

## Denton/UNT Professional Development School

The Denton/UNT PDS is a research-based collaborative partnership between the Denton Independent School District and the University of North Texas College of Education.

### Brief overview

The Denton PDS, formed in 1994, began at Borman Elementary, and by 1997 had grown to nine schools, and divided into three separate cadres of three schools. In 2002, the PDS became reconstructed such that only one PDS cadre encompassed potentially all schools in Denton ISD, but engages only enough schools each year to accommodate the number of student interns assigned to the cadre, which range from 25 and upwards to 50 in some years. At the lower end, six elementary and two middle schools are engaged in the process of PDS, whereas, at the upper end, up to 13 partner schools have been engaged in one year.

### Current practice

The PDS is organized into teams: principal, teacher leaders, supervisors, instructional, and student interns. Each team meets at least twice annually for different purposes.

- Principals meet to set logistics and timing of entry and exit of student interns, place interns, and review data from previous research to determine the direction of the program.
- Teacher leaders twice meet to organize and twice to present mentor teacher preparation for the receipt and guidance of student interns.
- Supervisors meet to discuss the procedures for supervision, present student interns with expectations prior to entry into the field, and discuss standing of interns during field placements.
- Instructional staff meet to discuss methods course connections as related to the field where student interns are observing.
- Student intern team members meet to discuss, plan, and implement seminars held weekly during the spring semester.

All teams coordinate through the university site coordinator.

Partner Schools, 2007-2008

Elementary Schools: Hodge, Evers Park, Lee, Borman, Hawk, McNair, Ryan

Middle School: Strickland, Crownover

## PDS Structure

The program is one academic year, the final year of the students' degree.

### Semester I

- Students interns attend class two days a week
- Student interns observe in the field two days a week
- Mentor teachers create schedules for interns to learn about school culture, adult responsibilities in the school, and general school operations
- Student interns engage with all mentor teachers during the seven week placement in the school
- Student interns are placed in two school settings, one Title I, one non-Title I
- The beginnings of a professional portfolio are presented at the end of the semester

### Semester II

- Student interns return to one of the two school in the following semester
- Each student intern is placed with two different mentor teachers for seven weeks
- Mentor teachers serve in the capacity as mentor for only seven weeks
- Student interns create, plan, and implement weekly seminars on topics of their interest
- Mentor teachers, principals, district, university, and community people aid the student interns in the seminars, as the interns request assistance
- A professional portfolio is presented at the end of the semester

## Research Agendas

### Institutional Research

Conducted annually in May, teachers, principals, interns, and supervisors are surveyed for their understanding of the team performance of the Denton PDS. The Team Development Model, PERFORM acronym is used as the basis for the instrument. Five years of data suggest that the team has progressed toward a high performing team.

### Academic Research

Beginning in 2005 a mathematics tutoring project was initiated during the fall of each of three years, 2005, 2006, 2007. Student interns are prepared as tutors of mathematics in the math methods course, then tutor for six weeks in the schools. Students tutored are randomly selected from among all students in grades 3-8 identified by the district as deficient in some mathematics areas. Three years of data indicate that students show significant gains at  $p < .05$  level when an ANOVA was applied to the data.

### Phenomenological Research

Beginning in the fall of 2007, at the behest of a mentor teacher, Fiesta Math Nights was initiated. The math methods and social studies methods instructors adjusted their classes to prepare student interns to create math games that cultural relevance to the Latino culture, the dominant culture of the two schools targeted for presentation. From the experiences at the two schools grew a study of the phenomenon, through qualitative analysis of reflective writings of the student interns. The study is being conducted by two student interns and an instructor.

### Action Research

Beginning in the spring of 2008, sixty mentor teachers committed to work with 30 student interns, in two rotations, to conduct individual action research projects in each of the 60 classrooms. Each project is developed by individual mentor teachers, with student interns serving as both data collectors, data processors, and, at times, data generators. The coordinator will conduct a case study of the phenomenon to determine the affect of the project on student interns' and mentor teachers' attitudes toward future research in the classroom. Currently, the district and university are planning an evening of research presentations.

### Strengthsquest

All student interns have completed the Strengthsquest profile. The office of student services works with the student interns on the use of their profile in developing resumes, dealing with parents, portfolio preparation, self-assessment. At the end of the semester an exit interview and survey will be conducted to determine the level of use of the profile on student professional portfolio development, job interviews, and perception of self as ready for teaching.

