

**Pre-Service Differently:
Supporting Teacher Candidate Efficacy with Mentorship and Coaching**

Ingrid T. Everett, Daniel Roesch, and Allison Rudolph

Abstract

Teachers leave the profession for reasons including lack of teacher preparation and inadequate mentorship. To better support candidates in the final stages of teacher preparation, a Pennsylvania state university partnership led a process to implement supports to enhance the mentoring process during teacher candidate's final field experience. This article describes the foundational facets of the Pre-Service Differently grant and its development and implementation in order to provide a framework which others can replicate.

Ingrid T. Everett, M. Ed. is the Project Manager for the Pre-Service Differently grant and adjunct professor at Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania. She can be reached at ieverett@bloomu.edu, 570-389-5120.

Daniel Roesch Ed.D. is an Assistant Professor at Bloomsburg University. He can be reached at driesch@bloomu.edu, 570-389-4365.

Allison Rudolph is the Project Manager at Research for Better Schools at Public Health Management Corporation (PHMC). She can be reached at arudolph@phmc.org, 215-731-2040.

*The authors gratefully acknowledge the contribution of the following:
M. Ellen Withrow, Grants, Research, & Development Coordinator, Central Susquehanna Intermediate Unit, Pennsylvania.*

Introduction

Pre-Service Differently (PSD) is a three-year post-secondary grant awarded in 2013 to a state university in Pennsylvania to enhance field experiences for pre-service teachers. The overarching goal of this initiative was to provide preservice and in-service teachers with the skills necessary to increase student achievement in English Language Arts and Mathematics. PSD partners collaborated to enhance pre-service teachers' traditional culminating field experience by 1) centralizing and mining assessments completed by stakeholders in pre-service teacher preparation programs in an online database, 2) updating the university's pre-service education coursework to improve students' preparedness to teach, 3) linking resources for pre-service teachers that address deficiencies outlined on certification assessment indicators, and 4) providing in-service teachers with professional development to increase their knowledge of best practices in education.

The PSD grant continued to evolve across its three-year duration. Just as effective teachers must be lifelong learners to meet the needs of their students, each educational initiative must respond to the changing needs of its many participants. Such growth was reflected in a number of ways. Differing professional development needs were addressed, including diversity pedagogy at participant request. Having a more flexible catalog of professional development offerings, which extended to include mostly virtual coaching, was a response to participant need for variation in program delivery as well as the expanded geographical reach of resources. Although Figure 2 reflects the intended focus of grant outcomes being the teacher candidate, the key role played by both cooperating teacher and principal must be recognized as fulfilling a central role. School district superintendents provided the critical access needed to engage educators in the grant and university supervisors formed ongoing connections with both

teacher candidates and school districts. These relationships provided up to date, research based examples being shared in the practical setting whilst bringing feedback from the field to inform the university setting.

Background: Traditional Field Experiences

Providing culminating opportunities for theory to be put into practice in teacher preparation programs has long been acknowledged as significant in the development of effective new teachers (Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP), 2015; Darling-Hammond, 2000; Levine, 2006; NCATE, 2010). Such practical field experiences allow teacher candidates to act upon formative feedback and on-going reflection to inform their practice (CAEP, 2015), whilst simultaneously reinforcing their classroom management skills under the tutelage of a more experienced mentor teacher (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2007). On the surface, teacher preparation and licensure programs appear to be systematically designed to fulfill the demand for highly qualified teachers throughout our nation's schools; however, field experiences have been criticized for producing ill-prepared new educators (Davis, 2015; Ingersoll, 2012; Levine, 2006). Indeed, it has been implied that the inadequacy of field placements may contribute to new teacher attrition rates of up to 50 percent within the first 5 years of teaching (Davis, 2015; Ingersoll, 2012).

