

Hillsborough County Public Schools and the University of South Florida: Better Together

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ABSTRACT: The 2014 Professional Development Schools National Conference recognized the partnership between the University of South Florida and Hillsborough County Public Schools for its outstanding collaborative accomplishments, and so named it one of the four recipients of the National Association for Professional Development Schools Exemplary Professional Development School Achievement Award. This partnership also won the 2014 Association of Teacher Educators Distinguished Program in Teacher Education, and the 2014 University of South Carolina Spirit of Partnership Award. This article describes the work of this innovative urban school-university partnership as it relates to the NAPDS Nine Essentials (2008) of professional development schoolwork.

NAPDS Essentials Addressed: All of the "Nine Essentials" are addressed in this article.

Introduction

Teacher education is currently under a paradigmatic shift, calling for increased school-university partnerships to place clinical practice at the core of teacher preparation (NCATE, 2010). Perhaps no one is better able to lead the charge of this reform than Professional Development Schools (PDS), given that PDSs have been forging school-university partnerships since the 1980s (Rutter, 2011). The purpose of this paper is to describe a robust school-university partnership that collaboratively advances student and professional learning.

A Mission Built on Equity

The University of South Florida/Hillsborough County Public School (USF/HCPs) Partnership began over a decade ago and has evolved from a model that was once clinically-accompanied teacher preparation – to embedded preparation for use of theory in real world contexts (Dennis et al, in press; NCATE, 2010). Our partnership unites a large urban university and the 8th largest school district in the country. Hillsborough County Public Schools serves 50,000 students and has almost 150 elementary schools. The USF/HCPs Partnership consists of 22 elementary schools and their administrators, 350 pre-service teachers (PSTs) and their collaborating teachers (CTs), twelve university faculty, and about fifteen doctoral students that work collaboratively each year. Together, we aim to advance learning for all stakeholders (PreK-5 students, pre-service teachers, inservice teachers, school and university teacher educators, and

school and university administrators), by actualizing goals in Teacher Education, Professional Development, Collaboration and Research. We conceptualize educator professional learning as a continuum of lifelong learning from pre-service teaching through retirement, which means that our mission, as NAPDS Essential 1 suggests, is larger than any one institution. Our goal to foster learning for all involves developing educators' knowledge, skills, abilities, and dispositions needed to demonstrate inquiry, inclusion, innovation, and integration. This goal is achieved through:

- Embedding professional development to reflect a shared understanding of research-supported practices
- Developing partnership structures and relationships that facilitate the alignment of curriculum and instruction across university and district curriculum
- Strengthening collaborative administrative and teacher leadership
- Appropriating adequate resources
- Creating a partnership culture that nurtures a coherent and strategically-focused research agenda

An integral part of our partnership is the belief that we will prepare educators to effectively teach all students. Given that our partnership is located within a highly diverse community, there are ample opportunities to work in Title One rural and urban elementary schools where students of color, large populations of English Language Learners and migrant students, as well as students from low-income households and students with

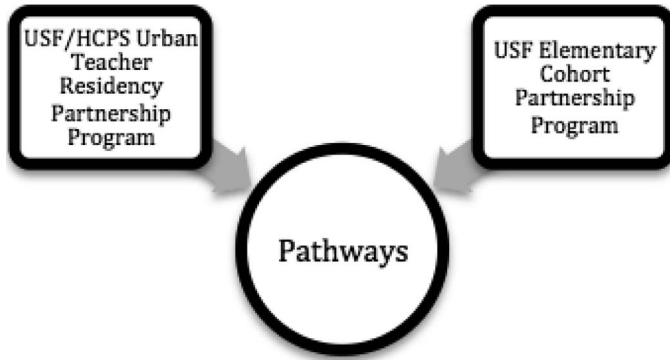


Figure 1. Two Pathways to Teacher Certification

disabilities comprise a large portion of the population. We are committed to supporting educators in being successful by becoming culturally responsive, and we seek to develop a commitment to working with diverse populations.

