

# PDS

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BRIDGING RESEARCH TO PRACTICE

A journal of the  
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# PDS Partners: Bridging Research to Practice

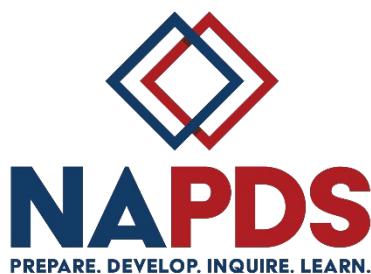


A Journal of the  
National Association for  
Professional Development Schools

Guest Edited Online Themed Issue  
Partnership as a Multi-directional Pipeline

Editors: Jennifer D. Morrison, Catherine Compton-Lilly, PJ Alonzo  
University of South Carolina

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## *The Nine Essentials, Second Edition*

### Essential 1: A Comprehensive Mission

*A professional development school (PDS) is a learning community guided by a comprehensive, articulated mission that is broader than the goals of any single partner, and that aims to advance equity, antiracism, and social justice within and among schools, colleges/universities, and their respective community and professional partners.*

### Essential 2: Clinical Preparation

*A PDS embraces the preparation of educators through clinical practice.*

### Essential 3: Professional Learning and Leading

*A PDS is a context for continuous professional learning and leading for all participants, guided by need and a spirit and practice of inquiry.*

### Essential 4: Reflection and Innovation

*A PDS makes a shared commitment to reflective practice, responsive innovation, and generative knowledge.*

### Essential 5: Research and Results

*A PDS is a community that engages in collaborative research and participates in the public sharing of results in a variety of outlets.*

### Essential 6: Articulated Agreements

*A PDS requires intentionally evolving written articulated agreement(s) that delineate the commitments, expectations, roles, and responsibilities of all involved.*

### Essential 7: Shared Governance Structures

*A PDS is built upon shared, sustainable governance structures that promote collaboration, foster reflection, and honor and value all participants' voices.*

### Essential 8: Boundary-Spanning Roles

*A PDS creates space for, advocates for, and supports college/university and P–12 faculty to operate in well-defined, boundary-spanning roles that transcend institutional settings.*

### Essential 9: Resources and Recognition

*A PDS provides dedicated and shared resources and establishes traditions to recognize, enhance, celebrate, and sustain the work of partners and the partnership.*

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**PDS Partners: Bridging Research to Practice**  
**Themed Issue: Partnership as a Multi-directional Pipeline**

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**Partnership as a Multi-directional Pipeline: Ensuring Shared Potential and Practice**

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**KEYWORDS:** Professional Development Schools, school-university partnerships

**NAPDS NINE ESSENTIALS (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition) ADDRESSED IN THIS ARTICLE:**

1. A professional development school (PDS) is a learning community guided by a comprehensive, articulated mission that is broader than the goals of any single partner, and that aims to advance equity, antiracism, and social justice within and among schools, colleges/universities, and their respective community and professional partners.
3. A PDS is a context for continuous professional learning and leading for all participants, guided by need and a spirit and practice of inquiry.
4. A PDS makes a shared commitment to reflective practice, responsive innovation, and generative knowledge.
8. A PDS creates space for, advocates for, and supports college/university and P–12 faculty to operate in well- defined, boundary-spanning roles that transcend institutional settings.

## Introduction

Welcome to this special issue of *PDS Partners: Bridging Research to Practice*! This issue's theme, "Partnership as a Multi-Directional Pipeline: Ensuring Shared Potential and Practice," arose from a realization that often partnerships are presented as mono-directional, whereby knowledge and support move from university to district and school. University faculty can sometimes position themselves or be positioned as the "experts" who may bring an unintended deficit view of schools (i.e. schools need "fixing" and we are the ones to do it). The articles in this issue seek to challenge assumptions that university faculty are the creators and holders of expertise provided to PK-12 schools and instead to consider how districts', schools', and communities' funds of knowledge can ensure growth, and inclusion, for all PDS members. Within these articles, we see intersectionality of experiences, ideas, and practices, and we see these concepts explained through a wide variety of voices and writing approaches. While some of the articles presented here are written as traditional academic studies, others are written as narrative stories; still others employ a combination of techniques. Through sharing the multi-directionality of the partnership pipeline, we also wanted to honor the variations in how those stories and partnerships may be shared.

We begin with a dialogue between Morrison and Quam who share "How the Intersection of Two Planes of Experience Equaled One Beautiful Art Gallery." This art gallery, situated at the University of South Carolina's College of Education, became a place for schools to share student work and is the impetus for this issue's theme.

Next, we move to two articles that focus on a culture of collaboration. First, Woodfield and colleagues share how a video project seeking to improve inclusivity for students with disabilities situates teachers, administrators, and paraprofessionals as leaders in the deliberate "shift toward a presumption of competence." Second, Jones shares a personal experience of how she took an example of "Pivoting at a Professional Development School" and was able to apply it to a current circumstance to model this process for her teaching intern. She explains "pivoting" is less about illusionary ballerinas and more about pandemic realities.

Then, we include three articles that address teacher efficacy and empowerment. Roselle and colleagues share "Seven Ways to Ensure Multi-Directionality in School-University Partnerships" based on their experiences working within districts. One of their suggestions is to include teacher/educator action research and inquiry, which is exemplified by Scott's article, which follows. Here, an elementary administrator shares how she engaged in practitioner inquiry through the COVID-19 pandemic's onset. This section ends with Myers's and Hysell's article discussing "The Relationship Between Experiential Learning and Teacher Efficacy in Student-Teacher Candidates: The *Text Talk* Project" where mentor teachers were supported in their efforts to provide authentic learning experiences for student-teachers.

We conclude with the last articles based on equity and cultural relevance. In this section's first article, Biery shares her own journey of becoming a more culturally responsive teacher and then leading the work schoolwide. Next, Ankeny and Oslick provide an overview of Project BEN, an "Innovative Professional Development for Teachers of ELs and Teaching Candidates," that focuses on schools' specific contexts to inform teacher-candidate experiences. Finally, we end the section and the issue with a pair of articles from Shore and colleagues. In the first article, they discuss a district-informed idea brought to the university to grow aspiring principals and fill a candidate shortage. Then, in "Equity Through Inquiry: One Region's Effort to Provide

Students and their Teachers with Leaders in their Schools That Look Like Them,” the authors seek to extend the first article by examining the aspiring principal candidate program and actively seeking to build a more culturally diverse pipeline.

We hope you will find these articles provide insights into the funds of knowledge that all members of our school, community, and university partnerships bring to the table. We would like to personally thank the *PDS Partners* editing team for this opportunity as well as our outstanding reviewers for their thoughtful and constructive feedback to authors.

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## How the Intersection of Two Planes of Experience Equaled One Beautiful Art Gallery

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Ashley Quam  
Pontiac Elementary School

**KEYWORDS:** Professional Development Schools, school-university partnerships

### **ABSTRACT**

In this article, Jennifer, a PDS Liaison from the University of South Carolina, and Ashley, an art teacher at a PDS school, discuss a recent project that highlighted the exceptional instruction occurring at Pontiac Elementary School.

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1. A professional development school (PDS) is a learning community guided by a comprehensive, articulated mission that is broader than the goals of any single partner, and that aims to advance equity, antiracism, and social justice within and among schools, colleges/universities, and their respective community and professional partners.
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4. A PDS makes a shared commitment to reflective practice, responsive innovation, and generative knowledge.

**Jennifer D. Morrison (JDM):** The display cases and bulletin boards that inhabited the north wing of the University of South Carolina's College of Education building had been empty and run-down long before I ever arrived. I watched them continue to be neglected for four years. Then, last year in my first year as a PDS Liaison, I decided the space could be put to better use by offering the PDS school that I worked with an opportunity to showcase student work and highlight the outstanding teaching and instruction I was witnessing occur on a daily basis. Excited by this prospect, I approached Ashley Quam, the exceptional art teacher at Pontiac Elementary School in Elgin, SC, about how we could create a gallery to feature her students' work. She was enthusiastic, and together we began building a vision for the space.

**Ashley Quam (AQ):** Jennifer Morrison, the PDS Liaison for the University of South Carolina Department of Instruction and Teacher Education, reached out to me early last school year about a possible collaboration between the university and Pontiac Elementary School students. She expressed a desire to include more authentic student work within the College of Education building to inspire future educators and create a greater sense of connection between the university and the surrounding community. She shared that there was an empty wall space and display cases within the building that had been neglected for too long and could serve as a perfect spot to highlight student artwork. I jumped at the chance! My K-5 students did not have many opportunities to showcase their talents outside of the school building itself, and the prestige of their saying, "My art is on display at UofSC" was too good to pass up!

This opportunity also spoke to me because I am a strong proponent for choice in education. I embrace the 'Teaching for Artistic Behavior' (TAB) philosophy and love to expose students to a variety of mediums and techniques. The TAB philosophy is a contemporary approach to art education where the student is viewed as the artist and the classroom is treated as their studio. The teacher is a facilitator of discovery and offers demonstrations that teach technique, while the student is the main determiner of subject matter. Sharing students' work and their processes for creating it aligned with my core beliefs about students and art education.

**JDM:** To begin, I had to access the locked display cases. It had been so long since they were used, no one knew where keys were; a locksmith had to be called to change the locks and make the cases usable. Once inside, I ripped out layers of crumbling paper and tediously pulled out what felt like a thousand staples from years of accumulated – and long-forgotten – displays. Once I had cleared the spaces, I repaired and painted the drywall in the display case and the cork on the bulletin boards. I installed a shelving unit with adjustable brackets and mounted puck lights on the ceiling over the bulletin boards and within the display case that could be operated with a remote control.

Ms. Quam spent the better part of a day arranging her students' 2D and 3D student artwork within the various spaces. She also included artist statements written by the featured students, books that represented her and the school's teaching philosophies, and a digital picture frame that scrolled through photographs of students engaged in art instruction and production (see Figures 1 and 2).

**Figure 1**

*University of South Carolina College of Education display case filled with Pontiac ES student art*



**Figure 2**

*University of South Carolina College of Education bulletin board of Pontiac ES student art*



**AQ:** I made sure to share with administration and parents that it was an honor to have their work on display at the university. Students were exceptionally proud to have their *first* show hosted by the university (which I am confident that this certainly will not be their last).

**JDM:** We celebrated the inaugural PDS Partners Art Gallery display by inviting students, their families, school and district administrators, university representatives, and local media to an unveiling ceremony. Students and families were given the opportunity to pose for photographs and talk with local media about the artwork.

**AQ:** Dr. Morrison and I decided to hold an opening reception with refreshments and fanfare and to invite students, their families, administration, and university representatives to come in their finest regalia to celebrate. Students arrived with entire families in tow and spoke to adults from the university about their artwork and their choices; what they've learned about themselves through developing the skills and confidence to express themselves; and what they want to study when they attend college one day. These conversations were exceptionally important because many of these students will be the first people in their families to seek higher education and, as a *Leader in Me* elementary school that teaches AVID strategies, we want to promote conversations about college and provide opportunities for students to familiarize themselves with universities so they will feel a comfortable sense of belonging in such spaces. Our students were invited to “dream” beyond their current worlds. Through this event, students felt like real artists sharing their work in a gallery show, and UofSC connected with the community in a real, meaningful, and memorable way (see Figures 3, 4, 5).

### Figure 3

*Pontiac ES student at media event sharing artwork*





**Figure 4**  
*Pontiac ES student at media event sharing artwork*



**Figure 5**  
*Ms. Quam with Pontiac ES student at UofSC College of Education*



*JDM*: I am excited for the future of this project. While Pontiac Elementary School was the first to showcase student work, we have created a sustainable process by which other PDS Liaisons are able to sign up for time to share their schools' achievements. At this point, the baton has been passed to Blythewood High School, and we look forward to many years of highlighting the brilliant teachers and children we are fortunate to work with through our extensive PDS network.

The link to the announcement can be found here: <https://tinyurl.com/UofSCart>

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*Ashley Quam is an art teacher at Pontiac Elementary School and has spent the last thirteen years teaching visual art to elementary, middle, and high school students as well as Choice Practices to undergraduates at The Art of Education University.*

## Using Video Research Methods to Capture Small Stories of Inclusion: A Research and Practice Model

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**KEYWORDS:** Professional Development Schools, school-university partnerships, video

### ABSTRACT

This article details a model for research and practice using video data for multidimensional purposes as part of a professional development school (PDS) partnership. The research methods described situate practitioners as leaders in a school working toward more inclusive school reform with support from PDS partners, including two Professors-in-Residence (PIRs) and PDS teacher co-liaisons. The purpose of sharing this methodological model is to: (a) explore how video research can foster reflective opportunities; (b) highlight professional leaders; (c) (re)construct student competence from a strengths-based perspective; (d) contribute to a video bank of best practices, all as part of collaborative work toward more inclusive schools.

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5. A PDS is a community that engages in collaborative research and participates in the public sharing of results in a variety of outlets.
8. A PDS creates space for, advocates for, and supports college/university and P-12 faculty to operate in well- defined, boundary-spanning roles that transcend institutional settings.

### Introduction

Rowan University's College of Education (CED) is housed within a four-year public research university in the northeastern United States. A defining feature of the CED is a partnership with a network of 11 P-12 PDSs. Professional Development Schools are school-university partnerships founded upon the nine essentials as outlined by the National Association for Professional Development Schools (NAPDS) (2008). While our work integrates all of the NAPDS nine essentials, this particular article touches on:

Essential 3: Ongoing and reciprocal professional development for all participants guided by need;

Essential 4: A shared commitment to innovative and reflective practice by all participants.

In this network, PDS partnerships are maintained by university PIRs and P-12 teacher liaisons. The focus of the research at this PDS was the intersections of inclusive education and disability studies in education (DSE). Specifically, the PDS partnership involved actively deconstructing deeply ingrained assumptions and practices around disabled students' perceived competence and subsequent access to inclusive settings. We intentionally use both the terms "disabled students" and "students with disabilities" to honor a variety of preferences, and acknowledge that using only person-first language runs counter to a disability studies perspective by overgeneralizing disability or by failing to focus individual and cultural disability identity preferences (Linton, 1998). Additionally, when disabled students receive a segregated and substandard education, this creates disabling school environments for students (Baglieri et al., 2011). Our work also reveals how PDS partnerships can support inclusive reform grounded in strengths-based practices for students with disabilities. Next, we explain what we mean when we reference "the intersections of inclusive education and DSE."

