

Formalizing a Process for Identifying Urban PDS Partnerships

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Who is responsible for student learning? We've heard it 'takes a whole village' to educate our children, but how have we gone about institutionalizing ways in which this responsibility is shared? One of the ways our college has begun to recognize the shared responsibility for student learning is through the creation of Professional Development School (PDS) partnerships. Both the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (1996) and the Holmes Group (1986, 1990, 1995) suggest that the solution to improving student learning is through formal university-school collaborations, or Professional Development Schools (PDSs). As the research base on PDS partnerships grows, so does the evidence that PDSs improve the quality of teaching in ways that

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ultimately improve student learning (Abdal-Haqq, 1998; Chance, 2000; Houston, Hollis, Clay, Ligon, & Roff, 1999; Levine, 1997; Teitel, 2001).

A true PDS, according to the Holmes Group (1990), seeks to establish a wide-ranging and long-term collaboration whose goals include promoting intensive professional development, restructuring educational roles and practices, establishing sites of best practice for the preparation of new teachers, and carrying out educational research. PDSs are institutions designed to make a difference in the lives of school and university people who work in them and for children who are educated in them (Holmes Group, 1995). To create an environment that promotes both adult and children's learning, partners must hold themselves accountable for implementing an effective professional development plan for teacher education candidates and practicing teachers and for documenting their efforts in order to assess the effectiveness of their plan in relation to student learning. The question for universities is not *should* we create PDS partnerships but, more importantly, *how* do we create them and how do we choose educational settings with which to form long-term, meaningful partnerships.

Conceptualizing an Urban Professional Development School Network

The PDS literature emphasizes the importance of teacher preparation and professional development for improving schools. While the literature advocates the creation of PDS partnerships, it does not offer much guidance for how to select PDSs. Our experience has been that many PDSs are chosen in one of two ways. A majority of PDSs are selected simply because they have a longstanding working relationship with the College and/or have personal connections with the education faculty. The second route has been that colleges of education have ventured into PDS partnerships with all of the schools with which they have connections. In these situations, we have seen the PDSs operate with varying degrees of success because not all of the PDSs receive the same attention and resources necessary to develop a successful PDS partnership.

In June, 1999, the Division of Education at Lehman College, City University of New York began developing a process for identifying PDS partnerships with local urban settings. We began our conversations around selecting PDSs by first exploring what we would want in a PDS, what goals we would want to accomplish through the partnership, and what commitments we would need to make to ensure that these goals could be achieved. A PDS Task Force was created consisting of depart-

ment chairs, coordinators of teacher preparation and professional development programs, and the Dean of the Division of Education. During the summer of 1999 the Task Force read and discussed commonly cited resources on PDSs and spoke to invited consultants who had worked extensively in elementary and secondary PDSs. Once we had a PDS knowledge base, we defined a Professional Development Site (as opposed to a Professional Development School) as a unique form of partnership that would focus on five PDS goals, reflect a set of core characteristics, and allocate all necessary human and material resources to ensure that the partnership is central to the culture of the participating institutions. The five goals that each PDS would seek to accomplish were:

1. Preparing teachers for urban schools using the Division of Education's conceptual framework;
2. Improving student learning;
3. Offering quality professional development opportunities for urban teachers;
4. Conducting inquiry into the impact of the PDS relationship on children, preservice students, teachers, and college faculty;
5. Helping teacher candidates find jobs in local urban schools.

Faculty in the Division of Education believed that if these goals were to be met, there must be some core characteristics already in place in the PDSs. Sites chosen to be partners in the PDS Network would need to demonstrate:

- ◆ A commitment by administrators and teachers to the themes and theory of knowledge underlying the PDS mission;
- ◆ PDS involvement of a *majority* of site administrators, teachers, counselors, etc; and
- ◆ A commitment to inquiry into effective practices for student and teacher learning.

In order to address these goals and commitments, both institutions would need to allocate important resources to PDS work, which included part-time liaisons, adequate space for classes and meetings, technical and material support, and release time for teachers. PDS work is time consuming and requires a great deal of energy. Therefore, we needed to start with a base of PDS participants who demonstrated interest in developing professionally.

