

**A “Medical Model” Professional Development School:
A Partnership for Teacher Education**

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to highlight an innovative EC-4 teacher education program that was created by a state university and a public school district partnership creating a Professional Development School (PDS). The PDS has received two awards for its contributions to innovation. The university-school collaboration attempts to restructure teaching and learning for the preparation of teachers in a school context to provide authentic opportunities for teacher preparation. Interns learn and teach for a full academic year in a standards-based, authentic, performance-based learning environment and demonstrate transformative education through experiential learning. The scope includes rationale, challenges, opportunities, lessons learned, data-driven reform, and successes. Conclusion of the report considers implications of the outcomes for school-university collaboration which heralds successes, yet warrants continued inquiry of the teacher education program and areas for further study.

The Demands of Current School Reforms

A growing disparity of supply and demand of quality public teachers continues to be an increasing concern of education stakeholders in some areas with crisis proportions in specific subjects. This is especially true for the state of Texas, where in a six year span between 1996 and 2002, the demand for public school teachers increased by nearly 50 percent (Fuller, 2002). While the number of teachers certified has been increasing to date (Herbert, 2004), attrition rates are impacting some teaching areas and districts.

The mandate of a highly qualified teacher in every classroom is the focus of the implementation of the *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) Act (U.S. Department of Education, 2001a) that all teachers in the nation will have to promote maximum learning of all students’ potential. The NCLB Act places an even greater burden on public schools to address this challenge. “The emerging research, coupled with the legislative mandate, has made providing a highly qualified and caring teacher in each classroom a national, state and local imperative” (The Education Alliance, 2006, p.1).

Linda Darling-Hammond (1998) defines teacher quality by the following indicators—education and examination scores for certification and experience; and presents research findings on the effects of teacher quality. The single most important factor for improving teacher quality is

evidence of student achievement; therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that high quality teacher preparation programs are critical.

Researchers (Ingersoll, 2003a; Ingersoll, 2003b; Boe, Cook and Sunderland, 2007; McCreight, 2000) state a variety of reasons for the teacher shortage pointing to teacher retention as the primary culprit. Carolyn McCreight (2000) reports, “Teacher attrition is the largest single factor determining demand for additional teachers in the U.S.” (p.4). The National Education Association (2001, n.d.) reports a turnover rate that contributes to the major problem affecting the lack of qualified teachers to meet the demand. Furthermore, it is approximated that one-third of all novice teachers will leave the classroom within a three year span, and one-half will probably drop from the profession during the first five years. The National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future (2007) points to the yearly turnover of teachers leaving the profession at 50% higher for schools with high percentages of poverty than the more affluent counterparts, thereby increasing the hiring of highly unqualified or unprepared to fill those vacancies. High turnover rates affect the poor schools and minority students.

The Alliance for Excellent Education (2005) reports that local school districts, states, and the nation as a whole are burdened with the estimated cost of teacher attrition. Thomas Carol, Acting President of The National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future in 2009, reports the enormity of the cost per teacher: “recruiting, training, and mentoring each new hire, which can range from \$4,300 in a small rural district to \$17,000 in a large urban district” (p. 8). Because of the high cost of human and financial capital (with recruiting and training replacements factored in), the total estimate is obscure.

The American Educational Research Association (AERA) Panel on Research and Teacher Education, which monitors teacher education topics such as teacher characteristics and demographics, reports an increasing percentage of the neophyte teaching staff are predominately female, white and monolingual and often obtain initial appointments in low-performing schools with larger incidence of poverty and minority students (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005, cited in The Education Alliance, 2006). These findings provide some guidance as to the difference of novice teachers’ content knowledge, effectiveness, and retention in high-poverty versus more affluent schools.

“Research has confirmed that high rates of attrition from teaching are often a function of inadequate preparation and support in the early years, along with poor salaries and working conditions” (Darling-Hammond & Bartz-Snowden, 2005, p. 53). Further, the researchers report, “A somewhat higher rate of attrition for beginning teachers should be expected as they assess the fit of the qualifications and interests to the demands of classroom teaching” (p. 25). A high probability of novice teachers choosing teaching as a life-long career is dependent on their feeling of competency in the classroom. It is reasonable to conclude that high quality teacher preparation programs are critical.

