

Mentoring Through Uncertain Times

Crystal Marshall-Krauss¹, Eva Garin¹, Dawn Nowlin²

¹Bowie State University

²Prince George's County Public Schools

Abstract: Professional Development Schools have faced unprecedented challenges with emergency shifts to virtual learning and mentoring during the COVID-19 pandemic. Through a NAPDS-recognized Exemplary PDS between a Historically Black College (HBCU) and a large urban/suburban school district in the northeast region, we began wondering how the pandemic was impacting our PDS work during these times of uncertainty. We also wondered what we could learn from one another about mentoring teacher candidates in the virtual classroom. In this article, we share the results of our action research study that focused on best virtual practices in PDS and mentoring teacher candidates in the virtual classroom, how to maintain connections in our PDS partnerships, and the impact of sudden changes on our PDS program.

Keywords: PDS, teacher preparation, virtual mentoring

NAPDS Nine Essentials Addressed:

- 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.

Mentoring Through Uncertain Times

Our PDS Network, like others in the nation, has faced unparalleled challenges with emergency closures and shifts to virtual learning for all grade levels due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As we continued to prepare teacher candidates through year-long clinical internships, we knew we would have to modify our approaches. But how could we move forward with changes without hearing the voices of our teacher candidates and mentor teachers? Our PDS Network has a long history of using action research, inquiry groups, and teacher researchers to investigate best practices and student performance to build reflective practitioners in our PDS sites and with our teacher candidates to address the National Association of Professional Development Schools [NAPDS] Nine Essentials (NAPDS, 2020). We decided to use the lens of action research to investigate effective mentoring practices during virtual schooling through our PDS partnership between Bowie State University and Prince George's County Public Schools. Dr. Eva Garin, PDS professor; Dawn Nowlin, a fifth grade mentor teacher; and Crystal Marshall-Krauss, a part time graduate student and middle school teacher, investigated what is working during virtual internships. We wondered what gaps in teacher clinical preparation aspiring teachers may experience as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic when they begin their first year of teaching in the 2021-22 school year. This action research investigation aimed to support our PDS program improvements by identifying the practices mentor teachers are using to support teacher candidates in a year-long internship program, learning about the experiences of our teacher candidates, and gathering examples of effective teaching in this time of uncertainty.

Beginning in the early fall semester, we used surveys, focus groups, and interviews with mentor teachers and teacher candidates to provide insight into the effectiveness of mentoring in a virtual classroom, particularly regarding several key areas including classroom management, relationship building, and communication. By the end of the spring semester, we were able to implement changes and program improvements for the following school year.

For this study, the definition of action research offered by Kemmis and McTaggart (1992; 2000) is used:

Action research is a deliberate, solution-oriented investigation that is group or personally owned and conducted. It is characterized by a spiraling cycle of problem identification, systematic data collection, reflection, analysis, and data-driven action taken and finally problem redefinition. (p.14)

Because the teacher researchers in our PDS Network have extensive experience both conducting action research and supporting their teacher candidates' action research, we were able to identify our focus and formulate our action research question. As one teacher researcher writes, "A teacher researcher may start out not with a hypothesis to test but with a wondering to pursue" (as cited in Hubbard & Power, 2003, p. 2). Dana (2017) defines wondering as "a question focused on a problem of practice that emerges from a felt difficulty or real-world dilemma experienced by the practitioner" (p. 7). The wondering guiding this study is, *How does the pandemic impact our PDS work, and what can we learn from one another about mentoring teacher candidates in the virtual classroom?*

Methodology

Participants

Twenty-nine participants participated in this study. All survey participants were volunteers from PDS sites and attended monthly, virtual meetings for PDS support. Sixteen were mentor teachers, eleven were teacher candidates at elementary schools, and two were secondary teacher candidates.

Participants for focus groups and interviews were selected from the survey participants who expressed interest in follow up focus groups and one-on-one interviews during the virtual meeting. Attention was given to include perspectives from mentor teachers, elementary teacher candidates, and secondary teacher candidates.

Data Collection

Surveys

A survey was distributed to mentor teachers and teacher candidates consisting of ten questions about their experiences with their particular role. The survey asked mentor teachers and teacher candidates to use a Likert scale to rate the overall effectiveness of mentoring during virtual schooling and to rate the effectiveness of mentoring practices in six categories of teacher preparation. The six categories were: content knowledge, building classroom environment, building relationships with PK-12 students, assessing student learning, designing effective instruction, and meeting the needs of diverse learners. These categories were selected based on the teacher candidate methods courses and teacher evaluation criteria from the PK-12 district the PDS sites are located within. The survey included one optional, open-ended comment question; eight of the mentor teachers and ten of the teacher candidates provided additional comments (See Appendix A).

