

Evolving Through Collaboration and Commitment: The Story of the North Florida Urban Professional Development School Partnership

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ABSTRACT: The 2009 Professional Development Schools National Conference recognized the North Florida Urban Professional Development School Partnership for its outstanding work in an urban education context and so named it one of the three recipients of the first-ever National Association for Professional Development Schools Award for Exemplary Professional Development School Achievement. This article describes, in the voice of the stakeholders, how the partnership developed its exemplary model.

Our partnership is fortunate to have resident clinical faculty members (RCFs) working at each of our schools. These RCFs are master teachers who have been released from teaching duties to work with pre-interns, interns, and beginning teachers. For example, the RCFs meet every 2 weeks with their groups of interns. At West Jacksonville Elementary School, a long-standing PDS, the RCF, Kathleen Witsell, takes her group of interns on a walking tour of the neighborhood in which they will be teaching. Mrs. Witsell relates her story:

The majority of our preK–5 students live in public housing and walk more than a mile

to school. I want to show the interns where their students come from each day so that they have some background knowledge regarding why their students may often arrive late, tired, wet, and possibly hungry. The walk is an eye-opener and at times frightening. The first road leading from the school is not safe. The sidewalks are overgrown with weeds and littered with trash, including empty beer and liquor bottles. There is a local group of neighborhood men who sit out in their yard and play dominoes and card games, a statement of unemployment in the community. At the end of the street is an extremely busy highway where cars are known to exceed 60 miles per hour. Their

next obstacle is the railroad tracks, where some of our students have been known to run across while a train is approaching. Finally, they reach home, a gated and guarded federal housing development. Along the way are several stray dogs, as well as cars pulling up and yelling things that no one wants to hear. I have worked in this neighborhood for 20 years and am always affected by this trip. I explain to interns that it is alright to have empathy for their students but to be careful not to use it as an excuse in lowering one's expectations for them. After we return to school, some of the interns cry and cannot believe what they just witnessed. It is a major breakthrough in their understanding of students who are living in poverty. They begin to understand that it is up to them to teach and aim high in their expectations to educate their students so that they make the best of their lives.

Recently, Witsell asked her interns to journal about how they felt teaching in an urban school. Having completed the first half of their internship, these are some of their journal comments:

I feel that as an African American teacher, working in an urban school is where I will make a bigger difference in students' lives. . . . I come from a large family. My mother has nine children, and she raised us as a single parent. I understand how it feels to cook, clean, tend to younger siblings . . . and then having to do your homework before the next.

Now that I have been here for about 8 weeks, I can honestly say that these children mean more to me than anything you would ever imagine. It is truly an honor and privilege to teach them. The hope, faith, courage, determination, and perseverance that these children have is a spirit so deep within them—one for such a small person I have never seen. Since I've been here, one of my student's fathers has been shot, one student's father was incarcerated for beating her and her family, over 5 of my students have been in the hospital, one mother died, and one Department of Family Services phone call ended with a

heated encounter with the parent. Even though they face so much against them, the children are so compassionate and loving and you can really see the children learning, growing, maturing, and appreciating you.

When I first received my internship placement, I was very apprehensive. I had never been on this side of town. I did not know if I would feel safe or comfortable. Once I got to school, that feeling quickly faded. This has been the best experience for me. . . . The way that I push my own son and daughter to achieve their highest potential is the same way I treat my students. I love the fact that it is easy to gain their respect as well as their parents' respect and trust. . . . I think I have so much to offer these students and would love to become a family member to an urban school.

These examples clearly demonstrate our candidates' active engagement in the broader school community. From the beginning, our partnership has been committed to embracing the teacher candidates as professionals in the wider school community and immersing them in each school's culture. This is one way that we have sought to operationalize the second essential of a PDS: a school–university culture committed to the preparation of future educators that embraces their active engagement in the school community.

A Little Background

The North Florida Urban Professional Development School Partnership consists of three urban elementary schools, one urban middle school, and one medium-sized regional university, and it has been in existence for the past 12 years. We truly welcome this chance to tell the story of how we addressed the opportunities and challenges embedded in the nine essentials necessary to be considered a PDS.

