trouble? There are easier ways to do teacher education, to be sure. But these four traits of energy, listening, vulnerability and accountability point us toward the benefits we see in PDS partnership. There are direct and immediate benefits, and then there are indirect or longer term benefits. And these benefits spread not only directly to the interns and those who work with them, but also to a wider community of the schools, the district, the university, the wider field of education, and our local community.

Direct benefit, for example, is in how well-prepared a set of candidates are by the time they graduate at the end of the year. It's in how the children this year have had an additional adult to support their learning. And it's in how teachers who served as mentors this year had the opportunity to grow themselves through mentoring a beginner. Those benefits to teacher candidates, kids, and teachers really matter, and those benefits accrue right away. But there are deeper and more transformative benefits that you can miss if you're not looking. And *these* benefits take some time and nurturing to develop. They are benefits expressed in the culture in which we work and learn.

Our own work together, culminating in the publication of *Teaching Writers to Reflect*, is an example of these indirect and longer term benefits. Think about all the things that had to be in place, in terms of an institutional culture, in order for this work to happen. Due to a culture of collaboration, nurtured in this partnership over 20 years, when the district introduced a peer coaching scheme, teachers were open to it. Deana and Colleen were two of those teachers, and that's how they started working together. Due to a culture of teacher leadership, nurtured in this partnership over 20 years, Colleen and Deana started trying all these new things in their writing instruction, like coteaching, but what's more, they felt the need to invite others in, to share it. Due to a culture of inquiry, nurtured in this partnership over 20 years, and due to a culture of teachers partnering with PSU faculty to conduct school-based research, nurtured in this partnership over 20 years, teachers and administrators knew Anne-- even though she has had no formal role in our PDS partnership-- and could nudge Deana and

Colleen to invite Anne in to see writing workshop. And due to a culture of vulnerability, nurtured in this partnership over 20 years, the three of us were able to come together as critical learning partners, with no set agenda other than seeking to discover what worked best for kids day to day.

Through all of those things, when you add up all of this energy, this culture of collaboration, of inquiry, of partnering, of teacher leadership, and of vulnerability, shared accountability.... All of this makes transformation possible for the benefit of the children who drive all of our work. For us to come together, we needed *all of this*, and to have *all of this* we needed the relationship, the PDS partnership, not just in name but in continued close engagement and trust, nurtured over these 20 years.

None of our work for the writers you see in our photos here, or the teaching strategies we developed together, or the book we co-authored, or the sessions and conversations we've had with colleagues nearby in professional learning sessions or afar in conference presentations,

is directly related to the mentorship of teacher candidates in State College classrooms. And yet PDS makes it all possible, over all those years leading to here. When partnerships are nurtured, you get the direct benefit, but you also get an environment, a culture, that is RICH SOIL in which all kinds of "volunteer" seeds can grow.

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Learners in K-12 The Future is Now: Meeting the Needs of English Schools

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Loachapoka Elementary and High School and Auburn University are involved in an emerging professional development school partnership (PDSP), a relationship that began summer of 2018. Reading, ESOL, secondary English education and music education professors hold methods classes

on our campus during the academic school year, as well as collaborate to provide summer programming. The effort is driven on the needs of our school as determined by administrators and parents. Needs include reading achievement; supporting English learners (ELs); access to music classes; and innovating curriculum to be culturally relevant, developmentally appropriate, and age appropriate through small group differentiation. Parents and administrators also highlight mental

health, nutrition, safety, and the summer slide during summer months. The latter concerns are well documented in isolated rural areas throughout our country (Phillips et al., 2007). Our story that follows is a new, dynamic aspect of the partnership that we hope continues to grow in the coming years.

Our work reflects various aspects of the NAPDS Essentials 3, 4, and 5 (NAPDS, 2008). It is our hope that, as we share our story, readers are

able to validate and extend their understanding of these essentials in terms of their own work in their unique contexts. This is indeed in the spirit of essential five as we share our work with you "as a way of contributing to the educational dialogue." (NAPDS, 2008).

Background

This is my first year at Loachapoka Elementary School. I (Rachel) spent the first three years of my teaching experience at an affluent East Alabama private school that did not accommodate assignments for any student. The next two years were taught in Montgomery at a school with the highest population of English Learners (ELs) in the county. This allowed the opportunity for me to develop skills working with ELs alongside two full time teachers specializing in teaching English speakers of other languages (ESOL) at that school.

Alabama is documented as one of the top ten high EL growth states and the funding structure has not kept pace with the growth of the EL population (Horsford & Sampson, 2013). Our county exemplifies this stark situation. There are currently 170 ELs in the county with only two full time ESOL teachers to serve students enrolled in 14 schools across the district. One of these teachers is also the lead teacher for the entire county.

At Loachapoka Elementary, we serve students from preschool to sixth grade and are connected to our high school that hosts seventh through twelfth grades in rural east Alabama. The elementary school has three hundred forty eight students with 89% being children of color. Twenty-one percent of our students are Hispanic and several live in homes in which English is not the primary spoken language. Hispanic families within our county experience a range of socioeconomic realities. Some have founded thriving businesses while others are struggling for consistent work. Poverty and isolation are among several factors that affect the families of this community.

