A Theme-Based, Cohort Approach to Professional Development Schools:
An Analysis of the Benefits and Shortcomings for Teacher Education Faculty

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One of the goals of Professional Development School (PDS) programs is to provide preservice teachers with opportunities for developing in-depth knowledge and experience as they learn to teach (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, 2001). A theme-based PDS adds value to the PDS program model because it allows faculty members to share their particular expertise and research interests with preservice teachers and with teachers at the PDS school site. Additionally, a theme-based PDS enhances university faculty members' opportunities to conduct research in their field as a part of their PDS work in preparing prospective teachers. The purpose of this article is to evaluate the theme-based PDS as a model of linking university teacher development goals with the professional interests of university faculty. To this end, we describe three examples of theme-based PDSs, share the results of a faculty surveys about how themes enhance the PDS experience for them, and triangulate the survey results with a follow-up faculty survey regarding the costs and benefits of theme-based PDS work.

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Before describing three theme-based cohorts (Paideia, Environmental Education, and English as a Second Language) at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG), we share examples in the literature~~rse~~ of other theme-based PDSs partnerships (Anderson, 1997; Barnes, 1987; Shroyer, Wright, Kerr, & Weamer, 1996). The Holmes PDS model, which provides the overarching theoretical framework for the theme-based PDS, is discussed widely in the literature (e.g., Abdal-Haqq, 1997; Book, 1996; Clark, 1999; Fullan, Galluzzo, Morris & Watson, 1998). However the PDS literature does not address the impact of working in a PDS partnership on higher education faculty. Instead, much of the focus of research is on graduates of theme-based programs; specifically, their knowledge structures (Roehler, Duffy, Conley, Hermann, Johnson, & Michelson, 1987) and program evaluations (Fotiu, Freeman, & West, 1986).

As one example of the earliest theme-based PDSs, Barnes (1987) describes the Michigan State University (MSU) model. The cornerstone of the MSU program is their conceptual framework, and the theme provides direction for the development of courses and practicum experiences. The outcomes of the themes are related to societal expectations of schools and teachers. Examples of MSU's PDS themes include the (a) Academic Learning Program; (b) Heterogeneous Classrooms Program; (c) Learning Community Program; and (d) Multiple Perspectives Program (Barnes, 1987). In the MSU model, the themes are established and the faculty fit into existing themes. According to Barnes the benefits of a theme-based model is that "the theme provides a clear and distinctive conception of teaching that is firmly grounded in research and understandings of effective teaching practice" (Barnes, 1987, p. 15).

Kansas State University's College of Arts and Sciences and the Manhattan-Ogden Kansas Public Schools developed a Math, Science, and Technology (MST) theme for prospective elementary school teachers (Shroyer, Wright, Kerr, & Weamer, 1996). The goal of this program was to integrate science and mathematics content with educational pedagogy applied to real world classroom teaching experiences (Shroyer, Bolick & Wright, 1996).

Another example of a theme-based PDS is the Wichita Kansas Public Schools and Wichita State University partnership, which developed an English-as-a-Second-Language (ESOL) PDS. Their purpose was to prepare preservice teachers to meet the needs of and enhance the learning of ESOL students (Anderson, 1997). Studies revealed that this partnership was successful and that preservice teachers, inservice teachers, and university faculty all benefited from the project (Anderson, 1997). In her research on the ESOL PDS, Anderson (1997, p. 23) highlighted four key factors of an effective PDS:

1. Goals and objectives must be mutually derived in an environment where everyone's views are valued.

2. Equality among partners must be achieved.

3. School-based issues must be the focus.

4. Roles and responsibilities must be forged by consensus, including the broad-based responsibilities (e.g., financial commitments) of the school district and university.

While Anderson's (1997) paper describes how the PDS experience enhanced university faculty teaching effectiveness, she did not focus on the cost and benefits of the theme-based component of a professional development experience. In this paper, we argue that consideration of the costs and benefits to faculty of having a theme-based PDS is crucial to strengthening the PDS model. As Anderson argued (1997) and the Holmes Group outlines (Holmes Group, 1986, 1995), having a successful PDS is a complex issue involving many factors. We argue that having a PDS in which university faculty can collaboratively structure a site-based public school experience that enables the blending of their research, teaching, and service commitments is crucial to their academic survival. In this article we first describe the evolution of the theme-based PDS model at UNCG and provide information relevant to the present status of our PDS program. Second, we present three mini-cases of different theme-based PDS partnerships, which represent our theme-based PDS model. Finally, we synthesize information from a recent PDS faculty survey to assess the costs as well as the benefits to university teacher education faculty members of our theme-based PDS model.