### Inclusive Education

For over 30 years scholars of inclusive education have shown the social and academic benefits of educating disabled and nondisabled students in age- and grade-appropriate classrooms with necessary supports (Schoolwide Integrated Framework for Transformation [SWIFT], 2019). Despite this evidence, disabled students are routinely educated in segregated classrooms, and many school decisions are made based on their perceived deficits (Jackson et al., 2009). Our PDS research examines the process and experiences of university- and school-based teams collaborating to counter deficit-based assumptions about students with disabilities through ongoing teacher and administration reflection, and designing practices to (re)construct inclusive opportunities for at this school.

### Disability Studies and Disability Studies in Education

We come at this work from a disability studies theoretical framework. As a field, disability studies challenges long-held assumptions and practices related to disability and special education (Taylor, 2006). Disability studies scholars situate disability as a natural form of human variation (Baglieri et al., 2011) and a "social phenomenon" (Taylor, 2006, p. xiii). Disability has historically been constructed through a deficit lens, compounded by stigma of difference associated with intersecting marginalized identities, such as racial and ethnic diversity (Annamma et al., 2013). Our collaborative work aims to document the process of resistance to deficit perspectives in inclusive educational reform aligned with disability studies in education, informed by the idea that "understandings of disability occur through human expectations and



interactions in social contexts” (Baglieri et al., 2011, p. 275).

Disability studies in education (DSE) scholars are concerned with aspects of *education* that “affect or are affected by disablement in educational contexts” (Gabel, 2005, p. 17). The term “disablement” refers to disabling economic, political, and cultural barriers that prevent disabled people from participating in mainstream society (Oliver & Barnes, 2012, p. 12). Central to the field are educational issues identified by disabled students and their families as they relate to exclusion and oppression. DSE scholars highlight how an absence of reliable support and limited, often segregated, educational access for students with disabilities has led to presumptions of incompetence and inequitable educational and social opportunities (Biklen & Kliever, 2006). The cyclic relationship between stigma, presumptions of incompetence, low expectations, and inequitable opportunities can be life-altering for those who have difficulties meeting normative expectations of performance in schools (Biklen & Burke, 2006). Engaging in this project through a DSE perspective placed responsibility on teachers, administrators, and paraprofessionals to foster more inclusive practice.

### **Presuming Competence and Constructing Competence**

Biklen and Kliever (2006) urge, “if you are interested in seeing another’s competence, it helps to look for it” (p. 184). The act of “looking for” competence of students with disabilities who move, communicate and participate in neurodiverse ways requires intentionality and support; so too does resisting deficit presumptions by constructing social and academic opportunities for such students to demonstrate their strengths in nontraditional ways in school (Ashby & Kasa, 2013). There have been few studies that capture the nuanced experiences of students, adults, peers, and families working together to deliberately shift toward a presumption of competence in/through inclusive education (Kasa-Hendrickson, 2005), or the outcomes of the students (Jorgensen et al., 2007), particularly within PDS partnerships. The research and practice model described is situated in this gap, and looks closely at the experiences of students and adults in the midst of school-wide shifts toward inclusive practice, captured in video recorded moments of student engagement.

## **Methods**

### **Site of Study**

This PDS project took place at a public elementary school in the northeastern United States that services fourth through sixth graders. The school is a Title I institution and considered “high needs.” The school serves approximately 500 students, almost half of whom (45.6%) live below the poverty line; 85 are students with disability labels and have individualized education programs. Of the school’s eleven special education classrooms, three are self-contained. The remaining eight special education classrooms are co-taught and considered “inclusion classrooms” integrating students with and without disability labels.

### **Participants**

For the video research component of this project, we engaged the existing PDS Steering Committee to recruit a subset of teacher and student participants. We conducted interviews with three disabled students, two nondisabled students, three paraprofessionals, three teachers, and three administrators, for a total of 14 participants. We provide more detail in the *Data Collection* section. Table 1 provides an overview of participants.

**Table 1: Participants in Video Research**

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Role</b>	<b>Grade</b>
Isaac	Student 1 (Special Education)	6 <sup>th</sup>
Jayden	Student 2 (Special Education)	6 <sup>th</sup>
Eric	Student 3 (Special Education)	6 <sup>th</sup>
Antonio	Student 4 (General education)	6 <sup>th</sup>
Tyrone	Student 5 (General education)	6 <sup>th</sup>
Katie	Paraprofessional (General education class)	6 <sup>th</sup>
Joshua	Paraprofessional (General education class)	6 <sup>th</sup>
Katherine	Co-teacher (Special Education)	6 <sup>th</sup>
Joyce	Co-teacher (Special Education)	6 <sup>th</sup>
Alice	Basic Skills Teacher, PDS Teacher Co-Liaison	4 <sup>th</sup> -6 <sup>th</sup>
Penny	Social Emotional Learning Special Area Teacher	4 <sup>th</sup> -6 <sup>th</sup>
Steve	Administrator Building Principal	
Cara	Administrator; Special Education Supervisor	
Eve	Administrator; Case Manager	

### **Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) Methods**

Our collaborative approach is grounded in community-based participatory research (CBPR) where our “community” is composed of students, parents, staff, teachers, and administrators in one school building. CBPR actively engages participants throughout the project, even if not in all phases (e.g., analysis and publication) (Minkler & Wallerstein, 2003). This project emphasized collaboration and promoted activities with the aim of fostering practices with application to the local school community (e.g., students with disability labels accessing inclusive classrooms) (Stanton, 2014). Meaning, we conducted regular cycles of videotaped interviews with students, paraprofessionals, teachers, and administrators and reflected on how we were collectively trying to reconstruct the conception of disabled students as strength-based contributors to the school community. Specifically, disabled students acted as experts on their school experiences, which we centered as the paraprofessionals, faculty, and administrators reflected on students’ thoughts on the inclusive support we were implementing.

### **Video Research Methods**

As Woodfield joined the larger research project in 2018, she brought expertise on DSE-informed video research methods: the aspect of the project we discuss in this article. The PDS Steering Committee agreed to layer in video research methods into our existing CBPR framework. We collaboratively developed the following areas of focus for our research: adult perspectives and practices, and student perspectives and experiences, both of which require researchers to ask specific questions, presented in Table 2.

**Table 2: Perspectives and Questions to Consider in DSE-Informed Research**

<b>Adult Perspectives and Practices</b>	<b>Student Perspectives and Experiences</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How do adults describe and enact efforts to presume competence of students with disabilities in schools moving toward more inclusion?</li> <li>2. What meaning do adults make of illustrative moments of students with disabilities' participation in inclusive academic and/or social activities?</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How do students with disabilities participate academically and socially in schools moving toward more inclusion?</li> <li>2. What are students' reflections on illustrative moments in participation in academic and/or social activities between themselves and their peers?</li> </ol>

To answer these questions, our approach drew on qualitative video-based narrative methods (Riessman, 2008). Use of video is well-suited for research with and about students with disabilities, as it allows for nuances of sound, movement, and non-spoken communication to be revisited closely (Dindar et al., 2017). This project zooms in on “small stories” (Bamberg, 2006) in school contexts through which we “...pay attention to inconsistent, fragmented, immediate yet important short everyday conversational narratives that may otherwise go unnoticed” (Kim, 2016, p. 262). This multimodal qualitative approach allowed for centering perspectives and experiences of students who have historically been excluded from research, to contribute to a base of understanding about their lived experiences and educational strategies that best support them from a strengths-based perspective.

### **Data Collection**

During fall 2018 professional development days, paraprofessionals received PIR-led professional development on guidelines for support in inclusive settings through a checklist of best practices for general education classroom goals and desired outcomes (Doering, 2005). Paraprofessionals were then instructed to video record moments they felt illustrated their use of these best practices over the course of that fall and spring. All participants were made aware of this methodological approach and consented to video recording.

The data collection process was overseen by the researchers and facilitated by PDS teacher co-liaisons. Since data was collected by several paraprofessionals, the materials were housed in a central location. The Basic Skills classroom, operated by the PDS teacher co-liaisons, served as the central hub for cameras, and housed the log book used to check materials in and out. Paraprofessionals were also given instructions on recording best practices.

We collected nine illustrative moment videos from this initial fall 2018 data collection phase, ranging from students at recess and in the cafeteria to participating in inclusive academic activities with a range of levels of adult support. Following this initial round of data collection, we provided reflective opportunities to review the videos during follow-up professional development sessions for paraprofessionals and special area teachers. During these sessions, each participant shared an example of a video clip they captured and described their thought process for selecting it as an illustrative moment of best practice for inclusive support. The group used the guidelines originally introduced for this project to identify strategies implemented during each video.

We then conducted interviews with a sample of students, paraprofessionals, teachers, and administrators. Participants watched videos that depending on their role they were either featured in or had video recorded. Each participant was asked a series of semi-structured questions to capture their responses to their actions in and around each video clip. The purpose of these interviews and professional development opportunities was to highlight what adults and students identified as strengths in inclusive practice in a PDS actively involved in inclusive school reform, based on a set of shared guidelines for inclusive support.

### **Participant Analysis and Reflections on Videos**

Woodfield and Elder conducted initial coding of video data. Due to their respective backgrounds with qualitative research methods, they collaboratively analyzed data and reported emerging findings to members of the PDS Steering Committee, who then verified findings and provided feedback and next steps for the project. To capture the use of strategies within each example, Woodfield and Elder conducted two rounds of coding on each video using the analysis software, Vosaic (FACTS, 2021). In Round 1, they captured the type of events happening in the clip, for example “peer interaction.” In Round 2, they captured the nuanced use of strategies based on shared inclusive practice guidelines used for training, for example “adult initiated peer interaction.” Following the interview phase of the project, they juxtaposed responses to each video side by side to understand various stakeholder perspectives on the contents of each clip.

Table 3 is an example of a side-by-side analysis of multiple perspectives on an illustrative moment captured on video, in which a disabled student was invited to play basketball with peers by a nondisabled classmate. Elder, who was observing, supported this interaction. Here, we present a brief sample of the perspectives of: a disabled student, a nondisabled peer, the special education supervisor, the Social Emotional Learning special area teacher, and a paraprofessional. This moment was reflective of the kinds of interactions captured throughout the project. The responses represent examples of the range of reactions generated across interviews related to each illustrative moment reviewed. The quotes are juxtaposed to illustrate the interpretations and feedback received about this moment, which was considered an illustrative moment of peer interaction during an unstructured inclusive social activity.

**Table 3: Side-by-Side Analysis of an Illustrative Video Moment**

**Description of the illustrative moment:** A disabled student was invited into an impromptu basketball game at recess, facilitated by a nondisabled peer and Elder. It is worth noting that while Woodfield and Elder are PIRs leading the video-based research aspects of the project, they also regularly modeled best inclusive practices for participants.

<b>Issac (disabled student)</b>	<b>Tyrone (nondisabled student)</b>	<b>Cara (special education supervisor)</b>	<b>Penny (special area teacher)</b>	<b>Katie (paraprofessional)</b>
<p><b>Issac:</b> I was playing basketball with others.</p> <p><b>Elder:</b> You were playing basketball with other people and you even spoke to somebody. Who did you speak to?</p> <p><b>Isaac:</b> Tyrone.</p> <p><b>Elder:</b> Yeah? What did you say to Tyrone?</p> <p><b>Isaac:</b> Can I play with him.</p> <p><b>Elder:</b> So how did you feel when you were talking to Tyrone?</p> <p><b>Isaac:</b> Less nervous.</p> <p><b>Elder:</b> Why?</p>	<p><b>Woodfield:</b> How did you feel after watching that?</p> <p><b>Tyrone:</b> I had fun, it makes me happy that he's happy.</p> <p><b>Elder:</b> And when I asked you initially because that happened, it wasn't planned. Right? I saw Issac looking and he looked interested in sports and I was like "oh I know Tyrone is there because I saw the video with you and [another student with a disability]." And so when I asked you initially what did you think?</p> <p><b>Tyrone:</b> I thought that it could be fun.</p>	<p><b>Cara:</b> Well [Issac] definitely wanted to play and as soon as they gave him the ball he even moved a little closer in towards the group. So I think just that initial engagement made him feel a little bit more connected.</p>	<p><b>Penny:</b> I think that I would talk to that group separately before I had Issac come in and say "hey when we invite Issac we don't just invite him on to the court we teach him how to play [basketball]. We show him so maybe you could be his shadow. You know he walks around with you or follows you wherever you go for a few minutes to let him get acclimated to the game and let him know what the rules are." And just kind of explain to them that this is a great thing that you're doing including someone to play in this game but let's really</p>	<p><b>Katie:</b> I felt like [Issac] needed a lot of encouragement. I've been with Issac three years and that's probably the one and only time I've seen him play with anyone. We told you [paraprofessionals] had tried to encourage him to play. I think what you do is physically took him and said "play, this is how we play," where she and I are always trying verbally to communicate it.</p>

**Isaac:** Well Tyrone is really nice.

**Elder:** Cool. And so what did you do to make that happen?

**Tyrone:** I brought him into the game and I told all of them to pass it to him for him to try and make a shot.

fully include him. This is what we're really looking for and you know and kind of turn it around on them how would you feel if you were playing a new game like chess but you didn't know how to play and somebody wanted you to play and you know don't you want them to show you physically what to do. And so kind of use some empathy to have him included.

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Made clear in the side-by-side analysis, both students reflected positively on this experience. We examined the relationship between the two peers interviewed and the role of the nondisabled peer in facilitating the game, with both receiving a bit of encouragement from Elder. The administrator echoes the importance of the initial invitation in building the disabled student's confidence for engagement. The teacher's perspective focuses on what could be done to improve interactions like this one in the future. For example, since the teacher perceived that the student with a disability was unsure of the rules, she recommends coaching nondisabled students to provide more interactive modeling. The paraprofessional, who has worked with this student for three years, seems surprised at the interaction and makes clear that the strategies used to facilitate the moment are different from prompts typically used to support this student. These adult perspectives demonstrate that even in interactions when students felt comfortable, there is room for improvement from a support perspective to push further toward students' inclusion.

### **Discussion and Implications**

The shared purposes of the video were to record illustrative moments at this PDS and create unique opportunities for ongoing reflection and collaboration. Next, we detail varied ways that the methodological process impacted research and practice, which in turn served to broaden and deepen the reach of this work.

#### **Impact of the Model on Practice**

The video clips captured by participants played multiple roles. In practice, the videos were situated to highlight paraprofessional expertise, helped to construct students from strength-based perspectives, informed inclusive placement decisions through action planning, and compiled a bank of best practice examples for professional development.