Twenty years ago, Konanc (1996) provided evidence which suggested that a high rate of teacher turnover makes it more difficult to place qualified teachers in every classroom. Teacher retention remains a pressing issue, especially because the trend impacts the neediest students (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). Teachers leave the profession because of low salaries and poor working conditions (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), 2010).

In participating PSD institutions of higher education (IHEs), teacher candidate practical experiences permeate pre-service teacher education. Education courses imbed a classroom

observation component that includes reflecting on the experience and connecting findings to pedagogical theory. Formal clinical experiences typically take place for the duration of the teacher candidate's final semester in local school districts. Teacher candidates may be assigned to two different 8-week placements or one full 16-week placement dependent upon the student's area of certification and logistical need. Whenever possible, pre-service teachers would complete prior coursework placements in the same school as their final clinical experience, providing a Professional Development School experience.

Pre-Service Differently

PSD was implemented to further reinforce teacher preparation outcomes by enhancing traditional culminating field experiences. This Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) post-secondary grant provided resources to those in roles critical to facilitating teacher candidate field experiences: university supervisors, school site principals and cooperating teachers (refer to Figure 2). Specifically, the local intermediate unit (IU) provided online professional development courses paired with instructional coaching to reinforce content knowledge and apply new pedagogy to participating in-service teachers' classrooms. In addition, a small cohort of individuals completed a Letter of Endorsement in Teacher Leadership and Coaching. Included in this newly trained cohort were a number of university clinical supervisors, a principal and teacher from a partnering high needs school and participants from the IU. To address the individual needs of each teacher candidate, PSD partners linked clinical teacher evaluations to resources that addressed each required competency. Aggregate results from the assessments prompted updates and improvements to pre-service coursework at the IHE. Details of PSD's signature components and reflection on implementation follow a description of recruitment efforts.

Recruiting Participants

Meetings were held with local district superintendents to provide explanations of expectations and opportunities associated with participation in PSD. With superintendent permission, the grant manager solicited the participation of teachers, principals and curriculum coordinators. In each participating school district, educators were able to choose whether to participate.

Initially, participation was offered to school districts that already had agreements for clinical placements with the IHE to partner in PSD. In the second year, the grant expanded to Western Pennsylvania under the auspices of a partnering state IHE. After this expansion, PSD provided opportunities to a diverse educator population that spanned 24 school districts in the Commonwealth.

Participants, who consisted of, in-service teachers, principals and curriculum coordinators, received instructions describing access to the online, asynchronous professional development modules. Additionally, they received access to an online learning platform ‘gateway’ through which the IU verified module completion of each participant. Badges earned provided participants with online confirmation of module completion and provided a checklist for the IU to monitor when a participant was ready to complete the final component: Instructional Coaching. Once a participant completed coaching, the IU informed the project manager who sent a letter of confirmation and a certificate of completion to the participant. This process simultaneously released the monetary stipend for professional development completion. An important part of this process included acknowledging and celebrating completion of the professional development because of the significant effort required of participants. Those who completed the experience were periodically highlighted on the front page of the project’s website to draw attention to participants’ hard work and to further encourage others.

Voluntary enrollment was critical to engaging participants. Educators in a participating school district had no obligation to participate and incurred no penalty for declining the opportunity. Cooperating teachers initially voiced the concern that they might no longer be permitted to host a teacher candidate if they did not participate in this initiative, but all were assured that this would not be the case. This freedom to engage in PSD resulted in 137 participants who had a vested interest in the associated outcomes and benefits. About 90 percent of the interested individuals (those who provided their contact information to the grant manager) enrolled in the program and obtained credentials to access the online modules. The barrier to entry for teachers seemed to be completing the first module; only about half (53%) of the enrolled teachers did so. However, 78 percent of those who finished one module went on to complete all the requirements. For principals and supervisors, the majority (81% and 100% respectively) completed one module but only about half completed all of the requirements.

