Developmental Stages of a Professional Development School: Lessons From a Long-Term Partnership

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ABSTRACT: This article describes the evolving stages of the establishment and development of a professional development school partnership. Whereas many such articles center on outcomes only, this one describes the developmental stages necessary to support a strong professional development partnership that allows for distributed learning for all parties involved. These stages include exploration, formalization, action, institutionalization, critical growth, and sustainability, which vary somewhat from those of traditional professional development schools in the detail concerning the later stages. As such, these stages can aid program designers in developing their professional development collaborative partnerships. Positive learning outcomes occur for all parties involved when these steps are utilized. In this article, we provide examples of the stages, their potential challenges, sample evaluation plans, and a flowchart for development.

The professional development school (PDS) is a place where preservice teachers spend much of their time and preparation on-site in a school that is affiliated with a university (Wong & Glass, 2005). In a PDS setting, university faculty, school faculty, and preservice teachers work together for the education of children. In fact, the learning community standard, as defined by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE; 2001), states,

> The PDS is a learning-centered community that supports the integrated learning and development of preK–12 students, teacher candidates, and PDS partners through inquiry-based practice. PDS partners share a common vision of teaching and learning grounded in research and practitioner knowledge. They believe that adults and children learn best in the context of practice. Learning supported by this community results in changes and improvement in individual practice and in the policies and practices of the partnering institutions. (p. 9)

Preservice teachers become well-prepared teachers because their professional development is a focus of the PDS; furthermore, research indicates that the PDS can effectively educate teachers (Blackwell, 2004; Teitel, 2003). PDSs began in the 1980s as a way to combat poor preservice teacher learning (Duffield, 2005). Goodlad (1988) laid the foundation for PDSs with his concept of simultaneous renewal, which involves a commitment from both institutions to reform their practices. Teitel (2003) furthers this idea by stating that

PDS partnerships should be transformative for all partners. In a PDS, students and preservice teachers can be concurrently supported by using the partnership to meet the needs of not only the students but the preservice teachers as well (Miller, Duffy, Rohr, Gasparello, & Mercier, 2005; Shroyer, Yahnke, Bennett, & Dunn, 2007). In general, preservice teachers learn a great deal because of their on-site education, in which they are allowed the opportunity to discuss issues with school faculty, participate in school meetings, and become part of the culture of the school. Students who address many subject areas and take many classes, all based at one site, benefit because they see the changes in students across the varied subject areas (Duffield, 2005). Preservice teachers indicate that their overall best educational experiences are those that are field based (Levine, 2002).

Castle, Fox, and Souder (2006) report that a PDS produces "beginning teachers who are more competent in some aspects of instruction, management, and assessment and are more integrated and student-centered in their thinking about planning, assessment, instruction, management, and reflection" (p. 78). Besides this study, others have shown the value of teachers who are prepared in PDS settings: First, they use various methods and practices (Zeichner, 1992); second, preservice teachers engage in reflective practice (Clark, 1999; Doolittle, Sudeck, & Rattigan, 2008); third, preservice teachers state that they are more confident as they enter their first teaching job after training (Book, 1996; Tusin, 1995); and, fourth, they are more familiar with daily routines and school cultures (Clark, 1999; Sobel & Taylor, 2005).

According to Teitel (2003), "there are several stage theories available to use for PDS development" (p. 47). For example, Teitel discusses the four *I*'s, which include investigation, initiation, implementation, and institutionalization, whereas Dixon and Ishler (1992) discuss the six stages as formatting, conceptualization, development, implementation, evaluation, and termination/reformation. The PDS standards of the NCATE (2001; see also, Levine, 1998) include four stages—beginning, developing, at standard, and leading—and so do those of the Michigan Partnership (Torres, 1992): initiation/exploration, design, pilot, and stabilization/refinement. While reviewing these other models, we thought that a professional development model needed to address more details and aspects. For instance, Teitel's model concludes with institutionalization. But whereas our model most closely resembles that of Dixon and Ishler (1992), we thought it important to offer more specific explanations for the development of a PDS. In particular, the present model describes developmental stages that allow for distributed learning for all parties involved in the context of ongoing reflection and evaluation. These stages include exploration, formalization, action, institutionalization, critical growth, and sustainability. In addition, the present model incorporates the option of the professional development collaborative learning community.

