

The CLASS Professional Development School Initiative: Redesigning Teacher Education Through Effective Collaboration¹

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Abstract

The innovative CLASS professional development school initiative seeks to redesign teacher education through effective collaboration to better meet the needs of a changing pre-service student population. Non-traditional, often part-time students are entering undergraduate pre-service education programs across North America and in other parts of the world in greater numbers. The timing for this is fortuitous because many states in the United States, Maine included, predict that half of the teachers currently in classrooms will be retiring within the next five to ten years. Pre-service programs, including Professional Development School (PDS) school-university partnerships, face new challenges to meet the needs of diverse populations of students. The University of Southern Maine's College of Education and Human Development on the Gorham campus and the Lewiston-Auburn College in Lewiston jointly developed undergraduate professional development school (PDS) K-8 programs called Teachers (for) Elementary And Middle Schools (TEAMS). In planning this program, university and school representatives reviewed the current literature and focused their attention on meeting the needs of current teachers, the needs of K-8 students, and non-traditional, part-time teacher candidates. This descriptive paper provides an in-depth look at a TEAMS program on the Lewiston-Auburn campus where it is called Collaborative Learning And School Success (CLASS). By "telling/sharing our story" of the implementation, early experiences and challenges of this collaborative and interdisciplinary program that is designed to meet the needs of diverse populations of students, we hope to expand the knowledge base and promote dialog for those institutions embarking on a similar exploration within the PDS context.

Program Background Information

Fourteen years ago, in 1989, the College of Education and Human Development at the University of Southern Maine initiated a plan to re-place its traditional undergraduate degree in teacher education with a newly developed fifth-year, graduate Professional Development School (PDS) model program known as the Extended Teacher Education Program (ETEP). This plan was shaped in great part by a careful study and discussion of the findings of Dr. John Goodlad's National Network for Educational Renewal and the Holmes Group, which indicated that to be most effective, teacher-education should become a collaborative effort between universities and local school districts and occur post-B.A. (Good-

lad, 1984; Holmes Group, 1990; Yerian & Grossman, 1997). Similar efforts to restructure teacher education programs through these collaborative PDS-type university-school district partnership programs have occurred not only in the United States, but also in Canada, the United Kingdom, the Virgin Islands, and other Commonwealth countries (Fullan & Connelly, 1990; Rolheiser-Bennett, 1990; Rudduck, 1991; Doherty-Poirier, 2001).

In 1995, the University reexamined its earlier decision to drop the undergraduate program due to perceived losses of undergraduate students seeking a shorter route to certification at other Maine colleges and universities offering traditional teacher education programs. In addition, we became aware

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that Maine, like many other places, was predicting retirement over the next decade for half of its teachers and the consequent need of many new hires. In addressing these needs and concerns, the University decided to develop an innovative undergraduate teacher-preparation program, based on the PDS model, with a strong internship component both to help prepare beginning new teachers for the classroom, and to retain these teachers in the profession for a longer period of time once they get started.

Determined to offer a program of academic rigor and high quality, we were unable to meet completely the need of students who seek, mainly for financial reasons, to avoid a fifth year of preparation. We were, however, able to address some of their concern by devising a 4½-year nine semester program. This multi-phase program which includes coursework in an academic major leading to a bachelor's degree in a liberal arts field and a professional regimen of teacher preparation which includes some graduate level coursework that results in certification, rather than a degree in education, to teach in elementary and middle schools (K–8). Students take the liberal arts core and academic major courses at the same time they are immersed in professional coursework and field experiences at partner schools. They receive ongoing opportunities for educational practice each semester, including a comprehensive mid-way Candidacy Review during semester five with the program culminating in a full year, full-time unpaid internship in semesters eight and nine prior to the program's Exit Review.

As with the University's ETEP program mentioned above, the core concept is that of John Goodlad's "simultaneous renewal of education," which means that both the university and the partner schools seek to renew themselves—their mission, curriculum and pedagogy—as they work together to improve the quality of educators. We chose the PDS model because it is so well supported in both past and current research (Goodlad, 1984; Holmes, 1990; Sykes, 1990, Fullan, 1993; Sarason, 1993; Darling-Hammond, 1994; Clark, 1997; Abdal-Haqq, 1995, 1998). This core PDS concept has demonstrated a "promising potential" in the support of ongoing professional development in teaching practice for

both pre-service and in-service educators (Sandholtz & Dadlez, 2000) with many tangible benefits and lasting innovations as part of an ongoing "quiet revolution" in the way that university-school PDS partnerships seek to improve student learning (Kochan, 1998).

