

PDS Partners

The Official Magazine of the National Association for Professional Development Schools

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A Message From the President

Donna M. Culan, Howard County Public School System (MD)



At the start of the new year, many of us resolve to set goals and make changes, both personally and professionally. Often we resolve to lose weight, set goals for saving money, commit to implementing an innovative strategy in our teaching, or initiate a plan to advance professionally. For 2011, NAPDS will also look to setting goals and making resolutions in order to advance Professional Development Schools nationally and internationally and continue to serve its members at the highest level.

The Executive Council and Board of Directors (EC/BoD) of NAPDS has begun a list of resolutions and goals for 2011 and beyond. In order to best serve our members, we resolve to work with members, others in the education community, and those outside of this community:

- To expand the visibility of the NAPDS in national and international arenas via increased awareness of the agenda, participation in NAPDS conferences and activities, membership and readership
- To increase and leverage its visibility and influence as a professional organization in national and state-level educational discourse
- To swamp the nationwide media with information about the positive work of school-university partnerships
- To promote the work of NAPDS members in order to better inform and educate others as to how/why Professional Development Schools impact student achievement
- To develop assessment tools for the Nine Essentials so that the effectiveness of PDS can be promoted
- To better serve the membership while expanding membership numbers
- To “grow” the PDS network with new members who are on target to do “the right thing” for educating teachers
- To spread the good news about NAPDS through existing membership to recruit others to the association
- To be our own best advocates

This list is only a start. The resolutions and goals for NAPDS cannot only come from a small group such as the EC/BoD. NAPDS is about all members and about the collaborations in which we engage. The list is not complete without the voices of our fellow collaborators, colleagues, and members. While I will not ask you to share your personal or professional resolutions and goals for 2011, I will ask you to think about this: What goals and resolutions do you have for NAPDS in 2011? The Executive Council and Board of Directors look forward to hearing about your NAPDS resolutions and goals; we look forward to the continued discussion and the collaborative plans for action to strengthen NAPDS and Professional Development Schools. I wish you a happy, healthy, and successful 2011, filled with many great PDS achievements!

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Thinking About Getting Your Professional Development School (PDS) Interns Involved With a Social Justice Experience: Four Basic Factors to Help Your Program Get Started

C. Matt Seimears, Emily Graves, Sarah Splichal, Kim Kerner, and Katelyn Kennedy, Emporia State University

“As a PDS program, how does your PDS program provide social justice experiences for your PDS interns? How can you get started to provide such an experience for your PDS interns? And what are some results you might expect to find after the experience?”

According to Hufford (2010), the phrase “social justice” is starting to become a trend in pre-service teacher educational experiences. Social justice is a term that has been used for centuries to describe a concept that some use to depict the movement towards a socially just world. Social justice is the search for equality in schools, materials, meals, space, and many more definable terms. Equality must be achieved across all types of demographics and differences, including race, class, gender, and school experiences.

In 2007, Emporia State University received a two-year grant to develop a qualitative/qualitative comparison study to study the positive (physical, intellectual, and emotional) impact PDS interns had while working with the Juvenile Justice Alternative Education Program (JJAEP) in Lubbock, Texas. JJAEP assists students who have been expelled from public schools, committed felonies or numerous misdemeanors, or were ordered by court to attend the program. This two-year qualitative comparison study conducted by Emporia State University PDS interns was developed to help them: 1) experience a new type of educational setting as a PDS intern (pulling them away from their normal day-to-day PDS experiences) and 2) develop a modified Teacher Work Sample (TWS)/Portfolio. The results of this study showed that PDS interns were emotionally impacted by this experience in two ways: 1)

This experience was new for them and they did not know students experienced alternate routes; and 2) Each PDS intern involved with the study expressed they would prefer to teach in the conditions they experienced throughout the process. Each PDS intern’s TWS was graded by outside individuals who were not part of the study, and the results showed the interns’ TWS factors 1 and 2 for the JJAEP (Texas) project were dramatically different from their current PDS placement factors 1 and 2 in the state where they were serving their internship (Kansas).