Making a Case

In an effort to address concerns about teacher placement in one high risk area, a university and school make a case for a pilot PDS institution taking guidance from the teacher- education

literature. Literature on teacher preparation advocates that a critical element of effective teacher education is an extensive internship in a PDS (National Commission on Teaching & America’s Future, 1996; Darling-Hammond, 1998, 1999; Darling-Hammond & Baratz-Snowden, 2005). As a result of the experience, PDS interns (1) feel more confident than the traditionally trained student teachers in knowledge and skill as a professional, (2) experience less anxiety in transitioning from being a student to becoming a practicing teachers, and (3) feel more at ease to work with diverse student populations and have lower attrition rates during the first few years to teaching (Abdal-Haqq, 1998). “Graduates of PDSs should be better prepared for the difficult first years of teaching than those pre-service teachers who experience a traditional campus-based program” (Mantle-Bromley, Gould, McWhorter, & Whaley, 2000, p. 2). Darling-Hammond, in an undated publication funded by the Gates Foundation on restructuring high schools, states,

Professional development schools, which now number many hundreds across the country, offer promise for supporting both beginning and veteran teachers in developing state-of-the-art practice in settings. Like teaching hospitals in the medical profession, these are schools that model best practices and are structured to foster the learning professionals and support such practice and provide needed coaching and collaboration (p. 6).

Research findings in a report published by the Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy at the University of Washington reinforce the viewpoint that the correlation of basic pedagogy of teacher-education preparation and content courses make a difference in teaching practice and, in turn, student achievement. Clinical experiences integrated with content are more effective than just subject–matter courses; the overriding influence of the cooperating teacher adds to the impact and authenticity viewed as fundamental of teacher education. (Wilson, Floden, & Ferrin-Mundy, 2001).

Collaboration for an Action Plan

The proposal of creating a professional development school was clearly advocated by leadership of the school-university collaborative due to major concerns for preparing teachers for high risk schools. Discussions for a partnership began with conversations between the superintendent of an ISD and the dean of the College of Arts and Sciences and Education (CASE) regarding areas of collaborative needs such as explicit attention for an innovative model of teacher education to develop highly-qualified teachers to meet the needs of high-risk students and to increase the retention rate of highly qualified teachers especially for high-risk campuses. In the spring of 2004, the superintendent and the dean signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) establishing a partnership and the school as a PDS.

The National Council for Accreditation of Teachers (NCATE, 2001) reports: “PDS partners share a common vision of teaching and learning grounded in research and practice. Learning grounded in research and practitioner knowledge. They believe that adults and children learn best in the contest of practice. Learning supported by this community results in changes and improvement individual practice in the policies and practices of the partnering institutions” (p. 11).

According to Teitel (1998) the initial stage of creating sustainable professional development schools is about mutual partnership formation, “some sense of mutual interdependence” (p. 41). A

partnership is created on the basis of achieving the common goals internally through the efforts to work across two organizations: a public independent school district (ISD) and a public upper level university. A collaborative environment is created by the attributes of the setting, the methods courses, and the university and school personnel.

A contractual agreement was formulated during the spring of 2004 between school district and university with the expectation that all PDS participants—students, interns, master teachers, regular classroom teachers, administrators, supervisors, and university faculty—are learners. The *Professional Development School Partnership Agreement* (2004) reflects parity in governance, resource allocation, funding and collaborative working relationships which integrates theory and practice for the delivery of instruction for all students.

Two non-negotiable items were established: Students enrolled as interns will have a quality training to warrant a 100% pass rate of all state standardized tests required for certification and students in the classrooms would continue to learn in a rich environment to allow them an opportunity to reach their maximum educational potential and to make improved gains on the annual state standardized testing, Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS). (Texas Education Agency, Academic Excellence Indicator System [AEIS] Report, August, 2007-2008)

Equitable Funding

The funding source for the university-school project results from the equitable and collaborative relationship between the partners. The ISD pays each master teacher (MT) a stipend above the standard regular pay scale and pays each teaching intern (TI) an annual salary approximately equivalent to a highly qualified paraprofessional. Interns are granted the same benefits granted to MTs related to various leave: sick, personal, and professional. The university grants a tenured faculty member quarter time reassignment to serve as PDS Liaison and for additional service during the academic year. The school provides an office for the PDS Liaison from which to perform the day to day responsibilities and spaces on the school campus for university course classrooms. In order to meet expected budgetary considerations, sources are identified in skeletal budgets outlining fiscal implications for both the university and the school. The *Professional Development School Proposal* (2004) formed the school-university partnership for the PDS elementary school.

