
Advancing a Professional Development System: Evolution and Evaluation

Somer Lewis

University of North Carolina Wilmington

Tamara M. Walser

University of North Carolina Wilmington

Abstract: This article describes the evolution of the University of North Carolina Wilmington's Professional Development System (PDSsystem) School-University Partnership, which began more than 25 years ago. In addition, authors discuss the development of a monitoring and evaluation system for the PDSsystem, including results of a recent evaluability assessment, and related implications for practice. For others engaged in professional development school (PDS) work, evaluability assessment may serve as a useful approach in the development of a monitoring and evaluation system, including outcomes and impact evaluation. Its focus on context, stakeholder involvement, and use of evaluation results provides information useful for formative improvement and for forwarding meaningful and feasible outcome and impact evaluation.

KEYWORDS: professional development schools, school-university partnerships, evaluability, assessment, program theory

NAPDS NINE ESSENTIALS ADDRESSED:

1. A comprehensive mission that is broader in its outreach and scope than the mission of any partner and that furthers the education profession and its responsibility to advance equity within schools and, by potential extension, the broader community;
2. A school–university culture committed to the preparation of future educators that embraces their active engagement in the school community;
3. Ongoing and reciprocal professional development for all participants guided by need;
4. A shared commitment to innovative and reflective practice by all participants;
5. Engagement in and public sharing of the results of deliberate investigations of practice by respective participants;
6. An articulation agreement developed by the respective participants delineating the roles and responsibilities of all involved;
7. A structure that allows all participants a forum for ongoing governance, reflection, and collaboration;
8. Work by college/university faculty and P–12 faculty in formal roles across institutional settings; and
9. Dedicated and shared resources and formal rewards and recognition structure

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Introduction

Since the mid-1980s, the professional development school (PDS) movement has sought to simultaneously revitalize teacher education programs and reform P-12 schools. In a comprehensive examination of initial PDSs from this era, Abdal-Haqq (1998) cites two major concerns that stirred what he referred to as a “second wave” of school reform and the conception of the PDS model: fear that our country was losing its position as an economic power, and social justice concerns regarding the “growing disparity between the economically advantaged and disadvantaged” (p. 1). In response to the demands placed on public schools and teacher preparation programs during this era of reform, the PDS model advocated school-university partnerships, which served as sites for best practice, pre-service teacher preparation, and simultaneous renewal of both basic and higher education. The model was highlighted in several influential reports, and by 1993 was adopted by over 46% of schools, colleges, and departments of education (AACTE, 1995; Carnegie Forum, 1986; Goodlad, 1990; Holmes Group, 1986). Since this initial wave of development, the PDS model has remained a critical component of ongoing P-12 school reform efforts and has aided in the reexamination of schools of education. In 2016, engaged in what many would agree is yet another wave of reform and prompted by similar fears, public schools and teacher education programs continue to hone the PDS model in an effort to positively impact both teaching and learning worldwide.

Although PDS initiatives have been heralded as an important element of school reform, they have simultaneously been criticized for the resources they require (Latham & Vogt, 2015). Along with higher education in general, and teacher education programs specifically, evaluation, and related accountability of PDSs has become increasingly important. Teitel (2004) noted a shift in PDS work from a focus on the process of starting and implementing a PDS during the first decade of PDS initiatives to a focus on PDS outcomes, including P-12 student learning. Whereas early PDS literature was often descriptive of how to implement a PDS, later research began to investigate outcomes and impacts. For example, studies have provided evidence that student teacher interns at PDS schools achieve higher outcomes than those at non-PDS schools (Castle, Fox, & Souder, 2006; Ridley, Hurwitz, Hackett, & Miller, 2005) and that teachers who were educated within a PDS system enter the teaching profession more often and stay in it longer (Latham & Vogt, 2015). Additionally, many of the published PDS studies report on the evaluation and outcomes of specific PDS initiatives and contexts (see for example, He, Miller, & Mercier, 2010; Pepper, Hartman, Blackwell, & Monroe, 2012; Reed, Kochan, Ross, & Kunkel, 2001; Theiss & Grigsby, 2010). The increased focus on outcomes is likely a reflection of the maturation of the PDS model along with increasing educational accountability, including the need for data and results about student outcomes, teacher quality, and teacher retention (Teitel, 2004).

Despite strides in PDS research, there remains a lack of empirical studies on PDS models (Capraro, Capraro, & Helfeldt, 2010; Reed et al., 2001). Challenges to studying PDS outcomes and impacts include the time and energy needed to conduct systematic evaluation (He et al., 2010), as well as the diverse and unique designs of the numerous PDS models in existence

(Capraro, Capraro, & Helfeldt, 2010). Reed et al. (2001) offer considerations for evaluating PDSs, such as the importance of context in determining what should be assessed and how, and evaluation as an ongoing process that includes “all PDS participants in determining goals, identifying data collection processes and materials, analyzing data, and using data to make decisions” (p. 191). In addition, the National Association of Professional Development Schools’ (NAPDS, 2008) “Nine Essentials” of a PDS provide guidance useful for evaluation, including as one “essential” the need to disseminate the work of the PDS and its impact on student learning.

The purpose of this article is to describe the current University of North Carolina Wilmington (UNCW) Professional Development System (PDSsystem) School-University Partnership, the development of a monitoring and evaluation system for the PDSsystem, and implications for practice. The following sections include an overview of what a PDS is; a description of the UNCW PDSsystem, which began more than 25 years ago; the monitoring and evaluation system for the PDSsystem, including the results of a recent evaluability assessment; and related implications for practice.

