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Abstract

As students prepare to enter college and the workforce, there has been a demand for them to be more independent, critical thinkers, innovative designers, and thoughtful collaborators. This preliminary study describes how a Professional Development School (PDS) partnership, between a middle school and a university, provides a more authentic teaching opportunity for middle grades teacher interns compared to the traditional, middle grades internship route. An authentic teaching experience provides a successful transition from “student to teacher” through a collaborative work environment; observing and developing the dispositions of an effective teacher; and learning the culture and structure of a school. The traditional middle grades internship route has been found to undermine the time needed to build relationships with students, cooperating teachers, and schools. The PDS partnership has alleviated this by securing a yearlong placement in one middle school leading to more confident, effective teachers prepared to engage the 21st century learner.

Keywords

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Impact of a Yearlong Placement in a PDS on Teacher Interns' Dispositions and Abilities to Teach Middle School

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Abstract: As students prepare to enter college and the workforce, there has been a demand for them to be more independent, critical thinkers, innovative designers, and thoughtful collaborators. This preliminary study describes how a Professional Development School (PDS) partnership, between a middle school and a university, provides a more authentic teaching opportunity for middle grades teacher interns compared to the traditional, middle grades internship route. An authentic teaching experience provides a successful transition from “student to teacher” through a collaborative work environment; observing and developing the dispositions of an effective teacher; and learning the culture and structure of a school. The traditional middle grades internship route has been found to undermine the time needed to build relationships with students, cooperating teachers, and schools. The PDS partnership has alleviated this by securing a yearlong placement in one middle school leading to more confident, effective teachers prepared to engage the 21st century learner.

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Impact of Yearlong Placement in a PDS on Teacher Interns'

Dispositions and Abilities to Teach Middle School

The debate among educational professionals on whether educating middle school students focuses more on their social and emotional development rather than their intellect has been under scrutiny for years now (Andrews & Anafara, 2003). As a result, college education programs are re-thinking the structure of their middle grades teacher internships. With the new common core standards, educators must change the way they prepare students for college and the workforce. Students are expected to be natural problem-solvers who can use the knowledge from their studies to develop innovative products and ideas. Mental dexterity is quickly becoming the new currency for students who want to successfully compete in a global society. The question becomes, "how do universities prepare teachers to develop students' learning according to the nation's standards?" Education courses in curriculum, strategies, and classroom management only support part of this goal. Teacher interns need time to make the connection between theory and practice (Van de Ven, & Johnson, 2006; Presseisen, 2008; Schaffer & Welsh, 2014). The solution is to provide teacher interns with extensive time in their field placements in order to enhance instructional practice, reflect on teaching, collaborate with experienced teachers, develop proper teacher dispositions, and learn school culture/structure (Andrews & Anafara, 2003; Scherff & Singer, 2012).

Literature Review

As universities work toward improving their education programs, they must consider improving their relationships with schools. It is not a secret that schools and universities have different ideas about what quality teaching looks like. One issue that has continuously arisen during pre-service teachers' internship has been the strong suggestion that they should disregard the instruction received in their education courses, suggesting that it does not apply to classroom

teaching (Teitel, 2003). Research studies also indicate that schools lack the readiness to support teacher interns as these graduates quickly lose the approaches they learned in their education courses once they begin teaching full time (Teitel, 2003). For this reason, colleges of education are focusing more on establishing Professional Development School (PDS) partnerships in order to renew schools and teacher education simultaneously (Teitel, 2003; Allsopp, DeMarie, Alvarez-McHatton, & Doone, 2006) which will then allow the focus to move toward cooperative development of student learning.