One Partnership: Two Pathways to Certification

In an effort to create a fertile context for fostering learning, the USF/HCPS Partnership has collaboratively designed two pathways to elementary certification (Figure 1). These pathways are intentionally designed to meet different but important needs that when combined, create an innovative partnership for a full-time, undergraduate program.

Partnership Pathway 1: Urban Teacher Residency Partnership Pathway (UTRPP)

UTRPP is a two-year, intensive, residency experience in which pre-service teachers' coursework is embedded in field experiences. Residents are located in six urban schools near USF. The schools range in size from approximately 250 students to 1200 students. Collectively, these six schools work intensively to create one UTRPP community.

There are two cohorts of 25-35 residents each operating at any one time, totaling between 50-60 residents in the program. All residents are contracted 7:30 – 3:30, mirroring Hillsborough County Public Schools (HCPS) teacher contracts. In their first year as juniors, residents are in schools five days per week about half a day each day equating to 20-25 hours per week. The other half of their time, they are in university coursework. In their final year as seniors, they adopt the HCPS calendar and begin in August with a collaborative professional development workshop. Principals welcome them as staff members in their school communities offering equal access to all professional development opportunities within the school. Residents spend four to five full days per week in the classroom with a half-day of coursework equating to 30+ hours per week of clinical experience. Upon graduation, residents have almost 2000 hours of clinical preparation.

Partnership Pathway 2: Elementary Cohort Partnership Pathway (CPP)

The elementary cohort pathway (CPP) is the largest program within the department and college, with over 300 pre-service teachers simultaneously progressing through a five-semester sequence. Whereas UTRPP coursework is primarily taught by faculty, the CPP coursework is primarily taught by graduate students. CPP includes coursework coupled with field experiences within each semester at sixteen specifically selected partnership schools. Fifteen PSTs are adopted by each school and spend their first four semesters working in various grade levels at the same partnership school. In the first year CPP interns spend one day a week in the same classroom. In the fall of the second year, the CPP interns switch classrooms and spend two back-to-back days in the school. Interns have the option in the final semester to remain in their school or change to another school for their final internship. In total, interns spend approximately 1000 hours in the field across the program. Like UTRPP, opportunities to stay within the same school allow PSTs to build understanding of the school culture, resources, curriculum approaches, diverse students, and the micropolitics of schools.

In Summary

As NAPDS Essential 2 suggests, interns in both pathways are actively engaged in the school communities. They attend open house and curriculum nights at their schools and participate in faculty/team meetings and Professional Learning Communities. We position the UTRPP as a specifically developed site for research and innovation in teaching and teacher education. The CPP serves as an equally important innovation site as it provides a research context for enhancing school-based teacher education, increasing the use of teacher inquiry as a professional learning and school improvement tool as well as preparing the next generation of teacher educators, our doctoral students.

Guiding Principles Across Pathways

Even though our partnership has two pathways, we have specific guiding principles that traverse the pathways and unite the partnership.

Conceptual Framework

Both pathways are guided by the elementary program's conceptual framework consisting of the four I's—*Inquiry, Inclusion, Integration, and Innovation*—as well as the Florida Educator Accomplished Practices (<http://www.fldoe.org/profdev/FEAPs/>). The four I's are threaded through each pathway's coursework and fieldwork. This integration is necessary for coherence and requires strong collaboration between school and university teacher educators, making partnership an important hallmark of our work.

Signature Pedagogy

NAPDS Essential 4 states that PDSs attend to innovative practices. In our program, we have signature pedagogies (Shulman, 2005) that are congruent with signature pedagogies in PDSs (Yendol-Hoppey & Franco, 2014) that foster innovative practices. These signature pedagogies include integrated coursework and fieldwork, teacher inquiry, and peer observation among others.

Integrated coursework and fieldwork. The integration of coursework and fieldwork requires collaborative coursework development. USF faculty and HCPS teachers, administrators, and curriculum supervisors planned the original scope and sequence of our programs. University methods faculty work with principals, teachers, and curriculum supervisors on methods syllabi/assignments on a regular basis. Partners provide feedback on whether what faculty are asking students to do is helpful in the classroom. School faculty and principals join the methods faculty in instruction during various classes throughout the semester. Faculty also meet with the HCPS science, math, reading, and writing supervisors to discuss course components and are invited to attend district trainings to support the faculty's understanding of district-wide initiatives across subject areas.