Our school illustrates the county's, and nation's, struggle to support reading development of ELs. With only 15-19% of our total school population reaching reading proficiency each year, the question of how to help our ELs become the most successful they can be, started to circulate with colleagues and our partner school Auburn University. This question was the basis of setting up the professional learning community (PLC) to try to find the answer, to help our students succeed, and to better prepare teacher candidates for the classroom.

Classroom Environment

I teach fourth grade. Our grade level departmentalizes so I teach three rotating home rooms reading and language arts. I have a total of forty five students throughout the day with thirteen to sixteen students per class. When the year started, five of the forty five were reading on a fourth grade level and four were close to grade level according to Star Reading. By mid-year five students tested on grade level and nine students tested into the on watch level. I have ten students

with Individualized English Education Plans (IELPs). Of those, two students were level 1 on the ACCESS for ELLs test and the other eight were level two or three. Three of my ELs read on grade level, one is reading close to grade level, four are below grade level, and two are in the severely below grade level category.

We have a 90 minute, uninterrupted block for two classes of students for reading, writing, and grammar. We also have thirty minutes of reading intervention time with students divided between the three fourth grade teachers based on specific skills. The last block's instruction is split with specials in the middle of class time.

My collaboration with Mary Jane McIlwain, a Reading Education professor, began a semester before we formed the PLC. Her reading methods course was taught on the Loachapoka school campus, and they joined me for my second rotation of students. Teacher candidates observed Mary Jane and I co-teach a mini-lesson and then they supported independent work while she and I circulated to coach students and candidates as they worked. She then took the undergraduate students back to the college classroom at our school to reflect on what worked and what needed to change. Afterward, Mary Jane and I reflected and planned the lesson we were going to co-teach the following week. Ways to support EL students was always a priority in our discussions, which led us to form the PLC with Jamie Harrison, the ESOL Education professor at Auburn.

Professional Learning Community Activities

Each week Mary Jane, Jamie, and I (Rachel) meet to discuss the previous week and look at lessons for the upcoming weeks. We use a learning cycle we call "plan, do, reflect, change" to guide our shared learning. Learning cycles are inherent in essential four and are powerful ways in which teachers work together in a specific context to help all students learn (West Ed., 2018). An innovation in our use of learning cycles is the way it is strengthening Loachapoka-Auburn University PDS partnership. Not only are teachers learning from one another as we put "best practices" to work in our classrooms, but university faculty and teacher candidates are learning with us.

Each meeting, we look at how students responded to different supports, areas they are thriving in and areas they are struggling to grasp. Ideas are given for upcoming assignments for ways to make them more accessible for ELs while not losing the challenge of the reading standards for Alabama students. These meetings have led to including a language objective for the students posted in the classroom, having student-created word banks for sorts, and setting sentence stems for the students to use. Each week includes looking at which supports need to be changed for future lessons on similar standards and reteaching opportunities.

We then look through upcoming lessons and add in scaffolding and support to help students

succeed to the best of their abilities. We look at each objective and break down the language used to make it understandable. We also breakdown the language students will need to have to be able to complete the standard. At this point the most successful supports for students have been using word banks, sentence stems, and having visual aids to help better understand the stories being read.

My school uses a program called Bundles that was developed by teachers in our system to group the reading, writing, and grammar standards together similarly to how they would appear on standardized tests. One Bundle that we worked to accommodate was focused on reading literature: explain major differences between poetry, drama, and prose and refer to the structural elements of poems (verse, meter, rhythm). This standard we broke into studying poetry for a week focusing on using visuals to help understand the poems and anchor charts made to look like an IPad with the different relevant terms being the apps you could pick to break down the parts of a poem. Then we focused on comparing poetry to prose by looking back at stories we had read throughout the year.

The students used Venn diagrams to help sort their thinking. This created the opportunity for me to start the word bank with paragraph, stanza, story, and rhythm. The students sorted these words into poetry or prose and got to have discussions on where each word goes. The students then added the words meaning, verse, characters and meter to our list of words.

Sorting and discussing terms in pairs led to whole group discussions on using the sentence stems, "Poems and prose are alike because . . .". Or "Poems and prose are different because . . .". Some of the words were easier for students to decide on when they were on the anchor charts but others like meaning or story took longer to decide where to place them. The next week we started using readers theatre to look at drama.

We went back to Venn diagrams to compare and contrast poetry and dramas. The students started with words like dialogue, scene, stanza, and verse. After sorting the words, we added story, theme, rhythm and pictures. Once we had finished we discussed where the words should be placed. We used the sentence stems "Drama is like poetry because… but it is like prose because…" and "Drama is not like poetry but is like prose because…".

The sentence stems mimicked what the students would need on their bundles test open response questions to allow students to practice both with a partner and independently before their test. When the students are given a sentence stem, I see higher levels of participation in my EL students conversing with their partners. I also see and hear them using the anchor charts to choose words to add to the sentence stems. Giving students having more practice answering open ended questions verbally then writing the answers

improved summative assessment scores when comparing specific poems to drama.