We have been involved in a PDS setting that was initiated 15 years ago. The elementary school is located in an urban school district that has faced multiple challenges—for example, constant changes in school and district leadership, financial hardship, issues surrounding accreditation, and much student attrition. Two of us have worked with the PDS from its inception. In this urban partnership, these authors have taught site-based classes each year and have been integrally involved in planning goals and projects for the PDS. One of us has been the university liaison for the majority of its existence. Another of us has been involved for the past 5 years, since joining the university as the evaluator. This PDS has gone through developmental stages accompanied by changes over time. Whereas other stages could be present in any PDS (Teitel, 2003), we explain our stages in general terms that may apply to any evolving PDS partnership.

The following developmental model provides one framework for the creation of a PDS partnership. This framework includes the following stages: exploration, formalization, action, institutionalization, critical growth, and sustainability. Ongoing reflection and evalua-

tion are critical throughout the stages. In this article, each stage begins with a story, followed by a description (see Appendix A for a flowchart of the stages).

Exploration

In a hot gymnasium one afternoon as school ended, the principal, two members of the university faculty, and the school faculty met to discuss the potential for a partnership. The principal was committed to having a partnership to support his school, and the university was considering an urban partnership to improve field experience opportunities. Both the school and the university were open to what a partnership might entail. The teachers questioned what services the university might be able to provide; they also had questions about length of commitment. After the meeting, one of the university faculty members wondered why one of the highest priorities was that of getting free basketball tickets for the students. Clearly, there needed to be more conversations about the possibilities of in-depth partnership.

In the exploration stage of a PDS, school faculty, school administrators, and university faculty engage in continued dialogue about the possibilities of forming a formal partnership. Much of this stage is dedicated to discussions about the research on PDSs and the benefits to both parties. Likewise, the negative aspects must be acknowledged, such as scheduling difficulties and space limitations.

It is at this stage that both parties must assess the importance and difficulties of establishing a partnership. Parties also may choose to visit other partnerships to see examples and methods of working together. Another aspect that needs to be examined during these early stages is whether the school and the university have a common set of educational goals and beliefs. If either party is not completely committed and satisfied, the partnership will have trouble forming. Although many strong partnerships are formed despite distance, a partnership in close proximity has advantages. For example, if a school and a university form a partnership where the buildings happen to be close, interaction can easily occur as university faculty and preservice teachers walk, drive, or ride a shuttle back and forth throughout the day. Furthermore, the importance of community and culture is easily taught and understood given that both institutions are part of the same community. However, even though the school and the university are part of the same community, program designers need to consider their differences in culture and background when introducing and interacting with members of each institution. Teacher–faculty relationships must be explored before trust can develop for the partnership. School faculty must not feel as though they are insubordinates, and university faculty must not feel as though they are superior. Both must acknowledge the differences in each other's positions, and both must value those positions as they relate to the education of children and preservice teachers. Furthermore, both institutions must recognize that the partnership involves a long-term commitment. This is essential so that institutions can grow and change together. Another consideration at the exploration stage is that of inclusiveness; as Teitel (2003) notes, "who is at the table and who is not?" (p. 14). A strong partnership draws from multiple sources at both institutions and from the community. In summary, after program implementers have had extensive dialogue about the possibilities of a formal partnership (including whether there are common goals and beliefs between the two institutions), the partnership may move forward or terminate. In particular, to move forward, the establishment of school–university faculty parity must be addressed, and, most important, a long-term commitment to the partnership must be recognized. If, after all consideration, both parties are ready to move forward, they may then proceed to the next step: formalization.

