. Partners have endeavored to work collaboratively in the K-5 classroom, the university classroom, working with parents, conducting research, and engaging in professional development. The partners have worked to blur the lines that have traditionally separated the parts and partners of teacher education programs.

The Partnership Evolution
In 1998 preservice teacher preparation programs at this university were completely changed. Almost all the old programs were put aside and entirely new programs were developed. There were two impetuses for the change, to bring coherence to the coursework and to better connect field experience to the courses. The old programs had little to no order to the coursework and two hours of fieldwork per course per week. Students went out to schools each week with no supervision and very little connection to the coursework.

The university faculty decided to start the revisions with the end, student teaching, in mind. Teachers from local area schools were invited to campus to help redesign the culminating experience. The P-12 teachers were asked how the student teaching experience could be improved. What should be eliminated, added, or changed? There were no preconceived ideas or plans from the university faculty. When it became apparent that we really wanted the P-12 faculties’ expertise, a completely new experience was planned. Followed by a redesign of the entire programs done collaboratively with P-12 teachers from local schools. This was the beginning of our partnership with local schools.

Schools were then invited to become formal partners with the university. The partnership began with five local schools in two different
counties. These school hosted preservice teacher fieldwork and student teachers. The teachers working with the university students had a role in the evaluation of the students, and input into the ongoing review and revisions to the programs and their components. This partnership program grew to fifty schools across four school districts. While the university programs and students gained from the partnership, there was little given back to the schools and the coursework was still separated from the fieldwork.

As a partner school network we began to review what had been built; looking for ways to improve the clinical experience for all involved. The idea that we kept coming back to was the need for a closer working relationship between the institutions, faculties, and students. The partners began looking at forming true professional development schools. The benefits for all stakeholders soon became apparent as we made revision to the pre-service programs, courses, and delivery methods. The changes included program revision including the addition of an assessment course, changes to the order of course delivery and changes to the field components.

The decision was made, as a partnership, to move to a faculty in residence program in route to a formal Professional Development School relationship. Delivering coursework at local elementary schools allowed a more seamless integration of coursework and fieldwork. The delineation between coursework and fieldwork became blurry. No longer did university faculty say to the preservice student “when you go to your lab school in five weeks you should look for ...” The conversation changed to “go to your classroom for the next thirty minutes and look for ...” The connections between university coursework and fieldwork become more integrated and meaningful for preservice teachers. Other changes that resulted from the new model included changes for how university faculty worked with colleagues, inclusion of elementary school faculty into the university coursework, how professional development and research integrated, and how equity became a goal.

Eliminating Boundaries in Action

As the new model was being piloted the first semester, the stakeholders began discussing how the new relationship was going to be different from the existing partner schools network. One of the major goals of the partners was to extend the proven effective aspects of other PDS models throughout the entire two-year program. The aim was to eliminate the artificial boundaries that compartmentalize teacher education. During the first two semesters, coursework is held at the PDS site two days a week. In order to eliminate the boundaries between coursework and fieldwork, students leave class during class time to observe, work with students in small groups, or teach before coming back to class to debrief. In addition, students spend an entire day in an assigned classroom each week in between the two days of coursework. Additionally, students spend four weeks of each semester four full days a week in their assigned classrooms. Moving between coursework and fieldwork allows the preservice student to view and put into practice the theories, skills, knowledge, and best practices being learned and lessen the boundaries between the learning environments.

Another blurring of lines occurred between K-12 teachers and university faculty. The elementary teachers moved beyond host for university students and occasional guest speakers in the university class settings, to a co-teacher in the preparation of elementary teachers. The staff of the professional development schools have provided instruction, assessment of candidate performance, as well as ideas and input for program improvement. Likewise faculty from the university have moved beyond their traditional roles as senior faculty and co-taught lessons in the K-12 classroom, tutored students, participated in and led professional development, met with parents of K-12 students, volunteered at school events, and participated in school activities such as focus walks and data review.

The delineations between university faculty and the courses they teach has also become less distinct. The university faculty involved in the program have worked collaboratively to integrate learning across courses and instructors. University colleagues have planned cooperatively, co-taught lessons, conducted peer observations and discussed them with candidates, shared class times and locations, shared student observations, problem-solved student issues together, and even conducted assessments together.

Lessons Learned

Throughout the process of change, faculty from the university and the professional development schools have worked to make improvement an ongoing process. Lessons have been learned along the way such as; the need to meet with all faculty to align assignments to meet the needs of the clinical experience; establish dates in writing for plans – for example: professional development; ensure expectations are clear about professional dispositions expected from students and university faculty; and, once connections are made, it is important to maintain them. Additionally, faculty have found communicating about timelines, moving candidates between classrooms, and making expectations clear are critical for successful learning by university candidates and elementary school students. The willingness of stakeholders to consider different ways of educating all students and being open to change is essential. These important aspects help to make the education process more integrated and less compartmentalized.

This evolution has taught us the importance of support from administration at all levels – public schools, school district, and university. Support is needed from the public school partners to have access to space in schools, access to the best candidates and elementary school students. The willingness of stakeholders to consider different ways of educating all students and being open to change is essential. These important aspects help to make the education process more integrated and less compartmentalized.
spend time in schools, and course release for university coordinators during the initial stages.

Plans for the Future
Learning from research the benefits of a professional development school model and extending those positive aspects across the program was a good starting point for the current program design. Intentionally blurring the lines that separate different aspects of the program and stakeholders in the program less distinct has shown the potential for preservice learning that makes more connections between coursework learning and practical practice, more positive views of the partnership, and a stronger preparation for teaching. Moving forward, the partners plan to extend professional development opportunities, begin formal research into the effects on university candidates and K-12 student learning, and begin the process for middle school and secondary preparation programs.

References


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Where is the How-To Manual When PDS Entities Divorce?
Building Anew from the Ashes
Judith Weaver Failoni, Fontbonne University

What happens when a successful, nineteen-year K-12 professional development school partnership, recognized nationally as a model of excellence, ends abruptly by request of the school district? What are the lessons learned to prevent problems in future partnerships? What are the tough choices in the short term, and how does a teacher preparation program recover from the immediate loss of its partnership schools? Our university engaged in reflective analysis about the downfall of our PDS to gain insight into decisions to reorganize field experiences and maintain exemplary practices.

The Rise of the Partnership
This small, NCATE-accredited university’s Department of Education created a professional development school (PDS) partnership in 1995, as part of a regional collaborative of other PDS partnerships. Our PDS was the only inclusive K-12 partnership in the region. From the beginning, several college courses were taught in the schools and the K-12 teachers were guest teachers. The pre-service students observed and taught lessons, and participated in an after-school mentoring program. Professional development was provided for school teachers, college faculty, pre-service teachers, and teams presented at national conferences. Participating PDS teachers received tuition vouchers for university courses. A Leadership Committee of K-12 teachers and principals, college faculty, and the Dean of Education, met regularly to set goals and assess outcomes, and administer the partnership. Summer retreats provided time for deep analysis of the strengths and challenges of the existing partnership. A large grant provided funds for school equipment and professional travel. In our seventeenth year, the PDS partnership received an award for best practice by a national organization. At all times, we tried to follow the “Nine Essentials” of the National Association for Professional Development Schools.

The Partnership Divorce: Looking Back to Move Forward - Were There Missteps Along the Way?
Looking back, there were decisions by the Leadership Committee and the university that began to erode the strength of the PDS. The following examples were the major issues that led to the dissolution of the PDS, which showed a disregard for some of the “Nine Essentials” of the NAPDS. These examples can provide lessons for future partnership endeavors because they are issues that need attention no matter how strong the partnership.

1 Personnel changes can disrupt the PDS engagement and require immediate priority.

Our partnership’s first two superintendents were enthused about the PDS, but the third superintendent cancelled it. The third superintendent served as an assistant for two years and during that time there were hints that he was questioning the need for the PDS. Perhaps we needed a stronger orientation about the PDS for him. He expressed concerns about documenting K-12 achievement and his teachers’ participation, but the Leadership Committee was complacent and did not address these topics. As original partnership K-12 teachers and principals left the district, the partnership did not always
engage new personnel in the PDS. In addition, we cut back on appreciation breakfasts that involved the entire teaching staff and we stopped attending new-teacher meetings to promote the PDS. Gradually over the life of the partnership, many teachers were unfamiliar with the PDS and unaware of what their role could be. The Leadership Team did not actively seek new ways to involve each new school staff member and eventually only a few teachers were active participants.

