

Creating an Environment of Educational Excellence: The University of Mississippi-PDS Partnership – The Evolution Continues

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ABSTRACT: Research emphasizes the effectiveness of professional development schools in preparing prospective teachers to successfully meet the needs of students. Effective school-university partnerships have a positive impact on student learning and on the stakeholders involved. Recounting the journey of the University of Mississippi PDS partnerships reveals our evolution from a PDS as defined by the Holmes Group in 1990 to our current status. The opportunity to reexamine the teacher education program through a Blue Ribbon Redesign Initiative for Teacher Preparation highlighted the need for our relationships with school districts to move back to PDS partnerships as now defined by the NAPDS. During this process, the revisions to our program and the changes being implemented led to the establishment of the framework of the “Six Cs for Effective Partnerships.” Recounting this process should be beneficial to teacher education programs and school partners who are considering program redesign and the revitalization of partnerships.

Research reveals the one factor that has the greatest impact on student learning is the classroom teacher (Levine, 2006). Teacher preparation programs have a tremendous opportunity and responsibility to train teachers who positively impact student learning. According to Levine, exemplary teacher education programs are committed to preparing excellent teachers and have clearly identified what an excellent teacher needs to know and be able to do. Partnerships between teacher education programs and P-12 schools have demonstrated an essential role in preparing effective teachers. Levine points out that in the most effective teacher education programs the field experience

component of the curriculum is sustained, begins early, and provides immediate application of theory to real classroom situations. The concept of professional development schools (PDS) provides a vehicle to accomplish this goal.

The University of Mississippi teacher education program initiated PDS partnerships as defined by the Holmes Group in 1990. However, with the growth in the program since that time, maintaining true PDS partnerships was difficult and the relationships slowly moved away from the PDS concept. With close examination of our programs and our partnerships with area schools came the realization that we needed to return to the PDS concept to

improve the effectiveness of our teacher education program. This article recounts the twenty-year evolution of our teacher education program, the review of the effectiveness of our program, and the resulting partnership and programmatic changes targeted at strengthening the training of our graduates. We believe that teacher education programs and their school partners will benefit from reading our story.

The Professional Development School Concept

The Holmes Group, also known as the Holmes Partnership, initiated the professional development school (PDS) concept over twenty years ago. In 1990, the Holmes Group developed six general guiding principles for creating a PDS. According to the Holmes Group guidelines, PDS sites were to include a commitment to:

1. teaching for understanding (rather than a factual recall) so that students learn for a lifetime,
2. organizing classrooms and schools as learning communities,
3. setting ambitious goals for everybody's children,
4. establishing an environment that supports continuing learning for all adults as well as children,
5. making reflection and inquiry the central feature of the school, and
6. inventing a new organization (Holmes Group, 1990, p. 7).

Support for the professional development school concept continues to be strong. In 2006, Levine stated that PDS sites provide “a superb laboratory for education schools to experiment with the initiatives designed to improve student achievement” (p. 105).

Traditional teacher preparation programs have been characterized as being too theoretical and having little connection to practice (Darling-Hammond & Baratz-Snowden, 2005). Such criticism has led many teacher preparation programs to create stronger links between course content and classroom practice. According to Moore (2003), field experiences hold

great potential for providing pre-service teachers the opportunity to make these connections while practicing instructional decision-making and self-reflection. Levine (2006) contends that a PDS “offers perhaps the strongest bridge between teacher education and classroom outcomes, academics and clinical education, theory and practice, and schools and colleges” (p. 105). Darling-Hammond and Bransford (2005) acknowledge the value of PDS partnerships as excellent opportunities for new teachers to learn to teach alongside more experienced teachers. Research suggests that teachers graduating from a PDS program are better able to make connections between ideas in coursework and their clinical experiences (Yerian & Grossman, 1997).

Through the collaborative efforts involved in forming and maintaining PDS sites, both teacher education programs and P-12 schools benefit (Caprano, Caprano & Helfeldt, 2010). Authentic PDS sites provide extensive experience within the school for prospective teachers along with frequent and sustained supervision and feedback by trained classroom teachers and university supervisors. P-12 teachers and university faculty members benefit from collective planning and decision making, as well as from participating in research and inquiry about teaching and teacher education (Abdal-Haqq, 1998; Darling-Hammond, 1994; Darling-Hammond, 2005).

