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# History and Future of Professional Development Schools in Kansas

Debbie Mercer and Scott Myers

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Quality clinical experiences are an integral component of effective teacher preparation programs. Evidence clearly indicates that experiences in classrooms, under the mentorship of effective teachers and mentors, greatly enhance the preservice teacher's growth and development (NCATE, 2010). This article provides a history of the Professional Development School (PDS) movement in Kansas, as well as the major influences and challenges ahead as partnerships continue to grow and adapt.

Simply assigning university preservice teachers to a classroom is not sufficient to ensure a quality experience. By working together, the university supports the work of PreK-12 schools, and school-based personnel support the agenda of preparing the next generation of teachers. Through mutually beneficial arrangements, PDS partnerships not only add value to the PreK-12 students, but to educators at all levels involved in teaching and learning processes.

PDS partnerships are defined in Kansas as "innovative institutions formed through partnerships between professional education training programs and PreK-12 schools" (*Kansas Model Standards for Professional Development Schools*, p. 3). PDS partners in Kansas expanded upon the work of the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (2001) when defining PDS and as standards were developed specifically for Kansas. While each partnership is unique, all are mutually beneficial and focus on enhancing student learning through the professional growth of preservice teachers, in-service teachers, and university faculty. Kansas PDS partners assert that there is not one right way to have a PDS partnership. All partnerships have different characteristics and thus do not look the same at all institutions (PDS Coalition minutes, 5-13-10). The capability for unique partnerships allows each institution to tailor to the needs of their preservice teachers and the districts involved.

The Kansas Coalition for Professional Development Schools began informally and several years later officially approved a charter. Thus, in 1999, Kansas became a national forerunner in establishing a statewide organization involving all college and university PreK-12 partnerships that choose to participate.



***Our science department was reluctant to become involved in this partnership and some viewed it as a way for the university to exert more control over what we were teaching as well as the methods we employed to teach. My role, as I saw it, was to emphasize that each teacher had strengths and experiences that, if shared, would enhance the perceptions and practices of the novice...I was thrilled when finally some came on board and began to cooperate. Today, it seems as if the partnership was always in place and seems destined to continue.***

– Dru Clarke

Retired Clinical Instructor and Original Secondary Planning Team Member, Manhattan-Ogden School District



The organization has served for 15 years in an official capacity. This history emphasizes the long-standing importance educators place on clinical experiences. Although the group originated and operated outside of Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE) itself, there is a very close relationship. KSDE encourages the partnerships in a variety of ways. It has helped develop resources including a website hosted by the University of Kansas since 2007. Also in 2007, there was a name change from “State of Kansas Professional Development Schools Partnership” to “Kansas Coalition of PDS Schools,” which remains today (<http://kansaspds.soe.ku.edu/>).

The PDS Coalition work was initially supported by a U.S. Department of Education (DOE) Partnership Grant for Improving Teacher Quality. These funds encouraged the development of Professional Development Schools in public and private teacher preparation programs across the state that “are designed ultimately to improve student learning by bringing about fundamental change and improvement to traditional teacher education programs” (1999, p. 7). Support was provided for ongoing meetings of coalition members, communication and collaboration between school-university partners, travel to national PDS meetings, and annual state PDS conferences. Coalition members developed state PDS Standards and a strong coalition structure during the years of DOE grant support. The funding of these intense professional development, communication, and collaboration opportunities among district and university partners across the state allowed Kansas to develop a more formalized PDS structure and state system of support.

Leaders of the Kansas Coalition of Professional Development Schools include higher education faculty from across the state and represent both public and private institutions. Presidents of the coalition have included

representatives from Emporia State University, Friends University, Kansas State University, Newman University, Ottawa University, Pittsburg State University, Southwestern University, University of Kansas, and Wichita State University.

There are 24 approved institutions of higher education involved in training teachers in Kansas. These include both public and private institutions. In 2009, the PDS Coalition minutes described the following PDS-oriented Kansas institutions:

- Kansas State University: all students participate in PDS, except some secondary for student teaching;
- Wichita State University: all elementary is PDS; next fall they intend for all secondary to be PDS;
- Ottawa University: limited PDS options;
- Baker University: all students do PDS for some experiences, but not necessarily experiences in PDS for student teaching; and
- University of Kansas: students have an option to do PDS. (PDS Coalition notes, 9-18-2009)

To highlight growth in just five years, currently the majority of the 24 teacher preparation programs in the state are engaged in PDS partnerships. While the partnerships are in various stages of development, there is no doubt that they are growing.

