



Teacher Candidates in the Instructional Coaching Cycle: Exploration of an Innovative Professional Development School Model (iPDS)

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Teacher coaching has emerged as an effective alternative to traditional forms of professional development (Kraft, Blazar, & Hogan, 2016). Researchers have studied instructional coaching models and found a positive influence on teacher efficacy and student outcomes (Scher & O'Reilly, 2009; Yoon et al., 2007). Yet there is little mention in any of the literature of including teacher candidates in the coaching process. Using the example of a Professional Development School (PDS) partnership between Kansas State University College of Education (KSUCOE) and the Shawnee Mission School District (SMSD), this article highlights the potential of utilizing instructional coaches in mentoring student teachers by describing an innovative Professional Development School (iPDS) model that has been mutually beneficial for both partners, and how this important educator development tool aligns with Standard 4 of the National Professional Development School Model: *A shared commitment to innovative and reflective practice by all participants.*

The Partners

Kansas State University College of Education

The KSUCOE established a Professional Development School model in 1989 on the premise that education should be viewed as a continuum from early childhood through university and that significant improvements in one part of the system are not possible without improvements throughout. Based on this premise, the vision of this model was and still is to collaboratively improve the College of Education's teacher preparation program while simultaneously reforming K-12 education for all students and educators within the partnership. To do so, the partnership capitalizes on the collaborative inclinations, experiences, and needs of the many educational partners in the community to demonstrate how to help all K-16 students achieve high academic standards. (Yahnke & Shroyer 2014). Traditionally, PDS school partnerships involve local schools providing placements for teaching interns to spend a semester turning theory into practice and application as they complete practice teaching. However, KSUCOE enrollment in teacher education is represented predominantly by students from the greater Kansas City area, over one hundred miles away from the main campus. For various reasons, including candidates' desire to live at home to save money, the college's technological capacities for distance supervision and the opportunity for students to be placed in an innovative school setting, the

time was right for expanding the program into a distance model for clinical placements in Kansas City. The college had a strong desire to stretch the capacities of the current, local model and with an opportunity for placements in the Shawnee Mission School District's new Apache Innovative School, iPDS was born.

Apache Innovative School

In 2016, SMSD transitioned Apache Elementary School from a traditional model to an "innovative school" model that gave teachers more flexibility in scheduling, students a more personalized education experience, and the district a place to identify best practices to spread to the rest of its schools. The goal of Apache Innovative School (ApacheIS) is to provide an innovative elementary school setting for students enrolled within its highly diverse attendance boundaries. The ApacheIS focus is on increasing student achievement and preparing students to be college and career ready while serving as a professional learning model school for the district.

The SMSD utilizes the Rigor and Relevance Framework, developed by Willard Daggett (2005), that identifies five key themes in establishing rigorous and relevant learning experiences for ALL students. Innovative practices continue to be implemented in the SMSD in alignment with the five themes:

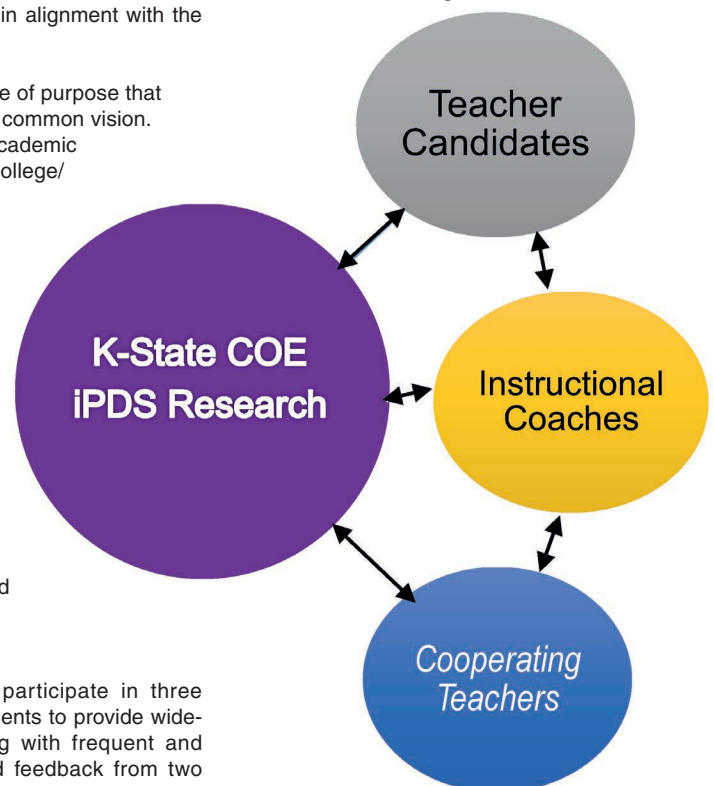
- Leadership: A clear sense of purpose that empowers staff toward a common vision.
- High Expectations: For academic performance as well as college/ career readiness.
- Relationships: Valuing relationships as part of a successful learning environment.
- Student Opportunities: Both academic experiences and personal skill development opportunities.
- Professional Culture: Teachers, administrators, and staff collaborate toward shared goals.