A reorganization within the university moved the Department of Education into a new “School” with a new “Dean” from another department who may not have understood the necessity and complexity of the PDS. In addition, a new Chair of the Department of Education was rather new to the university and not as familiar with the PDS. These changes became problematic when the superintendent, in our final year, wanted to confer only with the Dean and Chair, rather than anyone who had been intimately involved with the partnership. Perhaps the Leadership Committee did not properly engage the new Dean and Chair about the value of the PDS and they were not able to address the concerns.

Support of professional organizations cannot be underestimated.

Our university created the PDS within the parameters of a regional collaborative of professional development school partnerships. These school/university partnerships met regularly as a group to exchange ideas and develop strategies to benefit the PDS, following Essential #5. The requirement was a large annual report of goals and assessments and a critical analysis of each PDS. However, after about twelve years, our partnership decided to withdraw from our regional collaborative. Had we remained in it, support for our PDS would have been valuable in orienting the new superintendent. Our PDS would not have been an island, but rather a link in a large chain of partnerships involving other area superintendents. The regional collaborative also provided us with a partnership articulation agreement, so without the collaborative we did not have any kind of written memorandum of understanding, falling away from Essential #6. The regional collaborative would have provided resources to help us in our downfall.

The partnership must continue to document its impact on K-12 students and pre-service teachers.

In the beginning, the PDS collected evidence of the benefit of our mentoring program for K-12 students. Annual reports were made to the district school board, and findings were presented at national conferences (Essential #5). When we withdrew from the regional collaborative, an in-depth annual report was no longer required, and we became lax in setting goals, and stopped evaluations and documentation. We became accountable only to ourselves. Therefore, when questioned by the superintendent about the impact of the PDS on his students, we did not have any documentation. We were more thorough at evaluating the benefit of the PDS on our pre-service teachers, but that was only half of the partnership. The university faculty did not provide leadership to help the partnership document the impact on K-12 students.

Engagement of the university’s full-time faculty is crucial.

About half-way through our nineteen years, release time to lead the partnership was taken away from full-time faculty. This resulted in the designation of a series of adjuncts as the department liaison and co-chair (with a K-12 principal) of the partnership’s Leadership Committee, which led to a gradual lack of participation by full-time faculty. Since adjunct faculty are usually not as involved in accreditation, curriculum, and assessment of teacher preparation programs, it was unrealistic to expect that adjunct faculty can provide the time and resources for the important position of PDS leader. Without full-time faculty leadership, there is a danger of lack of quality control and a lack of focus of the PDS and its place in curriculum, assessment, and accreditation.

Decisions must be made in the best interests of the partnership.

Over time, other decisions were made that diluted the partnership. For example, an adjunct instructor was allowed by the Dean of Education to remove her course in secondary certification from the high school campus. The partnership never regained its high school teachers’ interest because they were no longer needed as guest teachers and they were reluctant to host observation students. This disenfranchisement created a gap in the K-12 PDS structure. Additionally, a high school teacher was recruited for the Leadership Committee who didn’t teach a subject for which we offer certification. This was not in the best interest of the partnership, as this teacher was not involved in our pre-service courses and activities while other teachers felt left out. All levels of K-12 teachers need to feel valued and have a definite role in the PDS, the prime focus of Essential #8.

The PDS partnership requires new resources and creativity for sustainability.

In the early years we were successful at obtaining a large grant that provided professional development for school teachers and university professors, funded travel to conferences for teachers, professors, and pre-service teachers, and bought equipment for the schools. Later we received a small grant from the business community for a “future teachers club” at the middle/high school and university, but this was not monitored well and we never achieved collaboration between the groups. It is important with grants to have an understanding of how each entity will have a role and understand the mutual benefit. Unfortunately, we did not pursue grants that would have given us broader opportunities as suggested in Essential #9.

The above examples led to a gradual disintegration of the partnership. Clearly, there were many mistakes in communication and mutual understanding, but we didn’t always see them. It is possible that even without the problems noted above, the superintendent might have canceled the partnership. However, without the errors, we might have been able to salvage the partnership, or parts of it, even if in a remodeled form.

How Did the University Survive?

Unfortunately, there isn’t a guide for what happens when one partnership entity wishes to break up the relationship, especially when it is sudden and leaves the university scrambling to fill the void. With the cancellation of the partnership at the end of the spring semester, the university was suddenly left with no schools for the fall semester for some of our field-based courses. We were going to need a variety of schools to satisfy the many different types of student experiences we had had in the PDS. We had tough choices to make and very little time. The university needed re-visioning to continue the excellent preparation of teachers in the near future.

While the cancellation of the PDS created chaos, it also gave us the opportunity to branch out in new directions. First, we re-evaluated our current field placements that were separate from our major K-12 PDS, and concluded that we would benefit from pursuing more diverse settings. For the first time at our university, we arranged a partnership in the inner-city and focused on the challenges and rewards of practicums in urban settings. Second, we established arrangements with area private schools that opened new possibilities for different niches of educational philosophies. These short-term decisions to work with schools scattered throughout the region provided new types of engagements and partnership models.

After four semesters without our PDS, we have been able to critique our short-term decisions and are now headed into the future with some long-term goals. While there is no plan to develop a comprehensive K-12 professional development school model like what we experienced for nineteen years, the collaboration with new schools has become exciting as we re-frame our clinical practices and develop new insights into other exemplary partnership models. The department created a new staff position, “Director of Field Placements,” which will help coordinate our many partnership schools and lend support to the faculty in these partnerships. There is life after the death of the PDS partnership!
Co-teaching in a Co-PDS: Outcomes of a Year-Long Pilot Program

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As teacher educators, one of the greatest benefits of being engaged in Professional Development School (PDS) partnerships is the ability to keep our knowledge current in regards to the nature and needs of today's classrooms and schools. Through our work in our local PDS sites, an important change we are noticing is that more and more teachers are co-teaching for part or all of their school day.

Co-teaching refers to two or more professionals working together with shared responsibility for all elements of the classroom such as planning, delivery of instruction, assessment, and classroom management (Friend and Cook, 1996). While the concept of co-teaching traditionally comes out of the special education field, co-teaching partnerships can take a variety of forms. General education teachers co-teach with special education teachers, general education teachers from different disciplines co-teach with one another, and general education teachers co-teach with English as a second language (ESL) teachers. For the purposes of this article, we will address co-teaching that occurs between general and special education teachers.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA, 2004) mandates that schools educate students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment (LRE). This means each individual student should be educated with his/her peers without disabilities for as much of the school day as is appropriate. According to the National Center on Education Statistics (NCES), in the 2012-2013 school year, approximately 61% of school-age children in public schools in the United States spent 80% or more of their school day in general education settings. In order to meet the needs of the growing number of students with disabilities served in general education settings, co-teaching is often used as a service delivery model.

As college faculty from two different departments, one focused on general education and one focused on special education, we began to discuss the degree to which we are preparing our teacher candidates for the realities of co-teaching in today's classrooms. At SUNY Buffalo State, teacher candidates seeking certification at the elementary level traditionally take all of their general education coursework through the Elementary Education and Reading (EER) Department, while taking their special education coursework through the Exceptional Education (EXE) Department. The faculty of the two departments tend to work independent of each other, often unaware of current concerns in our respective fields. In addition, the candidates engage in field work in separate PDS sites connected to each of these disciplines.

Due to the disconnected nature of our programs, we have found our candidates' knowledge and experiences are at times disjointed. They tend to view knowledge and skills learned in each discipline as separate and apart from the other. Further, they have difficulty understanding the larger context of education, or how all of the systems and pieces (i.e. general education and special education) work together to meet the needs of all learners.

In terms of learning about co-teaching, we traditionally cover the topic in the candidates' coursework. However, we do not typically systematically and explicitly model co-teaching for candidates, ensure they observe co-teaching in their PDS sites, or provide them opportunities to participate in co-teaching. Some candidates have these experiences, while others do not.