Defining PDS

While PDS organizational structures have shifted over time, PDS literature reveals several commonalities. Supported by Goodlad’s (1988) concept of simultaneous renewal, teacher candidate preparation, reciprocal teacher/faculty development, and the examination of educational practice to support student achievement, continue to be a mainstay in PDS literature (Cozza, 2010; Darling-Hammond, Bullmaster, & Cobb, 1995; Teitel, 2004; Trachtman, 2007). This includes the need to alter teacher education programs to support the professional growth of pre-service teachers in the field, as well as create support systems for improving the practice of teachers on site where partnership teachers take on new leadership roles and engage with university faculty to rethink practice (Cozza, 2010; Graham, 2002; Teitel, 2004). According to Darling-Hammond et al. (1995), these interactions create “an opportunity for the profession to expand its knowledge base by putting research into practice- and practice into research” (p. 88). PDSs serve as sites for the development of new instructional models and the examination of educational practice where students, teachers, and faculty challenge beliefs about both teaching and learning.

Collaboration is key to any PDS model (Ball & Rundquist, 1993; Cozza, 2010; Grisham et al, 2002; Lieberman, 1995; Taymans et al, 2012; Trachtman, 2007). Both teachers and university faculty take on shared responsibility for the development of pre-service teacher candidates. In addition, these collaborations seek to rethink “values, beliefs, and paradigms for schools and school change while negotiating two worlds and inventing new programs” (Darling-Hammond, 1994, p. 37). Graham (2002) identifies the importance of collaborations “built on mutual trust, willingness to communicate, flexibility, and a dedication to renewal in pursuit of excellence in teaching” (p. 8). Over time, these collaborations develop so that a PDS site is one of shared growth and exemplary practice.

Researchers have long proposed several “stage theories” in an attempt to capture the development of the PDS model (Dixon & Ishler, 1992; Teitel, 2003; Walmsley, Bufkin, & Rule, 2009). In 2001, the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), now consolidated with the Teacher Education Accreditation Council as the Council for the

Accreditation of Educator Preparation, recognized the power of PDSs to impact teaching and learning and developed a set of defining characteristics that are “interconnected and developmental in nature” to better assess and measure the impact of the PDS model (Cozza, 2010). These characteristics include Learning Community; Accountability and Quality Assurance; Collaboration, Equity, and Diversity; and Structures, Resources, and Roles (NCATE, 2001). With a rise in the number of PDSs nationwide and varying interpretation of the PDS model, the NCATE standards attempt to “direct PDS development, evaluation, and accountability” (Taymans et al., 2012, p. 226). In 2008, NAPDS released a policy statement articulating the organization’s definition of a PDS and encouraging school-university partnerships to embrace the Nine Essentials of “What it Means to be a Professional Development School.” While the language of the Nine Essentials are tangible, rather than abstract, the organization recognizes the differing contexts in which these PDSs are formed and opportunities for growth and evaluation of a model that has long served as a main component of school reform movements over the last thirty years (NAPDS, 2008).

Origins of a PDSystem

The origins of the Professional Development System (PDSystem) in the Watson School of Education at UNCW surfaced in 1989. At that time, a proposal was submitted to establish the Consortium for the Advancement of Public Education (CAPE) and the Model Clinical Teacher Program (MCTP). CAPE’s initial effort emphasized school reform while MCTP focused on the reform of teacher preparation schools across three districts. In the years that followed, faculty-led self-study and external evaluation of the partnership revealed the need to redesign teacher preparation and refocus collaborative efforts on school reform. In 1993, the decision was made to merge the most successful components of each parallel initiative into one focused system across programs in the entire School of Education. The consensus was for the partnership to transition to a more systemic model, which, in essence, became what we know as our present day PDSystem.

As the system developed, so too did the reciprocal nature of its collaborative efforts. Early on, PDSystem faculty focused on developing high quality sites by formalizing processes, identifying roles and responsibilities of faculty and school partners, and implementing policies to guide the development of pre-service teachers. As relationships matured and processes became institutionalized, the emphasis of the system transitioned to one of providing professional development and the systemic adoption and implementation of a well-defined framework for supervision (Wetherill & Calhoun, 2011). Through the years, our PDSystem has continued to evolve in both breadth and depth. As a larger number of schools and districts expressed interest in partnering, our System has transformed to include flexible options for meaningful partnership based on the needs of individual schools and districts. In addition, this growth has led to a re-examination of the reciprocal nature of our partnership and a recommitment to opportunities for mutual renewal.

At present, the PDSystem at UNCW has established collegial working relationships among the Watson College of Education (WCE) and 146 public schools across 12 school districts in the southeast region of our state. Our PDSystem improves the quality of teacher and administrator preparation and performance by offering an array of professional experiences,

including site-based seminars and a coaching and supervision model that pairs interns with trained partnership teachers. The partnership is intensive in that it collaborates with districts in placing students; provides professional development to build quality teaching capacity; offers opportunities to develop research, grants, and other initiatives; values reciprocity; and helps redesign our teacher education programs by building a community of reflective learners (University of North Carolina Wilmington, 2016b). Unlike some professional development school initiatives detailed in the literature which may impact a single school, the UNCW PDS system represents a more comprehensive approach to partnership: “It has become broad based and powerful enough to include the entire teacher education faculty, representatives from departments in the College of Arts and Sciences, over 2,100 partners and more than 500 public school educators each year” (University of North Carolina Wilmington, 2016a).

The growth of our partnership and our shared commitment to improve student learning by enhancing the quality of our teacher education programs, teacher performance, and school leadership has led to the development of a three tiered system of engagement. Organizing our partnership in this manner has allowed us to continue to create opportunities for school partners to have a shared voice in the PDS system at all levels. District partners and individual schools have the flexibility to move in and out of tiers dependent upon their readiness to partner in (Tier 1) Professional Development, (Tier 2) Pre-Service Teacher Placements, and (Tier 3) Comprehensive Support.