The iPDS Model

All KSUCOE candidates participate in three distinct PDS school placements to provide wide-ranging experiences along with frequent and sustained supervision and feedback from two levels of mentorship: trained classroom teachers and university supervisors. Unique to the iPDS

model are four layers of feedback: The KSUCOE supervisor, the SMSD Director of Elementary Education, the ApacheIS instructional coaches, and the classroom mentor teachers. This four-pronged approach places a great value on the benefits of collective planning and decision making as well as participation in research and inquiry about best practices for teaching and teacher education through research, reflection, and relationships with students and their families. (Darling-Hammond, 1994; Darling-Hammond & Rothman, 2011).

The iPDS model has become integrated into the ApacheIS leadership mission. ApacheIS is a training ground for future leaders in the district to serve in teacher leader, innovation specialist, instructional coaching, and administrative roles. All teachers at ApacheIS are expected to serve as mentors for teacher candidates with an awareness of ways to engage them in the art and heart of teaching from day one. Candidates experience common grade level collaboration time with colleagues, high-functioning professional learning communities, instructional coaching cycles, innovative instructional practices and extended professional learning opportunities. Professional learning targets hands-on instructional strategies for academic learning as well as direct instruction



The iPDS Model.



Table 1: Extended Professional Learning Opportunities

Vertical looping	Project based learning	Project Lead the Way and STEM Education
Daily morning meetings	Collaborative planning with Response to Intervention (RtI)	Individual learning plans and goal setting
Trauma Smart training and Social Emotional Needs	Technology Integration	Relationships and communication with parents

to increase students' social-emotional skills. Teacher candidates are exposed to and engaged in extended opportunities that include the following (Table 1)

Co-Teaching Model

Both iPDS partner institutions utilize a co-teaching model. The primary feature of a co-teaching model is the collaboration of two or more teachers on the planning, delivery, and authentic assessment of teaching and learning. (Davis, 1995, Sandholtz, 2000, Crow and Smith, 2005, Carpenter et al., 2007). Each semester, the university supervisor, the SMSD district and building administrators, instructional coaches, teacher candidates and their mentor teachers come together to review co-teaching implementation guidelines. Then the iPDS structure is described for the mentor teachers and teacher candidates. The instructional coaches share their expertise and expectations of a reflective dialogue loop in which they will model-teach, the mentor teacher and candidate will implement and the instructional coach will provide both the teacher and teacher candidate with the opportunity to look critically at their own teaching practices and continuously improve. The university supervisor becomes part of the feedback loop through monthly classroom visits, conferences with candidates, and distance supervision through technology.

Distance and On-site Supervision

Teacher candidates are expected to demonstrate their teaching abilities on the first days at ApacheIS. They utilize one-to-one technology to video capture their teaching opportunities in small group interventions and whole class opportunities. Candidates are required to provide two formal, face-to-face lessons for the instructional coaches, three for their mentor teacher, and upload at least five teaching samples to the cloud for the supervisor. Video samples are uploaded to a cloud and the university supervisor, instructional coaches, and teacher candidates have access to the videos and work together to provide effective feedback and professional expertise. Video samples are also required for the student teaching portfolio required by KSUCOE as the capstone project for student teaching completion.

Benefits of the Model

University Benefits

The KSUCOE places a great value on the benefits of collective planning and decision making in the iPDS model as well as participating in research and inquiry about best practices for teaching

and teacher education. Each month, a university supervisor checks in with key stakeholders on site: The district elementary education coordinator, building administrators, instructional coaches, mentor teachers and teacher candidates all provide feedback. Classroom visits enhance reflection on the model and provide innovative examples to enhance teacher education curriculum and development programs in the college. The flexibility of the model is demonstrated when changes are made in the teacher preparation program based on partner input. For example, the instructional coaches called a meeting with KSUCOE and SMSD partner administrators and indicated the teacher candidates were waiting until too late in the semester to make requests for the instructional coaches and mentor teachers to do their observations. To complicate matters for the instructional coaches, teachers throughout the building were also requesting coaching observations. In a collaborative spirit, stakeholders decided to prioritize a more realistic timeline with mile markers to guide instructional coaches, mentor teachers and teacher candidates in strategic ways. In addition, the instructional coaches committed to designing specific professional development for the teacher candidates in preparation for their anticipated hiring by SMSD. Training topics in classroom management, behavior supports, research-based strategies in blended learning and technology integration are reported back to the KSUCOE Chair of Curriculum and Instruction and provide examples of current needs for candidates as they progress through the state department of education's required program of study. This continuous feedback loop has led to co-construction of curricular changes and observation protocols, benefitting all stakeholders and contributing to KSUCOE accreditation artifacts required by the Council for Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) Standard 2, Clinical Partnerships and Practice.

