

Is it Possible to Sustain Innovation, Community, and Responsiveness in Teacher Education when a Unique Pilot PDS Becomes a Program-Wide Model?

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Abstract: This article chronicles the timeline of a PDS collaboration that originated as a pilot program between a College of Education and a public charter language immersion school and has grown to become the model for Early Childhood Teacher Education at our institution. The trepidation and successes of years one, two, and three are explored along with benefits and challenges of moving from a pilot to an institution-wide program. Observations from faculty, current students, and former students are examined within the context of the PDS Essentials: the challenges in preserving a “shared commitment to innovative and reflective practice by all participants” and the advancement of equity within schools and communities are highlighted.

KEYWORDS: Professional Development Schools, early childhood education, culturally relevant teaching

NAPDS NINE ESSENTIALS ADDRESSED:

1. A comprehensive mission that is broader in its outreach and scope than the mission of any partner and that furthers the education profession and its responsibility to advance equity within schools and, by potential extension, the broader community;
2. A school-university culture committed to the preparation of future educators that embraces their active engagement in the school community;
3. Ongoing and reciprocal professional development for all participants guided by need;
4. A shared commitment to innovative and reflective practice by all participants;
5. Engagement in and public sharing of the results of deliberate investigations of practice by respective participants;
6. An articulation agreement developed by the respective participants delineating the roles and responsibilities of all involved;
7. A structure that allows all participants a forum for ongoing governance, reflection, and collaboration; and
8. Work by college/university faculty and P-12 faculty informal roles across institutional settings.

Introduction

“The more radical the person is, the more fully he or she enters into reality so that, knowing it better, he or she can transform it. This individual is not afraid to confront, to listen, to see the world unveiled. This person is not afraid to meet the people or to enter in a dialogue with them. This person does not consider himself or herself the proprietor of history or of all people, or the liberator of the oppressed; but he or she does commit himself or herself, within history, to fight at their side”

--Paulo Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed.

Rationale for our PDS Pilot: Addressing issues of Equity and Engagement with Preservice Teachers in a Diverse Field Placement

Freire’s statement captures the requisite passion and commitment of K-12 and higher education partners who seek to create and sustain robust Professional Development School relationships where partners connect intimately with the ‘lived experiences’ of each other as well as the students—both K-12 and university level—in order to effectively transform the educational setting to empower all stakeholders. If Freire’s words are the heart and soul—the philosophical foundation—for a robust PDS, then how do stakeholders bridge the philosophical with the operational in sustaining a dynamic and meaningful partnership that enriches the lives and learning of all participants? Our university has been part of a Professional Development School model since 2008; this article reviews the first three years of our institution’s PDS model. Our pilot year (2008-2009) consisted of a collaborative relationship with a unique K-5 public charter school; we added a second school the next year and added two more schools the third year. In this paper, we explore the initiatives, opportunities, and challenges of the first three—developmental--years with an overview of years four through seven when our College of Education partnered with four geographically and culturally diverse school systems (including over 25 partner K-5 schools) to create a program-wide Professional Development School model for Teacher Education.

Responsive Evaluation and Changing Methodology

This paper provides a narrative overview—a tapestry of sorts--exploring the experiences of our College of Education faculty and interns as we moved from PDS collaboration with one school to a program-wide PDS model serving over 225 students across 24 different K-5 schools located in four counties. There was no one research focus the developmental years and data collection and analysis was guided by stakeholder needs such as:

Will immersion in a dual language (Spanish) charter school increase the critical consciousness of white preservice teachers and enhance their ability to plan for and to teach children from diverse backgrounds?

*Data collection from 2008-2010 of mentor teachers’ and interns’ journals, survey results, and transcribed interviews was used to study the development of preservice teachers’ cultural identities following immersion in a culturally diverse field setting (Reece, 2010). This study reinforced the beliefs we had going into the pilot year that preservice teachers having little prior experience with children

and families from diverse cultures could, indeed, show significant growth in their understandings of the needs of children from diverse backgrounds (Reece, 2010).

Are methods courses co-taught by university faculty and select K-5 mentor teachers more effective for intern preparation?

*Survey data collected from interns (2009-2011) participating in a PDS cohort where methods courses were co-taught by university faculty and K-5 teachers (Baldwin & Covert, 2012; Reece & Roberts, 2012) indicated more favorable responses in methods classes co-taught by university and K-5 teachers than course taught by university faculty alone.

Are there measurable differences in intern self-efficacy between a cohort of students participating in a field intensive PDS model versus a cohort of students from the same university participating in a traditional model of field and course work?