Since we know most teacher candidates will ultimately work in settings in which they will co-teach, we wanted to provide a better approach to prepare them for this reality. Therefore, with the support of our departments and dean, we developed a one year Co-Teaching Program as a pilot project in one of our PDS sites. Our goal was to provide a more cohesive view of general education and special education, with a specific emphasis on co-teaching.

Description of Co-teaching Program
To develop the Co-teaching Program, we examined our existing coursework and decided which courses could be paired and included in the year-long sequence. We selected four courses that are typically taken in the sophomore to junior year. For the fall semester, we paired an introduction to literacy course with a foundations of special education course. In the spring semester, we paired a literacy methods course with a classroom management course. Candidates who still needed to take all of these courses and who indicated an interest in co-teaching were recruited for the program.

In the fall semester, the Co-teaching Program took place Mondays and Wednesdays from 8:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. In the spring semester, the program ran on Mondays and Wednesdays from 8:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. A portion of this block of time was devoted to field experience each day (one hour in the fall and three hours in the spring), while the remainder was devoted to course lessons and activities. Each semester, the majority of class sessions were held at our PDS site – a local, bilingual P-8 school. A few class sessions were held on the college campus in order to devote additional time to coursework or in the event that the college was in session, but the PDS site was on break.

For the field experience, two teacher candidates were paired and placed in one classroom with a mentor teacher. As noted by Nielsen and Switzer (2015), "having a collaborative experience early on in the teacher education program affords teacher candidates firsthand knowledge of co-teaching. Teacher candidates must experience it to be able to learn about co-teaching effectively" (p. 6). Whenever possible, we paired a teacher candidate who was majoring in special education with one who was majoring in elementary education. The candidates stayed in the same placement for the two semesters of the program; thus, they were with their mentor teacher and elementary students for almost an entire school year.

The candidates were assigned individual work, as well as a number of collaborative projects that needed to be completed with their peer partner in the PDS classroom. Examples of the collaborative projects included designing and implementing a co-taught unit plan and developing a behavior intervention plan.

While the program courses have traditionally been taught in a PDS site, this program was different in that we used one shared “Co-PDS” for both the elementary education and special education coursework, similar to the work of Beam, Oswald, and Bates (2015). We both monitored the field experience, communicated with the mentor teachers, served on the PDS Liaison Committee, and set forth expectations for candidates within the PDS.

In terms of class time, we reserved half of the time for EER coursework and half of the time for EXE coursework. For planning, we met several times per month for the six months leading up to the program, and then continued to meet for co-planning throughout the program for a minimum of one and a half hours per week. We also communicated regularly through e-mail and in person to coordinate our efforts.

Due to the nature of our respective expertise and experience, the faculty member from EER led the planning and instruction of literacy coursework, with support of the faculty member from EXE, and vice versa. In terms of co-teaching, this meant that many times we implemented co-teaching approaches which have one teacher leading and one supporting (e.g. one teach-one assist, one teach-one observe). We made a point to explain to our candidates that when they are co-teaching at the elementary level, there should be a more equitable distribution of roles than what we were able to model in this situation.
There were also times we were able to use more involved approaches to co-teaching such as team teaching or station teaching. Prior to the semester, we mapped out our content together and looked for any opportunities to compact our curriculum and combine topics. One example of this occurred in the fall semester. For both of our courses, we needed to teach candidates how to develop lesson plans. Thus, we aligned our syllabi to teach lesson planning during the same week of instruction, agreed upon a common lesson plan format, and then designed and delivered instruction together.

Investigation of Co-teaching Program
In tandem with the program implementation, we designed and implemented a research project with the support of a Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) fellowship from our campus. The purpose of SoTL projects is to systematically investigate and advance teaching and learning practices (see the International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning at http://www.isssotl.com). In this case, our SoTL project was designed to examine the Co-teaching Program in terms of processes and outcomes.

We collected data from a number of sources. We administered surveys to teacher candidates in the Co-teaching Program as well as teacher candidates taking the same coursework, but in a traditional format. We documented our weekly co-planning meetings on a shared Google doc template. This included the meeting dates, times, topics discussed, and action steps we would each take after the meeting. We also both wrote journal entries each week. In these journal entries, we documented events that occurred in the Co-teaching Program along with our own professional reflections. These journal entries were used as a source of data in terms of the program research, but were also used as conversation starters in our weekly planning meetings.

For the purposes of this article, we will focus on the data gleaned from the co-planning meeting notes and faculty reflections. Both of these sources of data were reviewed thoroughly and analyzed for common themes. We organized the results into three main categories: (a) benefits for teacher candidates, (b) benefits for college faculty, and (c) challenges.

Outcomes of Co-teaching Program
Benefits for Teacher Candidates
One of the benefits we noted for teacher candidates was consistency. Typically, when they work with two (or more) different professors in separate courses, candidates have to learn two unique sets of expectations and routines. However, within the Co-teaching Program, we aligned our expectations and routines whenever possible in order to make them more cohesive and able to be comprehended by the candidates. For example, on our syllabi, we included the same policy for late assignments, the same expectations for annotating the class readings, and the same set of expectations for professionalism in the PDS site.

Due to the year-long nature of the program, there was also consistency in the fact that the candidates had us as professors for two consecutive semesters for a “looped” experience. When we started the second semester, they did not have to learn our expectations or routines; we were able to just dive right into our content. This also held true in the field experience classrooms. Since the candidates stayed in the same classroom for both semesters, they were able to develop deeper relationships with their mentor teachers and students. They were also able to become more involved in the school and classroom the second semester due to their increased confidence and competence, rather than having to start over in a new school and classroom for a brand new field experience.

A second benefit of the program for teacher candidates was the opportunity to focus heavily on co-teaching. We talked about co-teaching in class, we modeled co-teaching, the candidates had the opportunity to observe co-teaching in their PDS classrooms, and they had the opportunity to engage in co-teaching with one another. This degree of focus on co-teaching was well above and beyond what the candidates typically receive when taking their courses in our traditional format.

Perhaps the greatest benefit of our program was the opportunity for teacher candidates to make connections between the content of the various courses within the Co-teaching Program. In the beginning of the program, we often found ourselves pointing out connections in the content to the candidates. For example, if one of us was leading instruction, the other might interject and explain how the content of the lesson was related to the content of the other coursework in the program. This is not something that would have been done in a traditional format since we, as faculty, would not have known what was taking place in the candidates’ other courses. We found that when making these connections, the candidates often had “aha moments” in which the bigger picture was becoming more clear to them.

Making connections ended up becoming a hallmark of the program. We asked the candidates to make connections from one course to another both in class and in their assignments. It became very common for the candidates to state, “I have a connection…” in class and to cite the textbook from one class in an assignment for the other class. Due to these content connections, we observed our candidates developing a much more sophisticated understanding of education than candidates we have worked with in the past in a traditional offering of the same coursework.

Benefits for College Faculty
Each of the benefits noted for the teacher candidates was also a benefit for us as college faculty. We found the two-semester experience allowed us to know our students especially well and go deeper in our content during the second semester than we would have been able to if we were starting with a new group of candidates. We were also excited to see how much the candidates gained from their field work in the second semester when they continued on from the first semester.

Further, we appreciated the opportunity to work with one another in an effort to model and emphasize the importance of co-teaching. This is something we both felt we could not have accomplished on our own. Not only was it a benefit to the candidates’ development, but with the support of one another in class, we were able to cover our content in ways we would not have been able to do otherwise (e.g. station teaching).

As with the teacher candidates, we felt making connections with our content was one of the main program benefits for us as faculty. As previously noted, we were able to engage in curriculum compacting as we mapped out our semesters and noted areas of overlap in our courses. In addition to these planned connections, we always welcomed unplanned connections that occurred in class, such as interjecting a comment into one another’s lessons. This allowed us to share varied perspectives, and gave us the opportunity to help our candidates understand general and special education in a more holistic manner – rather than as two distinct and separate disciplines.

For us as faculty, the opportunity for our own professional development through this program was immense. Since we each came to the partnership with unique backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives, we were able to learn a great deal about education from one another. We found that co-teaching gave us an opportunity to reflect critically on our theoretical assumptions, curriculum design, instructional
delivery, and assessment goals. This occurred as we participated in each other’s lessons in class, read each other’s textbooks, and engaged in rich conversations at our weekly planning meetings. In addition, we both gained new pedagogical tools and strategies by observing and participating in one another’s teaching. As a result of this partnership, we both feel we will be stronger teacher educators moving forward.