Formalization

After deciding that the partnership should be established, the principal of the school developed an official contract and submitted it to the university education department. The principal discussed this contract with the superintendent of the school

district after receiving approval from the school faculty. This contract was then discussed and presented at a university faculty meeting, with some supporting the idea and others not wanting to be directly involved. Although some eyes rolled—namely, from professors not interested in fieldwork—the department formalized the partnership.

In the formalization stage, the university faculty should discuss the matter with the chair, the dean, and other pertinent administrators about what this formal relationship will look like and how it will affect the university. Likewise, the school must connect with administrators in the district to explore the formalization and approval of establishing a PDS. Given the potential for financial issues, legal issues, and so forth, the school district and the university both must approve the formal partnership to move forward. It is at this stage that both parties should write and sign a formal document indicating the roles of both institutions in the partnership. The contractual agreement about the partnership is normally developed during the 1st year, and it is in effect until changed. The agreement does not contain specific details about the partnership activities, which allows for the continued evolvement of the partnership. It basically states that an ongoing working relationship exists between the school and the university.

At this stage, a steering committee is formed, which involves members from both the school and the university. This committee has rotating members and is part of the contractual agreement. Sometimes this committee expands to include community members in an advisory role (e.g., parents, local business leaders). This committee guides the partnership and leads the planning and evaluation of programs throughout the year; hence, the steering committee directs the goals of the partnership. A strong PDS benefits from a plan and evaluation method for each year. The goals should be written in an action-plan format—that is, listing what the goals are, how they will be measured and assessed, and who is involved with them (see Appendix B for a sample goal). The purpose of this plan is to work together to create common goals, to formalize what is attainable and who is responsible, and to reflect on and so revise goals each year as needed. This gives the partnership a written document available to all those involved and interested. These goals often are based on the PDS standards of the NCATE (2001). The standards provide a framework for the structure of the partnership. An external evaluator familiar with both institutions should be chosen as the one person who evaluates each part of the plan and offers suggestions about how to reach goals differently or better the next time. Each goal should be evaluated by measuring its outcomes based on its projection for the year.

In doing so, an evaluator might ask,

- What difference do PDS partnerships make in improving K–12 student outcomes and preservice teacher outcomes?
- What roles and responsibilities do PDS participants have, and how are they different from traditional roles?
- What difference is the PDS making in improving the professional development of school and university preservice teachers, faculty, administrators, and relevant others?
- How has the partnership engaged in inquiry?
- What changes in institutional policies and practices have been developed or implemented that support the growth and institutionalization of the PDS? (see St. Louis Professional Development School Collaborative, 2001)

Some regions operate a collaborative based on these types of partnerships, and this stage would be the one during which members should investigate whether their area has such a collaborative. If so, the steering committee should inquire about membership. A PDS collaborative can aid in the implementation of a new PDS or the formalization of an existing PDS. In a collaborative, a number of partnerships exist, and they have regular meetings to discuss their work and evaluations. Each partnership develops an action plan for the year and submits an evaluation at the end of the

year. The collaboratives are often externally funded, and the school district and university may pay dues to help fund them. In the event that a PDS is part of a collaborative, the PDS members will find the potential for an immense amount of support and reflective discussion with other members. Although we value the importance of a PDS collaborative, we believe that strong partnerships can be formalized with or without this type of membership. Regardless, the following need to be addressed at the formalization stage: financial and legal issues, approval and support from the school district and the university, governance issues, program evaluation issues, and school and university faculty involvement. If these issues are not formalized, the partnership may cease to move forward. If, however, all issues are addressed, the partnership may move to the next stage—that of action.

Action

The first partnership activity included the university's students and faculty and the school's faculty painting the school playground. This provided an opportunity for those involved to communicate side by side. Shortly after, university students began participating in the school classes. Within a year, a site-based university class was initiated, and the school liaison began participating in university faculty meetings. By the end of the 3rd year, schoolteachers and children were used to seeing university faculty and students in their school. This represented the commitment of the university, and those originally skeptical were convinced that the partnership would not be a flash in the pan.

