

## NAPDS Exemplary Partnership Award Article

# Nine Essentials Render a Roadmap for Continued Improvement in an Award-Winning PDS Partnership Network

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### Introduction

The Notre Dame of Maryland University Professional Development School Network was a 2022 recipient of the NAPDS Exemplary PDS Partnership Award. This article details the network's use of many of the NAPDS's 9 Essentials in building and sustaining strong partnerships over time with a deliberate focus on continued improvement from year to year. A unique feature of Notre Dame's PDS network is its commitment to the university's mission in advancing equity and social justice in its collaborative work in individual PDS partnerships. Aligned with the University's mission and the School of Education's focus on engaging in service to others and promoting social responsibility, the mission of Notre Dame's PDS network is to support and sustain professional development school partnerships that are equity-focused, learning communities that improve student learning, prepare educators through clinical practice, provide reciprocal professional development, and conduct shared inquiry.

### Background on Partnership Network

Notre Dame of Maryland University (NDMU) is a small, urban, Catholic university located in Baltimore, Maryland which offers certificate, undergraduate, graduate, and Ph.D. programs for women and men. In addition, it is Maryland's only undergraduate women's college. Notre Dame's School of Education offers a traditional undergraduate teacher certification program along with alternative certification programs that cater to non-traditional students, returning to college to obtain a teaching certificate or master's degree. In addition to their formal coursework, all

teacher candidates are expected to complete a full-time, 20-week, student teaching experience split between two different schools that participate in a formal PDS partnership model. Notre Dame currently partners with 13 PDSs across five public school systems in the Baltimore-Metropolitan area. The network includes seven elementary schools, one elementary/middle school, one middle school, and four high schools.

Notre Dame primarily uses three research-based resources developed by Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to guide the initiation, implementation, and evaluation of its PDS partnerships – the *Professional Development Schools Implementation Manual* (2003); the *Standards for Maryland Professional Development Schools* (located in the implementation manual); and the *Professional Development School Assessment Framework for Maryland* (2007). Roles and responsibilities of key leaders in Notre Dame's PDS network were developed out of these resources and are clearly communicated to stakeholders involved in each individual partnership in an ongoing basis. There are nine formal leadership roles associated with PDS partnerships in Notre Dame's network (Table 1).

### Shared Resources and Participant Recognition and Rewards (Essentials #6 and #9)

The institutionalization of the resources to ensure the continuity of the PDS structure at Notre Dame has consistently remained strong since its inception in 1996. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed by PDS partners delineates the organization of the PDS and the resources to be provided. PDS partners communicate regarding roles, responsibilities and operating procedures and use continuous feedback to improve the operation of the PDS network. Partners also share resources to support

each partnership's work and the teaching of PK-12 students. In addition, PDS goals are expected to be aligned with school improvement goals at individual sites. Finally, leaders associated with each partnership receive ongoing training and support from the university and the school system(s) to ensure that they are prepared to follow through with their assigned roles and responsibilities. While the monetary supports and leadership opportunities vary across school system partners, examples of decades-long, ongoing institutionalized resources include the following: partnership budgets to be used for the delivery and/or participation in professional development activities for in-service teachers at PDSs; intern and mentor training/support prior to and during the internship experience; re-certification credits for mentors who volunteer to host interns; direct billing for graduate coursework for in-service teachers; professional development opportunities for site coordinators who provide PDS leadership at their sites; networking opportunities for PDS leaders across schools and universities in the State of Maryland; recruitment seminars and advanced contracts for interns placed in formal PDS partnerships; and seminars to keep university partners abreast of school system initiatives.

Notre Dame recognizes and rewards the PDS work of leaders within the network through institutionalized organizational structures and incentives as well. For example, the university provides annual stipends to liaisons, site coordinators, supervisors, and mentor teachers, each of whom assume an active role in sustaining their PDS partnership as an added responsibility outside of their full-time employment. The university also provides each partnership with an annual budget that allows the coordinating council (governance structure) at each school to support PDS work based on Maryland's Professional Development School Standards. While individual partner goals determine how these funds are spent, they are traditionally used for stipends to award in-service teachers who provide professional development opportunities for interns; the purchase of resources for faculty book studies; intern welcome gifts; mentor appreciation gifts; substitute funds to allow mentors and interns extra planning time; refreshments for welcome and goodbye receptions; and resources for PDS libraries created at individual sites. In addition, the university provides discounted graduate coursework to in-service teachers at PDSs; opportunities to serve as adjunct faculty members at the university; and professional development seminars offered by university professors as a service PDS partners.