In addition to the formal curriculum design, field supervisors (graduate students and partnership resource teachers) meet regularly with collaborating teachers (CTs) (once per month in UTRPP, twice per semester in CPP). During these meetings, syllabi and course assignments are discussed to identify successes and challenges. Additionally, during these meetings, CTs indicate what they believe expectations should be during the field experience and help co-construct these expectations for the interns. One unifying experience across the pathways is the HCPS STEM Fair where interns and residents receive district training in their methods coursework to serve as judges. Our attention to integrating coursework and fieldwork requires constant attention but is critical to our goal of improved learning for all stakeholders.

Teacher inquiry. Teacher inquiry involves educators systematically studying their practice (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2014). Within and across both the UTRPP and CPP pathways, inquiry is purposefully integrated and scaffolded. Teacher inquiry begins the pre-service teachers' first semester by looking at an individual student and continues through the two-year program culminating in a self-selected inquiry question. We encourage pre-service teachers, collaborating teachers, principals, and faculty to study their practice as a means for determining impact on student learning.

We work to share inquiry practices across the partnership through the annual USF Teacher Inquiry Conference with the goal of sharing the inquiries of PSTs, CTs, faculty, and school partners. This setting is a place for stakeholders working in individual settings to learn from and with those working across the partnership. This encourages cross-school collaborations, and brings to the forefront the number of stakeholders engaged in PDS work across USF/HCPS. In 2013 alone, stakeholders were involved in over 185 presentations at the conference. Each

year, we award individuals who are committed to the partnership and to teacher inquiry as a signature pedagogy of PDS work.

Multi-faceted supervision plan. We have developed a robust, multi-faceted supervision plan comprised of both coaching and assessment processes. We use a well-defined set of tools to support PST learning and assess PST development.

Within UTRPP, there is a content coaching initiative that supports collaborating teachers' and residents' pedagogical content knowledge in science, math, and literacy. Faculty with expertise in the areas of literacy, science, and mathematics not only teach coursework in those areas, but also engage in one-on-one coaching with PSTs to support the development of their pedagogical content knowledge. Partnership Resource Teachers support content coaching by collaborating with the content coaches and offering supervision support to the residents and collaborating teachers. In order to develop pedagogical content knowledge, content coaching places the elementary student at the center of this work, with the intention of understanding how content learning best supports student learning. Additionally, faculty work closely with district supervisors in each content area to ensure that a shared language is used. The in-tandem use of content coaches and Partnership Resource Teachers as field supervisors provides a comprehensive supervision plan for UTRPP.

While content coaching does not currently occur in the CPP, this pathway has been purposeful in assigning field supervisors to simultaneously serve as methods' instructors. This dual role allows deeper theory-to-practice and practice-to-theory connections as the field supervisors have intimate knowledge of the school contexts and the teacher education curriculum. These field supervisors stay with the same group of interns over several semesters. This allows supervisors to build relationships with school partners and gain a deep understanding of their interns' needs.

On-going Research for Program Improvement

The USF/HCPS Partnership prides itself on being a data-driven, research-focused partnership. We collect PST performance and pathway effectiveness data to inform ongoing program improvement. Stakeholders from USF and HCPS convene annually to evaluate the partnership and to set future goals. Using the NCATE PDS Standards, as well as the NAPDS 9 Essentials, we carefully consider all of our initiatives to determine how well we are meeting the standards and guidelines for our PDS work. Based on these discussions, we set goals for the following year, revisit these goals at the beginning of the next year, and hold regular meetings to check-in on our progress as well as to determine the impact of our initiatives on student learning, teacher professional development, and teacher preparation. This exercise allows us to collaboratively develop the partnership, invites input from all stakeholders (e.g., partners share the evaluation and goals with other faculty and bring comments back to the next meeting), and allows for celebration of progress.