Background for the PDS program at UNCG

Since 1990, UNCG has patterned its preservice teacher education program after the guidelines of the Holmes Partnership (1986). However, in order to reduce costs for students, a decision was made to retain the undergraduate degree in elementary and middle grades education as opposed to a five-year program. The PDS program at UNCG is a cohort model of 12-30 students called inquiry teams. Inquiry teams take their methods courses together and concurrently participate in extensive field experiences in PDS sites where they engage in a variety of interactions with K-8 students and teachers. By the end of four semesters all elementary and middle grades teacher candidates spend more than 1,000 hours in one or two PDS partner schools. The UNCG PDS model includes 10 hours per week of internship experiences for three semesters plus a full semester of student teaching, Teacher candidates are supervised jointly by teachers at the PDS sites, whom we call On-Site Teacher Educators (OSTEs), and by inquiry team leaders from the Department of Curriculum and Instruction (CUI). Inquiry team leaders make a two-year commitment to supervising, advising, mentoring, and teaching a weekly seminar for the teacher candidates.

The somewhat unique and value-added component to the UNCG PDS model, which is not an explicit part of the Holmes model, is the theme-based approach to our inquiry teams. In the UNCG program, team leaders determine the theme that

their teams will have based on their own expertise and research interests. As will become evident in the following pages, the topic of the theme and the extent to which the theme is infused varies greatly. The themes are related to academic topics (e.g., reading, math, literacy, and environmental studies) or educational initiatives (the Paideia model, teaching linguistically diverse learners, inclusive education, and Cognitively Guided Instruction (CGI) in math). The university faculty and the participating school(s) or school district work together to identify and select a PDS teaching site with a site-based initiative, an existing curriculum related to the theme (e.g., a magnet school), or a willingness to implement the theme.

Over the past twelve years, 10 themes have been instituted and offered in the elementary education program at UNCG. The themes include: Environmental Education, ESOL, Inclusion and Working with Children with Special Needs, Literacy (and sometimes a more focused theme such as Literacy for Primary Children, Literacy for the Upper Elementary Grades, or Tutoring), Children's Ways of Knowing, Technology Integration, Integrated Arts, Numeracy, and Paideia. Several of these themes have been repeated multiple times; others have been offered only once. Team leaders have great flexibility in the extent to which the theme permeates seminar activities and expectations for field experiences. Since 1994 preservice teachers have been assigned to a team based on rank-ordered preference cards that they complete before their admission to the School of Education and the PDS program, at the beginning of their junior year.

In summary, the UNCG PDS program, draws from the Holmes model while adding components that are uniquely its own. Additionally, the UNCG program has overarching characteristics that are standardized across teams. However, each team differs by having a unique theme which is infused throughout field experiences and seminars. This difference of assigning themes to the inquiry teams, the hallmark of the UNCG model, is the focus of the present research.

Methods

The present research has two parts. First, we offer three descriptive mini-case studies of theme-based cohorts (Levin, Matthews, Miller, Massey, Cook & Mercier, 2000). Three faculty members who have led from two to five teams each over the past 10 years at UNCG developed these descriptive mini-cases. The purposes of these mini-cases are to (1) document how themes are identified and implemented within a public elementary school; (2) identify factors that affect implementation of a theme; and (3) assess the costs and benefits of the theme-based PDS program for the various stakeholders involved, focusing specifically on teacher education faculty.

In addition to the mini-cases, we describe results from a survey (Figure 1) given to our PDS faculty in order to provide a more inclusive and data-driven picture of the status of our theme-based PDS model after ten years. A total of nine survey forms, representing 19 teams and seven unique themes offered between 1991-2001,

were completed. All but one tenured or tenure-track faculty member involved in PDS work completed the survey, giving us varying perspectives of our faculty with respect to their involvement with PDS teams. Additionally, a follow up cost/benefits survey was administered and 10 experienced PDS team leaders responded when we asked them to write down what they believed were the costs and benefits of leading a theme-based PDS team. All quotes in the following cases and our summary and interpretation of these data are based on these two surveys. A limitation of this paper is that we have not collected data from other stakeholders about the PDS theme model, which would have offered information about the perceived value of this model for our school partners or our university preservice teachers. Therefore, we focus in this paper on the benefits and cost for teacher education faculty only.

One PDS Program: Three Different Themes

Case 1: Paideia PDS

Background. Since 1994 the faculty, staff, and administrators at this PDS partnership site have worked with UNCG to develop a PDS program for preparing elementary preservice teachers. Over a six-year period of time, two different themes have been implemented at this site. During 1994-1996 and 1996-1998, two cohort groups of teacher candidates from UNCG completed a series of internships and their student teaching experience at this site concurrent with taking their methods, foundations, and other required licensure courses. Because of the university faculty member's interest and expertise in integrating computer-based technologies into the elementary school curriculum, instructional technology was the theme of the first two cohorts at this PDS site.