**“...teaching is both a vocation and a career, and there should be equal emphasis placed on professional training and cultivating a sense of social responsibility in educators.”**

**Table 1: Formal Leadership Roles in the PDS Network**

Key Leadership Roles	Brief Descriptions of Roles
University PDS Coordinator	Responsible for ensuring that all PDSs in the various school systems are operating within the state PDS guidelines and the University's PDS policies; works collaboratively with PDS liaisons, site-coordinators, and local school system representatives to support effective PDS implementation and activities.
University Liaison	Represents the university in each individual partnership; attends school-based School Improvement Team meetings in an effort to align PDS goals to school improvement goals; provides or secures staff development to meet school improvement needs at assigned school; and provides training for school-based mentors.
Site Coordinator	Represents the school partner in each individual partnership; identifies and recruits school-based mentors; assists with placement of interns with mentors; serves as the liaison between university supervisors and school-based mentors; and coordinates the introduction and integration of interns to the school.
Field Placement Coordinator	Maintains the official data list of internships and field placements; facilitates ongoing and timely communication among the interns, program coordinators, PDS coordinator(s), and university supervisors to assure all stakeholders are working together; provides schedules and directives for interns to assure timely compliance with required applications/paperwork.
University Program Coordinator	Provides assistance to interns and supervisors in meeting expected instructional requirements during the internship; works with university supervisors to ensure timely and effective monitoring of the internship experience; serves as the moderator if there are issues to be resolved related to the success of the field-based experience.
School-Based Administrator	Communicates the progress of the PDS to all stakeholders – parents, business partners, community, and school staff; collaborates with university liaison and site coordinator to arrange logistics for intern placement, pre-service mentor selection, and physical resources.
School System Representative	Serves as a clearinghouse for the establishment of PDS partnerships; facilitates communication among PDSs; marshals system resources to support PDS efforts in individual partnerships.
University Supervisor	Visits the intern regularly throughout the internship experience to confer, guide, observe, and provide constructive feedback and assistance; schedules formal observations of the intern with the intern and mentor; confers with the intern following each observation; collaborates with the mentor in helping the intern grow as a professional.
Director of University Supervisors	Provides support for university supervisors as they work with interns; creates networking opportunities for supervisors; plans for opportunities for supervisors to share best practices and participate in professional development; instructs supervisors in assessment of intern ePortfolio assignments and use of the Chalk and Wire assessment system.
School-Based Mentors	Orients and introduces the intern to the classes, the school, the faculty and the community, the personal and professional materials, and school policies and procedures; models a variety of instructional approaches/lessons at different stages of the learning process; coaches and reflects with intern; observes intern and provides daily constructive formative and summative feedback.

Needs assessments, partnership surveys, and a PDS advisory board have been institutionalized to promote continuous improvement in all PDS partnerships. These data gathering mechanisms and shared governance structures ensure that university and school system resources are directed in strategic and effective ways. The university has designed several 12-credit, graduate course certificates for in-service teachers at individual PDS sites seeking additional knowledge and expertise specific to school improvement efforts. Some of these micro-credential certificates have included Differentiated Instruction, Cultural Proficiency, and ESOL For Educators. The solicitation of feedback from partnership surveys and advisory board subgroups have also assisted the university in making modifications to the teacher education program, required course work in the program, internship seminars, and internship expectations.

**Unique Features that Characterize the Partnership (Essentials #1 and #5)**

A unique feature of Notre Dame's PDS network is its commitment to the university's mission in advancing equity and social justice in its collaborative work in individual PDS partnerships.

