Mort Elementary Community Partnership School 2019 Exemplary Professional Development School Award Winner

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ABSTRACT: Since their conception in the mid-1980s, Professional Development Schools (PDSs) have been seen as vehicles for the simultaneous renewal. Each year, the National Association for Professional Development School (NAPDS) selects PDSs that are exemplars of the NAPDS Nine Essentials. The purpose of this article is to share the comprehensive design of the Mort Elementary Community Partnership School, one of the 2019 NAPDS Exemplary PDS Achievement Award Winners. In this article, we describe, in great detail, the structures, shared norms and values, and positive outcomes for students that make Mort an exemplary PDS.

NAPDS Nine Essentials Addressed: All of them

Professional Development Schools (PDSs) have been recently cited as exemplary models of clinically based teacher education (American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, 2018). Despite the fact that PDSs have existed for over thirty years (Rutter, 2011), they have yet to achieve widespread implementation and historically have been criticized for lack of fidelity (Field, 2009; Goodlad & Sirotnik, 1988; Nolan, Grove, Leftwich, Mark, & Peters, 2011; Teitel, 1998). The National Association for Professional Development Schools (NAPDS) created the Nine Essentials in 2008 to address this issue of fidelity. Despite the Nine Essentials, how schools and universities begin the construction of a PDS remains a persistent topic of interest at the NAPDS annual conferences. The purpose of this paper is to describe the design of Mort Elementary Community Partnership School (Mort), one of two NAPDS Exemplary PDS Achievement Award winners in 2019. We hope that our story can illustrate and demystify the complexity needed to actualize educational renewal through PDSs.

Context

Mort is a one of the largest K-5 elementary schools in Hillsborough County Public Schools (HCPS) with approximately 850 K-5 students on average. HCPS is located in Tampa, Florida, and it is the 8th largest school district in the United States. The district is comprised of over 250 K-12 instructional sites. Approximately 150 are elementary schools. There are over 30,000 employees and almost 200,000 K-12 students in any given year.

Mort is an urban, Title 1, public elementary school that faces many challenges similar to other urban, high-poverty, low-performing schools. A majority of students and families face challenges associated with living in poverty. Ten percent of the children are homeless and even more are shelter insecure. A majority of the students are food insecure; almost all (97%) students receive free and reduced lunch. Many families are migrant workers or undocumented immigrants so many parents regularly move to seek work to support their families, resulting in a high transience rate. In fact, 50% of the student body turns over each year. The student population is predominately composed of students of color (approximately 90%). There are over one hundred staff members, approximately sixty of whom are considered instructional staff. Mort has one principal and two assistant principals.