Focus Groups

We conducted two focus groups through virtual meetings using a web conferencing platform. We posed three open-ended questions to participants about their experiences as mentor teachers and teacher candidates during virtual school internships. We used questions to encourage discussion between participants. Each question focused on a different aspect of mentoring teacher candidates including communication, support for mentor teachers and teacher candidates, and planning for the future in our PDS partnership. Questions were developed based on the survey results with an aim to gather more information about the results. For instance, a survey response suggested that communication between mentor teachers and teacher candidates was not consistently effective or ineffective. Based on this information, the authors posed a question asking participants to describe the communication as a mentor teacher or teacher candidate to gather more detailed information. Each focus group session lasted approximately one hour and was recorded. See Appendix B for Focus Group questions for each group.

Interviews

We conducted interviews with three participants to better understand our survey results and focus group discussions. These interviews were conducted with one mentor teacher and two current teacher candidates. Interview questions were based on the survey and focus group findings and focused on learning more detail about individual experiences in the PDS program

during virtual schooling. Interview participants were also asked to provide any suggestions for improvement in an open-ended format. The interviews were recorded and transcribed for analysis. Interview participants were asked the same questions as focus groups with an emphasis on their personal experiences.

Data Analysis

For the quantitative items in the survey, we used color coded bar graphs to compare the answers by participant groups. We used these bar graphs to formulate questions to pose to the focus groups.

The qualitative survey responses and interview transcripts were analyzed using coding categories, or themes described by Bogdan and Biklen (2007) as “terms and phrases developed to be used to sort and analyze qualitative data” (p. 271). The interview transcripts and qualitative survey results were read and reread by each of us and then we used Google Docs to highlight five themes: classroom management, relationship building, communication, PDS program, technology/other, and patterns. Finally, we compared our analysis at a Zoom meeting. These themes from the qualitative data sources were triangulated with the survey data, interview data, and focus group data.

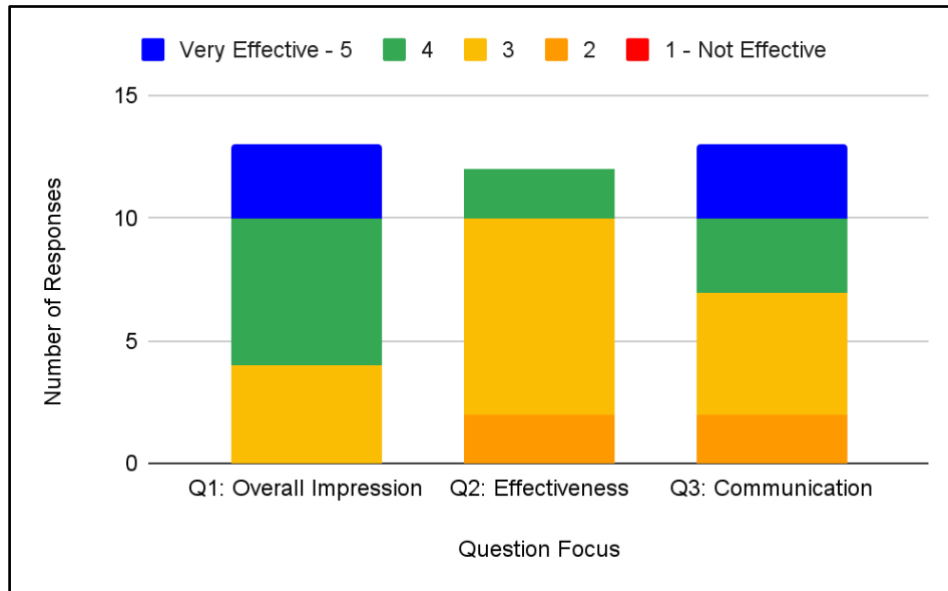
Findings

Mentor Teachers

Survey. Mentor teachers responded to survey questions about their year-long teaching internship experiences during the COVID-19 school closures. The first three questions asked mentors to rate their general impressions in three ways. On Question 1, mentor teachers were asked to give an overall impression of the year-long teaching internship. On Question 2, mentor teachers responded on how effective they found the internship in preparing teacher candidates for future teaching positions. Eight mentor teachers responded with a mid-range score of 3, neither effective nor ineffective. On Question 3, mentor teachers were asked to compare the effectiveness of their communication with their year-long interns with their experience mentoring before COVID-19 school closures on a 1-5 scale, with 1 being not effective at all to 5, effective. Responses to Question 3 were spread throughout the range from 2-5. Notably, no mentor teacher selected “not effective” for any of the general questions.