As a PDS program, how does your PDS program provide social justice experiences for your PDS interns? How can you get started to provide such an experience for your PDS interns? And what are some results you might expect to find after the experience? These are some of the questions we have considered in this project, and following are some of the recommendations we would make to other educators considering the same questions:

1. Identify first what social justice is, teach it to your PDS interns, and have them do some individualized research on the topic.
2. Collaboration: Find a site where your PDS interns are able to observe, take notes, and interview students, teachers and building administrators at the site that is selected. Without any type

of collaboration between your institution and the selected school or program, important issues could be overlooked.

3. Design a factor-based portfolio assignment (e.g., our factor 1 is “Identifying the Contextual Information and the Learning Environment” and our factor 2 is “Unit Learning Goals and Objectives”) for each PDS intern as part of their experience. Have the portfolio align with state content standards (NCATE, too), and have each student share with their peers the lessons discovered during their experience.
4. Go for it: Starting a new process for your program opens many new doors and allows your PDS interns to experience something out of the ordinary.

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Using Technology To Support Collaboration In Professional Development Schools

Oliver Dreon and Nanette I. Dietrich, Millersville University of Pennsylvania
Joey Rider-Bertrand, Manheim Township School District (PA)

Establishing a new Professional Development School (PDS) takes patience and perseverance. After several years of laboring through committees and discussions, our Professional Development School has finally gone from concept to reality. This fall, we piloted our first cohort of interns in a secondary science PDS. Partnering with a local school district, we placed five teacher candidates in a year-long internship with mentor teachers. When it became clear last year that the PDS would finally become a reality, we considered ways to support the communication and collaboration across the different members of the group. Looking at the “Nine Essentials” of *What it Means to be a Professional Development School* (NAPDS, 2008) a PDS contains “a structure that allows all participants a forum for ongoing governance, reflection, and collaboration.” This structure, however, can take many forms depending on the nature and unique characteristics of each PDS.

In our PDS, in addition to having backgrounds in science education, several members have expertise in instructional technology. For example, two of the authors of this paper are faculty members at a small state university in the northeastern United States who teach both science methods and instructional technology courses to teacher candidates. The third author is the K-12 supervisor of technology and science education in the partner school district. This common expertise and comfort with technology helped us create a technology-rich collaborative architecture to support the communication, and share the governance of, our PDS. This paper highlights some of the tools our group employs and the different tasks supported by these tools.

Joint Authoring and Ownership

Most people are familiar with Google. It’s a search engine that allows users to find websites and information easily. But Google also offers many other options that can help Professional Development Schools. One of these options is “Google Documents,” commonly referred to as “Google Docs.” Google Docs is a free online office suite containing applications for word processing, spreadsheets, presentations, and forms. While these applications on their own may not appear that unique for a PDS, the power of Google Docs rests in the ability to collaboratively create and share documents with others. Imagine your PDS is developing the budget for the coming year. Traditionally, a PDS member makes a draft of the budget and emails it to the rest of the group for suggestions. Other members make revisions and email them back, creating multiple versions of the same document. In Google Docs, there is only one version of a document. The document lives online and can be edited simultaneously by all members of the group. Google Docs maintains a copy of the most recent edit, as well as, a history of all past versions of the document.

Like any PDS, our group has jointly authored documents that guide and communicate our work. Whether it is a presentation at a conference, a draft of the articulation agreement or an article for publication, our collaborative efforts have been supported by Google Docs. In fact, this paper was originally created in Google Docs to allow the authors the ability to jointly edit the document. While this provides a great deal of functionality and efficiency to our group, it also communicates that all members mutually own the work and governance of the PDS.

Gathering Information

In addition to its office suite, Google Docs houses an exciting application called “Forms.” This application allows users to easily create surveys that can be emailed out to others or posted on a website. The survey can include questions in a variety of formats: multiple choice, Likert scale, short answer, essay, etc. Once someone completes a survey online, Google Forms automates the data collection and organizes the data into a spreadsheet that can be analyzed. Our group has used Forms to collect information from potential mentor teachers, to survey intern candidates and to schedule meetings with PDS members. Like other applications within the Google Docs suite, this information can be shared easily with all members of the PDS. Since all members have access to the same data, communication across the group has been enhanced.

