

**Buffalo State College
Professional Development School Consortium**

External Evaluation

Final Report

Prepared for

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Executive Summary

The Buffalo State College (BSC) Professional Development School Consortium was founded in 1991 by the Department of Elementary Education and Reading (EER). At present, the Consortium involves 45 schools and has been recognized as a program of excellence by the New York State Association of Teacher Educators (NYSATE), the New York Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (NYACTE), and the Association of Teacher Educators (ATE).

As a goal for the period 2005-2008, the Buffalo State College PDS Advisory Council and Consortium recommended that an external evaluation be conducted in order to find ways for connecting the PDS program to a wider constituency and for obtaining the resources necessary for such a change. In Fall 2006, the Dean of the School of Education and Associate Vice President for Teacher Education at Buffalo State College employed an external evaluator to conduct a study that would look for indicators of benefits of the PDS as well as any areas of concerns. The evaluator worked with the Dean, Interim Chair of EER, and the Director of the PDS to develop the goals and objectives and ways and means for the evaluation. These included an examination of the BSC website, documents (electronic and hard copy), two visits to the BSC campus in Buffalo, New York (February 20-23, and April 25-27, 2007), visits to four (4) PDS school sites, participant-observations of a PDS Consortium meeting and a PDS Advisory Council meeting; and interviews with school teachers and administrators, and university faculty and administrators.

Analysis of the data resulted in the following findings:

Focus Area 1: Community

Evaluation Question 1.A: Do teacher candidates feel that they are welcomed and valued in the PDS and that they belong to the school community?

- **Teacher candidates feel they are welcomed and valued in the PDS and that they are members of the school community.**
- **Mentor teachers and BSC faculty recognize the contributions made by teacher candidates to teaching as a profession.**
- **Teacher candidates in some certification programs at BSC are not as connected to schools as those from EER.**
- **Spending extended time in one school could be an additional benefit for teacher candidate development.**

Evaluation Question 1.B: Do PDS principals and mentoring teachers feel some ownership in relation to teacher candidates and teacher preparation in general?

- **By and large, principals and mentoring teachers in the BSC PDS Consortium are staunch supporters of the partnership and feel connected to it.**
- **Spending extended time in one school could be an additional benefit for teacher candidate development.**
- **More guidance and resources for the role of the mentoring teacher are needed.**

Evaluation Question 1.C: Do PDS principals, mentoring teachers, young students, teacher candidates, and college faculty feel positive connections to one another?

- **The overall strength of the BSC PDS Consortium is the quality and extent of its professional learning community.**

Focus Area 2: School and Instructional Practices and Professional Development

Evaluation Question 2.A: Is there increased/improved communication about instructional practices as a result of involvement with PDS? How are all members of the partnership benefiting?

- **There is increased/improved communication about instructional practices as a result of involvement with PDS.**
- **Teacher candidates benefit the most from increased/improved communication about instructional practices.**

Evaluation Question 2.B: Have instructional practices changed as a result of involvement with the PDS? How are all members of the partnership benefiting?

- **There is some evidence that instructional practices have changed as a result of involvement with the PDS for preservice and inservice teachers resulting in benefits for young students.**

Evaluation Question 2.C: Are the PDSs using evidence-based practices designed to promote success of all learners?

- **There is some disagreement regarding the use of evidence-based practices designed to promote success of all learners.**

Evaluation Question 2.D: How have the collaboratively designed action research mini-grants impacted the professional development of all partners and ultimately impacted young student achievement?

- Although there is some evidence that the collaboratively designed action research mini-grants have impacted the professional development of partners and impacted young student achievement, the evidence is *limited to self-report*. Because the projects are separate case studies, there are no means for aggregating the results of the projects to determine a *collective impact* at the Consortium level.

Evaluation Question 2.E: How have the PDS Consortium meetings and retreats impacted best practices?

See Evaluation Question 2.A, above.

Focus Area 3: Governance, Structure, and Resources

Evaluation Question 3.A: What are the strengths and needs of the present governance systems?

- The strength of the present governance system lies in the quality of its management and accountability mechanisms.
- The governance system should include a full-time Director of the PDS and appropriate support staff.

Evaluation Question 3.B: What are the strengths and needs of the current PDS budget?

- The strength of the current PDS budget is that it is designed primarily to support activities at the school and Consortium levels.
- The current PDS budget does not adequately support the appointment of a full-time Director of PDS and appropriate staff.
- The current PDS budget does not adequately support the work of lecturers, tenure track faculty, site liaisons, and mentoring teachers in the PDS.
- The current PDS budget does not adequately support large-scale studies that would demonstrate the effectiveness of the PDS at the classroom, school, and Consortium levels.

Evaluation Question 3C: How can the PDS become a stronger institutionalized component of BSC?

- **The PDS can become a stronger institutionalized component of BSC by providing formal structures and dedicated resources for supporting the work of tenure track faculty, full-time lecturers, and mentoring teachers in the PDS.**
- **The PDS can become a stronger institutionalized component of BSC by extending the Consortium to include other teacher certification programs in the College.**
- **The PDS can become a stronger institutionalized component of BSC by redesigning the current PDS experience for teacher candidates into an internship that includes student teaching.**

Evaluation Question 3D: How can PDS be highlighted as an asset to the college?

