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A journal of the
**National Association for
Professional Development Schools**



NAPDS
PREPARE. DEVELOP. INQUIRE. LEARN.

Volume 17 | Number 1 | Spring 2022

Through the Pandemic and Beyond

Our PDS Network has grown and changed over the years, but our consistent collaboration as well as our institutionalized norms and resources have provided us with a stable partnership that has allowed us to weather the pandemic together and remain focused on what makes our PDS strong. Not only did we transition to online learning, but we also used this as an opportunity to conduct action research on PDS and the Pandemic and were awarded the Claudia A. Balach Teacher Researcher Award by the American Educational Research Association, PDS Research Special Interest Group (SIG) for our work. This study, *Mentoring in Times of Uncertainty* (Marshall-Kraus et al., 2021) was also published in the NAPDS Journal, *School University Partnerships* themed issue, *Teaching in Times of Uncertainty* (Helfrich et al., 2022) Especially influential were our monthly virtual PDS Network meetings and our virtual mentor teacher happy hours, which have continued throughout the pandemic. We look forward to where these collaborations will take us next.

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NAPDS Exemplary Award Article

A Mutually Beneficial Partnership: Salisbury University & Wicomico County Public Schools

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The individuals involved in the Professional Development Schools partnership between Salisbury University and Wicomico County Public Schools are grateful for the opportunity to share more about the work that led the National Association for Professional Development Schools to honor this partnership with a NAPDS Award for Exemplary PDS Achievement in 2021! This is the fourth time that Salisbury University (SU) has been honored for its P-12 partnerships since the award's inception, and the second time that Wicomico County Public Schools (WCPS) has been recognized. All PDS stakeholders in the SU-WCPS partnership share a sincere commitment to preparing the next generation of teachers and enhancing the learning of P-12 students, with a "we're all in this together" approach.

Partnership Institutions

Salisbury is a city in, and the county seat of, Wicomico County on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. The Eastern Shore is located on the Delmarva Peninsula between the Atlantic Ocean and the Chesapeake Bay. The major cities of Washington, D.C., Baltimore, and Philadelphia

can be reached in two hours from the region. The City of Salisbury is home to over 32,000 people, within the over 100,000 individuals residing in Wicomico County. Agriculture, poultry farming, and shipbuilding are major industries in the area. There are two post-secondary institutions located in Wicomico County: Wor-Wic Community College and Salisbury University.

Salisbury University

Salisbury University is a public institution and is part of the University System of Maryland. It began as the State Normal School for teacher preparation in 1925. Now, SU facilitates 46 undergraduate degree programs, 15 master's degree programs, and two doctoral degree programs for approximately 7500 undergraduate and graduate students. The University's Seidel School of Education offers undergraduate programs in early childhood education and elementary education, as well as a combined dual early childhood/elementary education program. It also offers P-12 programs in music education, physical education and ESOL, and secondary education programs in English, mathematics, history, biology, chemistry, earth science, physics, French and Spanish. The Seidel School also facilitates graduate and doctoral programs for practicing teachers.

Due to the State of Maryland's mandate that all interns complete their 100-day extended internships in a Professional Development

School (PDS), coupled with the fact that SU is located in a predominately rural region, the Seidel School of Education's regional PDS network spans seven Maryland counties and includes 39 schools. In conjunction with the University's rich history in preparing future teachers, its national reputation for its partnerships with public schools is exceptional. SU was honored with the NAPDS Spirit of Partnership Award in 2009, the Emerging PDS Leader award in 2018 and 2021, and the NAPDS Award for Exemplary Professional Development School Achievement in 2011, 2015, 2017, and 2021. The 2015 award highlighted the PDS work in Mardela Middle and High School, located in Wicomico County, while the most recent award in 2021 encompassed SU's partnership with the entire district.

Wicomico County Public Schools

Wicomico County Public Schools employs approximately 3,000 teachers educating 15,000 students. WCPS offers full-day pre-kindergarten, an elementary school magnet program, NexGen STEM academies for middle school students, and Career and Technology Education and Advanced Placement and dual credit courses for high schoolers. Supports for students include opportunities provided by State Department of Education and Title One funds. Wicomico County includes 26 schools and learning centers, 20 of which partnered with Salisbury University as Professional Development School and partner school sites at the time of the award.