*Data from interns and mentor teachers compared self-efficacy among interns participating in an intensive field placement, PDS setting with interns participating in a traditional teacher education program at the same institution. Findings indicated students completing fieldwork in the intensive, collaborative PDS field experience indicated greater levels of self-efficacy with regard to teaching (Nodine, Reece, & Roberts, 2016).

Survey and interview data collected during years four through seven from all PDS stakeholders has been collected and results will be forthcoming. The consolidation of our university with another institution (during the academic years 2011-2012, 2012-2013, and 2013-2014) added a plethora of new responsibilities for faculty across all departments at the same time program-wide implementation of a PDS model in the College of Education occurred. For the purpose of this special publication, we will focus more on the growth of our PDS from a pilot effort to a program-wide model, citing aspects related to the research questions mentioned above. Challenges we faced with program-wide implementation of the PDS model included: maintaining collaborative communication with and high standards in the selection of mentor teachers; sustaining innovation and a sense of community among faculty during and following institution-level consolidation; and, pushing back against the pressures of standardization with intern led research projects and teaching opportunities with summer academic programs serving students in grades 6-12.

Key Objectives and Outcomes of the Pilot Year and Year Two of our PDS

In fall 2008, the North Georgia College and State University (NGCSU) student body was comprised of 7,460 students with the following demographic: 87.8% white; 6% Latino; 3.2%; 2% Asian; and 1% unidentified (UNG.org). The demographics of students enrolled in the College of Education mirrored the university demographic. In contrast, the demographics of the surrounding counties and school systems where many of our graduates would seek employment were much more diverse. The demographics of Hall County Schools, where many NGCSU interns would complete their senior field experiences, was comprised of: 52.7% white 38.9% Latino; 4.7% Black; 1.4% Asian; and 2% multiracial (Department of Education, 2009). Many of the children and families identifying as Latino were new to the United States and spoke very little English (Hall County Schools, 2009; U.S. Census, 2010).

A desire to provide NGCSU interns with more meaningful experiences with children and families from diverse resulted in a PDS pilot partnership between a public charter dual language (Spanish) immersion school (World Language Academy) and a cohort of seniors in the College of Education at NGCSU in fall 2008. The focus of the first two years of the partnership was to provide white, monolingual preservice teachers with student teaching experiences working with children and families from diverse cultural, linguistic, and academic backgrounds. Methods courses were held on the WLA campus and the lead author of this paper collaborated on course content with the WLA literacy coach (who is the second author of this paper and now a faculty member in the College of Education) to train interns in content reading strategies and then provide classrooms for them to practice the strategies.

NGCSU faculty and administration provided funding and professional learning opportunities for WLA teachers who were native Spanish speakers from Latin and South American countries in order to assist the teachers with credentialing and teaching strategies related to Georgia standards and K-5 curricula (L. Reece, observation, August 29, 2008; Reece & Roberts, 2012; WLA Charter, 2008). The practices and collaboration during the pilot year reflects NAPDS essentials of advancing principles of equity, providing all stakeholders with professional development opportunities, and creating a shared vision of improving education (NAPDS, 2008).

Lyman Hall Elementary, a Hall County Title One school with 96% of students qualifying for Free and Reduced lunch and 86% classified as English learners with a first language other than English, joined our PDS in 2009 (Department of Education, 2009). That year, nine junior and senior interns were placed at WLA and 10 junior and senior interns placed at Lyman Hall; these interns (along with 13 other students who completed traditional field placements in non-PDS schools) attended classes at Lyman Hall. Students completing field experiences in one of the two PDS sites discussed strategies of collaboration and professional learning, sharing information with peers in the traditional cohort (Nodine, Reece & Roberts, 2016). The PDS interns' professional learning experiences included: administering DRA-II reading assessments to students while supervised by mentor teachers; participating in vertical planning meetings and RTI (Response to Intervention) sessions with K-5 faculty, and designing plans for student-led conferencing. Such activities reflected the NAPDS Essential of "ongoing and reciprocal professional development" for all stakeholders "(NAPDS, 2008).