Embracing the vision of the founders, the School Sisters of Notre Dame, the University promotes the advancement of women and provides a liberal arts education in the Catholic tradition. Specifically, Notre Dame challenges women and men to strive for intellectual and professional excellence, build inclusive communities, engage in service to others, and promote social responsibility. Stemming from this mission, the School of Education at Notre Dame believes that teaching is both a vocation and a career, and that there should be equal emphasis placed on professional training and cultivating a sense of social responsibility in educators. Aligned with the University's mission and the School of Education's focus on engaging in service to others and promoting social responsibility, the mission of Notre Dame's PDS network is to support and sustain professional development school partnerships that are equity-focused, learning communities that improve student learning, prepare educators through clinical practice, provide reciprocal professional development, and conduct shared inquiry.

With a focus on advancing equity and social justice, Notre Dame's PDS partnerships are

selected based on the racial and economic diversity of the student populations they serve. It is the School of Education's belief that initial certification candidates can best be prepared through their participation in internships that embody diverse populations of students. As such, the placement coordinator at Notre Dame ensures that candidates are placed in two highly diverse, 10-week internship placements during their student teaching semester. PDS sites in the network span five different school systems with schools that represent urban, suburban, and rural populations. All but two of the network's PDSs serve majority minoritized populations; over 50% of the students in 10 of the 14 partnerships receive free and reduced lunch; and all schools in the network serve English Language Learners (ELLs) and special education populations. In addition, one school in the PDS network is an all-girls, public high school where 95% of students are non-white and 42% of students live below the poverty line.

Advancing equity and social justice is a major research priority of university liaisons in PDSs. Because liaisons in the network also serve as full-time professors in the School of

Education, it is expected that at least one of their yearly scholarship endeavors focus on a PDS partnership initiative. Liaisons are encouraged to publish their collaborative work in their schools in peer-reviewed journals that highlight school-university partnership work. They are also expected to present their work at local and national conferences. Some of the liaisons' most recent publications have focused equity and inclusion, cultural competency and anti-racism, flourishing, and refugee and resettlement experiences. Several liaisons have participated in the writing of grants to support the work of their partnership, the most recent grant award focusing on equitable virtual practices for ELLs in one PDS/Community School through the Governor's Emergency Education Relief Fund (GEER) grant.

As part of their engagement in serving others, Notre Dame's School of Education faculty participate in ongoing service opportunities throughout the PDS network. Full time faculty have served as tutors for students in PDSs, as mentors for new administrators in PDSs, as interpreters during school-based parent meetings in PDSs, and as professional development workshop leaders in PDSs. In addition, the School of Education has sponsored annual food and coat drives for families served in PDSs and supplied safety supplies during the pandemic by way of a university service project. A service-learning component is also embedded in the action research requirement for interns in PDSs. The focus on advancing equity and social justice is a unique feature that flows from the university's mission into all levels of PDS partnership practices.

### **Shared Governance Structure (Essential #7)**

As mentioned previously, to guide the initiation, implementation, and evaluation of its PDS partnerships, Notre Dame's PDS Network utilizes MSDE's *Professional Development Schools Implementation Manual* (2003); the *Standards for Maryland Professional Development Schools*; the *Professional Development School Assessment Framework for Maryland* (2007) to identify its goals and assess its progress. Notre Dame's PDS Network is built upon a shared, sustainable governance structure that fosters collaboration, honors all stakeholder voices, and prioritizes shared decision making. Shared governance includes three overlapping structures: site-based PDS partnership councils, school system steering committees, and a School of Education PDS committee and advisory board.

Each individual school partnership in the network is governed by a Coordinating Council, a collaborative governance vehicle that serves as the organizing body for the development and implementation of all aspects of the PDS. The Coordinating Council is generally co-chaired by the school-based site coordinator and the university liaison. Membership in the council includes representatives of PDS stakeholder groups such as the school's administration, mentor teachers, interns, teachers, parents, university faculty, community members, and school system representatives. The Coordinating Council meets at least four times per year, generally once per quarter. The first three quarterly meetings generally focus on the implementation of PDS goals aligned to Maryland's PDS Standards. Each partnership personalizes its goals and determines how resources will be used based on the unique needs associated with each partnership. The fourth meeting centers on strategic planning with a focus on continuous improvement for the next academic year. Topics for discussion at Coordinating Council meetings generally include the following: progress on partnership goals; school improvement plan updates; internship survey results from mentors and interns; overall intern successes and challenges; feedback from mentor teachers; development and assessment of needs assessment surveys; and design and evaluation of reciprocal professional development efforts.