It became clear as the grant progressed that some of the professional development modules were more challenging and time consuming than originally anticipated. As such, it was imperative to be transparent and inform interested individuals of the commitment they faced. The grant manager employed a simple solution: ensure that participants understood that they could complete the PD modules in any order they chose. The first cohort of teachers had completed the PD modules in the order listed on the chart furnished to all participants, where by chance, the most challenging module was listed first. Facing this initial hurdle discouraged some participants and they subsequently withdrew their participation. The project manager, during site visits, suggested other modules to complete first, in hopes that participants gained a sense of accomplishment and momentum to complete all the requirements. To better understand the nuanced obstacles, the project manager completed all elements of the professional development, resulting in suggestions and updates aimed at easing participants' burden.

The PD Modules

The IU hosted a site where participating teachers could log on, access the professional development, and track their progress toward completion. These resources supported educators who mentored teacher candidates completing their practical experiences. The online format allowed teachers from across the state to participate, irrespective of their proximity to the university. Similarly, since the IU previously developed the modules, teachers could complete the components at their convenience, with the expectation that they meet all the requirements within one calendar year of starting. This provided flexibility for participants to work through the content at their own pace, and when they had the time (especially over the summer). Topics did not build on each other, so teachers could choose in which order they completed the modules, allowing additional individualization.

The modules consisted of research-based professional development on a variety of topics in which PDE believed all teachers should be versed. Teachers spent 10 of the 44 required PD hours developing effective and engaging standards-based instruction. They chose two modules, which accounted for another quarter of their PD hours, from over 20 options that addressed components of the Framework for Teaching. For topics in Domain 1 (Planning and Preparation), teachers planned how to align instruction to student activities. In order to improve their classroom management (Domain 2), teachers could choose from coursework about creating an environment of respect and rapport in their classrooms. Focusing in on student-led discussions, teacher-to-student or student-to-student interactions, classroom procedures such as grouping students and organizing the physical space, or setting expectations for learning and achievement, enhancing students' pride in their work, or holding students accountable in the classroom, provided educators with potential management tools. To enhance instruction (Domain 3), teachers chose modules on engaging students in learning and exploration and the various types of

learning activities. Teachers addressed Domain 4 (Professionalism) by reflecting on teaching. The remaining 14 hours consisted of delving into the tools available on the Standards Aligned System. These resources included understanding various assessment techniques and decision making based on the data collected and current technology and digital resources available.

Coaching Component

In keeping with foundational understandings of instructional coaching, having an opportunity to examine content in more detail and practice newly learned strategies, increases the likelihood that such new information may be practiced in the classroom (Knight, 2007). For this reason, the professional development culminated in virtual instructional coaching to provide all parties with a common foundation of research-based knowledge and language (Loughran, 2006), and facilitate the transfer of theory into practice in the classroom setting (Knight, 2007).

Upon completion of all the modules, an instructional coach from the IU contacted the participant via email, zoom conferencing, or the phone to discuss coaching. The teacher, in collaboration with the coach, decided on a topic of interest based on his or her instructional needs. From that point on, the coach provided readings, videos, webinars, websites and other resources to support that teacher. However, for much of the coaching time, participants completed practical exercises that reinforced what they had learned, which concluded with coach facilitated reflection and extension of the topic.

Since each participant chose what would most benefit them and their students, the coaching topics varied widely. Teachers requested guidance in supporting the diverse types of learners in their classroom including providing the opportunity to engage students in project based learning and hybrid learning. Participants collaborated with their coach to support novice teachers through instructional coaching or gradual release models. Teachers set goals to improve their relationship with parents by increasing communication and requesting volunteers. Coaches often

provided technological solutions to teacher's focus on student engagement and classroom management techniques.

The final 10 hours of professional development through PSD was allotted for coaching. By the end of the third year, 95 participants began coaching and more than half of them (59%) completed more than the required hours. In total, PSD provided over 1,000 hours of coaching.