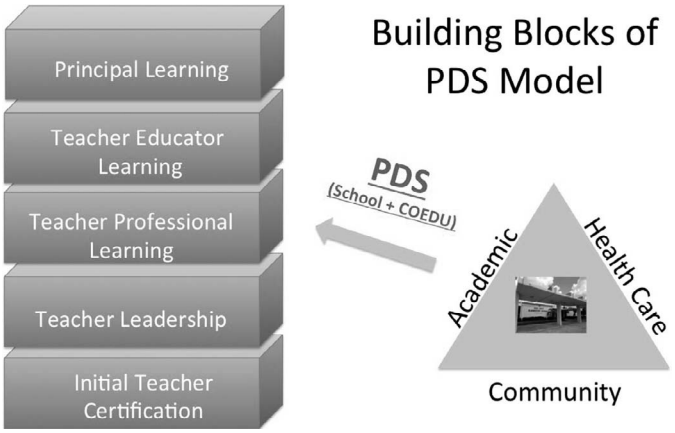

Figure 1. The Five Building Blocks of Our PDS Design

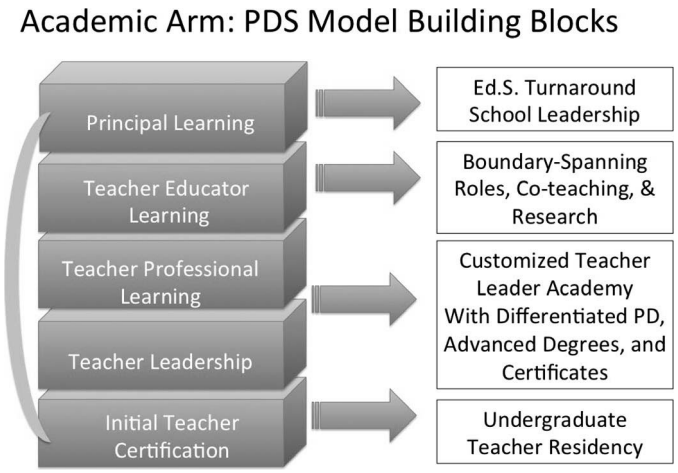

Figure 2. The Innovations Within Each Building Block in Our PDS Design

Community Partnership Schools (CPSs) are an emerging school-university-community partnership design out of the University of Central Florida to renew schools as the hub for communities struggling with challenges associated with living in poverty. As a CPS, Mort draws upon the University of Central Florida's Office of Community Partnership Schools' standards for CPSs. To become a CPS, a university, a K-12 school, and a health organization must collaborate with other core partners in a long-term commitment to support a high needs urban school in becoming the hub for a local community serving families living in poverty. This commitment is codified by all partners through signing a 25-year memorandum of understanding. In a CPS, there are three arms: (1) the academic arm, (2) the health care arm, and (3) the community arm.

Mort was selected to become a CPS in 2016 because of the robust, intentional partnership with the University of South Florida College of Education and the David C. Anchin Center (USF COEDU) that started in 2012. Since the inception of the partnership, the vision has always been to support Mort in becoming an exemplary professional development school (PDS). The university as well as the college's strategic plan includes a focus on school-university partnerships and community engagement. USF is a large urban research-intensive university with over 45,000 students. Within the university, the USF COEDU has 115 full time faculty, over 75 degree programs, and more than 2500 students. Mort is also one of four current partner schools for the Urban Teacher Residency Partnership Program pathway to teacher certification in the USF COEDU Elementary Education Program. This means that each year, Mort agrees to mentor 12-18 teacher candidates, called residents, who complete their clinically intensive program at Mort.

Mort is unique from other CPSs in the state of Florida. First, it has eight core partners whereas most have three. These eight partners include: the USF COEDU, HCPS, Children's Home Society of Florida, Tampa Family Health Centers, Florida Hospital, University Area Community Development Center, Tampa Innovation Alliance, Bay Hope Church, and Vistra Communications. Second, Mort uses the NAPDS Nine Essentials and the research-based concepts that undergird PDSs as the structure for its academic arm.

Our PDS Design

The design of our PDS is very comprehensive. We use a structure consisting of five building blocks that is illustrated in Figure 1. The innovations that support each building block are identified in Figure 2. The building blocks and innovations include: (1) Principal Learning, which includes earning an Ed.S. in Turnaround School Leadership at USF COEDU, (2) Teacher Educator Learning, which includes boundary-spanning roles, co-teaching, and research for school- and university-based teacher educators, (3 & 4) Teacher Professional Learning and Teacher Leadership, which includes the teacher leader academy model where teachers earn advanced degrees and credentials through differentiated learning taught onsite at the school using an emergent curricular design for graduate education, and (5) Initial Teacher Certification, which includes the Urban Teacher Residency Partnership Program where we prepare teachers for certification and licensure.

Mort's academic arm is seen as a prototype for other CPSs across the state of Florida due to its success as a PDS in developing teacher leadership capacity to improve student achievement and prepare future educators to improve teacher preparation and retention. We now describe, in greater detail, the PDS underpinnings that create the structure for the academic arm that truly make Mort an exemplary PDS.

A Comprehensive Mission Larger than Either Institution

Vision: *Mort Elementary Community Partnership School will create an innovative environment, which empowers students, encourages parents, enriches families, and elevates the community.*

Mission: *Mort Elementary Community Partnership School engages families and partners to provide services that inspire the community to ensure students excel as successful and responsible citizens.*

The vision and mission of Mort is broader than any of the eight community partners because the ultimate goal is to facilitate school and community renewal of an urban high-needs elementary school and its surrounding community. Figure 3 illustrates our theory of change. In the figure, the triangle represents the three CPS arms. The academic arm is intentionally listed on the left to show all of the essential elements needed to facilitate school and community renewal as a PDS. For the academic arm, where USF is the primary partner, we use a five-step theory of change: (1) Increased Leadership Capacity, (2) Developing Quality New Teachers, (3) Improved Teacher Learning, (4) Improved Student Learning, and (5) Facilitating School and Community Renewal. We elaborate on these steps throughout the remainder of this article.

Figure 3. Theory of Change for Mort Community Partnership School

Boundary-Spanning Roles

At Mort, there are five types of boundary-spanning roles as described in Table 1: (1) Professors-in-Residence, (2) Partnership Resource Teachers, (3) a Teacher Leader Liaison, (4) Collaborating Teachers, and (5) Community School Positions. These boundary-spanning roles are critical for communication and the success of Mort.