#### ***Highlighting Professional Expertise and Student Strengths***

Using video research methods provided participants with opportunities to highlight their implementation of shared knowledge of best practice guidelines for inclusion. By incorporating these video clips into follow-up professional development sessions, the researchers created space to highlight paraprofessional and teacher expertise, while leaving room for growth and development in inclusive practice. The video clips show students engaging in inclusive settings, including social opportunities across students with and without disabilities and examples of students with disabilities participating in inclusive classroom activities. These examples helped counter deficit-based constructions of such students' competence. Further, creating space for collaborative practitioner reflection on video clips of students engaging in inclusive settings contributed to (re)constructing student competence in positive and impactful ways.

#### ***Use of Videos in Action Plan Meetings***

We also used these videos in action planning meetings, which members of the PDS Steering Committee used to help develop proactive and sustainable inclusive support for disabled students. Action planning is one way to enact inclusive school reform that: transforms the organization of schools so stakeholders, including families, have more control, and helps to initiate, coordinate, and monitor integrated services for inclusive education (Sailor, 1996). During these regularly scheduled action planning meetings, we showed selected video clips to team members. When parents, teachers, administrators, and paraprofessionals saw students being



successful in ways previously unexpected, it tended to open doors to additional opportunities for students to be included. Seeing the students in the video clips, as well as including the students in the action plan meetings, further empowered the students themselves to find and develop their own narratives. Previously, decision-making occurred without taking students' perspectives into consideration. An outcome of these meetings was that students with disabilities were increasingly included in general education academic and social settings with nondisabled peers.

### ***Video Bank of Best Practices***

The videos collected for reflection and analysis in the research also served as exemplars of inclusive practice actively being implemented in the school. The use of these clips in professional development sessions, interviews, and action plan meetings helped to create space for students to be seen as active contributors to the school community in ways previously not available. By compiling video examples and creating space for reflection based on shared foundations in the presumption of competence, this process helped to create more awareness of areas of success and further need in moving toward inclusive practice. The bank of videos has been utilized by general education teachers transitioning to more inclusive practice, special area teachers seeking to improve their programs to meet the needs of all students, training for new paraprofessionals, as well as a refresher on best practice.

### **Impact of the Model on Research**

In the previous sections, we highlighted how we applied the video research to further develop inclusive *practices* throughout the school. In these sections, we explain how video methods helped to improve our ongoing *research* within the larger PDS project on inclusion.

### ***Iterative and Collaborative Process***

This video research model has promise for bridging research and practice in cyclical ways and strengthening PDS partnerships. We see the practitioner-led use of videos as part of this research data collection process as a potential model for PDSs to apply to their partnerships. One of the most important aspects of this work was the collaborative professional development of practices that support inclusion and shared responsibility for capturing illustrative moments of that practice. This work was supported by administrators, teachers, students, and paraprofessionals, and the process was facilitated by PDS teacher co-liaisons. Because so many stakeholders were involved at all phases, this was a highly effective and collaborative experience that captured both what was working for inclusion and what needed additional support.

### ***Led by Practitioners with Shared Commitment and Resources around Inclusive Education***

This article captures our collaborative process across the initial phase of this research, which was designed to be iterative. What we learned from this phase informs the professional development and research moving forward. We have since expanded data collection to include videos recorded by teachers and the researchers themselves, and plan to implement a third round of data collection captured from the students' perspectives. We learned that interpretations of moments look different based on those who are experiencing them, and that creating reflective opportunities across multiple stakeholders can have fruitful impacts on the direction of the research. For example, upon seeing the video examples, school administrators identified a need for more structured social inclusion opportunities for students with and without disabilities.



These opportunities created through practice and scheduling became an additional space in which illustrative moments for the research could be captured. The shared commitment to continuing to move toward full inclusion helped ensure that the research had a tangible impact on the space, and that the practice had a tangible impact on the research.

### Next Steps and Conclusions

Because this is an ongoing project, this article stands as an illustrative moment in and of itself: a space to share our evolving methodological research structure. Moving forward, we plan to continue with the same reflective processes, highlighting illustrative moments captured on video as professional development opportunities, using strengths-based video clips of students' inclusion in action planning meetings, and conducting reflective interviews with participants to better understand the impact of these "small stories" on the larger narrative of this school's culture and practice of inclusion.

The reciprocal and collaborative work created through this methodological process has much promise for PDSs seeking to create space for reflective research and practice. The relationships across PIRs, teacher co-liaisons, the PDS Steering Committee, as well as administrator, teacher, paraprofessional, and student participants of the research were enhanced by shared and continued commitments to use of the videos to highlight, build on and support the inclusive practice. The research was strengthened by the investment, feedback, and ongoing contributions of the participants, as well as those who attended professional development reflection sessions. We see this model as replicable in other PDS networks seeking ways to bridge research and practice, engage in practitioner-led inquiry, and center the experiences of students from strengths-based perspectives.

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**Cultivating a Culture of Collaboration: Pivoting at a Professional Development School**

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Killian STEAM Magnet Elementary School

**KEYWORDS:** Clinical educator, Collaboration, Professional Development Schools, School Culture, School-University Partnerships, Student teaching, Technology**ABSTRACT**

This article, written by a third-grade teacher, provides a first-hand account of collaboration and reflection with a student teacher intern while teaching in a Professional Development School (school-university partnership school) during the COVID-19 pandemic. The teacher details the process of pivoting during technology issues before and during instruction.

**NAPDS NINE ESSENTIALS (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition) ADDRESSED IN THIS ARTICLE:**

1. A professional development school (PDS) is a learning community guided by a comprehensive, articulated mission that is broader than the goals of any single partner, and that aims to advance equity, antiracism, and social justice within and among schools, colleges/universities, and their respective community and professional partners.
2. A PDS embraces the preparation of educators through clinical practice.
3. A PDS is a context for continuous professional learning and leading for all participants, guided by need and a spirit and practice of inquiry.
4. A PDS makes a shared commitment to reflective practice, responsive innovation, and generative knowledge.
5. A PDS is a community that engages in collaborative research and participates in the public sharing of results in a variety of outlets.

A lone ballerina with her toe down, head up, constantly spinning is the image I conjure when I think of pivoting. Yet my experiences with pivoting are vastly different and less graceful. During a global pandemic, these experiences have multiplied.

At 5:30 p.m. my district's Google Suite disappeared.

At 5:30 a.m. the next morning, the Google Suite is still down.

Walking to the classroom takes forever; the hallway extends another 30 feet. I mumble, wave, and smile at my colleagues hiding a heavy cloak of anxiety. I begin to think about the implications of not having access to Google Suite and its impact on my students. My concern is escalating.

I teach third-grade students. Most years, I have about 17 students on my roster. This year is different. I still teach third grade, but now I have 28 students. The drastic change in class size is due to teaching through a global pandemic. In the age of COVID-19, changes to how we think about teaching and learning are a part of our "new normal" as educators. Not only has the number of students on my roster increased, but I am also teaching in a unique setting. I am a virtual teacher, and I teach all of my students online. All of my lesson materials are online, and students access them through Google Suite.

I take a deep breath and start the mental process of pivoting.

Up until this point, I knew that teaching through a pandemic had its challenges, but to date, this is the moment that is most out of my sphere of control. In my peripheral view, a figure emerges in the classroom doorway. It's my intern. In the light of her smile, I am able to mask some of my anxious thoughts because as they say, "The show must go on."

I don't inform her of the power outage because I feel sure somebody from the district office will cancel school. I turn my cell phone on a very loud chime so as not to miss an email stating such.

No one from the district cancels school, so my principal does not send the text. Bridget and I exchange pleasantries.

Over the course of 14 weeks, Bridget has become acquainted with the students. She led small groups during synchronous times, using her own Google classroom as a breakout room. In the beginning of her leading small groups, she was a little unsettled because students were not as responsive as she remembered in her previous face-to-face placement. I confided in her that I felt the same pang of rejection. I reassured her that giving students her focused attention in small groups is impactful in a virtual setting and that with time they would respond. I modeled elaborating on one student's response and having students respond to each other by providing prompts such as "I agree with Kamarie," and, "I would like to add..." As the semester continued, Bridget's pivot was illustrated through her ability to facilitate discussion through peer-to-peer communication, which led to increased observable student engagement.

I gently break the news to her about the Google Suite outage. In her eyes, I anticipate my students' worry. I know that when students become aware of the outage, they will fret over what to do in the interim. Her eyes suggest she is waiting for an alternative plan, just like my students will.

I hope I reflect an air of confidence.

It is now 7:31 a.m. and still no Google Suite, but we do have the internet.

As a mentor teacher, I am aware that presentation matters as mentees are impressionable. So, I remain calm even though I am in knots on the inside. I take a mental retreat to a situation when professionalism was practiced in the face of pivoting.

Prior support came in the form of collaborative moments with our university partner-liaison, Dr. Thompson. Killian Elementary is a professional development school (PDS), which means that we have an ongoing and reciprocal partnership with the University of South Carolina. Our liaison of 20 years has dual roles at Killian: when he is not teaching an immersion science methods course to preservice teachers, he is supporting faculty with professional development. For three years, we have practiced professionalism as we have co-planned and collaborated on teaching full science units that incorporate what he calls "sense-making" activities. We share in making and collecting knowledge from our shared experiences; our work enables both tall teachers (the adult teaching candidates) and small teachers (the children) to have lots of opportunities to make sense of difficult science concepts like erosion and weathering.

For instance, we spend time after every lesson reflecting and pivoting for the next session. During one reflection session, we noticed that there was not enough time to teach the full cycle of a guided inquiry science lesson in one class period, so we decided to chunk the components across a three-week lesson sequence. This pivot made a positive impact on student engagement as we noticed that his students, the tall teachers, were able to concentrate on one part of the inquiry at a time, and my students, the small teachers, were better able to articulate science thinking within small groups. And I, through this professional pivoting paradigm, have moved from needing scaffolds to teach to planning units of study on my own. Ultimately, we noticed where we needed to adjust our plans to meet the needs of learners. Our relationship strengthens our shared collegial pursuits; I was interested in becoming a better science teacher and he was interested in giving preservice teachers authentic experiences in a classroom. Those times of collaboration prepared me for this moment when I need to illustrate to my intern what to do when what you plan has to shift due to circumstances outside of our control.

We sit for a moment and gather our thoughts.

The applications and extensions in Google Suite are easy to use and student-friendly. I hyperlink websites into the lesson plan. Websites such as [Readworks.org](https://www.readworks.org), [Flocabulary](https://www.flocabulary.com), and, my favorite, [Nearpod](https://www.nearpod.com) are class staples. I have spent the first nine weeks creating videos using [WeVideo](https://www.wecanarecording.com) for core content and explaining how to access and enter various websites. During check-in times, my students started sharing shortcuts they use to navigate the internet, and I captured their demonstrations in multiple videos. At that moment I realize that my students are

prepared to pivot alongside us.

On opposite sides of the room, we begin to plan an asynchronous lesson for the students called a student pathway. We collaborate on a shared document before we create a lesson plan for students. Teaching through a pandemic is innovative. We begin to brainstorm a lesson. Today is Veterans Day. So, we set out to design a student pathway about “[Thanking A Veteran](#)” using the Wakelet multimedia tool. As a colleague, she offers her expertise, and together we craft a learning module for our students. Because of the need to shift today’s plan, Bridget is able to experience not only the demands of our profession but also the rewards. Our mission is complete.

It’s 8:15 a.m. The Google Suite is still down, but together we pivot toward possibility.

How will you use your support system to become an agent of change in your school context? What will you do to ensure that preservice teachers get the practical experience of collaborating even during a pandemic? What expertise will you model to ensure preservice teachers have authentic and meaningful experiences before they have a class of their own?

Teaching through a pandemic has been challenging, yet my image of pivoting has expanded beyond graceful ballerinas. My experiences with pivoting are grounded in the daily cultivation of practicing professionalism as an educator. Being reflective, supportive, and collaborative is my new image of pivoting.

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**Seven Ways to Ensure Multi-Directionality in School-University Partnerships**

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**KEYWORDS:** Collaboration, Professional Development Schools, Multi-directionality, School-based teacher educator, School-University Partnerships, Teacher learning

**ABSTRACT**

This article provides seven ways to ensure multi-directionality in school-university partnerships. Authors provide suggestions for inviting school-based teacher educators, sometimes called clinical educators, to participate in college/university spaces. They include changing terminology, providing teaching opportunities for school-based faculty in university settings, assisting admission processes, establishing schools as clinical committees to strengthen feedback, appointing lead teachers, collaborative writing and research, and supervising teacher candidates.

**NAPDS NINE ESSENTIALS (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition) ADDRESSED IN THIS ARTICLE:**

1. A professional development school (PDS) is a learning community guided by a comprehensive, articulated mission that is broader than the goals of any single partner, and that aims to advance equity, antiracism, and social justice within and among schools, colleges/universities, and their respective community and professional partners.
3. A PDS is a context for continuous professional learning and leading for all participants, guided by need and a spirit and practice of inquiry.
7. A PDS is built upon shared, sustainable governance structures that promote collaboration, foster reflection, and honor and value all participants' voices.
8. A PDS creates space for, advocates for, and supports college/university and P-12 faculty to operate in well- defined, boundary-spanning roles that transcend institutional settings.



### Overview

Multi-directional, by definition and defined by Merriam-Webster, means the ability to move, function, or operate in more than one direction (“Multi-directional”, n.d.). It has long been established in the relevant literature that strong school–university partnerships are predicated on a mutually beneficial relationship that simultaneously renews both settings. However, the default is often that higher education institutions feel as though they hold the knowledge and expertise in the field. The paradigm in the teaching profession needs to shift so the wealth of knowledge and expertise of school-based teacher educators (SBTEs) can be acknowledged and leveraged to inform research and practice. Partnerships between teacher preparation programs and public schools “are essential in providing contextual experiences for teacher candidates. The schools serve as the clinical sites where the theories and practical applications are visible and active. Without the opportunities that schools provide to observe and practice teaching, the experiences of teacher candidates would be hypothetical and static” (Hands & Rong, 2014, p. 454).

This article explores Professional Development School (PDS) Essential #7, the establishment of structures that will allow all the participants to carry out ongoing governance, reflection, collaboration, and PDS Essential #8, which encourages college/university faculty and P–12 faculty to assume formal roles across institutional settings. In particular, this article will operationalize the term multi-directionality as it relates to school-university partnerships. It will outline practices universities may adopt to take up the expertise of school-based teacher educators and create more opportunities for collaboration.