Sharing Information

Besides creating a structure to support collaboration and communication, we wanted to develop a system where other important information could be shared amongst the group. We decided to utilize a “wiki” for this purpose. Many websites host wikis such as wikispaces.com and PBwiki.com. Wikis are websites that have multiple editors and can be used as a clearinghouse for important documents. While the thought of storing important information online might seem scary to some, wiki access can be set to “private” so only people

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“Grouped together, the ‘Nine Essentials’ of Professional Development Schools communicate the importance of establishing a school-university partnership that has a shared mission. One critical aspect of this partnership is the ability for all participants to collaborate, communicate, and govern. With the emergence of tools such as wikis, Google Documents and Nings, a PDS can now seek technological supports to meet these needs.”

with usernames and passwords can access the site. Our PDS has used our wiki to share information like the university’s Conceptual Framework and the district’s curricula. We have also used the wiki to introduce our intern candidates to the group. We required potential interns to apply to be part of our PDS. Part of the application process included a visit to the partner school to meet the teacher mentors. Prior to visiting the school, we had each intern candidate create a short video about themselves that we embedded in the wiki. This process allowed all PDS members to “meet” the intern candidates before the school visit.

Using a wiki helps to decentralize the flow of information within our group. Rather than having a few people managing the documents for the entire PDS, the wiki acts as a repository with all members having equal access to upload or download information. In addition to supporting information storage and retrieval, the wiki helps to communicate that the work of

the group is shared across all members.

Future Possibilities

As we begin preparing for our first group of interns, we are considering additional technological supports for the PDS. We are planning to incorporate blogs for all PDS interns to foster reflective practice. Another consideration is the use of a social networking tool called a Ning that allows for multiple avenues for communication and interaction. Many people are familiar with social networking tools like Facebook or Twitter, but Ning appropriates many of the same features for smaller, user-defined groups. Much like a wiki, Ning access can be set to private so only members of the PDS will be able to participate. The Ning is also scalable which allows groups to select those individual features (chat, discussion boards, blogs, etc.) that would support the work of the group.

Grouped together, the “Nine Essentials” of Professional Development Schools

communicate the importance of establishing a school-university partnership that has a shared mission. One critical aspect of this partnership is the ability for all participants to collaborate, communicate, and govern. With the emergence of tools such as wikis, Google Documents and Nings, a PDS can now seek technological supports to meet these needs.

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Teacher Concerns in the PDS Partnership Change Process

*Diana Bernshausen, Kennedy Middle School (TX)
Sarah McMahan, University of Mississippi*

When forming school-university partnerships, the process of creating new frameworks is no different than any other purposeful change. Any time human beings are asked to change from their comfort zone to a new paradigm, they must feel they are respected as key players in the process of change. In order to feel ownership of the change, all involved must first understand the purpose of the change, the intended outcomes of the change, and the procedures necessary to work through the change (Cunningham & Bernshausen, 2001).

Resiliency is generally defined as the capacity to spring back and adapt in the face of adversity (Henderson and Milstein, 2003; Sagor, 1996; Wang, Haertel & Wahlberg, 1994; Masten, Best & Garmezy, 1990). When in the stage of “self concern,” resiliency allows the issue to be dealt with quickly so that the anxious parties move out of self-concern quickly

The recognition of individual concerns is primary to the change process when developing successful school-university partnerships.

Fuller (1969) identified a consistent pattern in concerns expressed by individuals as they move from inexperience to experience in the profession of teaching. Although over four decades old, Fuller’s developmental model of teacher concerns is true not only in teacher development but also in many situations in which change is involved. Fuller’s model of concern proposes the following three phases through which a person might pass: 1) concern about self, 2) concern about tasks, and 3) concern about impact on

others.

Self concern focuses on personal concerns about how specific items are going to affect the individual self or group. In this stage individuals ask questions such as “What role do I get to play in this consortium?” and “How is this partnership going to affect my students?”. Task concern focuses on the task at hand. Examples of task concern include “Where is class going to be taught?” and “How many pre-service teachers will be at each PDS site?” and “What are specific responsibilities of each pre-service teacher?”. With impact concerns the focus shifts to students in schools. In this stage, one asks questions like “What impact is the partnership going to have on [student] lives?” and “How is this partnership going to improve/affect students’ state test scores?” and “How is it going to affect at the university level better prepared teacher candidates?”.