- **The PDS can be highlighted as an asset to the College by clearly defining and operationalizing the BSC PDS model, its role, and commitment for the purpose of ensuring teacher quality and school improvement.**
- **The PDS can be highlighted as an asset to the College by connecting the work of the Consortium to school systems and including representatives from the school system level.**
- **The PDS can be highlighted as an asset by supporting large-scale studies that would demonstrate the effectiveness of the PDS at the classroom, school, and Consortium levels.**

Based on these findings, the following recommendations were made:

Focus Area 1: Community

- **Extend the PDS field experience concept to other teacher certification programs at Buffalo State College.**
- **Reconceptualize the PDS field experience as a professional internship of two consecutive semesters that also includes student teaching.**
- **Reinvent the role of the mentoring teacher as pivotal to the success of the PDS through training and compensation.**

Focus Area 2: School and Instructional Practices and Professional Development

- **Create a focused agenda for professional development across the PDS Consortium in collaboration with school and district level needs.**
- **Create a focused agenda for action research across the PDS Consortium that coordinates with the focused professional development described above.**

Focus Area 3: Governance, Structure, and Resources

- **Appoint a full-time Director of PDS and appropriate support staff.**
- **Create formal structures and dedicated resources for supporting the work of tenure track faculty, full-time lecturers, and mentoring teachers in the PDS.**
- **Clearly define and operationalize the BSC PDS model, its role, and commitment for the purpose of ensuring teacher quality and school improvement.**
- **Develop an agenda and obtain resources for a large-scale study of the effectiveness of the PDS on teaching and learning.**

Introduction

The Buffalo State College (BSC) Professional Development School Consortium was founded in 1991 by the Department of Elementary Education and Reading (EER) as a single partner collaboration between a local school, a literacy methods instructor, a special education instructor, and 18 teacher candidates. Since then, the BSC Consortium of Professional Development Schools (PDS) has increased to 45 schools. Through its PDS work, the EER Department's Teacher Education PDS program has become multidimensional in its scope. School administrators and practicing teachers work cooperatively with EER faculty to design and facilitate the program requirements that Childhood, Early Childhood, Combined Childhood and Early Childhood, and Dual Childhood and Exceptional Education majors must meet. Ninety percent of the EER faculty is directly involved with the PDS, as well as faculty from the Exceptional Education Department, Educational Foundations Department, and members of the Arts and Sciences faculty at BSC. In 2006-2007, there were approximately 1,300 BSC teacher candidates in the program who provided approximately 90,000 contact hours in the service of young students in Western New York State.

The BSC Consortium of PDS has been recognized as a program of excellence both regionally and nationally. The teacher education program, which is the core of the PDS, is accredited by the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). In 2003, it received the Distinguished Program Award from the New York State Association of Teacher Educators and the New York Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (NYSATE/NYACTE). In 2005, it received national recognition as the Distinguished Program in Teacher Education by the Association of Teacher Educators (ATE). Also in 2005, BSC became a Gold Benefactor (Founding Member) of the National Association for Professional Development Schools (NAPDS).

Purpose of the Evaluation

As a goal for the period 2005-2008, the Buffalo State College PDS Advisory Council and Consortium recommended that an external evaluation be conducted in order to find ways for connecting the PDS program to a wider constituency and for obtaining the resources necessary for such a change. In Fall 2006, the Dean of the School of Education and Associate Vice President for Teacher Education at Buffalo State College employed an external evaluator to conduct a study that would look for indicators of benefits of the PDS as well as any areas of concerns. The evaluator worked with the Dean, Interim Chair of EER, and the Director of the PDS to develop the goals and objectives and ways and means for the evaluation. These included an examination of the BSC website, documents (electronic and hard copy), two visits to the BSC campus in Buffalo, New York (February 20-23, and April 25-27, 2007), visits to four (4) PDS school sites, participant-observations of a PDS Consortium meeting and a PDS Advisory Council meeting, and interviews with school teachers and administrators, and university faculty and administrators. The agendas for the visits are included in Attachment A.

Delimitations of the Evaluation

The evaluation study was delimited to a set of guiding questions developed by the executive team of the PDS Consortium and mutually agreed upon by the team and the evaluator (see Attachment B). The questions focused on three broad areas: (1) Community, (2) School and Instructional Practices and Professional Development, and (3) Governance, Structures, and Resources. The evaluation did not include a study of the breadth, depth, and quality of the teacher preparation programs at BSC. Also, the evaluation did not include a study of the breadth, depth, and quality of the curriculum for young children in any of the partner schools. Rather, it included only those aspects of the teacher preparation programs directly related to the general purpose and overall effectiveness of the PDS Consortium's design, operations, and outcomes.

Evaluation Criteria and Evaluation Questions

The framework used for the evaluation was an adaptation of the Maryland Standards for Professional Development Schools (<http://www.marylandpublicschools.org>) which are based on the Standards for Professional Development Schools of the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) (<http://www.ncate.org>). Both sets of standards are research based, field-tested, and provide commonality for school-university-community partnerships in the U.S. and abroad. The standards provide a common language and definitions for developing understanding, building consensus, and taking action within and between diverse partnerships at the local, state, and national levels.

Focus areas for the evaluation study were based on the three broad categories developed by the executive team of the PDS Consortium and posed in the form of evaluation questions:

Focus Area 1: Community

Evaluation Question 1A: Do teacher candidates feel that they are welcomed and valued in the PDS and that they belong to the school community?

Evaluation Question 1B: Do PDS principals and mentoring teachers feel some ownership in relation to teacher candidates and teacher preparation in general?

Evaluation Question 1C: Do PDS principals, mentoring teachers, young students, teacher candidates, and college faculty feel positive connections to one another?

Focus Area 2: School and Instructional Practices and Professional Development

Evaluation Question 2A: Is there increased/improved communication about instructional practices as a result of involvement with PDS? How are all members of the partnership benefiting?

Evaluation Question 2B: Have instructional practices changed as a result of involvement with the PDS? How are all members of the partnership benefiting?

Evaluation Question 2C: Are the PDSs using evidence-based practices designed to promote success of all learners?

Evaluation Question 2D: How have the collaboratively designed action research mini-grants impacted the professional development of all partners and ultimately impacted young student achievement?

Evaluation Question 2E: How have the PDS Consortium meetings and retreats impacted best practices?

Focus Area 3: Governance, Structure, and Resources

Evaluation Question 3A: What are the strengths and needs of the present governance systems?

Evaluation Question 3B: What are the strengths and needs of the current PDS budget?

Evaluation Question 3C: How can the PDS become a stronger institutionalized component of BSC?

Evaluation Question 3D: How can PDS be highlighted as an asset to the college?

Data Collection

Data for the evaluation were qualitative and collected from a variety of sources to ensure triangulation. Data sources included the following:

Review of Documents: Electronic and hard copy documents were reviewed before, during, and after the visits. Documents reviewed are listed in Attachment B.