In this article, we seek to answer the question: In what ways can SBTEs be invited to and included in university/college spaces to maximize the partnership opportunities and to positively impact learning for all? There are several ways that universities can be more inclusive in terms of school partner participation. In the following sections, we offer seven different ways to improve this inclusivity.

### Ways to Invite School-Based Teacher Educators into University/College Spaces Changing the Terminology

A long overdue, but established, need concerns how we reference those who work with teacher candidates (Parker et al., 2019). The lexicon associated with school partners has tremendous variance depending on the context, role, and region. One recommended universal term that illustrates the true nature of what school partners do is *school-based teacher educator* (AACTE, 2018). We know that words are important, powerful, and can lead to inferences that are either constructive or destructive. Sending a message of equity and value is imperative when we consider the enormity of the role that public-school teachers play when they assume mentorships for teacher candidates. Without their valuable expertise and time, teacher preparation programs could not exist. Professionalizing the role of the mentor teacher has been long overdue, and it begins with changing the terminology we use to describe this important and integral work.

### Providing Teaching Opportunities

Often, SBTEs are skilled practitioners who have current and relevant teaching experience. Offering school partners adjunct positions or co-teaching opportunities with university-based teacher educators (UBTEs) is one way of acknowledging and honoring their expertise, which also greatly benefits teacher candidates. Additionally, it is common knowledge



that many university-based teacher educators have not taught in public school settings for many years, and some have never taught in public schools. This is where the school-based teacher educator is a tremendous asset to teacher candidates. They bring a practitioner's perspective, practical and applicable examples, knowledge and experience with current educational trends and issues, and an authenticity that permeates their engagement with candidates. Their explicit sharing, as well as their modeling of high leverage teaching practices has tremendous value to teacher preparation programs, particularly as they bridge the gap between theory and practice. These teaching opportunities also serve to validate the professional and academic integrity that school-based teacher educators possess – something for which they are revered and respected.

### **Provision of Assistance in Admissions**

SBTEs bring value and perspective to the educator preparation admissions process. Rarely do we think of including SBTEs in what has previously been a university-based activity. However, accreditation requirements support and require the inclusion of school partners as part of the important decision-making process of admissions (CAEP, 2013, 2022). Ultimately, it is the school community that will receive teachers after their educator preparation, so it makes sense to include SBTEs in the admissions process. In many schools, such processes include writing an essay or being interviewed. SBTEs can contribute to both of these tasks by scoring the essays or joining the interviewing team. Ideally, school partners are compensated for the time and efforts that they put in to accomplish these activities.

### **Establishment of Schools as Clinical Committees**

The committee's purpose is to provide PDS stakeholders with a forum for identifying and discussing pertinent partnership issues, recommending policy, processing candidate performance issues, and holding a dialogue about the continued improvement of the teacher education program. Also discussed are ways of promoting simultaneous renewal, which is the ultimate goal of maintaining PDSs. The members of this group usually include superintendents or a board-of-education designee (Roselle et al., 2020).

### **Appointment as Lead Teachers**

The creation of a formalized lead teacher position professionalizes and empowers the role of SBTEs. This position ensures that the communication between the university and school partners is effective and ongoing. In addition to the goal of strengthening the communication loop, such roles assist in improving the quality of the clinical and student teaching experiences for teacher candidates. The coalescing of this group of professional educators can result in deeper, stronger, and more authentic relationships between the lead teachers and the UBTEs. The holder of this position should receive a stipend commensurate with the time and commitment invested.

According to Roselle et al. (2020), the roles and responsibilities of lead teachers include: 1) providing ongoing support to clinical teachers, cooperating teachers, and internship supervisors; and 2) participating in educational consortium meetings organized by the university to engage in educational discourse and to offer a practitioner's perspective and expertise with regard to educator preparation. Lead teachers may review and provide valuable feedback on the evaluation instruments used to measure the quality and impact of field placements and on the

observation protocols generated to highlight the teacher candidate's strengths and areas for growth.

### **Collaborating as Writing Partners on Grants and Research**

Many SBTEs are interested and skilled in pursuing grant funding. When colleges and universities, however, approach a school district to collaborate on a grant, they only ask for a letter of support. Inviting school partners to engage in a more meaningful role in the writing process may be appropriate. In addition, SBTEs are often excited by the prospect of conducting action research and writing in a formal way about their teaching. Schools and universities are strengthened by these types of collaboration.

### **Supervision of Teacher Candidates**

Educator preparation programs (EPPs) needed to quickly pivot to different supervision models during the current pandemic. Previously, retired principals were the primary people hired to supervise and provide feedback to teacher candidates. This has typically been done in person. Without access to school buildings, however, many programs turned to online video coaching platforms to be able to continue to enact supervision. The new method, which consisted of capturing and uploading videos, permitted EPPs to access practicing teachers and administrators for supervision purposes.

### **Conclusion**

The word *multidirectional* means the capacity to move, function, or operate in more than one direction. We are at a unique juncture at present as the circumstances require us to be able to “move” in new directions that reimagine our previous ways of being, serving, and working together. Considering ways to honor the work of SBTEs by upholding PDS Essential #7 and #8 through the establishment of structures and formal roles that will give all the participants a way to carry out ongoing governance, reflection, and collaboration will be beneficial to all.

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**Practitioner Inquiry: Supporting Teaching During a Pandemic**

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**KEYWORDS:** Action research, Practitioner inquiry, Practitioner research, Professional Development School, School-University partnerships

**ABSTRACT**

This article details the author's practitioner inquiry project focused on examining teachers' feelings about and uses of teaching with technology in a hybrid format during the COVID-19 pandemic. Data suggests that the Collaborative Inquiry Group (CIG) and administrative support provided to teachers influenced teachers' positive views and experiences as they started teaching with technology.

**NAPDS NINE ESSENTIALS (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition) ADDRESSED IN THIS ARTICLE:**

1. A professional development school (PDS) is a learning community guided by a comprehensive, articulated mission that is broader than the goals of any single partner, and that aims to advance equity, antiracism, and social justice within and among schools, colleges/universities, and their respective community and professional partners.
3. A PDS is a context for continuous professional learning and leading for all participants, guided by need and a spirit and practice of inquiry.
5. A PDS is a community that engages in collaborative research and participates in the public sharing of results in a variety of outlets.
7. A PDS is built upon shared, sustainable governance structures that promote collaboration, foster reflection, and honor and value all participants' voices.
8. A PDS creates space for, advocates for, and supports college/university and P-12 faculty to operate in well-defined, boundary-spanning roles that transcend institutional settings.

### Background

In March 2020, teachers at Oak Pointe Elementary School (OPES), a school near Columbia, South Carolina, left their classrooms and did not know at the time they would leave for the remainder of the school year because of the COVID-19 pandemic. During this unprecedented time, the closing of U.S. schools and rapid change in the education profession forced OPES teachers, like all teachers across the country, to closely examine and reconfigure their teaching practices to meet their students' needs. The delivery of instruction needed to be immediately redesigned in this new learning environment. As inequity of technology resources across the district became apparent during the pandemic, teachers strived to teach their students through paper and pencil packets.

As the COVID-19 pandemic continued, OPES prepared to open in the fall of 2020 using hybrid instruction (i.e., simultaneous face-to-face and virtual). The district provided students with one-to-one devices to be able to complete their schooling during the various instructional models. The district's professional development opportunities provided to teachers included a focus on [\*The Distance Learning Playbook: Teaching for Engagement and Impact in Any Setting\*](#) (Fisher et al., 2021) and [\*Bold School: Old School Wisdom + New School Technologies = Blended Learning That Works\*](#) (Kieschnick, 2017). The school district and OPES also provided time to help support teachers in selecting instructional strategies and navigating the resources available from the various learning platforms used during the upcoming school year. However, the instructional shift to this new learning environment using new technology resources proved to be a daunting task for most teachers. Teachers' prior knowledge to connect to this professional development was minimal, and the overwhelming situation did not lend itself to the learning of this new content.

Through a collaborative Professional Development School (PDS) partnership with the University of South Carolina (UofSC) and being part of the PDS Fellowship program which provided funding for my coursework, I was provided the opportunity to conduct a practitioner inquiry research study to purposefully observe and examine the characteristics of the successes and challenges teachers experienced and the collaborative decision-making conversations teachers engaged in at OPES given the abrupt change in their profession and teaching environment. Specifically, I sought different types of qualitative data to investigate the collaborative decision-making conversations, impact on collective teacher efficacy (CTE), and the common successes and challenges identified by teachers when they were required to change their practice.

This research proved to be timely and intentional because it was designed to hear teachers' voices, be responsive to their needs, and engage the OPES PDS partnership in a way that facilitated inquiry during a time when educators were forging new paths to educate students in uncharted territory. Through an inquiry as stance approach (Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 2009) teachers, administrators, and the UofSC liaison investigated problems and contexts of practice, as well as the ways practitioners collaboratively theorized, studied, and acted on those problems in the best interests of the learning of students and their communities. Using an inquiry as stance lens allowed me to place practitioner knowledge and teachers' interactions with students and other stakeholders as the central focus of this research and educational transformation (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009).

Prior to the pandemic, teachers at OPES exemplified an inquiry stance through the PDS partnership due to it being a space for continuous professional learning and leading for all

participants, guided by need and a spirit and practice of inquiry. The culture and environment at OPES through the collaborative PDS partnership was one of learning and reflection as teachers constantly asked questions and sought answers through professional development opportunities such as lesson studies, classes with UofSC professors, hosting interns, and partnering with the UofSC liaison to develop school-wide professional development. Even during the pandemic, OPES teachers continued to make a shared commitment to reflective practice, responsive innovation, and generative knowledge.

Teachers' social-emotional well-being became a priority for administrators at OPES. Knowing teachers could not endure "one more thing," administrators at OPES created dedicated time for teachers to grow together professionally. During this time, teachers continued to place a focus on students' needs and fostered an atmosphere of collaborative learning where they could readily implement new concepts to improve their instruction. To support teachers, the administrative team at OPES created a collaborative inquiry group (CIG) to listen to the voices of teachers and design intentional professional development around their ever-changing needs.

Weekly reflection forms offered opportunities to examine the successes and challenges teachers experienced as they abruptly changed their practice. Responses to the reflection forms offered opportunities for the CIG to design reflective, dialogic professional development with other knowledgeable education professionals as teachers intentionally used their time to prepare for the school year. The CIG, which was composed of administrators, the UofSC PDS Liaison, and teacher leaders, affinity grouped teachers based on their reflective responses and designed collaborative professional development time for teachers to share. Teachers reflected on their successes and challenges eight times through the Google Form Reflection surveys and met with collaborative professional development groups four times during the first nine weeks of the school year.

### **Collaborative Professional Development Opportunities**

The goal of these professional development opportunities was to value teachers' social-emotional well-being and design professional development in a way that fostered and encouraged teachers' voices. Through this process, teachers realized they all faced similar challenges, but did not let that deter them. They believed they could help students achieve in measurable ways through their collaborative efforts (Donohoo, 2017). This time and space allowed teachers to share their expertise, struggles, and triumphs with each other. In turn, teachers gained agency and felt empowered; they acted purposefully and constructively to direct their personal growth during this abrupt and necessary transition. Topics elicited from the teachers' Google Form reflective surveys over the first nine weeks of the school year were used to design topics for the collaborative professional development opportunities. These topics included technology logistics, planning, student engagement, technology platforms and tools, grading and assessing students, and student accountability.

The analysis revealed themes that emerged based on the successes and challenges teachers experienced as they abruptly and necessarily changed their practice during the COVID-19 pandemic. After teachers engaged in collaborative learning opportunities and engaged in collaborative decision making, many of the challenges became successes later in the data collection time period. As teachers had the time and space to ask questions and learn from one another, they determined resolutions through shared inquiry, problem solving, and reflection (Donohoo, 2017).



### **First Two Weeks of Data Collection**

Throughout the first two weeks of data collection, students participated in instruction using a hybrid model where they attended school face to face two days a week and attended virtually three days a week. The CIG group observed that teachers' technology logistical struggles dramatically impeded instruction during the first two school weeks based on the data collected from the weekly Google Form reflection surveys. Overcoming technology logistic struggles became teachers' main focus and concern because they were unable to teach students otherwise. In response, the CIG designed collaborative professional development sessions to support their needs at that time.

During the first collaborative professional development session, the teachers asked each other intentional questions to elicit information regarding what works well and what does not work well regarding specific topics based on the session they attended. Teachers asked intentional questions to process new learning and apply it to their current situation. For example, Christina (pseudonym) modeled SeeSaw to determine which students have completed an activity and how to provide feedback to them. The teachers provided positive and encouraging talk to each other, such as, "What a great idea!" "I will have to try that." "I love the way you did that." The collaborative professional development environment enhanced the development of the practitioners and was conducive to equipping teachers with innovative ideas that have proven to make a difference in student learning (Bandura, 1997).

### **Third and Fourth Weeks of Data Collection**

During the third and fourth week of data collection, students continued to participate in a hybrid model of instruction for two days of face to face and three days of virtual instruction. The technology challenges improved during the third and fourth week based on the data collected through the Google Form reflection survey. For example, Anne (pseudonym) shared, "This week has been so much smoother. Students have gotten the hang of our routines and we don't have very many issues."

Teachers learned how to navigate technological challenges and implement new instructional technology tools in their classrooms during this time period. Tina (pseudonym) indicated, "I found new ways to check in with my students virtually and my students have really settled in to using Google Classroom." Observing successful models served as a vicarious source of increased efficacy because teachers came to believe they possessed the knowledge and skills to perform successfully (Bandura, 1997).

### **Fifth and Sixth Weeks of Data Collection**

The 5th and 6th weeks of data collection proved to include important events. Throughout the 4th week, all teachers instructed students using a hybrid instructional model. During the 5th week, kindergarten through second grade students returned to school four days a week. The model was still considered a hybrid learning model due to one day being a virtual learning day. Students came to school in a face-to-face instructional model on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday. Teachers used Wednesday as a virtual instruction day and a cleaning day for the school. Third through fifth grade students continued with a hybrid instructional model attending face-to-face instruction two days a week and virtual instruction three days a week.

Many teachers indicated much more positive responses through the Google Form reflection survey because they saw their students face-to-face four days instead of two days.

Anne shared, “The 4-day face-to-face makes this so much better.” Mary (pseudonym) stated, “Being in school 4 days face to face has helped so much.” She also said, “Student engagement has been a lot better being back in person.”