District Benefits

The close collaboration between SMSD and university personnel allows for early identification of teacher candidates in the iPDS program who demonstrate skills and dispositions that are a good fit for an early hiring process in the district. Candidates participate in a fall interview event and may be identified for the accelerated track of round two interviews with building principals. Many candidates have been hired immediately upon graduation in long-term substitute roles or in some cases, to take over a classroom of their

own. The iPDS experience enhances candidates' chances for hiring by SMSD as they are pre-wired with an understanding of district initiatives, guidelines, and policies such as:

- An understanding of district curriculum maps, priority standards and assessment practices.
- Experience in using district resources to lead instruction.
- A philosophy of teaching the whole child with training and application of social emotional instruction
- Buy-in to the effectiveness of Professional Learning Communities and the power of teacher collaboration in meeting the needs of students
- A professional network of support from relationships built through the intern experience

SMSD coaches have been able to design, implement, and formalize protocols for the ApacheIS coaching cycle based on the professional learning aspects of iPDS. These documents and procedures benefit all aspects of a coaching cycle that includes a pre-conference form, pre-conference dialogue, classroom observation, and a post-observation conference. This formal process happens four times during the semester, twice with the instructional coaches and twice with the mentor teachers. Five teaching videos are uploaded to a cloud for KSUCOE supervisors for additional feedback. An instructional coach at ApacheIS shared her perspective on continued professional learning as coaches, teachers and candidates pose and answer questions about professional practices and benefit from each other's feedback:

It gives us the opportunity to hone our own craft. For example, when we are reinforcing the importance of reflection on teaching with an intern, the mentor teacher is reminded of the importance of reflection on their teaching. Right now, interns are so concerned about getting the lesson out there and taught, they aren't giving themselves opportunities to reflect. My job is to ask those reflective questions over and over and then give the interns time to learn. Hopefully when they are out there on their own, they are asking themselves those questions and strengthening their professional practices. We want to emphasize that we are all learning as professionals all the time. (Instructional Coach "A", November 18, 2019)

Teacher Benefits

The ApacheIS teachers serving in mentor roles as cooperating teachers are given an opportunity to develop leadership skills through mentoring and positively influence their buildings and the district. Mentor teachers not only grow instructionally from guiding and sharing their professional practices with teacher candidates, but also professionally. Mentors connect teacher candidates to curriculum resources, model peer-to-peer feedback and



develop a professional relationship that supports them as they transition to their own classroom. Having a role as a mentor teacher isn't just for a semester, it's a commitment to the profession and the success of others embarking on the teaching journey. Many cooperating teachers realize professional fulfillment from serving in this leadership role and become instructional coaches, curriculum cadre members and pursue a career in administration after serving in this capacity.

ApacheS teachers have strong feelings about the benefits and contributions of teacher candidates in their classrooms. They strive not only to support candidate development, but indicate a realization that the supportive relationships they are building may very well be with their future co-teacher, grade level or content partner, strengthening learning communities for students. As one mentor teacher shared, "The individual attention and small group support we can provide together makes such an impact on student academic growth. This is another caring adult forming relationships with my students and supporting them academically, socially and emotionally." (Teacher "D", February 1, 2019).

At the time of the mentor teacher interviews, teachers at ApacheS were participating in bi-weekly Trauma Smart training. Candidates were invited to participate with their mentor teachers in the training. Mentor teachers emphasized the benefits of participating together with teacher candidates:

"I try to reinforce to my intern that we did not get this type of training when we were in college and how valuable it is for working with the student populations in our classrooms. As she and I discuss what we are learning in the trainings in the context of our students, we are both becoming trauma-informed teachers."

