

# Meeting the Nine Essentials: Winthrop University-School Partnership Network

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## Introduction

*We are very excited to be able to partner, share, and learn not only with a university, but also with partner schools that will help us reach our potential using the wonderful teachers and resources that are available.*

—Partnership Network School Teacher

John Goodlad began a conversation in 1984 with his manuscript *A Place Called School* suggesting that, in order to improve schools and the work of teachers, a relationship had to exist between institutes of public education and teacher preparation programs. Although many years have passed, Goodlad's message holds significant bearing on whether or not all students receive a high quality, equitable education through the National Network for Educational Renewal's *Agenda for Education in a Democracy*. The Agenda promotes the simultaneous renewal of P-12 education and educator preparation, providing an equitable education for all students, and engaging in nurturing pedagogy to meet the diverse needs of students. The Winthrop University-School Partnership Network (WUSP) is a dynamic, diverse, and growing group of participants from nine school districts, thirty schools, multiple university programs, and community organizations. As a Network, we are working to emulate Goodlad's vision of having a shared responsibility for student achievement through teacher preparation and professional

learning. Moving from an "I" to a "we" perspective, our work is a model of how to not just blur, but to remove the lines between university and school for the purpose of supporting learners. We have made conscious efforts to address the "Nine Essentials" of the National Association for Professional Development Schools since our inception.

## Essential 1

As with any entity that values unique and wide-ranging perspective, the individual missions and purpose of each participant in the Winthrop University-School Partnership Network (WUSP) differ according to contextual factors. Acknowledging the importance of maintaining an individual identity while striving for the greater good is keystone to meeting the needs of each partner as they contribute to our state and national prosperity.

While celebrating each partner for their strengths and contributions, we maintain a common purpose and shared vision. Regardless of whether the partner is a teacher preparation unit, individual partner school, or supporting community organization, ongoing learning and development is the foundation of our mission: "The mission of the Winthrop University-School Partnership Network is simultaneous renewal and support of P-16 (preschool through college) education, practicing educators, and educator prepara-

tion.” The mission is fulfilled through four specific goals:

1. Improve P-12 student learning
2. Improve professional learning for district and university faculty and teacher candidates
3. Improve quality of teacher preparation
4. Increase support for new teachers

## Essential 2 – Developing Educators

Since 2009, one of the main initiatives of the Winthrop University-School Partnership Network (WUSP) is transformation of our teacher preparation Core curriculum. Winthrop University has had in place a 30 credit hour Education Core curriculum for over fifteen years. The overall purpose of the Education Core is to provide pedagogical content and practical experiences that serve as a foundation to all of our teacher education programs, from Early Childhood Education to secondary and P-12 certification fields. The Education Core plays a key role in consistently and purposefully developing the competencies that we intend to develop in all Teacher Education program candidates—competencies that are reflected in our conceptual framework. After reviewing data from exit surveys and employer questionnaires and discussions with school partners, district administrators, and program faculty, we identified a need to move to a more clinically-based program with experiences and content that would address the needs of learners in today’s schools.

Beginning with a kick-off retreat in 2010, school, district, and university faculty have been working tirelessly to truly transform the undergraduate teacher education experience. With clinical experiences beginning in the freshman year and occurring each and every semester thereafter (totaling an average of 1000 hours), the Education Core Curriculum requires extensive time in P-12 schools with diverse learners while applying concepts

learned in the Core coursework. Content of the courses is “wrapped around” a sequence of well-designed and targeted clinical experiences that occur in the school settings of our Partnership Network under the tutelage of carefully-selected and well-trained mentor teachers many of whom were involved in the creation of the curriculum. Having multiple voices and varied perspectives as part of the curriculum process has proved most beneficial, as there is a shared understanding and responsibility for educating the next generation of teachers.

The success of the early fieldwork as well as the culminating year-long internship is due largely in part to structuring a team-based approach for supporting teacher candidates in Partnership Network schools. For each experience, the candidate is part of a collaborative team that provides opportunities for extended practice under the guidance of experienced professionals from the partnership site and the university. Each team member has specific responsibilities to ensure the development of competency in the art and science of teaching. Because of the complexity and importance of the internship experiences, the Partnership Advisory Council crafted a model for mentor teachers that was not only closely aligned with the type of mentoring beginning teachers receive, but also explicitly outlined the guidelines and compensation for working with teacher candidates during various levels and experiences.