Figure 1

Mentor Teacher Responses: General Questions

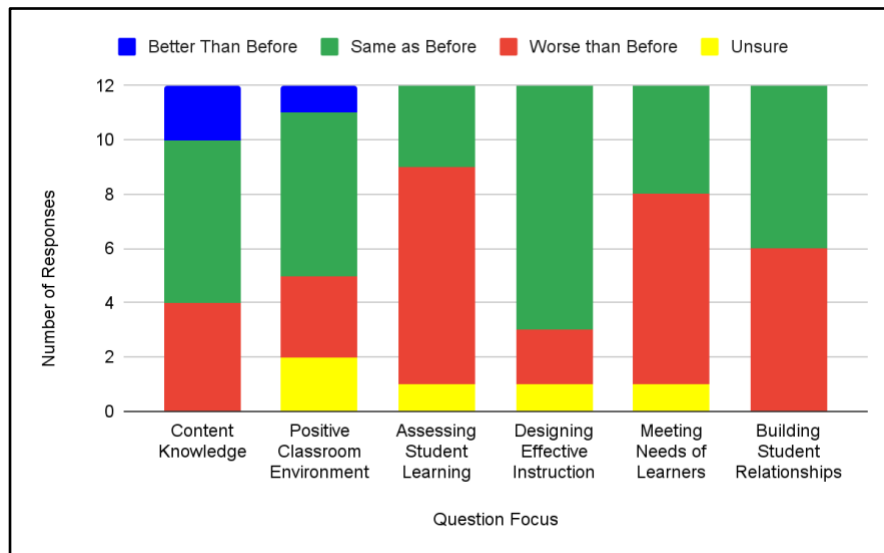


Finally, mentor teachers were asked, “How effectively do you feel you are able to mentor a year-long intern in the following areas during the COVID-19 school closures compared to mentoring pre-COVID?” The domain areas included: content knowledge, creating a positive classroom environment, assessing student learning, designing effective instruction, meeting the needs of diverse learners, and building relationships with PK-12 students.

Mentors responded that some domains of mentoring teacher candidates during COVID-19 are as effective or more effective than previous mentoring during in-person school. The following areas showed more than half of respondents selecting *equal to before* or *better than before*: content knowledge, creating a positive classroom environment, and designing effective instruction. In contrast, there were several areas mentor teachers identified as worse than before COVID-19, including assessing student learning and meeting the needs of diverse learners. The mentor teachers were divided on the area of building relationships with PK-12 students, where half of the mentor teachers stated this was worse than before and half responding this was better than before.

Figure 2

Mentor Teacher Responses: Domain Specific



Focus Groups. Mentor teachers stated that communication with year-long teaching interns was an adjustment but is more frequent than during face-to-face internships. One mentor teacher stated that in her experience, the virtual environment required “really looking at the lesson plan in detail and having a conversation” with the teaching intern. Mentor teachers found that by using text messaging, emails, and web conferencing tools, they had more explicit communication with year-long teaching interns. Mentors stated that being intentional about communication resulted in more frequent contact and clear focus for each discussion with teacher candidates. Mentor teachers highlighted the need to clearly plan roles and explain strategies before virtual synchronous classes. One mentor teacher stated, “We are on the phone, we’re on Zoom every day. We meet with them, especially when they take over, preparing for the instruction. We would do this 48 hours in advance. What the objective is and what the goal is, the outcome. And we will walk them through to a point where they would create their slides.”

Many mentor teachers also expressed uncertainty and concern about the lack of experience interns are having in teaching reading in small groups, managing transitions during a face-to-face school day, and managing their time effectively. Several mentors reported using online curriculum resources, such as teaching demonstration videos, to allow teacher candidates to observe instructional strategies. One mentor teacher described some of the learning the interns participated in at her PDS site, “[The teaching interns] do attend meetings with us on different subject areas, and when they can’t attend I would record and share it out with them, so they know what to expect for the different subject areas.” Mentor teachers also reported the importance of sharing all curriculum resources and explicitly explaining how teachers use curriculum resources to design learning experiences and lessons for students in a virtual environment.

