Best Practices for Transformational Teacher Education: The Full-Immersion Professional Development Schools Alternative

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ABSTRACT: This article reports findings to promote the best practices of a transformative teaching and learning environment, from a case study of a yearlong full-immersion secondary-level professional development school. The results support the idea that interns have a significant stake, an active professional community commitment, and a heightened awareness during their training and before their employment. As a result of the full-immersion professional development school experience, interns experience a significant transformational impact in their personal and professional grounding as future career educators. Best practices for the promotion of authentic teacher preparation are discussed.

There are alternatives to the current models of teacher preparation and development: They embody different assumptions about teaching and learning and the transformation of schooling—assumptions that appear more compatible with the complex demands of the context of teaching (Little, 1993). The long-held practice of a future teacher's spending 3 years at the university, then the final two halves of the 4th year in a field experience based on student teaching, has been questioned, namely, regarding whether it is an effective or authentic preparation model for future teachers (see Roth, 1994). Preservice teachers often give their in-service experiences a failing grade—calling it limited, inconsistent, and disconnected from their coursework (Neville, Sherman, & Cohen, 2005). Many educators advocate for a more professional, clinical, and authentic approach to the preparation of new teachers (Campoy, 2000; Darling-Hammond, 1994; Goodlad, 1994). Over the past decade, partnerships between colleges of education and school districts have taken root in school districts nationwide and in such places as the Netherlands and Japan, forming professional development schools (PDSs) and providing professional learning and development experiences to university faculty, experienced teachers, and the preservice teachers. There are many encouraging signs that PDSs are positively affecting the traditional ways in which teachers are trained, recruited, inducted, and developed (Levine & Trachtman, 1997; Mule, 2006). Many PDSs are playing a valuable role in school reform efforts. They are transforming the way that school districts and colleges of education work together to bridge the gap between theory on one hand and practice, academic preparation, classroom learning, in-service experiences, and transitions on the other. Castle, Fox, and O'Hanlan-Souder (2006) found that PDS teacher candidates performed at higher levels (compared to non-PDS teachers) on aspects of instruction, management, and assessment and that these higher levels of performance are intertwined with a sophisticated understanding of the connections between and across various aspects of teaching.

As the idea of the PDS becomes a more widespread and established part of the educational lexicon (as recently recognized by the National Association of Professional Development Schools [NAPDS]), the term *professional development school* has been used as a catch-all phrase for various models of school–university partnerships that may or may not be described as an authentic PDS. The NAPDS (2008) has articulated the following parameters to more clearly define a PDS:

1. A comprehensive mission that is broader in its outreach and scope than the mission of any partner and that furthers the education profession and its responsibility to advance equity within schools and, by potential extension, the broader community;
2. A school–university culture committed to the preparation of future educators that embraces their active engagement in the school community;
3. Ongoing and reciprocal professional development for all participants guided by need;
4. A shared commitment to innovative and reflective practice by all participants;
5. Engagement in and public sharing of the results of deliberate investigations of practice by respective participants;
6. An articulation agreement developed by the respective participants delineating the roles and responsibilities of all involved;
7. A structure that allows all participants a forum for ongoing governance, reflection, and collaboration;
8. Work by college/university faculty and P–12 faculty in formal roles across institutional settings; and
9. Dedicated and shared resources and formal rewards and recognition structures.

Clarification is still necessary that further distinguishes PDSs from the traditional student teaching models. With the definition of the NAPDS, it is difficult to truly discern differences in a traditional student teaching field experience and a PDS experience, which is an integral albeit separate functioning schools-within-school collaborative effort. At their best, PDSs do create a schoolwide culture that incorporates teacher candidates as full participants of the school community (NAPDS, 2008). Although Nos. 2, 3, and 7 hint at a full immersion into a school community, the NAPDS definition stops short of designating the experience as such. As school districts, colleges of education, and departments of education further consider instituting PDS policies, the development and implementation of a PDS should encapsulate the number of hours required of a PDS intern to serve in a clinical capacity in the school district. Literature on teacher preparation points to the extensive internship in a PDS as a critical element of effective teacher education (Darling-Hammond, 1999). However, one area of concern involves the discrepancy from PDS to PDS and the actual amount of time that an intern may spend in the classroom and school context, as compared to that of someone going through a traditional student teaching field placement. For example, in 2003, the State of Maryland redesigned its PDS standards and requirements, calling for PDS programs in the state to ideally aim for 100 days (full-time) across two semesters of in-school experience for certification. Currently, the overall length of the full-time portion requirement (5 days per week) of any PDS internship varies, with 15 weeks as a minimum full-time placement (Maryland Partnership for Teaching and Learning K–16, 2003). The number of days in many regular on-campus student teaching programs is between 15 to 20 weeks at 5 days per week, which is equal to 75 to 100 days per year and which still falls far short of a full-year immersion. In some instances, organizations consider a PDS simply 20 weeks of traditional student teaching spread out over the course of a full year.

