

The Shared Supervision Model: “Let’s Start at the Very Beginning. A Very Good Place to Start!”

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ABSTRACT: Periodic reexamination of existing professional development school forms is good practice to ascertain whether goals are being met. Such an assessment was sparked by a request from a superintendent in a 14-year-old professional development school structure at a public college in the Northeast. This assessment revealed that although the originators’ goal of creating bridges between the college and public schools was in place, some of the collaborating environments needed strengthening. With an emphasis on three of the nine essentials of a professional development school (as defined by National Association for Professional Development Schools), the shared supervision model evolved as a framework. This article provides an overview of the model’s implementation and projections regarding its future development.

With respect to professional development schools, the 2007–2008 academic year was a good place to start or, one might say, restart. Back in 1994, our institution, a public college in the Northeast, had joined what many considered “among the most significant education reform movements of the late 20th century” (Shroyer, Yahnke, & Heller, 2007, p. 195)—namely, the professional development schools initiatives—by establishing the Professional Development School Network. The creators believed that this version would accomplish the main goal of PDSs: to create bridges between higher education institutions and public schools (Levine & Trachtman, 2005). The network’s original two foci had been sustained: first, the provision of professional development workshops to network schools, and, second, the placement of School of Education teacher candidates in network schools for observation and

participation in different forms during their sophomore year and for clinical experiences during their junior, senior, and graduate-level years. However, whereas some bridges had indeed been established, they were in need of strengthening. Our shared supervision model thus became our first step in this strengthening. As such, it concentrated on reinforcing three of the nine required essentials of a PDS as defined by the National Association for Professional Development Schools (NAPDS). The first essential that we focused on was Essential 2, a school–university culture committed to the preparation of future educators that embraces their active engagement in the school community; the second was Essential 4, a shared commitment to innovative practice by all participants; and the last was Essential 9, dedicated and shared resources and formal rewards and recognition structures (Brindley, Field, & Lessen, 2008).

Impetus and Background

A superintendent from a local school district that was a member of the existing Professional Development School Network approached the dean of our School of Education, expressing a desire for a stronger collaboration between our higher education institution and the local elementary school. That school is the only one serving kindergarten through second grade in its district. Our college had frequently collaborated with the school, as a site for clinical experience for our early-childhood and elementary teacher candidates in their junior and senior clinical experiences. This collaboration had been traditional in the sense that the cooperating teachers supported and mentored their teacher candidates whereas the college faculty played a more significant, supervisory role. The superintendent expressed interest in furthering and deepening this relationship in a more meaningful and collaborative fashion.

An initial meeting was held at the elementary school with the following stakeholders: the superintendent, the principal, the vice principal, the district curriculum directors, the dean of the School of Education, the department chair, and the college's early-childhood faculty. At this meeting, the stakeholders discussed possible models of collaboration. Following the meeting, the dean presented a proposal that would begin a true PDS relationship. A unique feature of this proposal was the shared supervision model, as described herein. This proposal necessitated both the school's and the college's commitment to active engagement in the preparation of future educators.

Shared Supervision Model

This new relationship targeted the senior-year student teaching experience, which is the culminating clinical experience in our teacher preparation program. The typical framework for this experience involved placement of the teacher candidate in a K–2 classroom, with the assumption of a gradual takeover of class-

room teaching responsibilities by the teacher candidates over the course of 14 weeks. During these weeks, college faculty provided six supervised visits with formal observations, guidance, and feedback to the teacher candidates for improved teaching. The role of the cooperating teacher involved ongoing informal observations and feedback on the teacher candidates' teaching. The cooperating teachers completed a midterm and final evaluation form, although this form was not necessarily discussed with the college faculty in terms of the final grade. Cooperating teachers received a small stipend for hosting the teacher candidates in their classrooms. Teacher candidates were also enrolled in the Senior Capstone Seminar, which was held weekly on the college campus. The course required the teacher candidates to complete multiple assignments in their field site (the K–2 classroom). The cooperating teachers did not have a formal role in this, nor was there much communication regarding the course and its requirements among the college faculty teaching the course, the college supervisors, and the cooperating teachers.

The new shared supervision model differed in a few major aspects. Nine cooperating teachers were given 150% compensation over normal compensation for participating in the model, namely, undertaking the shared supervision responsibilities. These responsibilities involved three formal observations of their student teachers by the cooperating teachers using the college's standard evaluation forms and procedures, as well as a more active, supervisory role in addition to their ongoing mentoring role. Two college faculty members were assigned to teacher candidates and were responsible for the other three formal observations, using the same forms and procedures. This new shared supervision model created a more equal relationship between the cooperating teacher and the college faculty, with both working as colleagues in mentoring and preparing the teacher candidates for their profession. Significant ongoing dialogue and communication throughout the 14 weeks provided the hallmark for the success of this joint collaboration.