The internship experience at Winthrop University is a culmination of the teacher preparation program and represents a bridge between theory and practice. The year-long experience provides opportunities for teacher education students to acquire an understanding of the teaching process by gradual induction into increased instructional responsibilities. In a response to school partners expressing a need for candidates to experience the beginning of a school year, the 2011–2012 school year marked the inaugural year-long internships for our teacher candidates. As the

candidates begin the school year with their mentor teachers in the Partnership Network schools, they have a unique opportunity to serve as “junior faculty members” for an entire school year alongside highly capable master educators. The year-long internship experience is rewarding for our mentor teachers and of real benefit to our Partnership Network schools – having two capable adults for an entire year to support diverse learning needs.

Instituting a year-long internship was a process of planning, collaboration, and adjustment. A subcommittee of the Partnership Network Advisory Council (PAC) devoted many hours to deciding how placements would be made, relationships facilitated, and environments structured that would embrace having teacher candidates as part of a school faculty. Spring meetings provide an opportunity for candidates and mentors to meet before beginning the experience the next fall. This initial relationship building activity means discussions, visits, and planning can happen over the summer as teachers prepare to start a new year. Initially, mentor teachers and school administrators were sent a letter from the PAC describing the positive aspects of the year-long internship and various ways candidates could be supported in the experience. Although many sites went about building a supportive environment in different ways, small acts such as having the candidate’s name on the outside of the classroom door, giving the candidate a school t-shirt to wear on spirit days, and providing a district email to the candidate all highlight a willing and eager approach on behalf of the school to embrace the commitment to teacher preparation.

We are continuously assessing the year-long experience for its benefit to each partner. Survey evaluations and annual focus groups provide an opportunity to share success and challenge of implementation. The Partnership Advisory Council and Network Management Team examine the data for use in continuous

program improvement. Overall, the experience has resulted in overwhelmingly positive feedback as seen by the comments below:

- “I saw that as a very exciting change. At our school, the year-long interns’ names are mounted together. That is a powerful message when the students see them. They are really seen as two teachers.” – University Supervisor
- “I like the yearlong internship. I feel like they need to see the beginning. They learn how to set up a classroom. If you didn’t know then you wouldn’t know what it is like. Every year is different.” – Mentor Teacher
- “With parent teacher conferences, we sat down together and we [discussed] what we should write about this student. I was able to provide feedback because I have seen how far they have come. I know their personalities and who they should have next year. I knew their social skills and parent involvement. It helped a lot.” – Teacher Candidate

### Essential 3

In terms of supporting practicing teachers, faculty, and administrators, creating learning communities focused on data-driven, research-based practices for educators is the shared responsibility of our Partnership. Needs assessments of school and university faculty as well as professional development goals within school improvement plans define the direction and opportunities necessary to improve student academic achievement. Efforts to facilitate collaborative learning communities occur through the Professional Learning Opportunities page on the Network website ([http://www2.winthrop.edu/netscope/professional\\_learning.htm](http://www2.winthrop.edu/netscope/professional_learning.htm)). The site has four categories for addressing professional development needs: Common Core Professional Development Support, Current Opportuni-

ties, Possible Opportunities, and a Learning Opportunities Request section (see below). Special projects such as Common Core are structured by the Network Management Team. As sessions for these projects and others are scheduled, they are highlighted in the “Current Opportunities” section. Although delivered at a partner site or at the university, participation is open to the entire Partnership through an online registration system. “Possible Opportunities” is a section of the website housing descriptions of professional development in which faculty have expertise and are willing to implement in various locations. These are often sessions beginning at individual sites with proven effectiveness in meeting specific challenges.