The PDS Coalition was developed to support the work of the PDS partners. The stated purposes of the PDS Coalition include:

1. to provide a forum for learning about the work and importance of PDS partnerships;
2. to foster a spirit of collaboration and provide a network for the exchange of ideas and best practices among PDS partnerships;
3. to support efforts to enhance PreK-12 student achievement; and
4. to promote Kansas as a leader in the Professional Development School movement. (*Kansas Model Standards for Professional Development Schools*, p. 3)

### **PDS Standards**

The Kansas Coalition of Professional Development Schools recognized the need for the development of standards to guide best practices in PDS development. The Kansas Model Standard for Professional Development Schools (undated) reviewed, adapted, and developed model PDS standards appropriate for Kansas. These standards were based on national best practices and professional standards (NCATE, 2001).

In 2003, Dr. Alice Sagehorn prepared a summary of the Kansas Model PDS Standards as follows:

PDS Partnerships share a common vision of teaching and learning grounded in research and practitioner knowledge.” In 2002 the Kansas Professional Development School (PDS) Coalition developed five standards based on the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education Standards for Professional Development Schools. These standards form the common goals and objectives for Kansas PDS partnerships.

Standard One deals with the PDS as a “Learning Community” that supports the integrated learning and development of P-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.

In Standard Two the PDS partners are accountable to themselves and to the public for upholding professional standards for teaching and learning. PDS partners collaboratively develop assessments, collect information, and use results to systematically examine their practices and establish outcome goals. The PDS partnerships demonstrate impact at the local, state, and national level on policies and practices affecting student learning and teacher professional development.

Collaboration, Standard Three, is the centerpiece of the PDS partnership. Partners commit themselves to engage in joint work focused on implementing the PDS mission. They collaboratively design roles and structures and use their shared work to improve outcomes for P-12 students, teacher candidates, faculty, and other professionals.

Standard Four, Diversity and Equity, ensures equitable opportunities to learn. PDS partners and candidates develop and demonstrate knowledge and skills resulting in learning for all P-12 students. PDS partners ensure that the policies and practices of the PDS partner institutions result in equitable learning outcomes.

The PDS partnership establishes governing structures that support the learning and development of P-12 students, candidates, faculty, and other professionals (Standard Five). These structures, resources, and roles help ensure progress towards the state standards and individual goals of each partnership. (Sagehorn, 2003)

KSDE charged a large broad-based group, the Teaching in Kansas Commission, to develop recommendations that would affect educational change in the state. The *mission* of the commission was “Recognizing that teachers are the single most important factor in students’ success in classrooms; the Teaching in Kansas Commission seeks to strengthen, support, and grow the profession of teaching in Kansas” (*Teaching in Kansas Commission Final Report, 2008, p. 3*). The commission’s final report involved strengthening the PDS initiative in Kansas. KSDE staff asked for the involvement of the Kansas Coalition for PDS in addressing the commission’s recommendations for Goal 3: Teacher Preparation. The goals for this area included:

1. Develop and adopt Professional Development School standards and essential elements that will be reflected in teacher education programs.

2. Include the Professional Development School standards as a component of the KSDE program review process.

The PDS Coalition discussed these two goals and how they might best be implemented in the state. KSDE processed this input and took the two action steps to the State Board of Education in January of 2009 as part of the Teaching in Kansas Action Plan.

The PDS Coalition had already vetted the Kansas Model PDS Standards. The implementation of the review process for PDS was challenging for several reasons. Foremost, the very definition of a PDS partnerships allows for great variability. For this reason, KSDE developed a process by which institutions would share their PDS-related work as a compliment to the program review process, but not directly a part of it.

