RESEARCH IN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SCHOOLS

Visions From Professional Development School Partners

Connecting Professional Development and Clinical Practice

Merilyn Buchanan | Michael Cosenza
EDITORS

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A volume in
Research in Professional Development Schools
JoAnn Ferrara and Janice Nath, *Series Editors*

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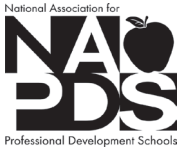

The mission of NAPDS is to advocate for and support
a professional development school model that is committed to:
student learning; clinical educator preparation;
reciprocal professional development; and shared inquiry.

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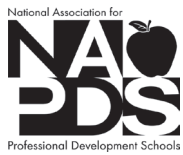

INFORMATION AGE PUBLISHING, INC.
Charlotte, NC • www.infoagepub.com

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

A CIP record for this book is available from the Library of Congress
http://www.loc.gov

ISBN: 978-1-64113-037-0 (Paperback)
978-1-64113-038-7 (Hardcover)
978-1-64113-039-4 (ebook)

Printed in the United States of America

We would like to dedicate this book to our grandsons, Leonardo Gaughan and Augustus Cosenza as a legacy for our passion for preparing high quality teachers who can help all students find ways to excel in multiple areas and achieve at their highest potential. It is our hope that Leonardo and Augustus have the opportunity to experience their P–12 education in a school that is partnered with a university.

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FOREWORD

This work brings a well-established reform movement back into the light once more. The idea of early and integrated field experiences has been with university teacher preparation programs and schools districts for over two decades. Many of these partnerships have maintained their strength as professional development schools, while others have diminished due to funding, outside pressures, and interests. It is with great enthusiasm that we see many political leaders, school districts, teacher educators, and organizations (National Association of Professional Development Schools, American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education, and the Association of Teacher Educators) focusing on the benefits of the PDS structure. The myriad of benefits have been discussed in our previous volumes—as well as the issues in establishing and maintaining this type of university–school partnership.

This work continues to add richness to the conversation of the previous Research in Professional Development Schools' volumes: *Forging Alliances in Community and Thought, Advances in Community Thought and Research, University and School Connections,* and *Creating Visions for University–School Partnerships.* We are most happy to add this volume to those above and to continue this much needed conversation—based on the importance the PDS model places on the professional growth of educators in schools and universities. We know through research that a good teacher can make a vast difference to the success of students, we know that teachers who are prepared are retained in teaching longer, and we know that teachers who

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have early clinical experiences enter their first position as an "experienced teacher."

Editors, Cosenza and Buchanan have selected authors to highlight the ways in which PDSs create a context for school renewal and learning. The practitioners and researchers included in this volume focus on the critical elements needed to create and sustain professional development schools, bring the vision into reality and enhance practice. Each chapter provides concrete examples of both the successes and challenges encountered by the authors as they sought to initiate or expand PDSs within their respective organizations. Readers are encouraged to consider the "lessons learned" from these experts to guide them on their PDS journey. The collective wisdom shared throughout this volume continues to add promising practices to further the role PDSs play for connecting professional development and clinical practice in schools.

—JoAnne Ferrara
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We would like to recognize the work and effort of Professional Development School—University Partnership teachers, administrators, and staff who dedicate themselves daily to providing the best possible educational experiences for the children, students, and teacher candidates whom they serve and inspire.

Our deepest gratitude goes to all of the contributing authors who have stepped forward to tell their stories, and share the ideas and best practices that they have experienced in collaboration with their PDS colleagues. We would like to acknowledge Linda Gray for her work in checking each of the chapters and bringing the manuscript into a publishable form. Finally, we extend thanks to publisher George Johnson for his guidance and good counsel, and series editors, JoAnne Ferrara and Janice Nath, for their support and encouragement.

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INTRODUCTION

The Essential Importance of the PDS Model for Effective Teacher Preparation

Thomas McCambridge

The role of the institution of higher education (IHE) in the preparation of teachers is to structure coherent programs that, in accordance with the criteria defined by their accrediting agencies, prepare teacher candidates to teach effectively in public school classrooms.

Such programs are typically divided into three stages, although differently organized in different institutions: *foundational course work*, emphasizing theory; *methods course work*, emphasizing both general standards for instruction and assessment (the Teacher Performance Expectations in California, for example) and specific strategies for specific courses at specific grade levels; and *clinical practice* (or student teaching).

In developing such programs, the goal of the IHE is to create programs that are vertically integrated in such a way that teacher candidate learning at one level constantly informs and is informed by teacher candidate learning at the other levels, the ultimate goal being a thoroughly prepared, committed professional teacher.