Research Aims

This study looks closely at one full-immersion secondary-level PDS where its intern teachers followed the same school district clock and calendar of a 6.5-hour day (approximately 32

hours per week) for 180-plus school days, equivalent to that of all full-time teacher faculty working in the school district. As such, this study addressed one key research question: What best practices are relevant to transformational learning and experiential professional development in a secondary-level PDS?

Context of the Study

Data were collected as part of a larger study conducted of a secondary-level English / language arts PDS during the 2005–2006 school year. This study is an interpretive qualitative research of a PDS partnership formed between the Creswell State University (CSU) College of Education (a pseudonym) and the surrounding Mountain Peak Area School District (MPASD, a pseudonym). The school district is unique because of its proximity to CSU, sharing culture and resources in many ways. The school district performs at levels that exceed state and national norms in numerous areas; it has a 95% graduation rate, with 86% continuing for postgraduate schooling and training. A large percentage of the graduating seniors from Mountain Peak High go on to become 1st-year students at the CSU campus located in the school district. Mountain Peak High, where the secondary-level PDS is located, has approximately 2,600 students in Grades 9–12. The CSU College of Education has one of the largest teacher preparation programs in the nation, with more than 600 potential future teachers graduating each year. Of these students, approximately 60 graduate with a degree and certification to teach secondary-level English. Of these, 15 completed their final-year field experience during the 2005–2006 school year, student teaching at the secondary-level English / language arts PDS where this study took place. During that school year, the PDS had 14 interns at the high school level and 1 at the middle school. The elementary PDS places approximately 60 students in all 10 elementary schools in the school district. In sum, about 10% of the students who graduate each year from the College of Education complete their field experience by participating in one of the two PDSs. A distinctive component of the elementary- and secondary-level PDS programs is the dual nature at which interns may be accepted to the program—at either the bachelor's level or the master's—although it is important to note that the two PDSs are entirely separate entities. They each have separate faculty and district members as leaders and separate educational processes and ideologies, although both utilize an inquiry model and share an annual student conference and both have won national awards for their distinct programs. The study solely focuses on the secondary-level English / language arts PDS. The founding and forming of this PDS emanated from Dr. Jameson, an associate professor of language and literacy at CSU. Upon arriving at CSU, he noticed a division in the program for preservice teachers, finding that the field experiences and the methods courses were not directly linked in any unifying way. He later found that foundations of education courses were not linked to the field experiences as well. He knew that these three areas are mutually supportive and informative. The lack of clarity and unity across the divisions prompted him to explore different avenues to create a more experiential, engaging, and cohesive program for preservice teachers. His aim was to restructure the field experience into something that was more collaborative and situated in the school setting. The groundwork for the founding of the PDS lay first in changing the space–time relationship of the preservice teachers' experience. A hybrid educator, Dr. Jameson developed a close relationship with the chair of the English department at MPASD. Being a certified public school teacher, he came to an agreement with the district to teach one high school English class during the school year while maintaining his university teaching responsibilities. The student teaching students placed in the school came to his classroom to engage in dialogue and learning. As negotiated through Dr. Jameson, the chair of the English department was now teaching one class on the university campus for student teachers. Symbolically, this exchange was one of the first important moves with the intent of creating a living laboratory for exploring pedagogy in the

language arts in the high school—one of his aims in starting the PDS in the first place.

As of 2009, the MPASD–CSU secondary-level PDS is in its 11th year of operation, having started in the 1997–1998 school year with only one intern. The program is unique in regard to its size; that is, after its 1st year, it grew to include 4 interns, but since then, it has never selected or admitted more than 16 interns in any given year. There are currently 93 alumni who have graduated from the MPASD–CSU secondary-level PDS. The PDS operates as a school within a school, and it follows as its primary time organizer the MPASD calendar, not the university calendar. The PDS is fully integrated into the school day of the MPASD. As well, not only do the interns follow the operating and educational procedures of the PDS, but they also follow district policies for sick days and vacation and for many of the same rules the school district teachers follow on a day-to-day basis.