According to Goodlad's National Network for Educational Renewal (NNER); the Holmes Partnership; the National Center for Restructuring Education, Schools, and Teaching (NCREST); and the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), professional development schools must focus on four goals (Clark, 1999). These goals include: schools provide a clinical setting for teacher interns, professional development be provided to in-service practitioners, teachers and interns conduct inquiry for the advancement of teaching and learning, and exemplary education be provided to improve student learning. Examples of these goals have included offering courses for interns on-site by university faculty and teachers; conducting study sessions with teachers and university faculty to discuss appropriate content and activities that would advance student learning; conducting research to determine the needs of students in the school's setting; and adjusting and enhancing the curriculum according to the research results identified in a school (Clark, 1999). Consequently, research has shown that PDS partnerships produce highly prepared teachers due to its extensive field experience, consistent supervision by university and school faculty, and collaboratively designed clinical programs (Ridley, Hurwitz, Hackett, & Miller, 2005).

Although PDS partnerships have shown to have an impact on the development of effective, successful teachers, what behaviors label teachers as being effective? Teacher education programs recognize that its teacher interns enter education programs with more experience being a student than a teacher. These experiences have shaped their beliefs, attitudes, opinions and values about school or what is known as their “dispositions to teach” (Collinson, Killeavy, & Stephenson, 1999; Schaffer, & Welsh, 2014). Depending upon what the dispositions are, they can impact student learning positively or negatively (Collinson et al., 1999). Therefore, it is important to determine the types of teacher dispositions that have a positive impact on student learning so that these behaviors can be modeled during the interns’ field placement. According to Good and Brophy (1997), research studies identified five key behaviors: lesson clarity, instructional variety, teacher task orientation, engagement in the learning process, and student success rate. In addition, helping behaviors such as explicit standards for classroom behavior, focused instruction, strategic questioning, feedback, and assessment variety all bring about student ideas, contributions, structuring, questioning, probing, and teacher affect (Cotton, 1995). Studies also identified teachers’ knowledge as another indicator of effectiveness: reflectivity, creativity, curiosity, respect of self and others and compassion (Collinson, 1996; Scherff & Singer, 2012). These data indicate that in addition to content knowledge and pedagogical skills, teacher education programs must also focus on dispositional skills if they want to develop effective teachers (Schulte, Edick, Edwards, & Mackiel, 2009).

Research tells us that proper dispositional skills correlate with effective teaching (Schulte et al., 2009) and effective teaching is associated with teachers’ confidence in their teaching abilities (Coladarci, 1992). Therefore, the key factor in developing effective teachers is PDS partnerships that will offer interns more adult interaction and support in their learning; a better understanding

of practices in today's schools; more time to develop student learning; and more time to enhance their teacher skills (Clark, 1999). It is these factors that build a case for good teaching and are essential to improved student learning. The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future recommends yearlong internships in PDSs (Teitel, 2003) for this purpose while future teachers gain confidence in their abilities and become effective instructors.

The purpose of this study was to determine the dispositions and confidence of middle grades pre-service teachers after completing a yearlong field placement in a Professional Development School (PDS) setting, a collaborative partnership between a university's College of Education and a middle school. The study examined how a partnership, would impact pre-service teachers' assessment of their abilities and dispositions toward teaching middle school in comparison to their peers who completed their internships in a non-PDS setting that included two separate field placements over the course of a year.

Methodology

Research Design

A convergent parallel, mixed-methods design was used, as it incorporated a pre-survey/post-survey followed by an open-ended interview questionnaire. Utilization of both data sets was necessary to provide a more complete understanding of the interns' experiences.

Participants

Participants for this study included a convenience sample of 39 pre-service middle grades teachers of which 19 were placed in a professional development school setting and 20 were placed in a traditional middle school – non-PDS group. The PDS group of teacher interns remained in one school for a duration of eight months where they changed content within the same team of teachers after 3 months teaching in their first content area. The non-PDS group of

teacher interns spent four months in one middle school teaching in their first content area and then moved to another middle school to teach in their second content area for the remaining five months of the school year.

Instrumentation

To determine teacher interns' assessment of their dispositions to be effective middle school teachers and assessment of their abilities to teach middle school, data was collected using the Teacher's Dispositions Index (TDI) and a series of open-ended questions to determine their feelings of confidence toward beginning their first year of teaching.