Lyman Hall Elementary provided a one-way immersion program for kindergarten students having little English vocabulary. This model provided for the majority of daily instruction to be delivered in the child's first language (Spanish) at the start of the year; the classroom teachers then gradually shifted to more instructional time in English and less in the first language. Two NGCSU interns, minoring in Spanish, were assigned to one -way immersion classrooms for their field experiences. One of the PDS requirements for field placements was for interns starting in fall was to meet and talk with prospective mentor teachers in spring; the immersion teachers (one of whom was a native Spanish speaker and one of was a native English speaker with a little Spanish) sat down with the interns and developed a plan for the field experience whereby both interns would teach children in both Spanish and English. During the first meeting, the interns expressed their hesitancy at teaching in Spanish; the teachers were encouraging and supportive, so the interns agreed to try teaching in both classes. Three weeks into the fall semester, these interns taught a hands -on science lesson completely in Spanish, to the delight of the children and the mentor teacher (L. Reece observation, September 24, 2009). NAPDS Essential 7—a field experience setting that allows for "ongoing governance, reflection,

and collaboration” among all stakeholders is evidenced by the level of engagement of both mentor teachers and interns" (NAPDS, 2008).

These interns, along with a NGCSU faculty member and mentor teacher, put together a professional learning session for their cohort peers on best practices for teaching ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages); NGCSU students then presented their work at the TESOL conference in Atlanta, Georgia (TESOL, 2010). These interns’ desire to promote equity and best practice in teaching children from diverse backgrounds was nurtured through open and ongoing collaboration and support from the K-5 mentor teachers in the PDS model. The NAPDS Essentials of: advancing equity, preparing future educators for active engagement, and opportunities for ongoing reflection and collaboration were evidenced in this project (NAPDS, 2008). After observing the success of their peers, three other Spanish-speaking interns volunteered to administer a pilot version of the PALS (Performance Assessment for Language Students) under the supervision of the lead author to Lyman Hall students in order to better assess their reading abilities and plan more effectively for reading instruction.

Culturally Relevant Teacher Education and PDS Field Placements

During the first and second years of the PDS, NGCSU interns volunteered for senior field placements within the PDS; these volunteers agreed to begin their field placement during teacher pre-planning (three weeks earlier than NGCSU peers in the traditional senior field experience model) and remained in their field placements any time during school hours when the interns were not in university methods courses. The total time that NGCSU PDS interns at World Language Academy and Lyman Hall spent in classrooms totaled 29 hours a week; NGCSU interns following the traditional model of field placement were in classrooms 14 hours a week. Our research showed that students participating in the PDS model requiring increased time in classrooms reported greater feelings of self-efficacy and willingness to take initiative in new settings (Castle & Reilly, 2011; Nodine, Roberts & Reece, 2016). Given the culturally diverse settings of WLA and Lyman Hall, we integrated Culturally Relevant Teaching (CRT) practices into methods coursework and seminar discussions. CRT curricula focused on the premise that teachers who relate academic content to their students’ lived experiences have more success in engaging students in the learning environment, developing critical thinking skills, and promoting self-confidence in learning (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

According to Ladson-Billings (1995), culturally relevant pedagogy/teaching is tailored to “collective, not merely individual empowerment” (p.160). This outcome was achieved through formal school sponsored activities such as family dinners (families bring dishes from their countries of origin to school for a potluck); spring festival where students showcase dances and celebrations unique to their county or culture. Most importantly, critical consciousness was developed through daily interactions among mentor teachers, interns, and students. The mission of advancing principles of equity (NAPDS Essential One) has been a cornerstone in our PDS program; community efforts such as those listed above reflect the commitment of both partners in outreach and engagement with the community (NAPDS, 2008).

Pilot Year and Year Two: Mentor Teacher Roles and Relationships

Traditionally, mentor teachers have been considered purveyors of practical knowledge while university supervisors evaluate students’ pedagogical development and provide theoretical

knowledge (Rodgers & Keil, 2007). The ongoing collaboration between mentor teachers and interns, meetings with NGCSU faculty and mentors, and monthly meetings with all PDS stakeholders blurred the roles of mentor teacher and university supervisor. Both mentors and supervisors shared and reinforced important pedagogical ideas—thereby providing the interns with consistent and relevant information. The features associated with changes in the roles of mentor teachers and university faculty included mentor teachers' beliefs that they could more powerfully engage students in the process of supervision which added a layer of complexity for evaluation and assessment of the interns as well as potentially new tensions between university faculty and mentor teachers; movement toward a more concerted collaborative effort between the university and the site school; and an increased focus upon preparing mentor teachers to assume their roles with interns (Rodgers & Keil, 2007). During the first two years of the PDS, mentor teachers met with university faculty and supervisors to discuss pedagogy and theory and to review the expectations of both partners; the Dean paid for substitute teachers to cover mentor teachers classrooms so the mentors could meet and collaborate directly with higher education partners. During the first two years, NGCSU also encouraged faculty and K-5 teachers to prepare NAPDS presentations and paid K-5 partners' travel expenses.