Structures for Collaboration, Reflection, and Communication

PDSs cannot be sustained without maintaining relationships, which involves spending dedicated time at the school. Different university representatives (e.g. Professors-in-Residence, Partnership Resource Teachers, doctoral students) are at the school almost daily. Additionally, the school and the university liaisons check in often either face-to-face, via phone, or by email. There is constant communication and both partners know that they can reach each other if there is an issue or a concern. Both school and university partners genuinely care about one another and are committed to helping Mort by supporting teachers to improve student learning.

As a PDS, we maintain the stance that school and university renewal is possible when the wisdom of practice is co-mingled with the wisdom of practitioners through collaboration and community. We have adopted the philosophy that schools and universities are true partners in solving educational dilemmas. This means that we value and recognize voices and expertise that everyone brings to the partnership, and that value is illustrated through our collaborative structures. One collaborative structure is the instructional team, which is composed of both school and university representatives, who co-plan and co-teach every session in the Teacher Leader Academy, which we will explain later in more detail. Teachers and school district administrators have input into the curricula for teachers in the Teacher Leader Academy as well as residents in their teacher preparation program (Building Block 1).

Another collaborative structure is the use of problem-solving meetings. The CPS Cabinet, which is composed of the core partner leaders, meet monthly to share events in the community, reflect on the progress of Mort, and solve current issues facing Mort families. In addition, there are three subcommittees (Data, Funding, Operations) that also meet on a regular basis to address issues and challenges connected to research, funding, and the daily functioning of Mort. At the teacher preparation level, there are also several collaborative structures, which include Leadership Meetings, Data Team Meetings, Coaches Meetings, and Advisory Board meetings. Each meeting serves a different purpose to support the functioning of the residents in the teacher preparation program to ensure that we are developing high quality teachers not only for Mort but also for other urban schools. Collaborative structures are critical for collaborating and communicating across so many partners as well as for fostering ongoing reflection and dialogue to address problems facing Mort families to improve student achievement.

Shared and Dedicated Resources and Reward Structures

As one of the CPS core members, USF COEDU signed a Memo of Agreement, making a twenty-five year commitment to support Mort. Each year, the CPS Cabinet seeks funding to support initiatives including providing funding so that teachers can earn advanced credentials as participants in the Teacher Leader Academy. Supporting more teachers to earn advanced credentials in the Teacher Leader Academy is a part of Mort's strategic plan.

From 2013-2016, there was only one Professor-in-Residence, responsible for all teaching and coordinating responsibilities. Now, visiting Professors-in-Residence participate by co-teaching alongside the primary Professor-in-Residence in order to build

Table 1. Boundary-Spanning Roles at Mort

Title of Boundary-Spanning Role	*Description of Role*
Professors-in-residence	Tenured/tenure track faculty who serve as university-based liaisons. They: • teach graduate coursework in the Teacher Leader Academy • convene and participate as members of the collaborative research group to engage in practitioner research • support teacher leaders and residents in the dissemination of practitioner research • mentor doctoral students as future scholars of teacher education • advocate and seek funding for Mort • serve on CPS committees to support the functioning of Mort
Partnership resource teachers	School district teachers who undergo a rigorous application process and, once selected, agree to assume a formal university-based teacher educator role for 1-3 years before returning to the classroom. They: • supervise residents (undergraduates earning certification in a clinically intensive preparation program at Mort) • teach methods coursework to residents • strengthen the connection between the school and university • teach teacher leadership courses to new teacher leaders in the Teacher Leader Academy at Mort
Teacher leader liaison	Teacher leader at Mort who has earned the USF Teacher Leadership Certificate. This person: • co-plans and co-teaches all coursework with the Professors-in-Residence in the Teacher Leader Academy • serves as an instructional coach to teachers at Mort • oversees all aspects of the differentiated professional development plan at Mort • serves as the school-based liaison to strengthen the connection between USF COE and Mort
Collaborating teachers	Teacher leaders who serve as school-based teacher educators. They: • must have at least three years of teaching experience, principal approval, achieve highly qualified status on their annual evaluations, and have completed Clinical Education Training • mentor residents on a daily basis • occasionally teach undergraduate coursework
Community school positions	There are three community school positions: • The Community School Director who manages all aspects of the community school with regard to the community. S/he serves as a liaison for the community partners and Mort and facilitates the multiple committees and meetings needed to support the functioning of Mort as a PCS. • The Parent Resource Coordinator who manages all aspects of outreach to the parents. S/he offers job readiness skill training like interviewing, resume writing, computer access, etc. S/he also works with HCPS to provide English Language instruction. • The After School Coordinator who manages all aspects of the after school programming to support student success. S/he works with USF and other community agencies to provide tutoring and extracurricular activities.

