
The Professional Development School Without Walls

A Partnership Between a University and Two School Districts

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ABSTRACT

The Professional Development School Without Walls is a partnership between the Departments of Special Education and Elementary Education at the University of South Florida and two large school districts. The goals of the partnership are to simultaneously improve teacher education and K-12 classroom practice and to study the effectiveness and sustainability of the developed model for partnering over time. This article describes how the partnering model was developed; the challenges, needs, and contexts influencing the development and implementation process; and the outcomes to date. One of the most unique features of the partnership is the way in which the roles of mentor teachers have been defined.

the effectiveness and sustainability of the partnering model over time. This article will describe the model being developed and, where available, provide preliminary data to support our emerging understandings of the model.

We use the term *partnership* to refer to a formal arrangement that links personnel preparation and school practice. In the last 2 decades, the most common form of a school-university partnership has been the *professional development school* (PDS). According to Teitel (1998), a PDS is different from other clinical settings because

1. it is an environment that integrates adult and children's learning;
2. it is characterized by reciprocity and parity for university and school partners on all issues of practice and policy; and
3. there is simultaneous renewal of the school and the university.

The partnership described in this article is between the university and two school districts. Conceptualized as a Professional Development School Without Walls (PDSWOW), the partnership has purposes and functions similar to those of a PDS, but this partnership is not confined to the structure of a building.

We decided to develop the PDSWOW partnership with school districts rather than with specific schools for several reasons:

THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SCHOOL WITHOUT Walls is a partnership between the Departments of Special Education and Elementary Education at the University of South Florida (USF) and the Pasco County schools and Hillsborough County schools in Florida. With the goal of simultaneously improving teacher education and K-12 classroom practice, the partnership is working to reform the elementary and special education preservice teacher education curricula, to clarify the current and emerging roles and responsibilities of special educators in inclusive schools, and to institute a model for professional development that actively involves general and special education teachers in researching their own teaching. A secondary goal of this partnership is to study

- Given the size of our teacher education program, it did not seem feasible to develop enough PDSs to accommodate all our students (approximately 90 per year in special education and twice that many in elementary education) in just a few schools. Furthermore, the PDS model is particularly problematic for teams of teacher candidates in special education. Few schools have special education departments or services that could accommodate more than a few special education teacher candidates at one time.
- We believed that working with the school district rather than with specific schools would have a greater impact on the district (Fullan, 1999). If we were to establish a sustainable model, we believed it was necessary to have a district-level commitment.
- PDSs are particularly vulnerable to the inevitable personnel changes that take place in all schools. When effective school leaders committed to the agenda of a PDS leave, the PDS often experiences a slump in its operation. It was our hope that by creating alliances and structures that extended beyond the walls of specific schools, we could establish learning communities that were less vulnerable to changes within a particular school.
- Florida is a unionized state, and we were advised that the union would not support any model that limited the opportunity of all teachers to be involved. By focusing on specific schools or specific regions of the school district, we understood that we would have been likely to incur the union's opposition.

BACKGROUND OF THE PARTNERSHIP

History of Collaboration Between University and School Districts

We believe that the history of institutional work influences how and why partnerships develop as they do. In our case, USF and both school districts had, for the most part, a solid and very positive relationship of collaboration that had been in place for at least 10 years prior to the formation of the PDSWOW partnership. These collaborations provided the foundation on which the current partnership was established. These collaborations included, for example, a leadership development program that focused on school improvement (Smith et al., 1995), a collaborative effort to blend general and special education into one teacher education program

(Stoddard & Danforth, 1995), a program to recruit and prepare employed paraprofessionals as special education teachers (Epanchin & Wooley-Brown, 1993, 1995), a model for coteaching (Evans, Harris, Adeigbola, Houston, & Argott, 1993; Harris & Evans, 1995), and the development of a professional development school (Rosselli, Perez, Piersall, & Pantridge, 1993).