To see action, activities must take place between the two groups in the partnership: the school and university. As stated previously, relationships among members of both institutions affect how strong the partnership will be. Activities cannot be effective unless an overall positive relationship exists. This relationship must evolve over time, but there are some initial attributes. University faculty and school faculty must be willing to work together in projects and with preservice teachers in a way that benefits all those involved. Respect for each individual and the school culture is necessary for building trust. As trust develops, the partnership is molded, and the presence of university students and faculty in the school becomes part of the culture. Likewise, it becomes natural for school faculty and administrators to work or attend meetings on the university campus. The PDS partnership differs from traditional university–school partnerships because the two groups share interaction and decision making on an equitable basis with a long-term commitment.

The steering committee is another strong relationship that must be built. Not only is it helpful to have equal representation from the school and the university on this committee, but it is also beneficial to have liaisons from both groups. This allows for two contact people—one from each institution—to help with questions, new projects, and so on. Naturally, the relationship between the liaisons must be strong. These two people are typically committed to the PDS, and they help to educate and involve others as the partnership develops.

The PDS standards of the NCATE (2001) emphasize the importance of student learning. Strong partnerships address this standard as a primary purpose of their work. This leads to activities that take place between the two groups of the partnership. There will be some natural fit from university faculty who want to bring their preservice teachers to the school right away. For example, one faculty member may want to bring his or her methods course students on a regular basis; one may want to bring students to observe; and one may want to begin a tutoring program. Through time, other university faculty can bring their classes for involvement at the school. The PDS should become a place where many university faculty members can bring students for educational purposes. This takes time and collaboration, so, again, a liaison in both settings can help coordinate activities between the two institutions. Furthermore, as the PDS becomes stronger and more interaction takes place, the committee may want to consider writing grant proposals to help fund some of the changes or

ideas that arise from the PDS. Being part of a PDS collaborative can help to create strong interactions, as can a strong administrator from the university or school district. This stage may take more time than that of the previous ones on the basis of the participants' experiences, which may be positive, mixed, or negative. It is important that those involved in the partnership allow adequate time for such experiences and so reflect on their variety to determine their impact on student learning and teacher preparation. If these activities are mostly negative or are not adequate to sustain the partnership, it may end at this time. If mainly positive, these experiences can then lead to the next step: institutionalization.

Institutionalization

A university academic vice president was invited to the annual regional PDS meeting. Firsthand, he heard the stories about planning, the work accomplished, and the successes of the partnership. During a discussion about the need for faculty time, the vice president committed, then and there, to reassigning time for the university liaison.

Institutionalization naturally occurs as a result of the previous step. Strong relationships lead to helpful activities and action. Many of the items listed earlier are actually part of institutionalization, given that both institutes help in the funding and survival of the partnership. For example, to have time for PDS activities, the university liaison and the school liaison may be provided additional funding (from the university, school, or both), course release, and the distribution of some normal duties. The action plan is normally developed at the beginning of the school year as part of the annual evaluation, which should be developed by members of the steering committee but should be made available to any school or university faculty member who is interested. As part of the action plan, members of PDS collect data throughout the year, engaging members in ongoing reflection and assessment. The lead evaluator then compiles and analyzes the data in aggregate. This evaluation subsequently provides recommendations for the following year's action plan. Furthermore, leaders in both institutions, such as the dean at the university and a lead district administrator, should receive a copy of this evaluation—maybe in a meeting format where the liaisons can discuss the benefits, goals, and relationships concerning the PDS. This discussion can include funding, grant opportunities, and other issues that can financially sustain the PDS.

