11-2013

Seeking Mutual Benefit: University and Districts as Partners in Preparation

Amy Daggett Petti
Portland State University, petti@pdx.edu

Seeking Mutual Benefit: University and Districts as Partners in Preparation

Amy D. Petti, Portland State University

ABSTRACT: This article reports the research findings of a qualitative study that employs case study research methods to examine a newly-formed university-district-teacher union partnership. Examination of the question ''How do we better prepare teachers'' led to the formation of a university-district-association (teacher union) partnership, which led to a new question: How do the roles of principal and liaison in a Professional Development School affect pre-service and tenured teacher learning? The school-university partnerships' mission was to design a mutually beneficial program of teacher preparation and tenured teacher professional development. Findings determined that there were significant perceived mutual benefits; notable benefits for the school partner appeared in the unexpected roles of tenured teacher, principal, and liaison. The sutdy's finding have implications for the universities that prepare teachers, teaching practitioners, school and district leaders, and even state and national policy makers.

NAPDS Essential(s) Addressed: #1/A comprehensive mission that is broader in its outreach and scope than the mission of any partner and that furthers the education profession and its responsibility to advance equity within schools and, by potential extension, the broader community; #2/A school–university culture committed to the preparation of future educators that embraces their active engagement in the school community; #3/Ongoing and reciprocal professional development for all participants guided by need; #4/A shared commitment to innovative and reflective practice by all participants; #5/Engagement in and public sharing of the results of deliberate investigations of practice by respective participants; #6/An articulation agreement developed by the respective participants delineating the roles and responsibilities of all involved; #7A structure that allows all participants a forum for ongoing governance, reflection, and collaboration; #8/Work by college university faculty and P–12 faculty in formal roles across institutional settings; #9/Dedicated and shared resources and formal[1] *rewards and recognition structures*.

Introduction

The purpose of this article is to share insights from an examination of principal and teacher roles in newly-formed school-university partnerships (SUPs). Specifically, we examine the questions "How do we better prepare teachers?" and "How do the roles of principal and liaison in a professional development school (PDS) affect pre-service and tenured teacher

[1]All names of people and institutions are psyduenyms as per requirement of the university's institutional review board.

learning?" This article summarizes the first-year findings of three separate school case studies that participated in a SUP, locally named a "Professional Learning Laboratory School" (PLLS). School-university partnerships establish placement of pre-service teachers, which is an obvious benefit to university; however, this article focuses on the benefit to the school partners. These findings advance nuanced learning from previous studies, but they are particularly relevant to consider when starting up school-university partnerships (Clark, 1999; Goodlad, 1994; Mullen, 2000; Teitel, 2004).

School-university partnerships are reenergized in this era of accountability, mandated through the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondard Education Act (ESEA). The ESEA demands high quality teachers and high quality principals in every building; finding mutual benefit in teacher preparation to both schools and university preparation programs is critical (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). For this article, the terms "PDS" (Professional Development School) and "PLLS" are synonymous, with PDS referring to the more general Professional Development School community, and PLLS referring to the local version described in this study. A brief explanation of the partnership formation and the problem of placement follows to explain the context of the study.

Partnership Formation

During the 2008–2009 school year, St. Mary's University (SMU), a small private university, in the Northwestern United States, sought partnerships with local school districts, to enter a two-year commitment to support the preparation of pre-service teachers. Extending the clinical preparation phase of teacher preparation has long been determined a worthy endeavor (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Dewey, 1916). While the three school districts agreed to the partnership, the organization and communication between the district and university was at the school level. The schools were Osprey Elementary, Sugar Maple High, and Dogwood High; details about these sites are included in the case student context. As evidenced by the PLLS partnership agreement, each school agreed to host pre-service field experience students for the 2009–2010 school year; schools retained those students for a subsequent year of full-time student teaching experience in the 2010–2011 school year. For this article, the term "pre-service teacher" refers to SMU's graduate interns and the term "cooperating teacher" refers to each of the school's teachers who served as a mentor to one pre-service teacher.

In addition, the term "tenured teacher" refers to teachers in the PDS who were not cooperating teachers. Each school created a liaison role, fulfilled by a part-time staff member who acted as a liaison between the district and university, and who served as an on-site mentor or coach to the pre-service students and facilitated tenured teacher professional development. For compensation, each school received a two-year grant of $35,000, which represented a $17,500 grant per year. Each school principal managed the grant. Since each school had the autonomy to freely expend the funds, each of the three schools spent the money differently. This agreement was formalized in a memorandum of understanding signed by representatives from all participating institutions.

The partnership agreement required both the schools and SMU to form an advisory committee, in order to share practices, reflection, governance, and design implementation. The advisory committee met monthly, and was composed of school administrators (principal and/or central office administrator), liaisons, university leaders, (program director, university supervisors, university communication and support staff), and an Oregon Education Association (OEA) leader. OEA is the statewide teacher union, referenced as the "teacher union" in the remainder of this article. The teacher union took a

particular interest in this model, hoping to expand on any successes to more districts and universities (Union Leader, personal communication, June 2009).

This advisory board aligned its mission with the with the National Association of Professional Development Schools Essentials of PDSs (Appendix A), specifically a shared governance structure, and a formalized agreement (Essentials #6 and #7). The teacher union funded an external study of this new partnership. Since the study sought to determine if PLLS programs produced better prepared teachers, and whether or not participating in PLLS influenced contract teacher practice, the 2009–2010 data collection was considered baseline information and requires subsequent comparative data analysis. At the onset of the partnership, motivated to make the partnership beneficial for the local school, the advisory committee consciously emphasized that the school's benefit would be the main priority of the new partnership; thus this arrangement was named a "school-university partnership," rather than a "university-school partnership." This shared mission of creating a school-centered collaboration influenced the tone of the partnership: that is, by placing the noun "school" in front of "university" we attempted to honor the schools as the primary beneficiary of our partnership.