Finally, if a partner has a specific need that is not listed, they complete an online “Learning Opportunities Request” survey that is submitted to the Partnership office to assist in finding an expert within the Network. Once the expert is identified and the session scheduled, it is moved to the “Current Opportunities” section so all participants are aware and can register if appropriate. Since beginning this structure in 2010, the WUSP has supported shared professional development related to mentoring, various curriculum needs, co-teaching, graduate coursework and add-on certification, and pedagogical strategies such as working with students in poverty and English Language Learners. Our learning community has provided partners with expertise for all learning opportunity requests submitted.

Beyond professional development that occurs throughout the year, our most comprehensive opportunity for sharing educational practices and procedures occurs at our annual “Partnership Conference for Educational Renewal.” In just three short years the conference has grown from just under 100 participants to 275 at the most recent 2012 conference. Offering 43 concurrent sessions delivered by teachers, district administrators, university faculty, and teacher candidates, the

conference has proven to be a time of celebration of Partnership work. With a conference planning committee of school and university partners, the conference aims to meet the professional development needs of multiple stakeholders while networking new partners.

## Essential 4 – Innovation and Reflection

Evaluating preservice initiatives, professional development and other projects occurs through an annual performance template aligned with the four Partnership goals. Partnering schools develop measurable objectives that address needs within their individual sites (often aligned with school improvement goals), which are then combined to measure the impact of the Partnership as a whole. At the end of each academic year, data is reported related to each objective with supporting analysis regarding how to move forward.

As plans are collected, information on specific “focus areas” are added to the WUSP website to facilitate collaboration. Partners within the Network can identify others working in similar domains and share resources to accomplish stated goals. University faculty can search sites appropriate for field-based research or engage in service activities with schools in need of specific expertise. Finally, assistance is available to sites just beginning to focus in an area that another site has been exploring and possibly addressed successfully. Once assessment plans have end of year data, Partnership staff members examine how many objectives addressed each Network goal and which of these objectives were achieved. The Network Management Team analyzes the final report for evaluation purposes and as a guide for future work.

Other reflective practices include gathering and analyzing internship survey data and teacher candidate (interns), mentor teachers, and university supervisor focus group feed-

back. The data from these various sources are compiled and used for program improvement through groups such as the Network Management Team (NMT), Partnership Advisory Council, and university committees (with school liaisons and administrators). Additionally, the NMT annually examines achievement data as a reflection on past initiatives and a source of information for future work, maintaining a Network focus on P-12 student learning.

## Essential 5 – Sharing Best Practice

The annual Partnership Conference for Educational Renewal is an established event that promotes the sharing of best practice throughout the Partnership Network. The conference has grown from just under 100 participants to over 300 at the most recent 2013 conference. With a conference planning committee of school and university partners, the event aims to meet the Winthrop University-School professional development needs of multiple stakeholders while networking new partners. Offering 43 concurrent sessions delivered by teachers, district administrators, university faculty, and teacher candidates, the conference celebrates past work and propels innovation for the next year ([http://www2.winthrop.edu/netscope/partnership\\_conference/conference2012.htm](http://www2.winthrop.edu/netscope/partnership_conference/conference2012.htm)). As one participant expressed, “The conference was informative and enjoyable. It was great to see what is happening in other schools. I have great ideas to take home!”

The use of Teachscape Reflect, a technology tool that allows mentor teachers and teacher candidates to capture video of lessons from a 360° perspective, has provided a unique opportunity for teacher reflection on teaching methods and student engagement. Beginning with six systems just two years ago, the Partnership Network saw such great benefit of this tool for professional learning communities and collaborative action research that we decided to invest in an

additional nine systems. Videos captured are not used for evaluation but instead to facilitate professional conversation in partner schools and in teacher preparation classrooms on the university campus. According to a school liaison, “Teachscape videos have allowed us to expand reflective practice. Teachers tape common lessons, first in one class and then another; then they reflect individually and share reflections. Clips can also be made and shared in departments as teachers seek input on how to tweak lessons and improve student learning.”

Finally, disseminating results from various Partnership Network initiatives is encouraged and supported by all Network partners. From presenting at the annual Partnership Conference for Educational Renewal to sharing data to an international audience at annual conferences such as the PDS National Conference co-sponsored by NAPDS, university faculty, classroom teachers, and school and district administrators are actively engaged in scholarly, collaborative presentations.