Our PDS system negotiates formal agreements with district superintendents and public charter school directors once every three years. These agreements reaffirm the importance of partnership goals and the responsibilities inherent in them while also reflecting the importance of flexibility in meeting the needs of individual partners, ensuring that the program goals are not compromised and that continuity and equity in partnerships remain foremost in the PDS system vision. Tier 1 partners build capacity in their schools to one day support the needs of pre-service teacher candidates. Teachers participate in professional development opportunities alongside College faculty and request support on site in individual schools or through district-based initiatives. Through collaborative initiatives such as the First Years of Teaching Support Program, the Promise of Leadership Award Program, and the National Board Support Program, among others, P-12 teachers, administrators and community partners collaborate alongside College faculty to re-examine current practice, provide meaningful feedback to teacher education programs, and participate in mutual opportunities for growth and shared decision-making.

Tier 2 schools serve as hosts for pre-serve teacher field and internship placements. In a given semester between 80-100 school sites serve as Tier 2 partners. Each Tier 2 school designates a school-based Site Coordinator who works directly with university faculty to place students and lead site-based seminars during the internship semester. These seminars, which take place on-site in our partnership schools, involve teacher interns, school partners, and university-based supervisors, offering shared opportunities for reflective practice by all partners. Partnership teachers in Tier 2 schools, as well as university supervisors, participate in 10 hours of professional development in our adapted Cognitive Coaching Model (Costa & Garmston, 2002) for learner-driven supervision prior to hosting a pre-service teacher intern. In addition to this initial orientation, partnership teachers, PDS faculty and university supervisors participate in annual Professional Learning Days (PLD), share feedback during PLD focus group sessions, and

engage in extensive conversations regarding clinical practice across programs and PDS school sites.

As our PDSsystem moves into a more advanced phase of its development, new roles, responsibilities and initiatives continue to emerge. These opportunities for shared collaborative growth and school reform are positioned in Tier 3 of our partnership and supported by Trachtman's (2007) research on the exploration of "inquiry directed at improving practice" whereas "the inquiries in which the participants engage provide the rationale for their cross-institutional partnership" (p. 197). Tier 3 partners are committed to systemic reform efforts and are connected to the PDSsystem at multiple points. Several Tier 3 initiatives, such as our Elementary Block, Master Teacher Program, and Partnership in Action Initiative, allow PDS partners to collaborate in meaningful ways to not only support the growth of our teacher preparation programs and teacher candidates, but to initiate change in both our partner schools and College of Education through small and large scale collaborations. Our Master Teacher Program, for example, selects partnership teachers from our Tier 2 schools and pairs them with faculty who share common interests for professional growth and research-based initiatives. These partnerships are supported through our PDSsystem Office and by other Master Teacher/faculty partners to initiate inquiry-based professional growth and enrichment opportunities. Master Teacher meetings provide a foundation for focused discussions regarding teacher preparation, recruitment and retention efforts. Additional PDS initiatives and advisory committees, such as our PDS Advisory Board and PDS School Partners Luncheons provide faculty and P-12 school partners with an opportunity to participate in the shared governance and reciprocal growth of our partnership.

As a result of the tremendous growth of our PDSsystem and our tiered approach to providing flexible support and opportunities for more intensive collaboration, a comprehensive system to monitor and evaluate the work of our PDSsystem was developed. Similar to our PDSsystem, however, our evaluation efforts and the ways in which we monitor and measure impact have evolved to meet the ever-growing demands of accountability and the needs of our school partners. In addition, several years of change in PDSsystem leadership and focus led to an in-depth examination of the evaluability of our current model.

Monitoring and Evaluating Our PDSsystem

In the WCE, we have a comprehensive system in place for monitoring our PDSsystem and conduct ongoing assessment of each of our degree and licensure-only programs. The WCE Database and Collaborative Portal is used extensively by the Office of Teacher Education and Outreach, which includes the PDSsystem and Professional Experiences Office. It provides a system for collecting and managing data on teacher education candidates; faculty; P-12 partnership school districts, schools, administrators, teachers; and alumni. The database includes applicant information, teacher education and graduate candidate profiles and coursework, key assessment results (e.g., Praxis scores), field experience data, teaching internship data, and administrative internship data. The Office of Professional Experiences uses the database to identify and monitor field experiences and teaching internships for teacher education programs. The PDSsystem uses the database to monitor training of teachers who supervise interns, as well as to communicate with school partners through the "portal" function, which allows a level of

database access to partners for providing updates and regular communication. With the database, we can create program and unit reports in response to internal monitoring and assessment needs, and in response to external requests.

In addition, the PDSsystem regularly administers and uses results of training and other surveys to improve professional development, document reach of services, and identify needs of partnership districts and schools. These assessments help to inform the work of the partnership and serve to highlight opportunities for mutual collaboration. Further, the WCE Assessment Office works with faculty to conduct assessment of each of our degree and licensure-only programs. This work is focused on student learning and program outcomes for each program with a goal of continuous improvement and includes data such as exit survey results, alumni survey results, student capstone project results, and performance ratings of student interns. Annual reports are submitted to the Office of Academic Affairs and provide reporting for university and college accreditation in addition to formative assessment for programs.

Although we have a comprehensive monitoring system in place and the PDSsystem routinely collects data to inform practice, in fall 2013, the PDSsystem Director initiated discussion with the WCE Assessment Director, seeking answers to bigger questions of effectiveness and impact. Given the growth and evolution of the PDSsystem and changes in leadership of the PDSsystem and college, the directors decided to conduct an evaluability assessment before engaging in larger-scale outcomes and impact evaluation. Trevisan and Walser (2014) define evaluability assessment (EA) as the systematic investigation of program characteristics, context, activities, processes, implementation, outcomes, and logic to determine:

- The extent to which the theory of how a program is intended to work aligns with the program as it is implemented and perceived in the field,
- The plausibility that the program will yield positive results as currently conceived and implemented, and
- The feasibility of and best approaches for further evaluation of the program. (14)

Thus, EA served as exploratory evaluation to clarify how the PDSsystem is intended to work, the extent to which stakeholders understand and agree with that intention, the extent to which PDSsystem implementation aligns with that intention, and the best approaches for further and ongoing evaluation of the PDSsystem. As others have similarly noted (Pepper et al., 2012), we needed to first understand what our PDS model had become and if that was what it should be before embarking on a resource-intensive outcomes and impact evaluation. The EA approach also emphasizes context and stakeholder involvement, which are important to PDS evaluation (Reed et al., 2001). The following sections describe the EA process and methods. Subsequent sections include EA results, findings and recommendations, and implications for practice.