While teacher preparation programs recognize the value of PDS partnerships and their role in preparing effective teachers, they agree that these partnerships can be difficult to form and maintain. As noted by the National Association for Professional Development Schools (NAPDS, 2008), differing notions have emerged as to the meaning and purpose of a PDS. This creates a challenge to the development and effective implementation of true PDS partnerships. Today, many educators use PDS to describe any school-university relationship that engages in the preparation of new teachers. This idea varies greatly from the concept first established in the late 1980s and, as a result, the term has lost its authenticity. This realization prompted the NAPDS to establish a set of

essentials that identifies more clearly what it means to be a PDS (National Association of Professional Development Schools, 2008). These essentials are closely related to the guidelines initially proposed by the Holmes Group but provide more focused attention to the key elements of a PDS. These nine essentials of a PDS require partnerships to:

1. craft a comprehensive mission statement,
2. commit to the preparation of future educators,
3. provide professional development for all participants,
4. commit to innovative and reflective practices,
5. engage in widespread dissemination of their work and its impact on student learning,
6. articulate an agreement of roles and responsibilities,
7. sustain a forum for ongoing governance, reflection, and collaboration,
8. determine formal roles across institutional settings, and
9. share resources, as well as reward and recognize participants.

In a PDS partnership, the teacher preparation program and the local school benefit from a collaborative relationship as they work closely together to prepare new teachers. Reflection on the effectiveness of the partnership and planned revisions to strengthen the teacher preparation program and the partnership should take place on an on-going basis. This process helps insure that the collaborative partnership prepares well-qualified teachers who are able to facilitate P-12 student success. The challenge for a more comprehensive study of the overall teacher preparation program at the University of Mississippi School of Education (UM SOE) was prompted by a collaborative effort of the Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning (2009) and the Mississippi Department of Education Blue Ribbon Redesign Initiative for Teacher Preparation. The purpose of this initiative, which encompassed all teacher preparation institutions in Mississippi, was to increase the quality of new teachers in Mississippi's P-12 schools.

Faculty at the UM SOE embraced the charge of this initiative and formed a Blue

Ribbon Committee for Redesign (BRC). The redesign focused faculty's attention on the current status of the program through an in-depth review of seven major issues related to teacher preparation: field experiences, subject area content knowledge, differentiated instruction, classroom management, recruitment/retention, strong partnerships, and accountability. Information gathered from research and reflection related to these issues, as well as feedback from our school partners, guided faculty as they planned innovative ways to enhance and improve current practices. While the BRC was comprised of faculty at the UM SOE, input from our school partners was also an integral part of the decision making process. The BRC used the results from Likert-type and open-ended items collected from our annual Teacher Education Program Evaluation (See Appendix). This program evaluation completed by student teachers, P-12 cooperating teachers and administrators in the participating schools, and university supervisors asked specific questions related to program effectiveness and the partnership between the university and the school sites. Results from the evaluation were compiled over a number of years to determine stakeholders' perceptions of strengths and areas for improvement within the partnership. The themes that emerged were matched with the seven major issues related to teacher preparation identified in the BRC Redesign Initiative. The results provided valuable information that guided the work of the BRC committee.

As the redesign process unfolded, we realized our partnerships with area schools no longer fit the definition of a PDS as defined by the Holmes Group guidelines under which they were initially developed (1990). As a result, the more focused and better-defined nine essentials designated by the NAPDS became the guidelines for enhancing our partnership with schools with the goal of reestablishing true PDS sites. The seven major issues related to teacher preparation were addressed by the BRC in a way that would eventually fit the model of PDS.

The acknowledgement by the NAPDS (2008) that many partnerships no longer match the PDS guidelines and the understanding that

other universities may be struggling with the same issues prompted us to share our story. Recounting this process provides an understanding of where we started and the reasons our focus shifted to a modified version of a PDS. The Blue Ribbon Redesign Initiative for Teacher Preparation facilitated the reexamination of our program and reinforced the need to return to the true meaning of a PDS. The revisions to our program and the changes currently being implemented to further build and strengthen our partnerships are included. Through this process the development of a model for effective partnerships emerged.

Background of the University of Mississippi PDS Partnership

The UM SOE has a long history of working with area P-12 schools in north Mississippi. Partnerships between The University of Mississippi and area elementary schools began as a result of the Mississippi Reform Act of 1982. At that time, the UM SOE operated a university kindergarten that served as a laboratory in which pre-service teachers observed and trained while working with young children. The Mississippi Reform Act of 1982 provided for the establishment of kindergartens in public schools throughout the state. In the years that followed, as the kindergartens were included in the elementary schools, the university laboratory school was dissolved and the university faculty began assisting one local school system by providing training for kindergarten teachers in developmentally appropriate methods for young children. Consequently, as pre-service teachers observed and worked in field-based experiences in the kindergarten classrooms in this school, they observed elementary classroom teachers implementing the types of early childhood instruction being advocated in their classes at the university (C. Leigh, personal communication, March 26, 2001).