During the first year, NGCSU interns confronted feelings of being awestruck, excited, and intimidated in an environment where many teachers spoke mainly in Spanish. During the second year with Lyman Hall, the cultural chasm wasn't as broad as teachers (even those who were native Spanish speakers) used English most of the time, except in the one-way immersion kindergarten classes.

Following lunch with third grade teachers at WLA during the first week of field placement (three of whom were native Spanish speakers while two were native English speakers), one intern shared her feelings of uneasiness when team members turned to one another and spoke in Spanish. Interns shared similar feelings during our first seminar meeting with questions like, "Are we supposed to ask Spanish speaking teachers to translate for us? Should we act like we understand what they're saying? Are they talking about us?" (L. Reece, observation, August 25, 2008). For the next seminar, two native Spanish-speaking teachers joined us along with the dual language program coordinator to address intern concerns and to talk about the school's goals. Our robust conversation ended with one intern capturing the moment, "Wow! I guess we're feeling what kids who don't speak English well feel every day in schools where everything is in English" (L. Reece, observation, August 25, 2008). One of the Spanish-speaking teachers hugged the student and replied, "Yes, yes, it is so" (L. Reece, observation, August 25, 2008). K-5 and university partner exchanges such as this one opened the door for these young interns and their professor to build the knowledge, skills, and compassion to work alongside school and community members to promote principles of equity in ways that deliberately address teacher identity development regard to principles of equity (Banks, 2003; Gee, 2001; NAPDS Essentials, 2008).

The principals at WLA and Lyman Hall provided NGCSU interns the opportunity to attend professional development activities with school faculty. During the school year, interns attended workshops on effective RTI (Response to Intervention) reporting and monitoring, student-led conferencing, and meetings with parents from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. The university role in collaborating with K-5 partners in the pilot PDS included faculty and intern participation as leaders for such extra-curricular activities such as Science Olympiad and Odyssey of the Mind teams; assisting with Chinese New Year activities; and

tutoring in math and English in after school programs. Extra-curricular activities such as these afforded interns the opportunity to work with parents and other community members.

The tremendous success of collaborative efforts such as literacy faculty co-teaching methods courses with K-5 partners and science education faculty collaborating with K-5 teachers for hands on science labs (Baldwin & Covert, 2012) led to more formal collaboration, with the literacy coach co-teaching methods courses with university faculty (Reece & Roberts, 2011; Reece & Roberts, 2012). By the third year of the partnership, mentor teachers and interns met together for vertical planning as well as development of assignments for methods courses. While the interns benefitted from the rich relationships with mentors as well as professional training opportunities, school administrators also saw the benefit of close collaboration between K-5 teachers and university partners.

Monthly meetings were held with mentor teachers, university faculty, and administrators to discuss what was working really well and what aspects of the extended field pilot needed to be addressed. A number of ideas stemming from these meetings are currently standard practice among all Five Professional Development School sites. These include: debriefing week, mandatory start to the field placement with preplanning, and community-service based projects targeting issues related to elementary schools' SIP (School Improvement Plan). Debriefing week (Reece and Nodine, 2014) is the week between the ending of one six -week field placement and the beginning of another. During this time, interns research schools, personnel, and programs they are interested in and shadow school professionals during the week. An intern may choose a school counselor, teacher of gifted students, ESOL teacher, or administrator to work with or shadow during the debriefing week. Prior to shadowing the selected person or persons, the interns develop questions (like a mini action research prospectus) and then attempt to answer those questions as they shadow the school person. One student opted to spend half the week shadowing a school resource officer and half the week shadowing a school counselor. The questions she and her peers developed included: how do you work effectively with parents and students when you may not speak the same language? Do you find that more students who live in poverty tend to drop out of school? How do you help teachers understand the needs of children who may not speak English? The experiences during debriefing week led this intern to complete a research project studying the impact of teacher mentoring on at-risk students (L. Reece, observation, November 16, 2008).

The strong support for the PDS shown by the administrators during the first two years paved the way for other schools to join the PDS model in years to come; in addition, such support also laid the groundwork for future collaborative projects between K-5 and university faculty (Reece and Roberts, 2012; Reece and Nodine, 2014). One example of the "shared commitment to innovative and reflective practice" (NAPDS, 2008) occurred during the brainstorming, planning, and execution of the "social studies blitz" teaching experience. During this activity, fifth grade teachers and volunteer interns developed inquiry-based lessons to introduce fifth grade English language learners (ELLs) to sixth grade social studies vocabulary through inquiry-based group projects. In addition to vocabulary development, interns engaged students in critical inquiry discussions related to immigration, rights of Americans, and economics. This discussion grew out of a student's concerns over immigration legislation; the intern unpacked the facts for the students then invited community members in to address the issue on a local level which reflects a commitment to the NAPDS Essentials One and Two (NAPDS, 2008; Reece & Nodine, 2014).