A second shared governance structure associated with Notre Dame's PDS network includes steering committee meetings held between the university and the school systems with which the university partners to support PDSs. Notre Dame's PDS liaisons attend steering committee meetings for the school system partnerships they each represent. These meetings are held 2-4 times per year, depending upon the school system. It is during these meetings that data from interns, mentors, principals, and supervisors are shared and discussed in an effort to promote continuous improvement across all PDS partners. In addition, school system representatives share new district initiatives of which university stakeholders should be aware as they support teacher candidates in the teacher preparation program and interns completing their student teaching experiences in PDSs. These initiatives can include the introduction to new reading programs, program updates to AVID and PAR, an introduction to the Schoology learning management system, and/or new protocols for fingerprinting and email assignments for interns. These meetings also

serve as excellent networking opportunities where PDS leaders can share ideas, challenges, and successes across universities and individual PDS partnerships. The information that is shared at these meetings often assists Notre Dame's PDS leaders in learning about the research emerging in other PDS partnerships, reflecting on institutionalized practices in their individual partnerships, and/or initiating innovative practices in the network or their individual PDS partnerships.

A third and final shared governance structure associated with Notre Dame's PDS network is the School of Education's PDS Committee and Advisory Board. The mission of the PDS Committee and Advisory Board is to support and sustain Notre Dame's professional development school partnerships as equity-focused, learning communities that improve student learning, prepare educators through clinical practice, provide reciprocal professional development, and conduct shared inquiry. This committee/board utilizes the stakeholder data and ideas shared during individual PDS partnership coordinating council meetings and school system PDS steering committee meetings to focus continued improvement at the PDS network level. University liaisons serve as committee members and school system leaders (such as principals and directors) act as advisors in making data-based decisions about what the university network is doing well and what it still needs to work on from year to year. The PDS committee/advisory board utilizes the data to create a strategic plan for the network that guides decision-making processes from one year to the next. Strategic planning initiatives focus on the success and involvement of all PDS stakeholders, including PK-12 students.

### **Mutual Benefits Associated with Learning and Leading (Essentials #2 and #3)**

Notre Dame's PDS Network partnerships are mutually beneficial to all stakeholders. As part of the institutionalized structure, the network embraces the preparation of educators through clinical practice. Interns are immersed into the cultures of their schools across two diverse, 10-week placements during their 100-day internship experience. This allows interns to engage in each school community while learning to teach and having experiences with students of diverse backgrounds and abilities. Interns are able to develop mastery of InTASC Standards during their internship by working alongside a master teacher. Pre-service mentors also benefit through the improvement of their own practice by coaching and reflecting daily with their interns.

Institutional structures set the context for continuous professional learning and leading for participants associated with the network beyond clinical placements. The partnership network affords greater professional development opportunities for school and university faculty members as well. Teachers may assume one or more of many new roles, such as site coordinator, pre-service mentor, or adjunct faculty, to support

**Strategic planning initiatives focus on the success and involvement of all PDS stakeholders, including PK-12 students.**

the PDS. School faculty can also participate in activities such as peer coaching, mentoring, presenting at conferences, participating in on-site coursework, engaging and/or leading in professional development opportunities, or serving on the Coordinating Council. PreK-16 faculty may also engage in professional collaborations such as team teaching, conducting action research, serving on school improvement teams, or leading/participating in professional development opportunities.

Finally, the longevity of Notre Dame's PDS partnerships has allowed for various institutionalized benefits across the network over time. The majority of Notre Dame's PDS partnerships have been in existence for a decade or more which has allowed for a level of depth that can only be realized through deliberate relationship building and focused strategic planning. Examples of an array of these benefits have been evidenced in the hiring of interns in the PDSs in which they serve; teaching assistants, in-service teachers, and administrators receiving discounts on courses and programs offered

through the university; support for school improvement efforts; professional development workshops, resources, and services; professional growth opportunities offered through local and national conferences, walk-through observations in PK-12 classrooms for university methods students; placement of interns in cohorts for support; adjunct faculty recruitment; and research/scholarship opportunities. The Notre Dame PDS Network values all partners as active participants in the ongoing, collaborative process to improve candidate preparation and support school improvement efforts.