By 1986, training in developmentally appropriate methods expanded to first grade teachers in this district. Gradually, as assistance and support for the teachers in this school district expanded, teachers from surrounding

districts became interested in participating in the training. Several teachers from these surrounding districts participated in summer workshops to receive training and build support networks among the teachers that had been trained (C. Leigh, personal communication, March 26, 2001).

In 1991, initial participants of the University of Mississippi PDS partnership began the formal process of establishing the PDS partnership. Faculty members and the principals and teachers from five area school districts began to build the partnership based on guidelines established by the Holmes Group (1990). In creating what the Holmes Group would define in their guidelines as a new organization, they created a long-range plan that established criteria for expansion of sites and personnel, planned collaborative activities, and developed a handbook that defined the underlying assumptions and responsibilities to which each partner committed (Love, Emerson, Shaw & Leigh, 1996). The handbook became the written document that outlined the roles and responsibilities of each participant—the university faculty, school partners, and pre-service teachers. To further address the guidelines, the mission of this partnership focused on empowering teachers to become facilitators of learning; to value themselves as reflective, interactive problem solvers; and, to emerge as responsible, active leaders and autonomous generators of knowledge and ideas. Each year, university faculty met with school faculty to review and revisit the mission, the philosophy, and “TEACHERS as Facilitators” knowledge-base model. This process insured the participants of the partnership were focused and devoted to the same goals (Chambless, Love & Owens, 1998).

As the partnership continued to emerge, an advisory council was organized. Administrators and teachers from nearby school districts and university faculty from liberal arts and education joined UM SOE faculty on the council. The advisory council developed a timeline for planning, implementing, and refining the UM-PDS Partnership. The group developed selection criteria for PDS sites. These criteria included the need for diverse programs, diverse

populations, excellence in teaching, and implementation of the Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (InTASC) standards (Council of Chief State School Officers, 1992). With Holmes Group and university support, several members of the advisory group attended Holmes Group meetings, made presentations, and networked with other professionals on a national level (Love, et al, 1996).

As work continued, personnel from the school districts and university developed a vision for the creation of an environment of educational excellence. Such an environment would:

- nurture the growth and education of diverse student populations,
- support the professional development of experienced teachers, administrators, and counselors,
- support the professional development of future professionals, and
- allow professionals to explore and generate new knowledge about teaching and learning (Professional Development School Site Guide, 1992, p.1).

A university-supported grant made it possible for a classroom teacher from a participating school district to work part-time as a liaison to pinpoint staff development needs and gain perspectives by assisting in undergraduate teacher preparation courses. PDS leaders then conducted summer seminars for cooperating teachers, administrators, and counselors. In these seminars, supported by Holmes Group grants, participants developed an understanding of the PDS concept, discussed philosophical principles of both the PDS concept and the university's teacher education knowledge base, and defined elements of individual roles and benefits to all participants (Love, et al, 1996).

During the field experiences, elementary education students observed and tutored in the PDS sites throughout their junior year. Senior education students worked in the PDS sites for two full-time Action Lab blocks totaling seven weeks during the fall semester. During the 15-week student teaching experience in the spring semester, pre-service teachers taught lessons they

had planned based on the constructivist, interdisciplinary approach (Love, et al, 1996).

To ensure elementary pre-service teachers had experience working in diverse settings, they were required to work in both an upper level and lower level classroom in at least two different PDS sites during the field based experiences. Selection of PDS sites where diverse populations were located and special needs children were taught in inclusive classrooms were additional considerations. Special education pre-service teachers completed fifteen hours of field experience for each of their courses and participated in the student teaching experience in the PDS sites in the spring. During the student teaching semester, pre-service teachers met regularly with school faculty as a cohort group. A seminar class was held on-site with each group. School faculty shared the responsibility of teaching senior level methods courses while university faculty were often invited to model instructional practices in PDS sites (Love, et al, 1996).

The university's research and service roles in PDS schools were enhanced by the appointment of a university site coordinator in each school district. These site coordinators played a leadership role in placing students, coordinating university supervisors, and planning seminars for student teachers. They regularly met with administrators as a proactive measure to prevent and resolve problems. The site coordinators communicated with cooperating teachers and pre-service teachers about their needs for professional development training. Site coordinators organized efforts in which cooperating teachers and administrators served as resource persons for student seminars on topics such as communicating with parents, addressing children's learning styles, preparing lessons to meet children's interests and needs, the middle school concept, and classroom management (Love, et al, 1996).