Figure 1 presents the model that has guided us through these opportunities and challenges; it is a representation of how we have interpreted the PDS essentials over the

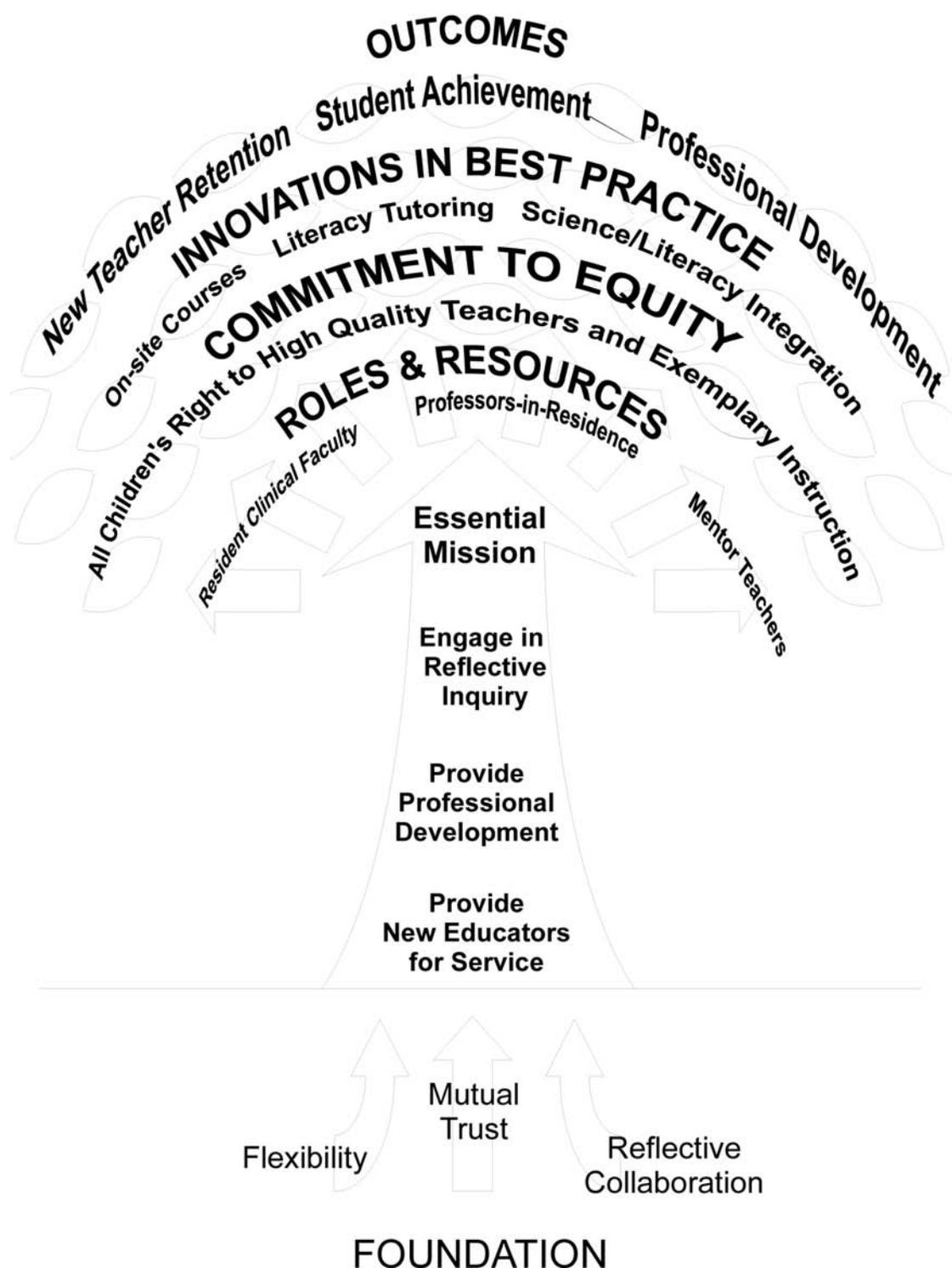


Figure 1. North Florida Urban Professional Development School Partnership: Evolving Through Collaboration and Commitment

life of the partnership. The theoretical framework for the model was inspired by our reading numerous noted researchers in the literature, but it is based mainly on working directly with experts in our field and their seminal readings (Abdul-Haqq, 1998; Levine, 1997, 1999; Tietel, 2001, 2003; Trachtman, 2007) and additional major resources, including Linda Darling-Hammond (1994, 1997), John Goodlad (1994), and the Holmes Group (1990).

Individual components of the model—including the foundation, the reflective collaboration, the essential mission, the roles and resources, the commitment to equity, the innovations in best practice, and the outcomes for preservice and practicing teachers as well as preK–8 students—are all discussed in depth throughout the article as they relate to the nine essentials.

Essential 1: Partnership Mission Built on Equity

A major mission of the College of Education and Human Services at the University of North Florida is to train preprofessional candidates to teach in urban schools. A major goal of Duval County Schools is to recruit and retain quality teachers in urban schools. These missions meet in the urban professional development school (UPDS) partnership, which has at its heart improving teaching and learning of preK–8 children in four urban schools.