During the same time frame that the aforementioned collaborative research and program development efforts were being implemented, the USF Department of Special Education began linking preservice students' field experiences to specific courses and clustering students in specific schools. University faculty began meeting with school district administrators and teachers to plan and coordinate the field component of this effort. These coordinating meetings were scheduled on a regular basis for the purposes of evaluating and improving the shared work. As the collaboration evolved, school-based roles were defined. Called site-based coordinators, teachers or administrators at each of the schools where clusters of students were placed for early field experiences provided on-site supervision and training to the student teachers assigned to their schools. This led to a federally funded personnel preparation grant that supported the newly defined roles and helped extend the university-school district collaboration for teacher education.

During the same general time frame, the leadership within the college and in one of the school districts, in response to a state initiative, began working on a proposal for a seamless teacher preparation program. At the heart of this proposal was the concept of blurring roles and responsibilities in the education of teachers. Once the proposal was developed, it was submitted to the USF faculty and the Pasco school district administration for approval, and both groups endorsed the concepts within the proposal. Many of the ideas from that collaboration were incorporated into the PDSWOW partnership.

In addition to the specific projects that provided the structures for collaboration between the university and the school districts, numerous less formal working relationships were developing between the elementary and special education departments at the university. As the two departments worked more closely, relationships developed, and trust and respect were fostered among faculty. This trust building and learning about shared values, interests, and needs both within the university and between the university and school districts over a 10-year period corresponds to the early stages of work done in PDSs described in the 2001 NCATE PDS standards (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, 2001) as the *emerging stage* in a PDS.

Addressing Contextual Pressures and Needs

In addition to the establishment of a firm foundation of successful collaboration that engenders trust and respect, we believe that in order for partnerships to be successful and to

be sustained, the needs and self-interests of the partners must be understood and addressed. If a partner is not benefiting from the partnership, it is unlikely that the partner will be actively and constructively involved. Accordingly, to understand why and how the partnership has developed and is developing, it is important to understand the needs and pressures that each partner is facing.

Needs of the Teacher Candidates. Central to the operation of the PDSWOW partnership is the consideration of teacher candidates' needs. We see their needs as coinciding with the needs of both the district and the university—to be prepared as competent, caring, ethical, and resilient teachers. To accomplish this goal, we first asked ourselves, *What do we know about how people learn to teach?* and, based on that knowledge, *What should teacher preparation programs look like and be like?*

We know that many teacher educators have observed the phenomenon of students mastering content in their classes but not being able to generalize or apply that content to practice. Shulman (1992) offered an interesting explanation—that learning to teach involves two types of knowledge: the scientific, formal theories that have traditionally been included in university coursework, as well as a type of knowledge that differs from traditional, scientific ways of knowing. Unlike *scientific knowledge* and principles, which are applied in a consistent manner across settings and problems, *craft knowledge* is contextualized and local. Each time a teacher individualizes instruction, her or his methods vary because of the local context, even though the principles or the concept of individualization remain constant. Thus, teacher candidates need guided, supported practice in the application of craft knowledge.

We also know that teacher candidates have at least a 14-year apprenticeship of observation (Brookhart & Freeman, 1992; Lortie, 1975) that has prepared them to think they know a lot about teaching. To change teacher candidates' conception of teaching from what they experienced and observed as students, programs need powerful pedagogical strategies that will engage teacher candidates in the study of teaching and in the examination of values and biases embedded in conceptions of teaching. Deconstructing the concepts of teacher, learner, and schooling can enable teacher candidates to develop new insights into teaching and schooling and enable them to construct their own personal understandings of the concept of teaching.

We know that deep chasms often exist between on-campus coursework and off-campus clinical experiences. This fragmentation between on-campus coursework and off-campus clinical experiences is one of the major weaknesses in traditional teacher education programs (Goodlad, Soder, & Sirotnik, 1990). After reviewing the literature, McIntyre, Byrd, and Foxx (1996) noted that “this disjointedness of program goals and curriculum may be responsible for the historical ineffectiveness of teacher education because most

preservice teachers are unable to grasp the whole while experiencing the myriad of disconnected parts of the curriculum. Many teacher education programs fail to challenge their students to understand how ideas are connected and/or related to field experiences” (pp. 171–172).