Method

The principal data collection methods were in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. In-depth interviews were conducted between February and May 2006, toward the end of the intern's full-year immersion in the PDS. Before the interviews, participants were asked to respond in writing (on hard copy or via e-mail) to a preinterview survey, which served as a basis for discussion and inquiry in the face-to-face meetings. Interviews lasted 45 to 90 minutes and each was conducted in a private area of the school or in a neutral, mutually agreed-on space. All interviews were recorded and transcribed. District and university documents pertaining to the PDS were coded and transcribed, and more than 40 hours of observation were logged. All current members of the PDS organization were asked to be interviewed for the study. Some did not wish to be interviewed. In sum, 14 current PDS participants and alumni were interviewed for the larger study: 8 interns of the 2005–2006 school year (Beth, Drew, Barb, Pam [bachelor degree interns]; Jordan, George, Jen, Connie [master's degree interns]), 1 alumnus (Ben), and 5 alumni who are now teachers with the school district (4 in the PDS: Lisa, Cindy, Nica [mentors] and Sally, a former mentor and the district associate) and who are working in various capacities within the PDS organization (as seminar facilitators and administrators, e.g.). Interviews included an alumnus associate who worked in a triangulated relationship (Lonny) and the founding director of the PDS (Dr. Jameson), who is an associate professor in the language and literacy program at CSU, for a total of 16 interviews. In addition, before the start of this study, I conducted a pilot study that aided in preparing for this research. Presented here is a sampling of the findings and dialogue from the participants interviewed.

Theoretical Framework

Rather than conceptualize teacher development as being lockstep with a series of universal stages regardless of setting or experience, teacher educators emphasize the interrelationships between teachers' learning and development and the context of their learning (Darling-Hammond & Branford, 2005). The problem facing future educators is not necessarily that of having enough experience but rather how one can apply his or her life experiences in useful and beneficial ways within the constructs of one's professional roles and environment. Transformational learning theory is a process of exploring, assessing, and working to change limiting frames of reference and habits of mind, having individual and social dimensions and implications; it demands that we be fully aware of how we come to our knowledge and what values lead us to our perspectives (Mezirow, 2000). Transformative learning involves dialogue—inquiry, rational discourse, or, simply put, conversation that enables individuals to make self-discoveries. As people make self-discoveries, their feelings, images, and thoughts become unified with their actions (Wade, 1997). Legitimate peripheral participation and situated learning offer a helpful framework in understanding the relationship between experiential professional

development and transformative learning in the context of a full-immersion PDS context. Legitimate peripheral participation and situated learning encompass the social and relational aspects of learning within a community of practice. They are activity theories not simply concerned with *doing* as disembodied action; rather, they refer to *doing* as object transformation, with a contextualized activity of the entire system, not an isolated activity. In the PDS, interns become completely immersed in the community of practice and learn through participating on a daily basis over the course of one school year in this environment. The participation model for establishing authenticity is predicated on the assumption that an activity's authenticity depends on the extent to which learners engage in authentic practices of a community (Barab & Plucker, 2002). Learning occurs through discourse, dialogues, participating in activities, and the complex web of social relationships that exist in the community that embodies a professional practice. In this process, authentic learning occurs through immersion. Legitimate peripheral participation and situated learning refer not just to local events of engagement in activities with people but to a more encompassing process of being active participants in the practices and processes of social communities and thereby constructing identities in relation to these communities (Wenger, 1998).

Data Analysis and Findings

"If one aspect of knowing oneself better is the ability to reflect upon one's place and function in society, another aspect is the ability to reflect upon and come to a better understanding of the implementation of that function" (Bottery, 1996, p. 191). Experiential, hands-on learning activities offer a powerful medium for promoting transformative learning. Cranton and King (2003) outline five practical strategies to promote and encourage transformative professional development: action plans, reflective activities, case studies, curriculum development, and critical theory discussions. All these strategies were employed in the MPASD secondary-level English PDS, and the findings build on these ideas. The community clearly worked hard to cultivate a perspective, environment, and expectation of reflective practice, thereby creating a solid basis for transformative learning (Stein & Farmer, 2004), which, from an educational perspective, is an interactive process (Wade, 1997). My findings further suggest that the following practices aid in cultivating an environment conducive to promoting transformative learning in a full-immersion PDS.

Practice 1: Authentic Immersion—Space–Time Dimensions and Reality Student Teaching

Designing the PDS program around the school district calendar, not the university calendar, and requiring the intern teachers to be governed by the same work rules and policies as their mentors are considered best practices in the light of this study. Nica, a mentor and an alumnus of the program, indicated that the PDS "is like your 1st year of teaching, with scaffolding."