The University of Southern Maine's Teacher Education Council unanimously approved a skeletal plan for the new undergraduate PDS program in early February of 1998. The University consists of three campuses: two located fairly close to each other (Portland and Gorham) in the southern part of the state; the third, Lewiston-Auburn College (LAC), located in the twin-city area of Lewiston and Auburn, closer to the central part of Maine. The plan was established for all three campuses, but soon after the work of implementation began, it became clear that, due to differences in student profiles and curricular structures, the Portland/Gorham and LAC programs would need to be developed separately. While both would follow the same guiding principles of the PDS model, the details of implementation would of necessity be somewhat different, with LAC's program tailored to meet the needs of its largely part-time and non-traditional student body as well as take advantage of the college's interdisciplinary curriculum and collaborative ethos. The Gorham/Portland program assumed the name of Teachers (for) Elementary And Middle Schools (TEAMS), while at Lewiston-Auburn College the program became known as Collaborative Learning and School Success (CLASS).

This paper will be based upon the CLASS program both because it's the one with which the authors are most familiar and because it offers opportunities for discussion of key issues not relevant to the TEAMS program. Currently, there are 35 students in the program, 29 of whom are non-traditional and/or part-time students with a wide range of needs, expectations and demands. By sharing our experiences in developing a PDS through effective university and school district collaboration that includes this population, we hope to encourage others to consider such a model or to be assistance to those already undertaking the challenge.

The Lewiston-Auburn College CLASS PDS Program

Introduction/Overview

What we are trying to accomplish in the CLASS program at LAC is well supported in the past and current research as previously cited, but most significantly by our own collective personal experiences as college professors, classroom teachers, school administrators, cooperating teachers, methods instructors, and university supervisors. Along with our school partners, our central commitment was to redesign teacher education through effective collaboration. To develop an innovative model PDS site which would prepare "teacher-leaders" to become change agents in schools by providing our CLASS pre-service students both an opportunity and empowerment to make choices to be more effective in the teaching-learning environment through best practices within a context of pedagogical content knowledge beliefs and strong (full year, full-time) internship (Cobb, 2001; Gimbert, 2001; Goodlad, 1984, Shulman & Grossman, 1998; Wait & Warren, 2001).

Since non-traditional and part-time students comprise the majority of those attending Lewiston-Auburn College, it became apparent that the CLASS program needed an implementation that, while maintaining high standards and expectations, would make it possible for these students to enter it and complete their degree. Our review of the literature on PDS programs yielded but few mentions of meeting the needs of students like ours (Levine, 1992; Higgins, 1999; Teitel, 1999). Although tailoring the program for this population would be difficult, we accepted the challenge as particularly relevant to the College's very mission, which stresses our commitment to being "accessible to a non-traditional and diverse student body" and empowering them "to take responsibility for their own learning." We believe we are making substantial progress due to a number of factors, including:

1. A collaborative design process.
2. The type of capable teacher candidates we are attracting; i.e., non-traditional, part-time students, who bring with them maturity and significant life experience.

3. The particular strengths of the college itself; strengths that are especially relevant to the preparation of effective classroom educators.
4. Intensive coursework in the sciences (including physics) and mathematics, with field opportunities for practical applications in our PDS partner schools.
5. Participation in state and national grant programs in support of mathematics, science and technology.
6. The development of an effective learning community and PDS partnership through the active participation of all constituent members.

1. Collaborative Design Process

As the University of Southern Maine undergraduate teacher education program's conceptual framework went through the final approval process, the Coordinator of CLASS PDS, on behalf of the College, contacted schools in our immediate area. Our goal was to find elementary and middle schools interested in working collaboratively on the final development, redesign and implementation of the CLASS PDS program so that we could provide an "authentic context of co-ownership" (Teitel, 1997).

In early January of 1998 we sent a letter to the principals of the twelve Lewiston and Auburn elementary and middle schools. Four principals responded immediately. Each was telephoned so that their interest and support could be gauged regarding the development of an innovative university-school PDS partnership. Follow-up visits with each school were discussed, and invitations were received from all four. Initial visits in February and March included in-depth discussions with both administrative teams and/or interested teachers. After careful consideration, Sherwood Heights Elementary in Auburn and the Lewiston Middle School were selected to join the partnership. Both schools have diverse populations that include a large proportion of economically disadvantaged children. Each school signed a formal written agreement with the College and was given representation on subsequently developed CLASS program, steering, admission, and candidacy committees, as well as on various ad hoc committees.

The initial planning and preparation for the implementation of the CLASS program was a comprehensive process involving college faculty, partner teachers, college students, and school district and College administrators. The design and implementation process entailed three concurrent efforts: general overview sessions, design-team work, and participation in a summer leadership institute.

During the spring of 1998, a series of general overview sessions were held for teachers and administrators. These were conducted at the partner schools and were open for the entire school community. These sessions provided significant information about Professional Development Schools in general and, specifically, the University of Southern Maine's undergraduate teacher education program's conceptual framework. They also included a strong "give and take" conversation component designed to make clear from the outset that this was a full partnership and that planning of this new program would be collaborative from start to finish.