We know that people learn through scaffolding, in which concepts are connected and organized within an individual's cognitive structure (Black & Ammon, 1992; Cobb, 1988; Pravat, 1992). Putnam and Borko (2000) also suggested that learning and knowing are situated in physical and social contexts and require interaction. Therefore, teacher candidates need learning experiences that help them attach meaning to concepts and theories, provide opportunities to interact with others in the discussion and practice of concepts and theories, and require examination of the contexts in which the practice of teaching occurs. A close connection between clinical fieldwork and coursework is necessary to provide such learning experiences—experiences that help the teacher candidate put the pieces together as they progress through the teacher preparation program, rather than assuming that it all becomes clear to them in the end.

Attention also has to be given to the types of clinical fieldwork that are integrated with and connected to the coursework and preparation program. Teacher candidates need opportunities to explore various schools and the communities in which schools exist, instead of only experiencing teaching and schooling by completing fieldwork in one particular classroom within a school (Goodlad, 1990; Zeichner, 1992). As stated earlier, learning is contextual. If teacher candidates do not understand and interact with the context in which schools exist, their professional practice will be built on an incomplete foundation; they will have a difficult time understanding how to shape their teaching to the needs of the context around them and to advocate for reform where needed.

America's classrooms are becoming more and more diverse, whereas the teaching population continues to be dominated by individuals of European descent (Gallegos & McCarty, 2000). Because teachers' backgrounds often do not match those of their students, they sometimes misunderstand an important piece of the context of teaching—the piece brought by the students themselves. Issues of ethics, power, and privilege are often overlooked, because experience with inequities is not a typical part of the teacher's background and schema (Ewing, 2001). Therefore, teacher candidates need experiences and dialogue opportunities that uncover and critically examine the context of schooling as a whole.

Thus, in order to acquire the breadth and depth of understanding needed to apply teaching principles in addition to content delivery, we assume that teacher candidates need

1. practice in application over different contexts and time;
2. honest, focused, frequent, skilled, and informed feedback about their practice; and

3. sufficient practice of their emerging skills, so that their knowledge and skills are sufficient to transfer to different settings, where the same type of support and guidance is not present.

Needs of the University. As implied earlier, the fundamental need of the university is the creation of a quality teacher education program that draws students to the program; however, as has been widely noted in the professional literature, change in university programs is often slow and difficult (Fullan, 1999; Imig & Switzer, 1996). At USF prior to the implementation of this program, several program design features challenged our ability to deliver the quality program we envisioned.

First, our program is a large one, and the schools with which we work are spread over a large geographic area—considerably larger than the state of Rhode Island. Moreover, some of the area is congested, which means that visits to the schools in those areas involve a lot of travel time. The faculty who are responsible for on-campus instruction do not have time in their schedules to visit more than a few of the students in their field assignments; therefore, prior to the PDSWOW partnership, large numbers of adjunct faculty were employed to supervise teacher candidates. Although they were competent professionals, they were not connected to the goals and philosophy of the on-campus teacher education program, which further contributed to the disjunction between on-campus coursework and field experiences.

Even when the primary faculty were directly involved in the supervision of students, there were challenges. It was often difficult for the university supervisor to be in the schools at times when the teacher candidate wanted or needed to be observed. As a consequence, faculty sometimes saw staged teaching or “shows for the supervisor.” Furthermore, faculty typically were not present for upsetting or exciting events, thus missing the fervor of the spontaneous conversations that followed. These inevitable difficulties contributed to their being the outsider in the triad of teacher candidate, cooperating teacher, and university supervisor.

Even when positive, productive relationships developed between the university supervisor and the cooperating teacher, the focus of the work was on the teacher candidate, leaving little time to work as a team on improving practice in the classroom or in the setting. After faculty invested considerable resources in a setting, the teacher candidate graduated, and the setting remained essentially the same. The work that had been done had not contributed in a deliberate way to the improvement of teaching practice. Accordingly, it is questionable whether the students in the classroom benefited from the presence of the teacher candidate.