As with any project, logistics must be handled effectively. Although teachers appreciated completing the modules at their own pace, and in the order of their choosing, it required the project management team to develop and maintain a system for managing participant's progression through the program. Organized in a Google spreadsheet, members from the university, IU, and evaluation team routinely populated the document with interested individuals, module completion, as well as coaching topics and progress. The team found it beneficial to also include fields for administrative tasks like date of enrollment, coach notification, and release of stipend. Since team members were spread across the state, they relied on the collaborative nature of Google products; specifically, how the form auto-updates in real time and more than one person can manipulate the document at the same time. This allowed for clear and accurate tracking among the team. It also served as an evolving document; as the need arose, columns were added for internal notes or teacher ID numbers linked to the release of state PD hours.

Similarly, participants reflected on some of the logistical challenges of participation. The website developed by the IU was simply home base for participants to track their progress and be linked to other resources that provided the PD. Participants found it clunky to have to navigate to and from that site. Participants lamented about having too many passwords---one for each PD resource. In addition, they had to indicate completion on the IU's website (which was otherwise often overlooked).

Individualized Resources for Pre-Service Teachers

In the first year of the grant, the PSD team created an online website where supervisors, cooperating teachers, and pre-service teachers completed all IHE required assessments for state teacher certification. The process began once the IHE placed a pre-service teacher with a cooperating teacher. Representatives from each partnering IHE collected the contact information for those individuals, and their assigned supervisor, and uploaded it into the PSD online platform. To reduce initial instances of login failure, managers at both IHE's sent out initial introductory emails and instructions to orient participants to the system prior to the beginning of the clinical placement. If emails bounced back, the IHE took that opportunity to update the online website with the correct email. When appropriate, the IHE also indicated pre-service teachers' specific content area specializations like special education, music, mathematics or science, so that analysis could identify differences by certification.

Once provided with access, users saw a list of assessments upcoming, to do, completed or, past due as assigned by the university supervisor. In addition, customizable prompts allowed grant administrators to set automatic messages to remind participants periodically to complete each assessment in a timely manner. To complete the form, the user selected the applicable rating from the rubric that explained the differences in teacher development for each rating (see Figure 1 below). In addition, users had the opportunity to add comments justifying their selection. Additionally, the website linked each indicator with remediation resources. If a pre-service teacher did not demonstrate mastery of a core teaching competency his or her mentoring teacher or supervisor could assign additional resources for him or her to view. The majority of the remediation resources were sourced from the Standards Aligned System (SAS) developed by PDE as a comprehensive, researched-based resource to improve teachers' practice.

Linking resources with competencies allowed for individualized support for each pre-service

teacher. Synthesizing ratings from all pre-service teachers allowed the IHE to identify trends amongst all of their students. This led the education department to reflect on the preparation it provided to its pre-service teachers, and make changes to the curriculum to address topics for which preservice teacher need was demonstrated.

Figure 1. PSD Developed Online Student Assessment System

1 Planning and Preparation

1.1 Lesson plan is appropriate to age group and subject

? N/A

N/A	Unsatisfactory	Basic	Proficient	Distinguished
Not applicable.	The teacher plans instruction that does not adequately address how learners grow, develop, and meet rigorous learning goals in the content area.	The teacher plans instruction that demonstrates limited understanding of how learners grow, develop, or meet rigorous learning goals in the content area.	The teacher plans instruction that adequately addresses how learners grow, develop, and meet rigorous learning goals in the content area.	The teacher plans instruction that demonstrates clear connections between how learners grow and develop to meet rigorous learning goals in the content area.

Comments

Rich text editor toolbar with icons for undo, redo, bold, italic, strikethrough, bulleted list, numbered list, link, unlink, insert video, and insert image.