Teachers became more accustomed to the challenges of technical logistics and troubleshooted those challenges successfully. Their belief or conviction that they could influence how well students learn by overcoming challenges beyond their control (Bandura, 1997) positively impacted their collective teacher efficacy (Hattie, 2018). Teachers made a shift during these weeks to voice successes and challenges related to instructional practices. Mary used SeeSaw for independent work time and indicated, “Students pop back into the Google Meet to check in and this works well when handling the various work times of students.” Anne shared, “I tried Jamboard this week for a math activity.” The successes with instructional practices lead to a need to learn more about assessment and grading, as well as planning. Heifitz and Heifitz (1994) recognized the need to grow knowledge, capacity to deal with adaptive challenges, and solve problems in the act of working on them as part of inquiry as stance.

### **Seventh and Eighth Week of Data Collection**

Grades third through fifth moved to four days of face-to-face instruction. Therefore, all teachers instructed students using a hybrid instructional model, meeting face-to-face four days a week. During this last collaborative professional development session, the teachers engaged in high teacher voice and social networks as they shared artifacts they had learned about and used with their students with their grade-level teams. The CIG designed this collaborative professional development opportunity differently so teachers could collaborate with their grade level teams and showcase their new learning.

For example, Anne shared her learning from Peardeck and how she modified a colleague’s suggestions after one of the collaborative professional development sessions. Through this modification, she altered the instructional technology tool to meet her students’ needs and provide her with the data she needed at the time. Mary shared an instructional technology tool she continued to use with her grade-level team even though they returned to the four days of face-to-face instruction. The tool provided quick formative data to guide instructional next steps, which the grade level team found extremely beneficial. Teachers continued to ask questions. Tina shared an instructional technology tool called Scope. Several teachers asked her what it was, where to locate it, and how she uses it with her students. However, teachers did not pose as many questions as they had in previous collaborative professional development sessions. The majority of the time was spent sharing artifacts, which exhibited how they had become reflective professionals and thoughtful decision makers (Eun, 2019).

### **Description of Data**

The CIG inferred from the data that implementing instructional technology tools and learning about these tools came from conversations with colleagues, collaborative professional development opportunities, and personal investigation of the tools. Teachers communicated they would much rather learn from each other than watching a video or completing a learning module.

The challenges that remained constant, as indicated by Table 1, were technology logistics and planning instruction. Teachers indicated extreme frustration regarding technology logistics. Teachers at OPES never experienced one-to-one technology prior to the pandemic. Therefore,



teachers not only were implementing their curriculum in a new environment, they were also having to learn new platforms and how to seamlessly integrate individual devices into regular classroom processes. These challenges impacted instruction negatively and were outside of participants' control. Support from colleagues and troubleshooting techniques minimized these challenges over the course of the study. Teachers indicated they were overwhelmed with planning instruction for multiple learning environments. Planning for the virtual environment took teachers twice as long to plan.

**Table 1**

*Successes and Challenges Most Common During Collaborative Decision Making*

Successes	Challenges
positive talk (teachers)	frustration with logistics (teachers)
intentional questioning (teachers)	overwhelmed with planning (teachers)
sharing of resources (teachers)	student engagement (virtual instruction)
instructional strategies	
instructional technology tools	
problem solving (teachers)	
positive feedback between teachers	
encouragement (teachers)	
student engagement (face-to-face)	
student feedback	
parent communication	
student assessment	
student accountability	

Through collaborative professional development opportunities, participants exhibited the positive characteristics of CTE. Changes in beliefs occurred as participants' attributions of improved student performance shifted from external causes to teaching. Technology logistics impeded instruction so much during the first two weeks that most participants were unable to teach a full day of instruction. As technology logistics decreased, participants shifted their focus to teaching. However, once students returned to a four day face to face learning environment, teachers indicated a need to return to their traditional ways of teaching prior to the pandemic. This shift in focus led administrators to design next steps to support the professional development of teachers and their future learning needs. Collaborative professional development opportunities empowered teachers to make instructional decisions together and positively impacted participants' beliefs about their abilities to help students learn (Donohoo, 2017).

### **Implications**

As we continued this journey, our call to action was to administrators and school leaders: give teachers the time and space to share their experiences, expertise, struggles, triumphs, and reflections along the way. Past research indicated teachers tailored learning more to what students could not do during crisis times, whereas often conventional school was about what

teachers thought students needed, even if students could already do the tasks (Fisher et al., 2021). Most schools and educators were asking themselves: What has changed in our world, and therefore how can we adapt? (Kieschnick, 2017). During the pandemic, teachers experienced many challenges around technology logistics and planning instruction for the various learning environments in which they were teaching. Through collaborative decision making during intentionally designed professional development, teachers shared their successes and challenges and engaged in practitioner inquiry to learn about instructional technology tools to best support their instruction. However, the move back to a face-to-face learning environment created a dissonance between integrating new instructional technology tools with the teachers' pedagogical wisdom.

The integration of technologies into instruction made teachers more effective. They unlocked differentiated, individualized, and personalized instruction to meet students' needs. Also, the integration of instructional technology tools gave students more control over the pace, the when, and the how of their learning so rigor and relevance was increased (Kieschnick, 2017). Now that teachers had some prior knowledge of instructional technology tools, more attention was given to instructional strategies, pedagogy, and academic goals that teachers apply to instruction.

The expertise and wisdom of teachers must be valued. Allowing teachers to choose the technologies made them better and more efficient at what they love to do. This autonomy moved teachers toward defining student learning goals and rooted technology in pedagogy (Kieschnick, 2017). The CIG designed the collaborative professional development in a way that tied technology (i.e., new learning) to pedagogy (i.e., previous knowledge) so thinking, decisions, and instruction come from a place of purpose (Kieschnick, 2017).

The next steps for this research, practitioner inquiry, and the growth of PDS at OPES were to move instruction to the next level using our experiences from this research study. By combining the *Bold School Framework for Strategic Blended Learning* (Kieschnick, 2017) and the data team process (Allison et al., 2010), teachers at OPES strategically implemented blended learning instruction using their prior pedagogical knowledge and data-driven decision making to ensure the success of their students during a pandemic and beyond.

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## **The Relationship Between Experiential Learning and Teacher Efficacy in Student-Teacher Candidates: The *Text Talk* Project**

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**KEYWORDS:** Gradual release of responsibility, Literacy, Primary grades, Professional Development Schools, School-University partnership, Teacher self-efficacy, Text Talk

### **ABSTRACT**

This article describes a study in which teacher candidates' teacher self-efficacy was examined while using the *Text Talk* program and the Gradual Release of Responsibility format during their clinical experience in literacy. Data analysis indicates that teachers reported a statistically significant increase in their self-efficacy as a result of their experience. Themes from an open-ended survey included that teacher candidates reported that they felt prepared to support students, benefited from classroom-based professional support, hands-on experience teaching students, and grew in their use of literacy strategies.

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2. A PDS embraces the preparation of educators through clinical practice.
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7. A PDS is built upon shared, sustainable governance structures that promote collaboration, foster reflection, and honor and value all participants' voices.

### Introduction

Every teacher varies in their spoken languages, amount of training, and years of experience; however, they are still expected to teach a rich mosaic of diverse learners in the classroom. Many components go into a teacher's being successful in a classroom, one of which is teacher self-efficacy (TSE). TSE embodies teachers' confidence in their roles as educators and has been associated with professional performance and student success (Hoy, 2000; Gibson & Dembo, 1984; Mojavezi & Tamiz, 2012; Tracz & Gibson, 1986). TSE begins developing in earlier stages of professional development, with field support and experience being related to the level of confidence a teacher has (Gold, 1985; Rupp & Becker, 2021). There are high rates of job burnout with teachers, which suggests the current standard of training is inconsistently meeting their needs (Fives et al., 2007). It brings to question if there is a more effective methodology to consider in teacher-preparation programs that would better meet the needs of future teachers.

TSE has been characterized as the confidence a teacher has in the ability to promote students' learning in a classroom (Hoy, 2000). Teachers' levels of confidence are related to their openness in implementing new methods of teaching that better meet the needs of their students by attending more to individual versus group needs, using different forms of criticism, and persisting during difficult situations (Gibson & Dembo, 1984; Guskey, 1988; Stein & Wang, 1988). Teachers who have lower levels of TSE engage in educational dialogue with students the least (Muhonen et al., 2021), whereas higher TSE has been linked to an increase in student motivation and academic achievement, specifically in reading, language, and mathematical achievement (Mojavezi & Tamiz, 2012; Tracz & Gibson, 1986).

While some teachers have reported gaining TSE through their experience as student-teachers, others have reported a decrease in TSE during this same period of professional development (Hoy, 2000; Hoy & Woolfolk, 1990). These findings suggest the time they serve as student-teachers is a powerful stage in professional development. Some student-teachers have reported feeling that they lacked the necessary understanding of how to meet the needs of all learners in the classroom and needed additional support (Stites et al, 2018). First-year teachers who had less field experience during training reported a lack of preparedness (Kee, 2011). These findings show that there is a deficit in experiences gained through teacher preparation programs.

Access to support as well as the type of support received are strong determinants in student-teachers developing TSE (Rupp & Becker, 2021). Supporting the specific needs of student-teachers by allowing them to take an active role in lesson planning and encouraging reflections on performance were found to increase TSE (Rupp & Becker, 2021). Feeling that a lesson implementation was successful also helped student-teachers build confidence (Rupp & Becker, 2021).

While a higher level of guidance during student-teaching has been linked to an increase in TSE, a lack of sufficient support has been found to lead to burnout (Fives et al., 2007). It is estimated that 41% of teachers leave the profession after five years due to such circumstances as burnout (Ingersoll et al., 2014). Teacher burnout has been found to start as early as student-teaching (Gold, 1985). Burnout has been linked to poor academic performance and motivation in students, as well as teachers feeling incompetent in managing classroom behavior (Madigan & Kim, 2021; Malinen & Savolainen, 2016). Prior findings have demonstrated the needs of teachers are being inconsistently met; therefore, it is crucial to explore new methods of supporting instructors during early stages of professional development to buffer the negative effects seen in this population.

### Current Study

The current study examined the initial student-teaching experience of student-teacher candidates. A non-traditional model was followed that had student-teacher candidates split their time between being in a lecture and working hands-on with students in an effort to increase TSE. The study defines TSE as teachers' confidence in their abilities to promote and encourage students' learning and engagement in the classroom.

An adaptation of the gradual release of responsibility (GRR) model was used. The GRR model is a framework that was designed to provide the necessary level of support in the steps towards independence (Pearson & Gallagher, 1983). Traditionally, this model follows these steps: focus lesson, guided instruction, collaboration, and independence (Pearson & Gallagher, 1983). The adaptation consisted of student-teacher candidates learning about a lesson, observing the lesson being done by a teacher, collaborating on the lesson with another student-teacher candidate, and implementing the lesson. The last two steps were not sequential since the student-teacher candidates continued doing both throughout the study.

The student-teacher candidates were supported through a GRR in using the *Text Talk* program. Dr. Isabel Beck and Margaret McKeown (2001) designed the read aloud program *Text Talk* to teach higher-level thinking and advanced vocabulary to students in K-3 classes. *Text Talk* is not the focal point for this research and is only meant to serve as a guide to gradually teach student-teacher candidates to build confidence and expand their knowledge of teaching methods. A predeveloped program was utilized since student-teacher candidates were still enrolled in academic courses and lacked the necessary foundation for independent lesson development.

Student-teacher candidates worked as partners to have an additional support system while implementing *Text Talk* lessons. The partners were assigned one English only and one English learner student. This study defines English only as English being the child's primary language, and English learner as English being the second language spoken and in acquisition. Working with students from differing backgrounds gave the student-teacher candidates the opportunity to learn to differentiate lessons to meet the needs of a variety of learners. The current study has the potential to greatly contribute in advancing the field by offering a new approach in training student-teacher candidates. It is predicted that guiding student-teacher candidates in using *Text Talk* through an adapted model of the GRR will promote an increase in TSE.

### Method

#### Participants

The sample was student-teacher candidates in a teaching credential program at California Lutheran University (CLU). Participants were enrolled in a 15-week course related to literacy and language in diverse classrooms that was taught by the researcher during terms in 2014, 2015, 2016, or 2018. This course is part of a professional development program where student-teacher candidates typically split their time between being in a lecture and observing a classroom at a professional development school. There were 85 participants over four non-consecutive years. There were 22 participants in 2014, 35 participants in 2015, 13 participants in 2016, and 15 participants in 2018. Participants from one course are pictured in Figure 1. There is no demographic information available.



**Figure 1**

*Student-teacher candidates participating in the Text Talk Project*

**Materials**

Participants were given *Text Talk* materials. There were four books administered: *A Pocket for Corduroy*, *Harry the Dirty Dog*, *The Scarecrow's Hat*, and *Sheila Rae, the Brave*. Each book came with the corresponding read aloud and vocabulary activities created by *Text Talk* that are developmentally appropriate for the assigned age group (Beck & McKeown, 2001).

**Measures**

Student-teacher candidates completed the Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale (TSES; long form). This measure was designed to examine areas of difficulty that teachers face in the classroom (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). This measure uses a 9-point scale, rating how much the respondent feels that they can do as a teacher. The scale ranged from 1 (*nothing*) to 9 (*a great deal*). There are 24 questions, with three moderately identified subscales: student engagement (8 items), efficacy in instructional strategies (8 items), and efficacy in classroom management (8 items; Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001).

Participants were administered an open-ended questionnaire *Text Talk* Post Survey that was designed by the researcher. This was developed to obtain personal reflections that the TSES could not capture. The survey asked the following:

1. How has the *Text Talk* project empowered your confidence in teaching?
2. What was the value of having the *Text Talk* project as part of your reading methods class?

**Procedures**

Approval was obtained from the Institutional Review Board and renewed for subsequent years. The researcher obtained approval from Flory Academy of Sciences and Technology



(FAST) for the research to be done at the school site. CLU and FAST had a pre-existing relationship that allowed student-teacher candidates to observe in classrooms as part of their program. The current study permitted the student-teacher candidates to get hands-on experience working with students in a kindergarten classroom at FAST under the supervision of the teacher and researcher. The study consisted of six sessions, each lasting two hours and fifty minutes. The session dates and times were predetermined in the course schedule. The student-teacher candidates were given an informed consent, which outlined that participation was voluntary and would not affect their grade.