Interview. During the interview, the mentor teacher affirmed the results of the survey and focus groups by stating she was concerned about teacher candidates’ skills with classroom management due to the nature of virtual schooling and the policies in place in school districts

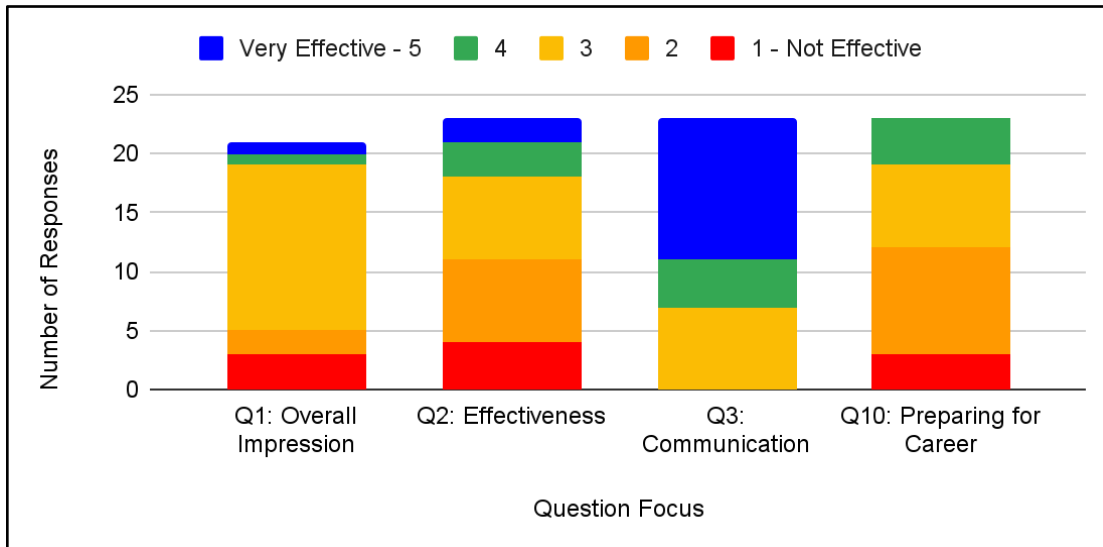
regarding how teacher candidates may work with students. In this particular school district, teaching interns were not allowed to be present in a virtual space for relationship building or instruction without the mentor teacher present. This created challenges for the typical gradual release of responsibilities the mentor teacher had previously used. The mentor teacher also identified access to technology and reliable internet as a barrier for some teacher candidates, stating, “there were a lot of issues with the technology piece.”

Teacher Candidates

Survey. The Teaching Internship during COVID-19 Survey was completed by 23 students currently completing the year-long internship with a mentor teacher. On Question 1, “Overall, how is your virtual year-long internship going?” respondents used a 1-5 scale with 1 being “very poorly” and 5 being “very well.” Teacher candidates provided scores that included the full range of the scale. Fourteen teacher candidates selected a middle score of 3. On Question 2, teacher candidates were asked to compare the effectiveness of their current virtual internships with their pre-COVID-19 field experiences in classrooms. Similar to Question 1, teacher candidates reported the full range of responses on Question 2. Question 3 asked “Overall, how is the communication between you and your mentor teacher?” Teacher candidates responded with all 3, 4, or 5 scores, with 12 responding that communication was “Very Effective.” Finally, teacher candidates responded to the question, “Overall, how effectively is your year-long teaching internship preparing you for your first year teaching face-to-face?” Twelve teacher candidates responded with a 1 or 2 indicating they did not find the internship to be effective for preparing them for their future professional careers. Eleven teacher candidates responded with a 3 or 4 indicating some effectiveness. No teacher candidates indicated that the virtual year-long teaching internship was very effective at preparing them for their future careers.