As schools and universities collaborate to create a PDS partnership, this model of change related to teacher concerns is an important piece of the puzzle. As individuals enter the collaborative partnerships, lack of experience or lack of trust gives little basis for typical initial concerns that relate to the partnerships. Instead, their concerns focus on issues of a personal nature and questions like “Will the other members of the partnership like me?” and “Will I like them?”. Individuals at this

stage also wonder “Can I work with them or them with me?” and “Can I get them to listen to my needs for this collaboration?”.

As individuals gain trust and experience in the ways of collaborating, the concerns about “self” become less personal in nature since the focus begins moving toward fitting into the scheme of things. As the individual transitions into concerns about the task—which focus on the work of the collaborative—the following questions become relevant: 1) Who will be responsible for mentor training? 2) Where will classes be taught? 3) Who will teach the classes?

Only after experiences with the tasks outlined by the partnership can there be a move to concerns about the impact of the partnership on students in the classrooms. It is important to note that the three levels of concern can blend smoothly and that movement among these levels can go both up and down depending upon the situation at the time (Fuller, 1969). What is more important is knowing that if self-focused concerns are not recognized and resolved early in the partnership, collaboration will not occur. Members must be at least at the “task” level to ensure successful collaboration.

Individuals and groups move through these stages of concern as defined by Fuller (1969). Everyone begins as self concerned and when

self concern goes unrecognized there is no movement to task or impact; therefore, when dialoguing with school district representatives the first question becomes “What is your role in this partnership?”. Listening to teachers’ responses allows for the self concerns to be discussed and addressed.

A major goal of school-university partnerships must be the initial recognition of individual concerns and the focus on resiliency prior to embarking on the tasks at hand. It must be recognized that best practice cannot occur until elements are identified that will have positive, neutral, and negative impact on both concerns and resiliency. Neutral elements must be carefully analyzed to determine the value of their continuation. Negative elements must be removed and replaced by enhancement of those elements that have positive impact. Identifying and resolving these issues and building resiliency in the partnership will lead to practices that will both promote and sustain a healthy school-university partnership.

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Lessons Learned Through the PDS Model (or....8:00 Is Too Early! Welcome to the Real World)

Ann K. Behrens and Marian Sorenson, Quincy University

“For the teacher candidates, many unexpected lessons are learned as well. Despite claims that school should start later in the morning, classes really do begin at 8:00 a.m. or before and teachers must be there even earlier. Collaborating teachers do not appreciate late arrivals – and an e-mail begging forgiveness after the fact does not get them off the hook. Relationships with students can be formed in many ways and not always in the classroom itself. Jumping rope on the elementary playground and commiserating with a high school student over the difficulty of quitting smoking were two examples cited by teacher candidates as important elements in building relationships with their students.”

Quincy University initiated the PDS model in the spring of 2006. Partnering with public and parochial schools, the university teaches a total of 19 courses in nine different K-12 schools. Prospective teacher candidates may enroll in pre-professional education courses as early as their freshman year and immediately are immersed in the classroom setting. The advantages of the PDS model are well documented, and faculty members expect students to gain knowledge, insight, and skills from working with the K-12 students in a variety of ways: through observation, mentoring, tutoring, leading both small and large group instruction, assisting on recess duty, conducting school-wide assemblies, and hosting family curriculum nights.

Some lessons learned through the PDS model fall into the category of expected outcomes. Teacher candidates quickly realize the importance of relationships in the classroom. The PDS model allows them to immediately see the connections between theory and practice. Having many opportunities to practice instructional strategies helps teacher candidates feel more confident in their abilities as they prepare for student teaching. A frequent observation is that teaching is a lot of work! Candidates also realize that few clear-cut solutions exist for many of the problems faced by a classroom teacher.

For the teacher candidates, many unexpected lessons are learned as well. Despite claims that school should start later in the morning, classes really do begin at 8:00 a.m. or before and teachers must be there even earlier. Collaborating teachers do not appreciate late arrivals – and an e-mail begging forgiveness after the fact does not get them off the hook. Relationships with students can be formed in many ways and not always in the classroom itself. Jumping rope on the elementary playground and commiserating with a high school student over the difficulty of quitting smoking were two examples cited by teacher candidates as important elements in building relationships with their students.