Problem of Placement

Placement of pre-service teachers has been a particularly persistent problem in the state of Oregon, since the numbers of graduating pre-service teachers far exceeds the hiring demand for new teachers in school districts, and universities often find themselves in competition when making placements in districts. One school representative explained, "Our district [has been] overwhelmed with requests for placement of pre-service teachers from seven local teacher preparation programs, [and] we are often asked to find placements for 25–40 teachers per year" (Administrator, advisory meeting notes, June 2009). In a climate of teacher layoffs and reductions in force (RIFs), pre-service teacher placement has become increasingly problematic, as the acceptance of pre-service teachers is still perceived as extra work by teachers, administrators, and school districts. In Oregon, most placements are made only because university personnel ask friends and colleagues to "accept" teachers—requests that often verge on begging for placements.

As well, with the added complexity of requiring licensure matches between pre-service teachers and their mentors, particularly for secondary placements, there are few quality checks to ensure all placements are of highly qualified, highly effective teachers who possess positive mentor dispositions. Too often pre-service teacher placement is random, dictated solely by student requests and geographic preferences (i.e., pre-service teachers wanting to be close to home). Less frequently, a more optimal placement process is employed through the use of informal networks, such as when building principals have a supportive relationship with the placement university. Alumni tend to support their own teacher preparation programs, and will likely accept a pre-service teacher for placement out of a sense of loyalty (or even guilt). However, the placement process still lacks a strategic element focused on aligned the strengths, qualities, or needs of pre-service teachers with school's goals, methods, focus, and personnel strengths. As Ruhl (2009) writes:

> The placements made by universities represent a compromise between finding the **best** placement and finding **any** placement. Some universities employ a faculty member whose sole responsibility it is to find placements for student teachers. It is not uncommon to have student teachers from 2, 3, or 4 institutions in the same school. This placement pattern does not support optimal learning on the part of the pre-service candidate nor does it advance the instructional priorities of the school. (Ruhl, 2009, p. 3)

Table 1: Mutual Benefit of A Strong School-University Partnership (Co-constructed by Ruhl & Petti)

Partnership Element	*School/District Benefit*	*University Benefit*	*Combined Result*
Orientation toward instruction	Practical, needs to meet multiple initiatives: differentiate for learners, implement core programs & curriculum, show student progress, engage students	Theoretical: can be based on ideas, research supported instruction, complex; may need years to master some strategies, effective cooperative learning, student active participation, partnerships, writing and reading workshops	Balance of real world demands and theory and research based practice
Use of data	Basic access to multiple points of data, can see results, not always able to analyze what to do with results	Proficient: can provide support to interpreting data, setting goals, monitoring progress; can support school's analysis of data	More effective use of data in decision making about instruction
Assessment of students	Knows instruments and procedures; limitations on administration time & personnel	Knows assessment theory	Can help administer and interpret results and university pre-service teachers can gain valuable experience in assessing students
Resources	Limited; time and schedule bound;	Flexible: can provide pre-service teachers for additional support as part of participation in school improvement	Combining pre-service students' time with that of cooperating teachers in shared professional development can benefit both pre-service & tenured teachers
Pre-service participant	Can provide mentors, and pre-service students can provide 'release' for teacher collaboration	Receives quality mentoring and models; can support a variety of teacher duties and responsibilities	Improved student to staff ratio; pre-service participants can bring fresh ideas and challenge existing practices
Professional development	Site based and external experts	Embedded in core courses	Additional pre-service staff can release tenured teacher, contract teachers participate and assist cooperating teachers in deeper reflection

When universities and school districts collaborate to develop extended partnerships, a more strategic and favorable placement process can occur, in which districts identify their high performing schools and place pre-service teachers there, with the result that the best practitioners train future practitioners. One way to ensure such an alignment is to develop shared and collaborative practices, so the school-university partnership (SUP) is perceived as mutually beneficial (Teitel, 2003). There must be something "in it" for the district as well as the university. Table 1 illustrates the potential benefits of school-university partnerships for all constituent institutions. School-university partnerships and PDSs may allow for more strategic placements and effective teacher professional development. This article examines a PDS model and offers answers to the grand if persistent research question, "How do we better prepare pre-service teachers?"

Instructional Rounds

Instructional rounds were selected as a signature type of professional development to be implemented throughout the PDS. This

decision came early in the formation of the SUP, and the refinement of the rounds process dominated many SUP advisory meetings. The PLLS based their conception of instructional rounds in the shared reading of the book, *Instructional Rounds in Education* (City, Elmore, Fiarman, & Teitel, 2009). However, as the PLLS moved from a shared reading to implementation of rounds, they discovered, as Petti (2013) notes, ". . .instructional rounds is a term that is also becoming overly generalized to include a variety of practices combining three common elements: classroom observation, an imporvement strategy, and a network of educators" (p. 116). Instructional rounds are further discussed in this article in the "Research Design" section.

Literature Review

Professional Development Schools

Partnerships between universities and school districts that focus on pre-service teaching placements are one basis for the creation of Professional Development Schools (PDS). Although such partnerships are not new, long-term relationships and commitments between universities and schools are less common. For more than a century, educators have sought better ways to prepare teachers in order to promote higher quality teaching for better student outcomes. Dewey's (1916) work in the Chicago school system represents an early testament to the benefits of a long-term commitment to better teacher preparation by partnering university and schools.

