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Round Peg, Square Hole: Trying to Bridge PDS Models and Nontraditional Teacher Education

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ABSTRACT: The dominant PDS models described in research literature are all based upon the pairing of traditional, college-based teacher education programs with traditional public schools. Though these PDS models have proven very successful in such contexts, there is significant question as to whether they can be successful when comprised of nontraditional teacher education programs and nontraditional schools. With greater numbers of future teachers seeking alternative means to licensure, it behooves PDS advocates and researchers to explore the fit between alternative teacher education programs and PDS models and, when there is not a good fit, to try to create hybrid PDS models for a new educational landscape. This study chronicles how one university attempted to match its nontraditional teacher education program first to the dominant PDS models and, when that failed, to a hybrid PDS model. The resulting PDS hybrid itself begs the following question: at what point does a hybrid PDS become a paradox?

Theoretical ckground ntext

Virtually all participants benefit from a well-conceived and operated PDS university-school partnership (Darling-Hammond, 2005; Holmes Partnership, 2007). The PDS model shows such promise in producing high quality teachers—and for building relationships between teacher education programs and the K-12 schools that they ultimately serve—that the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) recently stated that professional development schools should become the norm for teacher induction (NCATE, 2006). Not surprisingly, many teacher education programs nationwide have created—or are in a rush to develop—their own professional development schools (NCATE, 2001; Tietel, 2004).

Although professional development schools offer myriad benefits to students, schools, and pre-service teachers, almost all PDS models represented in the research literature (and the dominant PDS theories upon which they have

been developed) are oriented around traditional teacher education programs and teacher education candidates (Holmes Partnership, 2007; Johnson, Lefever-Davis & Pearman, 2007). That is to say, the assumptions underlying the theory and standards around almost all PDS models match full-time teacher education programs with traditional tenure-track teacher education faculty who hold responsibility for both course design and instruction. Similarly, a review of PDS literature even within this journal shows that most PDS models are structured around traditional K-12 public schools.

The merits of the models described above are time-tested and well-proven. Virtually all extant PDS models are circumscribed, however, by the fact that tests of their efficacy are limited to a very specific form of teacher education; little research illustrates or examines how have they been implemented or tested in newer or alternative education models, including the non-traditional teacher education programs which have exploded in popularity in the past decade.

Although there is not a definitive, universally-accepted PDS concept (Imig, 1997; Kochan, 1999) and although the dominant PDS models allow for some flexibility (Goodlad, 1993), the examples that do exist share a number of characteristics that make existing PDS programs untenable for a growing number of teacher education programs and their respective students. In short, many of the same components that make PDS models so successful—for example, shared goals and mutual benefits from the partnership, dedicated teacher education faculty who buy into the model, and school and university operating schedules that are roughly similar—are also the traits that limit (and sometimes negate) the possibility of such partnerships for a growing form of teacher education: accelerated programs that combine on-site and distance classes, are tailored to non-traditional college-aged students and career changers, and rely heavily upon adjunct teacher education faculty who themselves continue to teach in K-12 schools.

These teacher education programs, which can be categorized generally as the “enterprise” model of higher education, have witnessed explosive growth in the last decade and are challenging the dominance of traditional teacher education programs (Kopp, 1996). The enterprise model is largely synonymous with the “entrepreneurial” model, a term endorsed by a large number of for-profit universities (Bishop, 2005; Knowles & Kalata, 2007). The enterprise model is “a centralized and standardized approach to the design, development, and management of educational programs” (Lowenthal & White, 2008, p. 932). It is characterized by centralized administration and oversight of the courses taught within the educational institution (top-down management of course content and delivery), standardized course design, and required fidelity to that design by adjunct instructors hired to teach it (Lowenthal & White, 2008). It is often associated with accelerated college or graduate-level programs because it allows a program to have a small core faculty (saving the university salary costs), controls content by mandating a specific curriculum (standardization), and allows the

condensing of course content from a semester to a much shorter duration (allowing the university to again cut costs in terms of faculty pay per course while, at the same time, facilitating a faster route for students to a complete degrees or earn licensure). The model is especially prominent in higher education programs tailored to the needs of working adults (Lange, 2006).

At the same time, most of today’s PDS models pair traditional university teacher education programs with traditional public schools, most in elementary or middle level settings. Existing PDS models are thus being further challenged by a fast-growing educational demographic: the charter school. Charter schools have far outpaced initial predictions of their growth; they have even become central to the Obama Administration’s focus on educational improvement. With the development of charter schools, researchers need to examine the unique opportunities and challenges that might result from professional development schools formed with these still novel school structures. Similarly, researchers need to examine how PDS models might work (or not) with K-12 schools. Opening a PDS to a K-12 environment certainly adds to the complexity of a model. With increased complexity, researchers may need to examine the efficacy of the K-12 PDS model itself (an area for further study).

With calls for the PDS model to become the standard of quality teacher education (NCATE, 2006), researchers and teacher educators need to begin exploring the possibility of elaborating upon or altering the most common PDS models—in other words to examine the possibility of creating “hybrids”—to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse group of pre-service teachers and the teacher education programs in which they choose to enroll. Teacher educators wishing to expand the PDS model to an ever-larger population of nontraditional pre-service teachers should begin to examine whether the two models—the enterprise model and charter schools—can work together for their mutual benefit. Can these two new models of educating pre-service teachers be merged or are they, by the nature of their respective structures,

too dissimilar to find common ground? Can there be a middle ground in which educators create a hybrid PDS model and, if so, can it work? And, perhaps most importantly, at what point does a hybrid PDS model cease to be a true PDS model at all? In other words, how much can one change the dominant PDS model to fit a program while maintaining the integrity of that model (and of the PDS concept itself)?