Another benefit we experienced was the sharing of common challenges and celebrations. When we were faced with difficult situations, including logistical issues of the PDS or concerns with teacher candidates, we were able to work through them together. Likewise, when we had positive moments including successful service events at the PDS or exceptional performance from our teacher candidates, we were able to share in them together. For these reasons, we both very quickly came to value having a co-teaching partner to work with every day.

Challenges
While for the most part, our experience was extremely positive, the co-teaching program did pose several challenges. Perhaps the greatest challenge was the amount of time we needed to spend in planning, as well as participating in one another’s courses. While our departments and dean were very supportive and even gave us release time to make this program a reality, time remained a challenge. This challenge we experienced corresponds to the professional literature. For example, Hestenes et al. (2009) noted that the time remained a challenge. This challenge we experienced corresponds to the professional literature. For example, Hestenes et al. (2009) found engaging in team teaching often added additional time to faculty members’ teaching load. Without department support and incentives (e.g., course release), it is unlikely that many faculty would be able or willing to maintain co-teaching in higher education in light of the vast amount of other faculty responsibilities.

A second challenge we experienced was making sure we were on the same page with all aspects of the program in order to present a unified front for our teacher candidates. While for the most part, we agreed on the major components of our program, we did have to ensure we had ongoing conversations about our content, perspectives, ideas for lessons and assignments, teaching styles, and expectations for candidates. There were times that we had differences of opinions. Although this was not always comfortable, we both appreciated being pushed to see a different perspective and reach agreement in the best interest of our candidates.

Prior to this program, we had the opportunity to work together on various other projects and had already developed a very positive working relationship. Therefore, for us, the challenge of working through differences and coming to agreements never became a barrier. However, we imagine this might be more challenging for other faculty who have not worked together previously, or who have widely disparate backgrounds or perspectives.

Role of PDS in Co-teaching Program
Preparing teacher candidates for their future roles in P-12 schools requires us to work closely with our PDS partners. The success of the Co-teaching Program was in large part due to the nature of our PDS partnership. The school at which we implemented the program has had a long-standing partnership with our college and is operating “at-standard.” An active liaison committee includes the school principal, both college faculty involved in the Co-teaching Program, a guidance counselor, and several mentor teachers. The committee meets monthly to coordinate the Co-teaching Program, as well as a number of other initiatives which have stemmed from the PDS partnership.

The work at this site is strongly guided by the NAPDS Nine Essentials (NAPDS, 2008). In regards to developing the Co-teaching Program, we were fortunate to have “a shared commitment to innovative and reflective practice by all participants” (PDS Essential #4). Our PDS has demonstrated a commitment to co-teaching in their own programming and was happy to support our work in implementing the Co-teaching Program for our teacher candidates. This included allowing us to place the candidates in pairs in the classrooms; providing opportunities for our candidates to observe and participate in co-teaching; and enlisting mentor teachers as guest speakers about co-teaching in our class and at our PDS Consortium events.

Conclusion
Our PDS was instrumental in making the Co-teaching Program a success. We hope to pay that forward by ultimately producing candidates who are more prepared for their future roles in P-12 schools. We are excited to have recently received approval to carry the Co-teaching Program beyond the pilot stage and into a second year. We hope to continue to produce candidates who have a better understanding of the relationship between general and special education, as well as the knowledge and skills needed to effectively co-teach.

References


Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004, Pub. L. No. 108-446.


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Many school districts are using professional growth plans as a way for teachers to improve their practice. Professional growth plans, sometimes referred to as deliberate practice plans, are structured routes for reflection and professional development that are often embedded in teacher evaluation systems. Specifically, professional growth plans allow teachers to focus on their strengths and weaknesses and develop an individualized plan to support growth in a designated need area. Ziemke and Ross (2014) view professional growth plans as an important factor in teacher growth and in enhancing the “continuous improvement of teaching practices through life-long learning” (p. 35). In her book, Talk About Teaching, Charlotte Danielson (2015) highlights the importance of teacher growth by stating, “a school committed to the improvement of learning must be equally committed to improving the quality of teaching” (p. 3). In this article, we discuss how a teacher preparation program uses professional growth plans as a vehicle to support teacher learning and foster a commitment of continuous improvement while strengthening university and district partnerships.

A goal of our teacher preparation program is to prepare candidates to reflect on their practice and to use those reflections to improve their practice. We implemented the professional growth plan with preservice teachers for this purpose as well as to offer teacher candidates similar opportunities for reflection and growth as their cooperating teachers have in our partnering district. The professional growth plan uses the Danielson Framework for Teaching and is aligned with the local school district’s deliberate practice plan, which also uses the Danielson framework to assess teacher performance and identify areas of strength and areas needing growth. Aligning our professional growth plan with our district partner’s deliberate practice plan allows teacher candidates to step into the profession familiar with the district’s individual growth plan process.

The Process – Part 1: Developing the Professional Growth Plan

The professional growth plan is developed in two parts. Part 1 of the plan, adapted from our partnering district’s deliberate practice plan, is completed by candidates the semester before they student teach (see Part 1 questions below). This part allows preservice teachers to analyze data to select learning goals and plan doable action steps to achieve those learning goals. Candidates analyze and reflect on data collected during the previous semester in the program and may include teaching observations, P-12 student feedback, personal reflections on teaching, and mid-program evaluations completed by cooperating teachers and university faculty. The goals selected should be doable and focus on teacher growth as these are individual plans for candidates’ professional growth. We ask candidates to select an area of growth from domain 2 (the classroom environment) or domain 3 (instruction) from the Danielson framework since these domains focus on work in the classroom in front of students. Each preservice teacher develops one goal, which identifies the Danielson domain and specific component. For example, one candidate’s goal was to improve her ability to construct higher level questioning to foster more discussion in the classroom (Danielson domain 3: Instruction, Component 3b: Using questioning and discussion techniques). Part 1 of the professional growth plan also requires candidates to identify specific professional development opportunities they will complete that will allow them to achieve their goals, such as reading articles and books, using Internet resources, attending conferences and workshops, and observing and interviewing teachers. Further, part 1 asks candidates to specify activities they plan to implement and describe how they will collaborate with other educators. Since an important component of the professional growth plan process is collaboration, we want candidates to think about how they can collaborate with peers, cooperating teachers, grade level teams, instructional coaches, administrators, and university faculty during the professional growth plan process. Finally, for part 1, we ask candidates to identify the types of evidence and artifacts they will collect to demonstrate their goals have been met. Part 1 is approved by university faculty before implementation can begin.

The Process – Part 2: Implementing the Professional Growth Plan

The second part of the professional growth plan, also adapted from the district’s growth plan model, is completed at the end of the senior internship semester after candidates have had the opportunity to implement the plan (see Part 2 questions below). During the final internship, candidates collect supporting evidence and reflect on outcomes and the practice of teaching. As mentioned before, a key piece to the professional growth process is the collaboration with other educators. Preservice teachers work with their cooperating teachers, grade level teachers, and other interns throughout the implementation phase. Since this is a developmental process, we allow candidates to revise and update their plans as needed during the implementation phase. In addition, university supervisors discuss the professional growth plan with interns after every classroom observation.

Professional Growth Plan PART 1

1. What data are you using to guide the development of your professional learning goal? What do the data tell you?
2. Using the information from question 1, what is your focus area that you have identified as having the greatest potential for increasing student learning (include the Danielson domain and component)?
3. What goal will enable you to strengthen your practice?
4. Describe what will you do to build professional background knowledge related to the domain and component that you have selected in order for you to achieve your goal.
5. What specific activities/actions will you implement to help attain your goal?
6. How will you collaborate with other professionals to meet your goal?
7. What evidence/artifacts will you collect to demonstrate that your goal is being met?

