A Dynamic Relationship:
The Impact of Formal and Informal Assessment on a Professional Development School for In-Service Non-Credentialed Teachers

By James Cantor & Sue Schaar

Introduction

Over the past decade many university-based teacher education programs and school districts have forged partnerships creating restructured, collaborative programs aimed at improving teaching and learning for credential candidates (CCs), as well as the children that they serve (Abdal-Haqq, 1998). According to data from the California Department of Education (www.cde.ca.gov), progress is being made in raising the percentage of fully certificated teachers teaching in urban schools; however, it is unknown whether this progress will be sustained or if it is a short-term spike. Keeping credentialed teachers remains a challenge as many leave the inner city or the teaching profession within their first five years of teaching.

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The intention of this article is twofold: (1) to provide both a description of an innovative, alternative teacher preparation program that was designed to address this challenge, and (2) to analyze how the assessment process was integral to its success. Our analysis will focus on how both formal and informal evaluation procedures produced a dynamic and beneficial relationship between the assessment process and implementation. The innovation that is the focus of this article is the Local District G Professional

Development School, (Local District G is one of eleven local mini-districts in the larger Los Angeles Unified School District).[1] It is the product of a three-way partnership between the nation's second largest school district, Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD); a large comprehensive public university, California State University, Dominguez Hills (CSUDH); and a non-profit public education fund, Los Angeles Educational Partnership (LAEP).

Most professional development schools (PDSs) prepare student teachers in exemplary schools with collaboration and support from the school and university (Lawrence & Dubetz, 2001; Paese, 2001). However, because of the enormous challenges all of the elementary schools in Local District G face and because of their need to develop stable and credentialed teaching staffs, this PDS encourages participation from all of the schools in the local district. This PDS is unique because it is designed to positively impact non-credentialed university teacher education students who are already teaching with full classroom responsibilities. With the goal of accelerating the acquisition of needed teaching skills, precepts of the PDS model are applied in order to explore and develop the best methods of teacher preparation. The intended outcomes are that the participants will earn their Preliminary California Multiple Subjects Teaching Credential in one year, and they will also have the skills and inclinations to be successful teachers and coaches in Local District G for many years to come. Before describing this model, it is necessary to understand why it was necessary to design this innovative program.

Setting the Context:

The Problem That Is Being Addressed

There is tremendous public concern about the very low standardized test scores in LAUSD (see www.lausd.net). Although test scores are beginning to increase, historically seventy-five percent of the entire district's third graders score below the 50th National Percentile Rank, NPR, in reading on the Stanford 9 test. Fifty percent score in the bottom quartile. The scores in District G are some of the lowest in LAUSD. Social-economic and cultural issues powerfully impact student achievement (Nieto, 2004), making teaching in these settings enormously challenging. In Local District G virtually all of the children live in poverty or extreme poverty. Another factor accounting for the low test scores in LAUSD is the fact that for many of the children, English is not their primary language. In LAUSD, approximately 45% of the 720,000 K-12 students are listed as English Language Learners. Although Spanish is the primary language for 93% of these students, the California Office of Education lists a total of 54 different home languages in the entire school district. This makes instruction difficult and complex.

Unfortunately, similar to other urban public school districts, LAUSD does not have a high percentage of seasoned, well-trained teachers to meet this challenge. Demographic changes and educational policies, such as Class Size Reduction, have

created an extreme shortage of certificated, trained teachers. Local District G, like others that serve the inner city poor, is particularly challenged to attract and retain first-rate, qualified teachers. In fact, when this PDS began in September 1999, 40% of the teachers employed in Local District G schools had not completed their professional training and held Emergency Permits. This allowed them to teach while they completed their university coursework after school and evenings. Several of the schools in this partnership had over 50% of their faculty still working on their entry level teaching credentials.

The PDS Model:

Connections to the Literature

Teacher education programs are confronting these new challenges, viewing them as opportunities both to create more effective ways of bridging theory and practice and to offer the kind of "on-the-job" training that these beginning teachers need (Cobb, 2000; Earle, Seehafer, & Ostlund, 2001). The old ways of preparing and training teachers are not working. New efforts are being made to effectively connect learning theories with teaching practices by synchronizing curricula with real-life classroom situations (Nave, 2000; Newmann & Wehlage, 1995). To break down the isolation prevalent among beginning teachers, Professional Development Schools/ School-University Partnerships (PDS/SUP) also design special supervised clinical practice experiences (Zeichner, 1992). Universities and school districts are responding collaboratively to re-invent teacher education programs by focusing support aimed at helping beginning teachers develop the skills and the inclinations to be successful teachers and leaders in inner city schools for many years to come (Oakes, Beck, & Mitchell, 1996).