Catelli (2006) provides further historical perspective of school-university partnerships, concentrating on the distinctions between the 1960s and post-September 11, 2001 eras. Catelli's historical perspective synthesizes the importance of teacher preparation as a catalyst for school-university partnerships, yet it does not examine their influence on leadership development or on the effects of the partnership on contract (tenured) teachers who participate fully in PDS schools. Catelli identifies a potential benefit of school-university partners in the added probability of closing achievement gaps between different populations of students. Saint Mary University's PLLS chose to anchor their project in the practitioner's guide, *Handbook for Professional Development Schools* (Teitel, 2003), building on the research and findings of Darling-Hammond (1994), Haycock, Hart, and Irvine (1992), and Kochan, (1999).

Teitel's text explores the literature of the Professional Development Schools (PDS) movement (Darling-Hammond, 1994; Dewey, 1915; Sewall, Shapiro, Dulcette, & Sanford, 1995; Teitel, 2003) while also providing clear guidelines for partnerships intending to pursue this PDS model. As a shared text, Teitel's interpretation of PDSs became the common literature of the participants in the PLLS. Participants read and discussed the first four chapters of the book as part of their early advisory work. With the school site representing the locus of control for PLLS design and implementation, the professional development embedded in school improvement closely aligns with Calhoun and Joyce's (1998) model of a school-based, faculty-centered approach to improvement, which is in contrast to their research and development approach which emphasizes the use of external experts.

Teacher Quality

Researchers agree the most important factor in student achievement is the quality of the teacher (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Goodlad, 1994; Haberman, 1995; Hawley & Rosenholtz; Reeves, 2003; Schmoker, 2006). Teacher quality can be viewed as the responsibility or prerogative of a variety of agencies: teacher preparation programs, state licensure agencies, school or district supervision and evaluation entities, or the professional development divisions of school districts. Regardless of where one wants to place responsibility

or blame, improving teacher quality is a mutual goal of schools and universities. Teacher quality is inextricably linked to teacher preparation efforts and tenured teacher preparation, which intersect in the PDS model.

With government mandates such as No Child Left Behind (the current version of ESEA), educators are expected to improve achievement for *each* student, and report those results across disaggregated groups. Yet, although we know that the single most influential factor on student achievement is teacher quality, many of our attempts to improve schools never breach the classroom door or affect what others call the "core technology" of teaching and learning (Bodilly, 1998; Calhoun & Joyce, 1998; City, Elmore, Fiarman, & Teitel, 2008; Hill, Campbell, & Harvey, 2000). These core technologies include teacher planning, teaching or instructional practice, student assessment, and teacher reflection.

So how do teacher preparation and in-service professional development efforts accomplish these ends? There is no silver bullet, magic pill, packaged program, or prescribed theory of instruction that has been proven to achieve these goals; rather, a combination of many practices that create layers of professional development throughout a teacher's career—from pre-service and across a teacher's professional life—must be considered. Regardless of methods, techniques, and practices, nothing will improve teachers' instructional practices without being "inside" of instruction or without involving the teachers who must ultimately carry out the task of improving student achievement.

Shared or Distributed Instructional Leadership

Principals must know high quality instruction when they see it, and they must provide both support and accountability for instruction when such quality is lacking. Yet, this practice remains difficult and rare. Principals typically report that they know that observing instruction is important, but they rarely have regular opportunities to observe classrooms outside of a generally abbreviated evaluation schedule (Petti, 2010b). In the midst of multiple mandates, initiatives, and new curriculum strategies, school and district leaders nevertheless must breach the classroom door and dwell with teachers. It is arguable that nothing a principal or district leader does is more important to the success and well-being of our schools' students.

Partially because of the demands of the roles of school leadership, such teacher preparation, evaluation, and preparation efforts are no longer one-person heroic tasks; instructional leadership must embrace distribution (Spillane & Diamond, 2007). In other words, school district leaders must leverage the input of high-performing teachers, teacher leaders, instructional coaches, and university personnel to improve instruction. These high-performing teachers, leaders, and coaches are all exemplars in their own right; their high efficacy spills over to those around them. When educational leaders recognize the need to share instructional leadership, teacher performance improves schoolwide (Goodlad, 1994; Petti, 2010a). If school or district leaders tackle improvement in isolation, the rate of change is slow and laborious. For this reason, Professional Development Schools require sharing or distributing leadership across roles to penetrate regular teaching practices. Specifically, the PDS establishes a liaison role to support the professional development of pre-service and tenure teachers. In the PLLS studied, liasions were all teachers or newly retired teachers from the local school. PLLS liaisons were responsible for coaching or mentoring the pre-service teachers and facilitating professional development for tenured teachers. The practice of coaching is increasing in frequency across the nation, especially in light of school and district improvement plans (Hasbrouck & Denton, 2005; Knight, 2007).

Equally essential to distributed leadership is the role of the cooperating or mentor teacher—the teacher who is directly responsible for the development of the pre-service teacher. Several researchers have focused on the cooperating teacher role (Clark, 1999; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Goodlad, 1994; Mullen, 2000). This study focuses mostly on the liaisons' and principals' roles.

Role of Principals

The role of principals in the PDS movement is sparsely documented. Very few research articles explore this role, leaving open assumptions as to the cause of omission. So this study sought out each participant principal and conducted extended interviews to explore their understanding, role, and impact on the PDS design and outcomes. Stroble and Luka (1999) explored the principal role, contrasted with that of the university administrator (a term given to the university supervisor). Since early rhetoric of ESEA's pending reauthorization promises a strong leader in each building, there is a need for further research and development of the site principal's relationship to universities that seek strong partnerships in support of teacher and principal preparation. Universities must seek stronger relationships with role model principals, who can positively influence the development of the next generation of principals and teachers. Cheney, Davis, Garrett, and Holleran (2010), in their report for the Rainwater Leadership Alliance, concur that highly effective principals must mentor future principals and teacher candidates.

