

Winthrop University – School Partnership Network

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We are very excited to be able to partner, share, and learn not only with a university, but also with partner schools that will help us reach our potential using the wonderful teachers and resources that are available. ~ Partnership Network School Teacher

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John Goodlad, in his book *A Place Called School* (1984), suggested that, in order to improve schools and the work of teachers, a relationship had to exist between institutes of public education and teacher preparation programs. Today Goodlad’s message continues to hold significant bearing on whether or not all students receive a high quality, equitable education. The *Agenda for Education in a Democracy*, formulated by Goodlad and the National Network for Educational Renewal over twenty years ago, promotes simultaneous renewal of P-12 education and educator preparation, advocating equity in schooling and engagement in nurturing pedagogy to meet the diverse needs of students.

The Winthrop University-School Partnership Network is a dynamic, diverse, and growing partnership of educators from nine school districts, thirty schools, and Winthrop University. As a Network, we are emulating Goodlad’s vision of shared responsibility for student achievement through clinically-based teacher preparation, sustained collaborative professional learning, and inquiry and research-based practice. Moving from an “I” to a “we” perspective, our work is a model of how to not just blur, but to remove the lines between university and school for the purpose of supporting learners.

Partnership Mission

The various participants in our Network have individual missions that differ according to contextual factors, affording the partnership wide-ranging perspectives, needs, and inputs. While celebrating each partner’s strengths and contributions, we maintain a shared purpose: *simultaneous renewal of schools and educator preparation with a focus on P-12 student learning through the engagement of collaborative learning communities involving district and university students and faculty*. Using the mission as our foundational cornerstone, the Network partners collaborate to meet four specific goals: (1) Improve P-12 student learning; (2) Improve professional learning for district and university faculty and teacher candidates; (3) Improve quality of teacher preparation; and (4) Increase support for new teachers.

Shared Governance through Structured Roles

As with any diverse organization, we have established a system of shared governance in the Partnership Network to promote regular, active engagement of all partners. The “nine essentials” of a Professional Development School partnership developed by the National Association of Professional Development Schools (NAPDS, 2008) informed elements of our shared governance model. A *Network Management Team (NMT)* guides implementation to meet our four shared goals and includes representatives from three colleges at Winthrop University (Education, Arts and Sciences, and Visual and Performing Arts) and the nine participating school districts. The NMT oversees the ongoing work of the Partnership Network, conducts needs assessments and facilitates professional development activities, informs the redesign and continuing improvement of the teacher preparation curriculum, and regularly analyzes assessment data to determine impact of Network initiatives.

The *Partnership Advisory Council (PAC)* directs the implementation of the Partnership Network at the school level. The PAC consists of a School Liaison from each of the 30 school

sites, nine Winthrop Faculty in Residence (WFIR), and university and district representatives from the NMT who meet monthly. Members of the PAC review and select new schools to join the Partnership Network and are involved in the selection of Mentor Teachers to support teacher preparation and beginning teacher induction.

School Liaisons and *Winthrop Faculty-in-Residence* serve as conduits between university and school to support collaborative professional development, determine research needs, encourage qualified teachers to serve as Mentor Teachers and support their work with teacher candidates and beginning teachers, serve as adjunct instructors and guest speakers, facilitate work between school and university faculty to ensure alignment between course content and sound pedagogical practices, and assist in networking participants.

Partnership Network Structure and Communication

A four-tiered approach to our Partnership Network acknowledges the diverse needs and varying perspectives coming to the table. The organizational design of the Partnership Network is dynamic and developmentally flexible. Where one school may be poised and ready for a significant level of engagement, others that recognize the advantage of the partnership may have limited capacity at the time to participate. In true university-school partnership fashion, stakeholders from all entities met extensively to construct a network structure that would allow for and facilitate public school participation at four differentiated tiers – professional development schools, partner schools, content area assemblies, and satellite schools.