Rationale for Formalizing an Equitable Selection Process

Once Division faculty had determined what would be necessary in a PDS, we looked for examples of how other institutions had selected the sites with which they were engaged in long term and intensive PDS partnerships. As noted earlier, we found the selection process was rarely mentioned in the literature on PDSs, and when it was, it seemed that the PDS had been chosen because of existing collaborative projects, sometimes involving several individuals within the two institutions and sometimes involving only a couple. At Lehman, we had many existing partnerships with schools, yet we knew we could not allocate the necessary resources to every one of the existing partnerships to accomplish the goals of the PDS.

Furthermore, we needed a selection process that would help us avoid building PDSs on individual interests or commitments and instead build partnerships that were endorsed by all faculty. The danger in individual commitments was that the PDSs would become marginalized, considered the work of only one individual within the department, and if the individual left, the PDS partnerships could fall apart. By including representation from all departments and inviting all faculty to make choices about what sites to use, there would be a collective rather than an individual commitment to maintaining the partnership. Once we agreed to a process for considering all possible sites based on a common set of criteria, we eliminated turf battles and making choices based on personal relationships. It was only in this way that we would be able to institutionalize the PDS concept at the college. Finally, a formal process was needed if we expected upfront commitments from the site administrators and district superintendent to provide the needed resources to the PDS over the long term.

Creating an Equitable Selection Process

The first step in formalizing a selection process was to establish a committee that would oversee the process. The College/School Professional Network (CSPN) Committee was established within the Division of Education for that purpose. During the 1999-2000 academic year the CSPN was involved in the process of defining criteria for partners, inviting applications from educational settings in the urban area, creating a selection process and criteria, organizing visiting teams for potential PDS sites, and making recommendations to departments for selecting sites with which to create a formal partnership. In the remainder of this paper, we share details of this process in the hope it will both

encourage others to formalize a process for selecting sites and offer insights into what to include in such a process.

The CSPN first reviewed existing PDS criteria. The committee carefully reviewed the draft of PDS standards developed by NCATE (1997), which have since been revised (NCATE, 2001). The committee also reviewed the Lehman Urban Teacher Education (LUTE) framework, which is the conceptual framework guiding programs at Lehman College (see Appendix A for an overview of the LUTE). The committee also came up with logistical criteria, e.g., the accessibility of a site by disabled students and its location in relation to public transportation. Based on this material, the committee drafted a framework that would be used to develop a written application for interested sites and a data collection instrument for a visiting team.

The application included an overview of the goals, commitments, and core characteristics of a Lehman PDS site and a request for information that would be used by visiting teams to talk with interested sites. In the application, sites were asked to provide:

- ◆ A School Profile (Narrative + School Report Card and/or Comprehensive Educational Plan);
- ◆ An explanation of the site's current relationship with Lehman;
- ◆ Reasons for wanting to become a PDS;
- ◆ A description of the relationship between the site's mission and the LUTE;
- ◆ A description of current inquiry-based practices at the site;
- ◆ A description of involvement with Community, Parents, Counselors, Local Agencies;
- ◆ The technical and human resources to be allocated to the PDS; and
- ◆ Approvals from the superintendent, principal, the school governance committee, and the teachers union representative.

An instrument was developed to guide the prospective sites and the visiting teams in exploring the potential of the site for becoming a PDS. A segment of the instrument can be found in Appendix B. The instrument contained three types of information: (1) a description of the standards for a PDS; (2) an assessment scale identifying the degree to which there was evidence of PDS potential for each standard; and (3) examples of evidence found.

Applications were first sent to local school district superintendents with a letter from the Dean inviting them to disseminate the application to schools. There were three reasons to begin with superintendents. First, it was critical to have the superintendent's support since human and material resources were going to be allocated to the PDS. For example, district offices control the funding to provide security in schools after school hours, which is important when on-site courses are held after school hours. Secondly, district offices control the content of city-wide staff development days, and it is important to have the commitment of a superintendent that teachers in the PDSs can engage in PDS activities such as PDS conferences on these days. Finally, the New York City school system is organized in such a way that any invitations to partner with the college must be approved through a superintendent's office.