Teacher's Disposition Index (TDI). The Teacher's Dispositions Index (Schulte et al., 2009) was used as a pre- and post-survey instrument to measure the dispositions of effective teachers in accordance with the Council of Chief State School Officers' Model Standards for Beginning Teacher Licensing, Assessment and Development (1992). The instrument consisted of a 45-item survey that measured two dimensions, a student-centered dimension and a professionalism, curriculum-centered dimension that were aligned with INTASC's ten principles (Table 1). A response scale ranging from "1" strongly disagree to "5" strongly agree was assigned to each item. The instrument was intended to determine if the teacher interns' dispositions changed after a yearlong placement in a PDS setting. Interns in the traditional, non-PDS, setting were also given the TDI pre and post survey in an effort to determine dispositional differences between the two groups.

Table 1
INTASC Principles

<i>Principle 1</i>	The teacher understands the central concepts, tools of inquiry, and structure of the the discipline(s) he or she teaches and can create learning experiences that make these aspects of subject matter meaningful for students.
<i>Principle 2</i>	The teacher understands how children learn and develop and can provide learning opportunities that support their intellectual, social, and personal development.
<i>Principle 3</i>	The teacher understands how students differ in their approaches to learning and creates instructional opportunities that are adapted to diverse learners.
<i>Principle 4</i>	The teacher understands and uses a variety of instructional strategies to encourage students' development of critical thinking, problem solving, and performance skills.
<i>Principle 5</i>	The teacher uses an understanding of individual and group motivation and behavior to create a learning environment that encourages positive social interaction, active engagement in learning, and self-motivation.
<i>Principle 6</i>	The teacher uses knowledge of effective verbal, nonverbal, and media communication techniques to foster active inquiry, collaboration, and supportive interaction in the classroom.
<i>Principle 7</i>	The teacher plans instruction based upon knowledge of subject matter, students, the community, and curriculum goals.
<i>Principle 8</i>	The teacher understands and uses formal and informal assessment strategies to evaluate and ensure the continuous intellectual and social development of the learner.
<i>Principle 9</i>	The teacher is a reflective practitioner who continually evaluates the effects of his/her choices and actions on others (students, parents, and other professionals in the learning community) and who actively seeks out opportunities to grow professionally.
<i>Principle 10</i>	The teacher fosters relationships with school colleagues, parents, and agencies in the larger community to support students' learning and well-being.

Interview Questions. Teacher interns, in both placement settings, were also given three open-ended questions to determine their feelings of confidence in their ability to teach middle school. The questions included the following:

- 1. Has your teaching internship given you the confidence to begin your first year of teaching? How (provide 2-3 examples)?*

2. *If you do not feel confident about beginning your first year of teaching, describe where you feel deficient in your teaching experience?*
3. *If you had to do it all over, would you choose an internship in one middle school for an entire year or would you rather 2 different internship placements, one per content area? Give your reasons.*

Procedures

Both groups of interns began their clinical placement at the beginning of the fall semester, which included their participation in the pre-planning duties of their cooperating teachers.

Traditional Clinical Placement (Table 2). The traditional clinical placement required teacher interns to participate in their placement responsibilities for 3 hours a day, Monday-Thursday. Fridays were dedicated to the interns' attending their classes at the university. The traditional form of clinical placement, during the fall semester, was known as "Block" placement where interns would "block out" three hours in the day to participate in their clinical experience. The "block experience" required the interns to teach in their first content area for 13-weeks. They received three evaluation visits from their university supervisor. This form of placement allowed them to gradually begin their student teaching. The start of the spring semester required the interns to begin a "full load" of student teaching in another middle school. The interns taught in their second content area, full-time for the entire week for 14 weeks and received three evaluation visits from their university supervisor. Interns received pre-TDI survey at the start of their "full load" of teaching. The post-TDI survey and interview questions were administered at the conclusion of their student teaching in the spring.