Interruptions by announcements, bells, phone calls, assemblies, visitors, and student messengers annoy teacher candidates because these things disrupt the flow of instruction. One of the hard lessons they learn is that these things simply happen and teachers must be flexible and adjust. Not everything goes as planned! They also quickly realize the relationship between good planning and classroom management.

While working in the classroom environment, teacher candidates objected to sitting for a long time or watching someone else do the work because both were boring activities. They felt that an hour was too long to focus

and that a variety of activities made the class more interesting. Because of their own experiences interacting with the K-12 students, teacher candidates realized the value of active learning in the classroom. In a course evaluation survey, one student commented, “Somebody can tell me ten times how to do something, but I don’t really get it until I do it.” These observations led to discussions about implications for their own teaching.

When planning student learning outcomes, instructors in a PDS model can count on both predictable and unforeseen results. Working in many classrooms throughout their teacher preparation program, teacher candidates have the opportunity to internalize the realities of the school experience over time. During reflection periods following the K-12 interactions, faculty members should help their students understand all of the learning outcomes, both expected and unexpected.

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Transforming Teacher Education with Field Experiences that Involve Teacher Candidates in Collaborative Research

Pat Tipton Sharp, Betty Ruth Baker, and Trena Wilkerson, Baylor University

*“We believe that undergraduate research is the pedagogy for the 21st century.”
—National Conferences on Undergraduate Research, 2005*

Teacher candidates need an opportunity to study student learning and teaching practices in a research-based program. Involving teacher candidates in field experiences that provide opportunities to engage in collaborative research with university faculty and PDS teachers in a classroom setting can develop strong content knowledge, strong pedagogical knowledge, and an understanding and implementation of various forms of research. The Baylor-Waco Parkdale Professional Development School has included a research component for candidates for nearly all of its 10 years.

Two types of research models are taught in an experiential approach during two semesters of the junior year. The formal research project in mathematics during the fall semester is faculty planned and directed with candidates involved in assessment, differentiated instruction, and data collection. During the spring semester candidates plan and direct a collaborative action research project in literacy in their assigned classroom with their teacher.

Our program began with formal research in mathematics focusing on teaching geometry in the kindergarten classroom. Two professors developed the research study from NCTM standards, and candidates completed the assessments and used hands-on curriculum intervention to study kindergarteners' learning of geometry. This geometry research has recently been added to Baylor's international internship program in Queensland, Australia.

With student progress evident in the geometry study, the Parkdale PDS principal requested a new focus on fractional understanding. A graduate problems course in teaching mathematics chose as its research project to address elementary children's learning of fractions. After an extensive background analysis of the fractional literature, they wrote the Institutional Review Board application for the university and school district, developed assessments, planned and field tested hands on interventions, and assembled evaluative instruments for candidates, students, and faculty.

Graduate students and faculty then instructed undergraduate candidates in the research process and videotaped candidate performance in assessment and instruction. Data collection involved extensive assessment, and candidates learned to assemble data to use for differentiation in their planning, instruction, and selection of materials. Preliminary results showed students' retention of mathematics vocabulary is important to their

School-University Partnerships Submission

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further understanding of concepts. Kindergarteners could name the fractions $\frac{1}{4}$, $\frac{1}{2}$, and $\frac{1}{3}$, and they understood the concept of “fair share.” These aspects are beyond the requirements of our state standards for kindergarten. This research is a continuing longitudinal study.

During the spring semester candidates design an action study in collaboration with their classroom teacher guided by a literacy-based question posed by university faculty. After assigned readings related to action research, candidates follow the prescribed action research sequence:

1. Identify the question, issue, or problem
2. Define a potential solution
3. Locate or develop pre and post assessments

4. Apply the intervention and collect data regarding the intervention
5. Analyze the findings
6. Take action
7. Share in a public forum

This past year’s general question posed by the faculty was “Does using wordless picture books contribute to children’s oral language?”. After the intervention period, candidates reported data that shows children’s improved use of appropriate vocabulary and sentences, increased descriptive language, and evidence of better engagement. Candidates reported that their involvement in research improved their understanding of the research protocol, and that knowledge has enhanced their understanding and use of research. They commented in reflections

that they now know how to let assessment guide instruction.

The success of the research model is found in collaboration. Classroom teachers and university faculty collaborate with teacher education candidates to improve children’s learning by enhancing instruction in the classroom.