University supervisors who worked with students in designated schools regularly visited the pre-service teachers to supplement the guidance they received from cooperating teachers, to participate in action research projects, and to support cooperating teachers as they

made changes in their classrooms. Cooperating teachers participated in campus classes, serving as resource persons and co-teachers. Initially, teacher exchanges were facilitated by a small grant given to participating schools by the university so teachers could visit each others' classrooms. The feeling of community in the PDS was enhanced by offering school district partners privileges such as access to the university library, parking privileges, and the opportunity to purchase tickets and memberships to recreational facilities. School district faculty also received scholarship credit hours for graduate coursework taken at University of Mississippi toward an advanced degree (Love, et al, 1996).

Each year, a variety of techniques to evaluate and make appropriate changes to the UM-PDS partnership were implemented. Along with informal discussions with students, cooperating teachers, administrators, and university faculty, the partnership administered a yearly survey to all participants. The results of the formal and informal assessments were analyzed and distributed. The results served as a basis for further discussion, consideration, and change. Changes and refinements were made to the program based on the outcomes of the evaluation procedures (Love, et al, 1996).

A study conducted by Pepper and Love (2002) chronicled the evolution of the first twenty years of the UM SOE partnerships (1982–2002) that included the establishment of the PDS partnerships. Based on longitudinal patterns revealed in the results of the evaluations of the PDS partnerships over ten years, recommendations for future changes to the partnership to better accomplish the mission were outlined and implemented.

Through the years, the partnerships between area P-12 school districts and the UM SOE continued to work together to successfully train pre-service teachers. However, because of the growth in numbers of students, school sites, and the addition of four university-based regional campuses, the partnerships moved away from the initial Holmes Group definition of professional development schools. Close examination of the partnership by the BRC also

revealed that the UM-PDS did not meet the nine essentials of “true” PDS partnerships identified by NAPDS. Based on the partnership continuum proposed by Teitel (2008), the partnership existing between UM and local school districts prior to the Blue Ribbon Initiative for Redesign of Teacher Preparation could be classified as a “transactional relationship.” A transactional partnership acknowledges a commonality of purpose and makes adaptations and adjustments in the way the partners work with one another in order to reach their individual and collective goals. However, the two groups often remain as individual entities and do not take advantage of the relationship to learn from each other. Our pre-service teachers continued to complete field placements in the area schools but the collaborative nature of the relationship with the schools was no longer evident.

The changes proposed by the School of Education Blue Ribbon Committee for Redesign (BRC) and approved by faculty have the goal of moving our partnerships with P-12 schools to a transformational level. In a transformational partnership, Teitel (2008) explains that the partners retain their identities but are willing to learn from and with each other. The success of pre-service teachers becomes the joint responsibility of all parties. Stakeholders work collectively to make decisions, leading to a deeper sense of professionalism enabling them to develop a common vision of shared outcomes. The process of making these changes is underway for the partnerships and the return to PDS sites in selected schools will gradually take place.

The faculty at the UM SOE acknowledges there are challenges involved in accomplishing this endeavor, yet a successful program redesign depends on strengthening PDS partnerships. One obvious challenge to this process is managing the growth in the number of school sites, regional campus sites, and pre-service teachers over the years. The current PDS partnership program has grown substantially since 2001, when the program consisted of nine school districts with 24 schools and one regional service center for persons with special needs.

Currently, our students complete field experiences within 37 school districts (143 schools) as well as the regional service center for persons with special needs. In addition, the program has grown from a program on the main campus to include four regional sites with full time tenure-line faculty. The SOE faculty acknowledges that consistency of program implementation across school sites and at regional campuses will be a challenge, but measures are being taken to ensure the needed consistency. One such measure implemented is the appointment of content area coordinators to facilitate consistency in course requirements and content across sites. The number of elementary, secondary, and special education teacher education students has also grown substantially. The increased enrollment is considered a positive for the program and university, yet it presents additional challenges as the redesign of the PDS partnerships proceeds.

Implementation of Program/Partnership Changes

Initial planning by the BRC for the redesign included numerous meetings to begin the process of moving school partnerships to a transformative relationship. This initial planning led to the formation of a Network of Professional Schools (NPS). The NPS is comprised of all schools currently serving as field experience sites for our pre-service teachers, including those that were once considered PDS sites. The change signifies the UM SOE's acknowledgement that our partnerships have moved away from being "true" PDS sites. The goal of the redesign process is to slowly move partnerships with selected schools in the NPS to PDS sites as defined by NAPDS. Programmatic changes implemented as a result of the BRC took place in all school settings to ensure the consistency of training our teacher education students received. Because these changes are a major undertaking within all the NPS schools, the BRC realizes that the move to build true PDS relationships will be slow and deliberate. The first step has been initiated by strengthen-

ing relationships with one school that will serve as a pilot.