Year Three: Excitement and Growing Pains

Two public charter schools (also in Hall County) were added to the PDS relationship in year three—Martin Technology Academy and Chestnut Mountain Creative School of Inquiry. Martin Technology Academy (MTA) was participating in a school-wide training initiative with Dell Computers; PDS interns placed at MTA received technology training and also sponsored Science Olympiad teams. Chestnut Mountain Creative School of Inquiry (CMCSI) provided PDS interns with training in the Renzulli Model of teaching with high expectations for all students. PDS interns at CMCSI participated in professional learning activities based on differentiation strategies for K-5 teachers with content, process, and product (Renzulli & Reis, 2003).

A PDS is considered to be fully implemented when ongoing collaboration between partners, directed at the development of learning outcomes that address the specific needs of PDS children, exists. Learning outcomes and practices are fully endorsed by the PDS and all involved institutions. Further, the partnership extends beyond the school campus to effect sustainable changes in school practices and policies influencing educational policy at the district, state, and possibly even national levels (Breault & Lack, 2009). During year three of the PDS model, administrators, mentor teachers, university faculty, and interns met together twice each semester to review programmatic goals, share ideas and practices, and brainstorm new avenues for collaboration. One strength of the PDS model at this point was in the diverse demographics of the participating K-5 schools. While all from the same county and geographically near one another, the academic and social goals and strengths of each school were different. Lyman Hall Elementary teachers planned weekly with ESOL support personnel to design lesson plans and activities tailored to the needs of English learners. The dual language (Spanish and English) immersion model of World Language Academy exposed interns to weekly planning sessions with grade level teachers who were native Spanish and native English speakers. The math/technology focus of Martin Technology Academy afforded interns the opportunity to participate with mentor teachers for in-depth professional learning on technology use, sponsored by a grant from Dell Computers (Hall County Schools, 2011); and interns at Chestnut Mountain Creative School of Inquiry assisted teachers in developing inquiry units of instruction aligned with Georgia curricula standards.

A prerequisite for analyzing the roles of university faculty and mentor teachers is careful examination of the construct of teacher identity itself. The decisions interns make in the field setting relate directly to the influence (both formal and informal) of mentor teachers and university personnel. The four schools of our PDS in year three differed with regard to curricular focus, family and teacher demographics, and administrative style. With the addition of these two schools, all interns attending site-based methods classes in one cohort also had the intensive field experiences being part of the PDS model. Robust discussions occurred over intern initiative; in the first two PDS schools, interns were encouraged to initiate ideas, propose and implement projects, and lead programs. The two schools added during the third year were different with regard to the leadership style of the administrators. More formal in structure and administration, these schools maintained a more traditional view of the intern-mentor relationship. During year three the cohort added discussions of school culture and the influence of administrators in teacher behaviors---another wrinkle to the fabric of teacher identity formation. Interns shared candidly the positive and challenging aspects of the school culture in their field placements. During debriefing weeks, interns were encouraged to visit a school with a

different school culture and to talk with teachers at that school. Following the debriefing week, one intern commented: “I really like my experiences at World Language Academy; but Martin Technology Academy felt more like a school where I would fit. I liked the structure and the way the principal maps things out for the teachers”. Another intern stated, “I liked the willingness of teachers at Lyman Hall to use their Spanish in order to communicate with children and families; I became more confident in my Spanish speaking and will be able to communicate better with English learners in my own classroom” (L.Reece, communication, April 13, 2011). The varied experiences of these four PDS schools provided interns with experiences that broadened their understanding of student demographics as well as varied approaches toward teaching and learning found in different schools.