The *A & M Regents Initiative for Excellence in Education* served as a partner during the first year in developing, implementing, and refining this model program through two supporting grants: one for developing the curriculum framework and a second for the evaluation of the pilot program after the first year and the documentation of findings. All operational funds have been provided by the partners of the collaboration.

The funding source for the project results from the fiscal collaborative relationship between the partners. The financial implications for the ISD monetary support of the PDS appear to be neutral with the exception of a one-time expenditure for additional equipment. The fiscal implication for the university is annual expenditure which includes the one-quarter released time for university liaison duties and workdays associated with the public school work year and additional adjunct salary expenditures.

Equity of governance and resources between school and university need to be specified in a partnership agreement. Equality of operating cost between partners in lieu of seeking grant funding will add to the sustainability to the program but is not a necessity.

Professional Development School Partnership

The PDS school-university partnership is founded on improvement and reform to education in the public schools. Dr. Linda Darling-Hammond (2005b) advocates that the importance of professional development schools is to serve as a clinical setting where teachers study with a mentor teacher.

The PDS movement endeavors to create a more effective learning environment by making educators at all levels true professional practitioners of best-practice. According to Lee Tietel (2003):

The purpose of professional schools is to promote student learning. PDSs do that by improving schools, preparing new teachers in better ways, supporting the growth and development of all educators and using inquiry and research to see what is working well and what is not (xvii).

Program Goals

The ultimate goal of the Professional Development School (PDS) is to serve as a clinical teacher laboratory to promote student learning. “PDSs do that by improving schools, preparing new teachers in better ways, supporting the growth and development of educators, and using inquiry and research to see what is working well and what is not” (Leivine, 2003, p. xvii.); by this means, a developmental internship for pre-service teachers to produce highly trained, confident, and qualified EC-4 teachers for public school classrooms.

The three comprehensive goals are:

- To provide a clinical teacher preparation program guided by standards-based curriculum that will give future teachers the competencies and experiences needed to be highly qualified teachers in challenging classrooms in high-risk schools (Griffin and Associates, 2002)
- To provide an academically and culturally rich learning environment that provides opportunities for all participants to reach their educational potential
- To establish a community of learners who focus on identifying experiences of high-need students and how this influences teaching.

PDS Curriculum Framework

A collaborative process occurs in the planning and decision making within and across institutions in formulating the curriculum framework. Morse (1995) advocates:

Curriculum decisions are made easier by a common framework shared by teachers, administrators, university faculty and teacher education students participating at the school. Teachers feel a sense of ownership for their instruction decisions and for the environment of their classroom while being guided by the broader curriculum framework. (p. 2)

Standards for EC-4 certification as mandated by The State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC) serve as a scaffold for developing a standards-based curriculum framework and as a guide for sustaining the teacher education program. The educational environment must uphold standards for best practice and a high level of success on state standardized tests. As an alternative to the traditional college classroom, the PDS provides a learning environment, an authentic classroom. The content and pedagogy required by the state for school and teacher-licensure are embedded into the daily responsibilities and activities of the TIs.

PDS Site

An elementary school within the public school district was chosen as the collaborative PDS site for three reasons: (1) the campus is a 50 year old former junior high school that has been remodeled and retrofitted to accommodate modern technology and promote a fluid learning environment. Basic design of the building is a continuous corridor of three-room classroom suites. Rooms of each suite open to each other and to the main hallway. This building plan was designed to accommodate team and model/demonstration teaching as well as the flexible grouping of students for differentiated instruction; (2) the campus is less than two miles from the university campus, facilitating easy access to both campuses by teacher interns, ISD staff, and university faculty; and (3) the demographics of the site present a racially and economically diverse student population with a high incidence of high-risk students that provides an ideal internship site to prepare future teachers to be successful in wide variety of the state public school campuses within a learning community.