Last, an important aspect of institutionalization is the change in roles of school and university faculty. School faculty become teacher educators, and university faculty assume teaching roles at the school. School students benefit from their regular teachers as well as from preservice teachers and university faculty instruction. Likewise, preservice teachers benefit from their regular university professors but also from school faculty who may teach courses at the university, interact with them informally at the school site, or serve as mentors. In summary, institutionalization is a crucial stage to begin the cycle that includes critical growth and sustainability. In particular, formative and summative evaluation techniques must be utilized for administrators who use evidence-based practices. In other words, administrators who make budgetary decisions and decide goals and outcomes for the school district and university need strong data to support the continuation of the PDS. In the absence of strong data, termination may occur. A successful PDS is a true partnership in every way, which allows the movement forward to begin in the cycle of critical growth, sustainability, and institutionalization.

Critical Growth

After many years with a strong partnership, the steering committee was in a rut. Its members felt as though they had accomplished a lot, but they wanted to redirect their efforts for continued growth. Their major question was "Where do we want to go next?" which required an evaluation and examination of the annual action plan. The steering committee used the PDS standards of the NCATE to examine its work. From this, the

group developed a new plan with revised goals. Members of the steering committee had watched other partnerships in the region fade away, and they decided that they did not want that for their schools. They stayed together for the kids.

Critical growth is a stage in which an established PDS can flourish. Because so many people are heavily involved at the start of a PDS, it can be easy to relax and watch the changes occurring after the PDS is established. However, PDS participants must take an active role in documenting changes and assessing the needs of the school and the university. For example, there may be changes in the administration, or faculty at the school or university may desire change. The steering committee may want to consider engaging the partnership in more research and assessment. Partnership members must analyze and constantly reflect on the relationships and what would be best as the PDS continues. Those involved in the partnership need to take time to celebrate successes and positive outcomes. Teitel (2003) describes a critical plateau that may occur: A PDS may reach a plateau, and its members may be unsure and unclear of what direction it should take. At these plateaus, the members use the PDS standards of the NCATE (2001) to move the partnership forward. Using these standards for assessment helps partnerships recognize strengths and areas of needed growth. In fact, the action plan should be altered each year to reflect any changes in the partnership as it evolves and grows. If members of the partnership can continue to constantly reflect, evaluate, and grow, they can move the PDS to sustainability—that is, having the ability to sustain the partnership despite great challenges and odds.

Sustainability

After 10 solid years of continual growth in the partnership, major changes began to occur. First, a new superintendent was hired for the school district. In addition, an interim chair for the Department of Education was appointed. The next year, another new superintendent was hired, and a new principal and a new assistant principal came to the school upon the retirement of the long-standing principal. That same year, the dean of the college was replaced by an interim dean. The next year, another new principal and new assistant principal came to the school. Another new superintendent was appointed by the elected board, which later was replaced by a state-appointed board. In addition, another new chair for the Department of Education was hired. In spite of these changes, the faculty at the school and the university continued their focus on student achievement and the development of teacher candidates.

Sustainability is an issue in many PDSs when there are changes in leadership. If a new administrator in the school or university is hired and does not see the benefits of a PDS, the partnership may have hurdles to overcome; or, if new school faculty or university faculty are hired and do not understand the benefits of the partnership and are reluctant to get involved, the partnership must use other strategies. One of the most important ways to sustain a partnership in instances like this is to have a strong record of success as documented in the action plans, evaluations, and meeting minutes. Preservice teacher outcomes and student achievement are two ways to show critical growth. The yearly evaluation and the documents showing these achievements are crucial. The documentation of the PDS provides support for its sustainability.

Two important aspects of sustainability are funding and recognition. For example, school and university faculty should be rewarded in promotion and tenure for their work and contribution to this commitment. Reallocation of teaching duties should be considered for school and university faculty who spend significant amounts of time engaged in partnership activities. Regarding funding, if administration from either campus wants to eliminate monies for the PDS or if the grant funding ceases, the partnership may have to look for external funds to continue. Again, strong documentation of past efforts and achievements will aid in this endeavor. Furthermore, the roles of university faculty and school faculty change as the partnership develops. Over time, those involved often move from a less-informed role to

