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PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SCHOOLS

BUILDING COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIPS SLOWLY

Centenary College, Hackettstown, NJ is currently engaged in the third year of participation in a national movement promoting Professional Development School (PDS) collaboration, and is continuing to encourage and promote relationships that will help ensure quality field placements for our student teacher interns and on-going professional growth of educators.

Professional Development Schools (PDS) represent a relationship between P-12 school settings and the Education Department of a college or university. Participating personnel include P-12 students, pre-service teachers, in-service teachers, administrators, and college faculty. The purpose of the PDS collaborative is to create a learning community with win-win-win objectives for pre-service teachers, in-service teachers, and P-12 learners, as well as growth opportunities for everyone involved. In view of the federal mandate that all classroom teachers be highly qualified, “No Child Left Behind” legislation, PDSs offer an additional avenue for enhancing professional growth opportunities. The New Jersey Professional Standards Board mission statement reads, “The mission of the Professional Teaching Standards Board is to ensure that standards based Professional Development results in professional growth and enhances student learning.”

The key to Professional Development School (PDS) collaborative relationships is the important benefit to all stakeholders; pre-service teachers, veteran in-service teachers, school administrators, college faculty, and P-12 learners. Strong relationships take time to develop for a variety of reasons, not the least of which is mutual trust.

More than ever before, P-12 administrators face many challenges and increased responsibilities daily. Similarly, the role of classroom teachers is becoming increasingly demanding. Efforts toward building collaborative relationships with colleges and universities must be approached cautiously. In addition to the recognized security issues with having outside personnel in the schools, administrator and teacher time must be directed toward the P-12 program, not toward providing accommodations for outside institutions. In these regards, a sense of trust and benefit to the P-12 program must evolve. Strong collaborative relationships may develop slowly and can begin with very modest expectations.

“Although a wide range of practices are being called partnerships, the term is best used to describe a relationship in which different entities serve each other’s needs in a manner similar to what biologists refer to as *mutualism*. In other words, as Goodlad notes, a true school-university partnership is, above all, beneficially symbiotic. In such a partnership there should be channels of

communication between the university and school districts including a governance group consisting of the district superintendents and the dean of the school, college, or department of education (SCDE) as well as key leaders from arts and sciences, a coordinating group of university faculty and school district administrators, and interpersonal relationships that support open and frank exchanges of ideas involving teachers at both the university and school level.”¹

The Education Department at Centenary College, Hackettstown, NJ has begun developing strong collaborative relationships with area P-12 schools. Program specifics, as identified later, are clearly and simply stated. P-12 school personnel are invited to serve on the Advisory Council of the Centenary College Education Department, a governance group cited above as an important channel of communication. Another component of trust that must be earned over time is for school administrators and teachers to be assured that college personnel will not be critical of programs and procedures nor view themselves as THE expert authority. The resources dedicated by Centenary College to this important component of pre-service and in-service teacher training reflect the strong commitment to the “improvement of instruction”.

“Although wording differs and there are differences in emphasis and focus among the different PDS advocates, a strong convergence around the following four goals has emerged over the past 15 years:

- Improvement of student learning
- Preparation of educators
- Professional development of educators
- Research and inquiry into improving practice

This consensus was examined, field tested, and codified by the PDS Standards Project of the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education. (NCATE)...While not everyone in the PDS community embraces the Standards with the same enthusiasm, they are widely seen as the best representation of the consensus of what it means to be a PDS.”²

With this in mind, a component of the Centenary College PDS philosophy is to encourage a school climate that promotes on-going professional growth among all school personnel. In fact, participants in PDS professional growth currently include school superintendents, principals, teachers, and school secretaries, in roles that include students in formal courses, adjunct professors, workshop participants, and workshop presenters.

During the 2002-2003 academic year Centenary College provided two graduate courses, 3 credits each, at a school site in Dover, New Jersey. These courses were specifically developed to meet the needs of elementary and middle school teachers for enhancing mathematics instruction. The courses were taught at North Dover Elementary School and provided an opportunity to develop a professional rapport with Dover faculty and administrators.

As a direct result of this positive experience, Centenary College entered into a Professional Development School relationship with Academy Street School in Dover for **the 2003-2004 academic year**. Working with Dover administrators and Dover faculty, we successfully trained four student teachers with outstanding cooperating teachers. Two of these cooperating teachers made presentations at professional conferences on the Centenary College campus during the spring of 2004. The Centenary College Education Department was pleased with the modest but positive PDS initiative.