The goal of this article is to address these questions by critically examining an attempt to create a hybrid school-university partnership. The purpose of this article is not to examine the relative strengths and weaknesses of the extant PDS model, not to delve into the raging debate surrounding the charter school movement, and not to detail the challenges inherent in nontraditional teacher education programs. Rather, the goal of this article is to explore the conflicts that result when trying to match the “best practices” of professional development schools with two PDS partners that are themselves nontraditional: K-12 charter schools and accelerated, working adult-oriented, and adjunct-driven teacher education programs. Via a one-year pilot study of a hybrid PDS model, this study questions the extent to which it is possible to adapt the dominant PDS models to the needs of nontraditional teacher education programs. It also questions at what point a hybrid PDS deviates so much from its original conception that it is no longer a professional development school but something else entirely.

The School University Partnership

The University

Regis University is a private religiously-affiliated university in Denver, Colorado. Although the university has a traditional undergraduate college that serves 1200 students, this study focuses on the university’s “College for Professional Studies,” which serves more than 13,000 undergraduate and graduate students in four different professional schools (including a school of education). This branch of the

university is dedicated to offering flexible and accelerated programs for working adults at a number of campus locations and online. The central design of the college is based on the enterprise model (Lowenthal & White, 2008) whereby regular faculty members oversee the design, development, and management of educational programs which are typically taught by adjunct or affiliate faculty. The primary job responsibility of full-time faculty members, who work differing hours and at different locations than the faculty who teach in the programs, is to advise students.

The program’s School of Education and Counseling serves roughly 1400 students, most of whom are career changers in their thirties and forties who chose the university because it offers flexible, continuing education courses that are scheduled to fit with their working lifestyle. The majority of students enrolled in the education program are seeking a combined degree and licensure (either a bachelor’s degree or a master’s degree). New courses begin every eight weeks, allowing for six terms per calendar year. To appeal to working adults, students’ schedules are not rigidly sequenced. Rather, students may choose to take any or all of their courses based upon such issues as scheduling, location, and personal preference; students thereby design their own programs of study and anticipated dates of completion. Most students take either one or two classes per term (three to six credit hours). Students in the combined Master of Education with licensure program (who are the students in this study) generally complete their respective programs (elementary or secondary) in a year and a half to three years.

PDS pre-service ticipants

The eighteen graduate students enrolled in the first year of the professional development school on which this study focuses were selected from the wider pool of applicants to the university’s teacher education program. These participants met all of the requirements for entry into the regular program but also demonstrated an ability to take daytime classes and gave assurances that they would not work during their

time in the PDS program. Those selected for the program differed in a number of ways from the wider student body in that they were far younger, they were not holding down full-time jobs or taking care of small children at home (with some exceptions), and they were willing to sign on as a cohort in a very prescribed program of study.

The PDS

For its PDS program, the university partnered with a large and diverse K-12 charter school. Founded in 1997 in a large converted storefront, the school has since been expanded numerous times to meet additional enrollment demands. The school operates under the authority of a large charter school governing/funding body; it is not affiliated with or beholden to the public school district in which it is located. It employs a Core Knowledge curriculum (Hirsch, 1988; see also www.coreknowledge.org).

The school offered six classes per elementary school grade, with between one and five content area teachers for each of the high school content areas. All of the school's sixty-eight teachers were state licensed. The school's founder and principal oversaw all school business. Under him were four area principals (K-2, 3-5, 6-8, 9-12), one of whom served as the school's professional development school liaison. The mission of the school was "to educate students to attain superior levels of academic performance through the use of rigorous Core Knowledge curriculum and college preparatory courses of study within a safe learning environment. The arts, athletics, and extracurricular activities complete the educational experience."

The school's 1700 students were in most ways demographically representative of the local community: 40% white, 50% Hispanic, and 10% Asian (largely Vietnamese and Hmong) and Native American). Thirty percent of the student body was eligible for free and reduced lunch. Although the school did not have an active English Language Development program at the time of the partnership described in this article, 31% of the students were designated as English Language Learners (ELL). The school

had no students labeled as having moderate to severe learning needs.

Data Collection

A former colleague and I conducted a two-year case study exploring the creation and first year of operation of the university-school PDS.¹ My colleague, Dr. Kelli Woodrow, who specializes in the social foundations of education, continues to work as Assistant Professor and Faculty Advisor at the university. I worked at the university as an Assistant Professor and Faculty Advisor for two years until I left in 2008 to assume a tenure-track professorship in literacy (my primary content area).

Data was collected from a variety of sources including field notes; surveys of students, adjunct university faculty, and staff at our PDS partner school; informal interviews of students, adjunct faculty, and our PDS school site liaison; artifacts that included materials used to recruit students to the model and to explain the model to university faculty; and photos of the school site. The bulk of our data came from weekly field notes regarding the initial design and implementation of the program using traditional, ethnographic methods of data collection—participant observation and field notes. According to the conventions of qualitative research (Erickson, 1986; Lincoln & Guba, 1985) we wrote field notes as soon as possible following preliminary meetings with the PDS partners and university administration (the Dean of the School of Education and Counseling) and immediately following each of the observation periods. My colleague, who assumed the role of leading the PDS effort once I had left the university, recorded field notes following each of her visits to the school (generally the same day). These served as a source of background information, feelings and perceptions of daily events, and, as recommended by Sanjeck (1990), "a preliminary stab at analysis" (p. 100). Among the artifacts collected were the initial models created from the conceptualization of a hybrid PDS, notes from discussions/debates within the university's School of Education and Counsel-

ing (and conflicts that resulted), notes from initial meetings with the PDS school site personnel, PDS promotional materials designed for recruiting teacher education students to the model, the K-12 school's website information, accountability reports and accreditation reports. All data was collected during and shortly following the first year of the PDS model's operation (2008–2009). We conducted student and faculty questionnaires immediately following the first year of the model (at the end of the spring term of the first year). These questionnaires provided both numerical data (e.g., Likert scales) and qualitative or student-specific data (e.g., information or examples student or faculty added). The questionnaires also asked a number of open-ended questions about the strengths and weaknesses of the program as well as about students' individual experiences with it.