The second area of need at the university had to do with the selection of mentor teachers. Occasionally, as others have also reported (Applegate, 1985; Goodlad, 1990; Guyton, Paille, & Rainer, 1993), the programs and practices seen in the classrooms to which our students were assigned were not

the models or the quality that we wanted for our students. Over the years, as the process for selecting cooperating teachers for the final internship was institutionalized, the university largely lost its voice in the selection process. Out of bureaucratic convenience, the school districts controlled the selection of cooperating teachers, which meant that as Goodlad (1990) and others (McIntyre, Byrd, & Foxx, 1996) have found, the reasons for selecting cooperating teachers were not always based on their performance as mentors. Data collected at the end of each semester indicated that approximately one third of the students enrolled in internships were placed with teachers who, in the students’ opinion, were not the type of teacher they (the teacher candidates) wanted to become.

In addition to being riddled with challenges that were not easily resolved, the supervision model was an expensive one—both in time and in dollars. It became clear that a supervision and mentoring model was needed that better addressed our needs and the needs of the students—a model that would ensure quality experiences and mentors for our students and also meet our goal of contributing to the improvement of PreK–12 programs.

Needs of the Partner Schools. Both partner school districts encompass large geographic areas that include rural, suburban, and urban areas. Both districts are opening new schools each year for the next few years, and in both districts, by the time a school is built, the school population has already grown large enough that temporary, portable classrooms are needed. Both districts also face significant teacher shortages, especially in special education, and like all school districts, they are challenged in how best to provide quality services. Both districts are also studying their service delivery models as they work to determine how best to serve their exceptional student populations as they move from highly categorical and center-based service delivery systems to more inclusive approaches. Finally, both districts are confronted with all the problems associated with rapid growth in a context of high-stakes testing. Given these stressful demands faced by the districts, master teachers have often been called on to meet many needs but received little in the way of opportunities to continue their own professional development. Without the rewards of professional learning opportunities, and faced with the increasing expectations placed on the entire system, master teachers have been frustrated, and some have been retiring and leaving the profession, contributing to further teacher shortages.

For the school districts, the greatest motivation to be involved in a partnership came from their critical shortages both in the number and the quality of teachers. Although both districts have large, competent, and active staff development programs, neither district’s staff development could address all the professional development needs of their teachers. Furthermore, although both have established instructional goals and innovative programs to address those goals, both districts’ needs are so great that support and assistance in meet-

ing their instructional goals and school improvement plans are always appreciated.

STRUCTURE OF THE PDSWOW PARTNERSHIP

The structures and plans for the partnership were shaped by the needs described. Our goals were

1. to improve coordination and communication between the university and the schools, so as to reduce the fragmentation between on-campus and field learning experiences;
2. to provide a reliable, well-trained cadre of mentor teachers for the teacher candidates;
3. to create a cost-effective, efficient, and effective model for supervising the teacher candidates;
4. to recognize and reward the excellent mentor teachers who work with teacher candidates; and
5. to provide professional development opportunities for master teachers, so as to sustain and retain them in the teaching profession.

In addressing these goals, we asked the question, *What available resources do we have, and how can we best use them?* We made the assumption that by redesigning the way we worked together, combining our resources and maximizing our various strengths, we could provide more and better services both at the university and in the schools. We identified several resources on which we could capitalize.

One of the most important resources we identified was a group of unrecognized but talented and motivated mentor teachers in both school districts. Our experience, supported by the research literature (McIntyre, Byrd, & Foxx, 1996), had been that when a good fit existed between a teacher candidate and a mentor teacher, the mentor teacher exerted significant influence over the teacher candidate's development of understanding of teaching, learning, and schooling (Gyton & McIntyre, 1990). It therefore seemed worthwhile to develop, promote, and expand that relationship, while preserving the essential features of the triadic model. We believe that when there is a poor fit between mentor and teacher candidate, or when the teacher candidate is having difficulty, the involvement of a third, outside person with a solid knowledge base is both helpful and important. Therefore, we worked to create a model that capitalized on the importance and power of mentor teachers while providing backup and support from the university.