In an effort to enhance and further promote a meaningful collaborative relationship with PDSs, Centenary College sent a strong signal regarding commitment to the program. College Administrators and Education Department Faculty agreed on the following commitment:

- PDS administrators and teachers with appropriate credentials are welcomed as adjunct professors
- PDS school personnel may participate in Centenary College workshops and professional development programs at 50% of the registration fee
- PDS administrators are invited to serve on the Advisory Council of the Centenary College Education Department
- PDS personnel are invited to attend Centenary College Education Forums held twice each year

And most important in terms of financial commitment:

- PDS school personnel may register for Centenary College coursework for 50% tuition
 - \$598 per credit
 - 3 credit course = \$1794
 - 50% = \$ 897 per three credit course
- Graduate courses would be offered at the PDS school site with as few as 4 participants per class (in-service personnel)

PDS schools are asked to observe and accommodate the following program mechanics:

Student teachers are placed in a school for a one year internship program with teachers serving as strong mentor/role models

1st semester-practicum, one day per week
two formal observations by college faculty

2nd semester-student teaching, full time for 15 weeks
six formal observations by college faculty

Cooperating teachers are provided orientation opportunities both on the Centenary College campus and at the PDS site

Centenary College student teachers are encouraged to observe several teachers in addition to the assigned cooperating teacher

Centenary College student teachers meet as a group to discuss professional growth experiences

The number of student teachers in a school is typically 3 or 4

The value of observing master teachers cannot be overstated. In addition to placing student teachers with highly competent role models, opportunity for observing a variety of respected teachers can pay significant dividends. Subtle strategies and procedures that pre-service teachers observe in the several classrooms can help in developing a clear vision of her / himself as a professional teacher. Also, in addition to formal feedback that pre-service teachers receive from college supervisors following a specific lesson, which of course can promote dramatic growth, formal and informal observations by the cooperating teacher can ultimately provide the most valuable feedback and constructive criticism. Working together daily for a full semester, in a climate of mutual respect, offers a cooperating teacher strong leverage in developing the pre-service teacher.

Beyond these learning experiences, the opportunity for student teachers to meet among themselves as well as with college supervisors at the PDS provides increased opportunity for sharing learning experiences and addressing relevant issues, beyond those offered in Student Teaching Seminar, EDU 400, which is held on campus weekly.

In *The Professional Development Schools Handbook: Starting , Sustaining, and Assessing Partnerships That Improve Student Learning (2003) Teitel states:*

“Pilot start-up PDSs tend to have the barest minimum of set structures and resources and only the loosest of role descriptions. This was particularly true in the early days of start-ups, since there was very little knowledge base about what structures should be in place and little commitment of time or money to them. But even now, I work with a number of partnerships that are quite consciously choosing to let form follow function and deliberately not using preset models to determine the way they organize themselves. Their focus is usually on the PDS work-the learning community changes being put into place-with just enough structure, power, legitimacy, and access to resources to make those efforts work. Often teachers and teacher educators work together in these efforts, operating “under the radar” of others at one or both of their respective institutions and only adding formal structures when they run into the need.”²

From the humble start with a single PDS relationship between Centenary College and Academy Street School, two additional PDS relationships were established for the 2004-2005 school year. These two schools include; White Rock Elementary School, Jefferson, NJ represented by Dr. Kathleen Prystash, principal, Dr. Gary Bowen, Superintendent of Schools and Dr. Mary Thornton, Director of Elementary Education AND Hackettstown Middle School, Hackettstown, NJ represented by Mr. Michael Meyer, principal, Mr. Karl Mundi, Director of Curriculum and Ms. Joanne Calabro, Superintendent of Schools.

During the 2004-2005 school year, the three PDS schools provided a year long authentic field experience for 11 pre-service teachers. Additionally, during the Fall 2004 semester graduate courses were conducted at two PDS sites, with 13 in-service teachers enrolled. In addition, nine teachers from PDSs were enrolled in courses on the Centenary College Campus. Also during the Fall 2004 semester, the principal of White Rock Elementary School taught courses as an adjunct professor.

During the Spring 2005 semester two graduate courses were again conducted at PDS sites, along with several graduate enrollees for on campus courses. Six PDS personnel were engaged as Centenary College adjunct faculty, including: Richard Brahm, teacher; Andrew Bujno, teacher; Joanne Calabro, Superintendent of Schools; Robert Cavo, principal; Michael Meyer, principal; and Dr. Kathleen Prystash, principal. Clearly the PDS collaborative learning community was growing, and blending the roles of professional educators.

“Teachers who were originally only focused on climbing the salary scale have discovered the importance of PDS professional development. Clinical educators are pursuing additional degrees. Field professors are selecting courses to enhance their capabilities and requesting workshops on how to meet the unique needs of learners. PDS teachers are proposing new courses they want designed for student interns. Professors are being asked to teach courses in new and different ways. This is a different vision for all educators.”³

“It is encouraging to note that although the slow pace of change is the biggest frustration of those involved in the PDS process, it is also something they understand and acknowledge as unavoidable. Although there are problems in instituting and maintaining the PDS, there were more benefits than problems identified and individuals appear to be garnering personal and professional satisfaction and growth from these activities.”⁴

Before elaborate structures can be established, strong foundations are critical. Small steps and slow growth hold far more promise for long lasting and productive relationships than lots of hype and fancy footwork. The Centenary College PDS program is built upon integrity, professional ethics, and trust. The need to build strong collaborative relationships slowly in an effort to reach toward the four major goals of PDS relationships is supported in the following compelling statements.