## Essentials 6 and 7 – Organizational Structure and Participation

The Winthrop University-School Partnership (WUSP) includes three Colleges from Winthrop University, nine school districts in upstate South Carolina, and several state and regional educational organizations. There are six Professional Development Schools, 28 Partner Schools, 108 Satellite Schools, and multiple Content Area Assemblies. The four-tiered approach to our Network structure follows the idea of differentiation acknowledging the necessity for teachers to consider students as individuals with diverse needs and contributions. We needed a dynamic and developmentally flexible approach to our network’s organizational design that acknowledged the various perspectives, relationships, and institutional structures coming to the



table. Just as students' needs are different, so are the needs of teachers, university faculty, schools, and institutions. Where one school may be poised and ready for a significant level of commitment, others may want to ease into the partnership a bit more slowly. Still others, recognizing the advantage of a partnership, may only have the resources to participate through minimal capacities. In the development of our Partnership Network and in true university-school partnership fashion, faculty from both entities met extensively to construct a network structure that would allow for and facilitate public school participation at four differentiated tiers - professional development schools, partner schools, content area assemblies, and satellite schools. Each structure varies in the level of commitment required from the school faculty and the university as well as the time devoted to the partnership.

- A **Professional Development School (PDS)** engages in unique and intense school-university collaboration designed to prepare future educators, provide current educators with ongoing professional development, encourage joint school-university faculty investigations into education-related issues, and promote the learning of P-12 students. The primary qualification of a PDS is its high commitment to this collaborative endeavor; the school may or may not be a school in need of renewal. A PDS is a dedicated school with the majority (2/3) of the school's teachers committed to the shared mission and willing to support teacher candidates. A significant university presence exists at the school with a university faculty member serving as a Winthrop Faculty-in-Residence for approximately 50% of their workload. PDS faculty members engage in the university through course instruction, partnership governance processes, and special events. The PDS has an identi-

fied school liaison (teacher or school leader) to help facilitate partnership-related activity.

- **Partner Schools** engage in school-university collaboration designed to prepare future educators, provide current educators with ongoing professional development, encourage joint school-university faculty investigations into education-related issues, and promote the learning of P-12 students. The school is committed to collaboration; however, there is not necessarily a majority staff commitment to the mission. Nevertheless, there is high interest and the school is in the process of building capacity or may be in waiting to become a PDS. This school has similar benefits as the PDS but will not necessarily have site-based university presence. A university Partnership Coordinator serves as liaison to the Partner Schools and helps facilitate the networking of the Partner Schools with each other, the Professional Development Schools, and the university. Each Partner School has a designated school liaison (teacher or school leader) to help facilitate the partnership-related work.
- A **Content Area Assembly** consists of faculty within a high school department or faculty representing a P-12 certification area (such as band directors and foreign language instructors) across schools and districts. This tier of Partnership Network membership provides an opportunity for group membership in the Network based specifically on a teaching discipline. The Content Area Assembly applies solely to secondary or P-12 certification fields that may experience challenges to gaining the necessary commitment of the entire school community required for PDS or Partner School tiers. Assemblies engage in collaboration

designed to prepare future educators, provide current educators with ongoing professional development, encourage joint school-university faculty investigations into education-related issues, and promote the learning of P-12 students. Participation as a Content Area Assembly requires approval from all school principals and superintendents represented by its members.

- For individual high school departments, a majority (75-100%) of the department faculty must be committed to the Partnership and participation in the established Assembly. Content Area Assemblies are available in English, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies.
- Teachers in P-12 certification areas at any level (elementary, middle, or high school) may join a Content Area Assembly for Art, Dance, ESOL, Foreign Language (French and Spanish), Music (choral and instrumental), Physical Education, Special Education, or Theatre.

- **Satellite Schools** are sites in a partnering school district where individuals (teachers, school leaders) engage in activities related to Partnership Network goals but school-wide commitment to the partnership collaboration is not possible for various reasons. Some Satellite Schools use this opportunity to build capacity and eventually apply to become a Partner School. This tier of the Partnership Network is designed to include individual teachers or school leaders who have a desire to be involved, have contributions to make, but are not situated in a school that is ready or able to commit to ongoing partnership work. In this case, individuals in a Satellite School often participate in teacher preparation or engage in collaborative professional development but they are not in any way obligated to do so. The Partnership Coordinator facilitates communication and networking opportunities for individuals in Satellite Schools.