In addition, the structure of the partnership is based on the following six assumptions, with their emphasis on equity:

1. We believe that all children can learn and have the right to a safe educational environment.
2. We believe that all children have the right to exemplary instruction and high-quality teachers.
3. Immersion in teaching/learning environments in urban schools increases our candidates' understanding of urban children's needs.
4. Shared resources between the school district and the university result in the best thinking of both groups.
5. Responsibility for inducting new teachers and for increasing preK–8 student achievement is best shared between the schools and the university.
6. Urban professional development school partnerships provide the greatest potential for success for all stakeholders.

At the heart of this UPDS partnership is the collaboration and communication among members of the learning community. The overall learning community consists of all participants in the UPDS partnership. Smaller learning communities exist at each site and so consist of preK–8 students, teachers, administrators, parents, business partners, the RCF member (exemplary teacher released from classroom duties to supervise interns and beginning teachers on-site), and the professor in residence (PIR; university faculty member released from one course to work with teachers on best practices)—all working together to increase preK–8 achievement and nurture teacher education candidates. Mentoring preprofessional candidates is a joint endeavor led by the RCF member. The principal, school coaches, directing teachers, PIR, director of field experiences, and other university faculty and administrators may also be involved in the mentoring process. Similarly, the methods courses taught on-site by the PIRs are jointly planned and developed with the appropriate classroom teachers. Another component of the learning community involvement is that the university teacher candidates participate in increasing preK–8 student achievement. All learning community participants are involved in disseminating successful UPDS practices in school and university settings and state and national conferences. Every member of the learning community is a valued member and participant. The leadership role changes to adapt to changing situations and circumstances, which allows the partnership to remain flexible.

Essential 2: Engaging Teacher Candidates in Our School Communities

An example of this flexibility is the intern focus walk described by the RCF in the opening paragraphs of the article. We believe that the reason our RCFs are able to make such a difference in the attitudes, beliefs, and lives of our interns is that they provide more continuous, in-depth support and encouragement of the interns' efforts than what the traditional supervision models can offer. Even with 15 interns spread over three schools, the RCF is able to check in with each one on a weekly basis and establish personal and professional relationships not possible under the traditional intern supervision model, in which a university professor visits the intern four or five times at most during the semester. The internship is the most intensive clinical experience offered through the UPDS partnership. The other programs in the four-stage continuum of clinical experiences (designed to develop effective teaching practice) include early field experiences followed by two preinternship experiences and the culmination of a teacher induction program. At each stage along the continuum, teacher candidates are intimately involved in the life of the schools in which they are placed. In one of the partner schools, whose relationship with the university has continued to evolve over the 12 years of the partnership, the teacher candidates' immersion into the school culture is rich. In addition, the 2007–2008 school year marked the 1st year that two PIRs served the school as a team; previously, there had been only one PIR. The second PIR brought with him expertise in science, which was exciting to the school given that 2007–2008 was also the 1st year that science was included on the high-stakes test in Florida. In addition, the steering committee at the school decided that the integration of science and literacy would be the theme of the school for the year, with workshops for the teachers offered by the two PIRs and with elementary science and literacy courses taught on-site during the academic year. During the fall semester, the science PIR taught his elementary

science methods course at the school, with the literacy PIR in attendance at each class to supplement with literacy integration strategies. The class was taught using an inquiry design and a constructivist approach to encourage as much independent thought and reflection as possible among the teacher candidates. The unique structure of the class included the matching of two teacher candidates with two fifth graders in groups for a half hour during each class period. Each group designed, implemented, and explained a science experiment, which they then presented to the school community (including parents) at a science extravaganza on a Thursday in November. The fifth-grade teachers were involved in the planning of the class as well, by providing the curriculum topics for the experiments, helping with the matching of the student groups, serving as mentors to the teacher candidates, and handling the many logistical and scheduling issues that arose. Likewise, during the spring 2008 semester, the literacy PIR taught her literacy methods course on the campus of the UPDS, matching each of her students with two second graders. Her students provided tutoring in comprehension, vocabulary, and phonics skills on a weekly basis with joint curriculum alignment provided by the PIR and the three teachers of the second-grade team. The second-grade teachers also served as mentors to the methods students. All teachers, administrators, coaches, and support staff in the school recognized and welcomed these teacher candidates as teaching members of the community for the valuable service that they provided to the children in the school. During spring 2008, one second-grade teacher told the literacy PIR about a literacy methods student, Lilly, who tutored an emotionally disturbed child in her class: “[Lilly] was the only person in the school who could reach Clarence and who could encourage him to work on literacy skills on a consistent basis.”

The other UPDSs report similar situations. At another flagship PDS, a professor emeritus and former PIR continued her dedication to the partnership by teaching her literacy course on the campus of the school. Her students provided a tutoring lab for struggling second-grade readers.