Yearlong Clinical Placement (Table 2). The yearlong clinical placement required interns to participate in their placement responsibilities full-time, Monday-Thursday. Fridays were

dedicated to the interns' attending their classes at the university. The yearlong clinical placement during the fall semester required the interns to begin observing and assisting with instruction in their first content area for 10 weeks. They received two evaluation visits from their university supervisor during the first 10 weeks of their placement. At the conclusion of their 10-week placement in their first content area, the cooperating teachers either provided or did not provide permission for the intern teachers to begin teaching in their second content area. Intern teachers began their placement in their second content where they observed and assisted with instruction for one week. The following week, they assumed full responsibility for the planning and instruction of one class in their second content area for 4 weeks and then assumed an additional class for the remaining 3 weeks of their middle school's fall semester. They received one evaluation visit from their university supervisor during the 7 weeks of placement in their second content area. The interns continued to attend their university classes on Fridays until the conclusion of the fall semester. Intern teachers returned to their middle schools in the spring semester to continue full responsibility for the planning and instruction of all of their cooperating teacher's academic classes for 6 weeks before gradually returning one class per week to the cooperating teacher.

They received two additional evaluation visits from their university supervisor while teaching their second content area. The interns were administered the pre-TDI survey at the start of their "full load" of teaching in their second content area. The post-TDI survey and interview questions were administered at the conclusion of their student teaching in the spring. The yearlong placement required the interns to fully adhere to their cooperating teachers' schedules. Their schedule included attending all professional development trainings, parent-teacher conferences, SST, IEP, 504 meetings, and all school-related activities.

Table 2
Clinical Placement

Traditional (Non-PDS) Dual Placement	Non Traditional (PDS) Yearlong Placement
<p>Fall Semester</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School 1 - Content Area 1 (13 weeks) • Pre-Planning – 1 week • Teach 3 hours/day - 4 days/week • Fridays – Seminar/Courses • Observations: 3-4 <p>Spring Semester</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School 2 - Content Area 2 (14 weeks) • Teach – full time everyday • Observations: 3-4 	<p>Fall Semester</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post planning – 2-3 days (prior Fall semester) • Pre-Planning – 1 week • Content Area 1 (11 weeks) • Content Area 2 (7-8weeks) • Teach – 4 days – full time • Fridays – Seminar/Courses • Observations: 3 <p>Spring Semester</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Content Area 2 –6 weeks • Teach – full time everyday • Observations: 2

Results/Discussion

Completion of the TDI survey varied considerably between the two internship groups. Within the non-PDS group, 45% completed the pre-survey and 65% completed the post-survey, as opposed to the PDS group where 84% completed the pre-survey and 95% completed the post-survey. For the purposes of this preliminary study, the data was analyzed and compared to determine the percent change from the pre to post survey responses between the two internship groups. Table 3 summarizes the pre and post TDI survey mean scores for both the non-PDS and PDS groups by INTASC principles. The mean scores revealed that both groups began the TDI survey in “agreement” with the item statements and progressed toward a “strong agreement” after completing the post-survey at the conclusion of the internship experience. On the surface, the results showed that both internship groups began their experiences with positive dispositions for teacher effectiveness and continued to move in a more positive direction, for each INTASC principle.

However, Table 4 shows that both groups shared more notable percent increases in the pre to post survey results for principles 1 and 6. According to these results, the groups shared increased change related to behaviors, which focused on providing meaningful and relevant instruction (principle 1; Table 1), and understanding effective communication techniques that fostered learning (principle 6; Table 1). Within the principle 6 category, the non-PDS group showed the most significant increase in their ability to read students' nonverbal communication (item #36 of the TDI) while the PDS group increased significantly in their ability to communicate care, concern, and willingness to become involved with others (item #14 of the TDI).