Going Program-Wide with PDS partners During Institutional Consolidation

With the addition of two more schools—for a total of four K-5 schools serving over fifty juniors and seniors from NGCSU, monthly meetings with all stakeholders became more difficult to coordinate; also, more university faculty were needed to supervise interns in the field and work collaboratively with K-5 teachers and administrators. At the same time, North Georgia College and State University (with two campuses and a total enrollment of approximately 7,000 students) was undergoing a consolidation with Gainesville State College (with two campuses and approximately 9,500 students) to become the University of North Georgia (UNG). The goals and missions of the two institutions differed in that GSC was a two-year college while NGCSU was a four-year university with a growing graduate program. At the time of consolidation, Gainesville State College had just begun an evening education program designed to meet the needs of nontraditional students who worked full time. Bringing together faculty from a nontraditional/evening education program at one institution with faculty from another institution having both traditional and PDS teacher education programs led to concerns and apprehension with regard to ‘merging’ into one College of Education. Such tensions were readily evident during consolidation that coincided with the first year of a program-wide implementation of the PDS model. In addition to navigating among different styles of leadership and significantly different Teacher Education programs, College of Education faculty from both institutions were tasked with consolidation policy revisions on topics from from faculty governance policies to class size issues, pay equity, and teaching on multiple campuses requiring their attention.

Years Four to Seven: Sustaining Flexibility, Community, and Innovation among Four School Systems in Geographically Different Regions

The essence of the discussions of a pilot PDS collaboration between one group of university interns and a new public, dual language K-5 school revolved around providing monolingual white interns with meaningful experiences teaching and working with children and families from diverse backgrounds; the ultimate goal was to increase interns’ understandings so they would be more effective teachers while also providing professional learning support for the K-5 teachers in the partner school. Flexibility, community, and innovation existed everywhere during the first year—interns, mentor teachers, and university faculty volunteered to embark on an adventurous new collaboration with one of the first dual language schools in the state. Stakeholders on both sides were excited and ready to begin. The innovative, unpredictable nature of the first few years of the PDS development appealed to the nature of risk-taking

faculty; when the expansion of this ‘adventure’ became a required path for faculty and students at our university, some faculty expressed concern over the speed and magnitude of changes accompanying the move from pilot to program-wide implementation of a PDS model. Faculty feared losing collaboration with colleagues due to the geographical distances between schools; they also questioned how to assess whether interns have all the requisite field experiences, given the diverse school cultures and the close collaboration required with PDS partners. Some faculty feared the PDS model would result in too much focus on the practical matters of teaching while theoretical connections would be limited.

Due to the enormity of responsibilities associated with consolidation, program-wide implementation planning of the PDS model was initiated late spring (2011); in less than six months, all early childhood faculty and students were participating in the PDS model. Methods courses and professional learning took place on site at a number of K-5 partner schools. Faculty stepped up bravely to the task; however, many felt overwhelmed and detached from colleagues and university resources.

Years Four through Seven: Mentor Teacher Selection and Challenges

Mentor teachers are vital to the success of a PDS partnership. The selection of mentor teachers is one that requires a philosophical ‘goodness of fit’ as well as content expertise. We worked closely with the school administrators during the early years to form a strong definition of desired qualities for teachers who would mentor our student interns. For starters, it was imperative that the mentor teachers see themselves as life-long learners as we wanted interns to understand that learning continues to happen in all stages of teaching. This experiential relationship between mentor and intern was a definite learning situation for both parties. We also wanted teachers that were willing to give constructive feedback to interns and university partners. The mentor teachers were modeling skills and strategies day in and day out and we wanted them to “coach” our student interns as they released classroom responsibilities of planning, teaching, and learning to interns. We looked for teachers that were collaborative by nature; this was accomplished through individual and group “chats” between. In order to maintain a fluid partnership between the university, the interns, and the elementary schools, collaboration was key. We also felt that mentor teacher buy-in was essential. We wanted the teachers to feel confident about being a part of this replication process and their role within it. During years one through three, it was easy to identify strong mentor teachers. Unfortunately as the PDS grew (years four through seven), it was proving difficult to find teachers that met all of these qualifications as well as being a much greater time consuming task for university faculty. This forced us to widen the pool of mentor teachers and from a university standpoint, provide training for ALL mentor teachers to somewhat help level the playing field.

Due to the fact there was/is little to no money to offer stipends to teachers, along with the fact that the state of Georgia no longer requires teachers to earn Professional Learning Units (PLU’s), it was a major challenge to entice teachers to attend the professional learning mentoring sessions we offered throughout the summer. One of the things the university sought out to do was to search for grant money that could be used for mentor teachers. We were not able to procure funding for all mentor teachers to receive stipends as we had done in the developmental years. We try to work as individually as possible with our mentor teachers in each school to articulate their role and our expectations as they help us replicate teachers, and faculty attempt

monthly meetings where representatives from the four different school partners meet to talk about issues and progress with field experiences.