The PDS organization followed the school district calendar as far as holidays, professional development days, and school and work hours, and the interns governed themselves by many of the same rules that their mentors followed regarding leave, sick days, and other school–employee regulations. Interns were required to be present for the entire school day; they integrated themselves into and so participated in the regular professional development workshops; and they attended department meetings and retreats that were part of the schedule—same as their mentors. They did not follow the CSU calendar year as their college peers did.

> From the very beginning, in the retreat week, they're saying, you know, "This is going to be like your 1st year teaching. You are a part of this community. You are going to basically be a teacher. You have a lot of the same responsibilities. You do a lot of the same things." So, from the very beginning, they wanted us to feel like

equals, you know? (Beth, bachelor's degree intern)

This was a transformative structural adjustment in the professional training and development of the interns. It adapted the students' spatiotemporal dimensions to the standards of the local school district's teaching professionals, rather than to those of being a college student. This practice also alters the interns' work standards, in the structural element of learning to teach, to the standards of a professional environment (the school district) by not adhering to the standard of the college learning environment, which students are familiar with and which is altogether different. Adjusting to the new environment and the articulated standards of professional practice is essential to helping the novice teacher communicate effectively and keep both eyes focused on high-quality teaching and increased student learning (Moir & Gless, 2000). The intern's frame of reference is altered—from one focused on being a college student and doing well in a class to one set on the professional norms and expectations of a classroom teacher. In addition, nonoccupational behavior was controlled as well. Because of this new schedule, students' social, work, and sleep habits were different from those of their peers, all being aligned with what it will be like when they become employed as teachers, thus creating a new pattern to adjust to and follow.

> I feel like, instead of having 6 weeks where you're sitting in a classroom and you're kind of watching when normal student teachers, they basically, from what I observed, sit in the back of a classroom, observe for, let's say, 10 weeks, and then teach, you know, 3 or 4 weeks, reflect for 2 weeks, and then they're done! And I just—I can't imagine feeling prepared after that! And going to teach a classroom of students, you'd be fumbling! For years! Because you have to learn lessons over and over and over again. And from other parts of the educational process that I've experienced at [CSU]—they've been nothing like a PDS. It's all very generic preparation. You know, you have to make fictitious lesson plans for lessons that you will never teach, which is ridiculous. You want to be able to teach that lesson and then reflect back on that lesson. So the next time you do it, you can realize how to do it better. You know? And it just—it doesn't make any sense to me at all. And so I feel like, if there were many programs like this, throughout the country, it could really make things so much better for students, for teachers, for everyone, you know? (Beth, bachelor's degree intern)

The school district as the classroom became the experiential playground for learning to teach, as opposed to the university campus and the lecture halls, which have all the associations of college life for interns to manage. Learning to teach in the PDS replaced the college structures, and the students realized a new form of learning, one that has a professional configuration, which they are initially unfamiliar with but then inquire about and figure out for themselves through the immersion.

Immersing oneself into a PDS community is a transformative process. It first requires decentering from the university classroom and recentering to the PDS, to the school site, to the community of practice; it is about moving from a known environment to one more ambiguous, more unknown. The interns must trust and then follow the inquiry process to new knowledge. In doing so, learning occurs. There is a crucial difference in the professional development of new teachers—between what happens in a university classroom (when students are taking a class on how to teach) and what happens when a student is actually learning to teach (in the real and situated context of a school and classroom).

> There have been a lot of times I haven't felt harmony within this program. That I really thought—I mean, I'm a structure-based person. I crave it, and so this has been really kind of—I mean, I feel successful in it, but it's been really kind of unsettling for me, because, it's just like, okay, I don't know, I have to figure out, and I don't know how to figure this out. I just have to do it, and it'll come. So, I mean,

> there have been a lot of times where I was just like, "Man, I wish that I were sitting in a lecture hall and being told, and then just having those 8 weeks." Although, those 8 weeks would not have made me feel comfortable at all going into my 1st year. So, I mean, in that aspect, this is completely invaluable. (Jen, master's degree intern)

In the PDS, the interns are not told what to do; they learn to make up their own minds. Entering the unknown environment comes with an entirely new set of problems—ones the novice has never encountered. This is the essence of the immersion, and the learning begins with this tension and how the interns respond to it. By learning in the situation and being in the moment, the intern is challenged to do and to form his or her own sense and meaning—creating his or her own paths, learning in collaboration with the other interns and forming perspectives side by side with mentors and the other working professionals in the community. Learning in the classroom or lecture hall often exists only in the abstract, in the mind. It is the creation of an unknown for the interns to make known so that they may encounter and own the embodiment of a professional experience that the PDS creates.