PDS Stakeholder Buy-In

PDS stakeholders throughout the Salisbury University – Wicomico County Public Schools PDS partnership truly view teacher preparation as a joint effort that benefits all. It is not difficult at all to gain buy-in from those involved with examples like these:

- Wicomico County Public Schools' Chief Academic Officer and Assistant Superintendent of Instruction not only served as principal of two PDS high schools in Wicomico County prior to this role, but has earned all three of his degrees in education from Salisbury University!
- WCPS's Director of Curriculum and Professional Development acts as the district-level PDS liaison to SU. The individual in this role at the time of the award has taught eight different courses at SU in the past four years.
- Many WCPS administrators, PDS site coordinators and mentor teachers earned their undergraduate and/or graduate degrees in education from Salisbury University, and enjoy the opportunity to pay it forward with the next generation of future teachers. "A Proud Sea Gull Teaches Here" posters highlighting SU alumni can be found outside the classrooms throughout WCPS schools.
- Eight of the sixteen PDS liaisons/internship supervisors are full-time faculty members at SU. Several faculty and staff members reside in Wicomico County and have children who attend, or have attended, WCPS schools.
- Five of the eight SU adjunct faculty members who serve as PDS liaisons and internship supervisors are former WCPS teachers.
- Twenty percent of the interns who completed their full-time internship experiences in Wicomico County Public Schools in Spring 2021 were high school graduates of the school district.

Shared Resources

Human Resources

The Salisbury University - Wicomico County Public Schools PDS partnership utilizes its human resources to further its PDS work. The following SU/WCPS PDS stakeholders give of their time and talents to reach the goals of the partners' individual and shared mission:

- WCPS's Supervisor of Accelerated Learning Programs and a PDS site coordinator serve on Salisbury University's May Literacy Center Advisory Council.
- WCPS's Director of Curriculum and Professional Development and a SU faculty member and PDS liaison are co-directors of Salisbury University's Academy for Leadership in Education.
- 23 WCPS employees have served as adjunct instructors for SU courses during the last four years, working with undergraduate and graduate students in 59 course sections.
- SU's Clinical Practice Coordinator serves on the school district's Judy Center Steering Committee, focused on early childhood education and family support programs.

- SU's Regional PDS Coordinator serves on the Career and Technical Education Program Advisory Committee for the Teacher Academy of Maryland Program in Wicomico County.
- The Regional PDS Coordinator and Clinical Practice Coordinator participate in monthly meetings of Wicomico County's Department of Curriculum and Professional Development.
- The Dean of the Seidel School of Education serves on the Lower Eastern Shore Regional Career and Technology Local Advisory Committee (which includes Wicomico County,) and served on the Recovery Planning Committee for the Division of Instruction for the district.

Physical Resources

As indicated in the partnership's Memorandum of Understanding, Wicomico County Public Schools and Salisbury University share physical spaces whenever possible. Four WCPS schools have opened their doors to internship seminar courses after school hours.

Salisbury University reciprocates WCPS's willingness to share physical spaces. Several Wicomico County professional development workshops are held on SU's campus, including Wicomico County Public Schools' annual Leadership Academy. This event takes place on two consecutive days in the month of July. WCPS asks SU faculty to share their expertise in professional development sessions, but more importantly, it invites the University faculty members to learn from leaders in their school district. SU faculty are able to participate in the academy's keynote exercises and sessions, or can simply grab lunch to make connections with WCPS supervisors of instruction in their disciplines. WCPS also holds learning opportunities for its students on SU's campus, as well as special events such as its annual Teacher of the Year banquet.