Design teams with members from both the partner school district and the university were the most integral part of the design and implementation process and were generously supported by the university through stipends for both the design teams and the participating partner teachers. This support from the top administrative level of the university was crucial and profoundly affected our ability to develop the partnership. The first design meetings were held toward the end of the school year; others occurred near the end of June and early July. At these meetings we worked together to develop a general outline of the curricular and programmatic elements, and began to address the issues surrounding the inclusion of non-traditional and part-time students.

In July an expanded design team was invited to attend a week-long local educational leadership institute called Leadership Associates for School and Educational Renewal (LASER). Directed by three faculty of the University's College of Education and Human Development and one liberal arts faculty member from Lewiston-Auburn College, Bob Schaible, LASER was based on Goodlad's Center of Pedagogy and Inquiry (CPI) and was funded through a DeWitt-Wallace foundation grant. This

institute provided a unique opportunity for our design teams to meet educational leaders and practitioners from around the state and to work on inquiry projects related to education reform and renewal. Our team's focus was on the development of our CLASS PDS program with an emphasis on designing the program for the non-traditional student.

To ensure success, we determined that both pre-service college students and mentor teachers should be of the highest quality (Gonzales & Lambert, 2001). In both cases, selection was made during the summer by a committee of both university-based and partner school-based faculty through a competitive process based on a variety of academic criteria (for students only), written application, and interview. In late August, prior to the start-up of public schools, we held a half-day orientation and luncheon for all interested college students, mentor teachers, and district and college administrators. This was an important informational and community-building event since it brought together for the first time all the various stakeholders as we prepared to launch our program in the coming academic year. The CLASS PDS was successfully implemented in September of 1998.

2. Teacher Candidates

The typical Lewiston-Auburn College undergraduate is in her/his early 30s—more than likely a single parent, female, who is taking 6–8 semester hours of coursework while employed either on a full-time or part-time basis. Our students' schedules are often more constrained than are those of traditional students, making it very difficult to create workable academic schedules, especially when we strive to place students into working cohorts. However, this difficulty is substantially offset by the more mature professional commitment and a more purposeful sense of scholarship Lewiston-Auburn College students bring to the classroom. Many have already had rich, meaningful and diverse life experiences related to the education of school-aged children—e.g., serving on advisory committees, volunteering, participating in PTA's, and working as support staff, educational technicians, etc.

3. Strengths of the College

Lewiston-Auburn College is committed to interdisciplinary and collaborative education in curriculum and course development as well as in pedagogy. With interdisciplinary majors, but no formal academic departments, LAC has offered in its fourteen-year history many courses that are co-developed and taught across disciplines. These courses include: Men, Women, and Work (instructors, in different years, from sociology and literature, sociology and management, sociology and psychology); Violence: Causes and Control (instructors from psychology and literature); Health Care Policy and Administration (political science and sociology); Behavior, Health, and Society (sociology and psychology); Cancer and Society (biology and nursing); Poetry and Photography: Two Ways of Speaking (photography and literature); U.S. Studies (history and literature); Life and Literature after Darwin (biology and literature); and What is Race? (biology and cultural studies).

Our commitment to building the team-teaching experience into our curriculum is not based solely, or even primarily, on the need for an expert voice from each discipline. Instead, it flows from our conviction that collaborative teaching offers tangible benefits to students and teachers alike. We believe that self-consciously collaborating teachers can serve as models in the collaborative learning process and thereby help create a classroom where everyone is both a learner and creator of knowledge and where existing power relations can be more easily challenged and altered (Robinson & Schaible, 1993; Schaible & Robinson, 1995). We find that team-teaching also improves undergraduate education by spurring each member of the team to take a fresh approach to such matters as selecting course readings, structuring class sessions, effectively modeling pedagogy, and developing various means of evaluating student learning. Finally, we view working together in the classroom as an effective way to overcome the isolation experienced by many faculty (Massy, Wilgar, & Colbeck, 1994; Matthews, 1993) and to develop a community of shared concern over teaching. Interdisciplinarity and collaboration are viewed at Lewiston-Auburn College as good not only for students, but also for faculty; indeed we

regard this emphasis as one of the best and least expensive (and as yet untapped in many institutions) sources of ongoing faculty development.

Another aspect of collaboration and student-empowerment at LAC is the active-learning pedagogy practiced across the disciplines. Virtually all faculty at LAC conduct their classes according to the student-led discussion format as developed by one of our faculty and a colleague on the Portland campus (Rhodes & Schaible, 1992) or through some variation of the format, along with various other active-learning strategies. Most of our faculty subscribe to the notion of decentering, wherever possible, the authoritative voice of the teacher so that a wider variety of student voices can be heard, exercised, and strengthened.