Figure 3

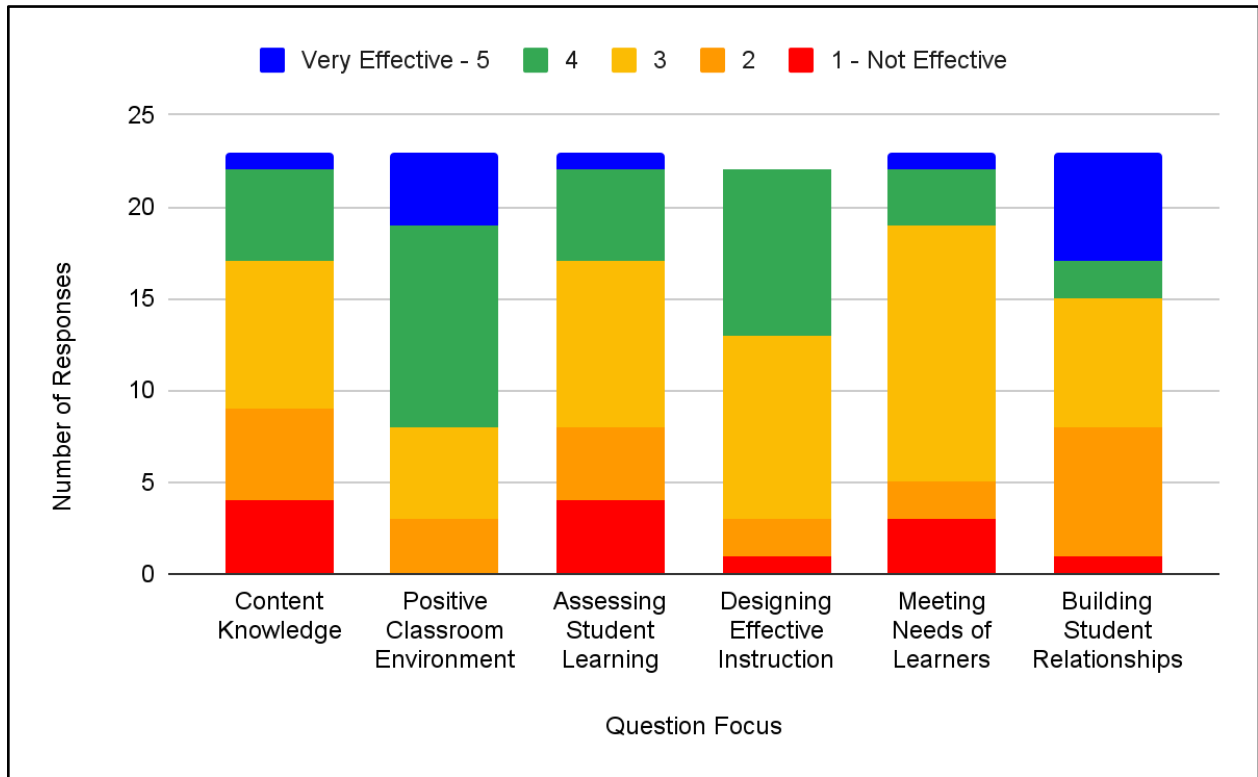
Teacher Candidate Survey: General Questions



Similar results were repeated on the remaining survey questions. Teacher candidates reported a wide range of experiences in the virtual year-long internship in specific domains. Figure 3 highlights the areas that were more effective or less effective, while responses for most domains fell in a middle range of 2, 3, or 4 on the scale. Building student relationships and a positive classroom environment showed more responses of “very effective” than other domains. In contrast, development in content knowledge, assessing student learning, and meeting diverse needs of students all had more “not effective” ratings than other domains.

Figure 4

Teacher Candidate Responses: Domain Specific Questions



Seven teacher candidates provided a response to the open-ended opportunity to provide comments (See Appendix A). In general, many expressed the university program requirements needed to be modified as a result in the change in the school model to virtual.

Focus Groups. During the focus groups, teacher candidates provided insight to several aspects of the year-long virtual internship experience and identified areas where the PDS program could better support teacher candidates and mentor teachers. In response to a question about effective communication during the internship experience, one teacher candidate focus group participant highlighted the need for school site PDS coordinators to “start a relationship with the student teachers that are coming into your school.” She continued to explain that her experience was that she “never spoke to those two teachers unless somebody was coming to visit the school because college students were in there.” This response helped explain some of the inconsistent responses to the survey about effective communication between teacher candidates and mentor teachers during the virtual internship experience. As this participant demonstrated, the PDS site-based coordinators had inconsistent communication styles.

Another area of focus for teacher candidates was access to the technology systems at the school. Many teacher candidates were frustrated with the lack of access to learning management systems, online curriculum materials, and access to other digital tools students were expected to use throughout classes.

Finally, the teacher candidate focus group spoke to the university requirements during the year-long teaching internship. Many stated that the coursework, assignments, and other requirements were unclear. One teacher candidate stated, “It’s a lot of duplication of forms; they’re not clear.”

Interview. During interviews, the teacher candidates reported on the difficulties of learning classroom management when students are in their own homes. One teacher candidate described how virtual learning has created “15 different learning environments, one for each student.” Another teacher candidate also reported developing relationships with elementary students was more challenging virtually compared to face-to-face experiences in the classroom stating, “When we were in the classroom physically, you were able to interact with the students a lot more. So, virtually, it was a little harder.”