that of a leader. This is particularly important as members of the partnership engage in critical reflection, individually as well as collectively in the annual action plan. Maintaining high standards for all those involved continues to promote the partnership throughout changes and as new members are invited to participate. As stated previously, the steering committee may need to revisit NCATE's (2001) PDS standards to support the continuing development of the partnership. In a school setting and in a university setting, new people are continually hired as others retire and leave. Embracing the PDS culture and welcoming and encouraging those new members are crucial aspects to its continued support and success. These three stages of institutionalization, critical growth, and sustainability involve ongoing reflection and evaluation, and they are closely related as the partnership evolves over time. The partnership can continue in this manner; however, sometimes within institutionalization, the partnership may terminate, depending on factors such as the closing of the school or a change in leadership.

Challenges at Any Level of Development

Although sustainability shows that a PDS can thrive despite challenges, acknowledging the types of challenges that may occur is helpful. As mentioned earlier, a change in leadership may happen at either the school or the university. If the new leader is not open to the PDS, it could be difficult to continue work on-site. As always, changes occur within the faculty at both the school and the university each year. New members must be included and encouraged to become part of the PDS culture, if the partnership is to remain strong each year. Another example involves the loss of school and university grants that contribute to one or more parts of the PDS. If the stipend or course release can no longer be funded for liaisons, then alternative ideas need to be considered. Changes in the curriculum at the school or the university may alter which classes or students become involved in the school or when university students can work with schoolchildren.

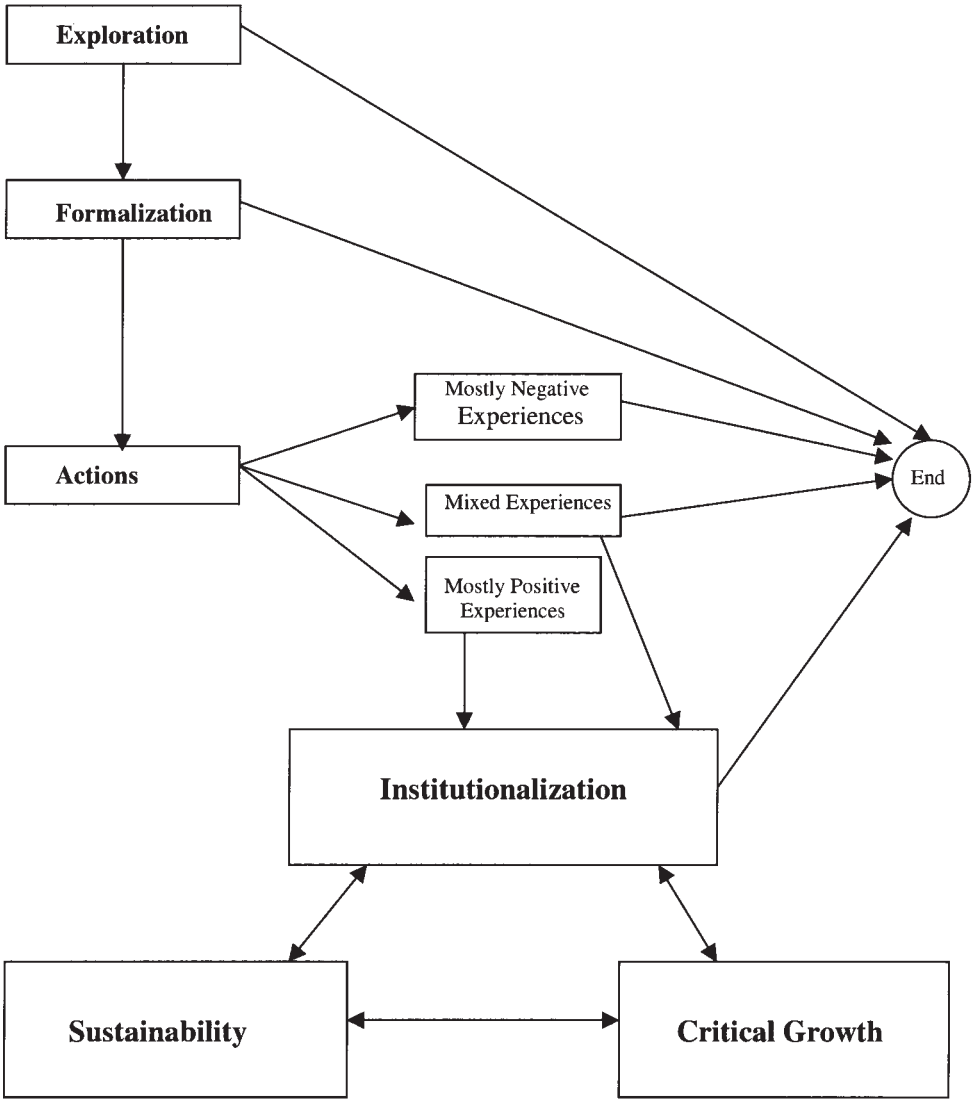
Other issues that continually call for reflection and problem solving can include scheduling issues for the university and school faculty. These include trying to find common times to attend meetings, discuss and plan actions, and so forth. Scheduling can also make it difficult for preservice teachers to attend the school. For example, the university semester system is not aligned with the school year calendar. Spring breaks and school holidays do not often coincide. University class times do not always match school schedules regarding the beginning and ending school times, the lunchtimes, and the special classes (such as art, music, and PE). A multitude of changes may occur in the school itself, including demographics and grade structure. These types of changes affect scheduling and interactions among members of the university and the school. Accreditation of programs at the university or the school can also affect which courses are taught and whether the same level of PDS activities will be encouraged or even allowed. A multitude of challenges may affect the formation of a PDS at any stage. As such, we have offered a few examples so that those who are interested in considering the formation of a PDS can understand some of the unexpected issues that may arise. Despite the challenges, members of a PDS must continually reflect and evaluate as they move throughout each stage and even when the partnership reaches sustainability.