Site Visits: The evaluator visited the following BSC PDS schools for approximately 2 hours each. Visits included walk-throughs of the buildings and orientation to the PDS program by a school administrator and/or a university representative. Site visits included the following:

- February 21: School #43, Buffalo, NY
- February 22: Enterprise Charter School
- April 26: Hoover Elementary School (included observations of 2 student teachers)
- April 26: School #82, Buffalo, NY (visit limited to Family Math Night activities)

Participant Observations: The evaluator participated in two regularly scheduled meetings of the PDS Consortium held April 27, 2007, at Hoover Elementary School. The first was the PDS Consortium Meeting that involved approximately 50 teachers, principals, BSC faculty, and teacher candidates. The evaluator observed participants in their “role-alike” groups as they discussed questions about assessing professional dispositions for teacher candidates. The evaluator also spoke briefly to the group regarding the purpose of the external evaluation for the future growth and development of the Consortium. The Advisory Council meeting immediately followed the Consortium meeting, and approximately 15 members were in attendance. Following a discussion of the agenda items, the evaluator spoke to the group about initial thoughts and impressions derived from the visits to BSC.

Interviews: Individual interviews were conducted with the Dean of the School of Education, the Chair of the Department of Elementary Education and Reading, the Director of the PDS, the Professor/Coordinator of the Niagara County Community College (NCCC) Childhood Education Program, a Co-Director of Project FLIGHT, a faculty researcher from the Center for Excellence in Urban and Rural Education (CEURE), two (2) school principals, and three (3) tenure track faculty from the School of Education. Group interviews were conducted with the BSC Provost and Deans (n = 4); PDS faculty (n = 15); teacher candidates in methods classes at School #43 (n = 15); teacher candidates from various cohorts and stages in the program (n = 18); school principals (n = 5); Enterprise Charter School staff and faculty (n = 12); student teaching supervisors and the Director of Student Teaching for Childhood Education (n = 7); student teachers (n = 11); secondary education faculty and the Director of Student Teaching for Secondary Education (n = 4); mentor teachers for Childhood Education (n = 10); and BSC tenure track faculty involved in teacher preparation (n = 5).

Interview questions were adapted from Appendix J, PDS Site Visit General Interview Questions, found in the *Professional Development School Assessment Framework for Maryland* (2003). Interviews were conducted formally and informally in a variety of settings during the visit. Formal interviews were conducted in designated locations at the school sites and the School of Education building. Formal interviews were audio taped and field notes and summaries were made during and after the sessions. The audiotapes were destroyed following analysis.

Data Analysis

This was a qualitative study that looked for the positive indicators of the benefits of the BSC PDS as well as any possible areas of concern for the future growth and effectiveness of the PDS Consortium within a framework of nationally recognized PDS standards and best practices. This study did not evaluate specific content of teacher preparation

programs not directly connected to the general purpose and overall effectiveness of the PDS Consortium's design, operations, and outcomes.

Common themes were drawn from analysis of documents, interviews, and participant observations. Findings were identified when the data met the following criteria:

1. Interview themes were held in common by 80% to 100% of the participants interviewed. This ensured that data saturation, strengthening the accuracy of the findings.
2. Identified findings pertained directly to the issues that were the focus of the study.
3. Findings were identified as significant to the development of the BSC PDS Consortium based on the evaluator's interpretation of responses and supporting data.

Limitations

Several cautions/limitations should be considered when examining the findings and recommendations of this study. First, the evaluation of the BSC PDS Consortium was limited to qualitative data. No assessment instruments were used for assessing the opinions of the Consortium's constituents nor their performance. Instead, data for the study were drawn from observations and interviews with the various constituents as well as an examination of numerous documents that served as evidence of the breadth and depth of the Consortium's collaborative activities. Finally, many of the findings and conclusions are based on perceptions and observations of both the evaluator and the participating informants. Certain biases may be present based on personal experiences, educational background, and training.

Findings of the Evaluation

Focus Area 1: Community

Evaluation Question 1.A: Do teacher candidates feel that they are welcomed and valued in the PDS and that they belong to the school community?

Finding 1.A.1: Teacher candidates feel they are welcomed and valued in the PDS and that they are members of the school community.

Like most teacher candidates, they view their field experiences as the most important part of their teacher preparation. Participation in the PDS enables them to extend their initial teaching experiences beyond the classroom by participating in service learning projects such as one-on-one tutoring and Family Nights for math or literacy. Recently, teacher candidates have been issued yellow ID tags that distinguish them as BSC students in the school sites, thus providing more visibility for the cohorts in the buildings.

Finding 1.A.2: Mentor teachers and BSC faculty recognize the contributions made by teacher candidates to teaching as a profession.

Mentor teachers and BSC faculty noted how the teacher candidates bring a “cheerful optimism” to the schools and classrooms during a time when many schools and teachers are feeling the press of the expectations of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation. In turn, teacher candidates felt they had received excellent feedback and moral support from their supervisors and instructors from BSC and their mentoring teachers in the schools. Mentors and BSC faculty modeled content-specific instruction and provided opportunities for discussion and reflection through seminars.

Finding 1.A.3: Teacher candidates in some certification programs at BSC are not as connected to schools as those from EER.

Some candidates noted that “Childhood Education students have an advantage” over their counterparts in other teacher preparation programs at BSC because students in other programs do not undergo a PDS-based field experience. The PDS model provides a site-based liaison (teacher coordinator) who provides internal support to the candidates and works collaboratively with the methods instructor/and or student teaching supervisor.

Finding 1.A.4: Spending extended time in one school could be an additional benefit for teacher candidate development.

Some candidates felt they had an advantage when they had been placed at the same school for two semesters of their methods courses because they were able to “know the kids names, routines, and rules of the school, as well as the behavior plan [used at the school].” Also, some teacher candidates believed that student teaching should be “a complete year in one building” while different schools are used for the field experiences in the methods courses.

Evaluation Question 1.B: Do PDS principals and mentoring teachers feel some ownership in relation to teacher candidates and teacher preparation in general?

Finding 1.B.1: By and large, principals and mentoring teachers in the BSC PDS Consortium are staunch supporters of the partnership and feel connected to it.

