

THE USE OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SCHOOLS TO INFORM EDUCATORS ABOUT THE SCHOOL-TO-WORK INITIATIVE

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This brief offers examples of how two current education reform initiatives, one designed to improve teacher education and one designed to improve student learning, can be integrated to achieve better outcomes for both educators and learners. Professional Development Schools (PDS) have been designed to improve preservice teachers' education through a collaborative partnership between a school, school district, and a college or university-based teacher education program. School-to-Work (STW) is a recent initiative developed to improve and connect school-based learning with students' future goals. The following text describes ways in which the elements of the STW initiative align with the goals of a PDS. More specifically, the PDS model can be used as a framework to teach STW concepts to both preservice and inservice educators. By combining the six organizing principles of a PDS as defined by the Holmes Group (1990, p. 7) and the concepts basic to STW, this new model of teaching and learning can provide the basis for systemic education reform which reaches future teachers, current teachers, and students.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SCHOOLS

In the Holmes Group's seminal book *Tomorrow's Schools: Principles for the Design of Professional Development Schools* (1990), Professional Development Schools (PDS) were identified as a way to address necessary reform in the preparation of teachers. The Holmes Group, originally comprised of representatives from approximately 100 research universities committed to redesigning teacher preparation, described a PDS as a new organization which "develops novice professionals,

continues and enhances the development for experienced educators, and researches and develops teaching as a profession" (Holmes Group, 1990). In practice, this development occurs through a collaborative relationship between a public school and an institution of higher education.

Many schools and universities have formed collaboratives similar to a PDS. These collaboratives are called "professional practice schools" (American Federation of Teachers), "clinical schools" (Carnegie Reports), or "partner schools" (National Network for Educational Renewal). In a national survey completed by the Clinical Schools Clearinghouse in 1994, sixty-six school-college partnerships were identified consisting of seventy-eight colleges and universities, along with 301 preK-12 schools. Approximately 75% of these partnerships existed at the elementary school level. In a subsequent survey, between 300 and 400 individual partnerships (i.e., one school in collaboration with one university) were identified (AACTE, 1997).

Two primary reasons for the establishment and proliferation of PDSs have been identified (Shen, 1996). First, a national decade-long trend of teacher education reform continues to gather widespread interest and support (Carnegie Forum, 1986; Goodlad, 1990; Holmes Group, 1990; National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 1996). Second, the appropriate redesign of teacher education requires the involvement of teachers and schools which can "exhibit the best practices" (Goodlad, 1986, cited in Shen, 1996). Universities are actively seeking schools with which to partner—schools which exemplify the

optimal theories and best practices emanating from the current research on teaching, learning, and the nation's changing economic and social interest. If colleges and universities are able to work and collaborate with schools, preservice teachers will be exposed to productive and effective learning experiences. For these reasons, schools of education and local districts have joined together for the mutual benefit of both.

The Holmes Group stressed their belief that universities don't "have any business telling the community what kind of schools it should have, but have a right to say how teachers should be prepared" (1990, p. 5). While members of the Holmes Group did not want to suggest that PDSs could solve all of the educational system's ills, this approach is one that could address the goals of improving teaching and elevating its status as a profession.

According to the Holmes Group, the following principles guide the organization of an effective PDS:

- Principle One: Teaching and learning for understanding.
- Principle Two: Create a learning community.
- Principle Three: Teaching and learning for understanding for everybody's children.
- Principle Four: Continuing learning by teachers, teacher educators, and administrators.
- Principle Five: Thoughtful long-term inquiry into teaching and learning.
- Principle Six: Inventing a new institution.

SCHOOL-TO-WORK

While universities and schools are defining ways to improve the education of teachers, proponents of School-to-Work reforms (STW) note the

beneficial practices this initiative provides for school-age students. The School-to-Work Opportunities Act (STWOA), enacted in 1994, suggests that local education and business community partnerships redesign the school-to-work/career transition for youth to include work-based learning, school-based learning and connecting activities. New designs for school-based learning include the integration of curricular content both across and within academic and occupational courses, and enhanced career planning and exploration experiences. Work-based learning opportunities provide students with real-world applications of knowledge through mentoring programs, cooperative education, or youth apprenticeships. Connecting activities bring the schools, workplaces, and institutions of higher education into closer working relationships by developing articulated secondary-postsecondary education programs in areas such as business or the health professions, and by offering teacher internship programs in businesses or community agencies.

As local schools, colleges, and businesses have developed STW systems, and as schools and colleges have developed PDSs, there are interesting possibilities for integrating these initiatives so that both student and teacher learning is strengthened. This Brief describes how the PDS model can be used as a framework to educate both preservice and inservice educators about the STW initiative.