Table 1. Four-Tiered Network Structure

Professional Development School (PDS)
The primary qualification of a PDS is its high commitment to this collaborative endeavor with the majority (2/3) of the school’s teachers committed to the shared mission and willing to support teacher candidates. A significant university presence exists at the school with a university faculty member serving as a Winthrop Faculty-in-Residence for approximately 50% of their workload. PDS faculty members engage in the university through course instruction, partnership governance processes, and special events. The PDS has an identified school liaison (teacher or school leader) to help facilitate partnership-related activity.
Partner Schools
Partner Schools are committed to collaboration; however, there is not necessarily a majority staff commitment to the mission. Nevertheless, there is high interest and the school is in the process of building capacity or may be in waiting to become a PDS. This school has similar benefits as the PDS but will not necessarily have site-based university presence. A university Partnership Coordinator serves as liaison to the Partner Schools and helps facilitate the networking of the Partner Schools with each other, the Professional Development Schools, and the university. Each Partner School has a designated school liaison (teacher or school leader) to help facilitate the partnership-related work.
Content Area Assembly (CAA)
A CAA consists of faculty within a high school department or faculty representing a P-12 certification area across schools and districts. This tier of Partnership Network membership provides an opportunity for group membership in the Network based specifically on a teaching discipline. The Content Area Assembly applies solely to secondary or P-12 certification fields that may experience challenges to gaining the necessary commitment of the entire school

community required for PDS or Partner School tiers.

Satellite Schools

Satellite Schools are sites in a partnering school district where individuals (teachers, school leaders) engage in activities related to Partnership Network goals but school-wide commitment to the partnership collaboration is not possible for various reasons. This tier of the Partnership Network is designed to include individual teachers or school leaders who have a desire to be involved, have contributions to make, but are not situated in a school that is ready or able to commit to ongoing partnership work. The Partnership Coordinator facilitates communication and networking opportunities for individuals in Satellite Schools.

Although the four tiers are distinctive, the intent with this structure is to ensure each remains strongly tied to a network of partners versus a singular relationship between one school and the university as indicated in the following figure.

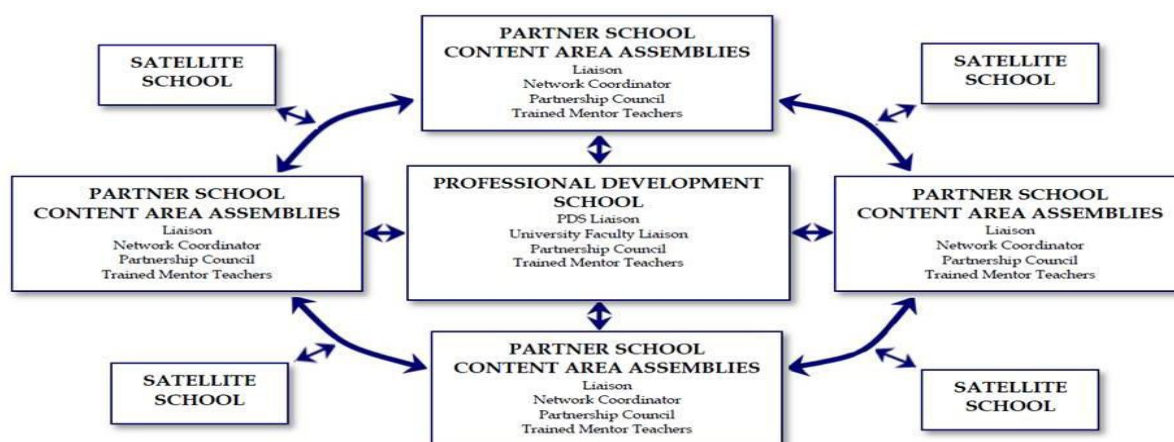


Figure 1. Partnership Network Structure

“Mini-networks” form through shared interests in inquiry-based projects, challenges faced, and/or explorations of innovative practices. Professional Development Schools (PDS) form the hub of the mini-network because of the significant commitment of the school to the partnership and the university faculty member (WFIR) dedicated to the school. These faculty members orchestrate the workings of the mini-network with additional support offered by school and university administrators. Partner Schools and Content Area Assemblies that share similar goals and objectives affiliate themselves with a specific PDS. Satellite Schools, as indicated above, can participate in any of the partnerships through opportunities such as professional development and teacher induction programs. In order to formalize the relationship between Network partners, a tier-specific Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is signed by school, district, and university administrators. The Network Management Team annually examines the MOUs and decides if changes are needed.