How the Paideia theme was implemented. While planning for a third PDS cohort at this site, the principal asked if the theme for the next cohort might shift from instructional technology to Paideia, which was the focus of the school's professional development plan. Paideia is both a philosophy and a school reform movement dedicated to helping children learn to be thinkers and advocating that schools transform into active learning communities (Adler, 1982, 1984; Roberts, et al. 1998, 1999). The UNCG faculty member readily agreed, understanding the benefits of having a common focus for the professional development of experienced teachers and the new team of interns at this PDS site. One of the hallmarks of a "true" PDS (Holmes Group, 1995) is having both novice and experienced teachers engaged together in learning. Therefore, we reasoned that becoming a Paideia-focused PDS would move our partnership closer toward the goals for PDSs. Furthermore, having Paideia as a theme allowed all the stakeholders (preservice teachers, inservice teachers, and the university faculty member) opportunities to learn and practice Paideia principles such as (a) increasing children's understanding of ideals and values through Socratic questioning during seminar discussions, (b)

developing intellectual skills by coaching children through integrated, thematic units of instruction, (c) strengthening teachers' didactic instruction of required subject matter, and (d) increasing the use of alternative forms of assessment.

In addition, several other opportunities occurred that moved this partnership closer toward becoming a more evolved PDS. First, UNCG decided to allow PDS faculty the flexibility of having smaller cohort groups, which allowed an entire team to be placed at one PDS site for the entire two years. Second, classroom space became available at the Paideia PDS site so that the UNCG interns could have their weekly seminars on site during the school day. Third, a teacher from this PDS was hired to help with supervision of the UNCG Interns. Fourth, other PDS faculty were recruited and paid by UNCG to teach two methods courses on site after school: Children's Literature and Reading Methods. Fifth, University-School Teacher Education Partnership (U/STEP) funds became available for grants jointly authored by the school and university PDS faculty. And, sixth, the National Paideia Center (NPC) moved its headquarters to UNCG about this time, and committed resources to training and supporting the PDS faculty and the UNCG preservice teachers during 1998-2000.

Benefits for faculty. The mutual goals of the Paideia-focused PDS cohort described above continued to evolve. Working together we (a)provided extensive field experiences for preservice teachers, (b) strengthened relationships among university and public school teacher educators, (c) provided on-site learning opportunities for both novice and veteran teachers through a joint focus on Paideia (d) and provided the children at this PDS with another adult in the classroom with knowledge about Paideia principles. With the Paideia theme having been embraced by the public school and with the additional support received from the National Paideia Center, the university faculty member gained understanding of the Paideia philosophy, principles, and methods, which contributed to her research interest in the development of teachers' pedagogical understandings. The relationships in this PDS partnership grew stronger and continued to develop as both school and university faculty worked together to educate another cohort of elementary preservice teachers. During her involvement with this team, the university faculty PDS team leader received promotion and tenure, concrete evidence that her work with the team was respected by her colleagues. The Paideia PDS site provided a robust forum for her to conduct research while endeavoring to enhance student learning of her college students and the public school students (Levin, 2003). The leader of this team concludes:

> I have always been somewhat of an elementary education generalist with a research interest in teacher development. So when I was asked to switch my team's focus from technology to Paideia, I was agreeable, as long as I had a forum to conduct site-based research and to provide my University students with a rich environment to develop their pedagogical expertise. Had I not been willing to refocus the theme of the team, I don't think I would have been nearly as effective at that school.

Conversely, by developing a theme that met the needs of the school, I was able to develop a new pedagogical expertise, specifically Paideia, and to have a cohort of university and public school teachers who have collaborated in research with me.

Case 2: Environmental Education PDS

Background. A science and technology magnet elementary school, located near UNCG, served as the PDS site for three Environmental Education Teams across six years: 1993-1995 (Team 1), 1995-1997 (Team 2), and 1999-2001 (Team 4). In 1998, this public magnet school decided not to participate in the UNCG PDS program due to issues related to school accountability centered around high-stakes math and reading assessment. With a change in principals and the continued support of the science specialist at the school, Team 4, a small team of ten students, completed their entire two-year field experience at the magnet school. Team 5 began their work there in August 2002 and the university continues to use this school as a PDS site.

How the Environmental Education theme was implemented. In order to best understand the nature of the Environmental Education theme at this PDS site, it is important to understand the science program at the magnet school. All K-5 students at this PDS site take science from the science specialist at least once each week. There are a total of 54 science-related fieldtrips each year — one each month per grade level, lasting from a half-day to overnight stays for 2nd through 5th graders. There are monthly science-focused evening events for students and parents, including Astronomy Night, Family Science Night, Science Fair, the Wright Brothers Anniversary Party, and the School's State Fair. The science program also has a special focus for a week each month including National Chemistry Week, Engineering Week, and American Heart Association Week. The environmental education theme was implemented by the university faculty member working closely with the science specialist at the school to ensure that the school-based initiatives related to science were incorporated into the professional development of the Environmental Education (EE) team. Additionally, university students on the EE team organized environmental education days for students and teachers, installed a mini-pond, and taught lessons related to the mini-pond.