As we look to prior research to answer the question, "How do we better prepare teachers?", it may be time for universities and schools to make it a regular practice to partner and better utilize their shared expertise, improving the conditions of both teacher preparation and ongoing professional development for tenured teachers. Collaboration and planning for meaningful partnerships between teacher preparation universities and schools or school districts is warranted for not only for improving teacher candidates' preparation but also for reciprocal professional development between tenured teachers and the universities in the partnership.

Research Design

This article reports on research methods and findings from a larger study, embedded in an external investigation of the PLLS partnership. Pertinent to this article are the data collection, anlaysis, and methods of qualitative research aimed at describing the first-year results and reporting those descriptions to the PLLS advisory group for continual review and refinement of the partnership.

Role of the Researcher

The role of the researcher—this article's author—was that of a participant observer (Bogdewic, 1992), affording me the opportunity to witness events that outsiders would not be invited to attend, such as instructional rounds, and debriefs with teachers at the end of the rounds process. As the researcher, I attended all advisory meetings and took part in instructional rounds. Since I was the former Director of Instructional Improvement for the district represented by Osprey Elementary, I was not totally neutral and had the benefit of an insider's perspective. To the teachers at Osprey, I was a familiar visitor, so my participation in rounds was not perceived as intrusive. I had known most of the participants of the study as former colleagues. I assumed the listener/oberserver role as Konecki (2008) describes, as a professional "acting as a device to listen, observe and record the perceived 'reality.' In this role they experience on a daily basis the 'dialogical' nature of their research methodology, which interacts permanently with the observed social actors and communities" (Konecki, 2008, p. 8).

PLLS Design

Studying a newly-forming "treatment" or design is challenging when the design is loosely defined. Because the partnership was formed to emphasize school benefits, each of the three schools had considerable autonomy in determining the details of what each partnership would entail. What was agreed upon were the following elements of the PLLS design:

1. Personnel: Each school would employ a part-time liaison—an experienced (or retired) teacher who would facilitate PLLS on-site learning and who would support pre-service teachers.
2. Professional Development Process: Each school would formulate some version of "instructional rounds" based on the shared reading of *Instructional Rounds in Education* (City, Elmore, Fiarman, & Teitel, 2008).
3. Commitment: Each school would commit to monthly advisory meetings to share, learn, and come to agreements between the school and university, and each school would agree to a two-year placement consisting of first-year field experience teachers and second-year full-time pre-service teachers. The placement commitment would extend the pre-service teaching experience by both place and time, having field and pre-service teachers stay with the same cooperating teacher (Advisory minutes, August, 2009).

Sample

Pre-service teachers were randomly assigned to participate or not participate in the PLLS schools. Therefore, there was no initial sample variance that would explain any future results. Due to the small sample size of 37 students (fourteen participant students and 23 non-participant students), there are limitations to any conclusions drawn.

Data Collection

Perception data. Data collected for the study included self-assessment surveys of field experience students' perceptions on the university teacher program outcomes; all enrolled students completed this survey in the fall of 2009; they completed the same survey two more times, in the fall of 2010 (beginning year two in the program) and the spring of 2011 (at the conclusion of the program).

Descriptive data. Data reported and analyzed includes the interviews, focus groups, video documentation, and/or observation of the "rounds" process.

Interviews. Semi-structured interviews of each building's principal and liaison were conducted in person or over the phone, with the responses recorded, transcribed, and member-checked. Each interview was then coded for themes, and those themes were reported back to principals and coaches for verification. Interviews took place in the middle-to-end of the school year, and at the end of the first year, and lasted 30–45 minutes. Two principals were interviewed a second time for more information.

Focus groups. Focus groups were conducted for pre-service field experience teachers, cooperating teachers, and tenured teachers who participated in instructional rounds. All but one field student participated, and all elementary cooperating teachers participated. Fifty percent of high school cooperating teachers participated. Focus groups were recorded, transcribed, and sent back to participants for member checks. Focus groups were conducted in spring of the first year of implementation and lasted approximately 60 minutes.

Observations of pre-service teachers. Each pre-service teacher was observed teaching a lesson. Observations of pre-service participants were completed using eCove observation protocols by the researcher and other observers. eCOVE is an electronic observation software, which

all pre-service, principal, university personnel, and liaisons were trained to use. A description from eCove's website describes its function:

> eCOVE Software LLC, founded in 2002, is a company devoted to improving teaching and learning by increasing the capacity of the administrator, classroom teacher, special education teacher, ESL teacher, parent and student to reflect on their actions through objective data gathered while observing the classroom and students. ("eCove.net," retreieved on July 9, 2012)

Observations of instructional "rounds" process. Observations were conducted at each school site during their version of the "rounds" process. The researcher followed each group of participants for the duration of their shared practice of instructional rounds. Frequency and membership of the rounds process varied from site to site, ranging from three to six rounds in the first year. The length of the rounds process varied from a few hours to all day, depending on the school and purpose of the particular round.

Data Analysis

Survey Analysis. Perception surveys were analyzed using one tailed, unequal variance t-test, to determine if the participant group varied from the non-participant group in their self-assessment of instructional knowledge and skills. Survey data from such a small sample has statistical limitations; there simply is not a large enough sample size to draw significant data from the surveys. However, first-year and second-year pre-service teacher perception data indicated no significant difference in population (participant and non-participant) perception (.01–.49). Perception data, however, is sometimes governed by the fundamental attribution error, or "a pervasive tendency on the part of observers to overestimate personality or dispositions [as] causes of behavior and to underestimate the influence of situational constraints on behavior" (Jones & Nisbett, as cited in Tetlock, 1985, p. 227). These results would indicate that this may have occurred; thus, pre-service teachers credit their own attributes, rather than the program, as contributory to their teaching-related skills.