During session one, student-teacher candidates completed the TSES. This was followed by watching a video on *Text Talk*, then reviewing the *Text Talk* curriculum with the researcher (see Figure 2). During session two, participants observed the teacher reading a book aloud while engaging students in the vocabulary and comprehension lesson that was provided by *Text Talk*. After this session, the student-teacher candidates were asked to write a one-page report on their observational reflections.

## Figure 2

*Participants reviewing Text Talk Project materials*



During sessions, three through six, student-teacher candidates worked as partners with their assigned English only and English learner students (see Figure 3). The partners used the following books for the corresponding session: *A Pocket for Corduroy* (session three), *Harry the Dirty Dog* (session four), *The Scarecrow's Hat* (session five), and *Sheila Rae, the Brave* (session six). In each session, the partners started by meeting to discuss lesson planning. They were asked to discuss and respond to the pre-reflection questions of:

1. How can I be of help to you during your *Text Talk* activity?
2. What specifically do you wish me to look for in your *Text Talk* activity?

3. What are your objectives and expectations for the *Text Talk* activity?

Based on their responses, the partners decided how to divide the lessons and the type of support they needed throughout the activities. During the lessons, the partners took turns doing a read aloud and completing the vocabulary and comprehension lessons for that book. After completion of these sessions, the partners met again to discuss and respond to post-reflection questions of:

1. How do you think the lesson went?
2. How does this compare with what you expected would happen?
3. Would you like me to share what I observed?

At the end of sessions, the student-teacher candidates were asked to write a reflection on their *Text Talk* activity. After participation was complete, student-teacher candidates completed the TSES for a second time and *Text Talk* Post Survey.

### Figure 3

*Student-teachers engaged in paired Text Talk instruction*



### Data Analysis

The pre- and post- TSES results were analyzed using Microsoft Excel. Participants were excluded from analysis if a pre- and post- TSES was not completed. Five participants did not complete a post-survey and one post-survey was completed by an unidentified participant, bringing the adjusted sample to 79. A paired *t*-test was done on overall scores on the TSES to analyze the change of TSE across the span of the study. Results were considered significant if the *p*-value was less than .05. Prior research has found that the TSES subscales are weakly associated with smaller samples and groups of student-teachers; therefore, the subscales were not considered for further analysis (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk-Hoy, 2001).

A thematic analysis was done on the *Text Talk* Post Survey. Since the survey was open-ended, the purpose of doing the content analysis was to identify recurring themes in the data.

Due to having a smaller sample size and shorter responses, the data were manually analyzed and coded for themes.

### Results

The results from the *t*-test on the pre- and post- TSES showed that TSE significantly increased by the end of the project ( $M=6.24$  to  $M=7.70$ ), with a *p*-value that was less than .05.

The analysis of the *Text Talk* Post Survey uncovered feedback that encompasses TSE. The following themes were identified in the data: *Supporting students*, *professional support*, *hands-on experience*, and *strategy growth*. *Supporting students* consisted of how the student-teacher candidates felt the study benefited their approach to meeting the needs of students. *Professional support* was the positive impact of having support from partners, the teacher, and researcher. *Hands-on experience* was the value of having the opportunity to work with students. *Strategy growth* was the new skills that were acquired. The data and themes are consistent with the findings from the TSES. Examples from themes can be found in Table 1.

**Table 1**

Themes from *Text Talk* Survey Data

Theme	Data
Supporting Students	<p>“Allowed me to work with 2 very different students...This allowed me to think of how to best accommodate each student.”</p> <p>“Has made me consider differentiation, since the students I worked with were at varying levels.”</p>
Professional Support	<p>“I was able to work with someone who helped scaffold my lesson part and vice versa.”</p> <p>“The value of a partner was tremendous because we offered feedback and suggestions to one another for improving future lessons.”</p> <p>“Watching an experienced teacher complete a “Text Talk” with a whole group demonstrated the value of the program. Being supported by (the researcher) was completely priceless.”</p>
Hands-on Experience	<p>“My first kinder teaching experience with this and it really showed me that they weren’t all that scary.</p> <p>“Put into practice what we had discussed in class, which was incredibly valuable, and it really helped to solidify my learning.”</p>
Strategy Growth	<p>“Helped build my confidence with redirecting students and keeping them engaged in lessons.”</p> <p>“Helped me to learn how to reflect on my lessons.”</p> <p>“I learned strategies to better prepare myself for each lesson.”</p>

### Discussion

The findings of this study support the hypothesis that the student-teacher candidates would experience an increase in TSE by the end of the project. The results of the TSES showed that there was a significant increase in TSE. This outcome was expected since the study built off of prior research that found supporting the specific needs of student-teachers, allowing the space

to plan lessons, and encouraging reflections on lessons led to an increase in TSE (Rupp & Becker, 2021).

The student-teacher candidates shared positive experiences in the *Text Talk* Post Survey. The *Text Talk* Post Survey themes were consistent with the TSES results and further supported prior research on factors associated with higher TSE. Within the theme of *supporting students*, student-teacher candidates discussed growth in being able to better meet the specific needs of students, an area that has previously been linked to higher TSE (Guskey, 1988; Stein & Wang, 1988). The *professional support* theme detailed the value of having support in the field, which is a critical piece in TSE (Rupp & Becker, 2021). Student-teacher candidates reported an appreciation within the theme of *hands-on experience* for being able to work with a small group of diverse students, and for some, this was their first time doing so. Experience in the field is an important factor in teacher preparedness (Stites et al, 2018). Within *strategy growth*, there was an increase in the ability to manage a classroom and reflect on lessons, areas linked to higher TSE (Rupp & Becker, 2021; Malinen & Savolainen, 2016).

The results show that the project was successful in increasing student-teacher candidate TSE through the adapted GRR model. These findings are impactful and a possible area for additional focus for teacher preparation programs. The time as a student-teacher candidate has been shown to be a sensitive period in professional development and utilizing new methods of training early on could potentially help buffer the negative outcomes pertaining to TSE in teachers.

### Limitations and Next Steps

Although there was a significant increase in TSE in student-teacher candidates, there are several limitations. One major limitation was that no comparison group was utilized; therefore, it cannot be determined which part of the study promoted the increase in TSE. An additional limitation is that TSE was solely measured through self-reporting. Questions in the *Text Talk* Post Survey were leading and suggested a positive experience was expected, which could have contributed to responses in favor of this approach.

Another limitation is that the sample size was small. The participants were recruited using convenience sampling since they were enrolled in a course taught by the researcher. Since the data were collected across four non-consecutive years, there is no way to rule out temporal effects or differences in sample groups. The sample was also gathered from a private institution with higher tuition costs, suggesting limitations in SES groups. Additionally, there is no demographic information available for participants, which makes generalizability challenging.

The findings of this study were promising, but further research is needed. To determine what increased self-efficacy, it is recommended to consider using control groups in future studies. Measuring student achievement should also be considered to determine if the observed increase of TSE has an impact on academic success. Research should aim to expand on this study in other grade levels to determine effectiveness at other developmental stages. Open-ended questions with neutral terminology should also be used in future studies to gauge the full range of experiences.

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**Culturally Responsive Teaching: From Individual Classrooms to Schoolwide Action**

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**KEYWORDS:** Diversity, Equity, Professional Development Schools, School-University Partnerships

**ABSTRACT**

This article provides a first-hand account of the author's experience realizing that her high school science students, many of whom were students of color, were not engaged in learning in her classes and how she learned about and put into practice more culturally sustaining and relevant pedagogies.

**NAPDS NINE ESSENTIALS (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition) ADDRESSED IN THIS ARTICLE:**

1. A professional development school (PDS) is a learning community guided by a comprehensive, articulated mission that is broader than the goals of any single partner, and that aims to advance equity, antiracism, and social justice within and among schools, colleges/universities, and their respective community and professional partners.
3. A PDS is a context for continuous professional learning and leading for all participants, guided by need and a spirit and practice of inquiry.



### Introduction

It's hard to admit you are wrong, and it is especially hard to realize you have biases in your teaching. This was my realization. I noticed my teaching practices were leaving many grade-level high school students disconnected, disengaged, and unresponsive. Sound familiar? The journey that followed this realization resulted in a career-altering transformation in my practice. I gained tremendous wisdom and compassion for others, but it wasn't easy—and, fortunately, it didn't stop with me.

As a result of lessons in the Fall 2019 "Introduction to Diversity" class at the [University of South Carolina](#) and participation in the [Professional Development Schools \(PDS\)](#) focus group at my school, I began to notice the students who were disengaged in my classroom were students of color. I realized that even with the best intentions, I was marginalizing students. I did not see my implicit bias, until one day...I did.

I saw that implicit bias validated some students while oppressing others. I saw the vulnerabilities of children whose identities were not validated by social structures. I saw how easy it is to believe the message of student deficiency and to normalize inequality. I wanted to do something about injustice—something that was in my power to do. I looked at myself and my classroom, and I began my own personal battle to combat this message so often communicated in schools across the country and that subsequently problematize inequality.

You see, as a white heterosexual female educator, I have never been told I could not do something because of the color of my skin or my sexual orientation. Even though I am a woman, my white identity has always been validated by structures in place. That gave me confidence, agency, and privilege.

My identity is not to blame. This is a societal problem where social signals reward some identities over others (Howard, 2010). However, with a little bit of effort on my part, in a short amount of time, I was able to break down some barriers for many students in my classroom through reflection and action. I began shifting my practice toward providing a more equitable classroom. I began looking for opportunities to include diverse cultures in classroom materials, dismantle impediments for diverse students, and create safe spaces to talk about sensitive, uncomfortable subjects like race and gender.

I had great successes with small changes such as providing more choice, co-creating culture projects with my classes, including students in classroom decisions, and sharing controversial topics associated with race and gender. As though I had sprinkled magic engagement dust throughout my classroom, disengaged students began to participate, complete their work, and influence others to do the same.

I saw students who had not turned in much work finishing their assignments early and being eager to present to the class. I heard kids say things like, "I've always been terrible at science," start to see themselves as scientists. I saw increased self-confidence in science coursework for many diverse students. What I learned was that by being interested in learning more about my students' cultures and deliberately valuing and including it in classroom materials and assignments, diverse student groups became interested in me and what I was trying to teach them.

James (pseudonym) stopped disrupting my class daily and started contributing. This once combative student suddenly began to pull his desk to the front of the room to ensure he didn't miss anything. Because of the multiple changes that occurred in my classroom over that first semester, one particular adaptation does not stand out to account for this shift in James's actions.

It was likely the combination of my choice to handle the disruptions confidentially and on my own without involving administration; explicitly speaking to his ability and positively about his identity as a black male; and the focus on building quality relationships. He knew where I stood and that place was as a supportive classroom member who just wanted him to be successful. This gave me an in to have the conversation with him about how distracted he was in class because of his cousin. That is when he started removing himself from the distractions by pulling his desk front and center. I helped him to recognize barriers in the classroom and to my astonishment he listened. He shifted from a distracted and disruptive student to a focused and engaged leader in the classroom.

### **Beyond Just Me**

The impact of cultural inclusion did not stop with my classroom. The PDS structures in place provided an arena to share my transition with seven other educators in the 2019-20 PDS focus group at my school. Equity and cultural inclusion became the focal point of our conversations. In addition, cultural responsiveness became our school-wide goal.

This all happened before the coronavirus changed everything. When the revelation of inequities swept across our nation in the spring and summer of 2020, we were already working to combat injustice at our school.

In the spring of 2020, the PDS focus group decided to find a book focused on culturally responsive teaching practices geared toward application in the classroom. We decided on Sharroky Hollie's (2018) *Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Teaching and Learning*. Of all the books available, we felt this book was most representative of best practices in the classroom for culturally responsive teaching.

The 2020-21 school year saw a 200% increase in participation in the PDS focus group, as 16 more teachers joined. Among the 24 of us participating in the book study are teachers in every content area committed to adapting our practice to be more culturally responsive to students.

PDS is revolutionizing education through the development of school-university partnerships and the empowerment of teachers. The existing PDS structures are designed to develop innovative programs to help teachers and schools become change agents and problem-solvers. At my school, teachers are awakening the most disengaged students through the interrogation of bias and inclusion of culture. The school-wide focus would not have happened had these PDS structures not been in place.

### **Yes, but How?**

There are several adaptations I made to my classroom to make it a more equitable space for all students, including utilizing a family approach, building quality relationships, including different cultures, and having communal structures. These adaptations are explained below.

#### **Family Approach**

Like Gallagher (2016) discusses, I now approach issues in the same way an ideal, functional family would deal with problems. I hold the same expectations for my students that I do for my own children. If there are students experiencing challenges, they know we will work together until we reach a solution. Students need to hear that belief they can do it, so I give them multiple opportunities to demonstrate mastery and learn. In addition, I attempt to handle issues that arise by using a supportive family model, which means handling it internally with a caring

approach. If there is a conflict, I try to resolve it with the student first to maintain confidentiality. This builds trust and lets them know they are important to our classroom. I do not call administration for small offenses. Another aspect of our classroom family is a buddy system, as discussed by [Ladson-Billings](#) (1995). Students have a buddy in the class for whom they are responsible. This builds peer social support and ultimately makes the classroom feel like a big family.

### **Relationships**

I prioritize developing a relationship with every student that extends beyond academics. This might mean participating in a few TikTok dances and learning a few handshakes. This level of engagement grants me access to real conversations about students' lives, goals, and the role of education, and the relationships we form gives me leverage to challenge them as learners, drawing on the importance of relationships as highlighted in the work of Howard (2013), Milner (2011), and Johnson (2011).

### **Cultural Inclusion**

I use every opportunity to include diverse cultures in my classroom. Student work fills the room. Displaying student work communicates that I value students as a member of this classroom and see this as their space (Hollie, 2018). I practice equity by ensuring the images I use on my slides represent multiple identities and my classroom materials are inclusive. I share historical controversies in science surrounding race and gender inequality. We talk about uncomfortable issues. I share personal stories that are related to the content and encourage them to share personal stories, too.

### **Communal Structure**

I relinquish control in my classroom whenever possible. Students are allowed to sit where they want, even if it is on the floor where we have beanbags. Whenever possible, I seek student input for classroom decisions. Some examples are student-created goals, choice in parameters for an assignment, and even order of learning. In addition, I plan opportunities for social interaction through collaborative work. This student-centered orientation of the classroom promotes equally valued perspectives on the content. Emdin (2007) calls this communal structure and suggests the corporate structures of teacher-directed learning and the hyper-structured classroom management of compliance causes diverse students to become disengaged.