Benefits for faculty. Preservice teachers on the EE teams leave with expertise and experiences in teaching environmental education that are linked to best practices in science education (Zemelman, Daniels, & Hyde, 1993). They experience opportunities to observe teaching and to teach in ways that are consistent with and promoted by the *National Science Education Standards*. Many students work toward and some earn an Environmental Education certification available in North Carolina as well, which requires attending seven instructional workshops, 50 hours of outdoor education experiences, 30 hours of Environmental Education teaching experiences, 30 hours of exposure to Environmental Education resources and facilities in the state, and a 20-hour action partnership. This theme-based PDS

program offers a model of undergraduate teacher preparation that prepares teachers to be K-5 generalists and science enthusiasts at the same time.

In spite of needing to work in multiple schools and not always having access to the science magnet school, the faculty member team leader was able to blend expectations for scholarship, service, and teaching while leading a theme-based PDS program centered on her area of expertise. This involvement has included co-authoring both practitioner-focused and research-oriented articles with the science specialist, other teachers at the magnet school, graduate students, and colleagues on the faculty. While she asserts that K-5 students as well as university students benefit from the enhanced science education they receive from working on her team, she knows that having the team has been career enhancing for her. The team leader concludes:

> Initially, I was uninterested in taking an elementary education team. However, not having an option, I was able to turn a work requirement into an opportunity that surpassed my expectations. While working in a public school for approximately 10 hours a week adds a tremendous load to my already rigorous teaching, research, and service load at the University, having a forum to present and field test ideas related to science and environmental education has been invaluable. I develop an idea, implement it, refine it, and ultimately write about the project. By the time I needed to put together a promotion and tenure package, I had considerable years of school involvement and a forum through my team for preparing conference presentations and publications.
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> Ultimately, the team leader of the science team received promotion and tenure at UNCG.

Case 3: English as a Second Language (ESOL) PDS

Background. The theme of this PDS cohort was improving the ability of preservice teachers to teach linguistically diverse learners. The faculty member who led this team was the University faculty member who taught English as a Second Language (ESOL) methodology and was licensed to teach ESOL and Spanish K-12. Additionally, she had several years of ESOL teaching experience. The PDS site was selected because it had a large population of ESOL students. Additionally, when this school was established, the principal insisted that she be allowed to bring her ESOL students with her from the old school. The faculty member decided that working with a principal who wanted ESOL students in the school would increase the likelihood that her preservice teachers would have a positive experience. Approximately 10% of the school population was comprised of ESOL learners.

While having considerable expertise in ESOL, the faculty member who led this team was a new, non-tenured faculty member with no experience in the PDS model. To ease the learning curve, she was partnered with a doctoral student who had co-led a PDS team previously.

Implementation of the ESOL theme. Once the site was selected, the University faculty member met with the principal to place the interns, to plan for having seminars at the school, and to meet with the ESOL teacher and ESOL teacher assistant. The principal had convinced the local district to keep the ESOL students at her school instead of sending them to a proposed cluster site. This action, combined with the principal's welcoming of the ESOL themed-cohort into her school, convinced the PDS team leader that this school would be a good one to use as the ESOL PDS school. However, within the first semester of the four-semester commitment, it became clear that a partnership with the University faculty member and the site-based ESOL specialist would not be an option. The site-based ESOL teacher was a visiting faculty member from another country. When the University faculty member asked her if the preservice teachers could come into the ESOL classroom to observe ESOL teaching, she responded that the room was too small and was not conducive to having visitors and that, additionally, the ESOL students would not be comfortable with visitors in their classroom. Therefore, the extent to which the ESOL theme permeated the ESOL PDS team was limited to mini-seminar lessons developed by the faculty team leader. Additionally, the preservice teachers had contact with the ESOL learners in their mainstream classrooms. Based on the seminar lessons related to teaching linguistically diverse learners, the university faculty and her doctoral student did present a paper at International TESOL about the their preservice teachers' growth in knowledge related to teaching ESOL (Antonek & Wood, 1999). However, opportunities for site-based collaboration and for implementing an ESOL tutoring program were limited. In Year 1, the ESOL theme did not permeate the team's experience.

In Year 2, the ESOL teacher did not return. Her replacement was a teacher with initial licensure in another area than ESOL who had been admitted into the University's ESOL licensure program. While not having a site-based specialist to collaborate with, the university faculty member who led the team was at least hopeful that the new ESOL teacher would be eager to collaborate on projects. Unfortunately, this second ESOL teacher decided to postpone pursuing licensure and moved at the end of the year.

Benefits for faculty. Unlike the first two cases, the ESOL theme-based PDS did not develop as the university faculty member had hoped. However, her preservice teachers were interning and student teaching in classrooms with ESOL learners. This gave the university faculty member the opportunity to observe in classrooms with ESOL learners and to develop in-service workshop material for teaching diverse learners, which she conducted on a regular basis. Unfortunately, no significant research was possible given the lack of cooperation from the site-based ESOL teachers. The team leader, not having a team previously felt that the learning curve on leading a team was too great to change schools in the middle of the two-year commitment. Additionally, she felt that the placements were successful for the preservice teachers and she did not want to jeopardize their professional develop-

ment by relocating them. Finally, the principal was committed to the university-school partnership and supportive to the PDS model in other ways.