In 2010, KSDE introduced the PDS Graphic Organizer, now titled the Institutional Action Plan (IAP) (Figure 1). KSDE requests this annual report to demonstrate how institutions are applying the five key standards to their own

Figure 1 | KSDE Institutional Action Plan

Institutional Action Plan (PDS IAP)		
<p><b>Professional Development Schools</b>  <b>STANDARD I: LEARNING COMMUNITY –</b>  <b>DEVELOPMENTAL GUIDELINES</b></p> <p>The PDS is a learning-centered community in Kansas 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 change and improvement in individual practice and in the policies and practices of the partnering institutions.</p> <p>The PDS partnership includes principal and supporting institutions as well as individuals. The principal PDS partners are members of the PreK-12 schools and professional preparation programs who agree to collaborate. The supporting PDS partner institutions include the institutions of higher education, the Kansas school district, and the professional organizations/ associations. The extended learning community includes: arts and sciences faculty, other interested school and higher education faculty, family and community members, and other affiliated schools who are important PDS participants in the extended learning community.</p>		
Current Practice to Address Standard	Future Plans to Address Standard	Challenges for the Institution

partnerships. The IAP allows institutions of higher education (IHE) to document their current practices. Each institution is then asked to reflect on their future plans and challenges in addressing each of the standards. The IAP is divided into the following sections:

- Standard 1 – Learning Community
- Standard 2 – Accountability and Quality Assurance
- Standard 3 – Collaboration
- Standard 4 – Diversity and Equity
- Standard 5 – Structures, Resources, and Roles

These current practices and reflective plans for the future serve as a developmental guide for continual improvement for IHEs involved in preparing future educators for Kansas schools. This continues to be an annual reporting request from KSDE. Each standard is described and the institution is asked to explain what activities are being accomplished that support each standard. The Standard 1 section is provided below.

To highlight the Institutional Action Plan, below is an example from a recent Kansas State University submission to the KSDE.

Figure 2 | **Kansas State University's Institutional Action Plan Excerpt**

**Standard One:**

**Current Practice to Address Standard**  
Action research has always been a component of KSU PDS. Many studies have been conducted by all of the various PDS partners. In the spring of 2014 all clinical instructors (CIs) participated a book study using the book “How the Brain Learns” as a basis for developing action research projects with interns and cooperating teacher starting in fall 2014.

**Future Plans to Standard**  
During the academic year 2014-2015, CIs will conduct book studies using “How the Brain Learns” with interns, cooperating teachers, and any other teacher in their building. An outcome of the book studies will be the development of action research projects to address brain-based learning strategies and the impact of these strategies on student learning. The research projects that the interns will be developing could be integrated into the student work samples that are part of the Final Student Teaching Portfolio. One hoped-for outcome is having these projects presented at the Undergraduate Research Symposium in spring 2015.

**Challenges for the Institutions**  
Providing support to the clinical instructors as they work with student interns to develop action research projects. (Kansas State University, 2013)

### Vision for PDS in Kansas

It has been some time since the PDS Model Standards were developed and approved in the state of Kansas. The Teaching in Kansas Commission helped propel the state forward. Where is it now and where will its vision lead?

KSDE has been engaging in dialogue about the professional learning continuum of licensed personnel in Kansas. What documentation is important when renewing an educator license? As the conversation progresses, the focus on ongoing professional learning continually rises to the top of the list of important attributes. Properly operating PDS partnerships play an essential role in the continuum of professionalism among educators (See Figure 3).