Points to Consider

As NAPDS essential four details, each person involved in this PLC is increasing understanding about the implementation of these practices. Below we each explain how the PLC impacted our practices as a practicing teacher and as professors preparing future teachers.

Rachel Smith - Teacher

Each week, after discussing what went well and what could have gone better, I was left able to reflect on how to improve as a teacher. This led to discussion points and research into best practices for different topics and standards. The PLC also chose to focus on what students can do based on WIDA scores and what the students were showing in the classroom. Starting small with teacher created word banks, I was then able to have the students work together to build a word bank to sort. The word banks could then be used as word sorts in centers. The sentence stems were a way to help ELs feel more comfortable in turn-and-talk situations which built their comfort levels in sharing with the whole class. With each standard I worked to push what was already being implemented in the classroom a little further in helping to support and challenge my students to become better readers.

Jamie Harrison - English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) Education

The PDS relationship allows us to rely on the practicing teacher to inform the guidance that we give. This is really important from a teacher educator perspective as it prioritizes the experiences of the teacher rather than the abstract nature of "best practices" or English language proficiency test scores. The teacher knows her students, she sees on a daily basis what they can do and how they respond in a variety of interactive contexts. Test scores on the other hand, give us a snapshot picture of a moment in time for this student, and depending upon the circumstances of testing (computer-based testing) may not always accurately represent their actual abilities.

In the context of the PDS relationship, the process of support for ELs is organic and builds upon what is already happening to build an equitable classroom environment for ELs. The goal is to build capacity from week to week so that scaffolds and supports such as increased visuals, sentence stems and word banks become part of the teacher's automatic repertoire. Starting from the foundational skill of determining language objectives is an essential component of this capacity-building process.

Mary Jane McIlwain - Reading Education Professor

Two considerations bubbled up while debriefing with my students in the fall, each of which I shared with teacher candidates, Rachel, and Jamie. First, how do you work EL scaffolds into the techniques

efficiently? Candidates and I played with sentence stems, visuals and total body response during interactive read alouds and shared readings. The time it takes to do this work is problematic. Creating the PLC including Jamie and learning cycles generates efficiency, effectiveness, and builds momentum and intentionality.

This semester, teacher candidates and I work with Susan Ray, a third grade teacher. Everything I am learning from knowing Rachel's students and my continued work with Rachel and Jamie influences my work with Susan, as well as the teacher candidates that are learning with me in her classroom. The PLC within our PDSP is creating a seamless path to "in time" learning for students, teachers, candidates and university faculty as we work to create equity for our EL students.

The second consideration is productively framing the tension between standardized test scores (representing what policy writers call "rigor") and meeting ELs where they are. Rachel seems empowered as she reflects on how ELs at varying ELP levels are responding to scaffolds; and I take this with me as I work with Susan and my undergraduate students. We are developing a sort of shared empowerment or collective efficacy to frame that tension productively. We better understand how to celebrate and value the small steps that create continuous progress for our students as they work toward "mastering a standard." We are learning that our efforts are about creating equity for all students as we collaborate in a real classroom with a real teacher and real students. It is their lives that create our reality whether our individual identities label us as student, teacher candidate, teacher, or researcher.

Next Steps

Finding scaffolds for ELs that transfer to a variety of instructional techniques is important work to be shared between researchers and practitioners and is pertinent to essential three. In my room, these techniques are interactive read aloud, shared reading, guided reading and centers. Most of our attention has been on interactive read alouds, shared reading, and centers. This is where we are growing our work in essential three into essential four as we increase the number of participants in our PLC and also push to learn more about various techniques used in reading instruction. Mary Jane and Jamie will be leading a year-long PD focused on EL support and guided reading next year. I wonder how sentence stems, word banks, and visual aids will transfer to guided reading.

Also indicative of essentials three and four, the plan is to work PLCs like ours into the PD mix. We are already headed in that direction as Susan is joining our weekly meetings. I know that having the opportunity to work with Susan in the PLC will strengthen the third to fourth grade transition. We developed a natural way of understanding all of our students, ELs in particular, and the

undergraduate students. It is validating to see the growth in all of them. Also, we will be able to share our experiences with our colleagues through the guided reading PD developed.

Implications and Recommendations

It remains our hope that readers are able to validate and extend their own collaborative practices within their PDSPs (especially those related to essentials three, four, and five) by reading our story. The EL scaffolds (posted language objectives, student generated word banks, sentence stems) we use to teach reading in fourth grade transfer to all grades and content areas. However, how these and other "best practices" fit any particular context is always a variable needing to be addressed by the learning communities in that very context. Let us all, preK-12 teachers and professors, create learning communities intimate enough to adapt practices to the nuances of our children and their families. Incorporate learning cycles into these communities to increase flexibility and intentionality about determining focus, collecting data (whether it be through student assessment or anecdotal reports) and adding it to the conversation. Together we can build perspective and strengthen our respective partnerships.

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