Interview and Focus Group Analysis. Themes and patterns of interview and focus group data were analyzed using grounded theory (Creswell, 1998), both within job-alike groups and across job groups. Grounded theory can best be summarized as an iterative process of coding transcribed data into groups of similar concepts, grouping concepts, validating those concepts through member checking, and then presenting findings to the group for confirmation, clarification, or refutation. Each set of interviews was coded, patterns were grouped and named, participants checked the themes and confirmed or clarified (none refuted); all data was then shared with the advisory group. The iterative data analysis informed the continuous refinement of the PLLS, as typical of ethnographic data collection and reporting (LeCompte & Schensul, 1997). Unless noted, the findings represent those themes that were horizontally determined, to be evident across job groups.

Observation Analysis. Individual lesson observations were shared with pre-service teachers for reflection and analysis in personal journals. Rounds observations were analyzed by the researcher and also videotaped for second-year analysis using visual grounded theory (Konecki, 2009). The videotape analysis is not reported in this article.

Artifact triangulation. Themes were triangulated by artifacts, minutes of advisory meetings, school websites depicting the PLLS, and reports to the district emphasizing the partnership or professional development plan embedded in the PLLS agreement. Konecki (2008) explains the value of triangulation in establishing validity for qualitative research: "To use Van Maanen's terminology, triangulation is usually employed as a persuasive tool

in realistic tales, which aims to [emphasize] the realness, objectivity and authenticity of presented descriptions and research conculsions" (Konecki, 2008, p. 15).

Case Study

Three unique contexts. While this article focuses on the common themes of teacher preparation and leadership across schools, each school represented its own case study of implementation of PLLS. The following descriptions of the three schools are important to consider when assessing the results. Each school has been given a pseudonym, as required by SMU's institutional review board.

Osprey Elementary. This elementary is located in a suburban district, or ring city, close to a large northwest city. Osprey Elementary received Title I funding, has a 65% poverty rate based on the free and reduced lunch program, and is organized as self-contained grades kindergarten (half-day) through grade six. The staff had been hired, mentored locally, and remained intact, with little movement. Sixty-four percent of the teachers hold Master's degrees or higher, and 100% of the teachers meet NCLB regulations for highly-qualified status by licensure. There were two administrators and 464 students, with 14% of the students in English as a Second Language Program (ESL). In the 2009–2010 school year, Osprey met Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) goals.

Sugar Maple High School. This high school was located in a small, rural, and working class town 30 miles west of the state's largest city. The teaching staff averaged almost eleven years of experience, with 88% holding a Master's degree or higher. There were 657 students with 9% of the students in English as a Second Language Program (ESL). In the 2009–2010 school year, Sugar Maple High met AYP, and had an outstanding graduation rate (95%), based on the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) formula.

Dogwood High School. This high school was located on the eastern edge of the largest city of the state, on the far eastern edge, in a transitional neighborhood that has grown increasingly more diverse and poor. Dogwood High School is the largest high school in the state, with over 3100 students in grades 9–12; over 13% of the students are in English as a Second Language Program (ESL). In the 2009–2010 school year, Dogwood High did not meet AYP, yet had an outstanding graduation rate (84%) based on National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) formula. Dogwood High has 54% White students and 46% non-White students.

Similarities. The similarities between the cases included the following elements: positive relationships with the university chair, Dr. Tim Read, who chaired the advisory meetings; presence of school-selected liaisons who were currently staff members at the respective schools; and a building- or district-level administrator who was a supporter of the program. Each school used a portion of the grant funds to fund the partial or full salary of the liaison position.

Differences. Key differences were reported or observed in the role of the liaison, especially in the amount of time devoted to the PLLS solely. Osprey had a full-time instructional coach who supported the PLLS in a self-reported .25 FTE (Full-Time Equivalent staffing percentage). Sugar Maple had two teachers who shared the liaison responsibility the equivalent of .2 FTE, and Dogwood had a retired teacher who spent almost .5 FTE devoted to the PLLS. In addition, the Osprey coach had the benefit of a network of instructional coaches in the district, with one full day per month set aside for professional development for coaches.

The other two observed differences between these cases were the structure and frequency of the "rounds" process and the distribution of the grant funds. Each school chose a unique version of "rounds," with a

frequency range of five to twelve per year. The grant funds were expended in three different ways. Osprey Elementary used the funds to partially fund the liaison and to fund substitute teachers, so that tenured teachers could participate in rounds and student data meetings. Sugar Maple High required teachers to apply for funds for a wide range of professional development activities, not all related to the PLLS. Dogwood High School used the majority of funds for the liaison position.

Findings

Findings shared here address the overarching research question of "How do we better prepare pre-service teachers?" and, more specifically, these related questions: (a) How does participation in PLLS benefit the performance (experience, practice, skills, attitude, and competency) of pre-service teachers? Of tenured teachers?; and (b) How do the roles of principal and liaison in a Professional Development School affect pre-service and tenured teacher learning?

Benefit to Pre-service Teachers

Pre-service teachers reported they received much more attention, intention, and higher quality of on-site professional development than their non-PLLS participant peers. They indicated that participation in rounds helped them be better prepared for full-time teaching in the fall. The pre-service teachers also thought they had a greater opportunity to collaborate with their mentors and school-based personnel, since there was a higher concentration of field experience students at one site. No non-participant pre-service teachers experienced any shared professional development similar to instructional rounds with their cooperating teachers at their individual school sites.

Benefit to Tenured Teachers

Principals indicated that their tenured teachers were more engaged in the professional development and mentorship of pre-service teachers, past experiences mentoring pre-service teachers, or their own teacher preparation program. Tenured teachers concurred, with one stating, "I wish I'd had this kind of opportunity to learn [instructional rounds] when I was in college, I was just kind of given an classroom and abandoned" (Tenured teacher interview, May 2010).