After many decades in which the three stages of teacher preparation have been more separated than integrated, the current reform emphasis is

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on a thorough integration of the three stages by putting clinical practice at the heart of the entire program.

This shift would accomplish two related things: First, it would encourage the move toward using professional development schools (PDSs) as the sites for clinical practice, and second, it would push IHEs to develop much more collaborative practices, both within teacher preparation programs and in their partnerships with school districts and school sites.

THE PUSH FOR REFORM

Currently, research, federal and state money, and enthusiasm among district officials, school administrators and teachers, and professors of teacher education all favor a shift toward emphasizing the clinical practice element of teacher preparation programs. The "Executive Summary" of *Transforming Teacher Education Through Clinical Practice: A National Strategy to Prepare Effective Teachers* puts it this way:

> The education of teachers in the United States needs to be turned upside down. To prepare effective teachers for 21st century classrooms, teacher education must shift away from a norm which emphasizes academic preparation and course work loosely linked to school-based experiences. Rather, it must move to programs that are fully grounded in clinical practice and interwoven with academic content and professional courses. (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education [NCATE], 2010, p. ii)

The rationale for this shift is both obvious and coherent: We know through research and anecdotal evidence that clinical practice is the most significant part of a teacher candidate's experience; teacher preparation programs should, therefore, be developed so that "Content and pedagogy are woven around clinical experiences throughout preparation, in course work, in laboratory-based experiences, and in school-embedded practice" (NCATE, 2010, p. 2).

This shift in emphasis has two obvious and important implications: First, the PDS model is ideal for accomplishing the goals necessary for a successful and effective focus on clinical practice, and second, the infrastructure of teacher preparation programs has to be changed in ways that require a different kind of professionally collaborative involvement from teacher preparation program professors than has previously been the case.

Or to put it the other way around, teacher preparation programs should embrace the PDS model as the best way to accomplish the reform goals called for by NCATE and other professional organizations. Embracing the PDS model requires a reorganization of the structure of teacher preparation

programs and—probably more important—a significant redefinition of the activities of teacher preparation professors.

PDSs AS ESSENTIAL FOR A FOCUS ON CLINICAL PRACTICE

The placing of clinical practice at the center of teacher preparation programs requires several shifts in emphasis, all of which are more easily and effectively accomplished in a PDS.

For example, within *Transforming Teacher Education Through Clinical Practice: A National Strategy to Prepare Effective Teachers* (NCATE, 2010), there are 10 design principles, calling for specific approaches to teacher preparation, most of which require significant changes in the definition and structure of teacher preparation programs at IHEs.

Design Principle 1 is "Student learning is the focus," meaning that "P–12 student learning must serve as the focal point for the design and implementation of clinically based teacher preparation, and for the assessment of newly minted teachers and the programs that have prepared them" (NCATE, 2010, p. 5).

The PDS, of course, emphasizes clinical practice in which teacher candidates have the opportunity to reflect on their practice, evaluate their success based on the performance of actual students, and reflect collaboratively with other teacher candidates, cooperating teachers, and their professors.

Design Principle 3 asks that "a candidate's progress and the elements of a preparation program [be] continuously judged on the basis of data" (NCATE, 2010, p. 5). This is consistent with Essentials 3, 4, and 5 of the nine essentials of a PDS (National Association of Professional Development Schools [NAPDS], 2008, p. 3):

1. Ongoing and reciprocal development for all participants guided by need.
2. A shared commitment to innovative and reflective practice by all participants.
3. Engagement in and public sharing of the results of deliberate investigations of practice by respective participants.

The difference between Design Principle 3 and Essentials 3, 4, and 5 is the requirement in Design Principle 3 to assess and evaluate on the basis of data. Some may see this as a conceptual conflict between the approach of the PDS and the demands of the larger reform movement, with the PDS approach being seen as "softer" (although it is entirely consistent to interpret "deliberative investigations of practice" as being necessarily data based). In

practice, at a particular site or within a particular teacher preparation program, it may well play out as a conflict. I would contend that if a conflict at all, it is a conflict that will be resolved by practice over time. In either case, I think that it is undeniable that only a PDS, with its emphasis on constant reflection and evaluation by all participants, can meet this requirement, however it is ultimately defined.

A third and final example from the 10 design principles is Design Principle 5: "Candidates learn in an interactive professional community" (NCATE, 2010, p. 5), the nine essentials version being Essential 2: "A school–university culture committed to the preparation of future educators that embraces their active engagement in the school community" (NAPDS, 2008, p. 2). Like all the other design principles and essentials examined to this point, the specific activities implied here require a high level of respectful, interactive collaboration. This collaboration occurs between university and district, university and school site, university faculty and school-site faculty. This collaboration is essential if clinical practice is to be woven into curriculum in a thoughtful and effective way.

