

# Chapter 113

## Commitment to Change and Action: A Holistic and Transformative PDS Partnership

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### ABSTRACT

*Professional Development School (PDS) partnerships in Race to the Top (RttT) states, as well as those in other states that have instituted education reforms and new legislation, are now in a unique position to promote their partnerships as transformative models of change and action. This chapter presents a successful, longitudinal, and holistically grounded PDS partnership and its research aimed at instituting integrative change for the purpose of improving student learning and achievement. Although small in size, the partnership has at its roots the audacious goal of changing and improving P-12 education integrated with professional education (13-20), with a vision of a new P-20 system of education directed at learning and simultaneous renewal of institutions. Academic and administrative leaders come together in this chapter to present the partnership's holistic nature and essential transformative practices, its empirical and practical work, lessons learned, and future directions for new career ladders for educators along with new research to influence state policy.*

### INTRODUCTION AND FOCUS

Successful Professional Development School (PDS) partnerships in many of the sixteen Race to the Top (RttT) states, as well as those in other states that have instituted dramatic education

reforms and new legislation, now stand in a unique position to promote their partnerships as transformative models of change and action. As transformative partnerships, they actively foster innovative change in education integrated with teacher education and simultaneous renewal of

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-4666-8632-8.ch113

their partnering schools and higher-education institution. Such PDS partnerships or similar ones that target system reform and change for both the P-12 and higher education sectors can be and should be leveraged by their states to produce the kind of evidence and research that will influence state policy and ultimately benefit students and student learning (Catelli, 2011). These relatively new structures which focus their research on student learning and teacher development have served as laboratories of the future and catalysts for the creation of new professional roles (see Neapolitan, 2011; Breault & Breault, 2012). PDS partnerships of this type, and specifically those that are holistic and more integrative of the four-pronged PDS mission and model, now have the potential to become R&D centers for education and teacher education similar to what the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching has promoted in recent years (see Bryk, 2008). As such, holistic PDS partnerships are specialized cases of PDSs and other education partnerships (Slater & Ravid, 2010; and Catelli, 2010a). They are by nature more comprehensive than those recently promoted in NCATE's *Blue ribbon panel report* (2010) designed to house "clinically rich environments" primarily for teacher preparation. Holistic PDS partnerships emphasize innovative research and action research in and on the partnership for specific purposes (e.g., improving classroom teaching directed at student achievement; changing and improving the partnership's organizational structure, etc.) In essence, they are intermediary structures that ultimately seek systemic change (Catelli, 2011). Whether the partnership is formed between public or private institutions or a mixture of the two, there is little doubt that the time is politically ripe for states to leverage such partnerships for instituting integrative, systemic change and simultaneous renewal of partnering institutions. Also, the time is right for states to leverage all PDS partnerships

to promote research that will favorably influence student achievement, professional practice, and state policy.

## **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this chapter is to present a successful longitudinal and holistically-grounded PDS partnership, and its research. Although small in scale, the Dowling College-Belmont Elementary PDS Partnership has at its roots the audacious goal of initiating change and improvement in P-12 education integrated with professional education (13-20), including doctoral programs, with a vision of a new P-20 system of education. The new system envisioned will foster more coordination, integration and research between and among the education levels directed at student learning and achievement. Now in its fifteenth year, the holistic partnership has a long list of accomplishments, publications and action research studies, recently culminating in the receipt of a prestigious research award. In 2013, the teachers and the director received an award from the American Educational Research Association's PDS Research Special Interest Group (SIG) for their collaborative school-university research. And in 2007, the partnership's personnel were internationally recognized for their empirical work and invited to collaborate with a university and school in Slovenia on a special research project. The project involved a unique video-based research study to investigate classroom teaching effectiveness (see Catelli, Likon, Vonta, & Pisot, 2009; and Catelli, Jackson, Carlino, & Petraglia, 2011). Over the years, the partnership's practical and theoretical work, and its research have impacted each component of the four-pronged PDS mission in integrative ways. More important, the PDS teacher candidates and teachers have consistently provided concrete evidence of their positive effect on student

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