> There are two fundamentally different experiences, and ambiguity is something that is at the heart of an activity, which is very much tried to be planned against; it can be planned against in the abstraction. I think it again goes back to the idea of abstraction versus activity because in the abstraction you can control what is literally learned and you can control what is presented in the order which it is presented and how it is done and you can talk about it. When you thrust someone into an activity, you have no idea of what is going to come out; you have no control over all the random variables that happen in this activity; and you have to be comfortable with the ambiguity, and what comes out is not at all certain. What comes out of these experiences, you have no idea. (Cindy, associate/alumnus)

The learning process embodies the dynamic tension generated in this active PDS environment.

> That is what this whole model is about—that if we had learned how to write a lesson plan when it did not matter, when we weren't writing lesson plans for our students and knew how that lesson plan was going to work in the classroom, it wouldn't have made half as much sense as it does now. And to know what my lessons looked like before I came up with a solid, clear rationale for why I was doing what I was doing and to see the difference between what happened when I didn't do that and what happened when I do that now, I realize that like you . . . part of this whole immersion model, this inquiry model is that you feel your needs when you need them. (Pam, bachelor's degree intern)

One learns how to teach when one is active, engaged, and immersed in the school community and the classroom. Removing or abstracting ideas from the school environment takes away from the authentic nature of constructive learning. The aim for the students is to make sense of the school, learning, and professional environment for themselves and their PDS peers, on the basis of their own experience, histories, and education, with guidance provided along the way from the insight of mentors and associates as needs arise.

> I think the PDS is a critical juncture in your life, and I was, I knew in college what I needed to do to get a good grade. I knew. A teacher could come in, a professor could come in, and like total I guess, size you up, I knew exactly what to do to get my A and be out . . . [how to game the system]. Right. And that was what I did all through college, and I was very successful at it. And when I came to the PDS, shortly after a few weeks, Mary [Nica's mentor] said she didn't use points . . . and the whole idea of learning and trusting the process and, like, doing something to find, like, to explore, not to just get an A or just to get the end result.

> That was when inquiry smacked into me. And I wasn't resistant at all. I found it liberating. (Nica, alumnus, mentor)

Practice 2: Initial Selection, Mentor–Intern Matchups, Mixer Days

> The comparative impact of initial socialization makes considerable difference in the life of an occupation. Where such socialization is potent, the predispositions of newcomers become less important through time; the selves of participants tend to merge with the values and norms built in to the occupation. The opposite holds where socialization experiences are weak; in that case, the attitudes, values and orientations people bring with them continue to influence the conduct of the work. (Lortie, 1975, pp. 55–56)

Students become part of the secondary-level PDS through multiple pathways: self-selection and application, counselor guidance, and outreach. There is a selection process that includes a writing assignment and an interview, for screening purposes. Matching the mentors and the interns is a complicated, fun, and flexible process that takes into consideration multiple factors before a match is made. It is transformative in that it applies a subjective as well as objective process to the selecting and matching process.

Selection into the PDS program, along with the immersion into the school district culture, is the interns' initial induction and socialization. Only a small portion of the CSU students who are studying to become English teachers apply to and get selected to participate in the PDS. Those who are selected display an ability to pursue their learning in a spontaneous way, and they exhibit autonomous characteristics that will lead them to success in the PDS program. "We look for some degree of dependence in structure, and somebody who seems to be overly dependent on being told what to do is somebody who we are not comfortable [with] . . . somebody who we have reservations about" (Dr. Jameson).

Mixer Day. After interns are selected, the annual Mixer Day occurs, when they are initially exposed to being matched with mentors. On this day, which takes place at the end of the previous school year, prospective interns admitted and accepted to the PDS come to the high school and spend the afternoon meeting their potential mentor teachers. There is a luncheon in which the university associate (Dr. Jameson) and district associates are present. There are also 20-minute roundtable, question-and-answer sessions between the mentors and the interns. Small groups of interns rotate from table to table, meeting potential mentors at Dr. Jameson's direction. After all have met, Dr. Jameson starts the mixer off with the following story:

> There was a group of rabbis in New York City who saw that their flock was beginning to marry out of the faith. So the rabbis decided to have a mixer with the people of the faith to get to know each other better so there could be more marriages. Then, after the mixer, the rabbis decide who will wed each other.