USING THE SIX GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Principle One: Teaching and Learning for Understanding

The Holmes Group thought it important that "all the school's students participate seriously in the kind of learning that allows them to go on learning for a lifetime" (1990, p. 7). In other words, a PDS should establish teaching methods that actively engage students in constructing their own knowledge for deeper understanding. Teachers in a PDS school would actively and intentionally engage students in their own learning, as suggested by the Holmes Group:

(Students) need to learn how to interpret what they learn, and to relate it to what else they know, and whenever possible to have some experience of what is being taught. They need to take the new information and fuse it with more conscious and refined meanings (1990, p. 12).

STW practices are similarly focused on providing students with in-depth knowledge. Congruent with the first principle, STW practices use workplaces and communities as a context in which students can learn about the statistical elements of quality control processes in manufacturing, or how attorneys use various theories of human behavior in the courtroom. As preservice teachers learn how to integrate both academic and occupational subjects, students actually experience the connection between “theory” and “practice.”

This philosophy would permeate the novice

BOX A: CENTERS FOR PROFESSIONAL PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT

At the Centers for Professional Personnel Development (a trio of PDSs located in Pennsylvania), educators receive preparation for general education certification, as well as for “professional education”—e.g., career guidance, School-to-Work, and other career exploration activities. Master teachers work with preservice teachers to accomplish the goal of this PDS:

To maintain a teacher education process that reflects the latest demands of the teaching profession, Pennsylvania business, industrial, and economic development, and issues reflected in federal and state legislation.

The Centers for Professional Personnel Development

teacher’s practice, as well as that of practicing teachers. PDSs similar to the ones described in Box A provide models for new teacher education arrangements that enable students and future teachers to see connections between student learning and future goals.

Principle Two: Create a Learning Community

First and foremost, Professional Development Schools are designed to improve preservice education and create a “learning community” for novice professionals (Holmes Group, 1990, p. 7). Students in teacher education programs usually “intern” or “student teach” in a school to learn the skills necessary to be an educator. This internship usually occurs late in their baccalaureate program, and for many education students, this experience marks the first time that they actually “act the part” and test their abilities in a school setting.

Professional Development Schools use the school and community as the classroom—“a learning community in practice.” In some PDSs, teacher interns complete methods courses at the school site and have the opportunity to discuss which “methods” they observed throughout the school that are most effective with particular students. Usually, the university instructor uses “real world” examples found in the school to teach the course. In this way, preservice students begin to understand theory and apply it directly to their current experience.

When applying STW principles, teachers are asked to go beyond the walls of the classroom to establish a “learning community.” For example, students may have an internship experience at a biotechnology company or a bank. It is the educator’s responsibility to integrate academic instruction with students’ actual work and life experiences—similar to a preservice teacher’s experience in a PDS. Teachers are responsible for helping students connect what they are doing in the classroom with what they are doing in the larger “learning community.”

Principle Three: Teaching and Learning for Understanding for Everybody's Children

Unfortunately, the School-to-Work Opportunities Act is often shortened to “School-to-Work,” thus leaving out one of the most important reasons as to why it exists—to create opportunity for all students. Proponents of STW note the disparate experiences of children in the educational system today. Many are “tracked” into vocational education programs with little thought or discussion about how this might affect the student’s future. At the same time, “college-bound” students feel compelled to forge ahead with college applications, with little thought about what a baccalaureate degree will mean for them and their future. The STWOA was designed to address the needs of all students—helping them become aware of other opportunities, new occupations and alternative future goals. An ideal PDS collaborative would be one in which activities are designed around these STW ideas and intentions. As mentioned previously, universities are looking for “exemplary” schools to partner with—those which will give their preservice students the best experience. This ultimately might be a school with many activities linking school to work and postsecondary education, as well as one with integrated academics— i.e., the definition of a STW system.

The Montpelier Professional Development Site (a collaboration between the University of Vermont and Montpelier High School) is an example of how a PDS can provide the framework to institute change for all students. Montpelier High School has established a program to develop Personal Learning Plans (PLP) for every student in the high school. The PLP initiative was designed “as a student-centered process with programs that support students in identifying and developing their strengths, needs, and interests so they become engaged in their educational experience.” This initiative has been designed to realign teaching and learning to make school more

applicable to students’ lives.