Finally, we are proud of our robust research agenda. We are committed to studying our practices to determine their impact on

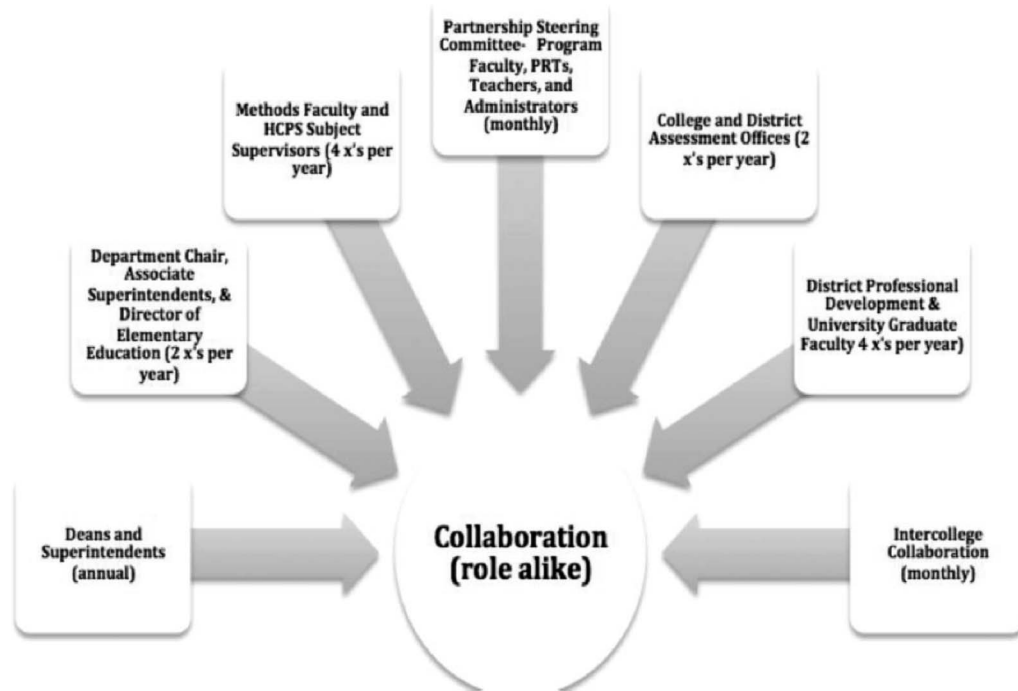


Figure 2. Role-alike Groups for Collaborative Oversight

PSTs, classroom teachers, and K-5 students. Each faculty member has individual lines of research and engages in collaborative lines of research within the partnership. These lines of research encompass an array of theoretical frameworks and methodologies, but share the purpose of determining how we have the greatest impact on all stakeholders within our partnerships.

NAPDS Essential 5 indicates that research dissemination is an important element of PDS work. In our partnership, we take research dissemination and conference participation seriously. As evidenced by over 30 presentations at the 2014 PDS National Conference alone, we work diligently to disseminate our practices. Partnership presentations occurred at the American Educational Research Association (AERA), American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE), The Association of Teacher Educators (ATE), Literacy Research Association (LRA), and multiple regional and state annual conferences each year. As such, we have a shared commitment to supporting conference travel for USF faculty, doctoral students, and PSTs, HCPS teachers and administrators, and the PRTs. Further, publications in nationally peer-reviewed journals and invited book chapters allow the USF/HCPS Partnership's best practices to be shared with others interested in implementing similar routines and practices.

Collaborative Structures

NAPDS Essential 8 argues for shared formal structures, roles, and resources. In our partnership, faculty from both USF and HCPS have formal roles within the partnership. Those roles

include collaborating teachers, partnership administrators, content-focused instructional coaches, partnership resource teachers, and partnership site coordinators. Both university-based and school-based individuals assume these roles. This hybridity creates complexity in our work but is essential for the success of our partnership.