Communication between our governing bodies is facilitated through our Partnership Network website (<https://www2.winthrop.edu/netscope/>) that also houses all key information, including MOU documents and meeting records. Professional development offered by the various schools, school districts, and university is publicized with an online registration portal. Details on how to join the Partnership Network and information on becoming a Mentor Teacher,

available mentor training, and the mentoring process are also on the website. A quarterly newsletter also sustains ongoing communication and the sharing of best practices across Partnership sites.

Collaborative Professional Learning

Intensive, high-quality professional development for both new and current classroom teachers is shown to be crucial in transforming schools and improving student academic achievement (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009). Creating professional learning communities that are focused on data-driven, research-based practices for educators is a shared responsibility of our Partnership Network. Working collaboratively, educators in the Network assist each other in professional development, incorporating approaches that have been identified as critical in ensuring teachers are knowledgeable about student learning, academic content, instructional skills, and working with diverse learners, resulting in student learning gains (Yoon, Duncan, Lee, Scarloss, and Shapley, 2007).

Needs assessments of school and university faculty, as well as professional development goals within school improvement plans, define the direction and opportunities necessary to improve student learning. Facilitation of collaborative learning across the Partnership Network occurs through the Professional Learning Opportunities page on the Network website (http://www2.winthrop.edu/netscope/professional_learning.htm). When professional development is scheduled at a partnering school site or at the university, participation is extended to the entire Partnership Network through an online notification and registration system. Sessions that have been piloted at individual sites and proven effective in meeting specific challenges are often replicated at other sites with additional partners. Participants can also specify needs through the online system and prompt new opportunities for all Partnership members. Finally, a comprehensive opportunity for sharing successful practices, innovative strategies, and collaborative research findings occurs at the annual Partnership Conference for Educational Renewal. The conference highlights advancements made through the active engagement of administrators, faculty, teachers, and students in the Partnership Network.

Scientific-based research and data-driven decision making, foundational to the Partnership work, is promoted through a Partnership Network Research and Inquiry Grant Program. The grants support collaborative efforts of classroom teachers and university faculty to solve teaching/learning problems and investigate educational innovations to improve student learning. Collaboration is mandatory for these grants with options including Winthrop teacher candidates as co-investigators, faculty from any of Winthrop's colleges, or other Network school partners. Submitted proposals are reviewed and selected by a subcommittee of the Network Management Team using a published rubric. The NMT as a whole monitors and supports the project implementation and reviews final data for effectiveness and inclusion in overall Partnership Network evaluation.

Professional learning in our schools and in the university classroom benefits greatly from the use of Teachscape Reflect systems, a technology tool that allows Mentor Teachers and teacher candidates to capture video of lessons from a 360° perspective (providing a unique opportunity for teacher reflection on instructional strategies and student engagement). With 15 systems in place across the Partnership Network sites, Teachscape has proven to be a valuable tool for professional learning communities and collaborative action research. According to one of our School Liaisons, "Teachscape videos have allowed us to expand reflective practice.

Teachers tape common lessons, first in one class and then another; then they reflect individually and share reflections. Clips can also be made and shared in departments as teachers seek input on how to tweak lessons and improve student learning.”

Transformed Teacher Preparation Curriculum

Since 2009, the Winthrop University-School Partnership Network has been working to develop a transformational teacher preparation program that is clinically-based. The program involves a dramatic redesign of the 30 semester credit-hour Education Core Curriculum. The purpose of the Core is to provide field-relevant pedagogical content and practical experiences that serve as a foundation to all of our teacher education programs, from Early Childhood Education to secondary and P-12 certification fields. The Education Core plays a key role in consistently and purposefully developing the competencies that we collectively intend to cultivate in all teacher candidates. With clinical experiences beginning in the freshman year and occurring each and every semester thereafter, the program culminates in a year-long senior internship. The Education Core Curriculum requires extensive time in P-12 schools with diverse learners applying concepts learned in coursework. Content of the courses is “wrapped around” a sequence of well-designed and targeted clinical experiences that will occur in the school settings of our Partnership Network under the tutelage of carefully selected and well-trained Mentor Teachers, many of whom were involved in the creation of the curriculum. Having multiple voices and varied perspectives as part of the curriculum development process has proved most beneficial as there is a shared understanding and responsibility for educating the next generation of teachers. Our work in transforming Winthrop’s teacher education curriculum is fully aligned with the recommendations of NCATE’s Report of the Blue Ribbon Panel on Clinical Preparation and Partnerships for Improved Student Learning (NCATE, 2010) that called for the education of teachers in the U.S. to be “turned upside down.” The report challenges universities to move to programs that are “fully grounded in clinical practice,” providing “varied and extensive opportunities for candidates to connect what they learn with the challenge of using it while under the expert tutelage of skilled clinical educators” (p. ii). Because of the complexity and importance of the internship experiences, the Partnership Advisory Council crafted a model for Mentor Teachers that would not only be better aligned with mentoring for beginning teachers but would explicitly outline the guidelines and compensation for working with teacher candidates during various levels and experiences. As seen in the model, part of the work of Mentor Teachers is the participation in curriculum and benchmark processes.