Applications were then disseminated to schools through the district offices. Districts chose to handle the dissemination of applications differently. Some sent applications to specific schools whereas others disseminated the applications to all schools. Once the written applications were returned, visiting committees were identified for each applicant. These committees consisted of three Lehman faculty from different departments. Site visits were made to every school that submitted a complete application, and the committee chairs presented a final report and recommendations to the CSPN committee. The CSPN reviewed all of the reports and forwarded its recommendations to the departments. Departments reviewed the reports of the recommended schools and voted on their choices. Sites were then notified by phone and in writing whether they had been selected as a PDS or whether they would serve as a Partner Site with the potential of becoming a PDS in the future.

We began our PDS Network with two elementary schools and one middle school. The schools that were chosen showed great potential to commit to professional development, collaboration and inquiry. In our selection process we examined sites for their potential to meet the PDS criteria. While a site may not yet meet all criteria, we looked for evidence that the site had the capability to eventually meet all the criteria. Our belief was that when a school shows the potential to be fully committed to the core characteristics and the mission of the PDS, together we can build a strong community of learners which not only supports teacher candidates but also practicing teachers. The community supports and nurtures the work of new and veteran teachers alike, which can only translate into better learning for children.

Insights from the Selection Process

Because inquiry is central to PDS work, the College/School Professional Network Committee built into the PDS framework a formal process for studying the effects of the work undertaken at the PDS sites. At the end of each year, teams of college and school faculty from each site meet to review their PDS work. In May 2001, we gathered data on the work that had taken place in the first three PDS sites selected for the PDS network. We surveyed PDS faculty and interviewed PDS and non-PDS student teachers from the three sites. We then met with our PDS school partners for a two-day evaluation meeting to: (1) revisit together the goals of a PDS and the NCATE PDS standards; (2) use the data collected to document different types of PDS work and levels of participation in PDS work by school and college faculty; and (3) set goals for the second year of the partnerships. Following the annual evaluation meeting, the authors met with a national PDS consultant to use what we had learned to establish a research agenda around our PDS work.

With some distance now from the selection process and the insights gained from our first year evaluation, we offer a set of considerations for those engaged in formalizing a process for selecting PDS sites.

(1) It is imperative that the goals of the PDS, the core characteristics that should be found in a PDS site, and the resources that will be allocated to it be determined before the selection of sites begins. The start-up year was intense and the work was extensive, but because we had explicit, agreed upon goals to work toward and knew the extent of our resources, we were able to dedicate the necessary time and resources to make the existing PDSs work.

(2) There needs to be a process for working with sites not selected as PDS sites, but continuing to participate as partners with the college. At Lehman, the CSPN Committee developed a three-tiered framework for partnerships (see Appendix C). The most intensive type of partnership between the college and schools are PDSs, followed by Partner Sites and Resource sites. Schools not selected as PDSs become Partner sites. Partner sites are those that: (1) are committed to becoming PDS sites, (2) have some or many of the core characteristics of a PDS, and (3) are attempting to meet all goals of a PDS. The main difference between a PDS and a Partner Site is that resources allocated to the work in a PDS are not present in a Partner Site. However, Partner Sites do engage in activities that occur at PDSs. For example, teacher candidates do field work and student teaching at Partner Sites, and adjunct college faculty are selected from these sites.

(3) When we developed our selection criteria we identified criteria that would be important to find in multiple potential settings. It is important to use common criteria if you wish to have an equitable selection process. However, we also realize now that it is important to include criteria based on content or age specific standards. For example, as we begin the process of identifying an early childhood PDS, our early childhood colleagues have observed that the general PDS selection criteria we used will have to be extended to include criteria specified by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), the professional organization that has established standards for Early Childhood Education.

(4) When evaluating a site's potential for allocating resources and making commitments to the PDS, potential secondary school sites must be reviewed with attention to the unique structures of these settings. Faculty in middle and high school teacher education face a number of distinctive issues in selecting a secondary PDS. Middle and high schools are organized by departments that are subject-based, that usually do not function the same way, and that have performance rates that are often not comparable. For instance, a local secondary school may have an outstanding Mathematics Department, but a Social Studies or Science Department with very low performance results. If such a school were to be chosen as a PDS, Social Studies or Science education faculty might not want to send their teacher candidates to such a setting. Because in the past Lehman's program coordinators in Middle and High School Education were responsible for the placement of their student teachers, most had developed a network of relationships with local teachers and schools they did not want to suddenly interrupt. In attempting to identify a high school PDS, no single high school emerged where all subject-based departments were able to meet the selection criteria for a PDS.