“Role Alike” Groups

We have created “role alike” groups that allow us to direct our work toward shared goals across our two large organizations. As indicated in Figure 2, seven role alike groups exist that support our partnership's development and oversight.

Examples of these role alike groups include: 1) methods faculty and HCPS subject supervisors as well as program faculty, 2) Partnership Resource Teachers/graduate students, teachers, and administrators, and 3) department chair, associate superintendents, and Director of Elementary Education. Partnership work in general is complex, but having a partnership between two large institutions requires multiple individuals working at multiple levels to circumvent bureaucratic structures.

Joint Professional Development

NAPDS Essential 3 articulates the need for ongoing professional development for all stakeholders. Since learning for all is at the core of our partnership, both pathways engage in formal and informal professional development. The meetings of the “role alike” groups serve as a partnership “back porch” (Dana &

Yendol-Hoppey, 2010) where the negotiation of issues and tensions and collaborative planning serve as professional learning for those individuals. In addition, beginning of the year professional development trainings for collaborating teachers and pre-service teachers are collaboratively planned and implemented. In these workshops, CTs learn about models of co-teaching, scaffolding PST learning, coaching tools, and how each of these meets programmatic goals. Throughout the year, these concepts are addressed in the meetings held at each school site as often as once per month, as in UTRPP, and as few as twice per semester, as in CPP. In several school sites, CTs are engaged in coursework with USF faculty. These courses offer job-embedded professional development in the content areas, such as literacy, or in teacher leadership. This means that CTs are learning not only how to deepen their practices as teachers, but they are developing their knowledge and practice as teacher educators, employing general mentoring practices, and also content-specific pedagogical practices.

Partnership Resource Teachers

NAPDS Essential 6 describes the need for Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs). We have multiple mechanisms for dedicating and sharing resources across our partnerships as articulated in our MOU. The Partnership Resource Teacher (PRT) position is an example of a shared resource as it is equally funded by HCPS and USF, including salary and benefits. PRTs are reassigned teachers from HCPS who apply and are selected to temporarily leave their PreK-5 teaching responsibilities to serve in a formalized teacher educator role in the partnership. Our PRTs are a critical role in our partnership, as they are best able to share the purposes and goals of the work being done in both the USF and HCPS classroom. PRTs meet regularly with pre-service teachers and their CTs. They facilitate conversations about high leverage teaching practices and mentoring practices, supporting the development of PST pedagogy and CT teacher education pedagogy. They also engage in co-planning and co-teaching, leading professional development opportunities, and supporting individual and collaborative inquiry. Sometimes they even work with PreK-5 students. PRTs bring valued practitioner and contextual knowledge to the partnership.

Shared Rewards and Celebrations

NAPDS Essential 9 calls for dedicated and shared mechanisms for rewarding the hard work of all stakeholders. We formally reward and recognize contributions to the partnership in a number of ways. First, USF offers courtesy faculty appointments to those partnership players who demonstrate a commitment to the continuing education of our PSTs and their colleagues, as well as who engage in research to demonstrate the impact of our partnerships on multiple stakeholders. Annually, we give three formal awards at the USF Inquiry Conference: (1) the Outstanding Partnership Award, (2) the Outstanding Teacher Research Leadership Award, and (3) the Outstanding Alumni

Teacher Researcher Award. At the end of the year, UTRPP holds a Professional Induction Ceremony to celebrate residents', CTs', and additional school- and university-based faculty's hard work. Finally, partners are recognized and rewarded through collaboration on shared presentations and publications. We believe that all of this recognition highlights the commitment to engaged partnership, research, and lifelong learning by all stakeholders.

Conclusion

While we have much to be proud of within our partnership, we are particularly proud of our ability to integrate two partnership pathways within the same program. These pathways meet important but different needs in a large teacher education program. This type of differentiation within a university – using the two pathways to inform one another – is something that has not been attended to in the teacher education literature. Our partnership is only successful because of the constant commitment to school-university partnerships that many individuals operating in many different roles and at many different levels within each institution have. We believe in collaboration, and we recognize that individually we are good, but when united, we truly are what our motto suggests - Better. Together. ^{SUP}

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