Providing her perspective on the benefits (and costs), the university faculty member concluded:

> I was asked to take an elementary education team of preservice teachers even though my specialization was foreign language education and ESOL. I thought that through sharing my expertise in ESOL I would be an effective team leader. However, I learned that much of the team curriculum necessarily focused on elementary education generalist topics like classroom management, educational psychology, and the general education core curriculum. Between that learning curve and not having a site-based specialist to collaborate with, my team experience was mixed. On the one hand, I learned the K-5 grade-level expectations. Knowing these grade level objectives and expectations made me a better ESOL teacher trainer. However, not having a site-based specialist to help implement my research and staff development objectives has detracted from my career. While coming to the University with a robust list of publications, I was not able to publish during the two-year involvement with this team. I finished my two-year commitment to the PDS school, primarily sharing my ESOL expertise with my preservice teachers as questions arose regarding their teaching effectiveness with the ESOL learners in their classrooms.
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> The faculty member who led the ESOL team did not pursue promotion and tenure at the University but continues to work at the University on a part-time basis.

Synthesis of the Three Cases

These three mini-cases reveal the extent to which the PDS themes are dramatically different, yet equally robust. Preservice teachers on the Paideia, Environmental Education, and ESOL-focused teams leave with different in-depth knowledge and experiences that mediate their becoming effective teachers — a plus. They also leave with the common body of content and pedagogical content knowledge that all elementary education majors receive in their methods courses.

The three cases also reveal how elementary education faculty can mesh their university responsibilities and expectations with site-based needs and issues at their PDSs, which is as demonstrated by the three cases — but not without some difficult challenges. In the Paideia PDS case, while the faculty member was not initially pursuing Paideia as an area of research, she was willing to accommodate the school's interests and subsequently developed expertise in the Paideia model. In this instance, the school's need was the catalyst for her developing interest and expertise in Paideia, which resulted in presentations and publications on the topic. In the Environmental Education case, this faculty member's involvement with the science and technology magnet school was a natural fit in which the site-based science specialist's and university faculty member's goals and objectives meshed. This PDS benefited from her expertise and she benefited from having a site to implement lessons with an emphasis on natural science and environmental educa-

tion. However, the third case shows that without congruence between the university faculty member's expertise and support for the theme from the PDS school, the benefits of having a theme-based cohort may be lost.

In all three cases, using their expertise, these faculty members were able to meet the needs of the local schools, provide the preservice teachers on their team with in-depth knowledge and experience in a particular area of expertise, and conduct and present research on the theme of the PDS. Two of the three cases show how the thematic focus mediates the school-university partnership and makes it possible for university faculty to meet rigorous research expectations while also teaching and providing professional service. These three cases also exemplify the extent to which undergraduate students complete the UNCG PDS program with an area of content knowledge or a focused, pedagogical specialization that is usually not available until graduate school.

A concomitant finding to emerge from the cases is the role that the school principal and other site-based facilitators at the PDS sites play in the successful implementation of a theme-based PDS. All three cases highlight the crucial gate-keeping role of the principal, and the importance of relationships with specialists at the school, as in the cases of the Environmental Education and ESOL teams. While the importance of making school-based issues a focus of a PDS has been reported in the literature (Anderson, 1997), our findings show that you cannot underestimate the role of the district and site-based gatekeepers in accepting or rejecting the PDS theme. The three cases show that developing a successful theme-based PDS relationship takes significant time and commitment from both university-based and site-based partners and that, when the partnership and theme are successful, faculty have a forum for teaching, conducting research, and providing service in a school where their expertise is valued. Finally, the first two three cases show that if university faculty are able to adjust their goals to meet the needs of the school, that a mutually beneficial, long-term relationship can develop.

Findings from the PDS Faculty Survey

In the second tier of analysis, we move from the descriptive cases to summarizing our survey data. Findings from a 15-item, open-ended survey (see Figure 1) administered to PDS team leaders revealed that the theme-based nature of the PDS teams was extremely important to them.

Based on our initial survey, all of the respondents reported that the themes of their teams were directly linked to their areas of research and expertise. When asked how the theme permeated the school and seminar, the most widely reported answer was related to teaching activities and assignments during the internship seminars with "the type of assistance we provided in the classrooms" as the second most reported answer. Two respondents reported that the fact that the theme already permeated the school had influenced the selection of the school as a PDS site.

Finally, in one case, the theme permeated the seminars by virtue of the fact that it facilitated university students working toward environmental education certification during their elementary teacher education program.