Evaluability Assessment Process and Methods

The evaluability assessment process included (a) focusing the EA, (b) developing an initial program theory, (c) gathering feedback on program theory, and (d) using the EA (Trevisan & Walser, 2014).

Focusing the EA. The WCE Assessment Director and PDSsystem Director determined the purpose of the EA and that an EA work group of key PDSsystem stakeholders was needed to support the EA. Thus, the EA was a collaborative effort of the WCE Assessment Director and an

EA work group including the Associate Dean for Teacher Education and Outreach, Data Administration Specialist, Director of Professional Experiences, PDSsystem Director, PDSsystem Administrative Associate, Teacher-in-Residence, Director of the Education Laboratory, Field Experience Coordinator, and Outreach Liaison.

Developing an initial program theory. The EA work group met weekly for one and a half months to develop an initial program theory of the PDSsystem—the logic of how the PDSsystem is intended to work. Document review and discussion led to the resulting theory, which was depicted as a framework of key activities, outcomes, and impacts of the PDSsystem (see Table 1). The outcomes are intended for teacher candidates, P-12 teachers, and WCE faculty. The framework is in alignment with the Nine Essentials of a PDS (NAPDS, 2008), highlighting teacher preparation and professional development as key activities and including student outcomes as an intended impact of the PDS.

Table 1
Program Theory Framework of the PDSsystem

Key Activities	Outcomes	Impacts
Teacher Preparation	Increase content and pedagogical knowledge and skills:	Improve the lives, learning, and opportunities of all students:
Professional Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Think critically, using inquiry, reflection, and data to problem solve and make decisions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Improve B-12 student academic achievement. ▪ Enhance the curriculum, structures, and school culture and community ties for B-12 school and UNCW staff and faculty.
Grant and Research Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Integrate academic and practitioner knowledge, applying theory to practice. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Engage B-12 students in enrichment activities.
Communication and Advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Differentiate instruction based on student needs and changing instructional environments. 	<p>Advance the education profession:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Prepare quality educators. ▪ Increase the longevity of educators in the profession. ▪ Advocate for best practices.
Monitoring and Evaluation	<p>Improve skills related to professional dispositions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Demonstrate leadership and professionalism. ▪ Engage in innovation and collaboration to impact positive change. ▪ Develop empowered and confident professionals. ▪ Believe that all students can learn. 	

Improve leadership capacity for teacher preparation, professional development, grant and research support, communication and advocacy, and monitoring and evaluation:

- Engage as a professional network and learning community.
 - Model best practices.
 - Increase the relevance of program and course content, using a theory to practice model.
 - Produce meaningful school-based research.
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As part of EA work group deliberations, members also identified stakeholder groups to collect data from for the next phase of the EA, gathering feedback on program theory. The PDSsystem Director and WCE Assessment Director later narrowed the list given priorities and resource constraints.

Gathering feedback on program theory. The purpose of this component of EA is to determine if the theory of a program aligns with program reality—reality being perceptions of the program and its implementation. Thus, we gathered feedback to determine if stakeholder perceptions of the program and its implementation aligned with the initial program theory framework (see Table 1). The following evaluation questions related to perceptions and implementation of the PDSsystem guided this work; questions are based on the evaluability assessment work of Trevisan and Walser (2014), and Smith (1989):

1. What is the overall perception of the PDSsystem, including its benefits and implementation? How do different groups perceive the benefits and limitations of the PDSsystem?
2. Who is the perceived audience for the PDSsystem? Who does it serve? Who should it serve? What do different groups perceive the audience of the PDSsystem to be?
3. What are the perceived goals of the PDSsystem? What should the goals be? What do different groups perceive the goals of the PDSsystem to be?

Additional evaluation questions were included to determine best approaches for further evaluation of the PDSsystem:

4. What type of evaluation information would be useful to PDSsystem stakeholders?
5. How available and accessible have different groups been in the EA process? How available and accessible would they be for further evaluation?
6. What types of data are already collected as part of PDSsystem implementation and operations?
7. What factors are facilitators or barriers to further, ongoing evaluation of the PDSsystem?

Data collection methods for gathering feedback are described below (see appendix for instruments).

Partnership teacher focus groups (N=8). The purpose of these interviews was to gain partnership teacher perspectives on the theory, or intent, of the PDSsystem; PDSsystem implementation; and the type of evaluation information that would be beneficial. The PDSsystem Director recruited focus group participants by sending an email invitation, and a follow-up email, to all partnership teachers with the scheduled dates and times for each of the three focus group interview sessions. Those who chose to participate confirmed their intent with the PDS Director and served as volunteer participants. Two focus groups included two participants and one focus group included four participants. The WCE Assessment Director conducted the focus groups at the College of Education. They were recorded and transcribed; thematic analysis was conducted. This included an initial reading of the transcriptions; subsequent readings, coding, and identification of recurring themes in the data; and categorization of data according to themes.

Key PDSsystem personnel individual interviews (N=5). The purpose of these interviews was to gain key PDSsystem personnel perspectives on the theory of the PDSsystem, PDSsystem implementation, and the type of evaluation information that would be beneficial. Items closely paralleled those asked of partnership teachers. The WCE Assessment Director contacted key PDSsystem personnel by email and asked them to participate in an interview; all who were invited to participate did. The WCE Assessment Director scheduled the interviews and conducted them at the College of Education. They were recorded and transcribed; thematic analysis was conducted. This included an initial reading of the transcriptions; subsequent readings, coding, and identification of recurring themes in the data; and categorization of data according to themes.