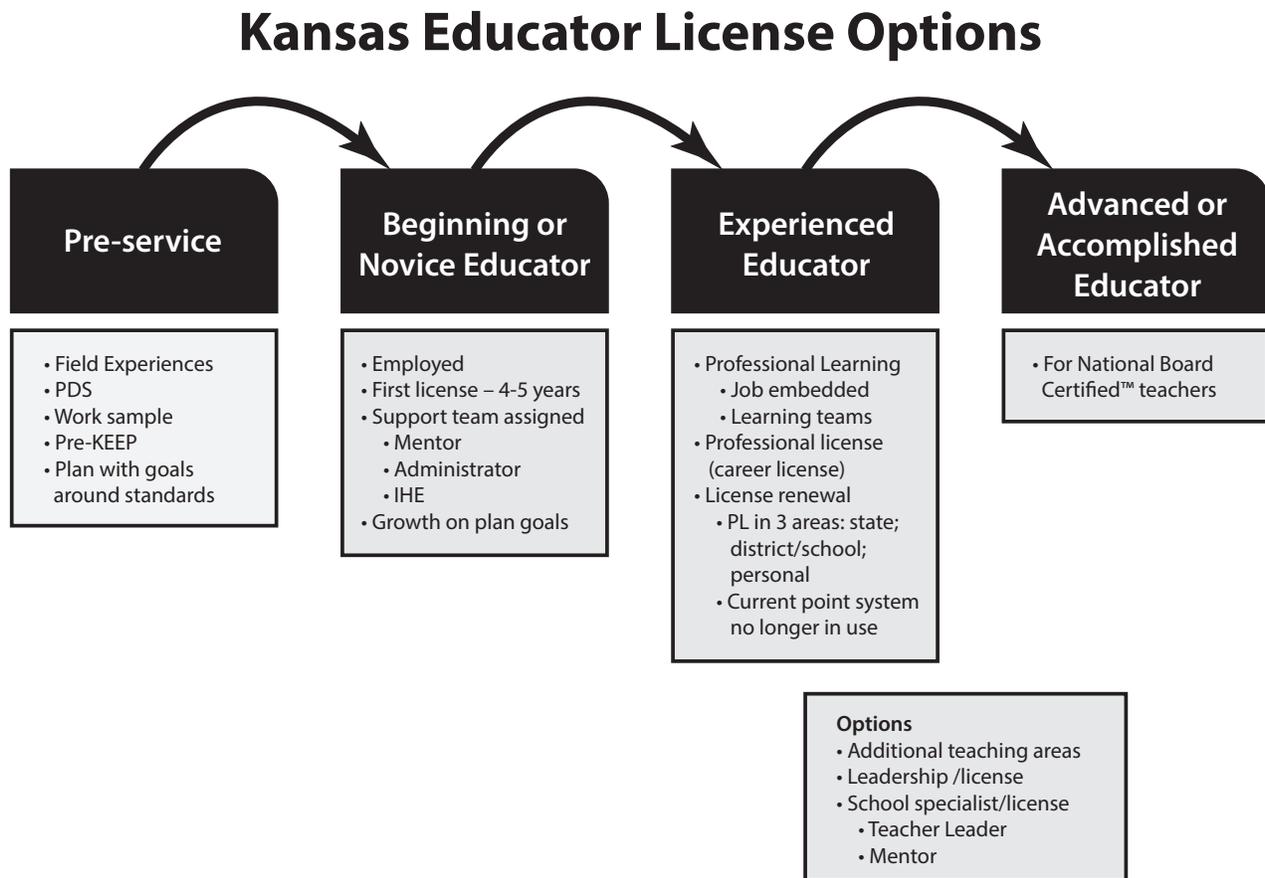
This professional learning continuum aligns with the very core of PDS partnerships. Kansas has long been a forerunner in the nurturing of such partnerships. Longstanding relationships have grown over years of trusted work. IHE faculty stay tied to classroom practice and up-to-date on current issues. They learn from their school-based partners. Likewise, school-based faculty have access to cutting-edge research, IHE faculty expertise, and many future educators. Together, the partners mold the next generation of teachers who will profoundly impact the learning of students.

Building on past good works, the timing is right to revitalize the PDS movement and propel Kansas to the next level. While simultaneously broadening its scope of work to continue to strengthen ties between IHEs and the state’s Local Educational Agencies (LEA), PDSs are a critical component of quality preparation. While this idea is perhaps daunting in the face of all other initiatives facing education, ensuring quality clinical experiences is essential. The needs of the field dictate that the members of the entire educational community jointly provide the most relevant and meaningful experiences to society’s most precious commodity: its students.

While the quality of the clinical experience—both observation and student teaching—trumps the quantity of the experience, it is important to provide the teacher candidate with ample opportunities to experience real-learning environments while being shepherded by excellent model and cooperating teachers. These master teachers are chosen on the basis of merit. It is through this hands-on approach of close guidance that the teacher candidates witness firsthand the successful teaching strategies and approaches the skillful professional teacher employs on a daily basis. This is most readily achieved by employing a true co-teaching approach to the clinical experience. KSDE envisions a PDS model where the early-career educator continues in a meaningful partnership relationship through the candidate’s third or fourth year of teaching.