Although the four tiers are distinctive, the intent with this structure is to ensure each remains strongly tied to a network of partners

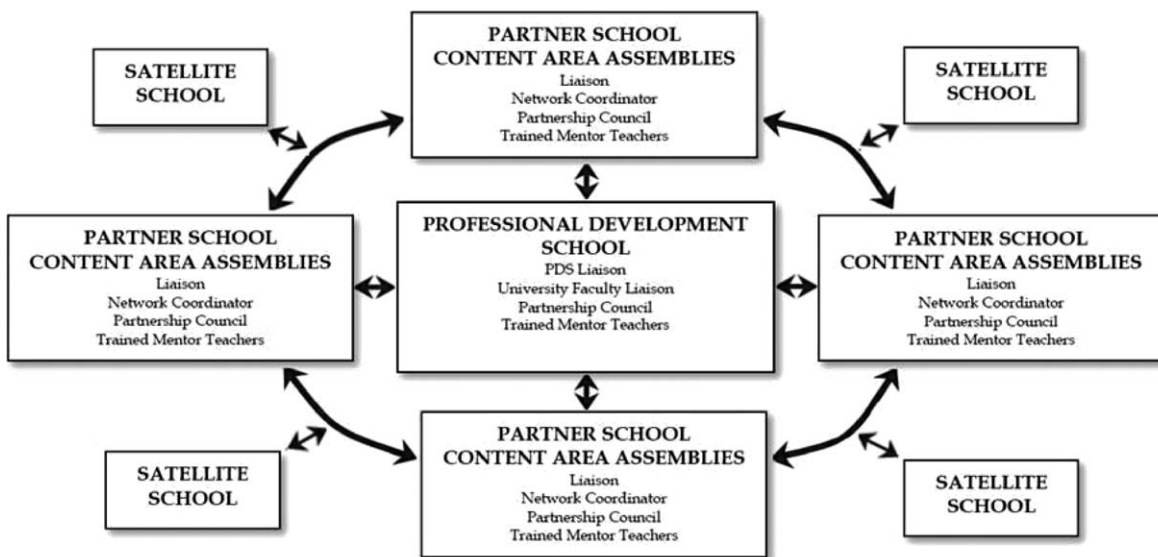


Figure 1. Partnership Network Structure

versus a singular relationship between one school and the university. The graphic below illustrates this concept and an overall picture of how the WUSP works.

“Mini-networks” form through shared interests in inquiry-based projects, challenges faced, and/or explorations of innovative practices. Professional Development Schools (PDS) form the hub of the mini-network because of the significant commitment of the school to the Partnership and the university faculty member dedicated to the school. These faculty members orchestrate the workings of the mini-network with additional support offered by school and university administrators. Partner Schools and Content Area Assemblies that share similar goals and objectives affiliate themselves with a specific PDS. Satellite Schools, as indicated above, can participate in any of the partnerships through opportunities such as professional development and teacher induction programs.

In addition to housing Network information, Partnership agreements, and governing body meeting details, the Partnership website (<https://www2.winthrop.edu/netscope/>) provides all opportunities for participants and the general public to stay up-to-date on the numerous initiatives and activities. Professional development opportunities offered by the various schools, school districts, and Winthrop University are advertised and a mechanism to participate in the professional development offerings at other schools and school districts is available (see section f for additional explanation on collaborative professional development). Details on how to join the Network is also on the website as well as information on how to become a mentor and the mentoring process.

Other forms of communication that enhance the collaborative nature of the Partnership include a quarterly newsletter, placement of student cohorts in the PDS schools, frequent school and university visitations, P-12 faculty co-teaching classes, and a Polycom system to facilitate long-distance

meetings and classes. The Winthrop University-School Partnership Network newsletter is an opportunity to reflect upon, celebrate, and make new goals for future work. Highlighting faculty, teacher, and student work often propels new connections and collaborations within the Partnership.