PDSsystem partnership district/school administrator survey (N=25). The purpose of this survey was to gain administrator perspectives on the theory of the PDSsystem and PDSsystem implementation. Items align closely with the key activities, outcomes, and impacts identified in the PDSsystem program theory framework (see Table 1). The PDSsystem Director administered the electronic survey by sending an email containing the survey link to all partnership administrators, along with a follow-up reminder about the survey. Data analysis included descriptive statistics for rating scale items and thematic analysis for open-ended items; that is, open-ended responses were coded, recurring themes were identified, and responses were categorized according to themes.

Faculty focus group (N=8). The purpose of this interview was to gain [name deleted for blind review] faculty perspectives on the theory of the PDSsystem, PDSsystem implementation, and the type of evaluation information that would be beneficial. Faculty were recruited through department chairs to make sure there was representation for each of the departments in the college; faculty responded to an email from their department chair to volunteer to participate. The WCE Assessment Director conducted the focus group at the College of Education. It was recorded and transcribed; thematic analysis was conducted. This included an initial reading of the transcriptions; subsequent readings, coding, and identification of recurring themes in the data; and categorization of data according to themes.

Additional data analysis. Once data were analyzed for each data collection method as described above, the results from the partnership teacher focus groups, key PDSsystem personnel individual interviews, and faculty focus group were further analyzed. Parallel items and the

development of a within-case, role-ordered matrix (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014) facilitated the review of results across each stakeholder group (partnership teachers, key PDSystem personnel, and faculty) for common and discrepant themes.

Using the EA. The WCE Assessment Director shared the EA results with the EA work group in a scheduled meeting for discussion and development of findings and recommendations. Based on this discussion, the WCE Assessment Director drafted an evaluation report, shared it with the EA work group for their feedback, and finalized the report (Walser, 2014).

Evaluability Assessment Results

Results are organized by evaluation question and include results regarding perceptions of the PDSystem and its implementation and best approaches for further PDSystem evaluation.

What is the overall perception of the PDSystem, including its benefits and implementation? How do different groups perceive the benefits and limitations of the PDSystem? Overall, the PDSystem was viewed as a true and beneficial partnership. When those interviewed in focus groups or individually were asked to jot down or say the first three words that came to mind in thinking about the PDSystem, the most common word was “collaboration.” Other words indicating the spirit of partnership included: community, connected, cooperative, reciprocal, communication, partnership, assistance, coaching, nurturing, support, and respect.

Based on results of focus group and individual interviews, a commonly identified strength was that there is a positive perception of the PDSystem in partnership schools. Other identified strengths and impacts of the PDSystem differed somewhat depending on the group being asked and their relationship with the PDSystem. This was also the case when asked about areas of concern/areas for improvement. Partnership teacher responses focused on strengths related to teacher candidates, noting better preparation of candidates in recent years (e.g., content knowledge, pedagogy, and professional dispositions). One partnership teacher described teacher candidates as having “fewer tears” and being “more confident.” Key PDSystem personnel and faculty identified strengths more broadly, noting PDSystem support of teacher candidates, P-12 teachers, schools, and faculty. PDSystem personnel and partnership teachers identified several specific PDSystem impacts on teacher candidates and P-12 teachers—a common impact identified was that the relationship with the partnership teacher allows teacher candidates to try new things. Partnership teachers also cited impacts on P-12 teachers, such as learning about new and innovative ideas from teacher candidates, and partnership teachers having to be “on their A-game” when hosting an intern.

Regarding areas of concern/areas for improvement, partnership teacher responses focused on teacher candidate preparation (e.g., classroom management and using data for decision making) and communication with faculty supervisors. A notable response theme was that partnership teachers want to be more involved with the PDSystem and want to get other teachers involved with PDSystem and hosting teacher candidates during their internships. Common response themes from key PDSystem personnel and faculty included concerns about ensuring that partnership teachers are rewarded, financially and otherwise, for their work hosting teacher candidate interns and the limited resources of the PDSystem given its breadth. As one PDSystem personnel noted, “There’s a difficulty in developing and extending the strategic vision for the PDS when the maintenance of it takes so much time.”

Another important theme was the need to improve faculty understanding of and engagement with the PDSystem. Key PDSystem personnel identified this as a need, and based on responses, and sometimes a lack of responses from faculty, greater understanding of the PDSystem, its purpose, and its work is needed. One faculty member was processing what PDS means during the focus group interview, commenting, “Who is PDS? It’s me. It has to be all of the faculty...our collective responsibility.”

In addition, based on the results of the partnership school and district administrator survey, overall, administrators rated the PDSystem highly on the seven items related to the work of the PDSystem, indicating a positive perception of the PDSystem. The seven items, rated on a 4-point scale, were: increases content and pedagogical knowledge and skills of pre-service educators through teacher preparation (mean = 3.24); increases content and pedagogical knowledge and skills of in-service educators through professional development (mean = 3.12); improves skills related to professional dispositions of pre-service educators through teacher preparation (mean = 3.28); improves skills related to professional dispositions of in-service educators through professional development (mean = 3.29); improves leadership capacity for teacher preparation, professional development, grant and research support, communication and advocacy, and monitoring and evaluation (mean = 3.24); improves the lives, learning, and opportunities for all students (P-12) (mean = 3.17); and advances the education profession (mean = 3.46). The highest rated item was “advances the education profession” (mean = 3.46), defined in the survey as preparing quality educators, increasing the longevity of educators in the profession, and advocating for best practices. As one administrator responded to the open-ended survey item, which provided space for additional comments, “The Watson College of Education has done a great job reaching out and partnering with school districts. This collaboration should continue as we work together to prepare new teachers for the field and improve upon the practice of current teachers.”