In all aspects of the PDS model, these various versions of respectful and interactive collaboration are called for. Essentials No. 7, for example, calls for "a structure that allows all participants a forum for ongoing governance, reflection, and collaboration" (NAPDS, 2008, p. 3). In other words, it is in the very nature of the PDS that all participants collaborate with one another in the ways that the larger reform movement requires.

THE INFLUENCE OF A COMMITMENT TO THE PDS MODEL ON TEACHER

Preparation Programs

Consider what is necessary for ongoing assessment and evaluation of individual teacher candidates and the teacher preparation programs based on data. Someone must decide what the criteria for assessment and evaluation are, how those criteria should be met, what evidence will be considered, and how that evidence will be assessed. It would be against the spirit of both the 10 design principles and the nine essentials for such choices to be made by one person or even by several people from only one element of the program. Collaborative partnership is at the heart of this process, from governance to teacher candidate evaluation, so setting the criteria, defining the process of meeting those criteria, and determining a process of assessment for that process must be respectfully collaborative.

This is true not just of the process of assessment of teacher candidates and teacher preparation programs but also of (a) the process of developing

the teacher preparation program itself; (b) creating and maintaining the partnership between university and district and between university and school site; and (c) the ongoing work of the university and school faculties in creating and maintaining all the elements of the PDS.

But both university teacher preparation program faculty and public school faculty have the obligation of meeting state-imposed requirements, and those requirements are often very different. At the very least, university faculty and school site faculty inhabit very different "cultures." Depending on professionals from two different experiences to collaborate on virtually everything involved in the preparation of teachers requires a deep belief in the spirit of both the 10 design principles and the nine essentials. In short, respectful and interactive collaboration is essential to the success of the PDS, and a successful PDS is essential to the effective redefinition of teacher preparation programs so that "clinical preparation is integrated throughout every facet of teacher education in a dynamic way" (NCATE, 2010, p. 5).

Another way to think about this proposed reform is to see it as a way to affect an authentic vertical integration of all the elements of a teacher preparation program; in other words, it is an opportunity for universities to achieve the programmatic coherence that in the past has been much more rhetoric than reality. To do so would require those involved in teacher preparation programs to work with one another in a wide variety of ways, always focused on the explicit and implicit goals of the 10 design principles, the nine essentials, and other similarly minded reform plans. Specifically, this would give university faculty the opportunity to work together to find ways to accomplish the following:

- Integrate clinical practice throughout the program.
- Articulate connections between foundations course work and methods course work.
- Work with school site faculty to develop criteria for assessment and evaluation of teacher candidates.
- Find ways to inform their practice and their collaboration with the nine essentials.
- Carefully develop an authentic "through line" from foundations course work to the completion of a master's degree based on clinical practice.

Each of these professional activities requires university faculty working with one another in a constant and ongoing way, in a variety of settings. Taken overall, these activities require two things, both of which are sometimes hard to find: first, a commitment of time to meet with, discuss, cooperate, and create with colleagues both within the institutions and across the

institutions and, second, an attitude of willingness—even enthusiasm—to work collaboratively with others.

The time required to engage in these things is simply not there in most teacher education faculties. If this reform is to succeed, the definition of *load* for those who work in teacher preparation programs will very probably have to be redefined. And university faculty are more prone to wanting to work on their own than they are wanting to work in a state of constant and ongoing collaboration with their colleagues and with school site faculty. An institutional commitment to these ideas and real leadership toward their realization will be necessary. But if both time and attitude are present, not only will the work product of teacher preparation faculty be improved but so will the work experience. A commitment to the programmatic ideals of the 10 design principles and the nine essentials would result in a more productive and happier university faculty.

CONCLUSION

There is a tremendous amount of pressure from outside the university–school nexus to create a very different kind of teacher preparation. This pressure comes from the federal government, from think tanks on both the left and right, from politicians and pundits, and from thoughtful and committed parents who recognize the foundational importance of the individual teacher.

The greatest reform energy at the moment comes from a suggested emphasis on clinical practice as the thread to be woven through the entire process of teacher education. The PDS is the perfect place for this to be accomplished and is itself a reform that is well under way.

The focus on clinical practice as the heart of the teacher preparation program allows for—in fact, demands—the interactive and respectful collaboration of all participants, working toward creating and maintaining an authentically coherent program. Such a goal, if reached, would not only improve teacher preparation programs but—perhaps more important—would improve the day-to-day experiences of "all participants": teacher candidates, school site faculty and administrators, university faculty, and P–12 students.

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