The tenured teachers indicated that they were more cognizant of their own practices, and began to speak with pre-service teachers about research and practices that they had "gotten away from"; they took their responsibility to the field experience teachers very seriously, including those tenured teachers who did not have an assigned pre-service teacher. The inclusion of teachers who were not working with a pre-service teacher in rounds was perceived as a "shift in culture" by principals and liaisons. Liaisons reported that now tenured teachers talk more about their practices, are more metacognitive, and participate more fully in rounds. Tenured teachers wanted to be able to provide good modeling, and wanted to represent the best of the profession to the pre-service teachers. Increased reflection of tenured teachers was consistently reported as a benefit to the school. One liaison summarized this impact:

> One of the things we talked about in governance meeting [was that] as a teacher you can't really improve without self-reflection. [Having pre-service students come observe in their classrooms] opened more tenured [teachers] to self-reflection. One of the problems is teaching can be insular, and folks get stuck; [participating in the PLLS] helps teachers get more feedback [and] be more self-reflective. (Liaison, 2010)

Cooperating teachers who mentored the pre-service teachers reported increased meta-

cognition related to their instructional and mentoring practice. "Having a practicum (preservice) student has led to deeper reflection of our practices and classroom communities. . .. Mentoring and debriefing with practicum students leads to better understanding [of content and pedagogy] and more explicit planning" (Cooperative teacher focus group, April 2010). The tenured teachers' responses support Reeves' (2010) notion of "deliberate practice," or the focus of instructional improvement on specific key strategies.

Role of the Principal

The principal role was perceived as key, especially with regard to the promotion of the shared professional development of preservice and in-service teachers, and most often with regard to the provision of resources (release time, funds, permission, and time) in support of such professional development. Liaisons spoke highly of their principals, and relied on their support and leadership to navigate their work with the university preservice teachers.

Principals who participated in rounds (two of the three) viewed themselves as learners; they reported that the rounds process got them back into classrooms in the midst of practice, as both a learner and observer, unrelated to the evaluation process. This experience of "re-engagement" with the instructional core was similar to key ideas highlighted in Blanding's (2009) interview with Richard Elmore, professor at Harvard Graduate School of Education:

> There are only a handful of principals who feel like their work has anything to do with the instructional practice. . . . They are not good at it, they have not done it in a long time, that's not what they have gotten rewarded for. (Blanding, 2009, p. 1)

Similarly, the tenured teachers reported that the presence of their principals during rounds signaled to them that the partnership was not just a "helping hand for new teachers, but a way for all of us to talk more deeply and reflect about our instruction" (Tenured teacher interview, May 2010). One teacher remarked, "until we started this [PLLS] partnership, our principal never stayed with us during professional development" (Tenured teacher interview, May 2010).

Role of the Liaison

The role of the liaison is one of a teacher leader. As a teaching peer, the liaison lent preservice teachers insight to the school's culture, while adding credibility and field expertise to the university's position in the partnership. School culture in this article refers to the

> . . . school's unwritten rules and traditions, norms and expectations. The unofficial pattern [that] seems to permeate everything: the way people act, how they dress, what they talk about or consider taboo, whether they seek out colleagues or isolte themselves, and how teachers feel about their work and their students." (Deal & Peterson, p. 6)

Liaisons were closest to both the field experience students and tenured teachers; they worked with both groups on a weekly basis. One principal reported on the liaison lending credibility to the process: "[The liaison's] reputation is wonderful; being an insider was a tremendous asset" (PLLS principal, 2010). Each principal/liaison pair was well-matched for collaborative, trusting, and valued partnerships.

Liaisons were very open to learning; each reported the responsibility of supporting preservice teachers enhanced their professional development skills. One liaison summed up her perceptions in this way:

> Being in the liaison role helped me see the connect and disconnect between teacher training programs and the reality of teaching. It made me wonder, what did I learn in my teacher preparation program, and the answer is 'not much'; most

> of what I learned I learned in those first days, that first year of teaching. I've made the FEs [pre-service teachers] one of my goals, that I want them to have the best years of preparation program. It's made me look at the building through their eyes. Mostly I realized the disconnect [between] my own preparation [and actual teaching practice]. This role has helped me observe differently. I'm more aware of their [pre-service teachers'] pondering; my eyes as a coach[liaison] have been strengthened. I can see more of the strengths and a bit more of the challenges than I could before I had the responsibility of Fes [pre-service teachers]. (Liaison, 2010)

Thus, the liaison emerged as the critical role in the successful implementation of the PLLS and successful learning of the participants, from the perspectives the pre-service and tenured teachers, the liaisons themselves, and the principals.

Funding

While not part of the original research question, school participants perceived the funding aspect of the SUP as a clear benefit. Supporting pre-service teachers can be viewed as an added responsibility, but having funds available for professional development and release time was extremely well received by the PLLS schools.

Challenges

Interviews and focus groups also illuminated some challeges to the SUP/PDS model. These challenges might impact the longevity of the SUP and are important considerations for groups seeking to form new SUPs or PDSs. There was clear consensus across roles regarding three of these challenging elements: time, program design, and communication between the university and participant schools.

Time. Time was most frequently mentioned as either an obstacle to the success of the partnership or related to a recommendation for improvement in the SUP. Time in classrooms by first year pre-service teachers was considered too limited by all school personnel, yet viewed as too extensive by the pre-service teachers. The agreement that pre-service teachers would spend 30 hours per term or approximately three hours per week was unclear to school personnel. Perhaps school personnel misunderstood the two-year duration of the graduate students' placement, but all school-based personnel felt that the first year pre-service teachers needed to spend more time in classrooms than the minimum 30 hours per term. School personnel perceived those who spent only these 30 required hours as lacking commitment.