Who is the perceived audience for the PDSystem? Who does it serve? Who should it serve? What do different groups perceive the audience of the PDSystem to be? Audiences identified by partnership teachers and key PDSystem personnel included P-12 students, teacher candidates, principals, and the school system/administration. Partnership teachers also identified the community; key PDSystem personnel also identified parents and WCE faculty who work with teacher candidates. Similarly, when asked to rate where the PDSystem should focus its efforts, overall, school and district administrators rated teacher preparation the highest (mean = 2.92 on a 3-point scale) followed by professional development (mean = 2.56), communication and advocacy (mean = 2.52), and grant and research support (mean = 2.38); indicating that teacher candidates should be a primary focus of the PDSystem.

What are the perceived goals of the PDSystem? What should the goals be? What do different groups perceive the goals of the PDSystem to be? Key PDSystem personnel and faculty noted positive impacts on P-12 students and professional development for P-12 teachers as goals for PDSystem. Faculty also identified research as a component, and key PDSystem personnel noted the importance of collaboration, connection, and reciprocity between the college and school partners. Partnership teachers saw the goals of the PDSystem as being focused on teacher candidates and providing them with real-world experiences. Based on ratings of school and district administrators regarding where the PDSystem should focus its efforts, all four areas—teacher preparation, professional development, communication and advocacy, and grant

and research support—received mean ratings above 2 on a 3-point scale, indicating that the PDSsystem should focus on all areas. Teacher preparation had the highest mean rating (mean = 2.92) indicating that this should be a main focus.

What type of evaluation information would be useful to PDSsystem stakeholders? Key PDSsystem personnel identified formative evaluation and impact evaluation as approaches needed to provide information for improvement and to determine impacts of the PDSsystem on P-12 students, teacher practice, and the region. As one key PDS personnel suggested, “Because it’s been around for 22 years now...what impact has there been socially, economically on the region?” They also noted the need to determine how they are doing in addressing the goals of school partners. Further, partnership teachers’ evaluation needs focused on information about how they are doing and how they can improve in their role. For example, one teacher commented, “In their first year of teaching what do grads want...what worked well? Help us improve.” Partnership teachers and WCE faculty are also interested in reviewing evaluation results from previous and future evaluations. Additionally, key PDSsystem personnel noted needing direct and clear recommendations from evaluation. Faculty further suggested comparing what the WCE PDSsystem is doing to other university PDSs, as well as the importance of including all stakeholder groups in evaluation.

How available and accessible have different groups been in the EA process? How available and accessible would they be for further evaluation? Key PDSsystem personnel who participated as EA work group members were particularly generous with their time; several work group members also participated in an individual interview. Faculty who participated in a focus group volunteered; scheduling the interview was surprisingly easy given the busy schedules of faculty members. The availability of partnership teachers for focus group interviews was problematic due to the state’s End-of-Grade assessments. This pushed the interview times into summer, which limited the number of teachers in the focus groups. The response rate for the PDSsystem Partnership District/School Administrator Survey was low: 25 out of 169 administrators completed the survey (14.8%).

What types of data are already collected as part of PDSsystem implementation and operations? As mentioned, the WCE Database and Collaborative Portal provides monitoring data for the PDSsystem and the PDSsystem administers training and other surveys to provide formative information. The WCE Assessment Office also compiles data (e.g., exit survey, alumni survey, teacher candidate performance and teacher performance) as part of program assessment for each degree and licensure-only program.

What factors are facilitators or barriers to further, ongoing evaluation of the PDSsystem? Facilitators to further, ongoing evaluation of the PDSsystem include:

- Stakeholder groups represented in the EA are supportive of evaluation and want evaluation information to help them document strengths and improve their work.
- Data already collected for program assessment for the teacher education programs can be used in evaluation of the PDSsystem.
- State and accreditation requirements are expanding and will result in more data collection that could be used for PDSsystem evaluation.

Barriers to further, ongoing evaluation of the PDSsystem include the following:

- Ongoing evaluation will require the time of the WCE Assessment Office and the PDSystem Office to plan and manage evaluation work and both have limited resources for this.
- School partners will be important stakeholders in the evaluation; however, great consideration will have to be taken to increase their participation while making sure they are not over-burdened.

Limitations of the evaluability assessment. There were several limitations to the evaluability assessment of the PDSystem. This was an exploratory evaluation that was limited in scope. For example, the initial list of stakeholders to interview that was generated by the evaluation work group included school district personnel, principals, teachers, site coordinators, university supervisors, WCE faculty, allied programs faculty (from the College of Arts and Sciences), representatives from across UNCW, and community agency representatives. Given resource constraints, along with the purpose of the evaluation, this list was narrowed. In addition, as mentioned previously, because of the timing of the partnership teacher focus groups, participation was low. The response rate for the administrator survey was also low. Thus, the evaluation results represent the perspectives of stakeholder groups more closely involved with the PDSystem (partnership teachers and administrators, key PDSystem personnel, and WCE faculty); for partnership teachers and administrators, there are additional issues with representation within the groups due to low participation. That said, this was an exploratory evaluation intended to provide initial, formative evaluation and to inform subsequent, more comprehensive monitoring and evaluation.

Evaluability Assessment Findings and Recommendations

The EA was conducted as exploratory evaluation to clarify how the PDSystem is intended to work (the theory of the PDSystem), the extent to which stakeholders understand and agree with that intention, the extent to which PDSystem implementation aligns with that intention, and best approaches for further and ongoing evaluation of the PDSystem. An initial program theory was articulated and depicted as a framework of key activities, outcomes, and impacts that describe how the PDSystem is intended to work (see Table 1). Data were collected from key stakeholder groups to determine if they understand and agree with the theory of how the PDSystem is intended to work and to determine the extent to which PDSystem implementation aligns with the theory. Data were also collected to identify best approaches for further and ongoing evaluation of the PDSystem.