We began an initial review of data in the spring of 2008 following the first semester of the program (the first two eight-week terms). We used this information to create "domains" and to begin organizing and coding new data. Using Grounded Theory, we were able to use this information to increasingly focus our research questions and data collection upon those issues that recurred in early data. Once we had created a semantic map of domains, we continued to add data based upon this initial categorization. This data collection continued through the end of the first year of the program (through Summer 2009). No data was collected or analyzed beyond this point.

We analyzed the field notes, surveys, interviews, and other documentary evidence according to Spradley's (1980) domain and componential analysis. The advantage of using domain analysis is that it promotes the systematic review and arrangement of data according to categories of meaning. It also allowed us to focus on those domains that were pertinent to the components of the professional development school and, thereby, provide a guide to analyze a wealth of otherwise overwhelming raw data. We began the domain analysis by rereading all of the data sources. Next, we created categories of semantic relationships (e.g., X is an attribute of Y, X is a way to

Y..) for each aspect of the professional development school. These categories were then filled in with instances from the data, otherwise known as "included terms" (e.g., in the category "attributes of Regis teacher education," the included terms could be adult learner, accelerated, enterprise model, etc.). As we continued to review the data, new categories were created for those items that did not fit into the initial professional development component categories. Every semantic relationship was composed of included terms and then smaller and smaller units until the smallest element of data—an actual quote or concept—was accounted for.

The second step in Spradley's domain analysis is called componential analysis. Componential analysis occurs at a higher level of inference than the domain/taxonomic analysis, and provides a means to compare and contrast different units of cultural meaning and identify otherwise unnoticeable patterns. In this stage, two separate domains are contrasted to illustrate patterns in the data. For example, we looked at "attributes of partnering institutions" on one axis and another domain such as "kinds of problems" on the other axis. We continued to use this model throughout data collection, in essence creating smaller and more detailed subcategories as issues and new data emerged. A sample categorization scheme looked similar to the following: Partnering institutions → Pinnacle charter → School buy-in to PDS partnership → Classroom space → Transient on-site classrooms, and so forth. Readers should note that this categorization scheme was not linear (as the example might suggest); rather the data branched and grew more detailed with time (an accurate analogy would be a detailed outline format that increasingly branches as new data emerged).

Findings

This experiment resulted in a number of significant findings, some of which we had anticipated prior to launching the program and others that we had not foreseen until issues arose during the first year of operation of this

PDS program. Following a summary outline of our findings below, we examine each finding in greater detail, trying with each to offer as much context as possible. Such context is important in that it provides others who attempt to create their own hybrid PDS models with a lens through which they might avoid the pitfalls that this program encountered. It might also provide greater insight into my own feelings—and thus biases—as I chronicle and analyze our experiences.

Our findings show that:

- 1) The creation of new PDS models for nontraditional teacher education programs is largely untried (at least according to the literature); this lack of a model to follow makes the creation of a hybrid PDS more difficult.
- 2) A hybrid model's complexity—especially one that can work with accelerated “enterprise” models of teacher education, grows exponentially in relation to the differences between the teacher education program and those represented in extant literature.
- 3) Enterprise models of education are, by their very nature, not well suited to PDS models because of their accelerated format, their reliance upon fidelity to a prescribed curriculum, their extensive use of adjunct faculty, and their student demographic (working adults who wish to create their own degree program schedule).
- 4) The governance/administrative structure of enterprise models of education are antithetical to the collaborative creation of strong PDS models; the top-down management of enterprise models hinders rather than promotes buy-in from university faculty and from partner schools.
- 5) Ultimately, we found that the level of hybridity required to match an “enterprise” model teacher education program with a charter school challenges existing definitions of PDS models to the degree that one must question whether or not the resulting model is indeed a PDS partnership.

Designing a program: No model to follow

One of our first findings proves to be a bit of an irony: the originality of this paper points out that there is a dearth of information regarding PDS

systems that diverge significantly from those associated with traditional teacher education models (models endorsed by John Goodlad, Linda Darling-Hammond, the Holmes Group, etc.). Even an extensive literature review leaves the would-be nontraditional PDS architect with no plan from which to build. The lack of a conceptual roadmap left a gaping hole in terms of conceptualization and integration, resulting in a number of false starts during the conceptualization period and quite a number of course corrections throughout the first year of the program. Try as we might, we could not, for example, find an existing PDS model that would work for our needs. Thus, when designing our model we went through four iterations before finally settling on the one model represented here; we were forced to abandon three earlier models because, as we tried to match our program to that of the charter school, we learned that each model would not meet our respective needs. As another example, during the first weeks of the program's operation we had to change the number of required teacher education candidate field/observation hours; our original model required more hours than we could schedule and that our students could manage. In summary, we found that although freedom comes with attempting something unique, one is also likely to be plagued by mistakes.