Too frequently in the past, pre-service teacher-education has been a passive simulated experience confined to a separate college in a university setting. Courses taught with traditional teaching strategies, and the courses themselves typically segregated within academic content areas with little attempt to integrate content concepts or to integrate liberal arts content with professional field experience (Holmes, 1986). The PDS partner teachers and faculty at LAC, however—both being proponents of integrated systems—felt that it was important to model integration throughout the program's curriculum.

One can readily see how LAC's interdisciplinary and collaborative philosophy provides a supportive context for developing a PDS teacher education program, especially one serving primarily non-traditional students. Our interdisciplinary curricular emphasis, we believe, is especially suitable for non-traditional students who have had much life experience encountering problems in inter-related, overlapping areas not neatly packaged as discrete disciplines. And our collaborative ethos seems particularly appropriate for a classroom of adult learners, most of whom, as Brookfield (1988) makes clear, sometimes feel demeaned by the more traditional and authoritarian top-down model of pedagogy, and greatly appreciate being treated as the adults they are, people with invaluable life experiences relevant to many concepts and issues raised in the academic.

In developing the curriculum of our PDS pro-

gram, we have designed it to reflect the College's integrative and collaborative philosophy, as evidenced by students concurrently taking liberal arts (including science) courses, a number of which are team-taught; professional education courses; and interrelated practica experiences at the partner schools, as well as having opportunities for service learning in the school communities in which they teach. Such integration occurs developmentally over the course of the program, not during only one or two semesters as in the traditional "student teaching" model. We developed these requirements to be connected, meaningful, task-based, constructivist processes within both the college classroom and that of the student's mentor teacher.

Learning to write should, of course, be an integral part of the preparation of pre-service teachers. While non-traditional learners, as noted above, typically bring to a subject substantive and mature reflection based upon lived experience, they frequently need to upgrade their writing skills. Here, again, we believe our practice meshes well with the strengths and needs of the non-traditional learner. Lewiston-Auburn College's faculty is committed to its well-established writing across the curriculum program, according to which every class in the curriculum has a significant writing component. Close collaboration between faculty and the College's Writing Center, the emphasis placed upon revision, and the encouragement offered by the our annual writing-competition scholarship awards, all serve to give the students the writing competence they desire.

The interdisciplinary curriculum and collaborative pedagogy, the consistently modeled student-centered teaching, and the heavy emphasis on writing improvement provide the CLASS PDS program an environment rich in the philosophical and pedagogical applications of Goodlad while simultaneously bringing this richness to a heretofore largely overlooked pool of potential educators.

4. Intensive Coursework in Mathematics and Science

Another factor contributing to the strength and innovativeness of the CLASS PDS is the attention we give to science and mathematics—two subject areas

that historically have been weak for elementary and middle school teachers. Our requirement of nine credits in mathematics and twelve credits in science goes well beyond what is mandated by the University of Southern Maine's core curriculum. To further strengthen the science and math preparation of our students, we hired a new faculty member, one of whose responsibilities was to develop and teach two courses designed especially for pre-service teachers and required of all CLASS students: (1) physics, the science most frequently avoided by (education) students, and (2) applied constructivist mathematics, designed to provide students with advanced understanding and skills in problem solving. This regimen in science and mathematics gives our graduates the competence to teach these areas with confidence.

5. Participation in Grant Initiatives

An important aspect of the program is the technology strand that College faculty and partner teachers developed and implemented. Technology standards based on the new International Standards for Technology Education (ISTE) guidelines have been integrated throughout the program to help our students develop understanding and facility with technology as an important tool for teaching and learning.

At Lewiston-Auburn College we support both this technology strand and our science education through grant initiatives. Due to the interdisciplinary and collaborative focus on our campus, we were able to work closely with our colleagues in the Natural and Applied Sciences and successfully competed for a National Science Foundation grant under the program of Postdoctoral Fellowships in Science, Mathematics, Engineering and Technology Education. Our grant, entitled "Making Science Education Accessible to Non-traditional Students," is supporting a post-doctoral student from Yale for a two-year period. This student works directly with our pre-service teachers and participates in a university partnership with elementary and middle schools, providing students, teachers and pre-service teachers, a rich research experience.

Our goal is to educate both the pre-service and partner teachers about student-centered pedagogy in science and mathematics education and to pro-

vide on-site encouragement and support in the partner schools. One way we are meeting this goal is through our Digital Science Archive (DSA) initiative coordinated by our NSF doctoral fellow. The purpose of the project is to create a digital archive of all Lewiston-Auburn College Natural and Applied Science lectures, graphics, and visuals that students, pre-service teachers, and in-service teachers in our PDS partner schools can access for use in learning, teaching, and research. We hope to develop a seamless, global continuum of illustrations that are annotated, and made available continuously, and whose use and interpretation are supported by the Lewiston-Auburn College participants.