When asked to identify the school-based factors that contributed to the implementation of the theme or the lack thereof, seven team leaders responded: school had "theme" or population of interest to university team leader (e.g., magnet school) which made it easier to implement; schools were interested in the theme due to the end of grade testing (e.g., literacy); and the school-based personnel (e.g., literacy facilitator and principal) were proactive in promoting the theme. However, in one negative response, the team leader indicated that the implementation of the ESOL theme was impeded by the fact that the ESOL teacher in the school did not yet hold ESOL licensure and therefore lacked the expertise and leadership that were needed to provide preservice teachers with professional development opportunities in ESOL.

In identifying the criteria for selecting the PDS sites, team leaders cited: site profile and site efforts with the theme as the number one reasons for selecting a site. The second reason for selecting a site was the principal's interest and willingness to work with the university. Other responses included "the department's history of using the site," "what was available," and "recommended by the department chair."

All nine survey respondents reported that the theme was very important to them as a team leader. One responded, "It is what I call the 'value-added' component of our PDS program — for faculty and for students." Team leaders, however, were not as confident that the theme was significant to the team members (the preservice teachers). According to one team leader: "I think this varied greatly. Some students knew coming into the program [what they wanted]. For others, I think they were placed on the team and it really held no personal significance initially. For still others, it was a phenomenally frustrating experience."

When asked how significant the theme was to the On-Site-Teacher-Educators (OSTEs) PDS team leaders' responses revealed that the theme played more of a role for the literacy and inclusion teams because those themes were central to the focus of the respective schools. An example of a less enthusiastic answer included, "They seemed most interested in having extra hands, regardless of theme." In one answer, change was reported. Initially the team leader's theme was not perceived as important, as evidenced by her never having been asked to conduct any professional development on the topic of the theme. However, when she adjusted the theme at the request of the school, the faculty member found the theme to be important to the faculty at the PDS.

Answers to the question about the significance of the theme to the school also revealed great variability, with some respondents unsure of the importance of the theme to the school. The team leader who struggled with the ESOL theme perceived that the classroom teachers valued the theme greatly. However, she did not find a way to incorporate the theme beyond discrete modules presented in seminars for her students. Therefore, the potential of the theme was not realized.

Two questions in our survey asked PDS team leaders to report how they were prepared to implement a team with a theme in the public schools. Several answers were provided. First, a cohort of doctoral students who served as team leaders met regularly to discuss issues of leading a team and collaborated on delivering seminars related to their individual strengths with their respective themes. Another team leader reported, "I drew on my previous classroom experiences, knowledge gained from my graduate studies, and the expertise of other team leaders focused on literacy." Finally, one respondent reported that her college degrees were in her theme areas.

In response to a question about whether or not team leaders had developed modules related to their theme that they could share, the data reveal that there were independent efforts, particularly by the doctoral students, who frequently collaborated on their team leading efforts. However, sharing of thematic modules has not been formalized so that materials can be used easily across teams, adopted by new team leaders, or developed into online resources. Some team leaders reported that they were asked to be guest speakers during the seminars of other team leaders. This informal effort to infuse other teams with the given expertise of a team leader (e.g., inclusion education, teaching linguistically diverse learners, technology, and literacy) is yet another informal "value added" component of the PDS program at UNCG that team leaders conduct as a professional courtesy.

Team leaders were asked if they would keep the same theme with a new team. All respondents reported that they would offer the same theme. The exception was the team leader for whom the ESOL theme did not evolve as hoped: "I would either keep the same site and change the theme or find a school with strong clinical faculty who would assist in implementing the ESOL theme." The team leader whose theme was inclusive education reported: "I would like to expand the issue of inclusion to look at a broader picture of diversity than just disabilities. Perhaps focus on special needs or something... I'm not sure."

For people who had led multiple teams, we asked how themes had evolved over time. The data reveal that, for the most part, themes remain the same because they reflect the expertise of the team leader; however, the delivery gets better as team leaders gain more experience with leading teams and implementing themes.

Another question addressed the issue of interplay between the given theme and best practices (as defined by national standards in various content areas as well as PDS research). Most respondents did not address the question directly in their responses, with the exception of one team leader who replied, "I always teach from a constructivist perspective and keep Zemelman, Daniels, and Hyde's (1993) 13 principles in mind"

The final survey question addressed the interface between balancing all of the general requirements of the PDS teams (e.g. teaching and technology portfolios, classroom management, multicultural education, working with students with special needs, Educational Psychology, and preparing for the Praxis exams) with

the assignments and modules related to the thematic focus. One respondent wrote: "The team members (preservice teachers) are much more concerned about the gate-keeping requirements and they feel like the gate-keeping requirements should drive the seminars. I ended up spending more time on these 'generalist' issues than I'd ever planned." Another team leader wrote: "Literacy is an issue related to all of these. We focus on technology related to literacy, meeting diverse needs, multicultural literature, etc." Finally, one team leader commented, "Educational psychology definitely got the 'short end of the stick' with my team...." This team leader reported that her students met at her house to finish their technology portfolios because of pressures to complete so much in the weekly seminars. She concluded: "I also don't feel like I did a good enough job bringing classroom management back to the 'table' each semester. We talked about it theoretically during the first semester, but I think I should have made it a point to revisit it every semester instead of only when an issue was raised." The comments of this team leader, who had great expertise in her theme and was always willing to share her expertise by way of extra presentations to other teams, as well as share her handouts, show the challenge of trying to balance the multiple areas of expertise. While she did not indicate a weakness of expertise in her theme area, she acknowledged the challenge of trying to balance being an expert with the generalist duties and objectives to be covered that were expected of all the PDS team leaders.