As one principal stated, “The PDS is the jewel in the crown of Buffalo State College.” Principals felt that having teacher candidates in their buildings helped build capacity for change through coordination of the K-6 curriculum and instruction with that of the teacher preparation program. Methods instructors and/or student teaching supervisors from BSC were viewed as resources within their buildings. Principals were consulted and asked for their input regarding candidate placements, logistics, and content of the field experiences. Service learning projects, tutoring, and general “hands on” assistance provided by teacher candidates were all viewed as positive aspects of the PDS relationship with BSC.

As with the principals, mentoring teachers in the Consortium also strongly support the partnership with BSC. They applaud having the methods courses taught on site for the teacher candidates, thus providing “benefits to the whole school.” Having cohorts of teacher candidates in the building helps foster collaboration within the school (teacher-to-teacher) and between the school and BSC (teacher-to-BSC PDS faculty). Specific connections to the PDS cited were Family Night experiences planned and executed by the teacher candidates, information packets provided by the methods instructors and/or student teaching supervisors, after-school meetings, and breakfast meetings held at the individual schools.

Finding 1.B.2: Spending extended time in one school could be an additional benefit for teacher candidate development.

Some principals noted that they would like to see more “looping” for candidates’ field placements (i.e., candidates undergoing two consecutive placements including student teaching within the same building). This arrangement, which is implemented at some sites by some PDS faculty and cohorts, provides for more consistency in support of teacher candidates’ development and makes for smoother transitions in supervision.

Some mentoring teachers also recommended that the “looping” approach, be implemented in order to “better evaluate the growth of teacher candidates.” Requiring methods candidates to spend a full day rather than several partial days in a classroom would also be beneficial.

Finding 1.B.3: More guidance and resources for the role of the mentoring teacher are needed.

Mentoring teachers requested more guidance about “how to best utilize” teacher candidates during their time with them. In particular, they requested having more time to sit down with the methods candidates to discuss and reflect on the assessment of the methods candidates’ performance. Also, mentoring teachers would like professional development on “how to be productive for observations” of teacher candidates, information about general best practices for mentoring teachers, and training for using technology in the classroom that would be coordinated with candidates’ skills for using technology.

Evaluation Question 1.C: Do PDS principals, mentoring teachers, young students, teacher candidates, and college faculty feel positive connections to one another?

Finding 1.C.1: The overall strength of the BSC PDS Consortium is the quality and extent of its professional learning community.

All learners—from the youngest child to the most senior of faculty and administrators—are actively involved in the life of the Consortium. From within, BSC teacher candidates are connected to their young students, providing developing instructional expertise and boundless enthusiasm for their chosen profession. Mentoring

teachers are committed to the nurturance and development of the teacher candidates in their charge and view themselves as partners with BSC faculty and administrators. Principals welcome the candidates as junior members of the school staff and view themselves as partners with BSC, as well. Finally, BSC faculty and administrators demonstrate the highest level of commitment and caring to the entire PDS enterprise by providing an organized and systematic program of PDS activities and support. Substantive connections to other entities, such as CEURE and Project FLIGHT, enhance and extend the professional learning community in meaningful and productive ways.

Focus Area 2: School and Instructional Practices and Professional Development

Evaluation Question 2.A: Is there increased/improved communication about instructional practices as a result of involvement with PDS? How are all members of the partnership benefiting?

Finding 2.A.1: There is increased/improved communication about instructional practices as a result of involvement with PDS.

At the classroom or school building level, methods courses and seminars within the teacher preparation program and targeted/coordinated professional development for inservice teachers are the primary vehicles for increasing/improving communication about instructional practices. At the Consortium or network level, the two primary vehicles for increasing/improving communication about instructional practices are the regularly scheduled Consortium meetings and retreats as well as the use of the BSC PDS website. Each year Consortium meetings have showcased instructional practices, including action research projects sponsored by CEURE and other funding agencies. Participants at the meetings have the opportunity to listen to presentations about projects and effective instructional strategies in content areas such as reading, math, and science. The meetings are held in different venues, such as schools and museums, which also contribute to the overall learning experience of the meetings.

The PDS Consortium's website is an excellent source of information about the Consortium and its partners and supports general communication for all members of the partnership. In addition, many of the presentations given at the meetings, retreats, and national conferences have been frequently downloaded from the site (see Website Statistics Report, 2005).

Finding 2.A.2: Teacher candidates benefit the most from increased/improved communication about instructional practices.

In general, teacher candidates benefit the most from communication and experiences focused on instructional practices. Inservice teachers and BSC faculty may also benefit if deliberate connections are made through course content, action research, and other curriculum-focused projects. This level of connection and benefit to *all* teachers, however, mainly occurs in those PDSs deemed by BSC as being at the "at standard" stage of PDS development (approximately one-third of the PDSs in the Consortium).

Finally, all members of the Consortium benefit insofar as they have access to information from the meetings. However, it is assumed that those who benefit the most are those who actually *engage in* applying, testing, and reflecting on the strategies either as individuals or as members of teams. There are no conclusive data available that demonstrate the impact of these strategies on the Consortium as a whole.

Evaluation Question 2.B: Have instructional practices changed as a result of involvement with the PDS? How are all members of the partnership benefiting?

Finding 2.B.1: There is some evidence that instructional practices have changed as a result of involvement with the PDS for preservice and inservice teachers resulting in benefits for young students.

In Spring 2006, 98% of the teacher candidates in Childhood Education (undergraduate and master's certification majors) were rated as "at standard" or "exceeding standard" according to Association of Childhood Education International (ACEI) Standards. Testimony from principals and teachers support the fact that Buffalo State College graduates are actively recruited by area school districts as excellent beginning teachers. BSC is *the* teacher education institution in Western New York, and its network of "home grown" educational leaders, as evidenced in the BSC PDS Consortium, supports that assertion. State and national recognition as an outstanding teacher preparation program, as mentioned in the introduction to this report, also support that claim.

There is also some evidence that young students benefit from their involvement with the PDS. In a Master of Science project entitled, *The Impact of Buffalo State College's School of Education's Professional Development Schools Consortium on Student Achievement* (Golias, 2005), a comparison was made between the achievement of students in PDS schools (long standing BSC partners) and non-PDS (matched) schools on the 4th grade ELA and Math NYS exams over a seven year period (1999-2005). Results showed significant gains in the number of students who passed the 4th grade tests as compared with their non-PDS counterparts. It is assumed that the overall quality of the BSC learning community's "treatment," as described above, contributed to the academic success of the students.

