

Editorial: Editors' introduction

Editorial

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Taking up [Sokkett's \(2008\)](#) argument that professional practice requires “the use of judgment on the basis of a body of scholarly knowledge and professional experience” (p. 45), this issue of *PDS Partners: Bridging Research to Practice* presents multiple perspectives on professionalism. Consistent with the journal's inclusive scope, it features traditional articles and case studies as well as more creative pieces from a range of professional educators, each articulating how scholarship and experience inform their actions and decisions. As always, our parent organization's Nine Essentials serve as a crosscutting framework. In addition to illustrating how “professions develop and maintain consensus around a set of values that shape core activities” ([Crowe, 2008](#), p. 989), these principles also hint at the need to continually renew such a consensus to maintain education's professional status.

Indeed, as our organization embraces its new name, the National Association for School–University Partnerships (NASUP), to signal a more expansive focus, we ask readers not to forget that P originally stood for *professional*. Carrying that mindset into the new era, Cárdenas opens this issue by describing the “profound” impact of belonging to a professional development school (PDS) network. In her multifaceted work as a practitioner and a graduate student, that structure supplied “continuous support and professional learning opportunities” that nurtured her capacity to advocate for multilingual learners at her elementary school. The reflective piece urges other would-be advocates to seek solidarity with like-minded professionals, ably embodying the NASUP tenet that high-quality professional learning is a right ([Polly et al., 2023](#)). When educators collectively claim that right, students benefit.

As another example of PDS teachers' potential to support students by positioning themselves as learning professionals, Cormier and Figueroa's article shares a project based on a children's book called *The Smart Cookie* ([John, 2021](#)). With help from a professor-in-residence, teachers enhanced their knowledge and skills related to social–emotional learning, stamina and neurodiversity. As the authors illustrate, sharing open-ended projects fostered “a sense of community and affirming spaces on a broad level.” The article shows how innovative professional learning that centers all learners as “smart cookies” helps to advance “equity, antiracism, social justice, and inclusion,” consistent with NASUP values.

Continuing the theme, Skinner's contribution, aptly titled, “Emphasizing the Professional in PDS,” details an innovative ungrading approach designed “to bridge PDS interns' competing identities while at the same time mimic the professional learning and leading that teachers enact on the job as members of professional learning communities.” Although Skinner's particular initiative occurred in a social studies context, the article's insights regarding the transitional nature of an internship are broadly applicable. For example, the finding that “treating the interns as emerging professionals contributed to an appreciation for teacher collaboration and a respect for the hard work of teaching” has clear transdisciplinary implications.

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Next, Letizia's case study also focuses on PDS interns. Just as Skinner highlights the novel practice of ungrading (Blum, 2020), Letizia also touches on a current topic in teacher education: intern compensation. Although a recent review of various work-integrated learning experiences found negligible differences between paid and unpaid modes, asserting, "The key to a positive placement was mentoring on the part of the placement supervisor" (Hoskyn *et al.*, 2020, p. 447), the authors also noted, "In a perfect world, all placements would be paid" (p. 449). Offering a unique perspective that may serve as a bridge to that ideal, Letizia recounts a program's response to an enrollment shift toward practicing educators seeking certification. Cautioning, "The situation at our university is unique and the insights from this study cannot be translated exactly to another institution," Letizia nevertheless demonstrates how to support employed interns who are balancing simultaneous responsibilities as students and teachers. For example, the teacher educators' need "to strengthen [their] relationships with the mentors" was paramount, and PDS liaisons were integral to that effort. All parties involved recognized the need to treat the students as professionals – cognizant, as in Skinner's piece, of that pivotal career phase.

Residency models are another means of honoring interns' multifaceted identities. As Mazzye and Gujarati state in this issue, they may even boost "retention and teacher quality." Their article includes a comprehensive residency blueprint, sensitive to the related benefits and barriers. However, like Letizia, they recognize readers' need to consider their own contexts, emphasizing the flexible definition of *residency*. Addressing teacher educators who are "moving toward a teacher residency model and are navigating similar complexities, . . . [they] recommend a collaborative development of a blueprint to frame your residency work." In turn, we invite you to keep the conversation going by sharing your insights in *PDS Partners*, aligned with NASUP's call "to examine the quality and nature of professional learning . . . [and] consider how professional learning and leadership opportunities can enhance partnerships" (Polly *et al.*, 2023, p. 118).

To that end, Hedin *et al.*'s contribution to this issue is valuable. Taking a critical look at the "successes and challenges" of their grow-your-own approach to addressing an alarming number of special education vacancies, the authors highlight the importance of treating paraprofessionals as learning professionals in their own right. Guided by the Nine Essentials, their partnership prioritized intentional recruitment and targeted support of aspiring special educators, ultimately celebrating that the entire cadre of diverse candidates "passed their state licensure examination and completed student teaching" before they "filled positions . . . in their sponsoring districts."

The next piece in the issue indicates how enacting professionalism can entail recognizing and including caregivers' role in students' learning. Noggle and Hooks share a professional development project targeting teachers, staff and paraeducators to promote such inclusion of parental figures. Specifically, they consider student learning and achievement through the perspective of fathers and father figures, an underrepresented group in parental outreach. The authors facilitated a professional learning experience in a virtual setting due to the pandemic, which helped participants to "recognize and remediate some of the insidious communication barriers that exist." As a result, the educators began "to shift their communicative attempts" to be more inclusive of all the individuals listed as students' caretakers and/or guardians. In essence, this shift is a sign of their enhanced professionalism.

Finally, we end with our signature column created specifically to honor those who continue to serve and professionalize the profession. In this installment, Donham recognizes the ongoing and communal efforts of Dr Sandi Cooper to improve math for early learners in the Baylor, Texas area. We join Donham in thanking Dr Cooper and invite readers to identify other hard-working professionals who deserve a spotlight. We welcome your submissions about such unsung heroes in PDS and other partnership spaces.

In sum, we view the diverse voices in this issue as a unified chorus with clear and honorable aims: “sustaining and preparing professional educators” (Cosenza *et al.*, 2023, p. 17). Through a collaborative self-study with similar goals, Snow, Dismuke, Wenner, and Hicks (2019) demonstrated how teacher educators can “model lifelong professional development for ... teacher candidates and ... graduates by modeling [their] own willingness to engage in continued professional development” (p. 266), ultimately encouraging “a community of practice where professional stance, or attitude, the professional context, and the outcomes of professional practice interact” (p. 268). As these *PDS Partners* articles attest, NASUP is such a community, every bit as focused on *professionalism as partnerships*. After engaging with each contribution in that spirit, consider exercising your own professional stance by applying your “scholarly knowledge and professional experience” (Sokkett, 2008, p. 45) as an author and/or reviewer for a future issue.

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