Demographics

The Title 1 School serves approximately 400 students in pre-kindergarten through fifth grade with a high concentration of economically disadvantaged and racial minority students. Approximately 95% low SES receives free meals, breakfast and lunch. The ethnic composition consists of approximately 75 % African American, 14 % Caucasian, and 10 % Hispanic, with one percent identified as Other. Thirty percent of enrollment is transferred into the school. The campus houses a Preschool Program for Children with Disabilities (PPCD) and a central classroom for multi-handicapped students. Special Education consists of 14 percent with district programs included along with nine percent on campus with district programs extracted. Approximately four percent of students are identified as Limited English Proficient (LEP). (Texas Education Agency, August, 2005)

Grade levels K-4 identified as PDS serve an average of forty students (students to three member adult team will result in approximately a 1/16 teacher/student ratio) utilizing three teachers per grade, the PDS team (1MT/2 TIs) and another teacher for a self-contained classroom. The four grade level teachers, along with principal, graduate administrative intern/reading specialist, and

PDS liaison meet twice a month (more often if needed) as a team to address issues related to the given grade (student, instructional or community and school). Also, children with special needs are served by teacher specialists.

School Patrons

Decisions that impact the shared interest of the school-university shall be accomplished through a collaborative operations team consisting of School Principal, Vice-Principal, University Faculty Liaison, Adjunct Clinical Faculty, and Deputy Superintendent for Instructional Services.

A Shift in Paradigm

The typical teacher preparation program includes traditional university courses in content and pedagogy with a field experience course (typically consisting of observing/visiting in classroom, 12 – 15 week student teaching term with cooperating classroom teacher as mentor, a senior year experience where the future pre-service teacher actually assumes the major teaching responsibilities of a classroom for a total of two full weeks). Some public school and university educators think this is insufficient time for future teachers to gain the experiences and practice necessary to provide a high level of knowledge, skills, and confidence to promote success as a career teacher.

A related field of literature, adult learning, supports the premise that teacher preparation would benefit from a variety of life experiences that connect practice with theory. In examining effective approaches to helping adults learn, theorists have built upon John Dewey and others to determine the role of experience in construction of meaning. Brookfield (1983) explains that the process of experiential learning involves a direct encounter with the phenomena being studied rather than merely thinking about the encounter or only considering the possibility of doing something about it. The PDS year-long internship focuses on the medical model with university course work and school classroom experiences. This approach is supported by theorist David Kolb (1984) regarding the use of experiential learning elements in adult education to establish an authentic learning environment within a social context such as an elementary public school.

Kolb builds on the seminal work of John Dewey and Kurt Lewin to explain that knowledge acquisition is a circular continuum comprised of four levels of interaction. The model illustrates the connection between these levels as an individual attempts to make meaning out of knowledge—Reflective Observation (watching), Abstract Conceptualization (thinking), Active Experimentation (doing), and Concrete Experience (feeling). In the PDS environment, TIs are immersed into the experience of teaching while simultaneously participating in pedagogy-based coursework, enabling them to engage in all four levels of the continuum as a holistic process. Using concrete experiences in the teaching-learning process, the University Liaison incorporates standards-based curriculum into the discussion, the University Liaison and MT provide feedback related to the event, and the TI completes reflections about the experience as a means of providing meaning to the student teaching encounter. The PDS curriculum framework is based on state licensure standards, practiced within classrooms, and evaluated by performance-based assessments by university instructors, master teachers, and administrators.

The new paradigm is reflected in Standard I: Learning Community—Developmental Guidelines in The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) (2001) standards which states:

PDS partners share a common vision of teaching and learning grounded in research context of practice. Learning supported by this community results in changes and improvement individual practice in the policies and practices of the partnering institutions. (p. 11)

Identification of Key Personnel & Program Delivery

A university professor selected jointly by the Superintendent of Schools and the Dean of the School of Arts/Sciences and Education serves as PDS University Liaison. Additional joint school-university faculty appointments, appropriately qualified, teach university-level courses that support the teacher intern experience and work with the grade level master teachers to provide a rigorous learning experience in an authentic social context for the interns.

The PDS university liaison serves as a facilitator between university staff and the PDS master teachers to formulate a standards-based curriculum. University faculty submitted documentation of state competencies and objectives to be addressed in senior block courses. Next, the liaison and master teachers matched authentic classroom learning assignments with state standards and objectives to be implemented in the classroom followed by reflection. Linda Darling-Hammond (1997) emphasizes that “that local coherence is possible only if educators are encouraged to use resources such as standards and frameworks as tools for informing their own curriculum building rather than as mandates to implement unthinkingly” (p. 233).

