
Editorial: Editors' introduction

PDS Partners:
Bridging Research
to Practice

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Across this issue of *PDS Partners: Bridging Research to Practice*, a clear thread emerges: professional growth is most powerful when it is reciprocal, embedded and intentionally structured within school–university partnerships. Taken together, these articles move beyond viewing teacher preparation as a unidirectional process and instead position it as a shared, evolving ecosystem in which preservice teachers, practicing educators and leaders co-construct knowledge, practice and identity.

At the center of this issue is a vision of Professional Development Schools (PDS) and school-university partners not simply as sites of teacher candidate placements but as relational and intellectual communities. These communities are sustained through three interconnected pillars:

- (1) Reciprocity and Mutual Benefit
- (2) Bridging Theory and Practice
- (3) Structured Inquiry and Reflective Practice

Together, these pillars illuminate how partnerships can cultivate not only competent educators but also confident, reflective and connected professionals prepared to lead within complex educational systems.

Pillar 1: Reciprocity and Mutual Benefit

The first pillar foregrounds the idea that meaningful partnerships must benefit all participants. Across these studies, professional learning is not delivered – it is co-constructed, resulting in strengthened practice, leadership and professional identity.

Norris and Doyle (2026) argue in “Elementary Teachers’ Perceptions of the Impact of Mixed Book Study Group on Their Practice and Literacy Leadership Skills” that collaborative professional learning serves as a catalyst for both instructional improvement and leadership development. Drawing on a qualitative study of teachers engaged in mixed book study groups, the author shows how structured, teacher-led discussions centered on professional texts deepened participants’ understanding of literacy practices while simultaneously building their confidence to lead professional development. Teachers not only engaged with research but also translated it into actionable classroom strategies and shared leadership within their schools. Importantly, the study highlights how adult learning principles, relevance, collaboration and reflection create a climate where teachers develop both expertise and agency. In this way, the work demonstrates that literacy leadership emerges through shared inquiry rather than hierarchical training.

Extending this emphasis on shared professional growth, “Inservice and Preservice Teachers’ Collaborative PDS Learning Walks” by Rombach and Guy (2026) positions collaboration as a driver of collective cognition and professional culture. Through Learning Walks, preservice and inservice teachers jointly observe classrooms and engage in non-evaluative, strengths-based conversations about practice. The findings reveal that these shared experiences foster collegiality, disrupt traditional hierarchies and promote a sense of mutual respect and contribution. Participants reported increased workplace positivity and a deeper appreciation for collaborative problem-solving. By positioning all participants as contributors, Learning Walks reframe professional development as a shared intellectual endeavor, strengthening both individual practice and collective capacity.

From a systems perspective, Curtis, Mishnick, & Rose’s (2026) article, “Strategic Staffing Models and the Perceived Value of Paid Teacher residencies: a convergent mixed-methods study,” demonstrates how reciprocity operates at the structural level. This convergent



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mixed-methods study shows that paid residency models benefit both teacher candidates and districts by reducing financial barriers, increasing retention and strengthening workforce stability. Districts reported that residents contribute meaningfully to school operations while developing instructional readiness, effectively transforming preparation into a mutually beneficial partnership. However, the study also highlights the need for sustainable funding and infrastructure to maintain these models. In doing so, it positions reciprocity not only as a relational value but also as a strategic imperative for long-term educational improvement.

Finally, in our signature Thank You for Your Service column, “Pamela Lewis – An Innovative Leader and Chief Cheerleader,” Martinez illustrates how leadership sustains and amplifies reciprocal partnerships. Pamela Lewis exemplifies a systems-oriented yet deeply human approach, fostering innovation while prioritizing relationships and belonging. Her work in aligning recruitment, preparation and early-career support demonstrates how partnerships can function as a seamless educator pipeline. Beyond systems design, her visible affirmation of teacher candidates reinforces a culture where individuals feel valued and supported. This profile is a reminder that reciprocity is not only structural but relational, grounded in leadership that is both strategic and affirming.

While reciprocity establishes the relational foundation of partnerships, it is through embedded and practice-based experiences that these relationships translate into meaningful learning. The next pillar examines how these partnerships bridge the longstanding divide between theory and practice.