Professional Growth Plan PART 2

1. What did you do to build your professional background knowledge related to the domain and component that you selected? Did you add any new professional learning opportunities during your internship?
2. What specific activities/actions did you implement to help attain your goal?
3. Did you meet your intended goal? Describe the evidence and artifacts that demonstrate the professional learning goal was met.
4. How did you collaborate with other professionals to meet your goal?
5. What new learning did you acquire as a result of the professional learning opportunities completed?
6. What impact did the changes in instructional practice have on you as a professional?
7. What impact did the changes in instructional practice have on your students’ learning?
8. How will you continue to develop in this area?
Colors are for Crayons, Not for Classroom Culture: How Can a Dialogic Behavior Culture Impact Primary Students’ Social Development?

Sherridon Sweeney, Mort Elementary
Maggie Robertson, Pizzo Elementary

Introduction
Johnston (2012) has suggested that talk is the primary tool of a classroom teacher. He also posits that “…social development is the foundation for intellectual, emotional, and physical health, even in adulthood” (p. 67). It should strike us as no small matter, then, when he goes on to share that children view the world through one of two mindsets, or “frames”. The first he refers to as a dynamic-learning frame, in which effort and collaboration with peers lead to growth and other desirable outcomes. The second he refers to as a fixed-performance frame. From this paradigm, everything in the world is final and unchangeable. Thus, effort and collaboration with peers are of little, if any, value, and a competitive spirit (in addition to other destructive side effects) begins to emerge in the individual who sees the world through this lens.

With a knowledge of these two opposing frames in mind, as well as the well-researched, positive effects of viewing the world from a dynamic, rather than fixed, frame, we embarked on a classroom inquiry in our primary-grade classrooms at the Title 1 schools where we teach, to investigate in what ways our own purposeful use of dynamic-frame language, as well as prosocial skill teaching, would enhance our primary students’ social development and enhance their dynamic, rather than fixed, thinking.

How It All Started
As teachers, we believe that our students come to us with varied background experiences and ideas, and it’s our role to make sure those experiences and ideas are built upon with the opportunities and skills we know children need in order to be successful in life. In particular, our own previous research told us that prosocial skills play a crucial role in the development of the kinds of healthy intellects, emotions, and physical states that form dynamic-frame thinking.

As we looked at the use of color charts, reward systems, and other “carrot and stick” (Kohn, 2009) methods of “managing” students’ behavior, we felt that each one failed to invoke a dynamic-frame; rather, and perhaps even more disturbing, they seemed to actively invoke a fixed-frame. We could see that some of our students lacked important skills that aid in problem-solving thinking and process-oriented behavior, but, upon reflection (NAPDS Essential #4), we weren’t exactly sure how to approach replacing those missing skills to give our students the opportunity to act and live out of a new mindset.

Taking Action
We decided to create a classroom culture plan based on 1) our prior experiences with children, 2) our combined extensive research into language as a teaching tool, 3) our knowledge of current child development literature, and 4) methods of prosocial skill education that I (Sherridon) had seen used during my time as a Literacy Coach on a study abroad trip in Cambridge, England. At the heart of this classroom culture were five elements:

- our own dynamic-frame thinking;
- shared values with our students (which we generated during the first week of school and posted in our classrooms);
- personal relationships;
- a commitment to the daily development of problem-solving and self-regulation skills;
- natural or logical consequences for inappropriate choices.

We also had to shift our thinking from regarding social problems as something to be avoided or despaired over, to viewing them as teachable moments that could and would yield productive outcomes in our students’ dynamic versus fixed thinking over time.

Lessons Learned
While numerous findings arose from this work, we will highlight here the three we found to be the most salient in our data. First, we discovered our students’ social imaginations (Johnston, 2012) and empathy for others increased. This was evident in our transcript data when students made statements like, “If [that were you], how would you feel?” or “Can [she] work with us? Because she’s working by herself.”

Second, we found that students were not only more willing to take risks, but they encouraged their classmates to do the same. Furthermore, these risks came to be seen as opportunities to grow, and growth came to be seen as a result of persistence and hard work. For example, after being told the math problem his class was about to try would be especially difficult, one student rallied his classmates by saying, “It doesn’t matter if we get it wrong 100 times…our brains will still grow!”

Third, students developed an ownership over the classroom culture we had jointly established over the course of the school year. This could be seen in our data when students made statements like, “Ms. Sweeney, I need to make an announcement: You guys, when you finish playing with one thing, clean up before you move to the next thing”, and “How are we going to work together if you’re going to get water?” (when one student’s science partner was playing at the water fountain during a small group activity). Many issues that previously might have resulted in a “color change” or punishment (in the days when we viewed them as “misbehavior” rather than teachable moments) became opportunities to replace missing skills and let students lead the way as capable monitors of how things were going in the classroom.

Conclusion
In teaching, we often hear it said that educators are in it to change lives. However, we now know now that a life can’t be changed until a mind has been changed. We argue that through the use of purposeful language and prosocial skill development, teachers can begin to literally change the minds of their students and, in doing so, prepare them for life even beyond the four walls of their classroom.

References


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Bowie State University’s Road Map to PDS Success: A 3-Tier Mentoring Approach

Cynthia E. Farmer, Dawn Nowlin, Daleisha Myers, Dawn Wine, Prince George’s County Public Schools
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Introduction
Mentoring is a powerful practice in any field. It can support or hinder any professional. Research by Pelon and Wojciakowski (2013) finds that mentoring experiences impact teacher candidates as they graduate and begin their teaching careers. Teacher candidates who had a weak relationship with their mentor tended to struggle, and some ultimately left the teaching field after only two short years, while teacher candidates with a strong mentor relationship had a much easier experience and pursued teaching for many years. Based on this research, Bowie State University made a commitment to ensure that our teacher candidates are practicing with the most effective mentors. To ensure that, a Mentor Task Force was formed, comprised of university faculty, PDS coordinators, and mentor teachers. The goal of the task force was to decide what needed to be put in place for our mentors to be even better.

The task force considered the following questions: What can we do to be sure our mentor teachers are well prepared? How can we ensure that our mentor teachers are effective coaches? How can we provide the mentor teachers reflective practices they can use with their teacher candidates?

From the inception of the Mentor Task Force through the development of each of the three training tiers, this is our story of the steps and mis-steps we took on our eight-year journey to create a tiered approach to professional learning for mentor teachers.

Preparing for the Journey
Following a summer strategic planning session, the Mentor Task Force was assembled in July 2007 with the decided purpose to reach out to local university faculty to examine their practices related to mentor training and determine a course of action for our Network. The task force met for a full week in the summer and then monthly throughout the following fall semester, and discovered that the other university offered one mentoring seminar for all of its mentor teachers. BSU PDS site-based Coordinators and university faculty participated in planning meetings with the other university, attended the seminar, and brought best practices back to our Mentor Task Force, where the course was adapted.

The Hurdles: Getting on the Right Track
For years, BSU PDS Network sought to provide effective professional development around mentoring, and to expand beyond a “one-size-fits-all” training approach. The problem stemmed from the fact that the mentor teachers had varying mentoring skill levels, from novices with their very first teacher candidate, to mentor teachers who had been mentoring in the PDS for many years and needed to transition to PDS leadership roles. As a result of the varying needs of our mentor teachers, some of them sought additional professional development after attending initial mentoring sessions. Once we observed the need for additional levels of training, we learned that a multi-tiered approach would work better.

Overcoming the Hurdles: Structure for the Tiers
Logistics presented a barrier as we were trying to get on track with successful mentoring. We wanted to meet the needs of the mentor teachers, site-based PDS coordinators, University PDS coordinators, and PDS site principals, which meant we needed to consider logistics such as time, location, funding, incentives, presenters, and format of the sessions, to ensure the most participation possible. We needed to give every mentor teacher an opportunity to engage in each tier. The Mentor Task Force knew that there would be four sessions within each tier, but PDS stakeholders collaborated on many other logistical factors (Ridley, D. S., Hurwitz, S., Hackett, M. R. D., & Miller, K. K. 2005) utilizing the following questions:

Question #1: How would we address time and when would the sessions be offered?
The Mentor Task Force decided that after school would be the best time to give all teachers the opportunity to attend because it did not impact the instructional day. We also determined that the sessions would run in the fall and spring on different days of the week (for example, every other Tuesday in the fall, and every other Thursday in the spring). Initially we planned for three and a half hours; however, after reflection, the presenters decided that was too long. After teachers have been instructing all day, it is difficult to attend fully to the session activities for such an extended period. After several conversations with multiple site-based PDS coordinators, we cut the time to two hours, and selected a start time that accommodated teachers traveling to the PDS site. Sessions are offered every other week. This format allows participants to practice the mentoring skills that they learn on their off-week and come to the next session with results and reflections.