During round-robin discussions, each of which lasts about 20 minutes, the mentors describe their teaching style and what they are looking for in an intern. The interns then ask questions, ranging from the mentors' subjects and levels taught, their philosophy of discipline in the classroom, why they came to teaching, and so forth. The mentors ask the interns how they came to find the PDS, what they see as their strengths, what their backgrounds are, and the like. Interns and mentors try to ascertain and discern who would be their best match. The mixer is lively and geniune, with much high-decibel-level laughter and discourse. During the four 20-minute sessions of the interns rotating among the mentors, the discussions come to a fevered uproar. The district associate, Sally, who 8 years before was the first intern (during the pilot year of the PDS program), says to the group about the matching process:

> There is some ambiguity built into this process as well. What you start out with in

> the beginning of the year . . . things shift, and may change, you may wind up with two different mentors . . . you may not wind up with at the end. Students and mentors may find the perfect match now, but may switch and find someone else. The ending is a surprise for everybody. (Sally)

At the end of the 20-minute sessions, Dr. Jameson again speaks, first thanking the mentors for opening their arms to the interns. Following this, the interns go into a separate room with Dr. Jameson to talk about whom they think they would like to be paired with. Each intern and each mentor are given a sheet to rank one another—ones whom they think they can work with and ones whom they do not. Mentors rate interns with “hearts, stars, and daggers,” as one associate puts it, in relation to how they see their interests and personalities working together.

The mentors stay at their tables, discussing and rating the interns. They follow the same process regarding each intern, taking notes during the discussions. They share their feelings and inclinations with other mentors but not in public. While this happens, Sally walks around, table to table, sharing her impressions with the mentors about the interns. After the interns and mentors are through ranking each other in terms of desirability and potential matches, Dr. Jameson and Sally go through a process of reviewing the ranking sheets and ultimately deciding which interns will work with the mentors at the start of the year. Personality, strengths, weaknesses, and interests are all considered in the matching process. Although this study did not delve into the depth of the relationship between the intern and his or her mentor, the interns clearly had dedicated, nurturing, and professional relationships with their mentors that went beyond mere training in classroom instruction and into the myriad of attitudes and dispositions of an educator. Portner (2002) notes that mentoring takes place within a working relationship and that the development of a working relationship requires the active participation of both parties.

Interns spend a significant portion of their day right next to their mentors, watching, observing, engaging, and, most important, sharing and collaborating in the day-to-day responsibilities of running a classroom. As much as it is a mentor–intern relationship, it is also like a marriage in that there is a synergy created when a duo are well coupled. This synergy emanates from a more leveled approach to the relationship; that is, a collaborative teaching relationship between the mentor and the intern is an ideal component part of the PDS. As noted in the MPASD PDS handbook,

> PDS is about needs. . . . PDS is about trust. . . . PDS is about magic . . . serendipity, chance, luck, spontaneity—the world is anything but an orderly place. Co-teaching automatically takes knowledge out of the realm of pre-authorized truth and supports a dynamic experience between two teachers exploring the world—comparing notes, exploring multiple hypotheses or interpretations, setting up an environment for thinking and inventing ideas about the world. (p. 5 [internal document])

Many interns and mentors meet outside of school and have weekly planning meetings in their homes; they also regularly meet at a local diner to reflect, talk, and plan for the coming weeks. The mentor represents a salient other, someone in the classroom environment whose role is to act, communicate, and interpret the implicit and explicit standards that the intern uses for evaluating his or her performance in the classroom. As Borich (1999) notes, the role of the salient other in the development of a teacher’s self-identity cannot be overemphasized. It is the salient other who nurtures or inhibits the developing teacher—encouraging or discouraging her or him to talk freely, ask questions, and learn from the relationship.

Practice 3: Placing Inquiry and Core Professional Ideas, Experiences, and Questions in the Center of the PDS Organization

Although inquiry plays an important role in PDS models, I want to stress the reasons why.