Financial Resources

While the Maryland State Department of Education mandates the PDS framework for teacher preparation, there is not an allocation in the budget to implement PDS work. However, the SU/WCPS partnership seeks and secures financial resources such as:

- SU's May Literacy Center provides tutoring for local elementary students each semester.
- In 2018, SU secured a three-year grant to partner with WCPS to bring together teacher candidates and practicing teachers in an intensive, innovative, and collaborative model that emphasizes culturally responsive and linguistically rich pedagogical practices.
- In 2019, SU's PDS Liaison to Pemberton Elementary School, worked with the school's principal to secure grant funding to provide restorative practice professional development for school staff and parents. Additional funds were utilized to purchase culturally and linguistically diverse books for the school library. The liaison also leveraged SU's

AmeriCorps program resources to provide teacher candidates to work with Pemberton teachers to assist them in the implementation of literacy intervention strategies.

Supporting One Another's Initiatives

Since Salisbury University is the only four-year institution in Wicomico County, one could play a version of "PDS Where's Waldo?" to spot various stakeholders at SU and WCPS events. Representatives from SU and WCPS are seamlessly involved in one another's initiatives:

- SU hosts Teacher Academy of Maryland (TAM) students from all four WCPS high schools for a "Day in the Life of a SU Teacher Candidate" experience annually. SU also has an articulation agreement to award TAM students with credit and \$500 per semester scholarship funds.
- SU faculty and staff read to students on WCPS's annual "Read Across America" Day.
- Salisbury University provides a gift of a free graduate course to Wicomico County Public Schools' Teacher of the Year annually. SU faculty also "hitch a ride" on WCPS's bus to the annual Maryland Teacher of the Year Gala.
- SU faculty and staff served as fifth graders' handshake and conversation evaluators for the "Amazing Shake Competition" at Prince Street Elementary School.
- SU's Dean of the Seidel School of Education, WCPS's Chief Academic Officer, Pemberton Elementary's PDS Site Coordinator, and a SU intern placed in Wicomico County served as keynote panelists at the 2020 NAPDS National Conference.
- A SU faculty member joined school staff to distribute meals to the Pinehurst Elementary School community on a daily basis during the COVID-19 public school shutdown.
- In response to the shutdown in the spring of 2020, a standing weekly Zoom meeting involving WCPS's Chief Academic Officer and Director of Curriculum and Professional Development communicating with SU's Dean of the Seidel School, the Regional PDS Coordinator, and the Clinical Practice Coordinator was put into place. This practice has continued to this date, allowing the PDS partners to check in with one another regarding joint and individual initiatives. During a time when many feel a disconnect, the SU/ WCPS PDS partners are communicating more than ever before.

Unique Opportunities for Teacher Candidates and Interns

WCPS PDS site coordinators and administrators share the belief that if the teacher candidates and interns feel comfortable in their schools, their P-12 students will benefit. Here are a few examples of how future teachers are welcomed into WCPS schools:

- SU's first pre-program course for secondary and physical educators that is taught on-site occurs at Mardela Middle and High School

in Wicomico County, allowing for teacher candidates to connect theory to practice in their freshmen year of college. This practice prompted the principals of North Salisbury School and Prince Street Elementary School to offer space and staff support in their schools to provide similar opportunities to more teacher candidates.

- At Glen Avenue Elementary School, the PDS site coordinators and liaison collaborate to implement experiences for interns to become familiar with key staff members throughout their building. Interns shadow, interview, and/or attend a panel discussion to include support staff such as cafeteria workers and custodians, student support educators, and behavior specialists. These opportunities provide the interns with an understanding of how each staff member can support them, and their P-12 students, throughout their internship experiences.
- Salisbury University teacher candidates and interns truly become a part of their Wicomico County Public School communities. One can see these future teachers participating in staff versus students sporting events, performing in school talent shows, grilling hamburgers at back to school nights, dressing up with fellow team members in group Halloween costumes, or taking part in spirit week activities.

Conclusion

The PDS partnership between Salisbury University and Wicomico County Public Schools plays a significant role in the identity of each individual institution. The partners have developed a genuine professional friendship and support one another in the community. True collaboration is simply understood by all partnership stakeholders, no matter what their roles may be. For example, SU's Regional PDS Coordinator enjoys sharing how her two daughters attended four different PDS schools in Wicomico County. When they were young and played school with their dolls, one pretended to be the teacher while the other pretended to be the intern!