University course content is delivered in multiple modalities: a variety of constructivist strategies, didactic instruction, modeling via demonstration lessons and team teaching, case studies, technology, and practice guided and independent. Assignments related to course work are embedded in the day-to-day classroom responsibilities. “Because teachers must learn about practice in practice, all programs—both traditional and alternative—should ensure well-supervised practicum opportunities, closely connected to course work, where they can learn from expert veterans who can model and coach effective teaching” (Darling-Hammond & Baratz-Snowden, 2005, p. 36). Course instruction offers “consistent opportunities to apply what they are learning, analyze what happens and adjust their efforts accordingly” (Darling-Hammond & Baratz-Snowden, 2005, p. 31).

The integration of theory and practice provides authentic learning experiences using performance-based assessments to be implemented by master teachers and the university faculty. Evaluation of performance-assessment documents for the internship practicum course and finalized by master teachers and the PDS Coordinator assure accountability for interns, as well as providing formative and summative feedback during interns’ first year of teaching and for assigning final university course grades.

Observations at each grade level

A specific schedule during the school term will provide for all interns to observe every grade level in addition to their assigned teaching assignment. Subsequent to visiting other classrooms, interns will be required to document the visit via a reflective essay. Observations on all grade levels will give interns a better perspective of the total elementary school program and students in the various grades levels.

PDS Program Design

Dr. Darling-Hammond has served to assist in the developing of certification standards for beginning teachers which reflects information regarding what teachers need to know to teach diverse learners. It is her contention that the traditional programs where students do all their course work up front—taking pedagogy courses, strategies, content, and classroom management—and then go into the classroom for a few weeks of student teaching is not sufficient. While presenting during a California Education Policy Seminar, Dr. Darling-Hammond (May, 1998) indicated that good programs should provide:

- A coherent curriculum that tightly intertwines theory and practice.
- Field work that is integrated with class work, coupled with support from carefully selected mentors.
- An extended clinical component, with a minimum of 30 weeks of student teaching.
- An emphasis on learning theory and child development, with extensive training in the ability to address the needs of diverse learners. (p.10)

The 18 semester hours that each intern takes during the PDS academic year, nine hours each semester, are taught as a holistic curriculum. A university adjunct faculty (who is also a Master Teacher) serves as faculty of record for 6 hours of special education content and the PDS Liaison is the faculty of record for the other course work; these two members team up to plan scope and sequence of all course content delivery and imbed it into the classroom for TI practice. Syllabi and assignment sheets identify standards to help students make connections between the work being done in seminars and classrooms with each of the standards.

Mieko Kamii and Susan Reditt (2002) advocate: “Student awareness of goals set by the standards, and the connection to course topics and assignments, is an important step in the preparation of teachers. But assessment must encompass both course inputs and student outcomes” (172). Class assignments related to the standards-based course content serves as a performance-based assessment to demonstrate the level of competency students have developed on topics of course content and standards to be addressed in state standardized assessments for certification.

The integration of theory and practice provides authentic learning experiences using performance-based assessments to be implemented by MTs and the PDS Liaison. Evaluation of performance-assessment documents for the internship practicum course and finalized by master teachers and the PDS Coordinator assures accountability for the TI, as well as providing formative and summative feedback during teaching interns’ first year of teaching and for assigning final university course grades. The curriculum framework serves as a guide for creating and sustaining an educational environment to uphold standards for best practice.

There are many events throughout the year that assist interns to become inculcated in the school district and form professional relationships. Teaching interns, accompanied by the PDS Liaison, attend district in-service days and a week of orientation for new teachers at the beginning of the school year followed by the beginning-of-school in-service for all district teachers and administrators, plus one full day of orientation on the PDS campus. Throughout the academic year, TIs and PDS Liaison attend various Saturday workshops which often can be in lieu of class time if they are addressing course standards and objectives.

A listing of professional development offerings are offered to the staff of the ISD. Teaching interns are encouraged to participate in offerings of their choice. The ISD professional development offerings are open to TIs and the university faculty as well. In addition, TIs and PDS Liaison are required to participate in all district in-service days and invited to attend any professional development offerings throughout the academic year.