Summary

In this article, we discuss the stages of PDS development: exploration, formalization, action, institutionalization, critical growth, and sustainability. Each PDS is unique, and each will face different issues in the development and implementation of a formal partnership. However, we offer an outline for building a PDS from the ground up. Challenges emerge from these stages that may affect partnerships, including the ability to move forward during dif-

ficult times; the ability not only to recognize when a partnership is unable to develop successfully but also to look for alternative partnerships; and the ability to constantly recognize successes and failures and strive for continual growth and renewal. These stages involve some logistic issues in the development of a partnership—such as how to spread the word, how to get others involved, and how to campaign for sustainability from administrations. These steps can therefore help those who are new to the process, those who are working toward renewing an "old" partnership, or those who are looking for background knowledge and advice to take to donors or administrators for funding for a partnership. One issue about partnerships remains true: Once a strong partnership is established, most involved see it as a necessity for the best education of preservice teachers and schoolchildren, as well as for the professional growth of university and school faculty. SUP

Appendix A. Flowchart Depicting the States of Development



Appendix B. Action Plan

Goal/Objective	*NCATE 1: Learning community—Provide resources for teachers new to the school and support for school and university faculty.*			
Planned Outcome	*Planned Activities*	*People Involved*	*Timeline*	*How to Measure*
Support is provided to school faculty	Distribute Bradburn's gift certificates to new school faculty	Mr. Westfall, Mrs. Gentry, Dr. Patel, and Dr. Evans	Fall 2006	Evaluation questionnaire, number of gift certificates provided
Minigrants are provided for activities that support the partnership	Minigrants are offered to university and school faculty on an application basis	Mrs. Carpel, Dr. Evans	Spring 2006	Completed minigrant applications
School and university faculty receive funds for professional development activities	Provide support for conference attendance	University and school faculty	Fall 2006, Spring 2007	Copy of conference program and/or documentation of info shared
School and university faculty participate in a study group around working with ELL students	Provide resources to support content of study group	University and school faculty, Dr. Evans	Spring 2006	Summary from university liaison

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