(Teacher "F", February 3, 2019)

Her colleague echoed the benefit of mentor teacher-teacher candidate collaboration as well as opportunities for reciprocal learning, "The collaboration between the cooperating teacher and the intern is invaluable. I learn as much from my interns as they learn from me. (Teacher "G", February 3, 2019). Her colleague echoed the professional growth that occurs when participating as a mentor teacher:

Serving as a mentor teacher has been a wonderful learning experience. It has helped me become a more thoughtful teacher because of the continuous dialogue about student learning the semester provided. We ended each day talking about the whys, next steps and celebrations. The Candidates bring enthusiasm and energy that is contagious and invigorates us personally

and Professionally. (Teacher "H", February 3, 2019)

Teacher H exemplified how the investment of time and energy into the mentor relationship can pay off. The candidate she mentored in the prior semester was hired by the district and now serves as her grade level partner and teaches next door.

Teacher Candidate Benefits

The iPDS partnership has prepared and placed 27 teachers in the SMSD over the past four years. The iPDS candidates-turned teachers were given an opportunity to reflect back on their time in the iPDS model and share their perspectives. One common theme in the interviews was a philosophy of continuous improvement as a professional emphasized by the Instructional Coaches:

Being able to utilize Instructional Coaches as an intern was amazing. I'm not nervous when somebody comes in to see me teach because it was a constant at ApacheS. There was always an Instructional Coach coming in--there was somebody always in the room watching--somebody was always giving feedback and always giving us that opportunity to grow because there's always room for improvement no matter if you're teaching 10 years or day one. (personal communication, Teacher "A", February 1, 2019)

Another theme was an emphasis on co-teaching and peer feedback.

What was really exciting for me was that we had a lot of opportunities to work together to co-teach. If I had questions as I planned, I could send a quick e-mail or go up and see them and boom, they would have ten ideas for me to try. We have an incredible coach in my building and at first she would say, "Oh, sorry, is this a bad time, and I was like, No, come in, because I was so used to having coaching at ApacheS. I wanted her to come in. I was used to having a revolving door of coaching and feedback. (personal communication, Teacher "B", February 1, 2019)

The final example captures an element of readiness teacher candidates have after participation in the iPDS model.

The instructional Coaches were a good liaison between the college, the district, and us--teaching us things that we needed to know to go into our career paths here. At semester, one of the teachers left so I was able to come in and take over the classroom. So now I have a classroom of my very own which is crazy to think that just a semester ago I was student teaching and now I have 20 kids who I love so much and I get so excited to come to school every day and

teach them. (personal communication, Teacher "C", February 6, 2019)

The literature supports the likelihood of a positive student teaching experience carrying over to a positive first year teaching experience and the importance of innovation within that experience. (Zeichner, 1990; Montebon, 2015). These three voices were echoed by other graduates of the model and point to the strength of iPDS for producing collaborative, confident and reflective early career teachers in the district.

Conclusion

The genesis of the iPDS model lies squarely inside NAPDS Essential 4, *A shared commitment to innovative and reflective practice by all participants*. The model, now in its sixth semester, provides a context for including teacher candidates in the coaching cycle. Positive outcomes for partners, instructional coaches, teachers, and teacher candidates have strengthened commitment to the model. Current partnership dialogue surrounding iPDS includes expansion of the model to secondary grade levels as well as studying the delivery mechanism of coaching via distance technology. These efforts provide opportunities for continued validation of both the iPDS model and NAPDS Essential 4.

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Trainees to Trainers: Teacher Candidates Coach Future Teachers in RTI

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What began as a casual remark at an advisory board meeting at Professional Development School (PDS) partner, Waipahu High School (WHS), ended with a simple, two sentence email, reading: "That was great! Can we do this again next year?" The impromptu idea evolved into PDS teacher candidates having a direct and lasting impact on the high school students interested in teaching, who are referred to as Teacher Cadets. These Teacher Cadets have declared their interest in the profession of teaching and are enrolled in the Academy for Professional and Personal Services, which houses the Teacher Academy. This Teacher Academy exists within the PDS, but up until recently, had not been connected in any significant way, despite the natural fit. That is, until the casual remark.

The connection that was created between the teacher candidates and the cadets capitalized on the foundational idea that learning is solidified when the material or concepts are taught to others. A study examining the influence of teaching on learning indicated that students internalize and learn new content better when they are expected to teach it to others. Fiorella and Mayer (2014) found that engaging in the process of transitioning from trainee to trainer provides "a learning strategy that promotes meaningful learning over time" (p. 81).

These trainees-cum-trainers made up a cohort of 19 general education University of Hawaii at Manoa (UHM) teacher candidates, including elementary and secondary candidates in various content areas. All of these candidates were

placed in PDS Waipahu Complex schools and were in their first semester of the program. Their course load included a Special Education class that covered an array of issues, strategies, and topics including Response to Intervention (RTI).