In another grant initiative, the College and one of its partner schools received a grant from the Maine Math and Science Alliance under a program called the K–16 Partnership Initiative in Mathematics and Science Education. The grant, entitled “Getting Results Through Pre-Service and In-Service Collaboration: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Teaching-Learning Mathematics, Science, and (Design) Technology,” has further enabled us to come together as a learning community and to improve mathematics, science and technology education at all levels—both pre-service and in-service.

Our largest and most important grant entails participating in the US Department of Education (DOE) technology challenge grant program. The national *Virtual Professional Development Schools (VPDS) Consortium* supports local efforts to improve all students’ learning results by strengthening teacher preparation and the “PDS’ness” of the university-school district partnership, while simultaneously strengthening professional development in uses of technology that contribute to enhanced student achievement. The CLASS program is receiving \$310,000 over five years in support of its ongoing partnership with the Auburn and Lewiston School districts.

During the five-year funding cycle this Consortium grant will support a variety of activities that strengthen the CLASS PDS program. First, it provides support for forming and sustaining Virtual Professional Development School planning teams, comprised of K–12 and teacher-education faculty and administrators. In addition, the grant provides

funding to hire substitutes to release classroom partner teachers for professional development including opportunities to work closely with pre-service students. Most significantly, the grant funding supports the hiring of one of the partner teachers to be the CLASS program’s school-based, full-time Site Coordinator whose role it is to work with both in-service and pre-service teachers and serve as a university adjunct faculty member to enhance collaboration between the school district and university.

The award also provides \$10,000 per year per PDS partnership, for five years, for the purchase of hardware and/or software and/or wiring and/or Internet connectivity. Using this capability, teachers, pre-service students, teacher-education faculty and K–12 students can more fully participate in and benefit from the national Consortium’s activities in professional development, networking, planning assistance, and online course offerings. In addition, the grant funds provide the CLASS partnership with free onsite and online technical assistance regarding technology, equity, and effective strategies for developing and strengthening our PDS partnership.

Through these various grant programs pre-service and in-service teachers are able to attend several day-long workshops throughout the school year to advance the overall goals of the CLASS PDS, work closely with college faculty, develop a team approach to effecting systemic reform, conduct action research, and gain access to professional readings through study groups and netcourses. The result of these inter-related components is that students graduating from CLASS will be better prepared to educate children for a world in which science and technology increasingly define our world and the options and opportunities it offers.

6. Community and Partnership

An important element of CLASS is student participation as empowered members of a community of learners. Such empowerment is facilitated by the strong support given the program by faculty in the traditional liberal arts disciplines and by the commitment to student-centered learning, mentioned above, that pervades all programs of study at Lewiston-Auburn College. This support from the

liberal arts helps students understand how their academic disciplines in the humanities and the natural and social sciences relate to their professional courses and their work in the partner schools. And the student-centered approach is particularly well suited for our non-traditional adult learners, who are more willing and ready than are younger students to assume a partnership with faculty in creating a community for learning.

The greatest challenge for us in this area, on the other hand, is scheduling. We must not only schedule coursework and field experience, but also find time for cohort members, with their busy work and/or family lives, to interact outside of our formal settings in order to build community and construct social bonds which help support them as a cohort over the four and a half years of the program. Here, again, our sense of partnership with the liberal arts faculty is a strong asset as they collaborate with CLASS in facilitating the working out of manageable class schedules.

During the full year, full-time internship, which occurs in the student's final two semesters, the CLASS community of learners supports students in their first sustained efforts as professional teacher candidates. As in most successful PDS partnerships, all community members along the pre-service/in-service continuum serve as resources for one another when learning how best to teach and learning how to study teaching-learning (Fischetti, (1999). The emphasis for the CLASS program is on cooperation and collaboration, not the competition that is traditionally pervasive at all levels of education, and on developing competencies for effective teaching ("best practice"), not on grades or accumulating a list of courses for certification.

The CLASS PDS team is comprised of college faculty, a school-based site coordinator, mentor and partner teachers along with administrators and administrative assistants, all who play an important role in supporting our pre-service students as positive and productive members of the learning community as they develop into teacher-leaders for the 21st century. Four dimensions, noted below, are clearly outlined in the program's conceptual framework for designing, implementing, conducting, and evaluating programs that prepare adults to work in

school settings:

1. *Connections and Partnerships* — Students and faculty examine the connections between theory and practice through ongoing, reciprocal relationships with schools, agencies, and businesses which include opportunities for service learning.
2. *Reflection and Critical Inquiry* — Students and faculty actively engage in examining and questioning content knowledge and understandings, and their own professional development.
3. *Performance Assessment* — With support and guidance from faculty, students demonstrate, through performance, their content knowledge, skills, and understandings, particularly as they relate to course goals and program outcomes.
4. *Diversity* — Students and faculty explore the impact of factors such as cultural background, age, exceptionality, gender, sexual orientation, and ethnicity on human development and learning.