For the most part, the “theory” of the PDSystem was validated. Perspectives and implementation of the PDSystem largely aligned with the framework of how the PDSystem is intended to work and several strengths of the PDSystem were noted. One gap in alignment was a lack of broad understanding of the PDSystem by some stakeholders. For example, partnership teachers and faculty members were only or mostly familiar with the component of the PDSystem that they had been directly involved in, such as teacher preparation. They lacked knowledge of other components of the PDSystem and its broader purpose. A related issue was the lack of evidence from the EA of simultaneous renewal of the College, its faculty, and its teacher education program. The general perception among partnership teachers, key PDSystem personnel, WCE faculty, and partnership district/school administrators was that teacher

candidates and P-12 teachers are main PDSsystem audiences that have been positively impacted by the partnership; however, the College, WCE faculty, and the teacher education program were largely overlooked as an audience and beneficiary.

In addition, resources were a concern that was voiced. Inadequate resources to support the work of the PDSsystem could negatively influence the plausibility of the PDSsystem achieving intended outcomes and impacts. Finally, during the process of developing an initial program theory, it became clear that the EA work group needed to be expanded to include representatives from the Office of Professional Experiences (the Field Experience Coordinator), the Education Laboratory (Director of the Education Laboratory), and the Outreach Liaison. This expansion of the work group evidenced the need for the PDSsystem to be treated as a complex system that relies on relationships with other WCE offices, WCE programs and faculty, and school partners to achieve its outcomes and impacts. A failure to do so would threaten plausibility.

Recommendations

Use the program theory framework to communicate the work of the PDSsystem. To support understanding and consistent communication regarding the PDSsystem, finalize the program theory framework of the PDSsystem (see Table 1) and use this as the basis for communicating the key activities, outcomes, and impacts of the PDSsystem. This will create a common language for discussion and understanding of the PDSsystem.

Identify strategies for increasing involvement of faculty and B-12 teachers with the PDSsystem. The PDSsystem Director, the Associate Dean for Teacher Education and Outreach, and others as needed should consider this recommendation and potential strategies. During the EA work group results discussion, members noted the need for an advisory committee to support the work of the PDSsystem. Such a committee could, as one goal, identify and monitor strategies for increasing involvement and help refocus efforts towards simultaneous renewal.

Use program assessment results for teacher preparation programs as part of ongoing evaluation of the PDSsystem. The WCE Assessment Office works with WCE programs to develop annual program assessment reports. The results of these reports for teacher education programs can be used in evaluation of the PDSsystem.

Develop an evaluation plan for ongoing evaluation of the PDSsystem. The WCE Assessment Office should work with the PDSsystem Director, the Associate Dean of Teacher Education and Outreach, and other stakeholders as needed (potentially a PDSsystem advisory committee—see recommendation 2 above) to develop a plan for ongoing evaluation of the PDSsystem. The key activities, outcomes, and impacts described in the program theory framework of the PDSsystem (see Table 1) should be the focus of evaluation. Attention should be given to faculty outcomes and organizational learning that impacts College and teacher education program work, in addition to outcomes for teacher candidates and P-12 teachers. The plan should include formative evaluation and outcome/impact evaluation, stakeholder involvement, and methods for disseminating evaluation results to key stakeholder audiences.

Implications for Practice

Recommendations from the evaluability assessment have led to several actions in the last year. The PDSystem Office conducted a brief faculty survey to gauge faculty perceptions and their level of connectedness to our PDSystem and has engaged in discussions regarding the distinction between student placements and professional development for partners. The Office has developed a new graphic representation of the simultaneous focus on new teacher preparation, teacher/faculty growth, and school reform. In addition, the PDSystem Director has convened an advisory board, which consists of school partners and university faculty who play key roles in the system.

Since the EA, faculty and school partners have engaged in conversations regarding more authentic opportunities for collaboration and, prompted by a growing teacher shortage, have discussed collaborative opportunities for teacher recruitment and retention. These discussions have also prompted opportunities for more in-depth exploration of practices within our teacher education programs. For example, the PDSystem Office is currently conducting a comprehensive study of our supervision model. In addition, the Office is leading a school partner-faculty workgroup to discuss recruitment opportunities for high school seniors. Collaborative partnerships such as this have prompted our teacher education programs to re-examine core educational coursework. The PDSystem continues to work with partners to identify opportunities for more intensive Tier 3 partnerships and has begun to address opportunities for growth in regards to administrator support and professional development.

The WCE Assessment Director has convened a newly formed Teacher Education Program Evaluation Advisory Group. The purpose of this group is to advise the development of an evaluation plan for the WCE teacher education program as a whole, including the PDSystem. The advisory group includes the PDSystem Director, the Dean of Teacher Education and Outreach, the Professional Experiences Office Director, and the Program Coordinators for each teacher preparation degree or licensure-only program. Results of the evaluability assessment are being used to inform the plan.

For others engaged in PDS work, evaluability assessment may serve as a useful approach in the development of a monitoring and evaluation system, including outcomes and impact evaluation. Its focus on context, stakeholder involvement, and use of evaluation results provides information useful for formative improvement and for forwarding meaningful and feasible outcome and impact evaluation. Each focus serves as a critical component in a process of ongoing reflection and growth, as we continue to explore the impact of our partnership work.

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Appendix: Data Collection Instruments**Watson College of Education
Professional Development System Partnership
Focus Group**

The purpose of this focus group is to gather perceptions of the Watson College of Education Professional Development System (PDS) Partnership.

Getting Started: Introductions, purpose of the focus group (5-10 minutes)

Ground Rules

- Everyone will be asked to talk during the focus group.
- Each person's opinions count and may be different from those of others in the group.
- Participants should not interrupt each other.
- It is permissible to develop ideas and thoughts based on what others in the group may have suggested.

Question 1: What are the first 3 words that come to mind when you think of the WCE PDS partnership?

Please write down your response.