Although we believed in the overall superiority of the PDS model compared to most traditional teacher education programs, we realized during the early development phase that the models described in relevant research were largely incongruent with the nature of the program in which we worked. After a number of false starts—one of which required changing our accelerated teacher education model to more closely match more traditional models—it became clear that creating a PDS model like those described in the research literature was impossible. Therefore, our focus shifted to creating a hybrid PDS model that would work within the unique parameters of the university's “enterprise model” education program (Lowenthal & White, 2009).

In turn, this meant that we had to distill from existing models their essential epistemological

and pedagogical constructs (i.e., what makes a PDS work) and tailor a new model—one that kept in place the essential structure of our accelerated program—that would incorporate those constructs. From successful PDS models we took the belief that teaching our pre-service teachers on site (at the K-12 partner school) was essential. We knew that we needed to integrate field experiences with the theories taught in our teacher education courses, meaning that our students had to be able to visit K-12 classrooms during the school’s operating hours. We wanted our pre-service teachers to provide for the charter school a cadre of trained and dedicated volunteers who could assist classroom teachers, work directly with students, and gain teaching experiences in classroom settings. We wanted to include the charter school’s classroom teachers in our courses as lecturers on specific topics, thereby providing our pre-service teachers with a practitioner’s point of view while also giving the school’s teachers a voice in our students’ educational experiences. We wanted to give the school’s teachers valuable resources in return, such as continuing education opportunities and pedagogical advice. However, with no model to follow, some of these goals fell by the wayside; others came to fruition only through an exceptionally complex process. We created and discarded eight different detailed models before deciding on the relatively complex hybrid model we ended up using. Even the model we settled on had to be changed and adapted throughout the first year, usually in ways we had failed to anticipate. Whether a finding or simply an impression, we nonetheless learned from our experiment that PDS models are hard to implement in specific settings even when there are good models to follow; they are likely to be exceptionally more difficult when one must pick and choose from essential PDS elements and tailor those to fit a new context altogether.

The simplest complexity: A hybrid PDS model

To create a program that could logistically function within our teacher education program, we developed a complex model that incorporat-

ed eight-week courses interspersed with a diverse mix of classroom observation experiences. Though we created and examined other models, the one we finally selected was arguably the least complex. This is telling; the complexity of the model we chose serves as an important finding (one discussed below): the level of complexity of our PDS model was directly correlated with the accelerated, enterprise model format common to our teacher education program.

To fit all of our coursework requirements into a prescribed time frame, we required participants to take three courses per eight week term (nine credit hours) for the first semester and either two or three courses per term during the second semester (depending upon elementary or secondary focus). This accelerated and compacted format—which corresponds to many enterprise models in general and to our university’s educational model in particular—was neither our first choice for the PDS model nor a format that we believed to be pedagogically sound for teacher education. We believed that matching courses to specific classroom experiences at specific times—as our model did—already added a layer of complexity to our required coursework and to students’ respective schedules. Compacting even more coursework into this already overstressed schedule (e.g., students taking nine hours of graduate credit while also attempting to observe 15–25 hours per class) proved untenable. The negotiated model we eventually selected simply did not allow time for reflection, for connecting theory to practice, or for examining the material in the teacher education coursework in sufficient detail. Despite the limitations an accelerated format placed upon our model, we were not given the freedom to significantly alter the accelerated format for our PDS. The Dean, upon whom decision-making ultimately fell, felt that doing so would go against our University’s market brand (the model for which we were known locally) and worried that our College was not equipped to manage a situation in which one program differed so significantly from the others (e.g., in terms of grading, tuition, etc.).

Our accelerated format resulted in excessively compacted and dense courses; we had to force copious amounts of material into a very

short span of time (unlike our other program, our PDS students had to take nine credit hours per term, which equaled 18 graduate credit hours per semester). To connect teacher education theories with actual K-12 classroom practices, we also required a specified amount of field hours in classroom settings we selected. We started the program by requiring 15 observation hours per week but had to amend this as the program got underway. Students were often unable to find adequate time to complete these fieldwork hours, and we found it overly difficult to orchestrate all of the student placements that the requirement entailed. Although our other teacher education program also required field observation hours for each class, those students were allowed to choose their school sites and grade levels (within certain parameters), thus relieving instructors of the responsibility of finding and scheduling placements.

Matching the unique requirements set by the university (e.g., eight-week courses and an accelerated degree completion time frame) was inherently complicated. Logistically, matching these two models proved almost untenable. Thus a second and related finding—and possibly the most important lesson that we learned from our experience—suggests that the greater the difference between a PDS-based teacher education program and a traditional university-based teacher education program, the more compromises one must make in terms of matching that program to a PDS model.

The different iterations of our own PDS models—from simple to increasingly complex—as we tried to match our program to the tenets undergirding existing PDS models supports this finding. Our first PDS model closely mirrored those existing in the literature. They had two to three courses per standard fifteen week semester (rather than eight week sessions), were populated by cohorts of teacher education students, and were designed to connect our coursework with specific elementary school classroom experiences (e.g., placing students in a specific class for a semester-long observation). Our next model tried to incorporate secondary students. These students had specific content areas requiring that we recruit and find classroom space for

even more instructors and courses. Similarly, due to the small number of teachers in specific levels of specific content courses (English I, English II, and English Literature; Algebra I and Algebra II; Geometry, etc.), we had to expand the model to include non-content area teachers.