Evaluation Question 2.C: Are the PDSs using evidence-based practices designed to promote success of all learners?

Finding 2.C.1: There is some disagreement regarding the use of evidence-based practices designed to promote success of all learners.

Interviews with the various PDS constituents revealed some disagreements about whether or not the PDSs are using evidence-based practices to promote success of all learners. These differences stem mainly from different curriculum requirements and needs in the different school systems. In particular, the success of young students in Reading is an issue. PDS partners that use *Reading First* (the program endorsed by the NCLB

legislation) are held accountable for implementing the program, and as partners, BSC methods instructors, faculty, and teacher candidates are involved to some degree—either directly or indirectly—with the implementation of the program. However, some faculty in EER who have strong backgrounds in the application and research of holistic approaches to literacy development have found ways for enhancing and extending the *Reading First* approach in collaboration with administrators and teachers. For example, a literacy project at Enterprise Charter PDS has involved the school’s faculty and teacher candidate, in an outreach effort that promotes family literacy. Teacher candidates have participated in professional development in Reading alongside their mentor teachers and have served as coaches in classrooms. A grant from Project FLIGHT has provided support for this teacher researcher project.

Evaluation Question 2.D: How have the collaboratively designed action research mini-grants impacted the professional development of all partners and ultimately impacted young student achievement?

Finding 2.D.1: Although there is some evidence that the collaboratively designed action research mini-grants have impacted the professional development of partners and impacted young student achievement, the evidence is *limited to self-report*. Because the projects are separate case studies, there are no means for aggregating the results of the projects to determine a *collective impact* at the Consortium level.

In recent years the BSC PDS Consortium has awarded approximately 12 action research mini grants each year to its “at standard” PDSs through funding provided primarily by CEURE. Teams at each school that include teachers, BSC faculty, and teacher candidates conduct studies on a variety of practice-focused topics using a systematic process of inquiry, data-collection, analysis, and reflection. Results of the projects typically result in positive experiences for teachers and teacher candidates and often result in improved learning for students. Data from an online survey (January 2006) showed that participants believe that conducting action research has a positive impact on practice and student learning and that an overwhelming majority would pursue additional action research opportunities in the future.

Due to the highly individualized nature of action research, however, there are no means for aggregating the results of the projects to determine a collective impact on teachers and young students on the PDS Consortium as a whole.

Evaluation Question 2.E: How have the PDS Consortium meetings and retreats impacted best practices?

See Evaluation Question 2.A, above.

Focus Area 3: Governance, Structure, and Resources

Evaluation Question 3.A: What are the strengths and needs of the present governance systems?

Finding 3.A.1: The strength of the present governance system lies in the quality of its management and accountability mechanisms.

The present governance system includes representatives from all constituents in the BSC PDS Consortium, including teacher candidates. Collaboratively developed By-Laws provide a set of procedures for the Consortium's activities, and the NCATE PDS Standards set guidelines for self-assessment and development of the partnerships. Evidence such as minutes of meetings, surveys, reports, and other multiple sources of data demonstrate a strong sense of accountability. In short, the Consortium's operations are very well managed and organized. As described above, the PDS website is an excellent means for communication both inside and outside the Consortium. Members of the Consortium participate in local, state, and national conferences, creating a reputation of excellence for using best practices in school-university partnerships.

Finding 3.A.2: The governance system should include a full-time Director of the PDS and appropriate support staff.

The current size and scope of the BSC PDS Consortium warrants a full-time Director of PDS at Buffalo State College. At present, the position is carried out by a full-time lecturer who directs the PDS in addition to other duties, including teaching courses and serving as Undergraduate Advisor in EER. Coordination and management of the PDS Consortium, which involves 1,300 teacher candidates in 45 partnership schools, is a tremendous task. In addition, there is no dedicated support staff to assist in carrying out the multiplicity of tasks involved in coordinating the PDS operations. At present, the Director relies on Graduate Assistants and undergraduate teacher candidate volunteers for clerical support and website development and maintenance.

Evaluation Question 3.B: What are the strengths and needs of the current PDS budget?

Finding 3.B.1: The strength of the current PDS budget is that it is designed primarily to support activities at the school and Consortium levels.

Schools are awarded funds according to a schedule based on their stage of PDS development (beginning, developing, at standard, or leading). These funds ensure a sufficient number of partnership schools that can provide a "PDS experience" for the large numbers of teacher candidates in the programs. Partnership schools provide "in kind" resources to the program, such as classroom space for BSC courses delivered on site, equipment, and refreshments for meetings and social activities.

Finding 3.B.2: The current PDS budget does not adequately support the appointment of a full-time Director of PDS and appropriate staff.

See 3.A.2, above.

Finding 3.B.3: The current PDS budget does not adequately support the work of lecturers, tenure track faculty, site liaisons, and mentoring teachers in the PDS.

Data from interviews and the review of documents showed that full-time lecturers, tenure track faculty, site liaisons, and mentoring teachers in the PDS receive inadequate compensation for meeting the high expectations and intensity of doing fieldwork in the PDS. Although the PDS “model,” i.e., intensified school-university collaboration during the methods courses phase of the teacher preparation program, has been used since 1991, no adjustments to teaching loads nor monetary compensations have been provided for BSC faculty and school-based teachers who directly service the program. Cooperating teachers for student teaching receive \$200 or a voucher toward graduate courses from New York State. However, since the BSC PDS model includes student teaching for only *some* of the candidates in the program, many school-based teachers who host candidates in their classrooms for methods field placements receive no direct compensation for this additional service to the PDS program. Likewise, tenure track faculty, who are expected to develop a scholarly agenda, receive no compensation for the added time and responsibilities of working with the PDS while at the same time trying to do scholarly work acceptable for promotion and tenure.

Finding 3.B.4: The current PDS budget does not adequately support large-scale studies that would demonstrate the effectiveness of the PDS at the classroom, school, and Consortium levels.

