

The Bowie State University Professional Development Schools Network Partnership

Eva Garin, Bowie State University
Traki Taylor, Bowie State University
Maggie Madden, Maryland State Department of Education
Judy Beiter, Anne Arundel County Public Schools of Maryland
Julius Davis, Bowie State University
Cynthia Farmer, Prince George's County
Dawn Nowlin, Prince George's County

ABSTRACT: The Bowie State University PDS Network Partnership is one of the 2015 Exemplary PDS Partnerships recognized by the National Association for Professional Development Schools. This partnership is built on a series of signature programs that define and support our partnership work. This article describes each of those signature programs that make our network unique.

NAPDS Essentials 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 with 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 investigation 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 P-12 faculty in formal roles across institutional settings; #9/Dedicated and shared resources and formal rewards and recognition structures.

Overview

History and Setting

Bowie State University (BSU) is a historically black university (HBU) located between Washington, D.C. and Annapolis Maryland and serves over 5,600 diverse students. BSU is an outgrowth of a school opened in 1864 in Baltimore, Maryland by the Baltimore Association for the Moral and Educational Improvement of Colored People an organization dedicated to offering educational opportunities that the state failed to provide for its black citizens. The association opened its first Baltimore school on January 9, 1865 in the African Baptist Church in Crane's Building on the corner of Calvert and Saratoga Streets. The school offered courses in the elements of education. Courses to train teachers were added in 1866. By 1910, the state decided to relocate the school to Bowie, Maryland, purchasing a 187-acre tract formerly known as Jericho Farm dating to 1716. The school opened at its current location in 1911 with about 60 students. In January 2015, the university launched a yearlong celebration of the 150th anniversary of its founding.

In 1999, BSU became one of two universities in the state of Maryland to pilot the first professional development schools (PDS). The commitment to the PDS model continues to guide our undergraduate teacher preparation programs.

Today, BSU remains a leader in teacher preparation. Its programs have maintained accreditation by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education since 1954 and continue to produce outstanding teachers and school administrators, with recent graduates including county and state Teachers of the Year (Bowie State University 2015).

Mission of the Partnership

The BSU Professional Development Schools Network is a collaborative partnership among a special center, six elementary schools, two secondary schools (middle school and high school), the College of Education, the College of Arts and Sciences, that spans two school districts. Our mission is to create and sustain a collaborative partnership that impacts student learning by exploring models of effective teaching and learning; facilitating extensive, year-long clinical practices for prospective teachers;

conducting needs-based professional development; and sharing best practices with PDS partners.

Bowie State University PDS Initiatives include:

- PDS Leadership Certificate via a Teach-Coach-Reflect, Advanced Teach-Coach-Reflect and PDS Leadership Workshop
- Focused professional development experiences in best practices, technology, literacy, mathematics and science
- Year-long internships
- Year-long intern assessment through a performance-based electronic portfolio
- PDS site-based inquiry groups and action research to analyze best practices
- An annual Bowie State University PDS Research Conference
- Multi-site planning including Summer Strategic Planning
- On-site methods courses
- PDS Reading Clinic

What Makes Our Partnership Unique

We believe that what makes our program unique is that we work across school districts and partner with both Prince George's County and Anne Arundel County Schools. Teachers from both school districts participate in the professional development opportunities that we offer and the school districts support our partnership and communicate with one another to have cross-district opportunities. Another unique aspect of our partnership is that we hold PDS Network Meetings across school districts and across programs, including elementary education, early childhood/special education and secondary education programs, and including PDS faculty and university faculty members. We feel that the size of our undergraduate program affords us opportunities for close collaboration and relationships.