Conversely, pre-service teachers reported that all but two of them spent much more than three hours per week, most spending double or triple that amount. Clarifying these expectations should be addressed prior to the start of a second cohort. Time for scheduling rounds was frequently considered a problem, in that it was very difficult to conduct rounds with various pre-service teacher schedules, especially at high schools. One high school solved this problem by stating directly that pre-service teachers should attend one consistent afternoon each week; this directed the pre-service teachers to report to campus weekly on the same day, at the same time. Thus, liaisons could have a consistent meeting time with pre-service students.

The final time issue involved the university calendar for field experience teachers. The university students began their field placements in the third week of September. School personnel preferred them to be available in August prior to the arrival of students. This is something for the university to consider for future partnerships, to offer extended time or credit for an early experience and to facilitate initial community building between cooperating teachers and field experience students.

Design. Since schools were given the autonomy to fund, design, and distribute leadership responsibilities for the PLLS, each school established their own designs for the pre-service teachers' programs. Some pre-service teachers more time with their cooperating teacher, others more time with the liaison, and each school designed some type of rounds process, which included the following items:

- A purpose for the observation cycle;
- Observations of one or more teachers;
- Debriefing conversation led by the liaison.

Beyond these common elements, the participants in the rounds process varied, but included on any one occasion any of the following individuals: tenured teachers, building administrators, university full-time student teachers, central office administrators, liaisons, field experience students, and the researcher. There was general agreement between liaisons that the rounds process should be more tightly defined and practiced with more specific agreements made; this would allow a future comparison to be made to determine whether inclusion in the rounds process makes a difference in preparing pre-service teachers and influencing tenured teachers. After attending a full session at each site, this researcher concludes there are distinct differences between the frequency, participation, process, audience, purpose, and outcomes of the "rounds" process.

Communication. There were consistent requests from principals, liaisons, and field experience teachers to have more communication between the university supervisors and PLLS school staff. School staff wanted more written and face-to-face communication about the requirements of the program, and offered suggestions for increasing the teaching responsibility of the pre-service students. Liaisons and tenured teachers reported that they wanted the field experience teachers to take on more responsibility for teaching throughout the year. This report resulted in a document created by the advisory team to clarify for cooperating teachers SMU's expected and increasing responsibilities for field experience teachers. Clarity of field experience teacher roles and responsibility improved across the entire PLLS program

Conclusion

At the end of the first year of the Professional Learning Laboratory School partnership, improved collaboration and communication were evident. Together, university and school districts were collaborating to better prepare future teachers. Both school and university partners recognized mutual benefits of collaborating around teacher preparation, a greater focus on tenured teacher reflection activities, increased funding for school improvement and professional development, and the utilization of school-based liaisons in bringing novices together with tenured teachers for engaging in and discussing shared practices. All participants believe that being "in practice" with each other through some type of instructional rounds was beneficial to improving pre-service and tenured teachers' instructional skills and knowledge.

The shift from *transactional leadership* (i.e., if you "take" a student teacher, you get some benefit) to *transformational leadership* (i.e., the experience was transformational for participating teachers, liaisons, and pre-service teachers alike) was evident in interviews and perceptions of staff in advisory meetings. What is left to do is continue to develop, refine, and document the evolution of the rounds process. Further exploration is warranted to explore the challenges and benefits to liaisons and principals who lead PDS schools. Through these analyses, continuous refinement will be possible in designing teacher preparation programs that are mutually beneficial to both schools and universities,

and that can withstand the inevitable changes of staff that occurs in dynamic school environments. One of our SUP principals concluded: SUP

> I think partnerships are a way to get work done. I'd like to see more of them, not just for universities and student teaching, but to specify where policy is headed, [I]have a vision of laboratory schools becoming the way we work. . . . It's no more a K-12 alignment; it's got to be K-16 alignment. . . . I think the public would buy in if they knew how these partnerships would work. (PLLS Principal, interview, May 2010)

Appendix A

Nine Essential Elements of Professional Development Schools

The nine required essentials of a PDS:

1. A comprehensive mission that is broader in its outreach and scope than the mission of any partner and that furthers the education profession and its responsibility to advance equity within schools and, by potential extension, the broader community;
2. A school–university culture committed to the preparation of future educators that embraces their active engagement in the school community;
3. Ongoing and reciprocal professional development for all participants guided by need;
4. A shared commitment to innovative and reflective practice by all participants;
5. Engagement in and public sharing of the results of deliberate investigations of practice by respective participants;
6. An articulation agreement developed by the respective participants delineating the roles and responsibilities of all involved;
7. A structure that allows all participants a forum for ongoing governance, reflection, and collaboration;
8. Work by college/university faculty and K–12 faculty in formal roles across institutional settings; and
9. Dedicated and shared resources and formal rewards and recognition structures.

References

Blanding, M. (2009). Treating the 'instructional core': Education rounds. Retrieved at: http://www.gse.harvard.edu/blog/uk/2009/05/treating-the-instructional-core-education-rounds.html on 10/12/2009.

Bodilly, S. (1998). *Lessons from new American schools' scale-up phase: Prospects for bringing designs to multiple schools*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND.

Bogdewic, S. P. (1992). Participant observation. In B.F. Crabree & W. Miller (Eds.), *Doing qualitative research* (pp. 45–69). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Calhoun, E., & Joyce, B. (1998). Inside-out and outside in: Learning from past and present school improvement paradigms. In A. Hargreaves et al. (Eds.). *International handbook of educational change* (pp. 1286–1298). Great Britain: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Catellia, L. (2006). School-university partnerships for closing the achievement gap: Ethical concerns. *International Journal of Educational Management. (0951-354X)*, *20*(3), 183–194.