Question 2: What is your overall perception of the PDS? How has the PDS impacted you and others? What do you think about how the PDS is implemented? What are the strengths? Are there areas of concern? (15 minutes)

Question 3: Who is the audience for the PDS? Who does it serve? Who should it serve? What do you think the goals of the PDS partnership are and/or should be? (10 minutes)

Question 4: In ongoing evaluation of the PDS, what would you like to know? What should the focus of evaluation be? (10 minutes)

**Watson College of Education
Professional Development System Partnership
Individual Interview**

The purpose of this interview is to gather your perceptions of the Watson College of Education Professional Development System (PDS) Partnership.

Question 1: What are the first 3 words that come to mind when you think of the WCE PDS partnership?

Question 2: Who is the audience for the PDS? Who does it serve? How has the PDS impacted these audiences? What do you think the goals of the PDS partnership are and/or should be?

Question 3: What is your overall perception of the PDS? What do you think about how the PDS is implemented? What are the strengths? Are there areas of concern?

Question 4: If you were granted 3 wishes for the PDS, what would they be?

Question 5: In ongoing evaluation of the PDS, what would you like to know? What should the focus of evaluation be?

**Watson College of Education Professional Development System Partnership
Administrator Feedback Survey**

**This survey was administered online through an electronic survey program.*

Part One: Please rate the extent to which you believe the Watson College of Education Professional Development System Partnership currently facilitates each of the following.

Scale: 1 = Does Not Facilitate; 2 = Somewhat Facilitates; 3 = Facilitates; 4 = Facilitates Well

Increases content and pedagogical knowledge and skills of pre-service educators through teacher preparation.

- Think critically, using inquiry, reflection, and data to problem solve and make decisions.
- Integrate academic and practitioner knowledge, applying theory to practice.
- Differentiate instruction based on student needs and changing instructional environments.

Increases content and pedagogical knowledge and skills of in-service educators through professional development.

- Think critically, using inquiry, reflection, and data to problem solve and make decisions.
- Integrate academic and practitioner knowledge, applying theory to practice.
- Differentiate instruction based on student needs and changing instructional environments.

Improves skills related to professional dispositions of pre-service educators through teacher preparation.

- Demonstrate leadership and professionalism.
- Engage in innovation and collaboration to impact positive change.
- Develop empowered and confident professionals.
- Believe that all students can learn.

Improves skills related to professional dispositions of in-service educators through professional development.

- Demonstrate leadership and professionalism.
- Engage in innovation and collaboration to impact positive change.
- Develop empowered and confident professionals.
- Believe that all students can learn.

Improves leadership capacity for teacher preparation, professional development, grant and research support, communication and advocacy, and monitoring and evaluation.

- Engage as a professional network and learning community.
- Model best practices.
- Increase the relevance of program and course content, using a theory to practice model.
- Produce meaningful school-based research.

Improves the lives, learning, and opportunities of all students (P-12).

- Improve student academic achievement.

- Enhance the curriculum, structures, and school culture and community ties for P-12 school and UNCW staff and faculty.
- Engage students in enrichment activities.

Advances the education profession.

- Prepare quality educators.
- Increase the longevity of educators in the profession.
- Advocate for best practices

Part Two: Please rate the extent to which the Watson College of Education Professional Development System Partnership should focus on each of the following areas.

1 = Should not be a focus; 2 = Should be given some focus; 3 = Should be a key focus

Teacher preparation

- Assess candidate experiences and identify teachers and school settings to align candidate needs with quality placements.
- Explore and add alternate placements—e.g., community organizations, early childhood centers.
- Provide the context for application of content, pedagogy, and professional dispositions.
- Use the Education Lab to demonstrate a model classroom, provide tutoring experiences, provide teaching and learning resources, and provide a “lab” for faculty and student research.
- Facilitate communication with university faculty, partners, and teacher candidates.
- Monitor and evaluate teacher candidate progress (formative and summative).
- Provide Partnership Teacher Orientation, refresher meetings, and ongoing support.

Professional development

For example:

- Professional Learning Day (partnership teachers)
- Technology Workshops (partnership teachers)
- Master Teacher Program (partnership teachers)
- Mini-Workshops (site coordinators)
- On-Site PD for specific schools on topics they’ve requested (all)
- Culturally Responsive Teaching (partnership and other teachers in partnership districts)
- Online Courses—e.g., leadership, literacy, technology (all)
- Mentor workshops (all)
- National Board Certification workshops (all teachers with 3+ years of experience)
- First Year of Teaching and Promise of Leadership Award (first year teachers-all)
- NCDPI Sessions and Instructional Updates (all)
- Yearlong leadership series with the Southeast Education Alliance (all)

Grant and research support

- Assist with writing grant proposals.

- Link WCE faculty with school districts based on needs and interests, grant opportunities, and timeline.
- Provide WCE faculty with information and forms for school district IRB processes.
- PD-related grants—e.g., ELMS, INCOME, MACC, Project-Based Mathematics.
- Fund and support WCE faculty and teacher collaborative research projects.
- Collaborate with community organizations and nonprofits.

Communication and advocacy

- Disseminate relevant research and best practices to partnership districts.
- Disseminate relevant WCE and other information to partnership districts—e.g., publications and newsletters.
- Advocate for policies that support the teaching and learning of all students.
- Southeastern Regional Education Summit
- Dropout Prevention Coalition
- Partner with faculty and units across campus to provide and support PD—e.g., African Americans in Education Conference, Technology Conference, AIG Mini Conference, P-12 student enrichment programs.
- Provide in-reach to UNCW—e.g., provide leadership for working in and partnering with schools.
- Provide awards and recognition—e.g., Roy Harkin Award, Promise of Leadership Award.
- Serve as a liaison and advocate at the regional, state, and national levels—e.g., regional superintendent meetings, professional meetings and conferences.
- Provide a professional network.

Part Three: Please provide comments related to your ratings in Parts One and Two of the survey and any additional areas of focus the Watson College of Education Professional Development System Partnership should consider.