Other challenges that the PDC faces as we have grown are: offering unique experiences across each PDC and battling outside pressures of standardization in Teacher Education. While growth is a positive thing for the university, it remains a challenge for the PDC. When we began this journey we were able to allow the students a substantial amount of flexibility within their course work and within their schools to craft an experience that met their needs, the schools goals, and was also responsive to their passions. As schools were added and student numbers increased, student responsiveness on the university side could not be maintained at the same level. There was a growing concern among faculty members that the students were not getting an equitable experience. This forced each PDS to become more standardized in their actions, which took away some of the initial “draw” to the PDS experience. While we strive to give each PDS its own identity and character, this remains difficult to do.

We are also battling with outside pressures such as edTPA, teacher certification changes, and GACE requirements. It is difficult not to “teach to the test” when as educators we know that this goes against our philosophies. We also understand the importance of these requirements and have been forced to make adjustments within each PDS (regarding coursework, expectations, and requirements) to conform to the expectations of these pressures. We feel confident that in the near future we will strike balance with each of these challenges, but for now we work hard to do our best to meet the needs of our student interns and replicate the best teachers possible. Despite all of the challenges, hurdles, and changes over the past few years, the program-wide PDS functions surprisingly well. We are by no means perfect and we strive daily to improve our practice, enhance our school partnerships, and remain positive across the university faculty.

Interviews with faculty teaching in the PDS model reflected new challenges to maintaining the original mission of the PDS model: to bring interns into meaningful contact with children, teachers, and families from diverse backgrounds. With over 225 juniors and seniors participating in the PDS model, faculty workload has increased at the expense of gathering together with K-5 partners to collaborate and plan activities specific to the richness of the particular school system where interns are in field placements. Planning has returned to more of a university-based endeavor with minimal collaboration at the coursework level. University faculty did indicate a positive impact of being based in a PDS “cluster” (geographical proximity of participating schools) in that interns get to know and work with two different teams of professors, thereby learning how to navigate different styles of teaching and learning and better understand their own learning preferences and how those preferences carry over into their teaching (A.Roberts, observation, April 6, 2015). With the pressures of EdTPA as well as administering a teacher education program that is housed off campus, faculty now see the challenges of preserving the integrity of a robust Professional Development School model with regard to collaboration, shared equity, and outreach into the broader community. The direction for our program to take moving forward may be guided from the compassion, initiative, and relationship formed between a public charter dual language immersion school and a small cadre of university faculty and students. We must also believe that we can continue our fidelity to the PDS Essentials (2008) even on a program-wide scale.

Conclusion and Future Directions

As the dust settles on the frenzied process of institution-level consolidation, university faculty find themselves better able to devote the time and energy needed to sustain the innovative practices upon which our program-wide PDS was built. With regard to recruiting and training mentor teachers, designated faculty are writing grants to provide stipends for the mentor teachers. Other faculty are collaborating with select mentor teachers to develop rubrics that may guide the duties and responsibilities of new mentor teachers. The University of North Georgia has started a terminal degree program in Educational Leadership tailored to innovative administrators and teachers currently working in the Professional Development School setting. Providing training and support for collaborative efforts of university and K-5 faculty at the administrative level will strengthen the relationship in a “top down” manner among stakeholders as we move forward.

Given the pressures facing faculty and interns with the current “standardization” movement in Teacher Education, juniors and seniors have little room for research and collaborative projects with faculty or mentor teachers. The lead author of this paper has developed and implemented a research-based summer teaching experience for UNG students to participate in *prior to* formal admission into the teacher education program. These students, who are completing Educational Foundations coursework in summer have the opportunity to serve as paid teaching assistants for two grant funded academic programs serving “at-promise” youth: *Steps to College* and *Summer Scholars Institute*. *Steps to College* is a three year academic enrichment program that serves promising 9th-11th grade students from counties surrounding the UNG Gainesville campus. Students who will be first generation college attendees and who are economically disadvantaged are recommended by high school counselors for this program. *Summer Scholars* is a three year program for rising 8th to 10th graders; curricula is designed by faculty interested in STEM and humanities teaching. Activities are inquiry-based for *Summer Scholars* and the requirements for student attendance is similar to *Steps to College*. Currently, one of the paid interns is also collaborating with the lead author of this paper to conduct an ethnographic study on the impact of Culturally Relevant Teaching on the self-efficacy of students attending *Summer Scholars*.