Service Level	Expertise	Guidelines	Evaluation and Reflection	Compensation
Host Teacher ¹	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher Education Curriculum Training Preservice Teacher Development 	Engage with and guide Winthrop teacher education students during early field work (freshman and sophomore years). Communicate with university personnel about Winthrop student progress.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Debriefing with university staff and school liaison Classroom observation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access to professional learning opportunities \$50/semester
Mentor Teacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Foundations in Mentoring ADEPT Teacher Education Curriculum Training Preservice Teacher Development Ongoing Mentor Professional Development 	Engage with Winthrop teacher education students during freshman and sophomore year experiences and host junior field experience student or year-long intern. Participate in ongoing professional development to enhance mentoring skills (school workshops, district workshops, etc.) and provide input on teacher education program admissions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Self-assessment of mentoring practices with sample conference from formative assessment cycle Debriefing with university staff and school liaison Feedback from teacher candidate(s), University Supervisors, and/or induction year teacher(s) Classroom observation Completion of an annual Professional Learning/Activity Log 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Winthrop Faculty and Staff ID Access to Winthrop library Reduced rates at WU arts and athletic events Ability to purchase WU faculty parking pass and West Center membership Invitation to annual Mentor Symposium \$200/semester
Master Mentor ²	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Foundations in Mentoring ADEPT Teacher Education Curriculum Training Preservice Teacher Development Ongoing Mentor Professional Development Advanced Mentor Training 	Engage with Winthrop teacher education students during early field work (freshman and sophomore years) and host junior field experience student or year-long intern. Assume a leadership role in mentor development (advanced mentor training, site-based observations, training and development of current/future mentors, etc.). Participate in teacher preparation curriculum review and admissions processes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Self-assessment of mentoring practices with sample conference from formative assessment cycle Debriefing with university staff and school liaison Feedback from teacher candidate(s), University Supervisors, and/or induction year teacher(s) Classroom observation Completion of an annual Professional Learning/Activity Log 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Winthrop Faculty and Staff ID Access to Winthrop library Reduced rates at WU arts and athletic events Ability to purchase WU faculty parking pass and West Center membership Invitation to annual Mentor Symposium Highlight on Winthrop's website as clinical faculty (picture, school, training, etc.) \$300/semester

Figure 2. *Mentor Teacher Model*

Specifically, the year-long internship experience allows candidates to follow the school and not the university calendar. As candidates begin the school year with their Mentor Teachers in Partnership Network schools, they are afforded a unique opportunity to serve as “junior faculty members” for an entire school year alongside master educators. The year-long internship is also rewarding for our Mentor Teachers and of real benefit to our Partnership Network schools – having two capable adults for an entire year to support diverse learning needs. Although sites build a supportive environment in different ways, small acts such as posting the candidate’s name on the outside of the classroom door, giving the candidate a school t-shirt to wear on spirit days, and providing a district email account highlight a willing and eager approach by the school to embrace their role in teacher preparation.

We are continuously assessing the year-long experience for its benefit to each partner. Survey evaluations and annual focus groups provide an opportunity to share the successes and challenges of implementation. Data are then shared with the Partnership Advisory Council and Network Management Team for continuous program improvement. Overall, the experience has resulted in overwhelmingly positive feedback. Additional information on assessing Partnership effectiveness is described in the following section.