PDS resource allocations also affected the selection process for middle and high school PDSs. Secondary teacher candidates are required by New York state to have student teaching experiences at two levels, one in the junior high school and one in the senior high. To satisfy this requirement, the department proposed that student teachers complete half of their student teaching experience in a middle school, and the other half in a high school. A college PDS liaison is assigned full time to one PDS site as the college's commitment to the PDS concept. With only enough resources for one secondary college liaison position, how would the liaison follow the teacher candidates to multiple PDS sites? Furthermore, the secondary PDS liaison would have expertise in one subject, but would be required to supervise students in a variety of disciplines at a PDS site.

To resolve these issues, one middle school PDS was selected and all

high school sites were designated as Partner Sites within the Professional Development Network. Faculty would then send their candidates to the Partner Site of their choice for their high school student teaching experience and to the Middle School PDS for the other half of their experience. The college liaison would directly supervise candidates in his/her subject area, and share the responsibility of supervising the others with faculty from the specific subject areas.

(5) There needs to be a clear plan for dissemination of applications. We learned the importance of our decision to have such a plan when schools contacted us wanting to know why they had not received an application. It was important to be able to explain to them why the invitation had gone to the superintendent's office first and then to refer them to their district office to find out the specific process used by the district to disseminate applications.

(6) It is important to notify sites of selection criteria and the structure of site visits in advance. This offers them an opportunity to generate both questions they might have and responses to the criteria. Because the PDS concept is a complex one, the visiting team will find that one of their roles will be to share information with people at the prospective site about the goals and commitments required in a PDS. It will also become evident whether the majority of administrators and teachers are aware that the school is considering a PDS partnership.

(7) The selection and preparation of visiting teams is an important process in its own right. Teams should be interdisciplinary. We tried to create visiting teams that represented diverse perspectives because we understood that faculty from varied programs, e.g., counseling, bilingual education, special education, would use different, but important lenses when evaluating a site's potential as a PDS.

Once PDS sites are up and running, visiting teams for future PDSs should include representatives from a current PDS site. Over time there will be members of visiting teams who did not participate in the development of the selection criteria; therefore, it is important to provide them with an orientation that includes a discussion of how to plan for visits, how to communicate their dual purpose (information exchange as well as gathering of evidence), and what to look for and how to document evidence.

(8) We recommend that visiting teams commit to multiple visits to a site. Some of our visiting teams made more than one visit, but most made only one visit to the site. After the selection process was completed, questions arose as to whether teams were truly able to develop a comprehensive picture of the school environment in one visit, particu-

larly when the site had been working with faculty at the college in a collaborative capacity for some time prior to the creation of a network of PDSs and yet was not selected as a PDS. Such questions challenge the integrity of the selection process.

Concluding Thoughts

One of the questions often raised about our selection process is whether we can develop true collaborative partnerships with schools when the selection process was conceptualized and implemented by higher education faculty. For an institution like ours, which is guided by a strong conceptual framework and is committed to meeting the NCATE standards for accreditation, it is imperative that our school partners share a similar philosophy and commitment. What we learned is that the collaboration really began once we sat down with representatives from the selected PDSs and began working together to match college and site needs in preparing teachers, providing effective professional development for practicing teachers, engaging in inquiry, and improving student learning. Using the LUTE conceptual framework and the site's Comprehensive Educational Plan, we began to explore more deeply our similarities and differences, and we mapped out an agenda for the first year of each PDS partnership. We recently concluded the first year of our PDS work and each PDS is growing in unique ways, as PDSs are expected to do (Darling-Hammond, 1994; Johnston, Brosman, Cramer, & Dove, 2000; Lawrence, 1999). We defined our agenda for each site for the second year by building on what we were able to accomplish in the first year. We could not have arrived at this place without beginning with a set of common goals and commitments as a frame of reference. The process of defining and re-defining our partnership in light of these goals and commitments is nurturing a true collaboration.