faculty capacity and thoughtfully plan for expansion. To become a Professor-in-Residence, USF COEDU faculty must make a yearlong commitment to Mort and must be committed to helping the teachers, the students, and the school succeed. In 2017, HCPS and USF COEDU specifically identified human resources including: 1) a course release annually for coordination for the primary Professor-in-Residence, 2) a quarter time for a teacher-on-special-assignment from Mort dedicated to being a liaison, and 3) a funded graduate student to assist with coordination, teaching, and research. Dedicated resources are an important part of sustainable partnerships, and Mort has committed community, university, and school resources for sustainability.

In addition to USF COEDU, USF's Office of Community Engagement and Partnerships (OCEP) supports the Mort by connecting university resources and expertise as well. For example, the OCEP Program Planner oversees work-study student placements at Mort and serves as the co-chair of the Mort Community Advisory Council. Additionally, USF faculty from various disciplines outside of education (e.g. engineering,

computer science) teach service-learning/community engaged courses to develop projects for undergraduate students that integrate with the needs of Mort. OCEP identifies resources in order to increase the capacity and impact of this unique partnership to improve PK-20 student success.

For reward structures, we hold an annual Pinning Ceremony where preservice teacher candidate residents are recognized for their accomplishments and they are inducted into the teaching profession by receiving a pin from their collaborating teachers. Teacher leaders who have earned an advanced credential such as the USF Teacher Leadership for Student Learning Certificate or an advanced graduate degree are also recognized for their achievements at the Pinning Ceremony. At the school site, the students are recognized through several leadership opportunities and monthly pep rallies. All students are divided into a house system (similar to Harry Potter) where they earn points and badges for attendance, hard work, kindness, effort, achievement, etc. Each month, the winning house also receives a special celebration and has their house trophy displayed in the front hallway of the school for all to see. Parents are recognized through a structure called VIPs (Very Important Parents) where they earn points for participating in school events, parent/teacher conferences, etc. Parents can use those points to purchase items from the school store like electronics, toys for holidays, etc.

Preparing Teacher Candidates

Mort is committed to developing quality new teachers through collaborative preparation, mentoring, and induction of residents in their initial teacher certification (see Building Block 1 in Figure 1 and the second box in Figure 3). Mort is one of six partner schools within the USF COEDU Urban Teacher Residency Partnership Program (UTRPP). This means that the Mort instructional staff agrees to mentor 12-18 undergraduate teacher candidates, known as residents, each year for a two-year period. Residents spend two full academic years at Mort where they are contracted just like teachers. They are at the school and take undergraduate coursework all within the hours of 7:30 am – 3:30 pm. Their university coursework is integrated with their clinical experiences. They receive onsite instructional coaching and support from a Partnership Resource Teacher. To date, Mort has hired over 15 resident graduates, thus contributing to the improvement in teacher retention at the school. Residents accumulate almost 2000 clinical hours upon graduation, so having teacher leaders who can serve as high quality school-based teacher educators (called collaborating teachers) to residents is imperative. These teacher leaders are developed through the Teacher Leader Academy.

Residents are seen as co-teachers and work alongside their collaborating teachers to improve student achievement. Their participation as active members of the school community is reflected in the daily actions of their collaborating teachers who place their names on the doors, sign their names as co-teacher on school/home communication, provide a designated space in the classroom for residents, and co-plan and co-teach with them. It is also reflected in the ways in which administration treat residents. Everything teachers get, residents get. For example, like students, all teachers are divided into houses and given t-shirts to reflect their house names; the residents are as well. Residents are expected to participate in all professional learning activities alongside their collaborating teachers. Their active engagement is most notable in that visitors are typically unable to distinguish residents from their collaborating teachers because students treat residents as just another teacher in their classrooms.