Table 3
TDI Survey – Pre/Post Average Means

INTASC Principles	Means Non PDS(Pre) <i>N</i> = 9	Means Non PDS (Post) <i>N</i> = 13	Means PDS (Pre) <i>N</i> = 16	Means PDS (Post) <i>N</i> = 18
P1	4.33	4.92	4.00	4.25
P2	4.51	4.94	4.40	4.44
P3	4.37	4.94	4.24	4.38
P5	4.42	4.90	4.15	4.41
P6	4.33	4.92	4.06	4.37
P7	4.46	4.86	4.26	4.44
P9	4.38	4.82	4.18	4.35

The PDS group also showed more increase for principle 5, which focused on developing a comfortable learning environment by encouraging participation and respect for all members of the classroom. The non-PDS group showed more increase for recognizing the diverse needs of students (principle 3). Although both groups showed movement toward “strong agreement” across the survey items, the PDS group’s change in dispositions was not as compelling as the changes seen within the non-PDS group (Table 4). It is to be noted that although both groups showed an increase in their abilities, their increases focused on different subscale categories within the survey. The non-PDS group’s increased abilities aligned more with the

Professionalism; Curriculum-Centered Subscale while the PDS group's increased abilities aligned more with the *Student-Centered Subscale*. These comparisons were identified in relation to principles 1, 6, 3 and 5.

Table 4
Mean Difference & % Increase

INTASC Principles	Overall Mean Difference Non PDS	% Increase Non PDS	Overall Mean Difference PDS	% Increase PDS
P1	0.59	13.62	0.28	7.08
P2	0.43	9.53	0.05	1.07
P3	0.57	12.95	0.14	3.40
P5	0.49	11.04	0.26	6.18
P6	0.59	13.62	0.30	7.50
P7	0.40	8.92	0.18	4.30
P9	0.44	10.13	0.17	4.01

The TDI data reveals that both internship groups exuded dispositions of effective teaching, however, the principles in which they shared significant progress toward these dispositions were noted for different behaviors. The non-PDS group showed more progress in relation to behaviors aligned with professionalism and curriculum; whereas, the PDS group showed more progress toward encouraging student-centered behaviors. These differences can be attributed to the settings in which the interns completed their student teaching. It is possible that the non-PDS group's progress revealed less distinction toward student-centered behaviors because their internships did not award them time to build relationships with students long enough to recognize and establish such behaviors. However, the PDS groups did have enough time to develop student-centered behaviors in their instruction since they were in a yearlong placement. These results are positive in that they suggest that the PDS interns were slowly evolving into teachers who began to recognize their responsibility to their students instead of themselves. It is

important that teacher interns make the transition from student to teacher in order to shape their dispositions to teach (Collinson et al., 1999; Schaffer & Welsh, 2014).

Another factor to consider when comparing the two groups is that the non-PDS group could not have experienced the true culture, dynamics and behaviors of the school since these elements take time to understand as well as implement (Fieman-Nemser, 2003; Lieberman, 1995). As a result, the non-PDS internship could have presented the impression of a less than difficult experience, giving the interns a false sense of confidence in their teaching. When the PDS group completed their entire internship in one school setting, they possibly experienced more challenges and therefore realized that they still had more learning and growing to accomplish, as true teachers believe they are never finished improving their craft (Fieman-Nemser, 2003). This realization could be attributed the lower percent increase on the post survey compared to the non-PDS group's post survey results.

Other factors to consider were that the teacher internship population outnumbered the university supervisors in the field. The university supervisors could only supervise the interns in the PDS setting, whereas adjuncts were hired to supervise the non-PDS setting. This difference could have impacted communicating the importance of completing the survey (Schaffer & Welsh, 2014). The non-PDS interns possibly did not think that they were held to the same obligations as the PDS intern group.