At the same school, two PIRs (one childhood education professor and one exceptional-student education professor) team-teach their literacy courses. This innovative collaboration between general and special education at the university level is both unique and exciting. The professors are modeling collaborative practices between general education and special education, which is valued in our schools because of the requirements of No Child Left Behind and the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act. The professors' methods students tutor struggling first-grade readers while the professors coach, model, and provide feedback to them. At still another UPDS, a middle school that was just added to our partnership last year, an ESOL class (English for speakers of other languages) was delivered last spring with a similar tutoring format. These methods students were similarly recognized and welcomed with open arms here, too.

Furthermore, the RCF members are assuming additional responsibilities to strengthen the university's preprofessional teacher education program. One RCF explains how this is accomplished:

For the past few years I have taught one or two classes of the field experience courses, which our teacher candidates take prior to the internship experience. These consist of teaching seminars with 20 to 25 students per class each semester. One of the students' assignments includes completing a 50-hour field experience at an assigned school. The director of the Field Experience Office has allowed for placement of the majority of my students to teach at West Jacksonville Elementary UPDS and schools in the surrounding neighborhood. This arrangement allows for a stronger bond with my students in that I check on each student weekly and discuss with them and their directing teacher their weekly progress. It also allows for greater discussion within my classroom because we have bonded, the students are not threatened by having their professor observe them, and they are comfortable with an urban culture. I think nothing made a stronger statement than this year when West Jacksonville received a grade of A. The Florida Depart-

ment of Education grades each school in the state based on our high-stakes test. Our students can and do achieve!

This model has been so successful that we scheduled a field experience class on the campus of West Jacksonville Elementary. We were able to utilize the school's resources by having the principal address the university students on her expectations of teachers, professionalism issues, and answer any questions they may have. Our assistant principal met with the Field 2 students presenting classroom management strategies and how to deal with [exceptional-student education] students. Several teachers came to our classroom to share best teaching practices within the classroom. The PDS literacy professor in residence also visited my students to share literacy strategies and classroom management ideas with them. It was very rewarding to see our former interns, now West Jacksonville teachers, come by the classroom to share their 1st-year experiences with the university students. I absolutely loved having this class at my PDS; however, I found it took a lot more of my time because students would come to class 1 or 2 o'clock instead of the required time of 3:50. They also did not want to go home after class because they wanted to debrief even more about their weekly teaching experience!

Clearly, these teacher candidates have been embraced by the teaching/learning community and made to feel a part of the school by the beginning teachers, experienced teachers, administrators, the PIR, and the RCF.

Essentials 6 and 8: Roles and Responsibilities—Informal and Formal

Because the terms *RCF* and *PIR* frequently occur in the preceding sections, it seems appropriate to give thorough explanations of these and other roles. It became apparent 12 years ago that if we wanted to influence beginning teachers' retention in urban schools, as well as improve teachers' practice and increase student

achievement, we had to design new and different experiences for our teacher candidates, the teachers, and the preK–8 students. Thus, we developed new roles and responsibilities as supports for our school improvement initiatives.

Resident Clinical Faculty

The on-site RCF members are exemplary urban master teachers released from classroom duties who are jointly funded by the University of North Florida and the Duval County Schools. The RCF members' formal responsibilities are to provide continuous supervision, support, and mentoring for the 10 to 15 student interns placed under their supervision. They are also responsible for supervising the teacher candidates enrolled in Field Experiences 1 and 2, Teaching Diverse Populations and Introduction to Education, and any other university students needing observations in the Duval County Schools. RCF members are integral members of their faculties, holding positions on their administrative leadership teams to assist in varied administrative duties within their schools. They also work directly with beginning teachers, providing modeling, mentoring, and support whenever needed.

Professors in Residence

PIRs are College of Education and Human Services faculty members who are released from one course to spend 1 to 2 days a week in a UPDS working with classroom teachers on school improvement initiatives and teaching college methods courses on-site to teacher candidates. They work closely with the principal and RCF to increase best practices school-wide and to conduct action research projects with the teachers. They are usually members of the School Advisory Council of the school, and they serve on the school's leadership team or UPDS steering committee. A team of PIRs works in one UPDS.

Mentor Teachers

Mentor teachers work with the PIR who is teaching a college methods course on-site and

whose methods students are tutoring the mentor teachers' elementary students. These teachers provide feedback to the methods students on a weekly basis on their tutoring. The mentor teachers are also involved in biweekly meetings with the PIR to plan the demonstration lessons taught by the PIR, discuss the qualities of a good mentor, and address any problems or concerns that might arise.