As a PDS Network, we have many opportunities to take leadership roles in the state and national PDS arena. Our PDS Network has been awarded both state and national grants to support our work with university faculty, PDS teachers, and PreK-12 students. Most recently we were the recipients of a Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) Race to the Top sub-grant that focused on our secondary PDS. As part of the Maryland Teaching Consortium, university faculty and PDS faculty met with state coordinators, other colleges and universities as well as local school system representatives, and teachers and administrators created *Preparing Educators for High Poverty/Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Schools: A Manual for Teacher Educators, Teachers and Principals* (Maryland Teaching Consortium, 2014). The manual describes Program Components, along with Program Indicators, and Suggested Evidence to guide educator preparation programs. This recently released document will provide a framework for professional development of PDS partners at Network meetings and Summer Strategic Planning.

Nationally, representatives from the BSU PDS Network have served in PDS leadership capacities. One member of the Network has served as one of the past presidents of National Association for Professional Development Schools (NAPDS). Another member of the Network recently served as the American Educational Research Association (AERA) PDS Research SIG Chair. Additionally, two members of the Network serve as associate editors of the NAPDS Journal, *School-University Partnerships*. While the BSU PDS Network is a small, close-knit learning community, the members of the Network support the advancement of PDS on a national scale.

Our PDS Network is guided by the Maryland State Department of Education *Professional Development Schools: An Implementation Model* (2003), which outlines PDS standards and a redesign in teacher education. This manual guides our commitment to the role of teacher inquiry in impacting student learning, extended internships and the requirement that all candidates must complete their internships in a PDS site. Additionally we focus on the National Association for Professional Development Schools (2008) document, *What it Means to be a Professional Development School*. Each of these documents and organizations has provided impetus as we developed our BSU PDS Network Signature Programs.

What is a Signature Program?

Signature Programs epitomize an institution's mission and define its distinctiveness. For the BSU PDS Network, identifying Signature Programs has facilitated PDS partners' identification of the network's programming strengths and non-negotiables (Kelly, 2008). This list of signature programs has been revisited at each Network meeting with site-based PDS coordinators and university faculty. Furthermore, each summer, our Signature Programs are discussed and refined with the greater community of site-based PDS coordinators, mentor teachers, school administrators, interns, and university faculty.

Network Signature Programs (Garin, 2015) evolved from discussion to print to reality through a five-year process. To advance the vision of our PDS Network, new programs are added and those that are no longer needed are omitted. The process of identifying and refining our Signature Programs is a collaborative effort between all PDS stakeholders, all of whom work together for the greater good of the Network and the PreK-12 students who we support. While each Signature Program stands as a unique initiative, they each share several underlying characteristics. Specifically, these programs:

- Build on existing strengths
- Work on interdisciplinary and interagency levels (Maryland State Department of Education, Prince George's County and Anne Arundel County school districts, and Bowie State University)
- Support the development and growth of PDS teachers, university faculty, and candidates

- Offer potential to tap into external and internal funding opportunities
- Distinguish our PDS Network from others
- Possess tremendous potential for development and start-up ventures
- Support the Standards for Maryland Professional Development Schools (MSDE, 2003) and the National Association for Professional Development Schools Nine Essentials (NAPDS, 2008)

The Bowie State University PDS Signature Programs and NAPDS Essentials

Action Research

Within the Bowie State University PDS Network, both PDS teachers and teacher candidates participate in action research. Interns use action research during their internship to support a school improvement goal or their mentor teacher's Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) and work with a small group of students to offer additional support. Teacher candidates present their action research to a panel of PDS stakeholders consisting of university and PDS faculty members who use a rubric to score and give feedback to each teacher candidate. These presentations occur towards the end of the internship semester and are one of the graduation requirements and become part of our assessment system. In addition, each year PDS sites are invited to apply for action research mini-grants, which are open to all teachers within the PDS, whether or not they serve as mentor teachers. To apply for an action research mini-grant, PDS teachers are invited to an information meeting on campus where the Request for Proposal (RFP) is presented and questions are answered. This Signature Program addresses NAPDS Essentials 2, 3, and 4.