## Essential 8 – Roles and Responsibilities

A system of shared governance in the WUSP promotes regular, active engagement of all partners. A Network Management Team (NMT) guides the implementation of the mission and four goals and includes representatives from three colleges at Winthrop University (College of Education, College of Arts and Sciences, and the College of Visual and Performing Arts), representatives from nine participating school districts, and representatives from education-related state organizations. The NMT fulfills roles including, but not limited to:

- Conducting needs-assessments and the resulting design and implementation of coursework and professional development activities;
- Redesigning and examining data related to teacher preparation curriculum;
- Reviewing proposals and reports for collaborative inquiry grants; and
- Analyzing annual data to measure the impact of initiatives on Network goals and for program improvement.

The Partnership Advisory Council (PAC) directs the implementation of the aspects of the Network on the school level. The PAC consists of individuals representing each Partnership Network school (P-12 faculty), the nine Winthrop Faculty in Residence (WFIR), and representatives from the NMT. These members meet every four to six weeks as a whole committee as well as several sub-committees including Core Curriculum (trans-



forming teacher preparation courses), Field and Clinical Experiences (monitor and adjust clinical aspects), and Unit Assessment (measuring impact of teacher preparation). Individuals from all divisions of the Network also serve on P-12 School Improvement Councils. Members of the PAC review and select new schools to join the Network and are involved in the selection of mentors for the teacher candidates. Agendas and minutes for the Network Management Team ([http://www2.winthrop.edu/netscope/grant\\_management.htm](http://www2.winthrop.edu/netscope/grant_management.htm)) and Partnership Advisory Council ([http://www2.winthrop.edu/netscope/partnership\\_council.htm](http://www2.winthrop.edu/netscope/partnership_council.htm)) are available online to facilitate communication as well as archive a history of our work.

School liaisons and Winthrop Faculty in Residence (WFIR) serve as conduits between university and school to address professional development needs of Partnership teachers and faculty. Both groups work with schools and departments to determine research needs, effectively use data, and disseminate findings. School liaisons identify teachers to serve as mentors and support their work with teacher candidates and beginning teachers with the help of the WFIR. Because school liaisons often serve as adjunct instructors and guest speakers in university classes and school classrooms they help facilitate work between school and university to ensure alignment between course content and sound pedagogical practices. Both school liaisons and WFIR assist in networking of participants in the Partnership.

## Essential 9 – Sharing Resources and Recognizing Success

One of the key factors of our work as a Partnership is identifying, utilizing, and acknowledging the expertise we have within ourselves. We are passionate that many, if not all, of our needs can be met by taking stock in the human and capital resources available for sharing. For example, our structure for

supporting the professional development needs of the Partnership is based on shared expertise. Partners use a web-based portal to submit specific needs then the partnership director facilitates identifying the appropriate person or persons within the Partnership with the expertise in the content requested. Sessions are scheduled at schools or the university and open to any participants in the Partnership. This sharing of resources not only eliminates the need to hire outside consultants but also saves time in delivering to faculty from multiple schools and departments who then go back and share information with colleagues.

Resources are also devoted to collaborative research. Since scientifically based research and data-driven decision-making are foundational to the Partnership work, the Winthrop University-School Partnership Network Research and Inquiry Grant Program supports the collaborative effort of classroom teachers and university faculty to investigate educational innovations to improve student learning. Proposals from collaborative groups of school and university faculty address one of three research categories:

- Inquiry into the impact on student learning of research-based best practices in specific classroom or school settings;
- Inquiry into professional learning to improve teacher effectiveness and its impact on student learning in classroom or school settings; or
- Research connected to the agenda of the National Network for Educational Renewal and its impact on student learning in classroom or school settings (<http://www.nnerpartnerships.org/about/index.html>).

Collaboration is a mandated aspect of the Research and Inquiry Grant Program with options to include engagement of Winthrop teacher candidates as co-investigators, a second Winthrop University College (Education,

Arts & Sciences, Business, or Visual & Performing Arts), or one or more other Network partners. A subcommittee of the Network Management Team (NMT) uses a published rubric to grant funds to select proposals. The NMT as a whole monitors and supports the project implementation and review final data for effectiveness and inclusion in overall Partnership evaluation.