Once we were told that our PDS model must retain the College's eight-week class schedule, the model became even more complex; we were forced to compress more content into a shorter period and still tie these courses to required field hours. By placing our courses in the school site and during the school day, we had to recruit a completely different population of students who would be willing to work in the cohort; this, in turn, necessitated new marketing materials, different advising, and so forth. And the issues described here do not even address the other side of the equation: finding appropriate times and ways to involve the charter school personnel in the decision-making process and operation of the model, providing them with professional development opportunities, and so forth. The fact that the relatively complex model above is the simplest one that we could devise highlights our finding that the more the teacher education program differs from those described in PDS literature, the more complex the model becomes. These findings also suggest that the logistical mismatches between a non-traditional teacher education program and existing PDS models require significant compromises to one or both of these entities. The level of hybridity in a PDS partnership increases exponentially with each unique and nontraditional parameter of one's teacher education model.

Curricular ongruence

Our program's reliance upon fidelity to rigid model syllabi—a trait common to the “enterprise” model of teacher education (Lowenthal & White, 2008) proved problematic for, if not antithetical to, the more organic needs of a strong PDS model. Standardized syllabi, a characteristic of the enterprise model (and common to accelerated college programs in general), are in many ways anathema to an

operable PDS model. Where PDS models require flexibility, our program was rigid; where PDS models require instructional collaboration, our course model was immutable.

More specifically, curricular incongruence played itself out in the sense that instructors teaching in the PDS model found themselves constrained in what they taught by the content of the model syllabi. For example, there was no room for instructors to deviate from the course module to explore in more depth the examples that the pre-service teachers were witnessing in their assigned K-12 classrooms, even if those issues did not relate relatively closely to the syllabus. Flexibility in a syllabus runs contrary to the enterprise (and accelerated) model; this educational model ensures quality control via fidelity to the syllabus. Students get the content that they need—content required by both the state department of education and the teacher education program’s accrediting agency—by going through a course syllabus step-by-step, which in an accelerated course means staying on topic.

Detracting further from a well-established strength of the PDS model was the fact that our course instructors—limited to teaching from a largely scripted curriculum—were thereby discouraged from cooperating with their counterparts in the PDS school. There was no place in the rigid course syllabi for cooperative teaching that would match the university’s instructors with those in the PDS school site. The university instructors were unable—and in some cases unwilling—to collaborate with the charter school’s teachers in the creation of lesson plans or to work on school-related projects. This created a noticeable disconnect between the theories taught in the teacher education coursework and the practices the teacher education students were seeing in K-12 classrooms. This was not solely the fault of our instructors or the result of their fidelity to model syllabi; our PDS model suffered from a lack of “buy-in” from the charter school faculty and staff as well.

Without question, some of the problems described above were complicated by the fact that we partnered with a charter school rather than with a traditional public elementary or middle school. By focusing a PDS program

solely on elementary education, for example, we could have created a less complex yet more manageable model. The partnership also resulted in a number of limitations to the study, which we describe below.

A new (and different) demographic: Students in our PDS program

One of the early but most substantial findings—one that questions the efficacy of a PDS model for a nontraditional teacher education programs such as ours—was that students in an accelerated enterprise model of teacher education simply cannot participate in the kinds of PDS models represented in the existing literature. My colleague and I found that we could no longer target our program’s normal demographic: career-changers who worked during the day. Instead we had to seek out more traditional students who could take daytime classes. This highlights the mismatch between our teacher education model and PDS models. Identifying students for this alternative PDS program was complicated by the fact that our regular teacher education program (like those in most enterprise models) admitted students via a rolling admissions policy, allowing them to start in any given eight week term. Though this model gave students a great degree of flexibility, it was not—for these very reasons—congruent with a strong PDS model. Scheduling flexibility inhibits the creation of stable or manageable student cohort groups, a principal structure of most PDS models (Goodlad, 1993; The Holmes Partnership, 2007). Cohort grouping was, my colleague and I believed, essential for our model to work. Yet again, we found that we had to recruit students specifically for the PDS program: students who would commit to taking a sequence of classes at prescribed times for a designated period through to degree completion.

Because we had to seek out a different kind of student for our PDS model, we also had to help develop a new system of recruiting students to the program; we had to reach out to a target audience different from those normally attracted to the university. This meant that we had to train admissions staff and even many of our own faculty colleagues on the model and how it

would operate. Once the university admissions staff was able to identify potential participants, my colleague and I had to meet with each prospective student to ensure that they were a good fit for our PDS model. This proved to be a multi-faceted process that evolved with the development of the model itself. In essence, we had to provide prospective students with details about our PDS model while the model was *in utero*. In reality, we found ourselves tweaking the model throughout the first year (especially in the early stages) to meet the needs of participants and to mesh with the logistics of our partner school. Ironically, our ability to recruit students to the program was made more difficult by the fact that we could not promise that the model would actually be implemented; implementation was dependent upon the successful recruitment of a specific number of students to make it financially viable for the university (we were told we needed at least ten elementary and at least six secondary students) for it “to go.”