Measuring Effectiveness and Reflective Practice

The Partnership Network utilizes an annual performance template to measure the effect initiatives are having towards achieving the four Network goals. Partnering schools develop measurable objectives that address needs within their individual sites that are then collectively pooled to measure the impact of the Partnership Network as a whole. At the end of each school year, data is reported relative to each goal and objective with supporting analyses regarding how to move forward.

Underline One: <u>Professional Development School</u> or Partner School		Academic Year: 2011-2012		
Name of School:				
School District:				
Directions: For each goal, specify measureable objective(s). Using the objective, identify related activities, necessary resources, evaluation methods, and resulting data-based outcomes (after implementation). Provide a one paragraph justification for the objective(s) chosen for each goal. Add additional rows as necessary. Final reports for the past year and plans for the upcoming year will be due August 30 each year.				
Goal 1. Improve P-12 learning through innovative and reflective practice.				
Objective 1a: Increase 85% of individual student text levels (K-5) to at or above appropriate grade level by May 2012.				
Activities	Resources Available	Resources Needed	Evaluation Methods	Data-Based Outcomes
1a.1: Post individual students' text levels on Assessment wall (all students K-2, students scoring NM on PASS or students reading below grade level (3-5).	assessment wall, leveled texts in book nook, running records/miscue analyses, Rigby Benchmark Notebooks, Dominic Assessment Kits, Fountas and Pinnell Assessment Kits, District	paper, leveled texts, additional Fountas and Pinnell Assessment Kits	classroom text level on a page sheets, assessment notebooks, assessment wall, individual student text level progress reports, end of year text level charts and postings in	End of the year testing showed that 81% of all students scored at or above grade level in reading accuracy and comprehension. 19% scored below grade level in reading and comprehension. Of the 19%, scoring below grade level, 94% showed significant gains from the

Figure 3. *Winthrop University – School Partnership: School-Based Goals, Objectives and Outcomes*

As plans are collected, information on specific “focus areas” is added to the Partnership Network website to facilitate communication and collaboration. Partners within the Network can identify others working in similar domains and share resources to accomplish common goals. University faculty can search sites appropriate for collaborative, field-based research or engage in service activities with schools in need of specific expertise. Finally, assistance can be offered to schools beginning a new focus that others have been exploring and addressed successfully.

Other reflective practices include gathering and analyzing internship survey data and teacher candidate (interns), Mentor Teacher, and university supervisor focus group feedback. The data from these various sources are compiled and used for program improvement through the Network Management Team (NMT), Partnership Advisory Council, and university committees on which School Liaisons and administrators play a role. Additionally, the NMT annually examines achievement data as a reflection on past initiatives and a source of information for future work, maintaining a Network focus on P-12 student learning.

Conclusion

From the onset, our desire is to demonstrate the significant value in having multiple voices contributing to the conversation with the shared commitment to improving teaching and learning in P-12 schools. Whether on the topic of teacher preparation, student achievement, mentoring new teachers, or supporting administrators, understanding and embracing diverse perspectives results in stronger teachers and, consequently, improved student learning. Although difficult at times, moving from an “I” to a “we” mentality has resulted in several noteworthy accomplishments and achievements.

- Transformed teacher preparation curriculum including a year-long internship;
- 4-tiered Partnership Network structure with shared governance and defined roles;
- A multi-leveled Mentor Teacher program;
- Collaborative professional development built upon expertise within the Partnership;
- Collaborative inquiry to inform educational practice; and
- An elaborate and ongoing assessment system for determining impact.

In spring 2012, Winthrop University received national recognition from the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education for work in field and clinical experiences and assessment practices. Such acclaim is due in no small part to the work of the Winthrop University-School Partnership Network. And, where the national recognition is invigorating and affirming, there is yet another accomplishment of which we are most proud: *improved student learning*. For example, a project-based learning implementation with 251 elementary students resulted in 40% gains shown on standards-based pre/post assessments. A reading initiative for struggling learners found statistically significant increases in student achievement on standardized measures. As a result of implementing the co-teaching model with general and special education teachers at a partnering middle school, reading and math standardized test scores of co-taught students (including students with disabilities) showed significantly higher growth than comparison groups. As the number one shared goal in our Partnership Network, the improvements we see in student learning through the dedication and innovation of collaborative partnership is the accomplishment of which we are most proud.

References

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