Courses Aligned to this Competency

- 9110 Setting Instructional Outcomes
- 9100 Enhancing Content and Pedagogical Knowledge
- 9130 Engaging Instructional Groups
- 9135 Productive Student Grouping
- 9365 Engaging Students in Learning
- 9390 Advanced Strategies for Flexible and Responsive Teaching
- 9310 Explaining Content: Teacher to Student

Source: Web-based System Developer

Discussion

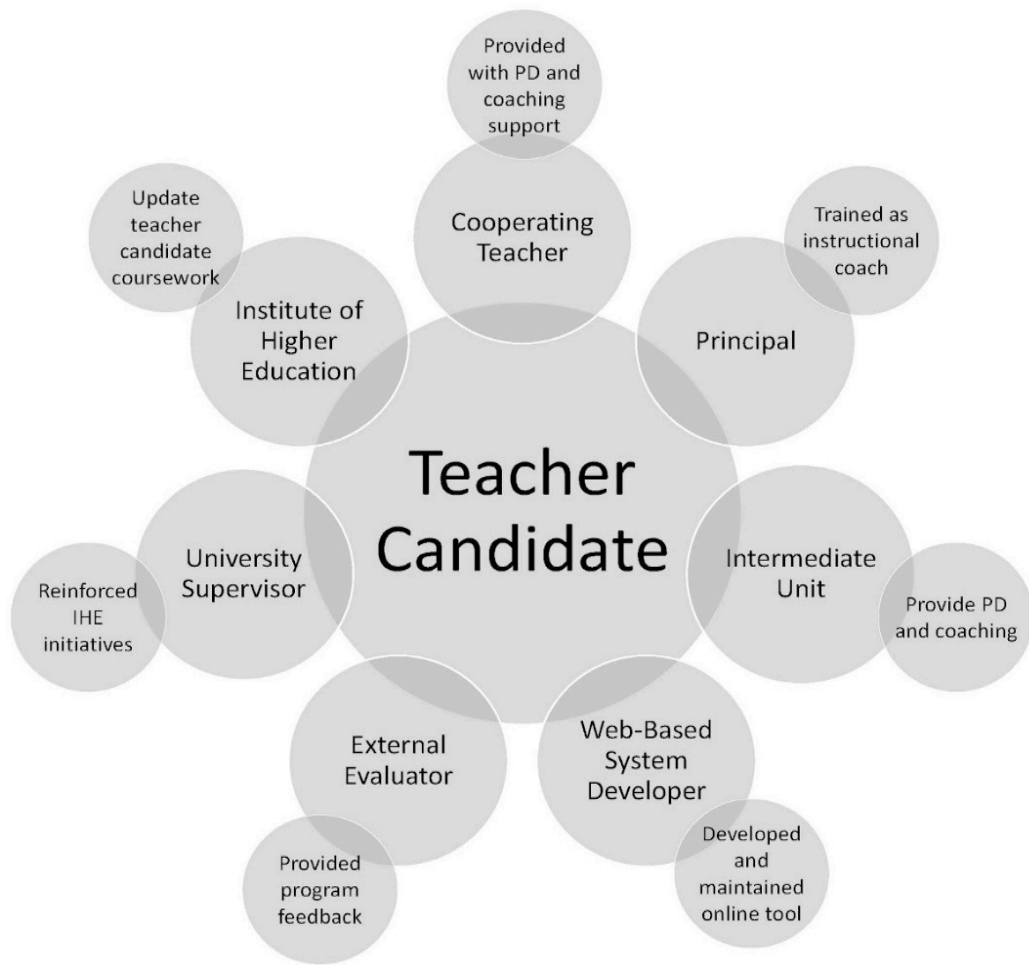
PSD was intended to provide holistic supports to teacher candidates during the transition from student to teacher. Scaffolds developed for grant implementation enhanced teacher candidate experiences during clinical placements, but remained in place to support new teachers across their professional career. The IU and IHEs already devoted resources to culling supports aligned with teaching competencies; the collection can now be utilized by anyone in the

profession. Ultimately, as teacher candidates transition to novice teachers, and novice teachers mature into veteran teachers, these continuously updated professional development resources are available to support their continued growth.