Putting inquiry in the center of the PDS organization allows for a constant flexibility and a continual questioning that form the nature of learning and knowledge. It allows for openness in understanding the possibilities of learning and the myriad conceptions and forms that learning takes. Questions and ideas as held within the heart of the interns' practice, as well as in the guiding principles outlined in the PDS handbook, act as a transformative impetus within the experiential learning context. The PDS of MPASD has at its core a culture of inquiry. In this light, the inquiry model structures interns' activities around their actual immersion into the teaching environment—identifying the issues, questions, and tension of the situated learning environment; contextualizing that which is inquired; representing the ideas in a personally and professionally relevant and inspired form; critiquing that which is learned; and, finally, transforming one's perspective and frames of reference based on the process. At its center, the process utilizes empirical qualitative research techniques in wondering about ideas—observing, note taking, interviewing, juxtaposing, and categorizing, all to elaborate and learn from one's inquiry questions. It is a powerful and multifaceted educational stance and component of the PDS that has a deep initial and ongoing resonance throughout the organization. This is the essential structure of a meaning-making process within the PDS organization. As informed by inquiry learning, the PDS culture of MPASD is characterized by nine attributes:

> 1. a community of learners in which members with a range of experience and knowledge contribute with equal power and voice.
> 2. a negotiation of the purposes and consequences of each activity for personal identity, social relationships and greater shared understanding
> 3. potentially infinite directions for members to organize experiences to serve/question personal/community valued learning purposes
> 4. a strong reliance on firsthand experiences, and the analysis of patterns in those experiences to generate knowledge (experience ideas/texts in action instead of just adopting ideas already defined)
> 5. inviting all members to share descriptions of their experience to expand and share the base for analysis, not to establish right and wrong answers
> 6. authoring and sharing symbolic representations of the ideas synthesized through experience (talking, writing, drawing, filming, documenting, etc.)
> 7. continuous questioning by all of the value of particular words, actions and artifacts to accomplish desired activities and knowledge
> 8. continuous revision of activity and knowledge to better serve the immediate interests and needs of all community members (embracing change and the local) and to facilitate the movement of ideas and people across boundaries of space, time and culture
> 9. through ongoing social interaction, continually inform each other's understanding and next inquiry. (MPASD PDS handbook, pp. 6–7 [internal document])

At the center of the PDS is the idea of improving the literacy levels of the students as well as the interns; all energy and much inquiry work toward this end. The transformational effects occur through engaging in, inquiring about, and coming to an understanding of the core PDS beliefs and goals.

The process is transformational in the acting out, interpreting, and individually engaging with those PDS attributes, as well as in the constant progression of individually and collaboratively answering the compelling professional questions that are at the heart of the participant's practices. Dr. Jameson revealed that at the heart of his teaching is the idea of ambiguity, or the admittance to more than one interpretation of an idea. The culture of the PDS organization is a reflection of the consciousness of its leader, who worked to clear an existential–constructivist space for interns, teachers, and associates alike to critically explore personally and professionally relevant teaching ideas that drive their desire to "do what it is they do as

Table 1. Core Professional Ideas, Experiences, and Questions as Held in the Center of the Professional Development School Participants' Practice

Beth	*Questions:* Did this lesson go the best way it possibly could? Are the students learning anything? Are they meeting the goals of the unit? Do my students like me? Do they enjoy the class? Is the class useful for them? Am I teaching the things that they're going to need in order to function when they get out in the real world?
Drew	*Question:* How are students grouped? *Idea:* The difficulty in removing oneself from a particular educational track.
Barb	*Questions:* How do I reach each student? How do I get to each student that learns differently? How do I do that fairly and equitably?
Pam	*Experiences:* Her relationship with grandmother, sharing books.
Ben	*Ideas:* The spirit that exists within narratives and parables; the creation, listening to, and telling of stories.
Jordan	*Ideas:* Failure and redemption; humanity and accessibility.
George	*Ideas:* Interactions with others and having a direct effect on somebody; being that person promoting change in a positive way and making others think; making people reflect on the choices they make.
Jennifer	*Idea/experience:* Expressions of gratitude from students.
Connie	*Ideas:* To see the good in every person, eternal optimism.
Lisa	*Idea/questions:* A critical socially conscious lens precipitated by graduate study: Why read? Why write? What is the teacher's purpose in conducting an activity? What is the student's purpose in doing any classroom literacy activity? What are the students' social worlds and how can she bring these worlds into what she is doing as a teacher?
Cindy	*Ideas:* How different the world is outside [this community]. And I guess I always have that in the back of my mind—how to create exposure to and understanding of that world without prejudice, without stereotypes, or students' being able to acknowledge one's own stereotypes and biases.
Nica	*Ideas:* Building a community around relationships with students, starting by being able to talk to each other as human beings; not seeing the student–teacher relationship as a superior–inferior one.
Lonny	*Idea/experience:* Racial identity.
Dr. Jameson	*Ideas:* Ambiguity. The more that I can make things unknown and unclear, needing elaboration and explanation, then I think the better intersubjectivity that can arise in a class.

educators." Interns, mentors, and Dr. Jameson discussed their core professional ideas, experiences, and questions that guided their practice throughout the year. Asking "What questions, ideas, or experiences are at the heart of your teaching?"—specifically within the context of the PDS—offered insight and clarification to the interns and PDS communities' understanding of what it means to be a teacher. What I found was a discussion of professional values and purposes evident in the lives of the participants, which ranged from issues of what it means to be literate, empathetic, and compassionate in understanding students, to a foundational belief in the power of relationships. The core professional ideas, experiences, and questions start as immaterial and then become the material that composes the individual and collective strands of the unique PDS textile.