Thus, our PDS model was both a metaphorical moving target and an exemplar that contrasted sharply with the very attributes that attracted students to our traditional teacher education program. The university’s primary teacher education program attracted students primarily because of the flexibility it offered. By contrast, neighboring colleges and universities, some of which were less expensive, had a higher academic profile than we did. Not surprisingly, a number of prospective candidates chose not to participate in the PDS when they learned that participation would require specific, immutable course sequencing. Still more were understandably reluctant to be, as one student succinctly noted, the “guinea pigs” for the model. Still other prospective students voiced fears that their future job prospects would be hurt by participating in the program. More specifically, they feared that: a) all of their field experiences and student teaching would take place at just one school; b) having all of their K-12 school experiences at a charter school might jeopardize their marketability for jobs in traditional public schools, and c) that at the school they would not get relevant experiences with students with

special needs or with differentiating for English language learners. Though the school was diverse in terms of its population, it lacked an exceptional education program or a formal TESOL program.² Not surprisingly, my colleague and I generally interviewed two prospective participants for every one whom we found to be a good fit for the PDS model.

The selectivity required for our model suggests major concerns regarding the efficacy of a PDS model for different and nontraditional teacher education programs in general. The students we were able to recruit for our PDS experiment ultimately did not represent the greater student body of our university’s teacher education program. Whereas our traditional student held a full time job or took care of their children at home, ours could only work part-time in the evenings, and even then many found themselves unable to do both. Our traditional students tended to supplement their tuition and living expenses by holding down a job; our PDS participants found themselves taking out more in loans and/or relying on parents to help pay their bills (some lived at home). Where our traditional student was older—thirties to early fifties—our PDS students averaged 27 years old. In summary, we found it impossible to pair a traditional PDS model with the students whom our enterprise model was designed to serve. Doing so was logistically impossible. Our experience suggests that the amount and degree of difference between the university’s typical teacher education student and those who were able and willing to participate in the PDS model may make the creation of a PDS model for a nontraditional program almost impossible. The program we created was, in reality, serving a different university population than the students whom we had initially been charged to serve. We therefore question at what point a hybrid PDS program evolves (or devolves) into a completely different program.

Different faculty for the PDS

Our issues with university-PDS mismatch were not related just to our student population. The enterprise model’s reliance upon adjunct faculty

proves detrimental to the needs of a PDS model. Our staffing issues proved to be significant enough for us to hypothesize that programs employing active practitioners as adjunct faculty will inevitably have trouble staffing their PDS courses.

Like the vast majority of PDS models, we planned to teach our courses on the K-12 school site during school hours rather than in the evening or on weekends when our regular teacher education program operated. Yet like most enterprise models of education, we relied upon adjunct teaching faculty who work in their respective fields during the day. A strength of the enterprise model—instructors who are current in their field—proved anathema for our PDS model. Although there was a long list of local educators who wanted to teach for the university, we could not adequately staff our courses with them; most were working or did not have the specific requirements we needed for our courses.

Our staffing issues could not be easily resolved by relying on the university's full-time faculty either. When we introduced the PDS model at a departmental faculty meeting, we found ourselves having to explain the PDS concept itself. Some colleagues had never heard of professional development schools while others understood the concept only very generally. In the days and weeks after our presentation, only a select few agreed to teach in the PDS model; one of these later backed out. We learned from subsequent individual conversations with faculty members that they were reluctant to leave behind the course models with which they were comfortable in order to try something new and untested. While there were a number of disincentives for participating in our model, we could offer no strong incentives. The Dean, who could have directed faculty to participate as part of their teaching load, refused to do so.

Based upon existing PDS models, we had originally envisioned having some of the charter school staff teach for us. Yet this too proved unfeasible. Most were busy teaching during class hours and the school had no financial incentive to “cover” for them if they were to teach for us.


Our college was willing to pay these teachers the standard adjunct salary, but it would not pay the school to cover their classes. Only one of the school's employees—the assistant principal assigned to be our liaison—taught for us. The only course she was willing to teach, however, was “Teaching With Love and Logic,” (Fay & Funk, 1995) a packaged concept for which she had already received training and a program that is not without its critics. In the end, we found only a small number of adjunct faculty who would teach for us. My colleague and PDS co-creator took on much of the teaching herself. This, in turn, meant repetition of instructors for different courses.

A major finding from this experiment thus serves to support earlier PDS research: there must be strong congruence—both logistically and ideologically—between university faculty and the PDS model in order for the model to work. In programs that rely heavily upon adjunct faculty, a successful PDS program may require the hiring of new adjunct faculty specifically for that program (faculty who are no longer themselves teaching in K-12 schools but who believe in the overall merits of the PDS concept). Ironically, a trait used as a selling point by schools using the enterprise model—instructors who have recent experience in the field—was simply impossible in the PDS model.

Too much freedom? Enterprise model decision-making and PDS best practices

One of the more important findings of our project highlights that the success of a PDS partnership is not just reliant upon faculty understanding of and buy-in to the PDS model, it is first and foremost reliant upon the respective PDS partners' administrations' understanding of the model, their willingness to collaborate on PDS decision-making, and their mutual commitment to ensuring that there is PDS partner fidelity to the original model (or, lacking that, both sides fairly negotiate changes to the model). Though this notion is certainly nothing new, our experiment examines it in a new context. In so doing, we posit that the administrations of more traditional forms of

teacher education programs and of traditional public schools are by their design better suited to forming effective PDS partnerships than are administrations of enterprise models of teacher education and/or administrations of charter schools. Of course, there can be no denying that virtually all PDS models were constructed around the former models and thus reflect the cultures and values central to them. At the same time, nontraditional models of education and charter schools are both built upon and reflect a different set of values and approaches which, we found, are ultimately not congruent with the formation and operation of a strong PDS. We pull from our experiences here—which we readily admit are very limited and thus not generalizable to all such programs—the belief that the centralized, top-down, and fidelity-focused administrative systems common to enterprise models of education may lend themselves to forming inadequately detailed and weakly structured PDS models that are, in the end, not well understood by the partner school. Similarly, the very autonomy that makes charter schools so popular—e.g., the freedom not just in terms of pedagogy and curricula but to create partnerships and arrangements with outside entities without the burden of district oversight and legal departments—may in the case of PDS partnerships lead to misunderstandings, frustrations, and ultimately to a lack of buy-in to the PDS partnership itself.