“The 600 or so Professional Development Schools that are currently operating are at various stages of development. PDS proponents stress that these institutions are works-in-progress, and full implementation of programming that addresses each of the four major goals is a long term endeavor.”⁵

“Veteran teachers learn more about theory and practice of teaching as they begin to teach pre-service teachers. Theory is demystified quickly as intersections between research, theory, and practice are built through collaborative meetings, discussions, and informal interactions. Teachers find their own knowledge base deepening, and they recognize that their teaching becomes more reflective.”⁶

To develop a concise mission statement for PDS development, Centenary College Education Faculty considered the four major goals cited above, which are:

- Improvement of student learning
- Preparation of educators
- Professional development of educators
- Research and inquiry into improving practice

along with the following agreement:

“Major organizations - including Goodlad’s National Network for Educational Renewal (NNER); the Holmes Partnership; the National Center for Restructuring Education, Schools, and Teaching (NCREST); and the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) - agree that professional development schools must accomplish four basic goals. Although the wording used by each organization varies, they concur that such schools provide a clinical setting for pre-service education, engage in professional development for practitioners, promote and conduct inquiry that advances knowledge of schooling, and provide an exemplary education for a segment of P-12 students (preschool through twelfth grade).”¹

Fully developed and mature PDS collaborative relationships reflect variety and sophisticated networks, but strong agreement on specific goals as cited above is essential for a solid foundation upon which to build. Adopting these goals lead to the following mission statement:

The mission of the Centenary College Professional Development School collaborative program is:

To create learning communities that function as collaborative partnerships between a school / school district and Centenary College, and that offer win-win-win opportunities for P-12 learners, pre-service teachers, and in-service teachers.

As our PDS program matures, Centenary College faculty from the arts and sciences will become engaged in the collaborative relationship with Education Professors and school practitioners. John Goodlad (7), suggests that three different groups of actors come together; the schools, education professors, and professors from the arts and sciences. In the interest of quality and integrity, the inclusion of various Centenary College faculty will evolve at a rate that encourages success, mutual trust, and acceptance of common goals. To date, full time professors from the social studies department and mathematics department have participated in the supervision of student teachers. It is planned that the role of these faculty members will expand to offer professional development opportunities for in-service teachers.

For the 2005-2006 school year, several schools and districts are collaborating with Centenary College as PDSs.

Academy Street School, Dover	AS	Liberty School, Great Meadows	LS
Allamuchy El. School, Allamuchy	AE	Lopatcong School District	LD
Alpha School District	AL	Matheny School, (Lab school site) Peapack	MS
Belvidere School District	BS	Memorial School, Washington Borough	MW
Bloomsbury School District	BL	Merriam Avenue and Halsted MS, Newton	MA
Central School, Great Meadows	CS	Nixon Elementary School, Roxbury	NE
Franklin Township El. School, Washington	FE	North Dover El. School	ND
Fredon Township School, Newton	FT	Phillipsburg School District	PS
Great Meadows Middle School, Great Meadows	GM	Pohatcong Township School	PT
Greenwich Township School Dist., Stewartsville	GT	Sussex Middle School, Sussex	SM
Hackettstown High School, Hackettstown	HH	Taylor Street School, Washington Borough	TS
Hackettstown Middle School, Hackettstown	HM	Warren Hills High School, Washington	WH
Harmony School District	HS	Warren Hills Middle School, Washington	WM
Hatchery Hill School, Hackettstown	HA	White Rock Elementary School, Jefferson	WR
Hope School District	HO	White School District	WS
Hunterdon Central Regional H.S., Flemington	HC	Willow Grove El. School, Hackettstown	WG

During the Fall 2005 semester, 6 courses were offered at PDS sites, some organized as matriculated degree cohorts. During the Spring and Summer 2006 semesters, twenty two courses were offered at PDS sites. Also, several PDS personnel enroll in classes on the Centenary College campus.

Websites of interest

www.njpep.org
www.aacte.org
www.ncate.org
www.nas.edu/sputnik/goodlad.htm
www.admin2.soe.purdue.edu/pds/

- 1 Clark, Richard W. (1999). *Effective Professional Development Schools*. San Francisco, California: Jossey-Bass, Inc.
- 2 Teitel, Lee, (2003). *The Professional Development Schools Handbook: Starting, Sustaining, and Assessing Partnerships That Improve Student Learning*. Thousand Oaks, California: Corwin Press, Inc.
- 3 Johnston, Marilyn; Brosnan, Patti; Cramer, Don; Dove, Tim; (2000) *Collaborative Reform and Other Improbable Dreams*. Albany, New York: State University of New York Press
- 4 Byrd, David M. and McIntyre, D. John, (1999). *Research on Professional Development Schools: Teacher Education Yearbook VII*. Thousand Oaks, California: Corwin Press, Inc.
- 5 Abdal-Haqq, Ismat, (1998). *Professional Development Schools: Weighing The Evidence*. Thousand Oaks, California: Corwin Press, Inc.
- 6 Levine, Marsha and Trachtman, Roberta, (1997) *Making Professional Development Schools Work: Politics, Practice and Policy*. New York, NY: Teachers College, Columbia University
- 7 Goodlad, John I. (1994) *Educational Renewal: Better teachers, better schools*. San Francisco, California: Jossey-Bass, Inc.