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“Editors’ Corner”

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Kristien Zenkov, George Mason University

Athene Bell, Manassas City School District (VA)

Note: This issue’s “Editors’ Corner” was written by Assistant Editor Jim Harmon

As 2010 winds down, I reflect on my PDS experiences of the past calendar year and recognize the impact that work has on my teaching, and I am better for it. As a high school English teacher in an inner-ring suburb of Cleveland, OH, I am a mentor teacher in the award-winning Masters of Urban Secondary Teaching (MUST) program at Cleveland State University. The program, now in its second decade of using a PDS model to prepare pre-service teachers for the challenges of urban education, provides me with a wonderful opportunity to model, reflect, process and problem-solve with another caring adult. I share my expertise as a veteran teacher in terms of content, technology-rich teaching practices, and the ability to develop relationships with students and colleagues. And my intern provides me with the latest research and best practices. It is this symbiotic relationship that makes the PDS so strong and beneficial for my students, present and future. As we watch politicians attempt to de-professionalize our chosen careers, I strongly believe Professional Development Schools are more critical than ever before. The partnership of schools and universities is critical to the stability, growth and relevance of the U.S educational system. It is our collective responsibility to leverage our relationships and networks, our collective voice, and our research and findings to make sure the teaching profession is respected once again. One way in which we hope you will continue to support our collective efforts is through the submission of your best ideas to our publications, for we all benefit through this sharing.

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Conflict Resolution Education: Enhancing the Student Teaching Experience

Margaret V. Kernen, Anne S. Varian, and Jerrilyn Saltz, The University of Akron
JoLane Billings, Norton City Schools (OH)

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact on classroom practices and mentor teacher/pre-service teacher relationships of training pre-service teachers and mentor teachers in Conflict Resolution Education strategies. The overall intent was to improve the potential for participants to implement CRE strategies in the classroom by simultaneously providing both the mentor teachers and the pre-service teachers with the tools to do so. Using the Conflict Resolution Education in Teacher Education program (CRETE), which is designed to provide in-service and pre-service teachers with training in CRE, mentor teachers and pre-service teachers participated in four days of CRETE training during the semester in which the pre-service teachers were completing their student teaching experience. The fact that mentor and pre-service teachers received the same training during the student teaching experience provided a unique opportunity for a shared understanding of particular beliefs and strategies regarding classroom climate.

Results

Lesson Reflections

A total of sixteen lesson reflections were collected from student teachers. Lesson reflections showed that the early childhood students overall responded very positively to the CRE lessons taught by the student teachers. Four lessons became the focus of instruction in the classrooms: The Bug Board, All Torn Up, I Statements, and Dealing with Anger. Student teachers reported high levels of student engagement in most of the lessons and even noted students using strategies from the lessons in other contexts. What follows are brief descriptions

of two of the lessons student teachers most often chose to teach and information from the lesson reflections regarding student responses and behaviors.

The Bug Board

In this lesson, which was taught in five classrooms, students used worksheets with pictures of bugs to write down things that “bug” them and things they do which might “bug” others. The students then discussed their ideas with one another in small groups and as a class and were encouraged to think about why this concept could be important to them. Pre-service teachers reported that classroom students were very willing to discuss the things that bug them and to reflect on their own behaviors and how they might affect others. Students were eager to share aspects of their own lives and provided the pre-service teachers with a variety of insights into their experiences. As one pre-service teacher stated, “We had a great discussion about what it means to be bugged and various ways to stop those behaviors that bother us and others. In addition, I was amazed at the variety of things that bother students. I discovered a lot about these kids, probably more than I wanted to know at times, but now I feel like I know a little more about them.”

I’m All Torn Up

In this lesson, which was taught in three classrooms, the pre-service teachers showed their students a life-sized drawing of a young girl named Alex. They read a story in which Alex woke up feeling good and then encountered a series of negative interactions and experiences throughout the day, each of which made her feel increasingly distraught. After reading each incident, the pre-service teachers tore off a piece of

the drawing. At the conclusion of the story, the classroom students were asked to discuss what they had seen and heard and how they felt about it. They were then asked to suggest ways they might make the child feel better. With each suggestion, the student teachers taped pieces of the drawing back together until the drawing was intact again. The pre-service teachers reported that, during the story, students appeared to be very in touch with their feelings, reacting both verbally and nonverbally to the experiences Alex was having in the story. In one reflection, the pre-service teacher commented, “(I looked) at the students’ faces and they were very emotional when Alex was being torn up.” The students became very attentive and involved when the drawing was torn for the first time. According to a researcher observation in a kindergarten classroom, “Students gasped when the teacher tore off a piece of the drawing.” Students’ attentiveness continued throughout this portion of the lesson, and they were anxious to suggest appropriate ways to put the child back together again and help her to feel better. They were also able to discuss how sadness can sometimes lead to anger.