Inquiry Groups

While action research is the most recognized form of teacher research, another lesser-known and less formal type of teacher research is the inquiry group (Garin, 2015, 2005). Inquiry groups are defined by the Maryland State Department of Education as "a group of PDS stakeholders who collaboratively examine and assess their practices and the outcomes achieved, and who "raise specific questions related to teaching and learning, seek to systematically answer their finding to others" (MSDE, 2003, p. 20). In the Bowie State University PDS Network, inquiry groups include teachers and teacher candidates (supported by their university faculty) who choose a topic of interest and meet regularly to discuss research literature and examine instructional practice, both theoretical and actual, as they implement new instructional strategies in their classrooms and collect data and student work samples to analyze collaboratively as a learning community.

To date, the BSU inquiry groups have read over 70 professional books including such titles as *The Café Book: Engaging All Students in Daily Assessments in Literacy* (Boushey &

Moser 2009, *Strategies that Work* (Harvey and Goudvis 2007), *The Book Whisperer: Awakening the Inner Reader in Every Child*. (Miller 2009, and *Boys and Girls Learn Differently* (Gurian, 2011). This Signature Program addresses NAPDS Essentials 2, 3, and 4.

Mentoring Workshops

The BSU PDS Network offers a three-tier professional development program developed by PDS teachers and university faculty. Tier 1 is a mentoring workshop, Teach-Coach-Reflect (TCR), which is offered once a year and is rotated to each PDS site. The workshop is delivered by PDS teachers and is open to university faculty and PDS teachers from all of our sites. Tier 2 is an Advanced TCR course collaboratively planned and delivered by PDS teachers. This four-session workshop is open to any university faculty or PDS faculty who successfully completed the initial TCR course (Tier 1). We are currently moving into Tier 3 as we begin offering a PDS Leadership Workshop for university and PDS faculty who completed Tiers 1 and 2. This workshop will provide opportunities for PDS research, presentations, and exploration of PDS through collective readings and discussions of books and articles. Through the successful completion of this three-tier professional development program, our educators are afforded the opportunity to earn not only credits but a PDS Leadership Certificate.

This Signature Program addresses NAPDS Essential 5.

PDS Network Meetings, Review Panels and Campus Committees

The BSU PDS Network holds the following meetings: PDS Network meetings, PDS Summer Strategic Planning meetings, and BSU Teacher Education Council meetings. Site PDS Site Coordinators, BSU faculty, pre-service mentor teachers, and BSU supervisors are invited to participate in these meetings. The PDS Network meets four times a year to discuss professional development needs, PDS conferences, inquiry groups, action research, and school improvement plans that involve PDS partners. Attendees include Site PDS Site Coordinators, principals, university faculty, and school district partners. The first meeting of the year is held in October, and this meeting's agenda includes revisiting our Network's Signature Programs, the roles and responsibilities of each PDS partner, and the support and professional development needed within the partnership. When we meet again in January and April, we plan our yearly BSU PDS Research Conference, Summer Strategic Planning, and mentoring workshops. We also revisit our PDS Network Signature Programs as well as the NAPDS 9 Essentials and the Standards for Maryland Professional Development Schools.

PDS Summer Strategic Planning considered the fourth Network meeting involves partners reflecting on the school year and planning for the upcoming year. Summer Strategic Planning provides an opportunity for school system liaisons and site-based PDS committees to meet with one another to develop and refine policies, procedures, programs, and larger PDS activities. During

these meetings research agendas are discussed, and the NAPDS 9 Essentials and Maryland PDS Standards are used to reflect on the progress of the PDS sites and the overall Network. As a Network, we reflect on our Signature Programs and formally vote on each program's modifications and continued inclusion on the list.

BSU PDS partners also serve on the Teacher Education interview panel, action research review panels and e-portfolio review panels. Site PDS Coordinators, BSU faculty, pre-service mentor teachers, school district liaisons, and BSU supervisors meet as a committee to interview candidates seeking admittance to a Teacher Education program at BSU. At the end of the internship, site PDS Coordinators, BSU faculty, pre-service mentor teachers, and BSU supervisors also serve on e-portfolio and action research panels. This Signature Program addresses NAPDS Essential 5.