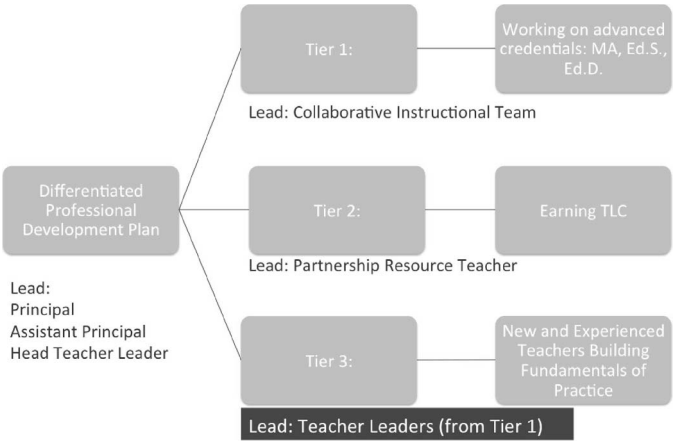

Figure 4. Differentiated Professional Development Model

Professional Development for All

In addition to developing residents as high-quality teachers, Mort stands as an exemplar of professional learning for all. First, school administrator leadership and learning are recognized through advanced credentials through a special degree designed for turnaround school leaders offered at the USF COEDU. This helps to support the increased leadership capacity (see first box in the Theory of Change in Figure 3). Two key components of professional development activities at Mort include differentiated tiered teacher professional learning and the Mort Teacher Leader Academy.

Differentiated tiered teacher professional learning. Of most importance, perhaps, is the attention that Mort has given to differentiated teacher professional learning. Mort uses a three-tiered whole school differentiated professional plan that addresses teachers' developmental needs and is illustrated in Figure 4. Tier 1 is led by the Collaborative Instructional Team of Professors-in-Residence, doctoral students, and the Teacher Leader Liaison, all of whom exist as boundary-spanners. This tier contains individuals who are certified teacher leaders, meaning they have already earned their USF COEDU Teacher Leadership for Student Learning Graduate Certificate and are remaining in this tier to earn advanced credentials. This tier culminates in those already certified teacher leaders either earning professional development points or advanced degrees

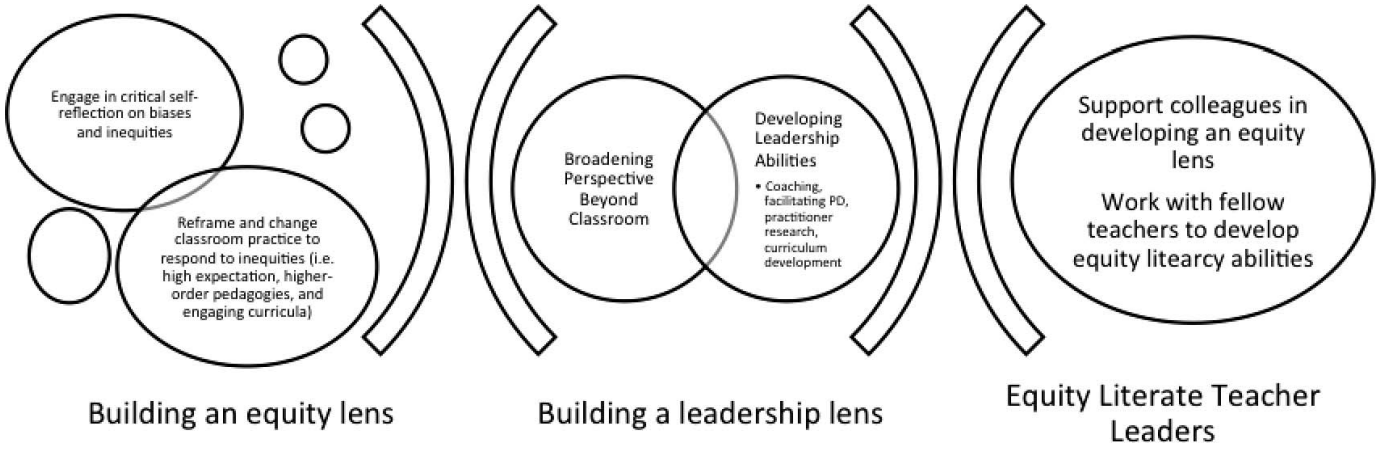

Figure 5. Framework for Developing Equity Literature Teacher Leaders at Mort

(masters or doctoral) taught onsite at the school using the school's data and contextual needs as the curriculum.