Pillar 2: Briding the Gap Between Theory and Practice

The second pillar highlights how clinically rich, embedded experiences allow teacher candidates to move fluidly between conceptual knowledge and classroom application. These articles demonstrate that learning to teach is most effective when it is situated within authentic contexts and supported by intentional structures.

In “Co-Planning, Coaching, and Clinical Practice: Leveraging the Apprenticeship Model in Teacher Residency Seminars,” [Pizzitola and Walker \(2026\)](#) argue that apprenticeship-based models are central to effective teacher preparation. Through co-planning, iterative feedback and reflective coaching cycles, candidates engage in sustained, practice-based learning alongside mentor teachers. The study shows that structured routines such as goal-setting and feedback cycles support growth in instructional planning, differentiation and culturally responsive teaching. Importantly, the findings emphasize that learning is reciprocal, with mentor teachers also refining their practice through collaboration. This work positions the apprenticeship model as a powerful mechanism for aligning theory with practice through ongoing, situated engagement.

Complementing this model, [Eargle, McGee, Kelly, & Wilburn’s \(2026\)](#) article, “Providing Authentic and Responsive Experiences: Insights from an Embedded Social Studies Methods Course at a PDS School,” shows how embedding coursework within school settings enhances both preservice and in-service learning. By situating a methods course directly within a middle school, the partnership enables candidates to immediately apply theoretical concepts while contributing to the professional learning of practicing teachers. The article highlights how boundary-spanning work requires shared values, flexibility and sustained collaboration. Through multiple perspectives, including faculty, teachers, administrators and candidates, the study demonstrates how embedded coursework fosters professional growth across roles. In doing so, it reframes teacher education as a shared, context-responsive process rather than a staged progression.

Similarly, [Harm’s \(2026\)](#) piece, “Bridging Theory and Practice: Creation of a Reflection and Engagement Guide,” offers a concrete tool designed to support this integration. The Reflection and Engagement Guide (REG) structures weekly conversations between student teachers and school-based educators, guiding reflection through targeted prompts grounded in theory. By incorporating frameworks such as cognitive apprenticeship and professional

teaching standards, the REG helps make thinking visible and connects abstract concepts to lived classroom experiences. The author emphasizes that structured dialog and reflection are essential for meaningful learning, positioning the REG as a practical mechanism for bridging the gap between university coursework and clinical practice.

If embedding candidates in authentic contexts creates the conditions for learning, it is through intentional inquiry and reflective protocols that this learning becomes visible, sustained and transformative. The final pillar focuses on the practices that structure this inquiry.

Pillar 3: Structure Inquiry and Reflective Practice

The third pillar centers on the use of shared protocols and inquiry practices that support reflection, dialog and continuous improvement across roles and contexts.

In “The Practice of Noticing and Wondering within School-University Partnerships,” Harbour, Curcio, Jones, Powers, & McCloud (2026) contend that structured inquiry begins with disciplined attention. The “noticing and wondering” protocol provides a shared language for educators to engage in reflective, non-evaluative dialog about teaching and learning. Drawing on narratives from teacher educators, candidates, teachers and administrators, the article demonstrates how this practice fosters curiosity, autonomy and collaborative sense-making. By shifting conversations from judgment to inquiry, the protocol creates space for deeper reflection and professional growth. Moreover, its adaptability across contexts allows it to function as both a pedagogical and professional learning tool. This work underscores that structured inquiry is not an add-on but a core practice for cultivating reflective communities.

Toward Coherent, Human-Centered Partnerships

Taken together, this issue’s articles offer a cohesive vision of school–university partnerships as dynamic systems of shared learning, practice and leadership. Reciprocity ensures that all participants benefit and contribute. Embedded experiences bridge theory and practice in meaningful ways. Structured inquiry sustains reflection and growth over time.

What emerges is a model of educator preparation that is not fragmented but instead integrated, relational, clinical and reflective. These partnerships do more than prepare teachers; they cultivate professionals across the career span who are confident in their practice, connected to their communities and committed to continuous learning. As the field continues to navigate complexity and change, this issue of *PDSP* offers a clear direction forward: strong partnerships—intentionally designed – have the power to transform both practice and profession.

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