Table 5
Open-End Question Response Categories

Internship Group	Confidence in Teaching	Deficiencies in Teaching	Preferred Internship Model
Non- PDS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience being in front of a classroom • Maintain discipline the more in front of classroom • Somewhat prepared • Needed more autonomy 	Content knowledge Classroom management	Two different schools: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More job opportunities • Exposure to different leadership styles • Exposure to different school cultures • Exposure to more teaching styles • One school may be better for hiring purposes
PDS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working in a school from beginning to end • Teacher responsibilities (training, meetings, conferences, duty) • Relationships (student & teacher) • Focus more on teaching 	Classroom management	One school: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insight into the teacher's role • Better idea of an entire school year (procedures) • One transition allowed for more focus on teaching • Witness/monitor student development and progress over a year

In addition to the TDI survey results, the interview question responses provided insight into the level of confidence the interns had for beginning their first year of teaching and how their internship preparation impacted their confidence. Based on the interns' responses, common ideas were identified. These ideas were grouped, in Table 5, according to the topics of the three opened-ended questions. Intern responses were also provided to support the ideas uncovered from the question responses.

Non-PDS Group Interview Responses

1. *Has your teaching internship given you the confidence to begin your first year of teaching?*

How (provide 2-3 examples)?

"I do feel somewhat prepared to teach my first year. My cooperating teacher was wonderful, however she was a tad controlling of her classroom. I will feel much more confident when I can do my lessons completely my own way."

"Yes! First of all, any experience in the classroom is beneficial. For some people, standing in front of a class can be nerve-racking. The more time you have practicing teaching in front of a class builds confidence. This experience also allows the teacher to take charge of the classroom and maintain classroom discipline."

- 2. If you do not feel confident about beginning your first year of teaching, describe where you feel deficient in your teaching experience?***

"I do feel confident, however content knowledge can always be strengthened."

- 3. If you had to do it all over, would you choose an internship in one middle school for an entire year or would you rather 2 different internship placements, one per content area? Give your reasons.***

"Two different schools: Being in different schools gives you an opportunity to see different teaching and leadership styles within the school. Two different schools also allows the student teacher to market themselves in different areas."

"I do like the advantages of teaching at the same school for an entire year. It is risky if you don't fit your placement, however it is most beneficial in the long run (especially for hiring purposes)."

PDS Group Interview Responses

- 1. Has your teaching internship given you the confidence to begin your first year of teaching? How (provide 2-3 examples)?***

"My experience at Liberty Middle School most certainly provided me with the confidence and skills I will need to begin my first year teaching. My experience at Liberty was far more than the "norm." Because I was placed as a PDC model intern, I was able to see the full 180 degree spectrum of a school year from preplanning to post. As a student teacher at Liberty, I was

required to attend professional meetings, contact parents, prepare and teach lessons daily, as well as serve silent lunch duty and car duty.”

“Being with the same kids so long gave me the opportunity to see how different things should be handled. I’m also more comfortable being in front of the kids and building a relationship with them.”

“I was luckily able to have two very different experiences in the classroom. I was in a gifted class and in a co-taught class. I was also given the rare experience to stay in the 7th grade. This allowed me to focus more on my student teaching and less time on getting to know the students because I already knew a lot of them.”

“Yes, this internship has given me confidence to being my first year of teaching. My teacher allowed me to interact with students’ parents during parent-teacher conferences, as well as be involved in all types of meetings ranging from IEP to 504 and more.”

2. If you do not feel confident about beginning your first year of teaching, describe where you feel deficient in your teaching experience?

“Even though I am confident and excited to begin my first year teaching, I am also nervous. I am no longer an intern, but these kiddos are MINE. I am responsible 100%. I feel as if my weakest area is classroom management.”

3. If you had to do it all over, would you choose an internship in one middle school for an entire year or would you rather 2 different internship placements, one per content area? Give your reasons.

“100% internship at ONE school! I feel as if the entire year, pre-planning to post-planning is needed to gain full insight into a teacher’s role. Specifically this year I was amazed at how my students changed over the year.”

“I would rather be in one middle school for both placements. I was comfortable and able to get the jitters out and be more focused when it came to actual full time student teaching.”

“When going to two different schools, a lot of time is used getting to know these new procedures.

Also, you do not have to spend time getting to know an entire set of students all over again.”