By maintaining this formal partnership over time, two distinct benefits exist. First, the early-career teacher will have a built-in support group on which to draw for technical, as well as emotional assistance. The support team for this educator made up of the IHE representative, the LEA-assigned mentor, and the LEA building administrator will be well-positioned to assist the novice teacher as this arrangement will ensure there is a bridge from the clinical experience into the profession. Maximally, the IHE representative on the

Figure 3 | Kansas Educator License Options



candidate’s support team would be the same professional who worked with the candidate during that person’s course of study while preparing to be a teacher. Specifically, the IHE professional would assist the candidate in completing experiential activities geared toward bolstering that person’s reflective practices. This documented work would lead to the documentation needed to renew their teaching license. These activities would lead the educator toward a firm grasp regarding personal strengths and growth areas. This reality will set up the candidate to continue professional growth through the induction period into the teaching profession.

Along with providing a continuation of knowledgeable support, establishing this sort of approach to developing early-career teachers has a second, equally important, impact on the educational environment that will benefit teachers and students alike. Simply, this approach will result in increased opportunities for IHE members to be participants in schools more than ever. Faculty from IHEs will be in classrooms for observations of clinical experiences, professional learning opportunities with P-12 faculty and to support beginning teachers, thus creating a deeper, more understanding relationship. This is important as this sort of deepening of understanding will open up lines of communication and will create opportunities for everyone to work side-by-side in providing better educational opportunities for P-12 students,

as well as students in educator preparation programs. Envision a culture where:

- LEAs ask IHE members to attend faculty meetings?
- IHE members feel comfortable venturing into the teacher workroom?
- LEA and IHE members come together to discuss teaching strategies to impact the education of the students in the building?
- IHEs are provided dedicated space in the school building to host professional learning opportunities for the LEA professionals?

Simply and understandably, IHE members must be in the schools on a consistent enough basis to become part of that school’s culture. While this occurs in pockets, relationships must continue to be nurtured so that this exchange is more frequent. As a concerted effort is put forth to bring the IHE and LEA professionals together more, benefits will follow. Opportunities for substantive conversations centered on providing even better educational experiences for the P-12 students could take place. This sort of arrangement is invaluable, as all parties would have the opportunity to come together in a joint effort in providing for all students.

As sustained conversations among the members of the LEAs and the IHEs occur, the partnerships will become stronger. Kansas has documented the benefits that occur



***The partnership has had growing pains with a succession of yearly growth leading to education of all involved!***



– Ed Chandler

Clinical Instructor and Original Secondary  
Planning Team Member, Manhattan-Ogden  
School District

when IHE members consistently provided timely, needed professional learning opportunities to their LEA colleagues on-site and vice-versa. Kansas has documented the benefits that occur when IHE professionals engage with P-12 students in their own school buildings, getting to know them and the challenges that they face on a daily basis. It is a positive experience for all parties involved as the shared knowledge and experience create a culture of collaboration and community effort. KSDE envisions this systematically occurring across all partnerships.

While the goals of establishing a deeper, better clinical experience for teacher candidates and establishing a more symbiotic professional learning relationship between members of LEAs and IHEs are daunting, the potential benefits—the desired seamlessness that will benefit all students in Kansas, kindergarten through college—are well worth the effort. Thankfully, the key ingredient to make the adjustments that need to be taken is a simple resolve to pull together to take the steps to address change. Any “barrier minded” orientation that might exist must be stripped away, giving way to an achievement orientation that simply will not fail for lack of trying. Toward that end, the KSDE envisions a time and place where each and every LEA maintains a PDS relationship with an IHE where the concerned professionals congregate multiple times a year to envision, plan, and enact steps to bolster clinical experiences and the development of on-going professional learning opportunities for all.

The KSDE vision of every school participating in PDS activities is a monumental goal. However, the positive impact of PDS partnerships in Kansas is well-documented. The results of such interactions are undeniably beneficial to IHE faculty, teacher candidates and school-based partners. By initiating new educators into the profession through PDS partnerships and staying connected during an induction period, highlighted by deep reflection, the education profession will continue to produce highly effective educators. Kansas will continue to build on the strong PDS foundation, as institutions continue to grow and adapt to meet today's needs, for local schools and IHEs.

By reaching the lofty goals set forth, not only will early-career professionals be more “learner ready” on day one of their official entry into the teaching profession, but also the environment and experiences of professional learning for both LEA and IHE practitioners will be such that members of the greater educational community will no longer be viewed

as being separate. Rather, the profession will arrive at a place where all professionals will be referred to as “educational professionals” instead of being “LEA professionals” or “IHE professionals.” That mindset will behoove us all.



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