In building our innovative university-school partnership, we are following a constructivist philosophy that leads both the college students and their mentor teachers to develop and expand their understanding of teaching-learning through an intensive hands-on, minds-on approach that is content-rich, pedagogically intensive, and field-based. This by its very nature may mean taking a risk—and this, in our view, is what real learning is all about. In fact, we see risk-taking as evidence that a student or teacher is taking ownership of the CLASS program and investing in its partnership.

Discussion: Challenges and Issues

As stated earlier our major challenge, and the essential question was whether the CLASS PDS program could be designed and implemented to meet the special needs of our traditional and non-traditional students, some who are part-time and many who are also, frequently, parents and employees. Our mid semester and end of semester student conference interviews and our mid-program Candi-

dacy Review and Program Exit reviews along with our internal program evaluation surveys strongly suggest that we are on track in this regard. We feel this is because of the processes inherent in the six factors discussed earlier that have provided the innovative program with a flexible and durable framework: our collaborative design process, high quality teacher candidates; strengths of the college; intensive coursework in the content areas; participation in grant programs; and the high quality of the learning community and university-school partnership.

However, there are many unresolved challenges that we encounter as we continue implementing the program. The discussion in this section is necessarily brief, given the parameters and limitations of this article, but we offer the following to give the reader insights on our progress—or lack thereof—regarding the issues before us. Some solutions are unclear at this juncture, but will, we feel confident, become clearer in time.

Some of these challenges include how most effectively to:

- Accommodate the different starting places of our entering students and build individual cohort unity.
- Build on the considerable and varying talents and experiences of older and non-traditional students.
- Develop overall program community in the face of: scheduling issues, the different learning and student needs of our cohort groups.
- Encourage the mentor teachers and the college students to take more responsibility in becoming actively involved in the process of their own learning and program development.
- Support students with regards to the financial demands and hardships brought about during their required full year, full-time internship in the partner schools.
- Develop inducements/incentives and in-kind contributions for teachers and college faculty who participate in the PDS.

There are many time-sensitive difficulties associated with trying to develop a rigorous pre-service program for students when many of them are non-traditional. Moreover, there is very little about these issues in the literature. How do we, for example, accommodate the different starting places of students entering the CLASS PDS program and manage to build cohort unity? How do we build on the considerable and yet wildly varying talents and experiences of non-traditional students? Some are significantly experienced in education from having engaged in such activities as running a daycare center or working as a teacher's aide in a classroom for many years. Others are older (and may in fact be older than their mentors) and have much life experience and yet have not set foot in an elementary classroom for decades. These individuals, although perhaps strong academically, feel out of place in college and lack confidence in front of their peers and thus need additional support.

Meeting these challenges has been difficult, but we believe we have enjoyed a measure of success and are determined to improve over time. Strategies implemented to achieve success include: having a "summer orientation" each summer for the new cohort where, in addition to community building activities, they meet the re-turning cohorts and PDS partner teachers and faculty; open houses for college students and school partners/mentors at the beginning and end of each school-year; holding frequent portfolio conferences during each semester; mentoring by our PDS partners in a proactive and reflective manner; scheduling concurrent courses of study at relevant places in the curricular sequence to accommodate the different starting places of our students; holding cross-cohort classes/seminars/workshops for students and their mentor teachers where students can showcase their varying talents and expertise; inviting college students and mentors to attend, lead and/or participate in conferences; and encouraging overlapping field visits at the partner schools to create opportunities for peer observation and feedback. This has been difficult work conceptually and logistically, but vital to serving our populations.

Building community has also been difficult. How do we best deal with scheduling issues that

arise when trying to bring our students together? How do we manage the tension between different learning needs and the students' need for our cohort groups? It is important to have a flexible field experience and seminar schedule that is sensitive to the needs of our non-traditional and part-time students but that still allows for a core of common teaching-learning experiences and the development of a vibrant learning community at the college and partner schools. Developing a sense of community in, between and among cohorts—with the very part-time, in- and out-movement of our non-traditional students—is a priority of our program and has involved a tremendous amount of shared decision making and planning in addressing the challenges we face. We want our students to be part of a true community of learners where learning is approached as a process, where community decisions are made by consensus.

What we have accomplished: building more social and convivial elements into the weekly seminars; having an "End of Semester (EOS)" open house for college students and school partners/mentors at the beginning and end of each semester; creating community-building exercises as part of the courses/seminars; creating a student chapter of the state teachers' association for members of the different cohorts.