Another resource we tried to reallocate was the expertise of USF faculty. We recognized that USF faculty have considerable knowledge about the research on educational innova-

tions and about evaluating programs and interventions not tapped in the traditional teaching model. We tried to create opportunities for faculty to work with schools and with *professional practice partners* (PPPs) in school improvement efforts that build on faculty members' knowledge and skills. University faculty have a theoretical and research-based perspective that is not always present in school-based decision making. They have much to offer with respect to innovative ideas and information about emerging and promising research.

We see the focus on professional growth of PPPs and school and practice improvement as critically important, because teaching is a difficult, demanding job. The literature is replete with reports of increasing paperwork, caseloads, restrictions, and demands on teachers' limited financial rewards (Kozleski, Mainzer, & Deshler, 2000). Furthermore, career development options are often limited for teachers who wish to remain in the classroom. Within our model, we wanted to create ways to recognize the outstanding accomplishments of master teachers and to provide them with professional growth opportunities that they deem relevant and important. We see the recognition and affirmation of teachers' competence and professionalism as a powerful tool for retaining teachers.

Another resource we have reallocated is the money that was previously used to support the adjuncts who supervised the final internship of teacher candidates. Money previously used for their salaries and their travel to and from schools was reallocated to support new initiatives.

THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SCHOOL WITHOUT WALLS MODEL

The model that has evolved for our PDSWOW partnership features

- creation of specific functions for schools and roles for master teachers to be involved in the preparation of students as teachers, with the purpose of reducing the fragmentation between on-campus and off-campus programs;
- collaborative and joint preparation of elementary and special education teacher candidates;
- implementation of a governance structure that is designed to promote regular and open communication among partners; and
- involvement of university faculty in the ongoing professional development of teachers and the school improvement efforts of schools.

Functions and Roles to Reduce Program Fragmentation

To address the challenges of coordination and communication between the schools and the on-campus program for the purpose of reducing fragmentation, several structures have been instituted, including the identification of partner schools and the creation of professional practice partners.

Partner schools are the schools to which we assign our students for their early field experiences. By concentrating this work in a limited number of schools, we are able to foster relationships between faculty on the university campus and faculty in the partner schools. Seven partner schools have been identified in one county and 15 in the other. The students complete three early field experiences in these schools.

The criteria used to select partner schools are as follows:

- The administration and teaching staff demonstrated an interest in participating.
- The district recommended the school as being capable of providing positive and helpful mentoring and teaching models.
- The school had clear goals for improvement to which the project could contribute.
- Preference was given to schools that had populations of non-English speakers and diverse teacher and student populations.
- The geographic location of the schools was considered after all previous factors were addressed, in an effort to partner with schools that were located in geographically convenient areas for university students.

Each of the partner schools identified a site-based coordinator, who is the primary liaison between the university and school. The site coordinators (teachers or administrators at the school) hold clinical appointments at the university and are responsible for overseeing the early internships of students placed in their schools, which includes negotiating which teachers will be assigned to mentor university students (teacher candidates), assisting teachers in their work with teacher candidates, monitoring the teacher candidates' progress, leading school-based seminars with the students, and communicating with faculty on campus about the students' progress, curriculum requirements, and program needs. The site-based coordinators all hold master's degrees, are tenured, and have participated in seminars on clinical supervision and teacher education. The terms of their appointment are not limited. They meet with selected university faculty on a monthly basis to discuss the partnership activities. Because of the demands placed on them at their respective schools, they do not participate in on-campus faculty meetings; however, they are included in university professional development ac-

tivities and celebrations both in the department and in the college.

The partner school model at USF was piloted in an earlier project; thus, some of the site coordinators have had 5 to 6 years of service in this capacity. They now use the pronoun *we* when discussing needed interventions, and they are quite willing to offer suggestions regarding ways to improve our teacher education program. Their language reflects a sense of commitment and investment in the partnership, and their ideas reflect a collective set of professional values and expertise. In short, the people who are comfortable with and skilled in the role of site-based coordinators are proving to be valuable colleagues. Some of the newer site-based coordinators, however, are less comfortable in the role, and we are now providing additional training for them. In a few schools, the site-based coordinator has been unable to attend many of the coordination meetings because of school pressures. We are now re-evaluating with these schools whether they are ready to be partner schools.