Tier 2 is led by a boundary-spanning USF COEDU/HCPS Partnership Resource Teacher. This tier consists of teacher leaders who are certified teachers, but not yet certified teacher leaders. This tier culminates in teacher leaders earning their Teacher Leadership for Student Learning Graduate Certificate, which is a four-course, twelve credit certificate program. The courses include Teacher Leadership for Student Learning, Coaching for Student Learning, Teacher Research for Student Learning, and Professional Development for Student Learning. Tier 3 is led by the Tier 1 Teacher Leaders who are facilitating peer-led, job-embedded professional learning for the rest of the instructional staff and the residents at Mort. Their abilities to effectively design and implement monthly professional development sessions that are aligned to the school's annual goals and the school improvement plan is the curriculum for the advanced credentials they receive in Tier 1 as a part of the Mort Teacher Leader Academy (MTLA).

The Mort Teacher Leader Academy. Teacher leadership capacity has been the driving engine of change for Mort as a PDS. The MTLA is an innovative approach to teacher leader development that transforms teacher professional learning at a school site while simultaneously transforming graduate coursework and advanced credentials at the university with the ultimate goal of improving student achievement on state standardized tests. The overarching goal of the MTLA is to develop a cadre of equity-literate teacher leaders who support school renewal of a turnaround urban school. Equity-literate teacher leaders advocate for equity and equitable educational opportunities for all students. To develop equity literate teacher leaders, we intentionally build both an equity lens and a leadership lens (Jacobs & Crowell, 2018) (see Figure 5). The equity lens helps teacher leaders develop the skills to critically reflect on bias and inequity and change instructional practice to respond to inequities. The leadership lens broadens teachers' lens beyond the classroom and develops their leadership abilities. The result is the development of equity-literate teacher leaders who can support colleagues in developing an equity lens and work with other teachers to develop their equity-literacy abilities. Equity-literate teacher leaders at Mort can:

(a) systematically study their own practice by conducting teacher inquiry and collaborative practitioner research to develop critical data literacy skills
(b) skillfully facilitate job-embedded, differentiated professional development to improve instructional practice
(c) effectively coach teacher candidates and in-service teachers to improve student achievement
(d) intentionally develop a lens of equity to recognize, respond to, and redress inequities in order to create equitable educational opportunities for all students

MTLA is a unique inside-out approach to rethinking teacher professional learning AND university coursework (see Table 2). In this flipped curricular model, a core group of teacher leaders (Tier 1) enroll in graduate coursework as their professional learning, but unlike typical graduate courses, the MTLA uses the school's needs to drive the graduate curriculum. The courses are co-taught onsite at the school, are aligned to the school's academic calendar not the university's calendar, and are tailored to meet the school's annual improvement plan. The syllabi are continually negotiated, which involves a rethinking of what counts as evidence of learning in graduate coursework. A great emphasis is placed on social learning, critical reflection, and a practice-to-theory approach to learning. Teachers do not learn material and then apply it; instead, they use experience as the driver for understanding theoretical constructs. In the MTLA, practice drives theory, capitalizing on authentic contexts within which teachers can both deepen their understandings of theory and make meaningful connections between practice and research.

With respect to university faculty, the MTLA provides the opportunity to work alongside teachers and administrators to transform their course syllabi to close the divide between theory

Table 2. Comparing Traditional Graduate Coursework With the Clinically Centered Graduate Coursework in the Mort Teacher Leader Academy

	Traditional	*Mort Teacher Leader Academy*
Location of graduate study	At the university	At the school site
Curriculum	Fixed and predetermined	Emergent and based on school's data
Instructor	One university professor	An instructional team consisting of representation from the school and the university
Time of professional development/ graduate study	Outside of the school day (e.g. evenings, weekends)	A part of the school day
Graduate course academic calendar	Aligned to the university calendar	Aligned to the school district calendar
Application of learning	Learn theory then apply it to practice	Engage in practice and intentionally connect it to theory
Graduate syllabi	Fixed, minimal negotiation	Tailored and continually negotiated to meet teacher leader and school needs

and practice. Rethinking course construction and enactment so that practice drives theory is a necessary paradigmatic shift for the university, and becoming a PDS has afforded this additional learning opportunity. In addition, doctoral students have access to unique learning opportunities. When they work alongside faculty at Mort, they have increased opportunities to teach innovatively as well as conduct meaningful research connected to the needs of the school. This partnership has created a living laboratory for preparing the next generation of engaged teacher education scholars who can work hand-in-hand with schools to solve real problems of practice.

As a result of the MTLA, Mort's professional development has evolved. Table 3 outlines the differences in teacher professional learning before and after the creation and implementation of MTLA. Teacher leadership is recognized through advanced credentials in that teachers earn their Teacher Leadership for Student Learning Graduate Certificate (a four course, 12 credit component of the MTLA). Teachers are developed as teacher leaders and school-based teacher educators as the keystone of our PDS.

