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**Introduction to the Themed Issue: Furthering the Education Profession: Partnerships in Action**

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Abstract: The purpose of this special issue is to highlight innovative practices and research within Professional Development Systems. The articles featured in this themed issue fall into three sections, with the first two sections focused on two core NAPDS essentials: Essential 2 and 3. In the third section, we showcase work that push the boundaries of traditional school-university partnerships and include community partners. These projects support the need for discussion around what we suggest is a new, emerging NAPDS essential: Engaging the Community.

**KEYWORDS:** school-university-community partnership, professional development schools

**NAPDS NINE ESSENTIALS ADDRESSED:**

1. A comprehensive mission that is broader in its outreach and scope than the mission of any partner and that furthers the education profession and its responsibility to advance equity within the schools and, by potential extension, the broader community;
2. A school-university culture committed to the preparation of future educators that embraces their active engagement in the school community;
3. Ongoing and reciprocal professional development for all participants guided by need;
4. A shared commitment to innovative and reflective practice by all participants;
5. Engagement in and public sharing of the results of deliberate investigations of practice by respective participants; and
8. Work by college/university faculty and P-12 faculty in formal roles across institutional settings.

How do schools and universities generate, establish, and sustain spaces for partnerships that move the profession forward? Spaces where conversations become action? Spaces where we rethink our relationships and traditional roles (Zeichner, Payne, & Brayko, 2015)? Spaces that enable substantive, much-needed change in education?

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Our theme, *Furthering the Education Profession: Partnerships in Action*, features partnerships in the third space, edge communities, that are intentional in their efforts to move the profession forward by pushing the envelope. These partnerships expand upon the foundational elements of school-university partnerships into spaces that bring life to teacher preparation, professional development, and community engagement. We plan to highlight research, cases in point, and conceptual pieces in each of these areas.

This theme is timely because of recognition of an increasing need to value horizontal expertise of faculty theory and practitioner practice (Zeichner, Payne & Brayko, 2015). Additionally, increased privatization of education and new political realities of teaching and teacher preparation in an ever-changing world require a renewed focus on partnerships that evolve and open space for advocacy, increase professional growth throughout the school and university, and intentionally engage community organizations as vital members of the partnership.

Within our themed issue on Partnerships in Action, we have highlighted innovative practices and research focused on two core NAPDS essentials: Essential 2 – preparation of future educators, and Essential 3 – ongoing reciprocal professional development for existing professionals. These essentials continue to be the foundation of the work in Professional Development Schools and Systems.

Section one of the journal highlights work encompassing Essential 2: Preparation of Future Educators. This section starts with an article by Nickens, Loman, McCoy, Tye, and Danley. Their article explores design elements of their university's clinical placement for early childhood and elementary education teaching candidates. They discuss challenges they encountered in the design and implementation and the specific responses to each. They also describe the unexpected result of the creation of a "third space," shaped by the blurring of hierarchical roles held by the district and the educator preparation program. Their work is relevant for those who work in teacher education and are engaged in conversations about the evolution of clinical practice.

Guzniczak, Jang, McEneaney, and Liu contribute to the existing knowledge on pre-service learning and school-university partnership teaching and learning by examining potential differences between on-site and traditional university learning related to literacy instruction. Guzniczak conducted two beginning literacy courses; one in "traditional" format, on campus with students doing field placement in area schools and one on-site at a participating partnership school where students also conducted their field placement. The authors compared and contrasted the perspectives of the pre-service teachers in the two settings with regards to their understanding of topic knowledge, classroom pedagogy, strategy use, and levels of involvement in each classroom experience. The results of their study lead to a better understanding of how to monitor and adjust pre-service literacy instruction.

Section two of this journal showcases work relating to Essential 3: Ongoing Reciprocal Professional Development for Existing Professionals. It opens with an article by Sikma and Minshew which details a sustained partnership and professional growth opportunity between a university faculty member and an elementary teacher within the university PDS. Their partnership began with the design and implementation of weekly STEM kits, and evolved to include additional collaborations and leadership opportunities. The paper presents a case for how intense, in-depth partnerships between faculty and teachers within a PDS can be mutually beneficial and produce positive outcomes for students and the larger PDS system.