Professional practice partners (PPPs) are mentor teachers who are tenured and highly recommended school-based leaders who function as the primary supervisor for teacher candidates in their final field experience. Unless a problem arises, PPPs are solely responsible for the supervision of the final internship of teacher candidates.

PPPs are selected using the following process:

- *A screening procedure that involves a review of their applications.* The application documents include a listing of their successful experiences as a mentor and school leader and a recommendation from their administrator.
- *A structured interview with a two-person team of university and district staff.* The structured interview focuses on their philosophy of teaching and on their motivations to mentor a teacher candidate. These interviews are designed to screen out persons who are highly judgmental, who approach the mentoring role in a controlling manner, or who view the teacher candidate's role and function in negative or inappropriate ways.

Once selected, the PPPs participate in a semester-long course. This course, "Mentoring Novice Teachers," is offered by the university for graduate credit at no cost to the PPPs. In this class, the PPPs review observation and feedback systems and clinical supervision principles and analyze teaching cases about mentoring and supervision. At the end of the course, they are introduced to action research. On completion of the course, the PPPs are appointed by the university for 2-year, renewable terms. During their appointment, they are responsible for the supervision and mentoring of two interns and for

participating in monthly seminars with university faculty and other PPPs. The seminars provide them with opportunities to discuss their work as PPPs, to examine strategies for responding to the challenges of mentoring, and to discuss other educational concerns that affect their lives as mentors and leaders. The PPPs are paid from the funds previously used to pay adjunct faculty for the supervision of teacher candidates.

During the course and the monthly seminars, university faculty focus on the rationale for the PPP model by sharing their research and beliefs about how people learn to teach. They review teaching cases about supervising teacher candidates and discuss evaluation procedures and standards. They also have the teachers write reflections about how they learned to teach, their most meaningful learning experiences, and their beliefs about teaching. One particularly effective writing activity that the teachers complete involves thinking about the most difficult child they have ever taught. Teachers are instructed to think about this so they will be prepared for the assignment in their next class. When the mentor teachers arrive at the next class, they are instructed to think about how the difficult student perceived the mentor teacher's classroom and then to describe their classroom from that student's perspective. These reflections are intended to stimulate the mentor teachers' thinking about their own educational beliefs, philosophies, and outlooks so they can articulate them better to their interns. Mentors must successfully complete the course on mentoring novice teachers before they can become a PPP.

Two faculty members are assigned responsibility for overseeing the final internship, which involves monthly coordination meetings with the PPPs and troubleshooting when a problem arises. Under these conditions, the university supervisor serves as a sounding board, a neutral third party to disagreements, and a source of information regarding program procedures for dealing with teacher candidates' problems. Accordingly, in both the course and the seminars, emphasis is placed on not trying to solve problems alone. If the teacher candidate assigned to a PPP experiences serious problems, an additional support person from the university becomes involved to provide informed and experienced support and guidance. The university person who provides support and assistance is the same person who meets monthly with the PPPs; thus, communication lines are already open.

To ensure that teacher candidates receive support and mentoring during their final clinical experiences, the teacher candidates participate in an ongoing seminar on campus with a faculty member who has worked with them throughout their program enrollment. Prior to the final internship, teacher candidates spend 3 semesters with the same professor in a professional seminar. Thus, a strong support system is in place for teacher candidates from the start of their internship.

In accord with the partnership goals, this model is also being examined for cost-effectiveness and efficiency. Because the model is in process, such data are not yet available; however, some of the major expenditures are obvious. Money

previously spent by the departments to hire adjuncts to supervise teacher candidates now goes to PPPs; thus, no additional funds are being spent. Furthermore, money previously spent on travel from site to site is being saved, as the PPPs are on site. The grant supports the site-based coordinators' pay. We are now in discussion with the school districts regarding other sources for supporting their work. We are also examining the benefits to schools of being a partner school. We assume that if there are sufficient benefits associated with being a partner school, the schools will be willing to absorb some of the partnership costs.

Collaborative Preparation of Teacher Candidates

Both the elementary and the special education departments were committed to collaborative preparation of their students, but neither was ready to merge, if for no other reason than that both departments were already quite large. The compromise position reached provides for students to take a core of classes each semester, in teams composed of half elementary and half special education students, and to work together in partner schools. The students are assigned to partner schools in equal numbers of elementary and special education students.