MT/TI Relationships

The fundamental design of the PDS program utilizes a master teacher (MT) employed by the independent school district (ISD) and chosen by a district/university committee, who serves as a mentor/coach to two teacher interns (TIs) at each grade level (K-4). The TIs serve in this role for a full academic year in lieu of the traditional student teacher model of 12-15 weeks. Interns start the year-long internship in August with teacher in-service and serve until the last teacher work-day in June for a total of 185 days. Interns interact with students in some capacity from 7:45 am - 3:45 pm every school day. In addition, interns are expected to be available for after school, TBA seminars with university clinical faculty or PDS Liaison, with possible Saturday and evening workshops as needed and assigned.

The master teacher and TIs assume instructional responsibilities for approximately 40 students at each grade level. The remaining 22 students at each grade level were assigned to a traditional classroom under the direction of a certified teacher who also serves on a grade level team. Texas Education Agency (TEA) has granted a class-size waiver to the 22:1 student/teacher ratio in the “master teacher/teacher intern” classrooms (the assignment of 40 volunteer students to the three member adult team results in approximately a 1:16 teacher/student ratio).

The TIs are selected through an application and interview process conducted by a partnership committee; once selected, they serve as teachers under the direct supervision, both academically and physically, of a grade-level MT. All five MTs persist in their grade level appointments and have two novice PDS TIs assigned each academic year.

University Faculty and PDS Liaison

The university PDS Liaison works collaboratively with the grade level master teachers to provide a rigorous authentic learning experience for the TIs. In addition, the PDS Liaison teaches on site courses, team teaches with MTs and university adjunct faculty. She assists in ISD professional development, serves on school committee and instructional teams, and conducts research. The

PDS Liaison collaborates with the school principal, college dean and master teachers to co-present at meetings and conferences.

The MTs (with joint school and university faculty appointments when appropriately qualified) will teach university-level courses that support the teacher intern experience. A research study (Gajda & Cravedo, 2006) focused on utilizing experienced classroom teachers to serve as clinical faculty while giving them collegial support of practice. The findings of this study strongly suggest that the practice has the capacity to “increase hands-on/real world learning opportunities for pre-service teachers, upgrade the pedagogical knowledge and skill of veteran practitioners, and break down deeply entrenched school-community stereotypes.” (p.51) Each Master Teacher conducts a professional development seminar for all PDS participants. Topics addressed during sessions reflect the strengths of the MT as perceived by self and school principal.

A great deal of adjustment has to be made to accommodate two different school calendars. The University Liaison and school personnel have two separate grading schedules. Of this may call for individuals to sacrifice themselves for the good of the group such as the Liaison adhering to all activities outside of the school day for both the university and the public school.

Teaching Interns

Prospective elementary teachers who choose the alternative PDS Program must apply by March 1 and have an overall grade point average of 2.75. This average is 1.5 higher than for regular field based-students to give some allowance for the student that might be at risk of not making a 2.6 average after taking summer courses; TIs start work weeks before the university classes begin. It is not good practice for classroom students to pull a TI after the Academic Year is underway.

Placement of intern is made with regard to demonstrated disposition, requirements, rating on electronic survey, and possible match with grade-level master teacher. Selected interns serve two roles: student and professional employee; they also have co-supervisors: school principal for school leadership and PDS Liaison for university faculty supervisor.

Now in the sixth year, the professional development school is a sustainable functioning public school that serves as a constructivist learning environment for “a teacher education program more rigorous than the current student teaching programs are, yet more practice-oriented than the current university programs.” (Kennedy, 1992, p. 63).

Assessments

Data are collected annually to make various assessments that guide data-driven decisions in order to further modify the PDS to improve learning for all and to sustain the PDS. Sources of quantitative data consist of intern score results for state standardized tests for licensure, standardized test scores of students including the state standardized scores, performance-based formative and summative ratings on acts of professionalism and competency levels on standard referenced tasks, and final course grades. Qualitative data is provided by MT/TI Focus Groups Reports, MT/TI Surveys, student reflections, field notes, and employer feedback. The collection of information has resulted in annual modifications in order to improve the obtainment of PDS goals.