Question 1 focused on the interns' confidence towards beginning their first year of teaching. The non-PDS group stated having confidence to “somewhat” having confidence. One student's confidence was based on having enough “in front of class” time delivering lessons whereas another student needed more autonomy in writing and delivering lessons. These responses share a common theme in lesson delivery being a determining factor for establishing a teacher's confidence. Both non-PDS students' comments paralleled their group's TDI survey responses, which focused more on professionalism, curriculum-centered behaviors, INTASC principle 1. The PDS group's responses centered on two themes dictating their confidence; experiencing the “full role of a teacher” from planning, attending meetings, to performing duties around the school; and building relationships with students for successful instruction. Based on the detail of their explanations, the PDS group seemed to have a clear idea of what brought about their confidence. Their belief that establishing relationships with students would allow them time to develop their instruction also paralleled their group's TDI responses related to INTASC principles 1 and 6.

Neither group commented on Question 2 based on their feelings of confidence toward teaching. One PDS intern discussed the self-recognition of their evolution from student to teacher and wanted more experience in classroom management as the intern felt a strong responsibility to students. Whereas, the non-PDS intern wanted more experience in knowing their content knowledge. Many non-PDS and PDS interns shared similar concerns “off the record” for needing more classroom management experience.

The final question was asked to determine the type of experiences the internship models provided to the interns. One response from the non-PDS group communicated an appreciation

for having two placements as it offered the opportunity for exposure to different forms of school culture and leadership. The intern also saw it as an opportunity to get more visibility for hiring purposes. Another non-PDS intern thought the opposite, stating that one placement setting was more beneficial for hiring purposes; however, expressed that it could be risky if the placement did not support the intern's needs. The PDS group's response focused on taking advantage of more time being in one placement setting. They were appreciative of the relationships that they had time to establish with students, teachers, and administration. They felt that they had an opportunity to see how the middle school student developed and changed over time; receive more insight into the role of a teacher; and focus more on instruction after moving beyond the transition process.

Conclusions

This study has given us a better understanding of how we need to improve our middle grades internship program. Although the teacher interns in both placement settings did not express concern for a lack of confidence in beginning their first year of teaching, the PDS placement model has shown to provide significant time for teacher interns to complete a more authentic teaching experience. According to the results of this study, the yearlong placement has proven to offer interns more experience into the practical nature of teaching while making the connection to theory. More importantly, the research data shows that a yearlong placement has a positive impact on the development of effective teacher dispositions. Our interns left their yearlong placements feeling confident in their abilities to collaborate with other teachers for the purpose of acquiring instructional ideas, perspectives into the needs of their students, and overall wisdom from experienced teachers. They gained experience in monitoring and adjusting their teacher behaviors and instruction for the gain of improved student achievement. They were also

afforded the opportunity to grow in their instructional knowledge and expertise as they received extensive professional development training alongside their cooperating teachers. This culmination of results supports the ideals and practices that we would like for future educators to possess upon entering the classroom. We believe that this route to teacher preparation will also create a significant pool of experienced future teachers that school administrators will refer to first when beginning their hiring process.

Future Implications

As we move forward with a yearlong internship model, our next steps are to begin working toward developing a “true” PDS environment. We would like to start by determining the needs of our middle schools and providing professional development opportunities based on their needs (Lefever-Davis, Johnson, & Pearman, 2007). By supporting the needs of our middle schools, it will provide university professors with a first-hand look into the types of training and knowledge future teachers will require to be more developed for a career in teaching (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Lefever-Davis, Johnson, & Pearman, 2007). More importantly, the university can seek the assistance of middle school teachers and administrators in providing such training. This not only gives middle school teachers a part in the instruction of future teachers, but it also gives them a vested interest in these students’ development as well as their own (Sandholtz, 2002; Allsopp et al., 2006). This could alleviate any apprehension that veteran teachers may initially have for committing to the role of a cooperating teacher. By taking the PDS approach to future teacher training, our program will secure more quality schools and teachers for internship placement thus supporting the need for university-school partnerships to work toward similar goals in the development of future educators (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995).

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