With the goal of increasing the possibilities for successful development of beginning teachers in inner city schools, school practitioners and university educators are communicating and collaborating, and together are creating new models for teacher preparation. The PDS/SUP model articulated by The Holmes Group, John Goodlad, Linda Darling-Hammond, and others offers the potential for a synergy to develop when schools and universities work together to promote school-based inquiry. These efforts seek to simultaneously support pre-service teacher education, current teacher professional growth and development, and continuing professional development of university faculty (Darling-Hammond, 1994; Goodlad, 1990; Holmes, 1986; Valli et al., 1997).

PDS/SUP is a term meant to convey the collaborative creation of schools devoted to the development of both novice and experienced professionals in the field of education. Like teaching hospitals in medicine, the PDS/SUP model provides novice teachers with intensively supervised internships linked to their coursework. Supervising teachers improve their pedagogical skills by working collaboratively, demonstrating their know-how, and by questioning their assump-

tions and routines. Teacher educators from the university become energized when educational theory is examined under the strains and tensions of practice. Traditional university-based research and school-based action-research equally contribute towards deeper understandings into teaching and learning in the context of school and educational renewal. By putting theory into practice and practice into theory, the aim is to develop symbiotic relationships that simultaneously transform schools, teacher education programs, and the ways universities and schools interact. The PDS/SUP ideal seeks to immerse practitioners and researchers in collaborative personal and professional growth, thus creating learning communities of education professionals in realistic settings with the goal of school improvement through long-term research and development.

The Innovation:

A PDS for In-service Teachers on Emergency Permits

Several years ago, leaders from each of the partnering agencies began to collaborate on a program designed to infuse the best practices of the Urban Learning Centers (Johnson & McDonald, 1996) into the university alternative certification program. This model adopts four basic PDS precepts: (1) In order to more readily contextualize the nature of schooling for beginning teachers, the complete teacher preparation program is held at one of the local school sites; (2) Both school site experts and university faculty engage in the teaching of university courses in the program; (3) The program is directed by operations and advisory committees composed of appropriate membership from each of the partnering agencies; and (4) Educators from both the school district and the university work together to bring about the reform elements (Blair & Colbert, 2001). The specific goals of the Local District G PDS are to (1) strengthen teacher education programs, (2) increase technology skills and instructional proficiency of new teachers, (3) retain proficient teachers in inner city schools, (4) increase leadership capacity in inner city schools, and (5) increase K-5 student achievement and technology use.

In order to develop highly qualified teachers in the shortest time possible, the curriculum of the PDS is designed so that a credential candidate can earn a Preliminary California Multiple Subject Teaching Credential within twelve months. University courses are taught twice a week at the Professional Development Center (PDC) on a local school site in five-hour sessions. Because CCs are full-time teachers, accommodations are made to approximate the experience traditional students receive when they serve as student teachers in experienced teachers' classrooms. The CCs are released from their teaching responsibilities two days a month to work with their coaches in classrooms with children. At lunchtime they meet at the PDC to participate in critical inquiry groups. Exposure to in-depth technology training and practice takes place one Saturday a month throughout the

program. The university courses are field-based and team-teaching is the norm, pairing a university professor with faculty from LAUSD or LAEP.

The program seeks to link university courses, theory, and educational research to practice in inner city schools. Teacher coaches are full-time classroom teachers from within the PDS schools who provide demonstration lessons for observation and participation, on-site coaching, and curricular planning. PDS leaders facilitate inquiry seminars to support the CCs as they examine student work and teacher practices. Advanced technology resources and training are provided by LAEP so that CCs will use the Internet for communications and research, as well as to enhance classroom instruction. The PDS seeks to build a learning continuum, a network of new teachers, experienced exemplary teachers, and university faculty, extending through a process of quality teacher credential preparation, induction into the profession of teaching, and on to development of teacher leadership.