Measurement of what is valued for standards-based learning requires the use of authentic learning-based assessments beyond the traditional paper and pencil classroom texts and standardized multiple choice tests. Therefore, authentic forms of assessments are used to assess skills and concepts taught assisting interns to relate learning to classroom practice. The National Academy of Education sponsored a publication which focuses on the preparation of new teachers:

Beginning teachers must be able to connect their understanding of *knowledge* with their understanding of learners by being *assessment-centered*. Assessment allows teachers to figure out how to pursue their curriculum goals in ways that will work for the students they teach. Assessments, and the feedback they can provide, are actually another source of learning, not just an evaluation of it. (Darling-Hammond, & Baratz-Snowden, 2005, p. 9)

A variety of authentic and constructivist strategies, include student observations, portfolio and reflection entries, case studies, projects, and practice of knowledge gained to assess skills and concepts learned in order to relate learning to classroom practice.

Successful Outcomes of Collaborations

Within the first five years of the PDS program, many successes can be attributed to the program. In addition to graduating highly qualified teachers, the PDS program has been acknowledged by two awards in recognition of innovative thinking to advance learning. The 2005 SRATE Award (Southeastern Regional Association of Teacher Education) was awarded by the Southeastern Regional Association of Teacher Education to the university and the 2006 Magna Award was awarded by the *American School Board Journal* to the ISD Board of Trustees.

Intern Outcomes

In the Spring of 2007, the Teacher of the Year Award was awarded to two 2006 PDS graduates. One was elected by students and colleagues while the other was elected by colleagues. The interns were in different school districts and different states.

Two kindergarten TIs hired for AY 2005-2006 were described by the school principal to be more like third and fifth year teachers of experience rather than only a year of internship. Furthermore, principal indicates that, “if he ever needs new hires, he looks to PDS.” This statement was later confirmed when the principal was staffing a new innovative Math and Engineering Elementary School.

Fifty-two EC-4 pre-service candidates have completed the PDS program during the past five academic years with a 100 percent pass for all graduates sitting for required state high-stakes certification exams: TExES (Generalist-Content), PPR (Pedagogy and Profession) and Special Education (EC-12) (Six of 52 graduates completed requirements for Special Education certification for grades EC-12). More than 50% of the PDS alumni are employed by the ISD partner. In all cases, the new hires recruited from PDS cohorts are placed on the salary scale referenced by number of years experience as second year teachers rather than first. During the

last four-year period, eight of the ISD hires to fill vacancies were recruited for PDS classroom positions. In addition, all new PDS graduates have one year of experience credited to their state retirement system (TRS) retirement fund. Only 4 of 52 PDS graduates hired by the ISD have transferred for various personal reasons related to family relocations. Only three, less than one percent of the total graduates, cannot be verified as being in service.

Evidence of PDS graduates fulfilling leadership roles appears in school newsletters, administrative notices, and personal communications. Many second and third year graduates are now serving as mentors for student teachers. Monitoring of school administrative notices gives evidence of multiple interns appointed to serve on textbook adoption and other assorted committees in addition to being appointed by principals to serve as lead teachers for their assigned grade level.

Student Outcomes

Students have made continuous gains on State Standardized Assessments (TAKS) in every content area every year since the start of the PDS academic year 2004-2005. The base line for comparison was reported in 2004 accordingly: Reading 81%, Math 87%, Writing 87% and Science 43% with an overall rating of Recognized. The overall improvements each year reaps a school rating of Recognized in 2009. Expectations for an exemplary school rating for the spring of 2010 are contingent on the continuance of higher annual percentage increments in standardized scores as has been the case during the history of the PDS. (Texas Education Agency, Academic Excellence Indicator System AEIS Report, August, 2007-2008)

Contributions to Success

The one characteristic of the PDS partnership that contributed to a win-win situation is the symbiotic collaboration among all of the stakeholders in the partnership. All parties did not have all the answers. Some non-negotiable items were stated by both partner groups—success and improved learning for all students—specifically. However, a proven process to obtain certain goals had to be developed for this to work.