Since being honored with the NAPDS Award for Exemplary PDS Achievement last spring, the Salisbury University – Wicomico County Schools PDS partnership has strengthened, benefiting all involved.

- SU's Department of Education Leadership recently hired WCPS's retiring Director of Curriculum and Professional Development, which allowed for a very smooth professional transition.
- SU has leveraged grant funds to offer College and Career Readiness Bootcamp experiences for WCPS high school students.

- The University and the school district have worked together to offer more SU dual enrollment courses for students in Wicomico County.
- SU is working with WCPS's Supervisor of New Teacher Induction to identify ways to support its recent graduates teaching in Wicomico County.
- Teacher candidates in on-site pre-professional courses have been taking part in clinical instructional rounds, visiting additional WCPS classrooms beyond those selected for their clinical practice placements. This allows them to witness different teaching styles and debrief on what they observe regarding student learning.

Once again, the Salisbury University – Wicomico County Public Schools PDS stakeholders appreciate being asked to share what makes their partnership exemplary with NAPDS members. Stay tuned for more great things to come!

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NAPDS Exemplary Award Article

Innovative School-University Partnerships: Insights and Understandings from a Year-Long Internship

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As educator preparation programs (EPPs) seek to enact programmatic innovations to effectively prepare candidates to enter the profession, they must create structures that empower teacher candidates (TCs) to apply their knowledge in increasingly complex situations within authentic contexts, i.e., the classroom (Cochran-Smith & Villegas, 2015). These opportunities, or clinical experiences, represent an important vehicle for TCs to develop pedagogical skills as they observe and learn from clinical educators (CEs) while enacting the methods and strategies learned within university coursework (Cochran-Smith & Villegas, 2015; Zeichner, 2021). When delivered within school-university partnerships, opportunities to define, implement, and refine clinical experiences for TCs are maximized, thus enabling EPPs to systematically examine key elements to increase TCs readiness to teach (Snow et al., 2016; Zeichner, 2021). This article describes the multi-year development and implementation of an intensive year-long clinical experience delivered within the context of a school-university partnership. Subsequently, key

findings and lingering questions are presented to provide stakeholders, including other EPPs, with sources of information to consider within the development and delivery of clinical experiences.

School-University Partnerships

Acknowledging the importance of systematic clinical experiences, many universities continue to examine ways to create clinically rich experiences within a program of study that is cohesively linked to K–12 students and schools within partnerships (Burns & Badiali, 2018). School-university partnerships represent opportunities to develop and implement aligned clinical experiences as university faculty and K-12 school personnel engage in ongoing and substantive dialogue and collaborate to craft a common vision of effective teaching (American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education [AACTE], 2018; Gutierrez & Kostogriz, 2020). Subsequently, in carefully structuring and scaffolding learning experiences, they can create experiences that are intentionally designed to facilitate TCs' application of knowledge developed through coursework directly with K-12 students in school settings (Darling-Hammond, 2014; Goodson et al., 2019). When partnerships are

enacted as instructional communities of practice, there is an emphasis on ensuring practitioner knowledge and expertise has equal value to that of the EPP faculty (AACTE, 2018; Darling-Hammond, 2014; Supovitz, 2002). Stakeholders from each group share the responsibility for the mutual development of TCs.

Research on school-university partnerships has documented that intensive, comprehensive clinical experiences increase TCs' readiness to teach (Snow et al., 2016) and improve their evaluations early in the student teaching semester (Polly et al., 2012). Opportunities for clinical experiences should be sustained over time and characterized by the application of knowledge in increasingly complex situations, with many opportunities for reflection and collaboration with others (Brownell et al., 2019; Hamnerness et al., 2005). When CEs and faculty provide consistent feedback and joint guidance originating from the same guiding principles, TCs were more prepared to teach in their own classroom (Bartanen & Kwok, 2021; Dunst et al., 2020). One study also found candidates participating in a year-long placement benefited from sustained interactions with students (Vagi et al., 2019).