Both preservice and inservice teachers at this PDS learn how to work with individual students to plan their school and future careers. For example, a student might identify an internship as one way to learn about a particular career. Educators are responsible for helping this student find an appropriate opportunity and relate it to his or her academic experience. A preservice teacher comments:

I think the PLP at Montpelier High School is something we studied ‘ideally’ in our education courses. It’s something that every student would ideally be involved in, and they will. In education courses, you frequently realize that the ideal world doesn’t always mesh with the practical world. Being involved with the PLP here, we’ll be able to put it together—the ideal and the real— and really have the

**BOX B: TRINITY UNIVERSITY/
INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF THE
AMERICAS PDS**

The Trinity University/International School of the Americas PDS provides both a Master of Arts in Teaching and an experience in an “exemplary school setting for future educators. Students at this high school hope to be “the future leaders of the international community” (International School of the Americas, 1996). Preservice students benefit from watching what an integrated and applied curriculum looks like in practice—”Methods of instruction include seminars, lectures, internships, real-world projects, and conferencing” (International School of the Americas, 1996). After their fifth year, preservice teachers are able to bring their knowledge of diverse students and integrated and applied curriculum into their future school settings.

students involved and active and be a voice in their education. This stuff we're getting 'on high' at UVM is really being put to use in the real world.

Another example of an effective partnership can be seen at the Trinity University/International School of the Americas PDS, where preservice teachers spend their fifth year as a full-time intern in a magnet school whose diverse student body concentrates on the social sciences, geography, politics, languages, and the fine arts of various regions of the world (See Box B).

Principle Four: Continuing Learning by Teachers, Teacher Educators, and Administrators

In a Professional Development School, experienced professionals act as role models and mentors for their interns. However, they also benefit from the on-site university faculty members from their partner institution. In many cases, teachers enroll in university courses that are offered at their school, or they enjoy “perks” from the university for working with preservice teachers. For example, current teachers at the Montpelier Professional Development Site receive “adjunct faculty” appointments at the University of Vermont when they work with student interns. They receive an identification card that allows them to use the university library and other facilities. This benefit is one example of a way in which teachers can continue their professional growth outside of the classroom walls. At the same time, they work with student teachers, helping them to integrate their academic knowledge (theory) with the practice of teaching. Concurrently, university faculty involved in PDSs gain practical insights about schools, the growing diversity of students, and effective teaching practices— all of which richly informs their teaching, research, and outreach to other schools and education groups.

The PDS model is an ideal framework in which to implement STW ideas. Because it is relatively new, current teachers may not have had the opportunity

to learn about this initiative. Preservice teachers may have taken classes or have had other experiences which help them understand STW and its underlying theory. By connecting preservice and inservice teachers in a PDS setting, current teachers can learn from the novices— the inservice teachers become the “learner” in this instance.

Principle Five: Thoughtful Long-Term Inquiry into Teaching and Learning

Ideally, a PDS collaboration has research as a central tenet to its existence. Unfortunately, universities are often seen as the “owners” and “purveyors” of research and critical analysis. Ideally, a PDS

... Is not a laboratory school. What is needed is not just a working coalition of schools and universities as they are, but a powerful synthesis of knowledge to help us find out what the schools of tomorrow might be like. To make this happen, universities will have to take schools seriously and treat them with respect, and they will have to take a close look at their own behavior and values (Holmes Group, 1990, p. 60).

In order for a PDS to be a learning community, universities must be willing to learn from teachers and the schools in which they work. Current practice is ripe with “action research” possibilities. Working with both current and preservice educators is one way in which university faculty can help establish a culture of inquiry into teaching and learning. By modeling research and its use in practice, teachers can begin to answer those questions that are of crucial importance to their work. Unfortunately, research is often difficult to embed in teachers’ practice (See Box C).

The STW initiative is particularly appropriate to research, as its implementation is relatively new. For example, current and future teachers can explore ways in which career-based programs or student internships facilitate learning. These

**BOX C: THE CHALLENGE OF
DEVELOPING RESEARCH BASED
ON PRACTICE IN A PDS**

Embedding inquiry into the design of a PDS is one challenge often described by those who administer PDSs. Specifically, the Urban Teacher Education Program (UTEP) in Indiana identified lack of time as the main reason why preservice teachers and their experienced colleagues struggled with reflection and engaging in inquiry. This issue must be addressed in establishing a PDS, if it is to stay true to the fifth principle as outlined above.

important questions must be answered for the STW movement to flourish. A PDS is an ideal setting to link the practice of STW in schools with the modes of research and theory predominant in the university.

Principle Six: Inventing a New Institution

The Holmes Group suggested a reformation in the way educators think about their roles and professional responsibilities:

The school's management, leadership, and faculty—including colleagues from the university—work together to invent a new organizational structure in line with the school's new purposes and principles about teaching and learning (Holmes Group, 1990, p. 67).