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Appendix A

Summary of LUTE Conceptual Framework

Theme I: Building a Community of Teachers/Learners

This theme suggests that the inquiry stance to education supports the development of education communities, drives instructional decisions, and shapes approaches to teacher, counselor, and school development. Within communities shaped by inquiry, everybody teachers and everybody learns.

Graduates of the program must demonstrate that they actively participate in learning communities (school classrooms, college classrooms, electronic communities) to pursue their questions and curiosities and to shape the curriculum. They must demonstrate how they learn from others in these communities, and they must demonstrate that they know how to form and maintain collaborative relationships.

Theme II: Educating for Social Action

This working theme relates closely to CUNY's stated purpose of intellectual achievement for the public good, as well as Lehman's location and obligations to

historically under-served populations, first generation college students, and immigrants. This theme emphasizes the idea that teacher and counselor education can be a movement for social change grounded in liberal tradition.

Graduates of the program must demonstrate that they have critically reflected on the mission of education in a democratic society and issues of class, race, gender, technology access and equity. They must demonstrate that they know how to make a positive difference in the lives of children and that they are committed to promoting caring, justice, and equity in urban settings.

Theme III: Developing Human Capacity

The theme supports a programmatic emphasis on high intellectual and emotional expectations and the richness of the pluralism in the student body. This theme is grounded in respect for difference and caring for people, and in beliefs that all human beings are capable of high levels of learning and nurturing.

Graduates of the program must demonstrate that they: (1) acknowledge what students bring to and need for their education, (2) have developed a broad repertoire of pedagogical approaches and content emphases including aesthetic education and visual and performing arts to work with diverse learners, (3) teach in ways that reflect a commitment to the well-being and learning of all students including bilingual children and children with special needs.

Theme IV: Attending to our Diverse Sociocultural Context

This theme derives from the belief that knowledge is created and teaching occurs in social contexts both traditional and electronic, and that human beings are essentially social creatures. As we live and work in a diverse and changing landscape of multiple ethnicities, languages, and economic circumstances, teachers must be responsive to this landscape.

Graduates of the program view family and community as rich educational contexts for their inquiry and instruction. They celebrate the educational power of people's cultural histories in their teaching and interactions with children, families, and colleagues.

Appendix B

Sample Criteria for Selection Process

Criterion	The committee found . . .	Examples /Evidence
A majority of site personnel demonstrate a commitment to the LUTE :	3 strong evidence 2 adequate evidence 1 little or no evidence	

1. Addresses Four LUTE Themes:

Criterion	The committee found . . .	Examples /Evidence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Building a Community of Teachers/Learners ◆ Developing Human Capacity ◆ Attending to Our Diverse Sociocultural Context ◆ Educating for Social Action <p>2. Meets goal of developing educators with values, practices, and knowledge identified in the LUTE Framework:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Commit to the well-being and learning of all students; ◆ Develop sensitivity to students with special needs; ◆ Promote caring, justice and equity; ◆ Respect linguistic and cultural diversity; ◆ Understand and respect intra-group diversity. 		
A majority of site personnel demonstrate a commitment to the PDS.	3 strong evidence 2 adequate evidence 1 little or no evidence	
Site will allocate adequate technical and material resources to the PDS	3 strong evidence 2 adequate evidence 1 little or no evidence	
A school liaison has been identified.	3 strong evidence 2 adequate evidence 1 little or no evidence	
Lehman Students can travel between the site and the college with ease.	3 strong evidence 2 adequate evidence 1 little or no evidence	
Site’s potential for meeting NCATE Critical Attribute I: Learning Community Standard:	3 strong evidence 2 adequate evidence 1 little or no evidence	

Criterion	The committee found . . .	Examples /Evidence
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The PDS is a learning-centered community characterized by norms and practices which support adult and children's learning. Indications of a learning-centered community include: public teaching practice; integration of intern and teacher learning with school instructional program; collegiality; inquiry; and dissemination of new knowledge. Opportunities to learn are equitably supported.

Appendix C Framework for Lehman/School Collaborations and PDS Development