On-site Methods Courses and the PDS Reading Clinic

The majority of our methods courses in the elementary and early childhood/special education programs are offered at a PDS. This has enabled greater collaboration, more opportunities for classroom visitations, and co-presentations between PDS teachers and university faculty. Methods courses are instructed by tenure-track faculty or PDS teachers who serve as adjunct faculty. This policy was created and endorsed by our college dean.

Since 2004, BSU has partnered with elementary PDS sites to host a PDS Reading Clinic as part of the Assessment for Reading Instruction course. This innovative format, serves a different PDS site each year and offers another opportunity for examining best practices. The Assessment for Reading Instruction teachers, who are BSU faculty and PDS teachers serving as adjunct faculty, meet with BSU teacher candidates at a PDS site and collaborate with the site-based reading specialist to provide instruction on assessments and appropriate reading interventions. Then, BSU teacher candidates practice these assessments and interventions with students who have been referred to the Reading Clinic by their classroom teacher. These students are tutored weekly for a total of 10-12 forty-five minute tutoring sessions with their BSU tutor. At the end of the semester, the Assessment for Reading Instruction teacher holds conferences with the classroom teacher who referred the students, the reading specialist, and the BSU intern/tutor to discuss the student achievement results of the reading clinic intervention.

The Science Methods instructors, who are PDS teachers serving as adjunct faculty, collaborate with the PDS Site Coordinators to determine course content. The course objectives often are often aligned with action research and inquiry groups conducted at the PDS site. The BSU teacher candidates are required to teach a science read-aloud in their mentor teacher's classroom. In addition, each PDS site has a science club that meets monthly during the science methods course. During this time, teacher candidates facilitate and implement club

activities and field trips in order to build intern and student interest in science. This type of course delivery gives PDS partners the opportunity to examine and share best practices specific to achievement in science.

The Reading Methods course is also taught at a PDS site by a one of our PDS reading specialists. The assignments address K-5 best practices in reading curriculum meeting state objectives and enriching the current literacy program. One such assignment is the implementation of an author study in the mentor teacher's classroom. This assignment promotes opportunities for teacher candidates and mentor teachers to collaborate on best practices in literacy instruction.

Publications and Conference Presentations

Conference attendance and presentations provide another opportunity for PDS partners to examine and share best practices and PDS Signature Programs on local, state, and national levels. The BSU PDS Network stakeholders gather every May at the BSU PDS Research Conference to share results of individual and collaborative action research, book study, and inquiry groups. Over 80 teacher candidates, PDS teachers/administrators, and university faculty attend this PDS Network Signature Program. At our last Summer Strategic Planning meeting, PDS partners identified this conference as a vital aspect of our partnership.

Each May, The Maryland PDS Network sponsors a statewide PDS conference where PDS partners share their best practices during breakout sessions. A gallery walk is also hosted where teacher candidates share their action research studies with conference attendees. BSU sponsors registration for teacher candidates and university and PDS faculty to attend this conference.

At the national level, PDS partners, including university faculty and PDS faculty, present their examination of best practices at conferences such as the National PDS Conference, the American Educational Research Association Conference and the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education Conference. These conference presentations have been an important aspect of our partnership as far back as 2004.

An important aspect of our PDS Network is that we collaborate on local, state and national PDS presentations. PDS partners have co-presented at our state PDS conference sponsored by the Maryland PDS Network and at the National PDS Conference. In May 2015, we co-sponsored the Maryland PDS Network Conference, which was held on our campus. Co-authoring journal articles and book chapters has given us an in-depth, reflective opportunity to examine and share best practices that impact student learning.