The mini-grants awarded for action research are excellent vehicles for engaging teachers, teacher candidates, and BSC faculty in collaborative inquiry and professional development. However, this case study approach to research does not carry the weight of thoughtfully designed and coordinated large-scale studies that would have the potential for measuring the effectiveness of PDS at the classroom, school, and consortium levels. Comparative studies of such magnitude would require more funds and professional expertise than are currently allotted.

Evaluation Question 3C: How can the PDS become a stronger institutionalized component of BSC?

Finding 3.C.1: The PDS can become a stronger institutionalized component of BSC by providing formal structures and dedicated resources for supporting the work of tenure track faculty, full-time lecturers, and mentoring teachers in the PDS.

The collaboration between college faculty and mentoring teachers is central to the success of any professional development school model. Without formal structures and adequate resources for supporting their work toward the development of new teachers,

the status of teaching as a profession continues to be minimalized because it is viewed as *service* rather than professional work requiring specialized knowledge and expertise.

Finding 3.C.2: The PDS can become a stronger institutionalized component of BSC by extending the Consortium to include other teacher certification programs in the College.

The PDS is confined to programs in the Department of Elementary Education and Reading, which contains the largest number of teacher candidates in BSC. By including other teacher preparation programs in the PDS, the benefits of an intensive and extensive field experience would be provided to all teacher candidates in BSC. Including other programs would also provide opportunities for integrating collaborative efforts with numerous schools and agencies locally, regionally, and nationally.

Finding 3.C.3: The PDS can become a stronger institutionalized component of BSC by redesigning the current PDS experience for teacher candidates into an internship that includes student teaching.

A two-semester internship in a PDS that includes student teaching would create a context for intensive and reliable preparation of teacher candidates. The internship model would also set the stage for more intensive professional development opportunities for inservice teachers by maximizing teacher involvement with the PDS in direct and substantive ways. Through this higher level of involvement, the potential for leadership development in PDS would be realized as well as the potential for research that could affect change in policy and practice.

Evaluation Question 3D: How can PDS be highlighted as an asset to the college?

Finding 3.D.1: The PDS can be highlighted as an asset to the College by clearly defining and operationalizing the BSC PDS model, its role, and commitment for the purpose of ensuring teacher quality and school improvement.

About one half of the school partnerships in the Consortium during Spring 2007 (n =14) were deemed as being at the “at standard” stage of PDS development. As part of their renewable formal agreements with the BSC Consortium, these schools each received \$1,250 for the purpose of conducting action research and receiving site-specific professional development for inservice teachers. The majority of these schools continue to work with BSC and BSC faculty on a sustained basis, providing excellent field experiences for teacher candidates and taking leadership roles in the Consortium.

By clearly defining and operationalizing the BSC PDS model, its role, and commitment, *all* schools within the consortium would have greater opportunity for developing into fully functioning PDSs.

Finding 3.D.2: The PDS can be highlighted as an asset to the College by connecting the work of the Consortium to school systems and including representatives from the school system level.

The BSC PDS is predicated upon a strong and trusting relationship between Buffalo State College and individual principals in several school systems. Interviews with principals and student teaching supervisors suggested, however, that connecting the PDS more directly to the needs of districts would help secure more resources for PDS as well as align the work of the PDS with school district goals and objectives. This alignment is especially needed now due to the high stakes accountability and pressures of the *No Child Left Behind* legislation.

Finding 3.D.3: The PDS can be highlighted as an asset by supporting large-scale studies that would demonstrate the effectiveness of the PDS at the classroom, school, and Consortium levels.

See 3.B.4, above.

Recommendations

Strong evidence indicates that the Buffalo State College Professional Development School Consortium is an exemplary professional learning community that impacts the quality of teaching and learning for all its members. Recognized as a statewide and national leader in teacher education, the PDS Consortium embodies the mission, vision, and core values of Buffalo State College by inspiring a lifelong passion for learning in the service of diverse people through a sense of caring, responsibility, and commitment. Its primary strength lies in the quality of a “homegrown” network of BSC alumni who continue to collaborate with the College in its work for effecting change in teacher education and pre-K-6 education in the region. The PDS Consortium is extended and enhanced by its connections to other entities, such as community colleges, research centers, literacy and volunteer programs. Overall, the work of the PDS Consortium is thoughtfully coordinated, managed, and implemented and embraces the use of national standards for PDS.

Evaluation findings also indicate some areas of concern, especially regarding the current state of resources, roles, and structures available for supporting the Consortium’s work. Reorganization and augmentation of current resources, roles, and structures must occur if the Consortium seeks to become a leverage of change for a wider constituency.

The following section of the evaluation report offers recommendations for increasing the effectiveness of the BSC PDS Consortium. The recommendations are based on the data collected, the opinions of the evaluator, and the suggestions of Consortium members. The recommendations are not definitive and are open to discussion and revision.

Focus Area 1: Community

Recommendation 1: Extend the PDS field experience concept to other teacher certification programs at Buffalo State College.

Extending the PDS concept to other programs will ensure deeper collaboration within BSC's departments and divisions for the purpose of cutting-edge teacher preparation across the campus. Including other programs in PDS will also ensure the ability to address issues of diversity and equity within the frame of PDS work.

Recommendation 2: Reconceptualize the PDS field experience as a professional internship of two consecutive semesters that also includes student teaching.

Reconceptualizing the PDS field experience as a professional internship of two consecutive semesters that also includes student teaching will provide an intensive and extensive culminating experience for teacher candidates. Creating a professional internship will support greater effectiveness of teacher candidates, mentor teachers, and college faculty and will provide a common basis for the planning, coordination, and deployment of resources in the PDS Consortium.

Recommendation 3: Reinvent the role of the mentoring teacher as pivotal to the success of the PDS through training and compensation.

Reinventing the role of the mentor teacher as one of professional work rather than service will maximize the effectiveness and sustainability of mentoring for the PDS program. More direct involvement of mentors through consortium-wide professional development in the form of workshops, seminars, graduate courses, etc., delivered at school sites or on the BSC campus, will result in a corps of teacher leaders that are central to the success of the PDS. Compensation such as stipends, vouchers, release time, and coverage for substitute teachers helps acknowledge the professional contributions of mentor teachers.