Despite these changes in my practice, I still ponder, how many students am I missing? How many students are *we* missing, educators?

I challenge educators and leaders to begin or to continue your own personal journey of interrogating implicit bias. Do not let complacency interfere with student achievement. Inaction is action to reinforce bias. I challenge you to talk about race, gender, and other marginalized identities and their influences on the classroom. Diverse student groups need us to have those conversations, and it is to the benefit of all students when we center all cultures in our classrooms. I challenge you to watch students breathe a sigh of relief and feel safe when you see them and they see you. Mostly, I challenge you to try to incorporate culture in meaningful and authentic ways.

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**Building ESOL Networks (Project BEN) as Pathways of Change:  
Innovative Professional Development for Teachers of ELs and Teacher Candidates**

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**KEYWORDS:** English Learners, English for Speakers of Other Languages, Professional Development, Professional Development Schools, School-University Partnerships

**ABSTRACT**

This article provides an overview and the theoretical foundations of a professional development project to support both teachers of English Learners and teacher candidates who are being prepared to teach English Learners. The program design is rooted in Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Teaching (CLRT) and place-based pedagogy.

**NAPDS NINE ESSENTIALS (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition) ADDRESSED IN THIS ARTICLE:**

1. A professional development school (PDS) is a learning community guided by a comprehensive, articulated mission that is broader than the goals of any single partner, and that aims to advance equity, antiracism, and social justice within and among schools, colleges/universities, and their respective community and professional partners.
3. A PDS is a context for continuous professional learning and leading for all participants, guided by need and a spirit and practice of inquiry.

### Overview

Building ESOL Networks (Project BEN) represents an initial effort to address the absolute priority of developing partnerships with in-service teachers of English Learners (ELs) and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) personnel for the purpose of improving the instruction of ELs in elementary schools. This project is embedded within a larger effort by the Department of Education to reinvigorate its ESOL Endorsement Program and signifies the start of a direct and collaborative relationship between our university's teacher candidates and highly-effective cooperating teachers for their clinical experience throughout the program of study. We hope to grow a mentor-mentee relationship as expert and novice teachers work together for the benefit of ELs in their school communities.

Developing partnerships between the home, school and community has been shown to positively impact student achievement (Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Jeynes, 2003) and for EL's families this need is critical (Coady et al., 2015). Thus, we seek to begin this work with two, high ESOL-dense schools. The term "high density" typically refers to schools whose population of active ELs exceeds 40% of the total student body population. These schools are often also Title I schools where children from low-income families make up at least 40% of enrollment. With this in mind, Project BEN's overarching goal is to develop, implement, and assess a professional development (PD) series – one face-to-face and two virtual sessions – in collaboration with an ESOL advisory board composed of ESOL specialists working in our county. The PD's intended outcome is to improve the instruction of ELs, develop teacher candidates' cultural competence, and foster collaboration between individuals in the school's professional learning communities (PLCs) and our university's teacher-scholars. Recent scholarship informs us that collaboration between mainstream teachers and ESOL personnel, who operate with specialized knowledge of instruction and assessment of linguistically diverse youth, creates an actionable synergy that is guided by co-construction of knowledge and brings together instructional strategies for the benefit of ELs (Bauler, Kang, Afanador-Vega, & Stevenson, 2019; Bell & Baecher, 2012; Martin-Beltran & Peercy, 2014).

Presently, there are approximately 4,200 English Learners (ELs) enrolled in our county's schools. To provide language services and comply with state statutes, school personnel are charged with assessing and placing students into ESOL programs to receive services from an ESOL-endorsed mainstream teacher through an inclusion model of instruction. Depending on the school's needs, the district may or may not allocate an ESOL teacher for the purpose of supplementing the instruction by entering the classrooms during mainstream instruction and working in small group settings with ELs. This instructional model, called inclusion with pull-in support, is the norm in elementary classrooms across our county. Though inclusion is an approved model of instruction under the mandates of our state's Consent Decree, mainstream teachers of ELs often report feeling underprepared to meet their students' needs (Coady, Harper, & de Jong, 2011) and scholarship on the effectiveness of training through ESOL-infused teacher preparation programs is limited.

Through Project BEN, we seek to investigate the process and product of growth through collaborative professional development. To accomplish this, we will facilitate the formation of two Communities of Practice (CoP) to jointly and cohesively work throughout the PD series at the two schools. Moreover, school-based CoPs will be guided by the use of student achievement data to guide the instruction and development of action plans for ELs at the conclusion of the PD series.



### **Theoretical Framework**

#### **Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Teaching (CLRT)**

Project BEN will base the framework of the professional development series on CLRT as it has been shown to be an effective approach to working with ELs and mainstream teachers (Coady, Harper, deJong, 2016; Lucas & Villegas, 2013). CLRT is grounded in sociocultural theories of teaching and learning where learning is socially constructed through collaborative work with varieties of resources and materials. Studies show that incorporating the intricacies of cognitive and sociocultural factors faced by ELs in schools can be mitigated by instruction that draws upon home literacy and value children's cultural awareness (Lowery, Oslick, & Pringle, 2019; Naqvi, McKeough & Thorne, 2013). Most importantly, CLRT emphasizes the need for educators to prioritize the role of language and culture in the classroom and deepen their understanding of ELs in mainstream education. In turn, educators gain the possibility to differentiate their teaching practice effectively for the specific ELs in their schools.

#### **Place-based Pedagogy**

Teachers of ELs in mainstream classrooms “need place-conscious teacher education programs” (Burton & Johnson, 2010, p. 384), which include a clear understanding of the community in which they (will) work, and a connection to local school placements (Gruenewald, 2003; White & Reid, 2008). Place-consciousness is essential to teachers' work because the educational policies they navigate, the instructional practices they implement, and the social processes that characterize schools directly influence their decisions (Ankeny, Marichal and Coady, 2019; John & Ford, 2017). Moreover, vast school districts, such as the ones found in our state, present great diversity both in environmental landscape and socio-economic background. Because we understand the potential influence of place-consciousness, we seek to collaborate with a rural and an urban school. These schools differ from one another in their geographical location, the communities they serve, and the local culture and customs. As such, we expect to find varied challenges to working with ELs as well as diversity in school culture and practices of professional learning communities (PLCs).

#### **Positive Effects of Project**

Project BEN will start in summer 2021 and its anticipated effects are two-fold. First, we expect that an ESOL advisory board will serve to advise the department in selecting field experiences for teacher candidates in tier II and tier III (student teaching) that lead to effective instruction, improvement in our CAEP/TESOL-accreditation evaluative scores and foster a relationship between district and school ESOL specialists and university supervisors. Second, we believe that Project BEN will have a positive impact individually on both in-service teachers of ELs and teacher candidates and grow a mentor-mentee relationship as expert and novice teachers work together for the benefit of ELs in their school communities. Outcomes and take aways from our experience will be shared after the project's completion.



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**Casting Call!****The Aspiring Principal Program: A Partnership Initiative Filling the Need for Leadership**

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**KEYWORDS:** Administrator Preparation, Professional Development Schools, School Administrator Preparation, School-University Partnerships

**ABSTRACT**

This article details the creation and features of the Aspiring Principals Program, an intentional, mutually beneficial partnership between the University of North Carolina at Charlotte and Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools.

**NAPDS NINE ESSENTIALS (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition) ADDRESSED IN THIS ARTICLE:**

1. A professional development school (PDS) is a learning community guided by a comprehensive, articulated mission that is broader than the goals of any single partner, and that aims to advance equity, antiracism, and social justice within and among schools, colleges/universities, and their respective community and professional partners.
3. A PDS is a context for continuous professional learning and leading for all participants, guided by need and a spirit and practice of inquiry.

Finding the right candidate for the main role of a Broadway show is key to a successful production. Casting directors rely on a vast pool of aspiring actors to find the perfect candidate that will bring a character to life. The “Casting Call” announces the search, and aspiring actors put forth their names for consideration. In education, school districts rely on the applicant pool of aspiring leaders in order to fill the “main role” of the principalship. School leadership is documented to have a high impact on student learning, second only to classroom instruction in school-related impact (Leithwood, et al., 2004). Thus, it is imperative that districts have a strong pool of applicants to fill vital leadership positions. With a growing population and pending retirements, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (CMS) discovered that the applicant pool for high school principalships was not sufficient to meet the needs of the district in coming years. After reviewing the history and context of CMS, this article documents the collaborative efforts between CMS and the University of North Carolina at Charlotte to build a program that would train aspiring high school principals to answer the “Casting Call” when the district has a vacant school leadership position. In this way, we are working towards systemic change and meeting the first 4 of the NAPDS 9 Essentials.

CMS is a large school district in North Carolina with a long and, at times, tumultuous history. CMS began as a single school in 1882 and grew rapidly as the population in the region exploded during the Industrial Revolution. “Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools” (n.d.) describes the expansion of the school district, noting that by 1913, CMS was named the “largest public school system south of Baltimore.” By 1964, ten years after the *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), the system had 88 total schools, but they remained segregated – 57 white and 31 black schools (Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, n.d.). In 1965, a significant court case challenged the district’s policies: *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education* (1971). As a result, the CMS Board of Education permitted transfers of students out of integrated schools, but discouraged transfers into the predominantly white schools, causing most school facilities to remain completely segregated.

The decades that followed saw new student assignment plans emerge in attempts to remedy the segregation situation. A second lawsuit over student assignment was brought forth by the Cappachione family that argued the district’s student transfer policies were still unfair (1999). The *Swann* case and the *Cappachione* case were ultimately combined and not fully resolved until the early 2000’s. It was April of 2002 when the United States Supreme Court announced that it would not revisit the *Swann/Cappachione* cases and their related petitions, consequently letting a Fourth Circuit Court’s decision approving the district’s student-assignment plan stand.

While this and related cases had slowly worked their way through the country’s court system, CMS maintained a focus on teaching and learning and consequently made significant academic gains. As an urban school system making academic gain, they began to be recognized, particularly for their reading and math scores. In 2001, the district was recognized by the Council of the Great City Schools as one of four top urban school districts in the nation (Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, n.d.). At the same time, the National College Board awarded CMS students the first Advanced Placement diploma in the country. In September 2011, the district won the coveted Broad Prize for Urban Education, the largest award of its kind, recognizing districts that are able to simultaneously increase achievement and close gaps amongst their urban student population (The Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation, n.d.).

Meanwhile, the student population continued to grow in diversity. The district continued to focus on learning for all students, and recognition for their accomplishments continued to accumulate. In 2013, the Council for Urban Boards of Education recognized CMS with the CUBE Award, an honor given to a school district that demonstrates excellence in school board performance, academic improvement, educational equity, and community engagement (Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, 2013). In 2014, CMS was once again honored by the Council of Great City Schools. CMS's laser focus on teaching and learning, academic excellence, and educational equity was evident.

Today, CMS is home to over 147,000 PK-12 students, housed in 176 schools. Since the awarding of the Board Prize in 2013, these last few years have seen even more population growth. In 2017, the U.S. Census Bureau estimated that "Mecklenburg County was the eighth fastest growing large population county [i.e. counties with populations of at least 500,000] in the United States." There are presently 32 high schools and 47 middle schools in CMS with the remaining number comprised of elementary and PK-8 schools. The district student population has continued to become increasingly diverse, with the 2020-2021 enrollment reported as 37% Black, 27% Hispanic, 26% White, 7% Asian, and 3% of students having two or more racial backgrounds.

A school district with 176 schools needs 176 principals every year! And while CMS was growing in size, its school leaders were growing older. By 2012, the district was anticipating crisis level shortages in their principal positions largely due to pending retirements. This shortage was particularly acute at the high school level, where neither the diversity of principals in place nor the existing assistant principal pool was considered either deep enough or wide enough by district leadership. Nor was the candidate pool diverse enough to reflect the student population. Action was needed immediately to avoid lapses in leadership for the large district. These considerations resulted in the beginnings of a multi-dimensional pipeline partnership, which began to bubble up. The thirty-two high school principals communicated during a principal meeting, and then with the other CMS principals. The district principals then communicated with the district office, and the pending leadership problem was identified and recognized.

It was then that representatives from the CMS district office approached the Department of Educational Leadership at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte and initiated talks to consider a specialized program that would fast-track leaders to fill imminent voids. UNC Charlotte's school administration programs were approved by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction and have been accredited since 2013. Regardless, faculty were willing to consider changes to meet the needs of CMS and a new approach to the program design. CMS personnel had already researched a rather unique program designed by the non-profit New York City Leadership Academy (NYCLA), and staff from NYCLA was willing to partner with UNC Charlotte and CMS for the development of the specialized program. In 2013, the partnership was formed to begin development of a robust principal pipeline program administered by UNC Charlotte and tailored to the secondary schools of CMS. The key features of the program are outlined in Table 1.

**Table 1**

*Key Features of the Aspiring High School Principals Program: A collaborate venture between CMS and UNC Charlotte*

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The program simulates actual challenges and rewards that CMS public high school principals face by immersing participants in authentic, problem-solving exercises that build leadership capacity.

Support is tailored to address each participant's unique learning style and leadership development needs.

Participants become part of a vibrant learning community of fellow aspiring principal participants, mentor principals, and other leadership development practitioners.

The program is a carefully crafted set of experiences that challenges participants in profound ways and prepares them to successfully lead a CMS public high school.

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UNC Charlotte already offered a 39-hour Master of School Administration degree and a 21-hour School Administration Certificate for K-12 principal licensure for candidates who held master's degrees in other areas. This new district-specific program would include a 5-week mandatory summer intensive experience which simulated the experience of being a high school principal. This summer simulation format set the *Aspiring High School Principal Program* apart from the other principal preparation programs in the region as well as the university's existing leadership program. It included an attendance requirement of five days a week, eight hours a day (not counting planning time and "homework"), and was action-oriented, involving many hands-on problems frequently faced by principals. The summer simulation experience included everything from surprise meetings with an angry parent (which were videotaped for later reflections and debriefing), to providing emergency assistance with struggling teachers in classrooms, to hiring personnel for various staff positions.

From day one of the program, administrative candidates were placed on racially diverse administrative teams with each candidate taking a turn as the principal for a week. Teams were responsible for completing a major work product each week that involved analysis of qualitative and quantitative data generated from the simulation school. Team members provided their weekly leaders with low inference feedback at the end of each week on how the "principal" performed as a leader. Low inference feedback describes what is happening in a setting without drawing conclusions, making judgments, or expressing opinions. For admission to the program, candidates were first nominated by their principals or other district leaders. All candidates had to demonstrate commitment to closing the historical achievement gaps in urban schools. They also went through a two-hour interview process, during which they analyzed and discussed school data, role-played coaching a teacher after watching a teacher instruct students on video, answered behavioral interview questions, and described in writing how they would handle multiple and synchronous school situations.