During interviews, teacher candidates also highlighted the alignment of assignments in the university courses and the internship responsibilities in a PDS school site. One teacher candidate stated, “They should look at reducing the number of assignments, especially when we’re virtual. We’re on the computer all day for classes and then have to be on the computer to do assignments.”

Summary Findings

We have identified five themes that mentor teachers and teacher candidates reported in the surveys, focus groups, and interviews. Table 1 offers a summary of our findings.

Table 1

Summary of Findings

Themes	Summary of Findings
Classroom Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The virtual school environment is a barrier to developing classroom management skills in teacher candidates who are completing internships in an online setting.
Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentor teacher disposition is a significant influence on the teacher candidate’s development during the year-long internship. • Virtual schooling requires specific strategies to develop relationships, both between the mentor teacher and teacher candidate and between the teacher candidate and students.
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequent, regular, and focused communication using tools such as web conferencing and text message proved to be beneficial to mentors and teacher candidates during the year-long internship.
PDS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear expectations and a cohesive program, as well as alignment of schedules, can help teacher candidates and mentor teachers successfully complete the year-long internship.
Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher candidates need access to all school district resources, including digital tools, learning management systems, curriculum resources, and any online subscriptions.

Discussion

We used the intersection of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education [AACTE] Clinical Practice Report and the NAPDS Nine Essentials (Garin et al., 2018) to frame our discussion about our action research study.

The results of this action research study provided programmatic insights for strengthening our PDS partnership and clinical internship through boundary spanning roles and caused us to take a collaborative look at the elements of our teacher preparation program (AACTE 2018 p. 5-11). We believe that as a result of collaborative action research, the three authors, a university doctoral student, a university professor and a PDS teacher and adjunct faculty member, learned specific ways to support mentor teachers and teacher candidates in our PDS network while experiencing an emergency school closure and virtual school environment. We used this emergency situation as an opportunity for *ongoing assessment of an established partnership, including its effectiveness and impact to ensure efficacy and sustainability through the COVID-19 emergency and shutdowns* (AACTE, 2018 p. 28).

The Revised PDS Nine Essentials (NAPDS, 2019) use Essential 5: Research and Results to emphasize the engagement in collaborative research and the public sharing of these results. This Essential guided us to collaborate across different PDS roles to bring our experiences together to be able to answer our research questions and analyze our results using different perspectives (Garin & Burns, 2000). We were able to share our action research study with university faculty and supervisors, site-based PDS coordinators, principals, and mentor teachers, to reexamine our practices and make shifts to accommodate the emergency of a virtual clinical internship and associated courses. We were also able to circle back to our study participants to share how their voices helped us make many of the changes that they requested.

We used our action research study to improve practice for all learners. One such practice was to implement a back to school gathering to bring all members of the PDS together before the year-long internship began. Mentor teachers, PDS Site Coordinators, university faculty, and university supervisors were able to meet and discuss goals and plans for the clinical internship.

We shared our action research results in a variety of outlets. We shared our findings at the NAPDS conference with other PDS program leaders and with our PDS network at monthly network meetings. In addition, we included the findings and modified the program offerings in our Teach, Coach, Reflect course for mentor teachers. We used these findings to dig deeper into our PDS work at our annual PDS Network Summer Strategic Planning Retreat, facilitating discussions with mentor teachers and university faculty to develop ways to address the areas of teacher candidate development identified as not as effective when experiencing a virtual internship, such as classroom management and assessing student learning.

We used this action research study to collaboratively craft changes to our program. One such change involved redesigning the methods course assignments to be more aligned to the experiences of teacher candidates at the PDS sites and reduce redundancies. Another change in the methods courses included more opportunities to role play or practice instructional techniques in courses with peers.

Finally, we have revised the course offerings and support for teacher candidates during their Phase One and Phase Two semesters of their clinical internship to include additional instructional technology training including web conference best practices and digital tools to assess student learning. University and adjunct faculty who deliver the methods courses have sought guest experts from the PDS sites to provide lessons about the technology systems and expectations in the PDS schools.

Our action research highlights the importance of collaboration and working with all members of our PDS Network community by listening to the voices of our teacher candidates, mentor teachers, and university faculty to ensure that the clinical internship experiences, whether virtual or face to face, are able to prepare future teachers for the realities of teaching in schools. From aligning university requirements and assignments to school district technology, teacher candidates benefit from PDS partners working together.