Innovative and Reflective Practice that Enhances Student Learning

In order to enhance student learning, innovation and reflection in and on practice are essential. Mort targets improved student learning as a result of the increased leadership capacity, the differentiation of professional learning for all, and the ability of teacher leaders to improve the instructional practice of their peers to positively impact student achievement by designing and leading job-embedded professional learning of their peers (see fourth box in Figure 3). Innovation and reflection require a school culture that is conducive to risk taking, which is difficult to cultivate and maintain in today's high stakes accountability climate. By focusing on developing teacher leaders, the MTLA has helped to influence the school culture to maintain a culture of risk taking, reflective practice, and innovative thinking despite the high-stakes accountability pressures of being a turnaround elementary school.

In addition, practitioner inquiry, which is the ability of teachers to systematically study their own practice (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2014), is interwoven throughout all aspects of the undergraduate and graduate curricula to support innovation and reflective thinking. Preservice teacher candidate residents annually conduct a formal teacher inquiry in their second year. Teacher leaders also conduct practitioner inquiry and, to date, they have studied their own classroom teaching practice, their ability to effectively facilitate professional learning communities, their ability to effectively design and implement job-embedded professional learning of their peers, and their ability to effectively coach their peers and their residents to improve practice that positively impacts student learning. Finally, a voluntary collaborative research group that consists of Professors-in-Residence, doctoral students, teacher leaders, and school

Table 3. Comparing and Contrasting Teacher Professional Learning Before and After the Mort Teacher Leader Academy

	Before 2013 (Prior to the Mort Teacher Leader Academy)	*Post 2013 (Since Inception of the Mort Teacher Leader Academy)*
Kind of professional development	Usually heavy on trainings	Primarily job-embedded professional learning
Curriculum	Typically one-size-fits all	Differentiated based on teacher needs and teacher performance
Instructor	Usually by school administrators or district trainers	Planned and facilitated by teacher leaders to enact teachers teaching teachers

administrators annually studies the MTLA to evaluate its effectiveness in meeting its annual goals and its progress toward improving student learning.

Preservice teacher candidate residents, teacher leaders, school administrators, university faculty, and doctoral students regularly present at national conferences. Teams have also traveled internationally to support the development of global PDSs. Finally, teams have also written book chapters, blog posts, magazine articles, and journal articles to disseminate findings from research generated at Mort.

Accomplishments and Achievements

Our proudest accomplishment is perhaps the impact on student achievement, which can be attributed to the complexity of our PDS design with our focus on teacher leadership development and true collaboration to foster renewal. Longitudinal data (2013-2018) of teacher perceptions, student perceptions, and parent perceptions of school culture and climate showed Mort was on an upward trend. However, moving the student achievement needle as measured by state standardized tests was a slower process. Based on student performance on the annual state standardized tests in English/Language Arts, Mathematics, and Science, Mort was classified as an "F" school by the Florida Department of Education in 2014. However, in 2015, the year that the first cohort of teacher leaders earned their Teacher Leadership for Student Learning in the MTLA, student learning progressed so substantially, that the school missed the grade of a "C" by two points. Teachers received bonus money from the Florida Department of Education for the tremendous growth in student academic achievement, a reward that had not been given to teachers at Mort in years.

However, the school grade plateaued for two years, maintaining the D and just missing the needed C to escape closure or takeover. It was during 2015-2017 that the MTLA resulted in a substantial number of teachers earning teacher leader credentials allowing for the beginning implementation of the teacher leader-led professional learning. By 2018, the implementation of teacher leader-led professional learning in our differentiated professional learning design was in full implementation and the school earned a C, missing a B by only four points. Achieving this grade saved the school from takeover from an outside company (based on the state's school accountability system). Other student achievement data show Mort closing the achievement gap to the district's standardized test score average, making tremendous proficiency gains in student test scores.

Student achievement data are not the only indicators of success. Longitudinal data have shown improvements in teacher retention from unfilled vacancies to a healthy 89% retention rate in 2018. Teachers' perceptions of Mort have also improved since becoming a PDS. Each year the district gives a school culture and climate perception survey. Longitudinal data since the beginning of the partnership shows increases in all categories of the survey with the greatest increase occurring in the category of Teacher Leadership (40% improvement). Overall, Mort showed a positive improvement in teachers' perceptions of school culture and climate while also earning a school grade of C in 2018 and saving the school from takeover, which was not true of other comparison turnaround elementary schools in the district. This means that the complex PDS design was not only able to develop teacher leadership capacity and shift the culture and climate to a positive atmosphere, but it was also able to improve teacher leader effectiveness to positively impact student achievement.