As the programs commingle, faculty members are learning more about unnecessary overlap and duplication of content in the two programs. Faculty members are also learning from each other with respect to content as well as to program structures, which appears to be fostering even more collaboration.

One of the program structures that has proved to be especially beneficial is the professional seminar that the Department of Special Education requires of its students each semester they are enrolled in the program. These 1-hour, weekly seminars are led by the same faculty member for the 2 years that the students are enrolled in the program. Each semester, a different program theme is emphasized; in the first semester, the self (i.e., students focus on their identities as teachers); in the second semester, diversity; in the third semester, ethics; and in the final semester, the seminar that accompanies the internship. By the time the students reach their final internship, they have established trusting relationships with a faculty member and with a group of their peers. They readily share concerns and questions they may have about their experiences. Thus, if the students encounter challenges in their internship, they can turn to their professional seminar leader and group to share their concerns and to get constructive feedback. This support provides an additional safety net and support system for our students in case problems arise during their internship.

Governance Structure for Open Communication

To ensure the creation of a collaborative, equitable partnership, we initially focused on developing structures within

which to operate. Our decisions were guided by Teitel's (1998) recommendations for the governance of PDSs. Teitel maintained that governance structures are needed for the following major purposes:

1. Building bridges between partnership groups and providing opportunities to learn about members of the partnership. These structures should also create opportunities for members to air their differences. In the PDSWOW partnership, there are numerous groups to be incorporated into the governance structure, creating a challenging and complex array of meetings. For example, partnership relationships must be developed between the administrators of the College of Education and the school districts, between supervisors and faculty with the university and the school districts, between the teachers and the university faculty, and between the Departments of Special Education and Elementary Education and other departments that teach the students in the program.
2. Supporting simultaneous and mutual renewal by going beyond simple coordination, creating roles for participants to play in each other's change processes and creating new structures within which to operate that mesh with existing structures if possible. For members to feel welcomed and valued within the partnership, they need a role and a function. These roles and functions need to fit the overall purpose and structure of the partnership.
3. Managing day-to-day tasks, such as reviewing student assignments and planning faculty development activities.
4. Assessing and planning for the long term.

To address these needs, an elaborate system of meetings has been developed based on the belief that if the partnership is to work, we need to support and promote it both from the top down and from the bottom up. In such large systems, it is necessary to have an impact on multiple levels. These various meetings provide frequent forums in which to discuss partners' needs and differences, to plan the future together, and to celebrate successes.

National Advisory Panel. The national advisory panel meets yearly to review the project, assess progress, and think about how the project can improve. The work of the project is compared to other such projects nationally; the significance of this project in relation to national and state issues is the focus. The members of the advisory panel are the dean, superintendents, and national experts in areas relevant to the

work of the partnership. The purpose of these meetings is to provide suggestions and ideas about how to continuously improve the partnership.

Steering Committee. The purpose of the steering committee is to provide oversight of the project. This committee reviews the project's progress and plans, approves specific initiatives and directions, and provides support in needed areas. This committee meets once a year and is responsible for focusing on the big picture. Top-level administrative staff from both school districts and from the university are members of this committee.

Management Teams. The purpose of the management team is the management of the project on a day-to-day basis. This team has coordinating, oversight, and planning responsibilities. There are separate management teams in both school districts, due to the differences in needs and structure of the districts. The membership of each team consists of district-level administrators in special and elementary education, school-based administrators, district support staff, and the project directors and coordinators. Each management team is scheduled to meet on a monthly basis.

Inclusion Curriculum Committee. This committee's focus is on the teacher education curriculum within the college. All the academic departments that have required courses in the special or elementary education programs have members on the committee. Moreover, representatives from the school districts and students are members. This committee is charged with reviewing the current curriculum and recommending ways to improve it. Their work is coordinated with the university and college curriculum committees.