The Partners

With over 2,000 education students, the School of Education at California State University, Dominguez Hills, has one of the largest teacher credential programs in the State of California. Because of the shortage of fully credentialed teachers in the region, almost 90% of its education students are employed as full-time classroom teachers in Los Angeles area public schools with various caveats (e.g., emergency permit, pre-intern, or university intern). Federal legislation, *No Child Left Behind* ("NCLB," 2002), has changed the hiring practices of school districts and consequently the percentage of teacher education students taking the traditional student teaching option in CSUDH's teacher education program is rising. Nevertheless, relatively few of the teacher education students at CSUDH earn their teaching credentials in the traditional way (coursework and full-time student teaching in preparation for full classroom teaching responsibilities); therefore, the CSUDH teacher education program tailors its program to in-service novice teachers beginning their professional training.

The Los Angeles Educational Partnership (LAEP) is a non-profit organization that works with educators, business leaders, and community members to foster and support improvements in public education in the Los Angeles area. The organization seeks to engage schools and communities in comprehensive educational reform, focused on infusing technology into classrooms and school sites. LAEP's contributions to the Local District G PDS include support for coach training, technology training, inquiry group training, and facilitation of the processing of the PDS outcome assessments (organizing, processing, and classifying the observations of the CCs and the writing samples from their students).

The Participants

Each year approximately 10 to 20 of the 35 elementary schools in Local District G participate in the PDS. The student population in District G is approximately 70%

Latino, and 30% African American. Over 40% of the children are classified as Limited English Proficient (LEP). These are all "Title I" schools (virtually all of the families live in poverty or extreme poverty), and are classified as "Predominately Hispanic, Black, Asian, and Other Non-Anglo." The ethnic breakdown of the CCs is diverse, addressing the need to provide teachers who better match the student population. Table 1 shows the combined numbers of the participants in the first four years of the PDS.

Organization and Structure

Although not included until Year 2 of the PDS (see "Preliminary Findings and Further Innovation" below), the four-member Operations Team (OT) meets at least once a week to assure fidelity and collaborate in the implementation of the PDS model. Its members are the Director of Professional Development Schools (LAEP), the two University Coordinators (CSUDH), and the Teacher Advisor (LAUSD/Local District G). This team works closely together to recruit and serve CCs and teacher coaches. They ensure alignment between the sequence and content of credential courses, the observation and participation guidelines, and the work of coaches and inquiry group facilitators. They also visit the CCs in their classrooms throughout the year, conducting formative benchmark observations. The OT continually monitors the PDS process for faithful implementation and assures that each partner's priorities are integrated and put into action. Also implemented in Year 2, the organizational structure also includes the Advisory Board, high-level administrators from the partnering agencies. They meet three times a year to review policies and practices of the PDS and to approve changes in the program.

Coursework

From its inception, partners fully recognized the need for the Local District G PDS to address the specific factors that lead to developing successful teachers in successful urban schools. The reform partners created the curriculum of practice by using the very specific context of the framework of the Urban Learning Center (Johnson & McDonald, 1996), and the knowledge base of CSUDH, a highly diverse urban public university. The model has three guiding principles: (1) teachers must know their students well, (2) the curriculum must be connected to students' lives

Table 1
Ethnic Data of Credential Candidates, Teacher Coaches, and University Instructors

	Latino	African-American	Asian	Caucasian	Native American
Credential Candidates (N=113)	26%	45%	12%	15%	2.0%
Teacher Coaches (N=61)	23%	49%	7%	21%	0%
University Instructors (N=20)	20%	20%	20%	40%	0%

for relevant learning, and (3) strategies are based on research. Strategies include Levin's hypothesis of acceleration (Levin, 1988), multiage teaching, interdisciplinary curriculum, thematic curriculum, social services support, data based decision-making, and technology to support instruction.

This is a rigorous, accelerated, academic program that demands the focused attention of its participants. CCs attend classes year-round. In order to compress the coursework effectively into one calendar year, the PDS curriculum is divided into four phases, each of which is thematically integrated and tightly articulated with the inquiry sessions and coaching (both observation of coaches and observation by them). Each phase has one principal goal for the preparation of new teachers and three or four performance and content standards aligned with the California Teacher Performance Expectations (TPEs). The program is a deep and layered developmental model of preparation in which knowledge and skills build upon each other by design.