Synthesis of the Survey Findings

PDS themes at UNCG came about as a result of restructuring the undergraduate elementary education program in keeping with national reform efforts in teacher education (Holmes Group, 1986, 1990). In 1990, the PDS program was standardized and classes and field experiences blocked. Magnet schools were involved as some of our first PDS sites, and theme-based PDS teams evolved to match the interests and expertise of the university faculty. Initially, there was some faculty resistance to moving to the PDS model. However, the UNCG program has evolved from faculty resisting team leadership to new faculty coming to UNCG specifically to work with our PDS teams, knowing that they can develop a theme-based PDS cohort based on their expertise. Now, faculty members actually compete for teams, and we sometimes have more faculty members who would like to work with teams than teams available.

After 10 years of developing and refining the model, we find that the theme-based PDS program at UNCG is strong. However, from the survey results we have learned that variability in the manner and extent to which a theme is implemented is great. Our data reveal that some PDS sites work with themes better than others for the following reasons: (1) administrative support, determined to some extent by the superintendent's goals and objectives for the school district; (2) willingness, interest, and the level of professional expertise of classroom teachers and other site-

based specialists; (3) personal relationships that work well between the university and the public school; (4) expertise of some PDS faculty that enhances the theme; and (5) school-based initiatives that support the theme where the theme is a good match for the school's needs. In a theme-based PDS model, a school must add an additional level of commitment, not only to becoming a Professional Development School, but also to supporting the theme.

Both the survey results and the case studies reveal considerable variability in the implementation of themes across teams. However, consistent across teams is the fact that the team leaders provide the preservice teachers and PDS sites with a level of expertise that is not readily available in undergraduate licensure programs. Unfortunately, the fact that the UNCG PDS themes are faculty-centric and not consistent across years creates a paradox. On the one hand, there is a need for flexibility in thematic offerings based on which faculty member will be assigned a team. In some cases a theme may only be offered once, so it is difficult to advertise and recruit students who may have an interest in a given theme. Furthermore, our data reveals that developing an effective theme-based PDS takes time. Perhaps, if our PDS themes were standardized, then it would be easier to recruit undergraduate students for teams and doctoral students to work with the teams while completing their studies. Nevertheless, some doctoral students at UNCG have contributed significantly to implementing themes, and some have published research related to their theme-based PDS (e.g., Antonek & Wood, 1999; Hildreth, 1997; Kurtts & Levin, 2000; Levin & Rock, 2003; Levin, Hibbard, & Rock, 2002; Rock & Levin, 2002). Survey results reveal that doctoral students also consider having the leeway to select the theme for their team as crucial to their academic success. Unfortunately, we have not used this feature as a recruitment tool.

A key finding to emerge from our survey data was the importance of school-based personnel in the implementation of a theme, particularly principals and site-based facilitators. In the case of the science/environmental education theme, the school-based science specialist pursued and completed a Ph.D. in science education at UNCG and was the ideal site-based person to collaborate with the university team leader in implementing the PDS theme. The Paideia team hired a site-based teacher who could implement the theme. Conversely, the ESOL theme was difficult to implement because the ESOL teacher at the PDS was not yet licensed in ESOL and lacked the expertise to provide professional development for preservice teachers about the theme. These examples show that expertise of school-based personnel plays a significant role in the successful implementation of a theme. This finding echoes Anderson's (1997) assertion that equity among partners needs to be achieved. Having school-based personnel with theme-based expertise increases the likelihood of a true university-school partnership and the successful implementation of the given theme.

Our survey data also revealed that the theme might be more important to team leaders and less significant to preservice and inservice teachers, who must concern

themselves with all content areas of the core curriculum. Some PDS team leaders have suggested that we develop modules based on our various themes and make them available electronically for other teams and schools so that each team could have access to multiple areas of expertise. To date this sharing has not happened in any systematic manner. Additionally, while in a follow-up study we plan to conduct research on student perspectives about the team theme concept, team leaders report that students sometimes perceive disadvantages to the differing experiences. However, from the faculty perspective, challenges arising from the variability across teams do not outweigh the benefits of preservice teachers' graduating with a given area of expertise, and when a theme is successfully implemented, the team leader has a forum for blending service, teaching, and research.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Our data reveal that having theme-based cohorts as a part of our elementary PDS model is an effective educational initiative that enhances our PDS work. The teacher education faculty at UNCG have found a way to enhance the original goals of the PDS model that is compatible with their research agendas. In the UNCG model best-practice principles in elementary education are meshed with areas of faculty expertise. Clearly, when the theme is implemented successfully, university faculty as stakeholders can benefit from a theme-based PDS model.