**Figure 1***Aspiring High School Principal Program Candidates, 2018*

The initial portion of the summer program was designed as a 5-week series of role-played scenarios, through which the students earned university credit for completing three courses which was a total of nine credit hours towards licensure. The courses included Fundamentals of Educational Leadership, School Leadership and Management, and Instructional. These versions of the three courses were, by design, entirely rooted in CMS policy and procedures. CMS helped provide the simulation school data for the activities with the prototype high school in play. This involved compiling a large 3-ring binder with all of the pertinent simulation school information such as demographics of students, qualifications and experience of teachers, and so on, to each student. Design features ensured that district leaders had confidence in the learning that the students would gain and trusted that they would be prepared for school leadership at CMS upon completion of the program. Faith in the program was apparent in the willingness of CMS to commit \$1500 per student toward tuition for the first three courses of the summer intensive program and have continued doing so each year. In short, they have put their money where their trust was. This trust emerged through a collaborative and a reciprocal approach of give and take



from all participants, CMS and UNC Charlotte personnel, as well as the leadership and flexibility needed to launch this innovative program.

## Figure 2

*Aspiring High School Principal Program, 2019*



The first cohort of the *Aspiring High School Principal Program* was launched in 2014 with what was considered the minimum of 15 participants. Since then, the program has grown and expanded to 25 candidates each year. Due to increased demand and resulting competitiveness, many applicants are now turned away, although several traditional options remain available across UNCC programs. After the 5-week summer intensive sessions, the students progress through the remainder of the program courses together as a cohort, continuing to develop strong working relationships and professional learning communities as they prepare for their roles as principals.

The new program was accredited by the North Carolina Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) and was reviewed in Fall 2020 by the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP). No areas of improvement or stipulation were identified for the *Aspiring High School Principal Program*. Considering the innovative approach and risk taken in creating the new program, this was a particularly celebrated success. Since then, the *Aspiring High School Principal Program* has brought accolades to both CMS and UNC Charlotte. The district and university now have a strong cast of candidate understudies waiting in the wings for upcoming principal openings. While CMS and the Department of Educational Leadership at UNC Charlotte had existed independently in the same city for decades, by forming a multi-dimensional partnership to tackle a tough leadership staffing problem head-on, both became better. Once the curtain rises following the recent Covid-19 inspired hiatus, the *Aspiring High School Principal Program* will continue to reduce prior leadership shortages for CMS schools

and strengthen the professional learning communities, programs, and partnerships for both organizations. It is our goal that our graduates will receive rave reviews on their performance as effective school leaders.

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**Equity through Inquiry: One Region's Effort to Provide Students and their Teachers with Leaders in their Schools that Look like Them**

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**KEYWORDS:** Administrator Preparation, Professional Development Schools, School Administrator Preparation, School-University Partnerships

**ABSTRACT**

This article details the process of recruiting and starting a cohort to prepare Latinx school administrators to fill impending positions in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg School district. The authors provide the context and steps of establishing the administrator preparation program.

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1. A professional development school (PDS) is a learning community guided by a comprehensive, articulated mission that is broader than the goals of any single partner, and that aims to advance equity, antiracism, and social justice within and among schools, colleges/universities, and their respective community and professional partners.
3. A PDS is a context for continuous professional learning and leading for all participants, guided by need and a spirit and practice of inquiry.

### Introduction

In today's diverse classrooms, it is no longer uncommon to hear words such as "Of course you can become president! Just look at Barrack Obama." Or "Of course you can become Vice President! Just look at Kamala Harris," or "Of course you can become a Supreme Court Judge! Just look at Clarence Thomas." Representation matters in all things – in our courts, in the White House, and in our schools. While the population of principals of color in U.S. public schools has been growing, data indicates that principals of color have been underrepresented and overly concentrated in poor and urban schools (Gates, et al., 2003).

We represent core professors working within a school leadership masters and certificate program at a large, urban university in the southeastern United States. Two of us are former students of that program. We serve adult graduate students in school administration who work as teachers, counselors, or in other roles in PK-12 schools throughout a region that spans over 11 counties across our state (and we do not mean virtually). We take our program out to the surrounding counties to meet demand, and over time, we have developed a strong principal pipeline that graduates an average of 50 new potential PK-12 school administrators every year. We have worked to cultivate a diverse candidate pool of administrative candidates from the region. African American representation within our cohorts is relatively high and matches PK-12 student demographics in our region's schools. However, four years ago we found one area of our otherwise diverse student population to be sorely lacking.

In 2016, we noticed a striking lack of Latinx students in our school administration classes; in fact, there were none. We looked more broadly and found an extreme lack of Latinx leaders in our region's schools. We traced the leadership problem to a lack of Latinx teachers in the region, the potential candidate pool for our graduate students and future school leaders. This lack of Latinx teacher candidates in our university preparation programs occurred at a time when the Latinx student population in the region was burgeoning. In 2010, the Latinx population in North Carolina was 8.4 percent; by 2019, that percentage had grown to 9.6, with the largest concentrations in urban Mecklenburg and Wake County and notable presence across the state's more rural small towns (Tippett, 2020). This article chronicles the actions we took toward changing these significant ratios within a large urban school district to work toward equity. Our transparent inquiry resulted in reverse partnerships with our students and their district leaders and led to the creation of a multi-directional pipeline for increasing representation within the school leadership candidate pool through more personalized approaches to data-sharing and inquiry. We became the learners, as well as leaders, in this process of systemic change, meeting the first 4 of the NAPDS 9 Essentials; 1) articulating a mission broader than the goals of any single partner that aims to advance equity, antiracism, and social justice, 2) embraces the preparation of educators through clinical practice, 3) entails continuous professional learning and leading for all participants, guided by need and a spirit and practice of inquiry, and 4) involves a shared commitment to reflective practice, responsive innovation, and generative knowledge.

### Background of the Problem

Seven years ago, the *Aspiring Principal Pipeline Program*, a collaborative effort between the University of North Carolina at Charlotte (UNCC) and the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (CMS) system, was formed to develop future school leaders, especially high school leaders. This effort was the result of an identified need by the district - a critical shortage of principal candidates within the district exacerbated by increasing numbers of pending principal



retirements. CMS is made up of 145,000 students, 9,507 teachers, 176 school principals, and 406 assistant principals or deans. The district created a Director of Principal Pipeline position, and that person reached out to us to brainstorm ways to shore up this looming leadership disaster. The first step was to engage established principals within the district to identify specific teachers within their schools and recommend that they consider participating in the leadership program. Identified candidates went through an application and 2-hour interview process that involved four 30-minute sessions (i.e., interview, data analysis, problem solving, and coaching teachers) involving both district and university personnel. Successful candidates were admitted to their first nine credits of coursework toward principal licensure with CMS contributing \$1500.00 toward each students' summer tuition. Many Black teachers had participated in the program since its inception; however, almost no Latinx teachers were coming through the program.

Also in 2016, we attended a *Forum on Latinos in Education* at the Museum of the New South in Charlotte, North Carolina, where we learned that the enrollment of the Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools (CMS) for that year included approximately 22% (32,000 out of 145,000) students with at least some Hispanic/Latino descent; 25,600 of these students spoke Spanish in their homes, and this number was projected to keep rising (Helms, 2016). Last year, enrollment in CMS of Latinx children was over 35,000, almost 25%. In the fall of 2020, that percentage had risen to 26%, and, for the first time in district history, the Latinx population surpassed the white student population (Helms, 2020).

In February of 2018, a regional report titled *Breaking the Link* (Charlotte-Mecklenburg Office of Accountability, 2018) was published, highlighting the increasing disparities for Black and Latinx students in our local schools. The report revealed that Black and Latinx students have fewer opportunities and worse outcomes in the district, especially if they attend high-poverty schools. We discovered that out of 176 schools in this large urban district, there were only three Latinx principals. In the surrounding counties, there were none. As professors in a respected Department of Educational Leadership in the state's Urban Research University, our mission is to prepare future leaders for the region's diverse schools. All of us enjoyed extensive careers working in schools prior to coming to UNCC. Our students in Educational Leadership are teachers and staff from local districts and the surrounding region, and we have enjoyed considerable success as a department, winning a \$3.7M Principal Fellows (TP3) competitive grant just last year for excellence in preparing school leaders. However, we were troubled that while the Latinx PK-12 student population had grown rapidly in the region, the numbers of Latinx teachers in our classes had not. In other words, there were almost no local Latinx teachers preparing to become principals. As Gandara and Mordechay (2017) argued, access to Latinx teachers positively impacts Latinx students. In addition, studies show that Latinx principals draw on the understandings of the importance of language and culture and actively work to address inequities while also serving as cultural brokers for students, teachers, and families, (Loebe, 2004; Murakami & Hernandez, 2015). Thus, we began our inquiry.

### Actions Taken

Two years ago, we decided to investigate concrete strategies to increase the numbers of Latinx teachers in our master's and certificate programs in School Administration. We had no start-up funds, just a commitment to addressing the underrepresentation of aspiring Latinx school administrators in our program and, in turn, the school districts we serve. This effort was firmly grounded in the research showing that children need role models with whom they can personally



identify, and so do adults. According to research, increasing numbers of principals of Latinx descent should lead to increased numbers of Latinx teachers being hired and increased numbers of Latinx students with an interest in career paths in education. We began a strategic effort to increase the numbers of Latinx teachers becoming administrators in the region and named it the *Latinx Leadership Initiative*. We shared our findings related to this shortage of Latinx candidates within our administrative cohorts with the district office Director of the Principal Pipeline, Jevelyn Bonner-Reed, with whom we had already established a productive relationship. She immediately joined our cause and facilitated opportunities for us to visit the district to gain direct access to our target audience. We decided to hold an information session about our now established *Aspiring Principal Program* specifically aimed for teachers in good standing with leadership potential and possible aspirations who were of Latinx descent. Jevelyn went through the district database and identified every Latinx teacher in the 9,507-teacher district. Now we had our list!

Next, we met with a focus group of the three Latinx principals to seek their advice on recruiting Latinx students into the leadership program. They shared with us that the Latinx community is not monolithic and that there are many different cultures within this subgroup. They emphasized that we would need to appreciate the diverse backgrounds that make up our Latinx population. Jevelyn then allowed and helped us to distribute targeted emails which we penned in both English and Spanish. We organized our first information session at the district's *Language Academy* for the candidates. We were excited that thirty-eight teachers attended this first session and the attendees were engaged and passionate. We invited some of our current students to speak about the *Aspiring Principal Program* and share what it took to move from being a teacher into a career path that involved leadership roles.

Then we listened. The Latinx teachers were skeptical at first; we learned there were challenges they faced in taking steps toward moving into administration. First, the master's degree to become a school administrator and the certificate for those already holding a master's degrees were not free. As for most teachers eyeing additional degrees, funding was of utmost concern for the attendees. At the inception of the program, the district had come through with funding for 15 summer credits, or \$1,500 each, for up to 20 teachers for our *Aspiring Principals Program*. When this information was shared with the participants, it piqued interest. They learned about our program; we learned about their needs, and we set out to find ways to meet them.

Next, we approached our own Graduate School at the university for targeted funding to provide scholarship assistance to alleviate the financial burden for potential Latinx administrative candidates. They came through with additional scholarship funds for many of the Latinx teachers enrolled in the program. With support from the district for the summer work, and support from the university for the following semesters, Latinx student enrollment in our program increased.

There were ancillary benefits to the informational meetings. The teachers became aware of and connected with other colleagues across the district that they did not previously know. "Oh, you're from Colombia? I'm from Colombia, too!" In fact, we had teachers from Venezuela, Ecuador, Mexico, Panama, and Costa Rica, to name a few. They spoke about their varied experiences and shared incredible stories about coming to the United States and overcoming vast obstacles. They also shared insights into the shortage of Latinx teachers. In some countries, 2-year college degrees are required to become teachers versus the 4-year

requirement in North Carolina. Some of our students had many years of teaching experience prior to coming to the U.S. Some shared their visa struggles and cultural hurdles, and they became resources for each other and for us. While we were not able to capture every word of every discussion, there were many valuable opportunities to communicate with colleagues without the need for interpreters during this informational session. We were excited to have our first five students of Latinx descent join our summer cohort that following year.

### **The Program Grows**

The next year we held more sessions in different sites to better reach identified teachers across this large district. We invited the three sitting principals who were of Latinx descent to attend the sessions and speak to the group about being a principal in CMS. Much like providing students with teachers who serve as role models that look like them, current Latinx administrators provided interested teachers with role models with whom they could identify and ask questions about the possibilities of pursuing leadership. Later evaluative comments revealed that this was a powerful contribution to ultimately convincing candidates to take the steps necessary for becoming eligible for administrative roles.

Meanwhile, we supplemented the list of teachers provided by the district with information from our own students and former students who were now moving into administrative positions. Some of them had moved into leadership jobs in surrounding counties, and thus our reach broadened. These students and former students helped recruit others whom they worked with, whom they knew to be of Latinx or mixed Latinx descent. This eventually opened doors and expanded the candidate pool beyond the district. Currently, two of our former students have moved into administrative roles within CMS, and others are being heavily recruited by surrounding districts. Thus, we have begun to bring these alumni in as guest speakers. This past year when we took our informational sessions to surrounding districts, and more teachers have been coming to the sessions. The word is clearly out.

Today we are happy to report that there are three Latinx Deans of Students and three Assistant Principals in CMS, and 17 new Latinx students in our program. We have broadened our inquiry to include our undergraduate teacher preparation program and shared the results of our initial investigation with our students. Our teacher education programs are now tracking numbers of undergraduate Latinx students and exploring similar ways to increase interest for Latinx students to consider teaching as a profession.

In summary, we found that treating students and teachers as valued resources and engaging in reciprocal dialogue went a long way in our efforts to increase Latinx student representation in our program. By viewing and working with district teachers, leaders, and our former students, we were able to inquire authentically into a regional problem, raise visibility of the problem, collaborate as partners, and make strides toward addressing the Latinx leader shortage. In the future we expect to hear more “Of course you can become a Supreme Court Justice! Just look at Sonia Sotomayor.” And “Of course you can be a member of the POTUS cabinet! Just look at Alejandro Majorkas, Xavier Becerra, or Miguel Cardona.” And “Of course you can be principal of this high school!”

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