Question #2: Where would the sessions occur?
The first sessions were held at the university. After reflections from this group, it was determined that the sessions should rotate to varied PDS sites within our PDS Network every semester, allowing teachers at different locations (northern, central, and southern ends of our school districts) to attend the sessions at their base school for at least one semester.

Question #3: What funding would be needed? Where would we find the funding?
Bowie State University and two local school districts provided the funding, which covered the cost of the materials for the sessions, and compensation for the presenters and teachers. The task force knew there should be teacher benefits for attendance in each Tier, such as a small stipend or one (1) continuing professional development credit for participating in each Tier. Teachers also earn a professional certificate noting their participation in the 3-Tier Approach.

Question #4: Who are the presenters?
Focusing on teacher leadership and building capacity in our PDS sites, it was decided that mentor teachers who excelled in the sessions as participants would then be trained to lead the next series of sessions as instructors. As an additional benefit, the participants related to these instructors since they too were mentor teachers working with teacher candidates on a regular basis.

Question #5: What is the format for the sessions?
Since the sessions are right after school, the Mentor Task Force decided that they needed to be interactive. During sessions, the participants engage in partner work, group activities, role play scenarios, and presentations. Instructional best practices are also demonstrated by the
presenters, for the mentor teachers to learn and use with their teacher candidates and students.

The Starting Line
First Tier: Teach, Coach, Reflect (TCR)
After addressing these questions, TCR was developed by the Mentor Task Force and delivered for the first time in Fall 2008. Since then it has been offered annually by the BSU PDS Network and has reached 120 participants.

TCR allows teachers to discuss theory, research, and best practices related to the mentoring of teacher candidates. This tier is a first step as many of the participants are either novice mentors and/or concurrently taking on the role of mentor teacher. The mentor teachers often come to this class with hopes of building a toolkit of strategies that they can immediately implement. The instructors of the tier focus on building mentor teachers’ capacity to combat any foreseeable situations that may occur during the teacher candidate’s internship. The class engages in field-based implementation activities with their teacher candidates in order to implement and evaluate mentoring strategies. The reflective nature of the sessions makes the work more personal to participants, who reflect on their own practice with their teacher candidates and think about their own time as a teacher candidate. Throughout the tier, many of the mentor teachers’ responses start with the reflective phrase, “When I was a teacher candidate...my mentor teacher...” This kind of reflection is a building block for becoming a strong mentor teacher, as the mentors think critically about what it means to be a mentor teacher and the experiences that stood out as invaluable as a teacher candidate. The session assignments require the implementation of strategies taught in class in the field, and help the mentor and teacher candidate discover ways to enhance their relationship, and practice techniques in coaching, feedback, and conferenceing. The final project in this tier is the Teacher Candidate Survival Toolkit: a personal collection of materials and resources that the mentor teachers can take back to use immediately with their teacher candidates, and for personal guidance beyond the class. It can be reused, updated, and adjusted as the mentor teacher grows within the PDS partnership.

Second Tier: Advanced Teach, Coach, Reflect (ATCR)
In SY2013-14, the Network began discussing the feedback from mentor teachers who completed the Tier-1 TCR course and wanted additional professional development on the mentoring process, focused especially on the areas of action research and working with challenging teacher candidates. To address these needs, we developed a second tier of mentor training called Advanced Teach, Coach, Reflect (ATCR), which was first offered in February 2014. Since then ATCR has been offered every spring semester and has reached 46 participants.

ATCR anticipates the support the mentor teacher and teacher candidate will need while implementing the university’s assignments, and provides models and step-by-step guidance for completing action research. ATCR enables teachers to refine, reflect, and set goals to strengthen skills as mentors. Through a smaller group setting, it allows time for networking with fellow educators to share best practices in order to enhance teacher candidate achievement. The prerequisite for this tier is TCR, which builds foundational mentoring that ATCR then refines by honing in on the nuances of mentoring. Mentor teachers get the opportunity to connect mentoring practices to the assignments in the teacher candidates’ core classes at the university. A signature assignment for teacher candidates during the last quarter of the internship is the completion of an action research study in the mentor teacher’s classroom. In coordination with the mentor teacher, the teacher candidate must target a small group of students to provide rigorous intervention to support student achievement. As conducting classroom-based action research can be challenging even for seasoned teachers, it is the PDS partnership’s role to provide support for the developing teacher candidates while executing this assignment. Mentor teachers provide classroom-based support since they share the same goal of student achievement. The mentor teacher must understand the assignment components and feel comfortable with guiding the teacher candidate from beginning to end. If the relationship and communication between the pair is not strong, there may be a breakdown in the execution of the action research assignment. Finally, the tier requires participants to create a presentation of their choice to share the components and methodology of their action research with their PDS site and teacher candidates. As a next step, we are planning to incorporate co-teaching models into the ATCR course.

Third Tier: Teacher Leadership
The third tier, Teacher Leadership, was conceived and developed by the BSU PDS Coordinator, and facilitated by the university’s PDS Coordinator and Professor in the College of Education. Tier-3 was piloted in the Spring 2016 semester, and thus far 10 PDS teachers have participated and have provided positive feedback. Tier-3 is an intensive teacher leadership series that allows mentors and site-based PDS coordinators to become experts on the NAPDS 9 Essentials and the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) PDS Standards. Participants in this tier must have completed TCR and ATCR, and many have been mentor teachers or have contributed to the PDS Network in other leadership roles. This group was selected as potential teacher leaders in the PDS to carry on the supportive work of the mentors and teacher candidates.

Substantial time was dedicated to networking between sites within our Network from elementary, middle, and high school levels to address the NAPDS 9 Essentials and serve as an advisory board to the University-PDS Coordinator. Evaluating our PDS program and sharing best practices of a strong PDS were a central focus during our discussions. Each participant is responsible for locating articles on certain topics (teacher leadership, co-teaching, and mentoring), and researching the best practices in the PDS arena. Journal articles were compiled into a collection as a resource for this select group of teacher leaders. Also, this forum allows PDS leaders to examine the accreditation process and support the university partners in preparing for upcoming accreditations. A pre and post survey about the teacher leaders’ knowledge of PDS set the stage and also concluded the tier. Daily journaling was expected that centered on topics discussed during session assignments. The final assignment requires the participants to broaden and share their knowledge of the PDS by co-authoring a journal article or newsletter on a PDS area of interest. In this way, the PDS is giving back to local and national PDS partners. This article was co-authored by a small group of participants who served as instructors for both TCR and ATCR.

Success
We base our success on mentor teachers’ feedback provided at the conclusion of each session. Below are teacher reflections from various PDS sites.

Reflections from Tier 1: Teach, Coach, Reflect (TCR)
• “I’ve learned from taking TCR to take the time to learn about your teacher candidate as a person and as a teacher, and I now have real conversations with my teacher candidate.”
• “Feedback is like a gift. It must be wrapped nicely in order for it to be well received. I now know that I need to conference more frequently with my teacher candidate. I learned effective ways to address concerns/issues with teacher candidates.”
• “I feel the Toolkit will benefit not only the teacher candidate but me as well.”

Reflections from Tier 2: Advanced Teach, Coach, Reflect (ATCR)
• “Through taking ATCR I’ve learned the type of mentor I am and what goals I need to work on.”

75 CHARACTERS: UM, CUMQUAM BERUPTATUM EVERO ET AUDANT ES NECUS DOLORELPE QUIAT
Lessons Learned at a PDS Middle School-University Partnership
in Southern Georgia

Melanie Sainz, Lowndes County Public Schools
Robert Spies, Valdosta State University

Introduction
In order to better understand where we have come from and where we are going, reflection on the process and the journey are essential. This paper is an attempt to reflect upon the beginnings of a Professional Development School (PDS) collaboration between a public middle school and a regional comprehensive university in southern Georgia, as well as the challenges and changes that have occurred since. Further, we hope that this reflection can provide other PDS partnerships with lessons learned in order to improve their own projects and initiatives. We will first offer an overview on how the partnership began, followed by a discussion of the positive elements and the pitfalls we encountered. Next, we will explain ways that we attempted to improve the partnership. Finally, we will outline plans for moving forward and future next-steps.