In addition to sharing resources, we have established multiple ways to recognize commitment to, participation in, and leadership for the Partnership Network. As suggested by our school partners, “advertising” the partnership work is critical to facilitating awareness of and conversation within their buildings, communities, and districts. School partners receive a large banner appropriate for outside display that highlights the site as a Professional Development or Partner School. The banners display the school, district, and university names along with their logos. The banners are displayed at school entrances or above signs to highlight partnership pride and prompt conversations (often with parents waiting in carpool lines). Banner presentations are formal events during school assemblies, PTO meetings, or school district board events.

Within the school and university doors, those providing leadership to the Partnership find reward in multiple ways. Winthrop Faculty in Residence (WFIR) and school liaisons receive reduced workloads or financial support for their contributions as well as opportunities for additional professional development at state and national conferences. Mentor teachers and university supervisors receive recognition annually at a symposium dinner. Outstanding mentor teacher awards are a highlight and determined by a subcommittee of the Partnership Advisory Council (nominations made by teacher candidates, WFIR, and university supervisors). The selected recipients receive a framed certificate while the nominator reads aloud the submitted nomination letter. Often met with over-

whelming tears of pride and honor, the awardee names are then engraved on gold plates and placed on a recognition board on the first floor in the College of Education on Winthrop’s campus. In just this past year, we decided to add a step to the recognition process by forwarding the awardee names to our state organization for teacher education. We are excited to report, two mentor teachers and one of the WFIR received recognition for their exemplary service to the teaching profession.

## Summary

From the onset, one of our main hopes as a Partnership Network is demonstrating the significant value in having multiple voices contributing to the conversation. Whether the topic be teacher preparation, student achievement, mentoring new teachers, supporting administrators, understanding and embracing diverse perspectives results are stronger teachers hence, improved student learning. Although difficult at times, we have moved from an “I” to a “we” mentality and seen the fruits of our labor in several noteworthy accomplishments and achievements.

- Transformed teacher preparation curriculum (year-long internship, mentor model) – Collaborative efforts of district and school leaders, classroom teachers, and university faculty and administrators has resulted in a unique, clinically-based program designed to ensure future teachers are prepared to meet the diverse challenges in today’s classrooms.
- 4-tiered Partnership Network structure with shared governance – Through constant conversation with all partners in multiple positions, we have created a Partnership Network structure that acknowledges the diverse needs of and capacities to commit to partnership-related work. Our structure chang-

es to meet changing contexts and aims to be inclusive of all participants.

- Professional development built upon expertise within the Partnership – So often in education, we witness outside entities building careers on “consulting” for schools and districts. With absorbent costs and often misguided contextual information, we are committed to tapping the expertise within our own partners saving not only money, but time. Building an online database that advertises professional learning opportunities and provides a means of requesting specific sessions, facilitates shared access to human and capital resources.

In spring 2012, we received national recognition from the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education for work in field and clinical experiences and assessment practices. Such acclaim is due in no small part to the work of the Winthrop University-School Partnership Network. And, where the national recognition is invigorating and affirming, it is our last accomplishment of which we are most proud: improved student learning. A project-based learning implementation with 251 students resulted in 40% gains shown on standards-based pre/post assessments. A reading initiative for struggling learners found statistically significant increases in student achievement on standardized measures. As a result of implementing the co-teaching model with general and special

education teachers at one of our partner schools, reading and math standardized test scores of co-taught students were collected and showed significantly high growth than compared to students who were not co-taught – this included students with identified disabilities. As goal number one in our Partnership Network, these improvements we see in student learning through the dedication and innovation of collaborative partnerships is the accomplishment of which we are most proud. <sup>SUP</sup>



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**Jennie F. Rakestraw**, Ph.D., is dean of the Richard W. Riley College of Education at Winthrop University. Through her work in Georgia and South Carolina, Dean Rakestraw has been engaged in P-12 co-reform and university-school partnerships for over 20 years.