In addition to receiving the 2019 NAPDS Exemplary PDS Achievement Award, we have been recognized locally and nationally by receiving the 2018 Shirley S. Schwartz Urban Education Impact Award from the Council of Great City Colleges of Education, the 2018 Best Campus-Community Partnership Award from the Florida Compact, and the 2017 Claudia A. Balach Teacher Research Award from the American Education Research Association PDS Research Special Interest Group.

In Summary

When Mort first became a partner school in 2012, our vision was always to become a PDS, but we used the term partnership school rather than PDS until we had met all of the NAPDS Nine Essentials. Today, we proudly use the term PDS to describe Mort because not only have we met the Nine Essentials but we are also leading in some of the essentials, particularly in our emphasis of professional learning for all. We use the guiding principles of PDS as the academic arm in our CPS design. We have made a long-term, twenty-five year commitment to a mission that is beyond the university, the school, or the other core partners. We have a complex theory of change that uses differentiated teacher professional learning to develop teacher leaders who can prepare high quality teachers and improve instructional practice of their peers to make a difference for K-5 students.

We continually conduct practitioner research to innovate and reflect on our practice as well as to understand and disseminate research, and above all, we stand committed to one another in our quest for renewing the school and the local community. Because of our collaboration and commitment, we have longitudinal impact data on teachers, parents, and student achievement scores that show the progress made thus far. Mort is still an urban, public elementary school whose families face many challenges associated with living in poverty, but this collaborative effort are removing the label of "low-performing" historically associated with Mort as we collectively work toward achieving our hashtag #allthewayup. Thank you for the opportunity to share our story. SUP

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Jennifer Jacobs, Ph.D. is an Associate Professor in the Elementary Education Program at the University of South Florida. Her research agenda within teacher education focuses on the development of equity-centered or equity literate teachers. Central to all of this work is a focus on the development of high-quality teacher education programs within high quality partnerships between schools and universities. She was a Visiting Professor-in-Residence at Mort Elementary Community Partnership School from 2017 – 2019.

David Allsopp, Ph.D. is a Professor in the Department of Teaching and Learning in the College of Education at the University of South Florida. His research and writing revolves around 1) effective instructional practices for students with exceptional needs and other struggling learners with an emphasis on mathematics, and 2) teacher education that promotes equitable access to school success for struggling learners. He recently served as the David C. Anchin Endowed Chair for Educational Innovation, Director of the David C. Anchin Center, and Assistant Dean for Educator Preparation and Partnerships in the College of Education.

Samantha Haraf, M.Ed. is currently a doctoral student in the Department of Teaching and Learning in the College of Education at the University of South Florida. Her research interests include teacher education, teacher leadership, student voice, equity for marginalized student groups, and social justice issues in elementary schools.

Wendy Baker, MA is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Teaching and Learning in the College of Education and a Partnership Resource Teacher for the Urban Teacher Residency Partnership Program between the University of South Florida and Hillsborough County Public Schools.

William Woodland Johnson, III is the General Director for Title I and Community Schools for Hillsborough County Public Schools. He was the principal of Mort Elementary from 2012 – 2019.

Amanda Bellas, MA is the Teacher Leader for Mort Elementary Community Partnership School. She has participated in Mort Teacher Leader Academy since 2013 where she received her Masters in Elementary Education and the USF Teacher Leadership for Student Learning Graduate Certificate. She continues to serve as the school-based partnership liaison between USF and Mort.

Francesca Perrone-Britt, M.Ed. is a Fifth Grade Teacher and teacher leader at Mort Elementary Community Partnership School.

Melissa Izzo, M.Ed. is a Reading Coach and teacher leader at Mort Elementary Community Partnership School.

LaTiecea Hailey-Brown is currently the Acting Principal of Mort Elementary Community Partnership School. Prior to this role, she was the Assistant Principal of Mort since 2014.

Dustin Krein is a Program Planner for the Office of Community Engagement and Partnerships at the University of South Florida. He serves as the co-chair of the Mort Community Advisory Council and oversees work-study student placements at Mort Elementary Community Partnership School.

Lillian Wichinsky, Ph.D. is the Director of Community Engagement and Partnerships at the University of South Florida. She holds a doctorate in community practice social work.