Final Thoughts

While the accomplishments of the Bowie State University PDS Network are many, we are most proud of the following:

Accomplishment	Aligned NAPDS Essentials
Staying together as a Network across school districts rather than dividing by school level or initial certification programs. This commitment has led to cross-district sharing and increased the effectiveness of the entire Network	1, 6, and 7
Developing a culture of inquiry through inquiry groups and action research	3, 4, and 6
Developing and implementing Signature Programs that have grown over time and represent who we are as a Network	1-9
Agreeing that the entire school is the PDS, not just the mentor teachers, and providing opportunities for all teachers, which results in the entire PreK-12 setting embracing teacher candidates	1, 2, 3, 4, and 5
Providing continual and collaborative needs assessment, reflection, and planning during Network meetings	1, 3, 4, 7, 8, and 9
Providing leadership at the local, state, and national levels in the PDS arena through PDS conference presentations and publications co-authored and co-presented by university faculty and PDS teachers	3, 4, and 5
Leading the state of Maryland by implementing a PDS Leadership Certificate workshop program for university faculty and PDS teachers consisting of a three-tier professional development series	3, 4, and 5

The Bowie State University PDS Network has a long history of collaboration, commitment to continuous improvement of all partners, and dedication to PreK-12 student achievement. Network members actively contribute to the knowledge of the network as a whole and to the larger PDS community within Maryland and nationwide. We pride ourselves on our professionalism. All members of the Network are professionals with parity, and all seek to advance the profession of teaching through cultivation of excellence within our newest members and ourselves, and through deliberate research into effective practices that result in improved school cultures and student outcomes. ^{SUP}

References

- Boushey, G., & Moser, J. (2009). *The café book: Engaging all students in daily assessments in literacy*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse Publishers.
- Bowie State University (2015). Retrieved from <http://www.bowiestateuniversity.edu/150thAnniversary//History>
- Garin, E. (2005, February). *Using action research and inquiry groups to enhance student learning in a professional development school context*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Association of Teacher Education, Washington, D.C.
- Garin, E., Winter 2015 (Volume 10, Issue 2). PDS network signature programs: What we have learned. *PDS Partners*.
- Gurian, M. (2011). *Boys and girls learn differently*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Harvey, S., Goudvis, A., (Eds.). (2007). *Strategies that work: Teaching comprehension for understanding and engagement*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse Publishers.
- Kelly, R. (2008, September). Setting academic priorities, identifying signature programs. *Faculty Focus*. Retrieved from <http://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/curriculum-development/setting-academic-priorities-identifying-signature-programs>
- Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE). (2003). *Professional development schools: An implementation manual*. Baltimore, MD: Author.
- Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE). (2014). *Preparing educators for high poverty culturally and linguistically diverse schools: A manual for teacher educators, teachers and principals*. Baltimore, MD: Author.
- Miller, D., (2009). *The book whisperer: Awakening the inner reader in every child*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- National Association for Professional Development Schools (NAPDS). (2008). *What it means to be a professional development school*. Retrieved from <http://www.napds.org>



Eva Garin is a Professor at Bowie State University where she coordinates the Professional Development Schools; she teaches courses in literacy and is the Past Chair of the American Educational Research Association PDS Research SIG.

Traki Taylor is a Professor and Dean of the College of Education at Bowie State University.

Maggie Madden is Program Approval Specialist and Maryland PDS Network Coordinator for the Maryland State Department of Education, Division of Educator Effectiveness.

Judy Beiter is the Anne Arundel County Public Schools of Maryland, Manager of the PDS Program & IHE Cohorts & Partnerships; she is also a Past President of the National Association for Professional Development Schools.

Julius Davis is an Assistant Professor at Bowie State University where he serves as secondary PDS Liaison; he also teaches courses in the MAT Program.

Cynthia Farmer, NBCT, is a reading specialist at Whitehall Elementary School in Prince George's County; she also serves as the PDS adjunct faculty who teaches the Reading Methods courses

Dawn Nowlin is a teacher at Whitehall Elementary School and the former PDS Coordinator at Vansville Elementary School in Prince George's County; she also serves as the PDS adjunct faculty who teaches the Science Methods courses.