The core professional ideas, experiences, and questions that the participants held at their center, closest to their hearts, offer additional insight to the collective inquiry that makes up this PDS organization. All members of the PDS community formed a collective organizational consciousness (Pruzan, 2001), which forms an integral component of transformational learning in the context of the PDS. Immersion into the school's professional realm, engagement with the school and student population, and practice in learning to teach, along with rational discourse, are encompassed within the relatively stable, structured, and programmatic organizational beliefs and goals. The PDS members' core professional ideas, experiences, and questions act as a constant central force within the small PDS institution and its collective ability to function as a transformational environment.

Conclusion and Discussion

Learning becomes individualized at the most fundamental level, yet the creation of learning, through a community of nonabstraction based on activity and engagement, makes for an authentic, creative, dialogic, and transformative environment. It is through the meaning-making representations of the professional community experiences that a new perspective and identity forms—based on the workings of an intern's day-to-day lived experiences, along with inquiries into the practice of teaching, their classrooms, and the social contexts through which they become a part via the immersion. Learning, as increasing participation in communities of practice, concerns the whole person, acting in the world (Lave & Wenger, 1991). For George (master's degree intern), a transformative PDS experience was quite evident.

> This experience has been like a rebirth, a reinvention of me, in that it has forced me to think about who I understand, challenges that have come about. And I think that is one thing great about being in the classroom setting; you have all of these experiences that most student teachers do not. The PDS is like a—it is like a reinvention of who you think you are and your identity from your individual standpoint; you are a more compassionate individual, a more understanding individual, and that could be strictly from my own individual self, but I think the experience forces you to think about how you will reinvent yourself, because you will, whether you realize it or not. The experience is going to force you to do that. I don't see how you could come into the experience and not be changed in some way, shape, or form. You will be. So I would say it is like a reinvention, a rebirth of yourself.

Owing to the context of the study, there are limitations to the generalizability of findings. More sites of yearlong immersion experiences for new teachers need to be identified and studied. PDSs are one vehicle for the promotion and development for a longer residency. Transformational learning in the context of an experiential PDS is the learning of an idea, a concept, a method, a practice, a body of knowledge relative to teaching and learning. Interns and mentors in the PDS engage immersion through a deeper, longer commitment to the school-district–university partnership. Interns learn by engaging their whole lives; they learn the Japanese *Semmei, soku, shimei*, or "how to use one's life" in service to teaching. Immersion—the awareness of, engagement in, and inquiring about the realized momentous significance of the social and relational aspects of the professional learning environment—acts as the foundation for transformational learning and experiential professional development in the PDS. The activities, dialogues, and discussions that take place through the social and professional interactions form a bridge for a transformative relationship between experience and learning in the PDS. As noted by the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education in its definition, PDSs seek to align the way in which future teachers are prepared in a school setting to the way that future doctors are educated in a clinical setting. Likening PDSs to teaching hospitals is an important one. It calls for treating teachers seriously, as modern clinical professionals, and it focuses on reforming schools of education as a first step (Hinds, 2002). Defining PDSs as professional communities of practice further bridges the gap between novice and experienced teachers and university faculty. Comparing the preparation of teachers to the preparation of doctors is an attempt at not only raising the status and prestige of the practice of teaching but also creating a more close-knit professional orthodoxy. As Kardos and Liu (2000) note, in integrated professional cultures, preteachers who come into the profession share in the responsibility for the education of all students, leading to continual growth for new and experienced teachers alike. The idea of full immersion into the school district clock and calendar is synonymous with the intent of a young doctor's residency. During a residency year, young aspiring doctors spend upwards of 80 hours per week in a hospital/clinical setting, with instructional lectures and supportive

teaching sessions given throughout a week. During their field experience, aspiring teachers, like aspiring doctors, make many connections with students—teaching and even learning themselves within the school context, on many levels. Full-immersion PDS experiences aim to produce an organic and authentic understanding of the ebb and flow of the atmospheric professional concerns of the school environment. SUP

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