The Pre-Requisite Phase orients new teachers to school culture, presents models of exemplary practice to them, and supports the development of a rudimentary repertoire of pedagogical skills with a social justice, multicultural perspective. Phase I builds on the knowledge gained about children's cognitive development. It focuses on the acquisition of language and literacy while dwelling on the nature of second language acquisition and the impact of language dialects on the acquisition of academic language. Phase II illustrates how academic language is utilized as a tool for cognition in the content areas of science and mathematics. Language and literacy development culminates in Phase III with the teaching of reading/writing in the content areas and expansion to the multimodal areas of the arts and physical education. The capstone reflective experience examines the social and philosophical underpinnings of American education in general, family and community involvement, and school reform models. The accelerated curriculum is specifically tailored for urban teachers and is supported by coaching and reflective inquiry (Russell, 1999).

Coaching and Reflective Inquiry

An essential innovation of this program is the coupling of CCs with seasoned teacher coaches in their schools. Teachers benefit when they have trusted relationships with other teachers who ask provocative questions; offer helpful critiques; regularly observe one another; and provide support, companionship, and assistance (Ackland, 1991; Costa & Kallick, 1993). The Teacher Advisor from the school district selects the teacher coaches based on classroom observations, recommendations from principals, and personal knowledge of them through her work in the district. Teacher coaches learn the Cognitive Coaching Model (Costa & Garmston, 1994), before they begin working with CCs. Then they meet once a month for continued professional development and supervision, and they are encouraged to ultimately prepare for National Board Certification.

Release time is provided twice a month for the CCs and coaches to collaborate

during classroom observation and participation sessions, working with the children in their classrooms during regular school hours. Important relationships develop as teacher coaches plan experiences that allow for the linkage between university coursework and actual classroom implementation. This novice-expert relationship permits teacher coaches to support the CCs' progress in teacher education classes, to demonstrate best practices, and to shape and guide the professional development of the beginning teachers. The CCs then come together in small groups for facilitated focused inquiry, reflecting on their students' progress, the application of concepts and methods learned in their professional development activities, and their personal progress in the profession. These inquiry groups are modeled on the Critical Friends Groups (CFGs) framework, which was designed by the National School Reform Faculty of the Annenberg Institute. The intention is to engage in professional development that nurtures collegial groups of teachers within schools to improve teaching practices by focusing on local concerns, discussing teaching practices, and examining student work (Nave, 1998, 2000).

Thus, the PDS builds a learning community of new teachers, experienced and exemplary teachers, and university faculty, which helps to integrate the processes of teacher preparation, induction into the profession, and the development of teacher leadership into a smooth continuum of professional development. Therefore, the goals of the PDS extend beyond the development of CCs, and like other professional development schools, the goals include the continued growth of the teacher coaches and university faculty (Teitel, 1997).

Integration of Coaching and Coursework

Before the start of each new phase, the instructors of all the courses meet to discuss how to integrate their courses in mutually supportive ways. They consult with the PDS Advisor to produce coaching cycle guides to provide structure and direction for the teacher coaches as they work with their CCs. The teacher coaches use these to direct their planning of demonstration lessons, observation and participation sessions, and other professional development activities in support of the coursework that the CCs are currently undertaking. For example, in Phase I the teacher coaches focus their efforts in helping CCs deepen their understandings of teaching developmentally appropriate reading and writing, planning lessons, and differentiating instruction.

Technology Component

Research shows that classroom technology has very limited effects on student achievement unless well-prepared teachers use it (Willis & Mehlinger, 1996). This PDS is specifically structured to fully integrate technology into the preparation of teachers for successful participation in urban classrooms. The PDS provides the use of laptop computers for both the CCs and the teacher coaches to promote the incorporation of technology as a vital part of both the coursework and the clinical

experiences. The CCs and the teacher coaches meet together for a Saturday session on a monthly basis for technology training that reinforces the teaching foundations and practices covered in the PDS program. The technology goals are for all PDS participants to feel comfortable using computers and Internet technologies in the classroom with their students, and to understand how computers can be used to create student-focused activities that promote challenging, authentic, and multidisciplinary learning. By the end of the year CCs are expected to use technology, including the Internet, to facilitate the examination of student work and their own classroom practice and to develop student and professional electronic portfolios.

Method of Assessment

An external evaluator, Vital Research, was hired at the inception of the District G PDS to determine whether or not the stated goals were being met. Both descriptive and comparative designs of evaluation have been used, as various forms of data have been examined each year. Findings have been disseminated through mid-year and end-of year reports.