Focus Area 2: School and Instructional Practices and Professional Development

Recommendation 1: Create a focused agenda for professional development across the PDS Consortium in collaboration with school and district level needs.

Creating a focused agenda for professional development across the PDS Consortium in collaboration with school and district level needs will help connect the work of the consortium in explicit ways to issues of curriculum, instruction, and assessment—all of which are affected by the *No Child Left Behind* legislation. Conferences and meetings that include representatives at the school district level will help develop the reputation of the Consortium as a vehicle for school change as well as high quality teacher preparation and continuing professional development.

Recommendation 2: Create a focused agenda for action research across the PDS Consortium that coordinates with the focused professional development described above.

Creating a focused agenda for action research across the PDS Consortium that coordinates with a focused professional development agenda will provide convincing evidence that could potentially effect widespread change in policy and practice.

Focus Area 3: Governance, Structure, and Resources

Recommendation 1: Appoint a full-time Director of PDS and appropriate support staff.

Appointing a full-time Director of PDS and appropriate support staff will ensure the ongoing sustainability and success of the BSC PDS Consortium. See Finding 3.A.2, above.

Recommendation 2: Create formal structures and dedicated resources for supporting the work of tenure track faculty, full-time lecturers, and mentoring teachers in the PDS.

Creating formal structures and dedicated resources for supporting the work of tenure track faculty, full-time lecturers, and mentoring teachers will ensure the sustainability of the PDS for the future. See Finding 3.C.1, above.

Recommendation 3: Clearly define and operationalize the BSC PDS model, its role, and commitment for the purpose of ensuring teacher quality and school improvement.

By clearly defining and operationalizing the BSC PDS model, its role, and commitment, *all* schools within the consortium would have greater opportunity for developing into fully functioning PDSs. See Finding 3.D.1, above.

Recommendation 4: Develop an agenda and obtain resources for a large-scale study of the effectiveness of the PDS on teaching and learning.

By developing an agenda and obtaining resources for a large-scale study of the effectiveness of PDS on teaching and learning, the BSC PDS Consortium will make an outstanding contribution to the field of PDS research and development. Collaboration on research with other BSC entities, such as CEURE and Project FLIGHT, and with national organizations, such as the National Association for PDS (NAPDS), the Holmes Partnership, and the National Network for Educational Renewal (NNER) will ensure BSC's place as a national leader in the PDS movement.

Conclusion

The Buffalo State College Professional Development School Consortium is an outstanding example of school-university-community collaboration at its best. Through further deliberation, thoughtful planning, and caring hearts, the Consortium will continue to thrive and grow in the truest sense of PDS. Although this report does not cover all the findings or discuss the recommendations in depth, it is hoped that the information provided herein will help guide the future directions of the Consortium and all its beneficiaries.

Attachment A

Site Visit Schedules

FEBRUARY 20, 2007

12:10 pm	Arrive Airport <i>Transportation: Tamara Horstman-Riphahn and Holly Quicksey</i>
12:30 pm – 1:30 pm (Café 59)	Lunch with Tamara Horstman-Riphahn and Holly Quicksey
2:00 pm	Check-in to Carriage House
3:45 pm	Depart Carriage House <i>Transportation: Holly Quicksey</i>
4:00 pm – 5:00 pm 519)	Meet with School Deans & Provost Ponton (Grover Cleveland
5:00 pm – 7:00 pm	Dinner with Dean Rochon (Saigon Café)
7:00 pm	Return to Carriage House <i>Transportation: Dean Rochon</i>

FEBRUARY 21, 2007

7:45 am	Depart Carriage House <i>Transportation: Leslie Day</i>
8:00 am – 9:30 am	Breakfast Meeting with PDS Faculty (Bacon 116A)
9:30 am – 10:30 am (Bacon 320)	PDS Office visit with Director, review files/documents/artifacts
11:00 am – 1:00 pm	On-site visit with Dr. McCarthy, EDU 312 (School #43) <i>Transportation: Leslie Day</i> 11:00 am – 12:00 noon: Classrooms 12:00 noon – 1:00 pm: Meet with teacher candidates / liaison committee
1:00 pm – 2:30 pm Truesdell	Lunch with Leslie Day, David Henry, Kim McCartan, Kim (Campus House Parlor Room)

3:00 pm – 4:30 pm Cleveland 418)	Meet with several 200-600 level teacher candidates (Grover Cleveland 418)
4:45 pm – 6:00 pm	Meet with PDS Principals (Grover Cleveland 418)
6:00 pm – 8:00 pm Cleveland 418)	Dinner with PDS Advisory Council and BSC guests (Grover Cleveland 418)
8:00 pm	Return to Carriage House <i>Transportation: Leslie Day</i>

Wednesday, April 25-Friday, April 27

Arrive Wednesday, April 25

5:10 arrival on Southwest Airlines Flight #1594 (leaves Baltimore at 4:10)

Airport Pick-up: Wendy Paterson

Dinner with Wendy Paterson, Chair of EER
Time: following pick up from airport
Location: Tentative: Le Metro with WP

Return to Lodging:
Driver: Wendy Paterson
Location: Courtyard Marriott
4100 Sheridan Drive
Amherst, NY
Confirmation # 83809419

Thursday, April 26

Pick-up by Leslie Day 7:45

Breakfast: provided by Lori Stucchio
Guests: current student teachers: Ashley Turpin, Ashley Wisholek,
Alexis Balk, Heather Lytle
Time: 8-9
Location: Bacon Hall 116B

On-site PDS visit to Hoover Elementary
Time: 9:15-11:15
School(s): Hoover

Observe Teacher Candidates Teaching: **9:20** with Lisa Sukdolak in kindergarten with Mrs. Carol Vasbinder and **10:40** with Karolyn Ott in fifth grade with Mrs. Katie Wood
 Principal Visit with Fran Paskowitz between lessons from **10:00-10:40**
 Drivers: Leslie Day to Hoover and Kathy DeLoughry from Hoover back to BSC

