
Four decades onward

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PDS Partners:
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Abstract

Purpose – The article highlights the experience of National Association for School University Partnerships (NASUP's) former presidents.

Design/methodology/approach – The article is written in an epistolary, narrative style.

Findings – Due to the nature of the piece, there are no research findings. However, the article features the insights of NAPDS/NASUP President, [full name]. [first name] discusses the value of [pronoun] presidency and insights into the past, present and future of the organization.

Originality/value – The article draws additional attention to the exemplary leadership of the organization's second decade and may inspire others to seek leadership within NASUP.

Keywords Teacher education, Partnership, Collaboration

Paper type Practitioner paper

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- Special Edition PDSP: Past Presidents
- Name: Alison Rutter
- PDS Affiliation (university faculty liaison, ESU – 2003–2023, PDS Coordinator, ESU - 2015–2016)
- National Association for School University Partnerships (NASUP) – SUP – Associate Editor: 2009–11
- AERA PDS-SIG – Program Chair: 1999–2003 (roughly. . .)
- List years served as President: 2009–11 (picked up Chris Perkins remaining term as my Pre-President year)
- Where was the conference held the year/s you were President: Orlando, Daytona, FL

I am honored to be asked to co-edit this special issue of PDSP with JoAnne Ferrara, a long-time colleague. I am also grateful that the Publications Committee and Board have allowed me to include my own piece about having been one of the Past Presidents, having not had that opportunity for the issue including the first 10 Presidents. Below is my Professional Development School (PDS) story.

When I was writing my dissertation about PDS back in the 90s, PDS was still a relatively new concept. Holmes had just come out with its trilogy and universities across the country were embracing the idea (which means it wasn't as new as I presumed!). In a flash, I was writing about PDS being over a decade old, then two, then three and here we sit looking back at 40 years of work on school partnerships, teacher leadership, collaboration and the overall concept built on relationships across the scope of education. What has changed? Personally, I started my career as a grad student working in a PDS with a middle school in NY that became the focus of my dissertation. Like other newly minted Ed.D.'s I wrote articles and presented at numerous conferences first on this early work and then what I saw happening in our world of

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PDS. The AERA PDS-SIG was my first PDS home. I was the Program Chair for a number of years which meant I got a preview of what was up and coming. I also became very active in my own university's PDS – East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania. ESU was one of the first PDSs to mandate PDS experience for all of its elementary education students ensuring it wasn't just for an elite few. I served as a faculty liaison in a number of our school sites and taught senior level classes that were interwoven with weekly school field experiences. Being in the schools each week helped me better understand the teachers' points of view and how practice was being implemented on the ground. Soon my involvement became state-wide. While NAPDS was being formed, we created a state version, PaPDS, to encourage PDSs to grow across our commonwealth. We met regularly, held state-wide conferences and tried to get various stakeholders to buy in. Many of us were also active in NAPDS and tried to bring the ideas percolating across the country back home and share ours more broadly. I got to serve as the 5th President of NAPDS for its three year run (pre, current & past) from 2009–11. We helped run the first Leadership conference in New Orleans where we introduced the new “9 Essentials” to PDS leadership groups. We lived and breathed those Essentials. Our journal, *School-University Partnerships*, was just starting up and I served as one of the Associate Editors of the new journal with my PDS school partner, Lyn Krenz, who also served on the Board. Looking back, it seems my entire career has been working in this area of partnership – trying to understand the nuances of working with school partners, to spread the word, to help new PDS get started and help existing PDS understand the underlying principles to help them grow and evolve as well.

With this 40-year perspective of PDS overall, we recognize that it has been an organic evolution (to cite Jim Nolan), a landscape in full succession (to cite Jane Neapolitan and myself) and a giving tree (to give a tip of the hat to Becci Burns). Interesting to look back at Holmes and think that they saw PDS as something that would happen in the big research universities with education grad students who had degrees in liberal arts and sciences working with teachers and K-12 students. Their focus would be the intersection of “higher” ed, K-12 teachers and administrators and the students being taught in those “regular” schools. This was in contrast to lab schools – these were regular classrooms in regular schools with regular students. Preferably, these schools would also serve lower socio-economic populations, giving a hand up to students who were often being overlooked. As one of my dissertation sponsors, Lin Goodwin at Teachers College, Columbia, counseled, PDS was not just one model, but many approaches serving these goals. Fairly early on, teaching colleges realized that this idea helped them as well to build partnerships with schools and cast off the impression that they were ivy tower faculty with little sense of what was happening in the schools where they were sending their own students teachers. Higher education was rethinking their own approach to teaching and learning by embracing the PDS vision. Not just grad students or liberal arts students, but teacher education faculty and students were being grounded in the work of schools and university. NAPDS came into being just as this surge was happening. They were encouraging schools to be the mutual partners with universities to better meet the needs of students. It wasn't just students learning from teachers who had learned from university faculty – it was all of us learning from one another.

Watching NASUP mature over this time has been rewarding in many ways. The SUP journal has burgeoned with many special issues on top of its regular bi-annual publication PDSP grew from a newsletter into a journal of its own right, capturing the voices of partnerships in action and other avenues for sharing PDS insights have been explored such as the video interviews with PDS leaders, writing workshops and zoom mini-meetings. All of this has helped get the word out and encourage research and involvement in collaboration. The most significant change however, was acquiring our independence from the University of South Carolina, whereby we became our own association with our own conference. USC played a pivotal role in getting us started, but as we grew we needed to be able to make our own decisions, be financially independent and represent our entire constituency. Hats off to the

leaders who achieved that. Since that time, we have weathered economic challenges as we got our foothold and increased our numbers post COVID-19.

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I believe it is critical for us not be just a niche idea, but one that can change teaching and learning across the board. We have come face to face with those not trusting teachers to be autonomous in our schools. Our ideals include giving agency to teachers and partnering with their schools to move beyond government-controlled scripted curriculum and endless assessments – to embrace collaboration and partnership in innovative ways. Our research needs to be broadcast further so that those making big decisions will lean towards us. Each of the past presidents has helped move this agenda forward in their own way. It has been four decades of work – two plus as NAPDS including one as our own NASUP – but we are making progress with our Essentials, our journals and our connections with like-minded organizations. As my former PDS department chair, Pat Pinciotti, always reminded us, it is most rewarding thinking of all of the thousands of children, the teachers and faculty who have benefitted from our collaborations so far – and how many more we can still reach. We need to remember that the hundreds of individuals who attend the conference each year are just the tip of the iceberg of our impact on education. Still, we need to continue to focus on growth and as Lin Goodwin said so long ago, recognize all of the varieties of partnerships that can make this dream a reality.

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