There is evidence that we are making progress in building community throughout the program. Students have more readily volunteered and even expressed a willingness to play an active role in the interview process with new applicants. A related example is that students are now much more likely to be observed informally mentoring both students in their own cohort or even cross cohort. With regards to curricular professional development programming, the CLASS PDS pre-service students have led (both formally and informally) workshops for the partner school teachers, as well as hosting the annual State conference for "Student Teachers" where many of them also presented. Finally, it was the students who took it upon themselves to take a lead role in the restructuring of the program's service learning component to make it even more relevant through increased community outreach and connectedness to the K-8 classrooms.

One thing that has not worked well with regards to building community has been to regularly schedule weeknight pizza social "get-togethers" for study groups, discussion or outside speakers that is often so successful at campuses with traditionally aged students. Our students are simply not able due to their irregular schedules; they would much rather schedule those type of networking opportunities on their own.

The challenges we face encouraging the pre-service students and mentor teachers to take more responsibility in becoming and remaining actively involved in the process of their own learning and program development are in many ways similar to those found in post-BA PDS programs where students tend to be older and similar in age to our students, with multiple outside responsibilities and also reside off campus. Higgins (1999) has identified four "layers of learning" that contribute to the shaping of the learning community: "trust, shared ownership, learning together and reciprocal support" all of which are consistent to our own experience and findings with our undergraduate non-traditional students.

Early in the program, the university Program Coordinator and the school-based Site Coordinator were often making many of the decisions about aspects of the program by default, despite our best intentions because the pre-service students—and sometimes the mentor teachers, were not yet comfortable determining their "own" developmental and individualized site-based curriculum as part of the CLASS PDS program. We have had to make a conscious effort to change this both in action and perception and to encourage the mentor teachers and the college students to take more responsibility in becoming and remaining actively involved in the process of their own learning and in program development; thus, developing increased "shared ownership" of the overall program (Higgins, 1999). At the same time we must be sensitive to the reality that our students, especially the non-traditional ones, have busy schedules with so many outside demands and responsibilities that they often do not have the time or energy to participate fully in the shared decision-making aspects of the program especially towards the end of the program during their full

year, full-time internship in the partner schools.

As previously noted, this internship is an integral component of the CLASS PDS program. For many of our non-traditional and low-income students, these “outside demands” include filling many responsibilities in their lives, including employment on which they, and in most cases their family, are financially dependent. This makes the full-time, full year internship during their final two semesters a significant challenge as they strive to meet both their educational and financial commitments. This is another challenge that we have had to address in order to retain students and for the program to grow overall.

Our solution to this challenge has been to reciprocate the commitment of our students by establishing an endowed fellowship fund to assist financially deserving students to offset the personal financial hardships of the full-year, full time resident internship requirement for students demonstrating financial need; thus, retaining the pool of talented and dedicated Maine teacher candidates who want to build a better future by becoming teachers in Lewiston-Auburn and schools across Maine. The endowed fellowship has recently reached its goal of \$150,000 and we are now beginning to distribute the endowment’s interest to fund the internship fellowships.

Somewhat related to this is the two-fold issue of inducements/incentives and in-kind contributions for teachers in the partner schools as well as for college faculty. It is often difficult to find faculty in higher education or in public schools who are willing to make the commitment to systemic change and reform in teacher-education when these efforts require time and dedication far beyond what is commonly expected (Firestone & Pennell, 1993; Sandholtz, & Merseth, 1992). In our own situation we were able to support the initial PDS design team work through modest stipends, made available by the university administration for our participating school partners. However, it is imperative that this support increases to a level such that professional development and opportunities to serve with recognition and compensation are regarded as a regular part of the work.

To address this concern we asked mentor teach-

ers to define their role—to make a list of all they do and would like to do and then suggest appropriate in-kind compensation. Although many quantified their need in terms of money, several asked for professional development in-kind opportunities between institutions, and a few even said that none was necessary since they, as professional educators, had already gained so much by being a participant in their PDS partnership work to reform and/or improve the quality of teacher education at the college. This desire and willingness by the K–8 partner school teachers to play an active role in the higher education pre-service curriculum reform and develop a more “holistic view of what it takes” has also been supported elsewhere in the current literature on professional development schools (Reed et al., 2000). It is another example of the strength and success of the CLASS professional development school initiative where working closely together all of the partners have been able to redesign teacher education through effective collaboration.

There are three areas that continue to present us with challenges where we still have questions although we have tried different remediations with mixed success. All teacher education programs—not just PDS’s, commonly face these challenge areas: Recruitment, attrition, and university support for college faculty working in the PDS partner schools.