In addition, the formation of a P-16 Council within the NPS has enhanced communication and collaboration between the university and partnership school districts. The purpose of the council is to provide a collaborative network of university faculty, district superintendents, principals, cooperating teachers, and students focused on teacher education program improvements.

The first programmatic change implemented was a year-long field placement during the senior year for elementary, secondary, and special education pre-service teachers. The pilot for the year-long placement occurred during the 2009-2010 school year. Prior to implementation, discussions were held with principals and superintendents in the NPS and initial input from stakeholders indicated strong support for the year-long field placements. As a result of this positive feedback and with understanding gained during the pilot year, year-long placements were implemented for all seniors, P-12 for the 2010-2011 school year.

Research supports the effectiveness of the year-long internship. In a report completed by the Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy (2001), prepared for the U.S. Department of Education Office for Educational Research and Improvement, research indicated that teachers who completed a year-long internship were more satisfied with their training, had a higher retention rate, and consistently rated their teaching abilities higher than teachers in a traditional program. The report also pointed out that experienced and newly certified teachers alike see clinical experiences as a powerful element of teacher preparation. Cooperating teachers have a powerful influence on the nature of the student teaching experience. Research documents significant shifts in attitude among pre-service teachers who work under close supervision in real classrooms with children. Allowing pre-service teachers to remain in one classroom for the entire year provides a complete overview of classroom management and organization, student growth, and the day-to-day challenges inherent in being a

teacher. This year-long experience also provides the opportunity for pre-service teachers to thoroughly conceptualize applications of theoretical models. In 2010, the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) (2010) strongly encouraged the move to year-long placements.

The second major programmatic change impacting prospective teachers involved increased training related to the diverse needs of P-12 students. Additional coursework focused on teaching students with special needs has been added to all teacher education programs. The IDEA (2004) mandate for inclusion of special needs students in general education classrooms supports the need for teachers to be prepared to work with students' diverse needs. Kilanowski-Press, Foote, and Rinaldo (2010) indicate that teachers generally believe they do not have adequate training in their teacher preparation programs or as part of their in-service professional development to work with students with special needs. Input provided by our professional partners and our teacher education graduates in their first year of teaching support these findings and has resulted in changes to strengthen and better prepare pre-service teachers in our programs to meet these challenges. Beginning in fall 2011, incoming sophomore elementary teacher education students enrolled in a program that will lead to dual certification in elementary education (K-6) with a special education add-on endorsement for mild/moderate disabilities upon graduation. Secondary education students will be eligible for an add-on endorsement in mild/moderate special education with an additional six hours of coursework upon graduation.

Another result of the redesign process was development of an assessment plan to evaluate program effectiveness and renewed partnership relationships. Feedback gathered from pre-service teachers, NPS teachers and administrators, as well as university faculty and other stakeholders, served as the impetus for continuous improvement of teacher training. Continued data collection and analysis of pre-service teacher coursework and observations of their

practice in the field serves as one measure of program effectiveness. Scores received on the Praxis II test at the end of their program will be another measure. Comparison of results collected from pre-service teachers in PDS sites and non-PDS sites may reveal differences in their performance. An additional measure of the strength of pre-service teachers placed in PDS sites will be revealed through follow-up surveys administered to new teachers and the principal after their first year of teaching. In addition, assessment of the renewed partnerships continues to be gathered through the revised Teacher Education Program Evaluation (see Appendix), as well as through focus group interviews with all stakeholders and the P-16 Council. Analysis of the data will be submitted to the P-16 Council for review. Recommendations for improvement will be submitted to the Dean and the Department of Curriculum and Instruction for implementation.

Through the redesign process involving year-long placements and the additional coursework in special education, the BRC began to realize a pattern emerging in discussions and implementation that helped to frame a redesign model for effective partnerships. Six important "Cs" were identified as essential to the success of the redesign: collaboration, communication, choice, continuity, consideration, and community. These six "Cs" seemed to resonate throughout the discussions as important areas of focus for strengthening and maintaining the partnerships with schools in the NPS and future PDS sites.

Six "Cs" of Effective Partnerships

The six Cs model guided our work through the redesign planning and implementation. The model (See Figure 1) has been beneficial in strengthening our relationship with current partners in the NPS and is integrally connected to the NAPDS nine essentials. As a result, the six Cs provided guidance as we began the move to development of the initial PDS sites.