The professional development completed by participating principals and mentor teachers often covered similar material tailored to their professional role. This provided all participants with a common language and base of knowledge in addition to a shared understanding of the burden of completion. As a result, teachers also noticed an increase in support from their principals. These principals transitioned from building managers to educational leaders, and were equipped with resources to engage their staff in discussions and provide evidenced based pedagogical strategies.

The supports provided by the PSD grant highlighted the need for educators across P-16 to work as a cohesive group. The increased collaboration necessary for all parties engaged in this endeavor transcended institutions and provided opportunities for more extensive dialogue potentially increasing understanding of others' roles in order to meet the needs of the participating preservice teachers and ultimately benefiting all students served.

Figure 2. PSD Supports



References

- Andrews, I. O. (1950). Experimental programs of laboratory experiences in teacher education. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 1(4), 259-267.
- Brown, K. M. & Wynn, S. R. (2008). *Teacher retention issues: How some principals are supporting and keeping new teachers*. 17(6), 664-676.
- Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation. (CAEP). (2015). Retrieved from <http://caepnet.org/standards/standard-2>.
- Clarke, A. (2001). Characteristics of co-operating teachers. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 26(2), 237-256.
- Darling-Hammond, L., (2000). Reforming teacher preparation and licensing: Debating the evidence. *Teachers College Record*, 102(1), 28-56.
- Darling-Hammond, L. (2003) Keeping good teachers; Why it matters, what leaders can do. *Educational Leadership*, 60(8), 6-13.
- Darling-Hammond, L., & Bransford, J. (2005). *Preparing teachers for a changing world: What teachers should learn and be able to do*. (pp.358-445). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Davis, J. (2015). Higher education to K-12: Preparing for reality. *National Teacher Education Journal*, 8(3), 103-108.
- Gareis, C. R., & Grant, L. W. (2014). The efficacy of training cooperating teachers. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 39, 77-88. Retrieved from <http://www.elsevier.com/locate/tate>.
- Ingersoll, R. (2012). Beginning teacher induction: What the data tell us. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 47-51.
- Ingersoll, R. and Strong, M. (2011). The impact of induction and mentoring programs for beginning teachers: A critical review of the research. *Review of Education Research*. 81(2), 201-233.

- Knight, J. (2007). *Instructional coaching: A partnership approach to improving instruction* (pp. 13-14). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Konanc, M. (1996). Teacher attrition, 1980-1996 (Statistical Notes No. 002). Raleigh: North Carolina State Department of Public Instruction. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 400240).
- Levine, A., (2006). Educating school teachers: The education schools project. Retrieved from <http://www.edschools.org/pdf>
- Loughran, J. (2006). *Developing a pedagogy of teacher education: Understanding teaching and learning about teaching*. London: Routledge.
- McCray, E., Rosenberg, M., Brownell, M., deBettencourt, L., Leko, M., & Long, S. (2011). The role of leaders in forming school-university partnerships for special education teacher preparation. *Journal of Special Education Leadership, 24*, 47-58.
- National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). (2010). *Transforming teacher education through clinical practice: A national strategy to prepare effective teachers*. Retrieved from <http://www.ncate.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=zzeiB1OoqPk%3D&tabid=7>
- National Institute for Professional Practice Wilkes University. (n.d.). Retrieved February 09, 2016, from <http://www.professionalpractice.org/programs/teacher-leadership-and-instructional-coaching/>
- No Child Left Behind (NCLB). (2001). *Executive summary*. Retrieved from <http://www2.ed.gov/nclb/overview/intro/execsumm.html>.
- Sykes, G., Bird, T., & Kennedy, M. (2011). Teacher education: Its problems and some prospects. *Journal of Teacher Education, 61*(5), 464-476.
- Zeichner, K. (2010). University-based teacher education: Rethinking the connections between

campus courses and field experiences in college- and university-based teacher education.

Journal of Teacher Education, 61(1-2), 89-99.