How the Partnership Began
The PDS partnership established between Valdosta State University (VSU) and Lowndes Middle School (LMS) in Valdosta, Georgia, which began in 2013 out of discussions between VSU and LMS administrators, has taken on several different iterations as the partnership matures. This collaborative initiative began in 2013 with two of VSU’s middle grades methods classes meeting on the campus of LMS. Senior middle grades education majors were enrolled in the classes, one a social studies methods course and the other a mathematics methods course. Further, these courses were also co-listed with a Master of Arts for Teachers methods course, allowing Masters with initial certification students to also participate in the PDS field-based courses and included teacher candidates working toward secondary certification. The two professors who were teaching the courses met with the middle school administrators and instructional coach to plan the logistics of the partnership. Middle school social studies and mathematics teachers were invited and encouraged to participate. Emphasis was placed on the win-win reciprocal nature of

• “I learned the steps of action research and different ideas for how to implement it in my classroom. I enjoyed the collaboration with others about action research.”
• “I learned the importance of modeling for your teacher candidate and setting expectations early.”

Reflections from Tier 3: Teacher Leadership
• “I enjoyed networking with other PDS colleagues and engaging in collaborative discussions.”
• “Journal writing allows time to put into practice all that we’ve learned.”
• “I now feel I have a better understanding of the NAPDS 9 Essentials and the MSDE PDS Standards.”

Through mentor teacher feedback and reflections we have been able to see the growth in our partnership, teacher candidates, and mentor teachers. The sessions were beneficial in creating lasting relationships between mentors and teacher candidates, which in turn enhances student achievement and prepares effective future educators.

The Finish Line
The primary goals of a university PDS partnership are advancing the teacher preparation program and bolstering student achievement. Another equally key component is to give back to the PDS sites by building a foundation for great mentor teachers. In this way, a PDS is working full circle by training mentors that will ultimately produce strong teacher candidates. This conception provides a quality student teaching experience for both mentor and teacher candidate alike. In order to develop mentor capacity, mentors must go through a structured professional development that enhances their practice of preparing student teachers. The 3-Tier Mentoring Approach (See Figure 1.1) has proven itself as an effective way to provide professional development to mentor teachers and to meet everyone’s needs, from tier one for novice mentor teachers through tier three for experienced mentor teachers transitioning to leadership roles. At BSU we are always looking for innovative ways to enhance our program and partnerships, and to grow as a PDS network. Moving forward, we are constantly asking ourselves: What should ongoing professional development look like for PDS stakeholders in charge of teacher preparation? Our 3-Tier Mentoring Approach proved to be successful in benefiting our mentors and teacher candidates.

References


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Figure 1.1

the partnership: additional real-life, hands-on experience in classrooms for the VSU students prior to their field- and clinical-experience courses and additional help from pre-service teachers for the teachers in the middle school classroom.

While considering the National Association of Professional Development Schools (NAPDS) vision and nine essentials, collaborators decided that the focus of the endeavor would target the following elements of the framework: 1) a mission broader in its outreach and scope than the mission of any partner and that furthers the education profession, 2) a school–university culture committed to the preparation of future educators that embraces their active engagement in the school community, and 7) a structure that allows all participants a forum for ongoing collaboration (2016). This framework guided our school-based PDS partnership’s design and ongoing development. We will discuss both social studies and mathematics collaborations, which varied in several aspects including teacher-candidate cohort sizes, the number of participating classroom teachers, the days of the week, and the approaches to collaboration within teachers’ classrooms.

Each of these university teaching methods classes would meet in a classroom at the partner middle school once a week for 11 weeks for the entire school day. This period is interrupted some days with the support of the university faculty and the teacher-candidates taught an entire class lesson and additional help from pre-service teachers for the teachers in the middle school classroom. Both approaches yielded positive results, and issues needing to be further addressed.

In addition, the university students were asked to participate in an activity with students outside of the school day. Choices included attending/chaperoning a school dance, attending and assisting at an athletic event, being a guest reader in a class, or participating in a Family Night activity. Teacher-candidates noted the benefit of seeing adolescents outside the classroom, and during course discussions were able to personalize the importance of building relationships with students in order to improve the classroom atmosphere. However, collaborative partnerships such as this one are not without challenges. Next we will examine some of the specific examples of positive outcomes and challenges we faced as we implemented the PDS school/university partnership.

Positive Outcomes and Challenges

This PDS partnership has yielded many positive experiences and results since its implementation in 2013. Middle grades education majors have had wonderful opportunities for additional clinical practice – real time with real kids in real classrooms – making them much better prepared for their apprenticeship field experience and student teaching clinical experience. We will offer several examples of positive outcomes and experiences that have occurred as a result of the PDS partnership in order to highlight the potential benefits of such an endeavor. We will also include several examples of pitfalls and challenges that have faced the participants in the partnership, including the public school faculty, administrators and students, as well as university faculty and teacher-candidates.

Through a series of meetings between university faculty, school administrators and teachers, the middle school classroom teachers communicated that they have had an opportunity to meet the needs of more of their students as well as feel a part of preparing future educators for success in the profession. For example, one social studies teacher was able to conduct a learning centers activity she wanted to try, but did not feel she could do successfully with only one adult in the room. Another example, a math teacher, was able to truly differentiate her instruction by having extra adults to work with small groups, some of which needed remediation, some additional practice, and others more challenging enrichment material. Both of these examples gave teacher-candidates the opportunity to not only see, but also participate in the implementation of, flexible grouping and differentiation implemented in a real-world setting, better contextualizing the methods course content.

Teacher-candidates noted numerous instances of getting to participate in well-planned lessons with engaging activities, seeing first-hand effective classroom management techniques that encouraged active engagement. Frequently, teacher-candidates shared with faculty and
Teacher-candidates, most of which had previously only observed teachers in a middle school setting, had an opportunity to be immersed in everyday classroom situations, experiencing instruction, behavior, classroom management, time management, assessment, and planning firsthand. These experiences offered teacher-candidates scaffolding with a set of hands-on experiences prior to the four-week full-time apprenticeship field experience in which they are placed with a single teacher and must plan and implement their own lessons for an extended period of time. Active engagement in these PDS settings helped to boost teacher-candidates confidence and familiarity in working with adolescents prior to a more immersive experience.

However, the partnership has not been without its challenges. Despite communication via email between university faculty and the classroom teachers, on several occasions, university students would show up at the door of a classroom ready to participate only to find that the teacher was out sick or had gone to a last-minute meeting. Other times, the teacher would have a situation with students or parents and simply say, “Not today.” Equally problematic and despite communication between the university faculty and classroom teachers about upcoming scheduled dates and topics of study, teacher-candidates would go into a classroom and classroom teachers would not have planned lessons and activities that lent themselves to teacher-candidate participation and assistance, leaving the candidates with nothing to do but observe. These kinds of problems resulted, in part, from a lack of communication between university faculty, school administrators and classroom teachers regarding what our PDS partnership was designed to accomplish and how it should be implemented in participating teachers' classrooms. These issues were improved by more proactive communication via email and face-to-face meetings with school personnel. Further, despite agreeing to participate in the partnership at the start of the academic year, classroom teachers soon became overwhelmed by other, more pressing classroom issues. Thus, the PDS partnership became less of a priority, in comparison, for some these classroom teachers. This led to negative feelings on both sides of the partnership and a need for reflection and redirection. In order to address these challenges, partners adapted the collaboration in the following ways, discussed below.