Collaboration is the shared negotiation of purpose and task (Grimmett, 1993) and ensures that relationships among partnership schools



Figure 1. Six Cs of Effective Partnerships

and the university are mutually beneficial. The voices from university personnel, principals, academic coordinators, teachers, teacher education students, parents, and P-12 students must be included and open lines of communication maintained. This collaborative relationship creates an ethos of care and trust among constituents. According to Marlow, Kyed, and Connors (2005), collaborative negotiation of purpose and task results in a commitment of all to the partnership and leads to the achievement of common goals. All stakeholders share responsibility, authority, and accountability for achieving results (Chrislip & Larson, 1994). Successful collaboration is sustained, viewed by all partners as useful and productive, and fulfills common purposes (Russell & Flynn, 2000).

Research conducted by Carrol, Featherstone, Featherstone, Feiman-Nemser, and Roosevelt (2007) found that when a collaborative approach to the experience is used, all stakeholders work to improve the field experience. The goal in their research was to construct a collaborative learning community among the cooperating teacher, pre-service teacher, and school liaison where all parties learned from each other. In this learning community, the traditional way of thinking about student teaching is changed from viewing the experience as a culminating experience to a beginning of learning for the novice teacher. Collaboration during the planning and implementation of the

year-long senior field placement implemented by our teacher education program has enhanced the learning experience for all stakeholders and strengthened our collaborative partnerships.

Probably the most critical aspect of a successful university and school partnership is communication. In order for the professional learning communities to improve the teaching and learning process, a partnership must establish a strong framework for communication (Doolittle, Sudeck & Rattugan, 2008). This framework may be initially established through written and oral communication between university and partnership sites. This process is usually followed by a formal agreement established by all parties and signed by a university and school representative. Communication works best when there is a contact person at the university and the school site, for example, a university coordinator and a partnership coordinator who keep lines of communication open.

The establishment of a P-16 Council within the NPS facilitates both communication and collaboration between the university and partnership school districts. The specific purpose of the council is to collaboratively (1) ensure the quality of field placements and supervision of the university's teachers, (2) provide input for new training modules for cooperating teachers, and (3) identify criteria for selection of cooperating teachers. The P-16 Council is composed of university faculty, district superintendents, principals, cooperating teachers, and students. Meeting the changing needs of the P-12 partners and teacher preparation program implementation is the major focus of the council. Responsibilities of council members include participation in meetings and other activities designed to strengthen teacher training.

Initial collaboration and communication with the NPSs occurred during the summer of 2010 when the staff from the UM SOE Office of Field Experience met with district superintendents and school principals to discuss the program changes proposed by the BRC. The purpose was to gather input on how to effectively implement the changes in their schools and districts. Discussions centered on dual certifica-

tion with special education, year-long internships, and a P-16 Council. Dialogue with the superintendents, school principals, and cooperating teachers was very helpful in planning implementation strategies for the program changes. The school partners and university discussed the roles each would take as the BRC recommendations were implemented. These discussions strengthened our partnerships by articulating formal roles and responsibilities, a NAPDS essential. The formation of the P-16 Council also created a “forum for ongoing governance, reflection, and collaboration,” an important element of a PDS according to NAPDS (2008).

Successful partnership relationships must allow for choice by all constituents. In successful relationships, the partnership sites and the university have choice in the schools in which students are placed (grade levels, content areas, and cooperating teachers). This process within the NPS is best facilitated when the field-experience coordinator and the school principal work together to choose cooperating teachers and pre-service teachers who will complement one another. Working with partners to determine placements assured what Fullan (1999) referred to as the decentralization of decision-making. In addition, to strengthen the NPS partnerships and meet the academic needs of P-12 students, choices through a collaborative process are made for professional development activities. In the past, partnership schools have identified topics in which they would like more training. The university faculty provided training in areas such as early intervention in literacy and mathematics. Future choices will build on these past collaborative relationships as we model developmentally appropriate strategies for pre-service teachers in the NPSs. These professional development activities meet another NAPDS essential by providing professional development for all participants.

According to Goodlad (1994), “There must be a continuous process of educational renewal in which colleges and universities, the traditional producers of teachers, join the recipients of the products as equal partners in the simultaneous renewal of schooling and educators” (p. 1-2). This continuity allows partnerships to

improve over time. Allowing the same principal, university coordinator, and school partnership coordinator to work together for multiple years builds trust and strengthens the partnership. In addition, the university and the schools will view each other as partners, not as separate entities. This continuity should lead to reflection that will encourage a systematic approach to understanding teacher practice and provide professional renewal through this mutually beneficial relationship (Lunenberg & Willemse, 2006). Establishing this continuity will lead to a commonality of expectations within the NPS.