One of the most critical elements in establishing and sustaining a successful PDS is the level of commitment on the part of all participants. Administrators and teachers would not have been willing to participate in the partnership without a long-term commitment because of the obligation of funding and other services that each had to contribute. The PDS proved to be successful once it was established because of the level of trust among administrators, teachers and other key staff involved in program development, implementation and delivery allowing for the teacher-education program successfully embedded in the PDS.

Levels of satisfaction voiced by employers, administrators, master teachers, and students did a great deal to raise acceptance of the PDS as a viable program. The students (TIs) were very instrumental in recruiting students for the cohort for the following academic year.

The benefits for both the university and the ISD personnel resulted in the development of some alternative viewpoints; this, in turn, increased value-added professionalism. Differences in

schedules, professional focus, perceptions of personal autonomy, efficacy and academic freedom—these issues emerged as critical elements. The ISD teachers serve as instructors in both education and subject-matter courses; consequently, the practical and authentic approaches provided by these teachers bring resulted changes in how university classes are taught and greater satisfaction among pre-service students. In turn, the university liaison serves in various school duties and contributions whenever possible (during the school day and after school hours). The integration of cultural difference between schools and universities aids successful collaboration. Marsha Levine, in the forward of *The Professional Development Schools Handbook* (2005) emphasizes:

PDS partners have to create new roles and structures in support of their unique kind of work. At the same time, however, they must address the strains and stresses that they will naturally encounter as they work with new partners and maintain their traditional memberships and roles in their home institutions. (p. xiv)

Challenges and Barriers

Involvement in professional development schools can offer many rewards; however, the pathway to creating a professional development school is not without obstacles.

Initially there was resistance to a year-long internship for pre-service education students during their field-based senior year; many suspect faculty in the College of Education voiced doubts regarding an undergraduate intern’s success as pre-service teaching intern with no completed course in curriculum and pedagogy. Furthermore, some questioned the ability of clinical faculty competencies regarding contemporary best-practice for the classroom. Concrete successes eventually won skeptics’ support for the PDS model as a college effort. Regional schools are now interested in the PDS model. Administrative groups have conducted site-based visits and have voiced the desire to replicate a similar program.

Some skepticism among ISD teachers existed, as on most public schools campuses, regarding the collaboration with professors from “the ivory tower.” Credibility founded in creating a sense of collegiality has eradicated the barrier. True collegiality takes place through individuals working together such as team teaching, planning, and decision making. The university contributing whenever possible with various duties, modeling and teaming dispels the “ivory tower” outlook.

Early in the program, MT’s perceptions and expectations of interns entering knowledge and competencies were too high. The problem was that interns were being equated with the levels of competencies that had been observed by student teachers. This presented some stress for the beginning cohort; however, MTs formulated a more realistic outlook by conferring with university liaison and utilization of benchmark assessment strategies.

The amount of additional time consumed by PDS meetings, supervision, and projects become an issue especially for the university liaison serving in all aspects of the ISD school day and special after hour activities, in addition to the inclusion of all university assignments for committees, advisement, and scholarship.

A PDS cannot be created by any school or university in isolation. A PDS emerges from a collaboration of each partner bringing a critical element to the partnership. The higher the trust factor, the higher beneficial collaboration for addressing needs of students. Implementation of a PDS demands a high level collaboration that can meet the many challenges for stakeholders to form and maintain sustainability (Robinson & Darling-Hammond, 1994; Teitel, 2003). Professionalism of teaching is an integral component of a PDS; teachers must take on new roles and different responsibilities.

Conclusions

Success of the PDS can be described as a win-win situation for both partners as novice teacher and teacher educators have developed a shared understanding and common language about learning and teaching. Partnership stakeholders must be committed to trying new things and going to the extent needed to “make it work.” A high level of collaboration is supported by adequate support and resources to provide the knowledge and skills to serve as change agents.

Individuals in counterparts of school and university have had past professional relationships; this is helpful in providing a high level of trust among school-based participants. Both research and logic confirm that the best PDS collaboration is symbiotic, benefit to all the partners.

Implementing a PDS is very rewarding; however, it requires an investment of more than funding, along with more challenges, work and time. Change requires a uniquely human activity that places personal and professional expectations on all learners and practitioners. Lessons learned can be contributed to the importance of approaching each challenge as a special case with needs negotiated to seek a high-quality learning community. The school-university collaborative PDS provides a viable program of producing quality teachers for at risk-schools.

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