As the years have passed, we have found that the roles have blurred; that is, everyone involved feels responsible for nurturing the teacher candidates and novice teachers and for the achievement of the preK–8 students. The directing teachers of the interns at the school function much as directing teachers in traditional schools except that the RCF is available every day on-site to answer questions and attend weekly meetings. They also take on more interns than usual, usually two interns a year in the smaller schools; some of our directing teachers have had two interns per year for the 12-year duration of the partnership. That is an enormous service commitment to the UPDS design and to inducting novice teachers into our profession. It is also a variation on the role of a directing teacher that is not typically found outside a PDS setting. Other, temporary roles are played out because the UPDS schools attract exciting educational programs to their schools owing to their reputations for excellent instructional practice. At one school, two new teachers became directors of the Poetry Club for this very reason. One teacher put it this way:

This past year I have been a codirector of the Poetry Club at West Jacksonville. The Poetry Club consists of third, fourth, and fifth graders. This club exists because of a generous grant from [University of North Florida]. I have been able to see students take poems and make them their own. I have witnessed students learn how to use expression and perform literature. I have been fortunate to be a part of this program. I have seen these students blossom into enthusiastic readers. As I become more involved with the partnership with UNE, I grasp a better understanding of what it means to be a part of a PDS. This

partnership has been such a benefit for both organizations.

We included Essential 6 here because the articulation agreement between the university and the school district specifically describes the responsibilities of the RCF member in detail and so includes the joint funding responsibilities of both institutions.

Essential 4: Shared Commitment to Innovative and Reflective Practices and Their Impact on Student Learning

As the teachers, PIRs, RCFs, and teacher candidates share their commitment to innovative and reflective practice, they assume the many roles of curriculum planners, event organizers,

literacy and science integrators, scientists, tutors, inquirers, storytellers, and more.

One way that our UPDSs have consistently provided improved and enhanced educational opportunities for preK–8 students over the last 12 years has been through offering college methods courses on-site. This practice has provided enhanced learning for our teacher candidates as well. Each course has included a tutoring component. The teachers and PIRs have diligently worked together to ensure that national and state standards are met and that college courses and curricula for the grade level align. The fifth-grade teachers and both PIRs performed a wealth of planning before the science methods course was offered at the school. The teachers and PIRs wanted to ensure that literacy and science were integrated as much as possible. A large part of the inquiry process used during the science experiments—during the recording of results as well as during the presentations—included the literacy and communication



Figure 2. Science Buddies Celebrating an Initial Success

processes. One component that the teacher candidates found especially useful was the two-way journal they engaged in with their fifth-grade buddies during the semester. They found that establishing and maintaining personal relationships with their buddies facilitated the fifth-graders' ease in asking questions and learning science. One student put it this way:

I'm so glad I decided to start the two-way journal with Lamar. He *really* opened up to me through the journal. I feel like Lamar doesn't like to open up in front of Leonard, but the journal gives him a chance to communicate with me openly. He is such a sweetheart.

The inquiry method was difficult for the students to work through at first. They are used to working for the correct answers, and they want to please their professors. In the beginning stages of the class, many students had to work through a period of cognitive dissonance. One noted, "I really enjoy working with the [writing journal] buddies. I am still a little unsure about what we are supposed to be doing with them however." Another stated, "We have developed an activity but we are having difficulty coming up with a concept that the activity could fall under." However, as the class progressed, the students became more confident with the inquiry process in general, as well as with their relationships with their fifth-grade buddies:

This past week was very enjoyable. The week before we had asked the students to make predictions of the steps we would take in order to make the ice cream. This week we tested out these predictions. I'm really excited about next week. Our lesson was a flop, but I like to call those "teachable moments." We are doing electricity and trying to make power from a lemon. But our students are coming up with some great and interesting predictions!

When we surveyed the literacy methods course students at the end of the semester, we found that the most frequently expressed theme involved the idea of relating theory and practice in a meaningful context, as shown in the following comments: "It is one thing to

read about teaching literacy and another thing to actually have the time to develop a relationship with a student and follow them through a portion of the literacy process" and "Instead of just learning different theories of how to work with children, I am actually practicing the theories myself."

The preK–8 students also benefit from the experiences at our UPDSs. In the last few years, each school has risen from a D or F grade to become an A or B school. For the two schools in which we have had the most continuous presence for the longest time (12 years), one achieved an A last year and the other a B. Tables 1 through 3 include the scores from the Florida Comprehensive Achievement Test, the high-stakes test given in Florida for the A school. The scores are given for reading, writing, and math for the third, fourth, and fifth grades.

The other flagship UPDS advanced from a C to a B last year, and it includes a tutoring lab for first- and second-grade struggling readers. It found, through DIBELS testing (Dynamic

Table 1. Students at West Jacksonville Elementary School Passing the Florida Comprehensive Achievement Test: Reading (in Percentages)

Grade	2006	2007	2008
Third	59	44	68
Fourth	44	30	63
Fifth	46	43	45

Table 2. Students at West Jacksonville Elementary School Passing the Florida Comprehensive Achievement Test: Writing (in Percentages)

Grade	2006	2007	2008
Third	—	—	—
Fourth	82	74	66
Fifth	—	—	—

Note. The writing test is given in only the fourth grade among the elementary grades.