The program has remained smaller in numbers than we had planned for with incoming cohorts averaging about 18 students. This is in part due to the rigorous nature of the program—especially the 12 credits in lab sciences and 9 credits of mathematics, as well as the fact that it is a nine-semester program. Teaching salaries remain depressed statewide which results in difficulty in attracting viable male candidates. Maine’s own lack of ethnic diversity is also a barrier to attracting students of color and other under represented populations. We are addressing these issues through more effective outreach and recruiting efforts and active dissemination of information; e.g. that although the program is nine semesters in length, students graduate with 30+ graduate credits. We are still a very young program and are confident that once the word gets out the numbers of our applications in all student demographic groups will increase.

Our attrition rate is about average among similar four-year programs and institutions. One difference, however, is that it generally occurs within the first two–four semesters. We would like it to decrease over the next couple of years. We do believe that there is a positive side to attrition and actually built into the design of the program a mechanism to address it more pro-actively: the mid-program Candidacy Review. Thus, the CLASS PDS program is as much about providing undergraduate students with real opportunities within the context of an actual classroom to find out both whether teaching is something they want to commit to doing **and** whether or not they have the “right stuff”—to become teacher–leaders. This concept can be a “hard sell” to the administration as it makes it difficult for them to anticipate both the costs and a secure tuition generated revenue stream during these fiscally challenging times. Overall, most of the program’s attrition is students self-selecting themselves out, as opposed to the PDS partners counseling them out.

Support for the PDS university faculty with regards to teaching load and responsibilities, most all of which occurs off campus at the partner schools, is mixed. Our experience in developing and implementing the CLASS PDS program has shown that even though the risks and opportunity for success for both the public school district and college are relatively equal, in many ways it is the local schools, their teachers and administrators who have made the stronger level of commitment in risk taking and leading the way as stakeholders. We view this as an encouraging sign as regards the vigor of our partner schools and the school district, and as a healthful challenge to the university’s administration who identify themselves as professionals dedicated to bringing about significant social change through a better understanding and appreciation of what a PDS faculty member contributes and how they should be recompensed.

As part of this limited discussion with regards to providing insights on our progress, the challenges we face and the solutions we seek, it is germane to make a brief mention of what we have done in the way of systemic program evaluation—which could be the subject of an entire subsequent article. As with all dynamic programs, to help us better under-

stand, evaluate and be accountable to the partnership, it is important for us to document and assess our growth over time through the collection of data informally and formally through processes which include both internal and external reviews, something that was indistinctly part of our initial design. This is not atypical as Teitel (2003) recently wrote, “Producing careful documentation and assessment of the impacts of PDS partnerships was challenging in the mid-1990s for the following reasons...” (p. 198). He lists several different reasons with which the CLASS PDS program can identify; e.g., rapid evolution of programming, too premature for longitudinal study, emphasis on nurturing, and lack of control groups (Teitel, 2003).

To address the shortcomings of our initial design we reviewed the literature and worked on developing both our underlying assumptions and mechanisms to gather pertinent data to shape our ever evolving and maturing approach with regards to evaluation (Reed et al., 2000). As with everything else that we developed, there has been a very close collaboration between the university and school partners on building systemic assessment into the program.

In the first year of implementation we primarily relied on just our frequent regularly scheduled conferences with students and partner teachers, as well as a comprehensive survey that was given to **all** PDS partner school community members to collect data. In the years since we have further augmented our evaluation to include a more comprehensive multifaceted assessment strategic plan to allow for more data driven decision making.

In addition to continuing to collect the valuable qualitative anecdotal data through the student and partner teacher conferences and more quantitative survey data, we have also benefitted from the following assessment processes:

- Completion of a comprehensive five year National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) program review;
- Participation in a U.S. Department of Education five-year consortium V-PDS grant

which included an external reviewer/consultant assigned to evaluate each of the PDS sites along with an annual survey;

- Utilization of our PDS partner schools' K–8 student performance data based on Maine's Learning Results state curricular frameworks, student Maine Educational Assessments (MEA's) and other standardized test results;
- Participation in a University of Southern Maine program evaluation by the Center for Educational Policy, Applied Research and Evaluation (CEPARE)
- Participation in a State of Maine Department of Education program review;
- Implementation of self-reporting/self-evaluations completed by students on a regular basis.

Conclusion

All of us in the CLASS PDS partnership have learned a great deal and grown professionally over the last four and one-half years as we have effectively worked together to redesign teacher education through collaboration. With our first cohort of students graduating in May of 2002, we were finally able to all collectively celebrate in the success of "our" interns receiving multiple job offers and all going on to teach in local schools which included one of the CLASS PDS partner schools—thus, the circle of professional development will continue to spiral for all of us.

Yet, we realize that we are just beginning to explore all the possibilities of developing an innovative and unique pre-service PDS program based on effective collaboration that serves a promising group of diverse students including significant numbers of non-traditional and/or part-time students. It is our hope that this effort will assist others working to simultaneously renew our schools and our university programs for professional education while at the same time opening the doors to diverse populations of talented students who constitute an invaluable resource we cannot afford to overlook.

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