Cheney, G., Davis, J., Garrett, K., & Halloran, J. (2010). *A new approach to principal preparation: Innovative programs share their practice and lessons learned*. Fort Worth, TX: Rainwater Leadership Alliance.

City, A., Elmore, R., Fiarman, S. E., & Teitel, L. (2009). *Instructional rounds in education*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Educational Press.

Clark, R. (1999). School-university partnerships and professional development schools. *Peabody Journal of Education, 74*(3 & 4), 164–177.

Creswell, J. (1998). *Qualitative inquiry and research designs: Choosing among five traditions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Darling-Hammond, L. (1994). *Professional development schools. Schools for developing a profession*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Darling-Hammond, L. (2010). Teacher education and the American future. *Journal of Teacher Education 61*(1), 35–4. American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education. http://jte.sagepbu.com

Deal, T., & Peterson, K.D. (2009). *Shaping school cutlure: Pitfalls, paradoxes and promises* (2nd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Dewey, J. (1916) *The school and society* (Rev. ed). Chicago: University of Chicago.

Garmston, R., & Wellman, B. (1999). *The adaptive school: A sourcebook for developing collaborative groups*. Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon.

Goodlad, J. (1994). *Educational renewal: Better teachers, better schools*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Hasbrouck, J., & Denton, C. (2005). *The reading coach: A how-to manual for success*. Longmont, CO: Sopris West.

Hawley, W. D., & Rosenholtz, S. (1984). Good schools: A synthesis of research on how schools influence student achievement. Special issue, *Peabody Journal of Education. 4,* 1–178.

Haycock, K., Hart, P., & Irvine, J. (1992). *Improving student achievement through partnerships*. Washington, D.C.: American Association for Higher Education.

Hill, P., Campbell, C., & Harvey, J. (2000). *It takes a city: Getting serious about urban school reform*. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution.

Knight, J. (2007). *Instructional coaching: A partnership approach*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Kochan, F. K. (1999). Professional development schools: A comprehensive review. In M. Byrd and D.J. McIntyre, (Eds.). *Research on professional development schools: Teacher education yearbook VII* (pp. 173–90). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Konecki, K. (2008). Triangulation and dealing with the realness of qualitative research. *Qualitative Sociology Review 4*(3), 7–28. Retrieved July, 2012 (http://www.qualitiativesociologyreview.org/ENG/archive.eng.php).

Konecki, K. (2009). Teaching visual grounded theory. *Qualitative Sociology Review 5*(3), 64–91.

LeCompte, M., & Schensul, J. (1997). *Designing and conducting ethnographic research: Ethnographers toolkit*. Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press.

Marzano, R. (2003). *What works in schools: Translating research into action*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

Mullen, C. (2000). Construction co-mentoring partnerships: Walkways we must travel. *Theory into Practice. 39*(1), 4–11.

National Association for Professional Development Schools. (April, 13, 2008). NAPDS releases policy statement of professional development schools. Retrieved at htt://www.napds.org/nine_essen.html

Petti, A. D. (2010a). Circles of leadership: Oregon district redefines coaching roles to find a balance between school and district goals. *Journal of Staff Development, 31*(6), 52–56.

Petti, A. D. (2010b). Learning together: The anatomy of a lab site, the future of collaboration in teaching and learning. Article presented at ORATE conference: "Owning the Future through a Comprehensive Vision for Teacher Education". March 5, 2010, Western Oregon University, Monmouth, OR.

Petti, A. D. (2013). Successful leaders beating the odds: Leveraging instructional rounds with professional development in school-university partnerships. In C. A. Mullen & K. E. Lane, (Eds). *Becoming a global voice: The 2013 yearbook of the national council of professors of educational administration*. Ypsilant, MI: NCPEA Publications.

Reeves, D. (2003). High performance in high poverty schools: 90/90/90 and beyond. Retrieved from http://www.sabine.k12.la.us/online/leadershipacademy/high%20performance%2090%2090%2090%20and%20beyond.pdf

Reeves, D. (2010). *Transforming professional development into student results*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

Ruhl, T. (2009) Professional learning schools as the site for new teacher preparation. Article presented at meeting of Advisory Committee for Professional Learning Laboratory Schools, Marylhurst University (Marylhurst, OR).

Schmoker, M. (2006). *Results now*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD Publications

Sewall, T. E., Shapiro, J. P., Ducett, J. P., & Sanford, J. S. (1995). Professional development schools in the inner city: Policy implications for school-university collaboration. In H. G. Petrie (Ed.). *Professionalization, partnership, and power; Building professional development schools* (pp. 179–198). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Spillane, J. P., & Diamond, J. B. (2007). *Distributed leadership in practice*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Sykes, G. (1999). Teacher and student learning: Strengthening their connection. In L. Darling-Hammond & G. Sykes (Eds.). *Teaching as the learning profession: Handbook of policy and practice* (pp. 151–180). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Stroble, B., & Luka, H. (1999). It's my life, now: The impact of professional development school partnerships on university and school administrators. *Peabody Journal of Education*, *74*(3/4), 123. Retrieved from EBSCO*host*.

Teitel, L. (2003). *Professional development schools handbook: Starting, sustaining and assessing partnerships that improve student learning*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

U.S. Department of Education, Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development, ESEA Blueprint for Reform, Washington, D.C., 2010: 2033.

Zeichner, K. (1992). Rethinking the practicum in the professional development school partnership. *Journal of Teacher Education*, *43*(4), 296–307.

❖ ❖ ❖

Amy D. Petti is an associate professor of Educational Leadership & Policy at Portland State University. Dr. Petti's research focus remains in school university partnerships and leadership preparation.