Table 3. Students at West Jacksonville Elementary School Passing the Florida Comprehensive Achievement Test: Mathematics (in Percentages)

Grade	2006	2007	2008
Third	35	66	73
Fourth	36	33	54
Fifth	32	21	45

Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills), that the tutoring provided by the methods course students improved the struggling readers' scores. Readers once identified as *high risk* or *moderate risk* advanced to the *low risk* or *above average* categories.

Essential 5: Sharing and Dissemination of Best Practices

As noted above, all UPDSs in the partnership consistently evaluate the best practices they use by examining the data from qualitative and quantitative sources, such as the children's Florida Comprehensive Achievement Test scores, various curriculum measures, DIBELS testing, and results from questionnaires.

The results that we have gleaned from these investigations over the past 12 years have been disseminated at school and university meetings as well as regional and national conferences. UPDS PIRs, RCFs, principals, the director of field experience, the dean of the college, school coaches, teachers, and students have all been involved in these presentations at all levels. We have presented our work at the National Association of Professional Development Schools, the American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education, the Association of Teacher Educators, the Eastern Education Research Association, the Education Trust, the Council for Exceptional Learners, the International Reading Association, Florida Reading Association, and the Florida Council for Exceptional Learners.

In addition, we have had groups of people from all over the state and country visit us to observe our UPDS partnership in action. We have recently hosted groups from Nova Southeastern University and Plymouth, England.

Essential 3: Ongoing Professional Development for All Participants

Besides being supported at state, national, and international conferences to present the re-

sults of collaborative work, all participants are provided with ongoing professional development activities on a regular basis, including our teacher candidates, practicing teachers, administrators, RCFs, and PIRs. Our UPDS teacher candidates are the recipients of four seminars during internship, uniquely designed for them on the topics of classroom management, professionalism, interviewing techniques, and assessment. These seminars are designed with the needs of urban schools in mind, and they are tailored to the unique circumstances of UPDSs. Because these seminars include only the UPDS teacher candidates, they are much smaller than the traditional seminars that take place on campus. The smaller group means that more questions are answered and that more in-depth answers are provided. The dialogue that develops is also much richer and more reflective on the part of the teacher candidates. Perhaps the richest and most rewarding professional development experience for teachers came a few years ago at one of the flagship UPDSs, when a master's degree in elementary education was offered on the campus of the school. Only nine teachers from the school took advantage of the opportunity, but all finished the program and are now considered leaders, change agents, and demonstrators of best practice at the large UPDS. At all the UPDSs, the PIRs provide in-service workshops based on the requests of the teachers. At the other flagship UPDS, the teachers at the school decided that the theme for last year should be the integration of science and literacy. They then asked the science and literacy PIRs to present a workshop on this topic to the whole staff at the beginning of the year. The PIRs presented a hands-on, inquiry-oriented workshop filled with ideas that the teachers could adapt to their curricula. Each grade level then met individually with the PIRs to refine and fine-tune their ideas for integrating literacy into the science curriculum. The fifth-grade teachers in particular were interested in this concept, and their ideas grew into inviting the science PIR to teach his elementary science methods course at the school and to pair up his students with the fifth-grade students to design science

experiments with a literacy component. At all the UPDSs, workshops are periodically provided to the teachers about what a UPDS encompasses. As experienced teachers leave or retire and new teachers take their places, this becomes a necessity. The PIRs, principal, RCF, and experienced teachers take a role in these informational sessions. Again, at one of the flagship UPDSs, a mentor teacher program has been in existence for the last 4 years. Specifically, the leadership team at the school decided 4 years ago to encourage more involvement from the third-grade teachers whose students were being tutored by the PIRs' college methods candidates. The mentor teacher design involved dividing the literacy methods students, along with their third-grade buddies, into four groups, each of which was assigned one of the four third-grade teachers who acted as their mentors. The preservice candidates tutored their buddies in that teacher's room after the initial demonstration lessons by the PIR. The mentors were asked to evaluate the candidates each week and to supervise the tutoring and answer any questions that the candidates had. The mentor teachers were also involved in biweekly meetings with the PIR, in which they matched the college methods course and third-grade literacy curriculum, planned the demonstration lessons, discussed the qualities of a good mentor, and addressed any problems or concerns that arose.

Results from a questionnaire that the third-grade mentor teachers completed indicated that their involvement in the program resulted in benefits to themselves as well as to the preservice candidates and third-grade students. When asked about the benefits they received, all four teachers mentioned that they collected new ideas for teaching strategies to use when teaching or reinforcing literacy concepts. When asked if their teaching had changed as a result of their participation, three of the four teachers responded positively. One teacher offered the insight that observing the candidates' mistakes made her more observant of these areas in her own teaching. One veteran teacher said that she was more aware of what she could change in her own practice.