Lunch

Guests: PDS faculty who are tenure track: invited: Dianne McCarthy (yes), Kim Truesdell (yes), Hibajene Shandomo (yes), David Henry (unable to attend), Keli Garas-York (yes), Robin Harris (yes) and Jane Neapolitan (yes)
 Time: 12:30-1:30
 Location: Campus House Parlor Room (upstairs)

Individual Visits:

Kim Truesdell 1:30 (in Bacon 316R)
 David Henry 2:00 (in Bacon 316C)

Secondary Education PDS Possibilities Discussion: present and future direction

Guests: Lisa Hunter (yes), Sue McMillen (no), Robin Harris (no), Winnie Fisher (yes), Linda Gleckel (yes), Warren Gleckel (yes), Dan MacIsaac (?)
 Time: 3:00-4:00
 Location: Bacon 116B
 Beverage and Snacks provided

Mentoring Teachers

Guests: Mrs. Sue Busch; Mrs. Bialik, Mrs. Travis, & Mr. Briglio, Mrs. Margaret Graham
 Time: 4:00-5:00
 Location: Bacon 116B
 Beverage and Snacks provided

PDS Site Visit for Special Appearance at the Family Math and Science Night

Presented by Kathleen Falconer's EDU 312 students and Ellie Robinson's Student Teachers at School #82, Buffalo, NY
 Time: 5:30-6:15
 Location: Buffalo on Easton – Directions 33 East, Right onto Suffolk, go 2 lights, left on Easton

Dinner

Guests: Leslie Day, Jane Neapolitan
 Time: 6:30-8:00
 Location: TBD

Return to Lodging:
 Driver: Day

Friday, April 27, 2007

Pickup: Mary Bailey about 7:30

PDS Consortium Meeting

Guests: about 65-100 members of the PDS
 Time: 8-10am
 Location: Hoover Elementary
 Breakfast will be served
 Agenda will be provided including time for Jane to speak, focus groups

PDS Advisory Council

Guests: about 20-25 members of the PDS Advisory Council, Paul Theobald, Endowed Chair; presentation by Warren Gleckel-
 discussion re: Goodlad & NNER
 Time: 10-11:30
 Location: Hoover
 Agenda will be provided with 20 minutes allotted to CEURE and 20 minutes for Jane, and 20 minutes for business portion of meeting, 20 minutes for reports, set calendar for retreat planning, set slate

Lunch

Guests: Amy, Sarah, Leslie, Jane, others?
 Time: 12:00-1:30
 Location: TBD
 Driver: Leslie Day

Afternoon Wrap Up

Final discussions with Leslie Day, others ?
 Meet the needs of Jane in terms of her requests based on debriefing from first visit
 Files, etc.

Evening departure

Driver: Day
 Leave for airport about 3:30
 Departs on Southwest Flight #263 at 5:35

Attachment B

Documents Reviewed

Electronic

BSC website
 BSC School of Education website
 BSC PDS Website
 List of Advisory Council Members
 Board of Trustees PowerPoint Presentation
 How are Professional Development Schools used in the Teacher Education Programs at Buffalo State College?
 Excerpts from the State of the College Address 2007, "Setting our Students on the Path to Academic Success"
 List of Student Teaching Cohort PDS Schools, Fall 2006
 PDS Journey Flow Chart
 General PDS Introduction to All Partners PowerPoint Presentation
 Meet the PDS Advisory Council
 Meet Our School of Education Professional Development Schools
 Mini-Grant Application Guidelines
 New Information for Methods Courses Instructors
 PDS Annual Retreat Program, Fall 2006
 PDS Consortium Meeting Agenda, April 27, 2007
 PDS Descriptions and Characteristics
 PDS Information and Guidelines for Methods Courses
 PDS Introduction to Hyde Park Elementary School PowerPoint Presentation
 Professional Development Schools at a Glance
 Retreat Invitation, Fall 2006

Hard Copy

2005 Award Application for the Distinguished Program in Teacher Education
 School improvement mini-grants request for proposals for 2006-2007
 School improvement mini-grant program evaluation
 School improvement mini-grants student questionnaire (primary)
 School improvement mini-grants student questionnaire (intermediate)
 School improvement mini-grant JP Program evaluation
 EDU 311 Field Placement Evaluation Form
 BSC PDS Consortium Self-Study—Network Summary
 Transfer Information Newsletter, Fall 2006, Niagara County Community College (NCCC)
 Childhood Education Program Professional Behavior Guidebook from Niagara County Community College (NCCC)
 Handbook for Elementary Education Majors—General Education 2000 Program (revised 2006)

Handbook for Elementary Education Majors—Intellectual Foundations Program (revised 2007)
Mentor Teacher Training Materials (by Barry Sweeney, Wheaton, IL)
Syllabus for EDU 400/401/402 (Leibowitz, Instructor)
Project FLIGHT Brochure
Project FLIGHT Annual Report, 2006
School Improvement Mini-Grant Program Evaluation Form
School Improvement Mini-Grant Student Questionnaire (Primary)
School Improvement Mini-Grant Student Questionnaire (Intermediate)
School Improvement Mini-Grant J P Program Evaluation
Elementary Education and Reading Field Experience Evaluation Summary, Fall 2006
Mission Statement, School of Education, Draft 4/04/06
PDS Advisory Council Student Representative Application
Proposed Dispositions for Teacher Education Candidates, Teacher Education Unit, BSC, Draft, August 22, 2006
Professional Development Schools Survey, Volunteer and Service-Learning Center, BSC
BSC Professional Development School Consortium Brochure
Professional Development School (PDS) Consortium By-Laws (9/29/06)
Buffalo State Literacy Center Annual Mini-Grant Program Initiative Request for Proposals for 2006-2007
Possible Actions to Realize the PDS Goals as Outlined by the PDS Advisory Council and Consortium, 2005-2008
List of Spring 2007 PDS Agreements
William Street School PDS Binder Materials
Letter of Support from NYSATE to Members of the Committee for the 2005 ATE
Distinguished Program Award
Student Teaching Field Placement Evaluation Form, Spring 2007 Version
Lovejoy Discovery School #43 PDS Binder Materials
PDS Program Overview Binder Materials (multiple sections based on PDS Standards)