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*City. She enjoys working with teacher interns and has served as the PDS site coordinator at John Ruhrah since 2010. She earned both her Bachelor's and Master's degrees at Notre Dame of Maryland University. ♦*

## References

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# NAPDS Exemplary Award Winner

## Growing a Partnership and Growing Together!

*Nancy Norris-Bauer, William Paterson University  
Cicely Warren, Paterson Public Schools*

### Context

The William Paterson/Paterson Public Schools Partnership was recognized by NAPDS as an Exemplary PDS at the National Conference in Chicago in February of 2022. The William Paterson University Professional Development School Network (WP-PDS) currently consists of 64 professional development schools in 23 districts across northern New Jersey. The district with the most participating schools is Paterson Public Schools (PPS) with 14 Professional Development Schools. Paterson was also the district with the first PDS partnership established back in the early nineties. The 14 Paterson schools include one K-4 school, one K-5, four P-8, two K-8, one 3-10 (for newcomers to the country), two 6-8 middle schools and three 9-12 high schools/academies. Each school has at least one Professor in Residence (PIR) and two schools have been part of the network for 13 consecutive years with the same PIR.

### The Partners

William Paterson University (WP) is a public University established in Paterson in 1855 to prepare teachers. It is the third oldest public University in New Jersey and is a designated Hispanic and Minority Serving Institution (HSI). William Paterson is currently ranked in the top 3% of institutions nationwide for social mobility in the *U.S. News & World Report*. The University's five core values center on academic excellence, creating knowledge, student success, diversity and citizenship. The College of Education prepares 1,000

undergraduate and graduate students in teacher education, counseling, and leadership programs. In the most recent accreditation cycle, the Council for Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) awarded the College of Education the 2021 Frank Murray Leadership Recognition for Continuous Improvement as it achieved accreditation with no stipulations or areas for improvement based on data trends and evidence.

The PPS district is the third largest school district in New Jersey with an enrollment of 24,987 students. The district is among the most diverse in the state with 40+ languages spoken in its classrooms. About 66.9 percent of its students are Hispanic, 22.2 percent are African-American, 5.6 percent are Asian, and 5.0 percent are Caucasian. With nearly 57 percent PPS students speaking a primary language other than English, the district provides bilingual/ESL services for 4,827 English Language Learners (ELL). They also provide SPED services for 3,925 students. All students are eligible to receive breakfast, lunch, dinner, and a snack at no cost.

### Partnership Framework

As PDS partners, both WP and the PPS PDS see the "partnership setting" as not only the individual physical spaces we share, but as third spaces where our collaborative work spans boundaries. This includes community partner spaces and—as has become even more apparent during the pandemic—digital space collaborations.

In each school setting, research and innovative practice varies according to the needs of each

partner district and individual PDS. Bolman and Deal (2017) remind us of the four major lenses through which organizations can be viewed – structural, human resources, political and symbolic. Integral to the human resources lens are Professors in Residence (PIRs) who work in individual PDSs and serve as liaisons between the schools and the University. Their selection is a collaborative process based on the goals of each PDS. The partnership supports the ability of school administrators to be leaders and learners by treating each PDS as a learning organization, in which joint work and inquiry are at the center of all improvement efforts. PIRs meet three times per semester to exchange information with each other.

The governance lens is key at multiple levels. Inquiry and an emphasis on lifelong learning and student engagement are the subjects of departmental/team meetings and PDS Network advisory meetings. This input helps to inform both school and network decisions about which approaches to teaching and learning are working and necessary areas of focus e.g. equity, diversity and inclusion should be moving forward. At the beginning of every year, each PDS sets 2-3 SMART goals for their collaborative work for the coming year. A goal might be related to student performance, teacher capacity, culture and climate or other priority areas.

Partnership work/decisions are co-constructed at all levels, including at the individual PDS. Professors in Residence (PIRs) are members of leadership teams that develop annual