These comments clearly suggest that the teachers gained valuable insights into their own practice as a result of their roles as mentors to literacy methods students. The teachers actually changed their practice because they were open enough to accommodate changes in their styles and strategies for teaching literacy concepts and skills. This mentor teacher program is still in operation today, and it now includes a second-grade team, yielding similar results.

At each UPDS, the RCF holds weekly meetings with the interns, and the PIR holds weekly meetings with the directing teachers of the interns. Many concerns and potential problems are handled at these meetings before small concerns become major dilemmas. Mentoring skills are topics that are discussed at the directing teacher meetings.

One RCF at a flagship UPDS started a new teachers' support group. She explains it like this:

There are currently ten teachers identified as *new*—most being 1st-year teachers but some being 2nd- and 3rd-year teachers but new to our school. Five of the 10 are former interns of mine. The purpose of establishing this group is to keep up with the concerns of the new teachers and work with coaches to alleviate and/or successfully deal with identified concerns. I chose the words of John Foster Dulles as a theme for this group—"The measure of success is not whether you have a tough problem to deal with, but whether it's the same problem you had last year [week/month]"—because in essence, I am trying to help the teachers learn to successfully address challenges and then move on to new challenges. We meet on a regular basis, and at each meeting the new teachers make known their toughest problem. From that time until we meet again, I work with the coaches to help the new teachers resolve their toughest problem. This may involve professional development/mentoring, administrative action, or simply helping the new teacher learn to view certain things from a different perspective.

The professional development that our directing teachers have experienced over the

years is best expressed by a young man who progressed as a student in an on-site methods class to an intern at a UPDS, to a directing teacher, to a National Outstanding Science Teacher winner, to a part-time instructor at the university, and to the president of the Florida Association of Science Teachers:

My students are constantly surrounded by students from the university who provide individualized support, as well as groundbreaking lessons in the content areas. I am consistently pleased with the level of professionalism and expertise that these pre-professional students bring into my classroom. These students not only support my students but consistently make me a better educator. Not only are their practices innovative, but I know that when pre-professional students are there watching me teach, I am consistently expected to conduct outstanding lessons.

A PIR had this to say:

My role as a professor has been enriched because of my interaction with the teachers and students at this urban elementary school for the past 10 years. Because of my demonstration lessons with the second and third graders, I feel my university courses are enriched and have become more authentic.

Essential 7: Ongoing Governance, Reflection, and Collaboration

Throughout the article, we have talked about unique programs created and implemented at each UPDS. Yet, in our partnership, collaboration, reflection, and communication occur in many ways, formally and informally, in an almost-continuous stream. First, there are regular biweekly meetings between the director of field experiences and the RCFs; the PIRs are regularly invited to these meetings as well. Each school is kept up to date about what is happening at every other school, and each usually receives valuable information that can

be adapted to its own situation. These are more than just teacher candidate placement meetings: Troubleshooting, reflection, idea swapping, and action research plans are more often on the agenda. At the beginning of each year, the dean of the College of Education and Human Services hosts a kickoff meeting for the principals of the UPDSs, the RCFs, and the PIRs. This is a time when we renew our commitment to the partnership and discuss new ideas and plans for the year.

In addition, each school has multiple ways in which communication and collaboration take place. In some schools, both the RCF and the PIR sit on the school's leadership team. This team then serves as the design team for the UPDS, from which all ideas are brought to the leadership team. In other schools, there is a UPDS steering committee consisting of the principal, PIRs, RCF, coaches, and teachers. This committee then plans, reflects, and evaluates the activities of the UPDS in regularly scheduled meetings. It was this steering committee at one of the flagship UPDSs that developed the theme of integrated science and literacy for the school after much lively and excited debate. Another way that communication and collaboration occur is through the School Advisory Councils at each school. These consist of various business partners, community leaders, and parents, as well as teachers and administrators from the school. The PIRs and RCFs are members of these councils. This is helpful when special UPDS events are planned at the school (e.g., the science extravaganza) and business partners' help is needed for additional supplies and parents' support is needed for participation at the event. It is also generally helpful to communicate the concept of the UPDS to the council and have its best thinking and support. Our UPDS partnership is an open group, even though it is large. Every member feels comfortable with every other member. Students in our methods courses feel free to meet with the director of the Field Experience Office; a beginning RCF feels comfortable meeting with the dean of the college. We have worked hard to make this informal communication possible, and

we believe that it lies at the heart of our accomplishments.