Meetings

As led by the coordinator (a third college faculty member), four joint meetings were organized throughout the semester with the participating cooperating teachers, the assistant principal, the language arts support teacher, and college faculty. The school principal also provided input. Meetings were spread out over the 14-week semester. Agenda items were solicited from school participants and college participants for all meetings. The first meeting, held before the teacher candidates' participation in the classrooms, involved training in use of the standardized assessment rubrics developed by the college's Department of Elementary and Early Childhood Education, along with an explanation of the other Senior Capstone Seminar assignments that the teacher candidates were required to complete in their field sites. Three subsequent meetings took place after teacher candidates' placement in classrooms. Highlights of topics follow. The second meeting occurred after the college faculty and cooperating teacher completed the first formal observations. Discussion focused on a concern regarding the shared evaluation of the teacher candidates, which resulted in the realization that the cooperating teachers and the two college faculty supervisors were using different lenses. A deeper understanding of both viewpoints evolved with the concluding decision that teacher candidates be exposed to the two different assessment philosophies, a reflection of what often takes place in the real world of teaching.

Evaluation of the professional development school model in terms of successes and needs to date took center stage for the third meeting. Positives were identified—namely, regular communication, flexibility of deadlines, and the cooperating teachers' comfort levels. Needs were expressed as well, for a joint post-observation conference by the cooperating teacher and the college faculty supervisor; for the planning of a joint introductory meeting, to be held before the first meeting of the cooperating teachers and college faculty and to be attended by teacher candidates, cooperating teachers, and college faculty; for the inviting of

cooperating teachers as guest speakers at the college campus; and for the possibility of designing a master of education for the cooperating teachers. Subsequent to this third meeting, the joint postobservation conference was initiated, and the recommendations were earmarked regarding the initial introductory meeting and guest teacher speakers, for inclusion in the 2008–2009 professional development school model. The master of education was explored with a possible target date of fall 2008. The last meeting involved discussion of the final evaluation of teacher candidates, the extending of the shared supervision model to other cooperating teachers at the school for the upcoming school year, and the continued matching of 2008–2009 teacher candidates with cooperating teachers by the assistant principal because of the success of her matching them for the current 2007–2008 year.

Professors in Residence

In exchange for the cooperating teachers' shared responsibility of supervision, the two college faculty (not the coordinator) each spent 18 hours during the course of 14 weeks as professors in residence. In this role, the faculty met with the principal and staff to identify and subsequently provide input into the school's emerging curriculum issues. The first step was a joint meeting organized by the principal, at which the two college faculty, the coordinator, the principal, and two math resource teachers consulted about developmentally appropriate math curriculum, with the emphasis on the kindergarten curriculum. Following this, the principal planned and coordinated a workshop for the district curriculum coordinators (language arts, social studies, mathematics, science, humanities, health and physical education, and special education, plus the assistant superintendent for instruction), wherein the college coordinator and faculty designed and conducted an interactive introductory seminar on developmentally appropriate practice. This meeting helped to clarify and bring to a consensus everyone's understanding of best practices in early-childhood curriculum.

Over the remainder of the 14-week semester, the two college faculty, in alliance with the coordinator, acted as consultants with the curriculum directors and the kindergarten teachers on the task of analyzing their kindergarten curriculum. At the end of the semester, the principal requested help to plan and design an in-service workshop to train the cooperating teachers to work with culturally diverse families. This was implemented the following spring 2008 semester and attended by the college coordinator.

Future Steps

Although this article describes our first steps toward creating a true PDS relationship between our college and a local elementary school, we must note that these first steps have been significant in addressing the targeted three essentials of a PDS from the nine defined by NAPDS. School faculty and administration and college faculty have entered into and are committed to a new culture that embraces active engagement in the school community in a variety of means (Essential 2). School faculty now participate in the formal supervision of student teachers, and school faculty and school administration coteach the capstone seminar with the college faculty. In addition, school faculty receive additional remuneration from the college for their added involvement (Essential 9). As such, college faculty have extended their role from one of pure supervision to one of becoming active members in the school community. Furthermore, the school and college have dedicated and shared their respective resources with the purpose of strengthening the PDS relationship through innovative practice (Essential 4). The success of these first steps toward building a stronger PDS relationship has resulted in the college and public school's further commitment toward expanding this new PDS culture.

For the fall 2008 semester, the plan was to expand the model to include 12 cooperating teachers cosupervising 12 teacher candidates with college faculty. The concurrent Senior Capstone Seminar, taken by all teacher candidates, was held on-site at the elementary

school. Participating cooperating teachers were invited to plan and deliver the course content with the college faculty. In the spirit of a true exchange of resources, there still lay the possibility of designing and delivering an on-site master of education program in early-childhood education for cooperating teachers, with an emphasis on mentoring. Furthermore, there was continued talk of working in partnership with the school to enhance its relationship with the Asian Indian population in the school. Last, now that the shared supervision model has been refined, the dean of the School of Education has expressed interest in implementing it in other schools within the college's Professional Development School Network. ^{SUP}

Acknowledgment

We title our article with due respect to "Do, Re, Mi," from *The Sound of Music* (1957), as written by Rogers and Hammerstein.

References

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