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Baker, Galanti, Graham, Hayden, and Bailey outline professional development efforts geared toward K-12 mathematics specialists, a group often overlooked by traditional professional development providers. The authors designed a professional development framework for these specialists rooted in recommendations from the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics that resulted in university-facilitated PLCs that allowed peer collaboration across school contexts and settings. Though the mathematics specialists approached the professional development seeking to improve their practice and further their professional knowledge from the university facilitators, the end result was a fully developed PLC in which participants were learning from and advising each other, collectively. Their work highlights the need for support for mathematics specialists, but also provides a framework for creating university-facilitated PLCs for teacher leaders.

Section two concludes with an article from Philippakos, Overly, Riches, Grace, & Johns. The authors describe a collaborative project between a university faculty researcher, school leaders, and classroom teachers designed to support the writing performance of students in grades 3-5. The project centered on the implementation of a year-long professional development model that addressed strategy instruction across multiple genres and involved distance coaching. At the end of the year, students' writing gains were significant in grades 3-5, and growth continued in the second year with less researcher support. The collaboration between these parties was rooted in a shared commitment to change and improvement, which the authors credit for the gains made. The project speaks to the power of collaborative partnerships between universities, school leaders, and classroom teachers.

Section three pushes the boundaries of the existing NAPDS essentials and consists of work involving school-university-community partnerships. The section begins with small-scale cases of this type of triadic partnership and concludes with projects of a larger scale.

The first article in this section, by Bentley and Hendricks, describes a school-wide literacy project involving a university, PDS partnership school, author, and illustrator. Pre-service teaching candidates from the university co-taught reading and writing activities related to the author/illustrator's texts. As a follow-up to these lessons, the author and illustrator visited the school, engaging students in read-alouds, book discussions, and a school-wide art project. The project demonstrates how community within the school can be built by involving community in the school.

Liao, DeVita, and Walden describe a partnership between dance students at a local high school, undergraduate teacher education students, and higher education graduate students. Over the course of multiple semesters, the students engaged in an integrated arts project that culminated in a multimedia dance performance on topics related to social justice in education. This project engaged the greater community through the public performance, connecting school, university, and community to advocate for social justice and the arts. The intentionality to share knowledge, exchange ideas, engage in art making, and collaborate for increased engagement and understanding of all participants of the importance of social justice education is a solid model program that showcases innovation in school-university-community partnerships. The authors provide insight into student experiences and their own knowledge gained to develop and enhance future partnerships with the model.

Sweetman, Shea, and Silversmith report on their preliminary findings from a design-based implementation research study exploring how to bridge the gap between the formal and informal science education communities. The project is rooted in the need to provide authentic,

situated learning experiences for students in a subject area to which many elementary teachers lack self-efficacy and commitment. The authors sought to address this need by designing professional development workshops for teachers that are a part of their school-university partnership network that were co-facilitated by university staff and informal educators (including educators and scientists from the local zoos, Audubon, land trusts, environmental organizations and museums). Their initial results describe the challenges and the benefits of integrating the informal education community into an existing school-university partnership.

The section concludes with an article by Radina and colleagues, who use the Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) framework to “center the insights, concerns, and voices of youth in urban communities and schools.” Their paper highlights the collaborative process that took place between university, school, and community partners to engage 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade students in YPAR projects on topics that systematically impact the lives of Black people due to institutional racism. The youth focused on the issues of homelessness, violence, poverty, and inequality, issues that deeply impact their community and their lives. The paper describes the projects as well as the challenges and implications of the partnership on all parties involved. Most importantly, their work is an example of the power of school-university-community partnerships and the role this type of partnership can play in “the struggle for educational, racial, and economic justice in urban communities and schools.”

Through the articles in the third section of this journal, we have showcased unique triads consisting of school-university-community partnerships. We hope to have opened space for discussion of a potential new essential, Engaging the Community, focused on advocacy efforts that advance the profession, expanding the reach of SUPs to include community partners and the impact of community engagement in school-university partnerships on P-12 schools and teacher education programs.

### References

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