Essential 9: Dedicated and Shared Resources and Formal Recognition Structures

This level of comfort with one another and depth of communication are built on a sense of trust that has led to unique agreements regarding shared resources. Over the past 12 years, one of the major components for the success of our UPDS partnership lies in how the university and the school district dedicate, share, and negotiate resources of leadership, time, space, people, money, materials, expertise, and workload. The UPDS was externally funded through two grants for 6 years. The University of North Florida and Duval County Public Schools considered the endeavor so successful that it has been jointly funded and institutionalized for the past 12 years. The Florida legislature established a line item in the budget for the university's urban school initiatives. This recurring budget line of \$768,000 assures that the College of Education and Human Services can count on recurring funds for its urban education initiatives. Whereas not all of this fund is expressly devoted to the UPDS program, the fund does allow the university to pay for half of the salary and benefits of the RCFs and to hire extra visiting faculty to assist in the urban mission of the college. The fund also allows for the purchase of instructional materials for the UPDS schools and for the professional development of the UPDS teachers. Thus, our state government and our large urban school district recognize the University of North Florida as a true collaborator in preservice teacher education and urban school improvement. All the RCF salaries are equally split between the university and the school district. The RCFs' responsibilities are also split between mentoring teacher candidates and beginning teachers and serving the principals of their schools in multiple ways. Other funding sources include generous grants from business partners and other businesses interested in our work. Some busi-

ness partners provide employees with time throughout the year to tutor children in reading, writing, and math, in addition to offering generous gifts of books, food, and money. For 12 years, a local attorney supportive of UPDS initiatives has provided a celebration for the tutored children of the methods students, with bags of books and educational toys. They and the methods students receive certificates celebrating the work they accomplished. The principal, teachers, and RCF also receive certificates recognizing their dedicated service to the partnership. Most of the schools have some kind of celebration and certificates for their students, recognizing their contributions to the UPDS. Another local businessman has provided supplies and materials to all the UPDSs when the need has arisen over the years.

The university provides a course release to its PIRs for their work in the UPDSs. The RCFs are released from their teaching duties to work full-time mentoring interns and beginning teachers and working in the schools. Both the University of North Florida and Duval County are committed to the UPDS model and are willing to continue to dedicate and share resources to ensure its success.

Our Proudest Accomplishments

Over the 12 years of the UPDS partnership, many changes have occurred, including changing players, changing structures, and changing schools. Remaining constant, however, are our basic philosophy and commitment to providing quality education to urban schools. We realize that change is the only constant in life and that it is essential if any entity—human or organizational—is to develop, grow, and evolve. We are proud of the fact that we have not just survived the changes; rather, we have flourished because of them. Dealing with changes in personnel and structure has given us a sense of flexibility and opportunity that we might not have had within a more stable environment. Another element that we are proud of developing and maintaining throughout the partnership is our sense of trust in one another as individuals and

as institutions. That trust was built up slowly, and it consisted of many small conscious and unconscious acts of kindness, concern, and patience. In a UPDS, trust develops when the partners can negotiate their different perspectives on schedules, time, project completion, deadlines, appointment times, teaching strategies, classroom management skills, and a host of other sticking points. A sense of openness, a sense of humor, and an ability to admit mistakes and failures have helped us in establishing that trust in one another.

We are also proud of welcoming our first middle school into the UPDS family with its ESOL component (English for speakers of other languages). This has long been a dream of ours, and it finally came about last year. We are certainly proud of our UPDS schools that have struggled from the stigma of D and F status to become B and A schools. This reflects a

remarkable effort on the part of many students and educators at those sites. We are proud of our Association of Teacher Educators' Distinguished Program in Teacher Education Award in 2003. In addition, that same year, we were chosen to be part of a national study of four PDS sites (see Trachtman & Levine, 1997), as sponsored by the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, to determine the feasibility of going to scale with our UPDS sites throughout the county.

We are proud of the retention of our teachers who have interned in the UPDSs. Approximately 80% of all interns in the UPDSs are subsequently hired to teach in the county's schools. Of those, 86% have been retained over the last 5 years. Nationally, fewer than 60% remain in the classroom after 5 years. Overall, 57% of those retained by Duval County are still teaching in urban schools.



Figure 3. Our PDS Family Celebrating in Daytona Beach

Perhaps, the feature of our program that stands out most of all is that of equity. As mentioned above, we truly believe that we are equally important, and we thus feel free to share our ideas openly. Last year, when asked about the benefits of being a buddy with a literacy methods student, a second grader wrote, "I love her. She helps me to read and write." Another said, "We helping them be better teachers."

Of course, our partnership's proudest moment came on March 14, 2009, in Daytona Beach, Florida, when we won one of the inaugural NAPDS Awards for Exemplary Professional Development School Achievement. We view this award as encouragement to continue the efforts that we began 12 years ago and to renew our commitment to the reflective collaborative process in which we believe. We are grateful to be honored by the NAPDS for the work that we have completed toward the nine essentials, and we look forward to continuing our evolution as a partnership, with the essentials as our inspiration. ^{SUP}

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