Executive decision: osing a partner school. The PDS literature is unequivocal in stating that choosing a school with whom to partner for a PDS is a critical step, one that should not be taken lightly (Goodlad, 1993; The Holmes Partnership, 2007). Rather, faculty of teacher education programs must be “on board” to work in the model and they must have a strong say in what that model should look like. This, of course, requires that faculty members, if not serving as the primary decision-makers for the university, are at least consulted in the major PDS decisions that will affect them, their students, their classroom teaching peers, and the K-12 students ultimately served. Although the enterprise model of education by no means prohibits collaborative decision-making between

faculty and administration, it neither requires nor makes the facilitation of collaborative decision-making easy. Rather, the enterprise model’s centralized nature, its shunning of tenure-track academic faculty (Burgess & Strachan, 1996), and its reliance upon adjunct faculty to teach its courses all give inordinate programmatic and curricular decision-making power to administration. The administration may or may not make wise and informed decisions, including in the choice of, and agreement with, a PDS partner school.

Similarly, with no district to answer to and the anti-union gestalt so common to charter schools (Hinchey & Cadiero-Kaplan, 2005), administrators in these schools find themselves freer to make major decisions independent of a higher chain of command or based upon their faculty’s needs or desires (Malin & Kerchner, 2006). Such freedom, though lauded in conservative school reform movements, also allows for mistakes that are less likely to occur in more traditional schools. A major purpose for district oversight of public schools is to use collective knowledge to make informed decisions. In the present case, these two unique and largely autonomous forces—the administrations of our college and the charter school—came together to form a PDS partnership. They did so autonomously and without first having sought the approval of their respective faculty. This act, we believe, largely set our model up for failure from the start.

Prior to the partnership agreement between our university and the charter school, I had been charged with finding suitable sites for a PDS (this was just before my colleague had been hired). In attempting to mirror the PDS model most frequently described in educational research, I initially looked to partner with a public elementary school. I had done research on the demographics of some of our local schools, examined their success—or lack thereof—on standardized state measurements, and had looked at their faculty to see if where I might make good use of former students and professional contacts. I had just started contacting prospective partner schools when our dean

announced that she had agreed to partner with a specific school—a large, diverse, K-12 charter school about three miles from campus. My task had quickly turned from finding an ideal partner school and tailoring a PDS model for it to creating a model that would work for a K-12 charter school. The project thus started off on a less than solid foundation.

My colleague (who at that time had begun working with me on the project) and I felt, then and now, that such top-down decision-making was antithetical to the goal of creating a workable PDS model: it ignored the expertise she and I had gleaned from reading a wealth of PDS literature and it ignored a central tenet common to almost all successful PDS programs: the need for all stakeholders to be present and participating in making important decisions. This lack of research-based or collaborative decision-making resulted in serious problems during our first year of operation. We believe that this is best exemplified by the fact that throughout our first year and despite our requests and then protestations for help, we were unable to find adequate space in which to teach our courses.

Classroom space: Misunderstood expectations and a lack of school buy-in. Based upon what PDS research suggests is a best practice, we originally planned to use classroom space at the charter school to conduct our classes. The charter school's staff had, at our early meetings, promised classroom spaces for this purpose. Unfortunately, as a tertiary program that was seen as not directly contributing to the school, our PDS program was the first to suffer from overcrowding. We found ourselves struggling—often at the last minute—to find class space in which to teach our courses.

Originally assigned to a relatively small conference room rather than a true teaching space, we made do until three weeks into the term. At that point, the school said it needed that space and relocated our classes to the auditorium's foyer, a dark and cavernous space located between the gym, the auditorium, the band room, and the weight room. It had no desks, whiteboards, or technology, and was,

during class changes, overrun with students. After voicing our concerns about the space to the school liaison, we were given a “portable” classroom on the playground. Our time in this ideal classroom space was unfortunately short-lived; as the school found itself in need of classroom space, we were again relocated. This time we were assigned to an upstairs storage space overlooking the usually loud and busy gymnasium. The space, much like the auditorium foyer, lacked not only technology, but also desks and chairs. Our teaching space was changed four times within the first five months of the program. Why the school had serious space issues mid-year, for example, after count day when the school's population should remain relatively stable or even drop, we never learned. All we knew is that we were shuffled from one bad space to the next with little regard for our needs.

We propose that the space issue resulted directly from problems with both the decision-making structures of our program and that of the charter school. These issues could and likely would have been avoided, we believe, had the PDS partners been closer to those of the models described in the literature. Because of the popularity of the PDS model and its widespread use in traditional teacher education programs, administrators at traditional public schools would have likely better understood the nature of PDS partnerships from the start. Even if this were not the case, however, a traditional school structure has safeguards that would have forced a closer examination of the model prior to its implementation. Before entering into any formal partnership, a traditional school's administration would have had to seek approval from above, which itself would have necessitated a firmer understanding of the model itself. The fact that a traditional public school would have required a formal memorandum of understanding if not a formal contract between the university and the school prior to agreeing to a partnership speaks volumes. The district of a traditional public school would have required greater delineation of the rights and responsibilities of both parties before the process had even started. Greater understanding—and legally

binding consequences—certainly leads to greater investment in the model (Goodlad, 1993). Misunderstandings, conversely, lead to less investment in the success of the PDS partnership.