Research/Staff Development Committee. This committee has not yet been formed, but it will be responsible for planning and implementing the ongoing research/professional development activities for the PPPs and the site-based coordinators. *Staff development* refers primarily to activities undertaken for the purpose of institutional development. According to Fullan (1999), "staff development is conceived broadly to include any activity or process intended to improve skills, attitudes, understandings, or performance in present or future roles" (p. 3). It may focus on teaching people how to do something new (i.e., implementation) or it may institute an innovation, such as introducing mentors for the purpose of staff development. Both of these are useful but, in Fullan's view, they are limited in their scope and impact. According to Fullan, staff development that has the goal of institutional development is more far reaching and long lasting. This type of staff development has the purpose of helping institutions to increase their capacity and performance through continuous improvements. This type of staff development influences the culture of the school and will be a major focus of this committee.

Involvement of University Faculty in Teacher Development

Initially, the PDSWOW partnership plan called for the creation of *collaborative research groups* (Paul, Marfo, & Anderson, 1996) as the primary vehicle for staff development. Collaborative research groups are groups of people with a shared interest in and commitment to an area of applied research. The focus of these groups is not on how to do something, although that may occur at times, but rather on the construction of understanding and meaning in context. At USF, we have used these groups

1. as a means of developing a collaborative culture within the department,
2. as a vehicle for faculty and doctoral students who were interested in learning about various topics and new ideas, and
3. as a strategy for helping diverse groups of people to come together in their visions by creating a forum in which to learn and to share insights.

These groups have been effective means of integrating and valuing persons of different levels of experience and perspectives. Although this ultimately may be the model used, discussions with our colleagues in both school districts have indicated that our professional practice partners have some specific needs and interests. Accordingly, a list of professional development options has been developed, and the PPPs have indicated their preferences. The options, in order of the PPPs' preferences, are

- additional study of mentoring skills,
- use of technology in their instruction,
- action research,
- writing teaching cases, and
- developing skills in advocacy and political action.

We are now recruiting faculty and doctoral students who are interested in working with teachers in these capacities. We were curious why the PPPs did not express interest in specific methods or teaching strategies, and we thought of developing research updates, so we could share interesting research with them. However, when we questioned them, we found they were going to staff development sessions in reading, science, math, and Individualized Education Programs, and we felt they had had enough content in those areas.

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

We have conducted focus group interviews with all stakeholder groups on a regular basis, both to provide us with for-

mative data about the PDSWOW partnership and to stimulate thoughtful discussion about the project. Clearly, the team that developed the initial concept for the partnership saw problems with the existing field supervision model; however, it has been gratifying to learn that the teachers shared these views. In fact, we have been somewhat surprised by the resentment they felt toward the traditional model, as illustrated in these representative comments:

- "I felt impotent [referring to the previous supervision model]. I think sometimes my recommendations were ignored. If I had concerns about the intern and the university supervisor didn't see them, the intern passed anyway."
- "The 20 minutes every 2 weeks is not a fair observation by the university supervisor. We see the intern every day. This is our responsibility now."

Another surprise has been the depth of feeling expressed by the PPPs with respect to the disappointment and hurt they feel about how their profession is being portrayed and represented to the public today. From the beginning of the partnership, a major goal was to recognize the accomplishments and contributions of master teachers; however, we did not realize just how meaningful this would be to the mentor teachers. From the feedback we have received from 168 mentor teachers, having their profession recognized as important and valuable and being affirmed as outstanding representatives of their profession are particularly important to the mentor teachers, as illustrated by a few of their comments:

- "I like the trust. Our professional knowledge is valued. It makes me feel good about our teaching."
- "It was wonderful spending so much time with other teachers who love teaching."
- "No one ever lets us make decisions about education. We are not used to having someone have confidence in us. I like it!"
- "I think it's important to pass the torch and train new teachers. I've been teaching for 30 years and I want to foster the same passion in new teachers that I still have. The passion for our work is what sustains us."

These master teachers are proud of their profession; they love teaching, and they want to assume responsibility for improving the future of education. Their comments underscore our belief that although working in partnership with schools is time-consuming and challenging, the potential rewards are significant, because together it is possible to accomplish goals that alone seem almost insurmountable. ■

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