Participant Interviews

In responses to the question about how the program impacted the mentor teacher/pre-service teacher relationship, every participant indicated that the program opened up significant dialogue between the pre-service teacher and mentor teacher regarding the training sessions and classroom management issues, even in cases where pre-service teachers were not paired with teachers who received the training. As one mentor teacher put it, “After each training session, we would always talk about it - things we had noticed,

“Using the Conflict Resolution Education in Teacher Education program (CRETE), which is designed to provide in-service and pre-service teachers with training in CRE, mentor teachers and pre-service teachers participated in four days of CRETE training during the semester in which the pre-service teachers were completing their student teaching experience. The fact that mentor and pre-service teachers received the same training during the student teaching experience provided a unique opportunity for a shared understanding of particular beliefs and strategies regarding classroom climate.”

“One mentor teacher, describing the positive outcomes of teaching students to use CRE strategies, stated that, ‘We have seen a reduction in the number of students running to either the student teacher or myself with their tattling. They’re trying to do some of that problem solving on their own.’”

things that we could maybe use in our classroom that would help particular students.” A pre-service teacher whose mentor teacher had not participated in training commented that, “I’ve been able to share (CRETE) ideas with her and a lot of the activities we did, she had never heard of before.” Most participants dialogued with one another regarding ways in which particular CRETE strategies could be applied to specific students or behavioral issues in the classroom. One teacher noted, “It’s definitely opened up dialogue – given us more to talk about or ways to pinpoint what’s going on with the students.”

Regarding benefits of the program to mentor and pre-service teachers, six of the participants commented on how much they enjoyed the training itself. As one put it, “We may have grumbled about Saturday trainings, but once I got there, it was great and the day went fast.” Another participant, a veteran teacher in her thirty-first year, said she would recommend the training for anyone, student teachers and veteran teachers alike. Other advantages of the training included the variety of strategies and ideas presented and the opportunity to bond with others over the four-day training. The majority of the student

teachers commented that they had greater understanding regarding classroom management strategies and more confidence in themselves as classroom managers. According to one pre-service teacher, “At the beginning of student teaching, classroom management was my weakest area. After taking CRETE, I learned a lot more strategies to build my repertoire of skills.” The primary benefit for the K-4 students, identified in the majority of the interviews, was the potential for improved social skills and an enhanced ability to resolve their own problems and conflicts. One mentor teacher, describing the positive outcomes of teaching students to use CRE strategies, stated that, “We have seen a reduction in the number of students running to either the student teacher or myself with their tattling. They’re trying to do some of that problem solving on their own.”

Conclusion

Pre-service teachers and mentor teachers recognized the value of the training as it related to their practices in the classrooms, the quality of interactions with one another, and in their ability to provide their students with improved social and problem solving skills. According to

the pre-service teacher lesson reflections, the K-4 students in this study exhibited high levels of engagement during these lessons and demonstrated understanding of the concepts both during the lessons and after they had been taught. Both pre-service teachers and mentor teachers discussed the degree to which CRETE had improved the quality of their discourse with one another, their classroom management skills, and their ability to establish and maintain a positive classroom climate, with a focus placed on building relationships with and among students.

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In Our Own Words

Laura Horvath, George Mason University/South Lakes High School and Hughes Middle School (VA)

Heather Martin and Cathy DeCoster, George Mason University/Hughes Middle School (VA)

Kimberly Haggard, Meghan Arnold, Shereen Bagherzadeh, and Erinn Mulligan, George Mason University/Robinson Secondary School (VA)

Note: “In Our Own Words” is a new regular column featuring the voices of those perhaps most invested in the Professional Development School concept: the interns themselves. For this inaugural edition of the column, the authors describe their work across three different PDS sites in Northern Virginia. Interns were asked to reflect on the “big ideas,” highlights, and lessons learned as new PDS interns during the first two weeks on their internships

during the fall 2010 semester.