Consideration of the attributes defined by NCATE (2001) must be made during the transformative process. The attributes critical to successful partnerships include the following elements: establishing learning communities, engaging in collaboration, assuring accountability and quality, defining organized roles and structures, and assuring equity. Principals and school districts must be willing to share in the responsibilities by embracing and considering the implications of these attributes. While schools with high rankings may be ideal sites, consideration should also be given to partnership schools that represent diversity in the student and teacher population. Another important consideration is the experience and qualifications of cooperating teachers. P-12 teachers who meet the qualification requirements and utilize research-based practices as models will be considered strong candidates for cooperating teachers. Within the NPSs, changes in classroom practices are expected as pre-service teachers and cooperating teachers consider themselves as agents within the partnership (Parkison, 2009). One of the NAPDS nine essentials is a commitment to “innovative and effective practice.” The careful selection of cooperating teachers who model these effective and innovative practices is an important step in building true PDS partnerships.

Establishing learning communities within the partnerships are of paramount importance. Putnam and Burke (2006) identified seven properties of learning communities: a sense of common purpose, viewing peers as colleagues, seeking self/group actualizations, perceiving

outside groups as similar to one's own group, individual and communal reflections, giving and seeking help, and celebrating accomplishments. These properties align with the NAPDS nine essentials. Community facets of the partnership such as supportive shared leadership and vision became a priority for the BRC redesign. The expectations between the university and NPSs continue to be clarified in order to create a sense of community where school personnel and university representatives view themselves as peers with shared values. This community building process included open meetings and discussions, the establishment of roles of all stakeholders, the development of a memorandum of understanding, and the coordination of a timeline for implementation and input provided through program evaluations. This process will move the NPS partnerships and future PDS sites to becoming a close-knit community with the emphasis on the connectedness between people (Boyer, 2003).

Conclusion

Research emphasizes the effectiveness of PDS partnerships in producing well-prepared teachers that are able to meet the diverse needs of students in today's classrooms. In addition to having a positive impact on student learning, these partnerships have proven to be mutually beneficial and create a seamless alignment among stakeholders. Recounting the thirty year journey of the University of Mississippi PDS partnership provides an understanding of our development and evolution away from PDS partnerships as defined by Holmes (1990). The Blue Ribbon Committee for Redesign has facilitated the reexamination of our program and reinforced the need to move back toward the meaning of PDS partnerships as defined by the NAPDS. During this process, the revisions to our program and the changes currently being implemented led to the establishment of the framework of the Six Cs for Effective Partnerships. The redesign has energized our partnerships with area schools and will strengthen the preparation of Mississippi's future teachers. ^{SUP}

Appendix

Teacher Education Program Evaluation To Be Completed by Student Teachers

NA-Not Applicable, Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree

The cooperating teacher with whom I worked during the year-long placement:

1. was helpful in providing feedback and suggestions as I planned for my 10-day lesson.
2. modeled effective communication skills as she/he interacted with me, the students, and parents.
3. used and provided a variety of teaching strategies that were effective in making learning meaningful for all students.
4. demonstrated effective classroom management practices and provided guidance to assist me in being successful in managing the classroom.
5. modeled formal and informal assessment strategies effectively and provided feedback and suggestions as I planned my 10-day lesson.
6. exhibited poise and sound judgment.
7. displayed professionalism through punctuality, appearance, attendance, and dependability.
8. maintained a positive and enthusiastic disposition toward the teaching profession.
9. cooperated and collaborated with colleagues and responded in a sensitive manner to situational needs.
10. maintained confidentiality and ethical standards.
11. exhibited understanding of how to work with parents/guardians.

The university supervisor with whom I worked during the year-long placement:

12. provided guidance and helpful suggestions as I planned my 10-day lesson, as well as after the observation of my teaching.
13. was readily available by email or phone when I needed assistance.
14. was knowledgeable of the teacher education program and could answer questions related to assignments.
15. visited me in my school at least four times each semester.

16. maintained a collaborative relationship with the clinical instructor and principal.
17. exhibited poise and sound judgment and responds in a sensitive manner to situational needs.
18. maintained confidentiality and ethical standards.
19. displayed professionalism through punctuality, appearance, attendance, and dependability.
20. maintained a positive and enthusiastic disposition toward the teaching profession

The school setting in which I completed my year-long placement:

21. exhibited a positive environment for K-12 students, cooperating teachers, and student teachers.
22. provided strong support for cooperating teachers, student teachers, and the School of Education.

Open Ended Questions

What are positive aspects of the teacher education program and the school/university partnership(s)?

What suggestions do you have for improving the teacher education program and our partnership(s)?