References

- American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education. (2018). *A pivot toward clinical practice, it's lexicon, and the renewal of educator preparation: A report of the AACTE Clinical Practice Commission*. Author.
- Bogdan, R. C. & Biklen, S. K. (2007). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theory and methods (5th ed.)*. Pearson.
- Dana, N. F. (2017). Practitioner inquiry and PDS work: A reflection on 25 years of purpose, problems, and potentials. In E. Garin & R. Burns (Eds.), *School University Partnerships* 10(4), 5-12.
- Garin, E. & Burns, R. W. (Eds.) (2020). *Clinically-based teacher education in action: Cases from Professional Development Schools*. Information Age Publishing.
- Garin, E., Burns, R. W. & Polly, C. (2018). The intersection of the AACTE clinical practice report and the NAPDS nine essentials. *PDS Partners: Bridging Research to Practice*, 13(3), 5-7.
- Hubbard, R. S., & Power, B. M. (2003). *The art of classroom inquiry: A handbook for teacher-researchers*. Heinemann.
- Garin, E. (2017). Teacher inquiry in professional development schools: Does it make a difference? A special online issue of *School-University Partnerships*, 10(4), 13-29.
- Kemmis, S., & McTaggart, R. (1992). *The action research reader*. Deakin University Press.
- Kemmis, S., & McTaggart, R. (2000). Participatory action research. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *The handbook of qualitative research (2nd ed.)*. Sage.
- National Association of Professional Development Schools. (2021). *Nine Essentials*. Author. <https://napds.org/nine-essentials/>

Author Information

Crystal Marshall-Krauss (Cmarshallkrauss@gmail.com) is a graduate student at Bowie State University in the Educational Leadership Doctoral program and a middle school computer science teacher in Montgomery County, Maryland. Ms. Marshall-Krauss has presented at several national and regional conferences including NAPDS, InstructureCon, and Personalized Learning Conference (PLearn) MidAtlantic.

Eva Garin (egar@bowiestate.edu) is a Professor at Bowie State University where she serves as the Director of the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning and as the PDS Network Coordinator. Dr. Garin serves as Co-Editor of the NAPDS journal, PDS Partners: Bridging Research to Practice and a past chair of the AERA PDS Research Special Interest Group.

Dawn Nowlin (dawn.nowlin@pgcps.org) is a 5th grade teacher in Prince George's County Public Schools in Maryland. She is also an adjunct instructor at Bowie State University in the PDS program.

Appendix A

Mentoring during Virtual Schooling Survey Open-Ended Comments

Mentor Teacher Responses

- Engagement Ideas: Teaching interns to open the chat for Qs then closing to avoid playful behaviors. Utilize active participants by thumbs up, holding up fingers, etc.. Allow students to unmute when counting or oral reading at times. Use of equity sticks for calling on students. Encouraging cameras on for those that have not opted out of video. Use of transition movement activities (e.g., Go Noodle, Interactive slides). [Materials that are] colorful, engaging!
- Lesson planning courses would help in addition to the reading methods classes. A separate class to focus solely on student engagement and differentiation would benefit the transition to virtual learning.
- As a mentor, you are used to having your intern with you and having conversations as things happen. In the virtual world, it's a difficult thing to do. Taking time out to plan when you yourself need those minutes can be challenging.
- Overall, the experience is great, my intern works very hard, is motivated, reliable and loves children. I am preparing her as much as possible, but I also understand that she is not receiving the day-to-day "real time" classroom environment experience that she needs.
- It is a bit more challenging compared to before. Difficulties with technology use, use of materials, and using virtual textbooks and games.
- Some things are different, but we adjusting well. As a teacher, you have to be flexible and reflective. You have to learn about your students' needs and how to connect with them. My intern has learned how to do these things. She has great time management skills, so it makes her internship and workload easier as well. There are some things that are lacking because we are not able to be in person like (guided reading and centers), but I will give her resources and other ideas I received from the meeting today.

Teacher Candidate Responses

- Accommodations within the college of education program need to be made to fit the virtual classroom setting, and there needs to be more communication between the staff.
- Please revamp this program according to the virtual world.
- The program requirements should be modified to take into consideration the amount of time spent on the computer.
- Revise the program because it doesn't work during this virtual learning.
- If candidates are being departmentalized, then they should be assigned two mentors so that there isn't confusion when it comes to teaching different content.
- Please adjust the program to fit the virtual environment. Communication is not effective.