Setting the Stage

Experienced classroom teachers have learned the importance of the week of planning and preparation that precedes the arrival of students each fall. The physical arrangement of the classroom space and materials has a huge impact on the efficient and effective running of a class. When interns enter a Clinical Faculty member’s class in midstream, it’s hard to see how the

decisions about desk arrangements, where to find materials and leave the homework affect everything from classroom management to comprehension. How the teacher introduces her students to the class and to herself sets the tone for the entire year. For this reason, our program asks our fall interns to report to their school sites during the week of “preschool” so that they can see firsthand how teachers construct their environments.

Preparing the Space

English intern Heather Martin took advantage of the ability to observe not only her assigned Clinical Faculty teacher, but others in the school as well, “As I watched teachers set up their rooms, I was struck by how overwhelming an empty classroom can be – especially to new teachers. I saw a lot of great ideas as I went from room to room.” Heather created a binder to capture the ideas she collected, “including a blueprint of my dream classroom (with lots of stolen ideas and some of my own). I keep adding to this blueprint whenever I see something great when observing other teachers.”

Social studies intern Cathy DeCoster reflected that “having an area for each class period to drop off their homework and a ‘what you missed’ folder for each period” are ideas she’ll be taking with her to her own classroom someday. Cathy observed that the best ideas were the simplest; “listing somewhere on the board the agenda and the homework,” for example. “I think the major thing I have walked away with after the first few weeks of school is the importance of organizing your classroom and class procedures and getting your students accustomed to them.”

“My mentor has been able to create a classroom that is both welcoming and extremely structured, allowing for students to feel comfortable in this environment,” writes science intern Kimberly Haggard. “It was interesting to experience both how she prepared for students to arrive and how she acclimated them to her classroom during that first week of school. The classroom is extremely organized, allowing for students to become autonomous and get what they need to succeed in class (tape, colored pencils, band aids) without asking permission.” Kimberly learned, however, that just having organized the classroom isn’t all that counts. Creating a warm and welcoming space is part of it. “The way she has set up her classroom allows for students to get an idea of who she is, including college memorabilia and souvenirs from vacations,” giving students the sense that their teacher is a real person.

Taking the Stage

If careful preparation during the week before students arrive is critical to a successful year, the first week for students is even more so. Fall PDS interns were able to observe exactly how their Clinical Faculty introduced themselves, their classrooms, and its routines to their students. “So much time is wasted with collecting homework papers and dealing with what students missed because of an absence, when having a procedure or plan alleviates that,” reflects Cathy DeCoster. Establishing these routines in the first few days of the school year is one key to success.

Heather made it a point to collect everything she could find that might help her set the tone with her own future students. “I have several syllabi, parent/student contracts, ice-breaker activities, and anything else I may want to incorporate into my new beginnings,” she writes. Meghan Arnold agreed adding, “I also found the procedures and expectations established during the first few days of school help shape the atmosphere of the class.”

Meghan went on to highlight the importance of relationship building during these early days with students. “I’m taking the responsibilities of a new school year in stride. I’ve grown to appreciate how important it is to make the extra effort to quickly get to know my students.” Science intern Shereen Bagherzadeh agrees that “the biggest lesson I have received so far has been how to greet these new students and to really get to know them, their names, their interests, and as much as you can about their abilities during that first week.”

One way to do that is to learn students’ names as quickly as possible. Kimberly Haggard got this opportunity through a strategy used by her Clinical Faculty mentor. “We took pictures of the students on the first days of school, creating flash cards with their names on one side and pictures on the other. We used these to study and learned the students’ names within a week. The students seemed to appreciate this effort, and we were able to recognize them by name both in the classroom and in the hall quickly and correctly.” Erinn Mulligan adds that a seating chart “is one of the most powerful tools” for getting to know your students, and “continues to be an important strategy to manage the class.”

Though “preschool” week can often feel bogged down in meetings, a lot can be learned about how an effective teacher approaches these important early days. “Laying the groundwork for a learning community may be challenging and time-consuming,” Meghan Arnold reflects, “but it proves critical to effective teaching.”

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