Teacher Education Program Evaluation To Be Completed by Cooperating Teachers

NA=Not Applicable, Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree

The student teacher with whom I worked during the year-long placement:

1. effectively addressed professional, state, and institutional standards related to teaching and student learning.
2. had an in-depth understanding of the content that he/she taught.
3. effectively solved problems related to teaching.
4. understood theories related to teaching and learning and effectively implemented them in lesson planning, classroom instruction, and classroom management.
5. selected and developed instructional strategies, interventions, and technologies to help all students learn and develop.

6. self-evaluated and made adjustments to improve his/her performance.
7. considered student background and experiences in order to make connections to real-world problems and make learning meaningful for all students.
8. collaborated with peers and other colleagues to improve his/her practice and promote professional development.
9. evaluated student learning and development and made appropriate adjustments or decisions based on data in order to have a positive effect on learning for all students.
10. created caring and supportive learning environments and encouraged self-directed learning and development by all students.
11. worked with students, families, colleagues, and communities in ways that reflect the attitudes expected of professional educators.
12. supported learning and development for all students; including students with exceptionalities and those from diverse backgrounds.

The university supervisor with whom I worked during the year-long placement:

13. played an active role in supervising the student teacher completing field experiences in my classroom.
14. was helpful in providing feedback and suggestions as the student teacher planned and implemented lessons and managed the classroom (preconference, observation, post-conference).
15. modeled effective communication skills as she/he interacted with the student teacher and me.
16. was knowledgeable about the teacher education program and trained me on expectations of the clinical instructor/cooperating teacher.
17. visited the classroom at least four times each semester.
18. maintained a collaborative relationship with the principal and me.
19. exhibited poise and sound judgment and responded in a sensitive manner to situational needs.
20. maintained confidentiality and ethical standards.
21. displayed professionalism through punctuality, appearance, attendance, and dependability.

22. maintained a positive and enthusiastic disposition toward the teaching profession.

The Teacher Education Program in the School of Education:

23. insured that information about policies and procedures were communicated to student teachers, cooperating teachers, and the school.
24. provided strong support for student teachers, cooperating teachers, and the school on issues related to the field experience.
25. provided training to cooperating teachers on expectations and completion of assessment instruments.

Open Ended Questions

What are positive aspects of the teacher education program and the school/university partnership(s)?

What suggestions do you have for improving the teacher education program and our partnership(s)?

Teacher Education Program Evaluation To be completed by University Supervisors

To be completed on each student teacher and cooperating teacher with whom they work.

NA-Not Applicable, Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree

Student teacher with whom I worked during the year-long placement:

1. effectively addressed professional, state, and institutional standards related to teaching and student learning.
2. had an in-depth understanding of the content that he/she taught.
3. effectively solved problems related to teaching.
4. understood theories related to teaching and learning and effectively implemented them in lesson planning, classroom instruction, and classroom management.
5. selected and developed instructional strategies, interventions, and technologies to help all students learn and develop.
6. self-evaluated and made adjustments to improve his/her performance.

7. considered student background and experiences in order to make connections to real-world problems and make learning meaningful for all students.
8. collaborated with peers and other colleagues to improve his/her practice and promote professional development.
9. evaluated student learning and development and made appropriate adjustments or decisions based on data in order to have a positive effect on learning for all students.
10. created caring and supportive learning environments and encouraged self-directed learning and development by all students.
11. worked with students, families, colleagues, and communities in ways that reflect the attitudes expected of professional educators.
12. supported learning and development for all students; including students with exceptionalities and those from diverse backgrounds.

The cooperating teacher at the school(s) where I supervised:

13. played an active role in supervising student teachers who were completing field experience in their classroom.
14. was helpful in providing feedback and suggestions as student teachers planned and implemented lessons and managed the classroom.
15. modeled effective communication skills as they interacted with student teachers, K-12 students, and me.
16. used and provided a variety of teaching strategies that were effective in making learning meaningful for all students.
17. demonstrated effective classroom management practices.
18. modeled formal and informal assessment strategies effectively.
19. cooperated and collaborated with colleagues and responded in a sensitive manner to situational
20. needs.
21. exhibited poise and sound judgment.
22. maintained confidentiality and ethical standards.
23. displayed professionalism through punctuality, appearance, attendance, and dependability.
24. maintained a positive and enthusiastic disposition toward the teaching profession

The school(s) in which I supervised during the year-long placement:

25. exhibited a positive environment for K-12 students, cooperating teachers, and student teachers.
26. provided strong support for cooperating teachers, student teachers, and the School of Education.

Open Ended Questions

What are positive aspects of the teacher education program and the school/university partnership(s)?

What suggestions do you have for improving the teacher education program and our partnership(s)?

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