The Montpelier High School/University of Vermont PDS is an example of how this principle can be reflected in practice. At Montpelier High School, student interns become immersed in the life of the school. They are able to experience a site-based management organizational structure—one consisting of faculty who are both administrators and teachers. This group, along with their faculty colleagues from the University

of Vermont, has been instrumental in reinventing this school and its methods of addressing teaching and learning. Interns experience this reinvented institution first-hand—they are treated as “co-professionals” and are asked to participate in all aspects of developing the PLPs, as well as other innovations in the school. An intern at this PDS notes:

I think there are a lot of opportunities and a lot going on in this school. The process of change has been ideal for an intern. There's so much going on—sometimes it's almost overwhelming! As far as the professional development opportunities go, the school is definitely strong. Engaging in the PLP, for example, has been unique and valuable.

This particular PDS is a model of a reinvented institution as defined by the Holmes Group because it has redefined what both students and educators should be learning.

Creating partnerships is a reinvention, or a shift away from the “status quo” in education. Public education and postsecondary education institutions are notorious for their autonomy—they provide education for particular groups, yet they rarely communicate about how these groups move within the educational system as a whole. To create a new education paradigm, educators in both K-12 and higher education systems must be willing to talk about what they do and how they do it. In a PDS, especially one in which STW ideas are infused (e.g., the Montpelier Professional Development Site), preparing future educators for work has been inextricably linked to preparing students to contribute to the world of work. This reinvention has powerful ramifications for all involved. Specifically, it creates understanding about how schools and postsecondary education institutions need each other to be effective and must be conscious of each other's role in developing both students and teachers.

CHALLENGES

Educators benefit from a preservice experience within a Professional Development School. This

is especially true when the PDS in which they are based reflects current and innovative ways of teaching students, and future teachers are able to learn the basic tenets of School-to-Work. However, both PDSs and high quality STW programs are not easily established and maintained. There are a few obstacles that need to be overcome for a local PDS partnership to be successful. The primary challenges focus on resolving conflicting fundamental interests and intra-institutional issues (Snyder, 1994).

In a PDS, stakeholders each bring different interests to the collaborative, and those interests compete for attention and resources. Teacher educators' main concern is the quality of the preservice program. They may be less interested in what students are learning— i.e., those whom the teachers are teaching. At the same time, mentor teachers in the PDS are mainly concerned with their students' learning. When issues of time surface, for example, mentor teachers tend to put their students first, ahead of the interns.

Intra-institutional issues also surface in new arrangements. The school and the postsecondary institution partner need to feel that working together benefits both of them in the long run. Working together may be a challenge, since participants are asked to do things differently in the name of the collaborative. However, collaboration is imperative to the viability of the PDS:

In an ideal state, the power to reinvent teaching, schooling, and teacher education is located in neither the university nor the school but in the collaborative synergy of the two (Cochran-Smith, 1991 as cited in Snyder, 1994, p. 118).

The different cultures of schools and universities often clash, creating obstacles to understanding. At the same time, each institution is trying to incorporate new and innovative ideas about teaching and learning into its work (e.g., STW practices). These issues and barriers must be

addressed for the partnership to achieve commonly-defined goals.

ACTION STEPS

Implementing STW is an important goal for the entire educational system— from preK to postsecondary education. This Brief provides ways in which the PDS model has been used as a framework to teach STW concepts to both preservice and inservice educators. As one recognizes the ways in which a school or university is reflected in the previously mentioned principles, consider the following recommendations:

- Learn about and discuss the STW initiative— make it a priority in your professional development.
- Ask your partner college/university to provide meaningful courses or experiences which help you to better understand the implementation of a STW system.
- Ensure that your PDS makes a connection to and directly references the STW initiative.
- Recognize the different ways in which students and educators learn— e.g., through integration, application, and context.
- Extend the idea of a “learning community” to include experiences and opportunities beyond the school building for both educators and students.
- Understand and apply the central tenet of STW— creating opportunities for all students.
- Create opportunities for teachers to act as learners, and for learners to act as teachers.
- Provide enough resources (e.g., time) to educators so that they can inquire about

and answer research questions which are critical to their work.

- Reinvent your organizational structure to reflect new ways of teaching and learning.

Both PDSs and the STW initiative represent new collaborative approaches to improving educational outcomes— one focused on new ways of strengthening professional teacher education, and the other focused on improving education to work or career transitions. As noted above, these approaches have a number of shared themes and principles. Where appropriate, combining the practices found in PDSs and the STW initiative will create an important synergy for systemic educational reform involving schools, colleges/ universities, and the business community. This synergy is crucial for sustaining both of these efforts until they reach a national level of implementation that makes them commonplace rather than unique or isolated opportunities.

REFERENCE AND RESOURCES

For more information about the theory and practice behind Professional Development Schools or the School-to-Work Opportunities Act, please refer to the following references and resources:

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