Appendix B

Focus Group and Interview Questions

Mentor Questions

1. When we asked mentor teachers the question, “Overall, how well is mentoring during Covid-19 going?” using a scale of 1-5 with 5 being very well, every mentor who took the survey responded with a 3 or higher score. What does going well mean to mentor teachers right now?
2. The intern responses were much more varied to this question. For instance, the majority of intern respondents score their responses a 3 or lower. Why do you think there is a difference between how mentors are viewing this internship versus how the interns are viewing it?
3. Mentor teachers reported lower scores for their responses to the question asking them to compare the effectiveness of this mentoring experience to pre-covid internships than they did for the overall question. Many mentor teachers indicated that the internship was not as effective as in person internships. Why do you think mentors report the internship is going well while not being as effective at preparing interns for future teaching careers?
4. Mentor teachers were asked to rate the effectiveness of different aspects of teacher preparation that are developed during the teaching internship experiences. Three areas, content knowledge, creating a positive classroom environment, and designing effective instruction were all rated as being effective or more effective during their virtual teaching internships. Why are these areas able to be as effective or more effective during Covid-19 school closure teaching internships?
5. Two areas of intern development were rated by mentor teachers as not as effective during the virtual teaching internship: assessing student learning and meeting the needs of diverse learners. What do you see as the barriers to successfully mentoring teaching interns in these areas? Why are these areas less effective in the virtual internship?
6. What are your suggestions for how PDS partnerships can provide support for areas that are not effectively preparing interns during Covid-19 school closures?

Teacher Candidate Questions

1. The question, “Overall, how well is mentoring during Covid-19 going?” using a scale of 1-5 with 5 being very well, Phase One and Phase Two students had a wide range of responses with some interns selecting each possible response from 1-5. Why do you think interns are having such different experiences with the virtual internship?
2. The mentor responses to this question were less varied and no mentor teachers selected the response of 1 or 2. Why do you think mentors see this virtual internship experience as going better than the interns?
3. Phase One and Phase Two students were asked how effective the virtual internship experiences are at preparing them for future professional teaching positions. About 80% of respondents select a score of 3 or lower on a scale with 1 being not effective at all and 5 being as effective as in person internship experiences. What do you think is a major reason that Phase One and Phase Two students are not finding the virtual internship to be effective?

4. Phase One and Phase Two students were asked to rate the effectiveness of the internship in several areas. Two areas offer an interesting comparison. Look at the number of responses for each score selected below. Why do you think there is a difference between building a positive classroom environment and building relationships with K-12 students?

Score Range	Number of Respondents for the question “How effective has your year long internship been at preparing you in the area of creating a positive classroom environment?”	Number of Respondents for the question: “How effective has your year long internship been at preparing you in the area of building relationships with K-12 students?”
1 or 2 - Not as effective as in person	3	8
3 - Mid way between not effective and as effective as in person	5	7
4 or 5 - Almost or as effective as in person	15	8

5. Phase 1 and Phase 2 students also responded strongly that the year long internship was not effective at developing their skills in content knowledge with the majority of respondents selecting a score of 3 or lower. However, the mentor teachers responded that the development of content knowledge was as effective or more effective than face to face internships have previously been. Why do you think there is a difference between how mentor teachers and Phase One and Phase Two view the effectiveness of developing their content knowledge during this virtual internship?
6. What are suggestions for how PDS partnerships can provide support for areas that are not effectively preparing interns during Covid-19 school closures?

First Year Teacher Questions

1. Since this is your first time as respondents in our study about virtual teaching internships, can you each tell us your experiences during your student teaching internship placements and your current roles and positions this school year?
2. We have surveyed several mentor teachers and teaching interns this semester who are all completing their Phase One or Phase Two internship experiences in a virtual setting. Based on your experiences previously and your experiences as first year teachers teaching in virtual classroom, we are interested to hear your insights into some of the responses we have found. First, mentor teachers and interns both indicate that the virtual internship is not as effective as face-to-face internship experiences. What do you think is the reason that virtual internships do not seem to be as effective?

3. Both current interns and mentor teachers responded that assessing student learning was an area that was not being effectively addressed during the virtual internship. Based on your experiences, why do you think this is the case? What could PDS partnerships do to help better prepare interns in this area?
4. Both current interns and mentor teachers responded that the area of creating a positive classroom environment was effectively being developed in interns during this virtual internship. What do you think this means for teacher candidates during the internship? What skills are they developing? How do you see this translating to the experience of first year teachers?
5. What other, if any, insights can you offer for PDS partnerships to prepare teacher candidates when completing their internship or first year of teaching in a virtual environment?