For our colleagues currently involved in pilot PDS programs, we strongly recommend careful planning with the inclusion of all faculty if you decide to move toward a program-wide PDS. Transparency and ongoing communication are key—even during the pilot year(s). In our case, the intensity of collaborating with K-5 colleagues to develop curricula and field experiences led to a closeness among university faculty working on the pilot PDS. At the same time, faculty who remained on campus and continued teaching and supervising interns in the traditional model experienced feelings of uneasiness regarding changes the pilot PDS would bring to all programs. We realized this during the year of program-wide implementation. Had we anticipated “us/them” tensions earlier, we would have worked more deliberately to be inclusive of all faculty during the pilot year by inviting K-5 partners to meet and talk with all Teacher Education faculty. Sensitivity toward faculty concerns, creating an inclusive environment where faculty feel comfortable discussing difficult issues, and engaging pre-education students and faculty with opportunities to learn principles of culturally responsive teaching will help all faculty buy into the PDS model—such buy in and support is essential in building and sustaining a dynamic professional development school model.

Appendix 1**PDS Timeline:****2008-2009 (Year One):**

Pilot implementation of a PDS between NGCSU and World Language Academy (public charter dual language—Spanish and English—immersion school). A cohort of 25 Early Childhood/Special Education students completed coursework on the campus of WLA; 8 of the students volunteered for and completed an extended, year-long field experience at WLA. Collaborative activities included: K-5 teacher-led professional learning in culture and language challenges; university faculty-led reading assessment administration; shared planning with science and social studies curricula (university faculty and students with K-5 faculty). Monthly meetings occurred between NGCSU leadership and faculty and WLA leadership and faculty to assess/modify initiatives.

Three other ECE/SPED cohorts remained campus-based and followed a traditional model of teacher education.

2009-2010 (Year Two):

A Title One—high poverty, majority population of ELLs—school, Lyman Hall, was added as a PDS partner/field setting. A cohort of 25 ECE/SPED students (with 16 of the students volunteering for an extended year long field placement at Lyman Hall and WLA) met for classes at Lyman Hall. In addition to continuing the Professional Learning activities of the first year, the following collaborative activities occurred: University faculty-led intensive social studies teaching to fifth graders; hands on science for students and faculty in grades 3-5; K-5 teacher-led literacy workshops on gradual release and reading instruction for English Learners. PALS (Spanish reading assessment) tests administered by NGCSU interns to Lyman Hall students to assess reading comprehension in the native tongue. Monthly meetings with WLA and Lyman Hall faculty and administration and NGCSU faculty and administration continued as part of ongoing program development.

Three other ECE/SPED cohorts remained campus-based and followed a traditional model of teacher education.

2010-2011 (Year Three):

Two non-Title One, public charter schools--Martin Technology Academy and Chestnut Mountain Creative School of Inquiry-- were added to the PDS model. A cohort of 30 students completed extended field experiences in one of the four PDS schools and all NGCSU courses were held at CMCSI; Debriefing week activities included opportunities for students from the more traditional schools in the PDS—MTA and CMCSI—to visit and shadow teachers at the more culturally and linguistically diverse—Lyman Hall and WLA—schools. Seminars led by K-5 partners included training in working with ELLs, differentiation strategies with social studies and science content and activities as well as the continuation of the collaborative activities listed above. Interns assigned to CMCSI collaborated with faculty on final revisions for the school's charter. Meetings among all stakeholders were held twice a semester to assess and plan for collaborative experiences across the four schools.

Three other ECE/SPED cohorts remained campus-based and followed a traditional model of teacher education.

2011-2012 (Year Four):

Program-wide implementation of the PDS model; four cohorts of ECE/SPED students completed extended field placements in one of four geographically and culturally different settings:

Hall County: ELL-rich, dual language immersion, charter schools for technology and creativity.

Forsyth County: Technology-based (BYOT—Bring Your Own Technology) curricula where teachers and students use “flipped classroom” technology.

Dawson County: Strong literacy initiatives and professional learning opportunities for K-5 faculty and NGCSU (now UNG) students.

Lumpkin County: Rural population with ties to the university.

Tensions among faculty as all were required to teach on-site at local elementary schools. This was also year one of the consolidation of Gainesville State College and North Georgia College and State University.

Meetings among all stakeholders occurred once per semester.

2012-2015 (Years Five, Six, and Seven):

Each PDS cluster has a convener and they meet on a monthly basis to maintain consistency across the PDSs.

Hall County PDS was separated into two groups due to the large number of Junior admits and the need for diverse field placements.

Due to many mentor teachers reaching retirement age, UNG faculty and staff provide training regarding the vision and mission of the partnership and to (in some cases) realign collaborative goals within the partnership.

Meetings with administration are becoming more consistent and have allowed for UNG to better meet the needs of school partners and students based on feedback from meetings.

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