Not only did we not have any legal or formal document outlying each partner's expectations, needs, and responsibilities—and thus we had no recourse when we faced challenges—we had numerous indications that the top decision-maker at the charter school did not fully understand the tenets of PDS partnerships prior to partnering with us. For example, the school's founder and principal (the same person) agreed to be part of a PDS partnership after only a brief initial meeting with our School's Dean, who was—we later learned—herself unfamiliar with many of the major constructs undergirding existing PDS models. Based upon the latter's limited understanding of PDS models, she could not have fully outlined with the principal the school's responsibilities in a PDS; rather, we subsequently learned that she had downplayed their obligations in a potential partnership.

The fact that the school's leadership did not have a firm grasp of the basic components of the PDS model became obvious as the model was put into action. For example, the school's PDS liaison, questioned in her correspondence with us about classroom space issues why we needed a "real classroom" in order to conduct our teacher education courses. Speaking to the low status of our program, she was also the first staff member at the school to be laid off when the school faced a budget shortage later in the year. The school administration's lack of understanding of the model showed through even when we tried to find ways to help the school. Having approached the school principal, the PDS liaison, and other administrators to find out what kinds of in-service activities or continuing education programs we might provide as a part of our partnership, we were met with blank stares. Emails asking how we might be of service to the school went unanswered. Much like our initial and agreed-upon plan to introduce ourselves and our PDS model to the entirety

of the school's staff, our attempts to conduct in-service trainings never came to fruition. These combined with numerous other examples showing that the school's understanding of and investment in the PDS model was lacking.

Much of the blame for these misunderstandings and for a lack of adequate buy-in to the model rests with the administrative structures of enterprise models and charter schools in general and to our Dean and the school's principal specifically. Combined, their respective top-down management and decision-making processes circumvented the development of clear and attainable expectations for each. The space issue was but the most obvious outcome of this lack of formality and oversight. This is by no means meant to suggest that each of the PDS partners described here shared equal responsibility or blame for this dilemma. Rather, we believe that as the agency responsible for seeking out a PDS partner, the university should have ensured that our K-12 school counterpart adequately understood, agreed to, and was willing and able to abide by a model that would be created with its input and its interests in mind. The governance structure of our department was not well-suited for the task at hand. The person in charge of that structure, unfortunately, failed to seek or accept advice from more knowledgeable faculty. The faculty charged with creating the program—my colleague and I—also failed. We agreed to create a program despite our misgivings and despite the incongruous nature of the demands placed upon us compared to the PDS literature.

Discussion and Conclusions

Creating a professional development school is an inherently difficult and complex endeavor. One must work with many different people, all of whom have their own agendas, their own views of "best practices," and their own ways of communicating their needs. A PDS partnership is, ultimately, the merging of two very different entities, each with its own manner of operation. Such a union is bound to be complicated; conflicts are inevitable. Some of these conflicts

result naturally, the outcome of two entities coming from different perspectives to seek common ground; others result from opposing paradigms or epistemologies where resolutions are all but impossible. In any relationship, success is at least partly based upon a strong initial match between partners. Mismatched partners are far more likely to fail. Such is the story of our efforts to create a professional development school between two very different partners. Though our goals were the same (and were, we believe, noble), we were mismatched from the start.

Unfortunately, nontraditional teacher education programs, especially those that are based upon the enterprise model, face many obstacles to creating a strong PDS program. Their rigid curriculum, reliance upon adjunct faculty (and thus their lack of research-focused faculty), nontraditional student bodies, and course schedules all tend to conflict with the development of a PDS, even in a hybrid form. Those programs operating for profit face even more obstacles. Similarly, charter schools—while offering many PDS partnership possibilities that traditional schools cannot offer—also bring with them unique problems that are not easily rectified through existing PDS models. Of course, partnering with a K-12 school adds even more challenges; the bigger the scope of one of the partners in a PDS, the more complex the model and the more difficult the logistics become. If anything, our experience suggests that, when trying to create a hybrid PDS, at least one side of the partnership should be “traditional.”

It is important to note that this attempt to develop a professional development school had many positive outcomes, outcomes on which the university, my partner in creating the model, and the charter school are still building. Ultimately, we have abundant evidence that our program resulted in many successes. We must, however, question the cost of these successes. Without doubt, creating a hybrid PDS requires a radical departure from the dominant PDS models discussed in the research. However, and as this experiment shows, deviating significantly from these proven models

may itself negate the very foundation behind the PDS movement. Simply put, creating a radically different hybrid may ultimately destroy the model one intended to adapt to one's uses. We created a PDS model and adapted it for our uses. At some point, however, we must step back and evaluate whether what we created met the spirit of John Goodlad, The Holmes Partnership, and myriad others who have invested time, energy, and talent in the PDS experiment. Ultimately, it is up to the reader to decide whether or not what we created here was a true professional development school and at what point a hybrid becomes a new entity altogether.

Though the struggles that my colleague and I faced in trying to bridge the chasm between dominant PDS models and nontraditional teacher education programs are those that others might also encounter (and from which they might learn), many of our experiences could be avoided. We readily acknowledge the many limitations to our experiment and to our interpretation of our experiences with it. Ours was but one attempt to forge a new model of professional development schools. It was imbued with our contexts, our personalities, and our admittedly naïve views. We caution that these findings should not discourage attempts to adapt, change, or even reinvent the dominant PDS models to fit newer and nontraditional teacher education programs. ^{SUP}


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