Steps Toward Improvement

Some of the problems we experienced led to a new approach to our collaboration, particularly with our mathematics partnership. The professor teaching the middle grades mathematics methods course proposed a different way for her students to participate in clinical experiences by having them offer to conduct a math task for two academic periods in a single teacher's classroom each week. That task would be chosen by the middle school participating teacher. The university students would then develop materials and plan the lesson for the chosen task. They would teach the lesson/task to two consecutive classes, then leave sufficient materials for the teacher to conduct the task during his or her remaining two academic periods. This approach was well-received among the middle school teachers and teachers signed up for a specific day on the list of dates provided by the professor. Teachers offered very positive feedback regarding this new approach. However, it still lacked the full collaborative nature reflected in the PDS vision and purpose. This approach centered on teacher-candidates rotating as teacher and, in many cases, the classroom teacher left the classroom in the hands of the university faculty and the teacher-candidates. While this improved practical experience for the teacher-candidates, it was not truly a partnership with the teachers, other than that the classroom teachers volunteered their classroom and students. The social studies methods faculty has adapted their approach to incorporate the classroom teachers more closely. Rather than planning entire lessons for the participating classroom teachers, teacher-candidates were asked to develop activities lasting approximately 15 minutes, and were to be related to the specific topics to be covered in the following week’s lessons. These activities were submitted to the school and university faculty for approval prior, and then feedback was offered by the classroom teacher regarding the effectiveness of the activity. These activities received overwhelmingly positive feedback from the classroom teachers and their effectiveness was noted by both teacher-candidates and teachers. Further, the classroom teachers adopted these strategies for their own teaching and even shared with teachers not participating in the program. Next, the university faculty requested that participating teachers incorporate elements from a list of potential teaching strategies including flexible and differentiated grouping and project-based learning. These activities were some of the most effective activities in which the teacher-candidates participated in past classrooms. This new approach will be evaluated on an ongoing basis in order to determine the effectiveness regarding teacher-candidates, classroom teachers, middle school students and the partnership as a whole.

Moving Forward

As this PDS partnership embarks on its fourth year, we embrace the best practices occurring within our partnership and venture to improve those areas that have been less than ideal. We hope to accomplish this by continuing our shared commitment to reflective practice. Taking this perspective, we plan to have enhanced communication among the participating university professors, the middle school administrators, and the participating middle school teachers. This will be accomplished by meeting as a group at the
middle school at the beginning of the semester, prior to the first class meeting. At that time, clear expectations for all participants will be laid out, discussed, and agreed upon. Additionally, several of the participating middle school teachers plan to attend PDS conferences, as well as present our own lessons learned, to gain a better understanding of the vision, purpose, and history of PDS, the nine essentials, and to interact with others who are implementing PDS initiatives in their schools.

As PDS partners, Valdosta State University and Lowndes Middle School will continue to give voice to the value and importance of this collaborative effort, both for the university and for the middle school. It is a work in progress, to be sure, but work well worth doing for the benefits it can provide to all those involved.

References


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Further, interns have opportunities to interview their cooperating teachers regarding teachers’ deliberate practice plans, write blackboard discussion posts set by professors, and share their professional growth plan experiences during the internship seminar time. As the result, the major topic of discussion during the internship seminar is evidence collected to show growth. We remind candidates that outcomes must be grounded in evidence (i.e., evidence collected must measure the selected goals). Evidence they select to demonstrate growth can vary and come from many sources, including observations from cooperating teachers and university supervisors, daily and weekly reflections of teaching, lesson plans, recordings of lessons, student work, and student feedback. Finally, we ask candidates to reflect on the entire experience, highlighting benefits to themselves and their students.

The Process – Part 1: Developing a Professional Growth Plan, Again

At the end of the internship, candidates once again create part 1 of the professional growth plan. We call this the “out the door” professional growth plan that candidates can use during their first year of teaching. Candidates complete part 1 of the plan, which is checked by university faculty as candidates exit the program. Candidates may choose to continue working on the same goal, but many times they select different areas for improvement.

Conclusion

By allowing teachers to have a stake in their professional growth, Marzano and Toth (2013) state that “teachers become the agent of their own expertise” (p. 5). Beginning the professional growth plan process in teacher preparation programs allows preservice teachers to enhance their teaching practices, accept responsibility for their own growth, and collaborate with other educators. Aligning this process with partnering districts’ growth plans also prepares preservice teachers for what is ahead as they transition into the profession. Our aim is to foster teacher candidates’ desire to continually improve their professional skills and expertise. We want preservice teachers to learn that growing as a professional is a cyclical process that requires one to constantly reflect, change and grow.

References


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Editors’ Corner

Eva Garin, Bowie State University
Drew Polly, North Carolina-Charlotte

Welcome to the summer edition of PDS Partners the Magazine of the National Association for Professional Development Schools. We would like to begin our Editor’s Corner with a huge debt of gratitude to Senior Editor Ron Siers Jr. for mentoring us in our new role as Co-Senior Editors for PDS Partners. We also recognize the popularity of this publication for both practitioners and researchers, and aim to continue to support our readers and contributors. Another thank you goes to all of the Assistant Editors who have worked with Ron over the years: Cathy Ramey, Jenny McFadden, Sara Elburn and Emily Hoffman as well as to the section editors Ron Siers Jr., Cathy Ramey, Coralee Smith, Ann Thomas, Ron Beebe, Nicole Marker, Karen Foster, Jennifer Douthit, Belinda Karge, Helene Cunningham, JoAnne Ferrara, Barbara Terracciano and Amy Simmons.

This summer issue will reach you just as our doors open to PreK to 12 students and university students. We believe that you will find something of interest in the array of manuscript topics. The first article by our colleagues at SUNY Buffalo State addresses the popular topic of teacher leadership with a twist to build teacher leaders in teacher candidates beginning their first year of teaching. The next article from Saint Louis University shares a unique international partnership between Belize and Saint Louis University. In the next article Mercer University tackles a challenging problem when students are asked to work in impoverished, culturally diverse and low performing schools. Our PDS colleagues from Augusta University and Sue Reynolds Elementary share how one partnership is working to create a seamless collaboration in district partnerships. Stetson University shares how they mentoring workshops developed by teachers for teachers. Bowie State University proudly shares their 3-Tier language and prosocial skill teaching. Elementary share their classroom inquiry in PDS to be published early Fall 2017. She can be reached at egarin@bowiesate.edu.

She is a former Associate Editor of School-University Partners. Her research interests are PDS, teacher inquiry and literacy interventions. Her latest publication, Action Research in Professional Development Schools: Does it Make a Difference was the impetus for the special themed edition of School-University Partnerships on teacher inquiry in PDS to be published early Fall 2017. She can be reached at egarin@bowiesate.edu.

Drew is a professor in the Elementary Education program at UNC Charlotte. He has served as the Secretary of NAPDS and works with school-university partnerships between his university and area schools and districts. He can be reached at drew.polly@uncc.edu.

Fontbonne University approaches the topic of PDS divorce something we have all experienced at one time or another and we hear how this experience helped them reflect and reorganize. The Co-teaching model has gained momentum in PDS and colleagues at SUNY Buffalo share the outcomes of their year-long pilot program. Teachers from Mort Elementary and Pizzo Elementary share their classroom inquiry in primary-grade classrooms using dynamic-frame language and prosocial skill teaching.

Bowie State University proudly shares their 3-Tier mentoring workshops developed by teachers for teachers. Stetson University shares how they use professional growth plans to support teacher learning and to foster a commitment of continuous improvement while strengthening university and district partnerships.

We hope that as the school year begins that you will find the time to read this issue and to meet the new Senior Co-Editors Eva Garin from Bowie State University and Drew Polly from the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. This summer issue will reach you just as our doors open to PreK to 12 students and university students. We believe that you will find something of interest in the array of manuscript topics. The first article by our colleagues at SUNY Buffalo State addresses the popular topic of teacher leadership with a twist to build teacher leaders in teacher candidates beginning their first year of teaching. The next article from Saint Louis University shares a unique international partnership between Belize and Saint Louis University. In the next article Mercer University tackles a challenging problem when students are asked to work in impoverished, culturally diverse and low performing schools. Our PDS colleagues from Augusta University and Sue Reynolds Elementary share how one partnership is working to create a seamless collaboration in district partnerships. Stetson University shares how they mentoring workshops developed by teachers for teachers. Bowie State University proudly shares their 3-Tier language and prosocial skill teaching. Elementary share their classroom inquiry in PDS to be published early Fall 2017. She can be reached at egarin@bowiesate.edu.

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Drew is a professor in the Elementary Education program at UNC Charlotte. He has served as the Secretary of NAPDS and works with school-university partnerships between his university and area schools and districts. He can be reached at drew.polly@uncc.edu.

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**PDS Partners Call for Submissions**

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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.

Submissions and any inquiries regarding past submissions can be made to: supjournal@gmail.com