While beyond the scope of this study, the benefits for the professional development schools are also clear, as evidenced by our annual PDS program evaluation data (CUI Department Annual Program Evaluations, 1993- 2002). As another data-point, our research shows that, from the team leaders' perspective, the theme-based PDS model at UNCG enhances K-5 student learning and brings both general and theme-related resources to a school. The K-5 students in our PDS sites receive more individualization and differentiation of instruction when a preservice teacher is in the classroom ten hours every week. These elementary students also receive additional tutoring that ultimately enhances their learning. The benefits for K-5 teachers of having another adult in the classroom include using this "extra time" to differentiate instruction, conduct small group work, monitor learning, and assess individuals. Also, a number of classroom teachers from our PDSs pursue advanced degrees, teach as adjunct faculty at the university, and pursue national board licensure as a result of their involvement with our PDS program. As seen in the three mini-cases, classroom teachers benefit from the expertise of university faculty who are knowledgeable about their fields of study, national content-area standards, and research-based teaching practices. Essentially, for the schools, team leaders are specialists and consultants in one.

Our survey data also reveal that the theme-based component of the UNCG model is pervasive in the eyes of faculty who believe it is also salient for our graduating preservice teachers. However, a shortcoming of how our PDS program

functions is that the themes are a value-added component only. Themes are not formalized or used as a recruitment feature of our PDS program. The theme-based model has not been publicized and is not advertised anywhere in our university's literature or website. Our theme-based approach in its informal, faculty-centric format is not conducive to advertising because it is not a program that can be stabilized as is. Therefore, UNCG has not developed a reputation for preparing elementary education teachers with a given area of expertise. In this era of Internet communication, students from all over the country could seek out our institution for the expertise that we help preservice teachers and doctoral candidates develop through our theme-based PDS model. Formalizing and describing the theme-based PDS feature of our elementary education licensure program has not happened to date.

Additionally, the theme-based component is not evaluated specifically when we conduct annual program reviews (PDS Annual Program Evaluation, 1993-2001). Furthermore, we do not currently conduct a needs assessment of our various PDS constituents, who include university preservice teachers, K-5 students, and the individual public schools, to identify the themes that they are interested in, deem as a priority, and are able to sustain. Perhaps our local school district would be more vested in our theme-based PDS program if they had more input into the themes, which is consistent with Anderson's (1997) assertion that a PDS must focus on school-based issues**.**

Leading PDS theme-based cohorts is no simple task, but many years of developing this model at UNCG reveal that benefits outweigh shortcomings. Through our research, we have learned that, in addition to Anderson's (1997) key factors for an effective PDS program, those considering a theme-based PDS model should ask themselves the following questions:

1. Does the university faculty member's expertise match the school's needs or focus?

2. Will the theme be supported at the school site?

3. Is the principal supportive?

4. Are there other faculty at the school who will mediate the PDS relationship and/or have expertise and interest in the theme?

5. Is the theme compatible with the school district's goals for its students and/or its focus for professional development?

6. Is there potential for a long-term commitment to the theme?

Clearly, themes, relationships, and common goals are very important to the success of a theme-based PDS model. Our research leads us to conclude that the theme-based aspect of the PDS model can be beneficial to all stakeholders, especially teacher education faculty, if the responses to the above questions are positive.

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Appendix I

PDS Questionnaire:
Theme-Based, Cohort Approach to Preservice Teacher Development

If you have had more than one PDS team, answer these questions related to the most recent team that you have had. If you are referring to a team other than the most recent team, please indicate this in your answer. Also, additional comments are encouraged.

1. How did you determine the theme(s) of your PDS teams?
2. Give examples of how the theme permeated the school- and seminar-based activities of your PDS team.
3. What school based factors contributed to the implementation (or lack of implementation) of the theme?
4. What criteria were used to select your PDS site(s)?
5. How significant was the theme to you as a team leader?
6. How significant was the theme to the team members?
7. How significant was the theme to the OSTEs?
8. How significant was the theme to the school?
9. How were you prepared to implement a team in the schools?

10. How were you prepared to implement your theme with your team?

11. Do you have modules prepared that you could give to other team leaders that they could use to infuse their seminars with your theme?

12. If you took a new team, would you keep the same theme?

13. If you have had more than one team, can you describe briefly how the theme differed or evolved from team to team?

14. What was the interplay between your theme and best practice (as defined by national standards in your area and by Zemelman, Daniels, and Hyde (1993))?

15. Teams are required to provide the following for preservice teachers: teach issues related to general knowledge of pedagogy/best practice; assist in the preparation of technology portfolios; infuse modules related to educational psychology, diversity, and special education; and prepare students for the Praxis exam. How does your thematic focus enhance, complement, or detract from these more general and gate keeping requirements.