1. Each year CCs and Coaches were given a pre-post self-evaluation of technology proficiency, and Cohorts I, II, and III were also compared to each other (Goal 2).

2. CCs' teaching practices were compared longitudinally (baseline, mid-year, and end-of-year assessment) through classroom observations utilizing a modified version of the California Standards for the Teaching Profession (Goal 2).

3. CC and matched non-credentialed teachers' retention in the school, Local District G, and LAUSD for Cohorts I, II, and III was compared longitudinally (Goals 3, 4).

4. Teacher/Leaders from Year 1 and Coaches from Years 2 and 3 were evaluated longitudinally to determine their retention in the school, Local District G, and LAUSD (Goals 3, 4) and their ongoing leadership participation (Goal 4).

5. SAT 9 scores of CCs' students in grades 2-5 were compared longitudinally to scores of non-credentialed teachers with the same grade and school for Years 1, 2, and 3 (Goal 5).

6. Student writing samples were compared mid-year and end-of-year (Goal 5).

Preliminary Findings and Further Innovation

The first mid-year evaluation, reported in May of Year 1, showed a lack of alignment between the program goals and what was actually happening. It should

be noted that during Year 1, the only monitoring of the PDS other than the research team was done by a group consisting of the leaders from the partnering agencies who met monthly for problem solving. Because it was felt that the misalignment was preventing the program from meeting its goals, a formal retreat was set to hammer out solutions to the issues. University faculty and administrators, LAEP representatives, LAUSD District G officials and elementary school principals worked together to monitor and restructure the program in the following ways:

1. Mid-year and end-of-year formal assessments would continue to be conducted by the external evaluators.

2. A more efficient and effective organizing structure was established for monitoring and problem solving.

    a. An Advisory Board composed of high-level officials from each of the partnering agencies would meet three times a year to hear reports and make final decisions concerning important changes or additions.

    b. Day-to-day issues and problems would be monitored and solved by an Operations Team (OT) that would meet weekly. This four-member OT would be composed of members of all three partners: the two university program coordinators, LAEP's Director of PDSs, and the LAUSD Teacher Advisor. The OT would report to the Advisory Board at their regular meetings. Any large issues that the OT felt uncomfortable making would be discussed and decisions made at the Advisory Board meetings.

The value of these changes cannot be underestimated in the success of the program in Years 2 and 3. These groups essentially became an informal research mechanism by which the functioning of the PDS could be formatively assessed and evaluated throughout the year, and changes could be made immediately if necessary. The OT has been particularly important in the process because of the frequency of its meetings and discussion by a small team of those who are actually working with CCs on a daily basis. The team meets faithfully every week, year-round. Meetings include "barometer readings" concerning CC progress and challenges, both individually and collectively, coaching issues, communication issues with the local district officials and principals, as well as curricular issues. Minutes are kept and referred to when necessary; innovations are planned, procedures adjusted, and the relative success of each change is discussed and noted.

Recent Findings

As Years 2, 3, and 4 have progressed, modification to past procedures has increased the integrity of the fabric of the collaboration into what the external evaluators called a "near seamless integration and alignment of program compo-

nents to support non-credentialed teachers in the classroom and in the completion of the credential requirements," noting that this had, for the most part, been achieved by the end of Year 2 (Vital Research, 2002, p.13). Examples of innovations guided by the research of the external evaluators and research of the OT are listed in Table 2 and Table 3. Formal research continues to guide the program and has demonstrated success in all program goals.

Table 2
Innovations Guided by Formal Research Report

Year 1		*Changes in Year 2*
Weekly morning pullout for classroom observation in one classroom	→	Alternate week whole day pullout for coaching and inquiry group
University classes 1 day/week late mornings through early evenings	→	University classes 2 times/week 3:30-8:30 p.m.
Technology training for CCS only		Technology training for CCs and Coaches
Monthly problem solving sessions	→	Weekly monitoring of issues and CCs by OT, reporting of OT to quarterly meetings by Advisory Board; problem solving by both groups
	→	

Table 3
Example of Change Guided by Research of Operations Team: Coaching Process

Original		*Change*
Informal feedback from coaches	→	Monthly Coach Logs specifying accomplishments and action steps for next cycle
Minimal written guidelines provided to coaches	→	Coach Handbook with more specific goals and objectives for each phase
CC reflective journals focused on observations in the classroom	→	CC reflective journals concerning professional development with coach
Stipend paid in beginning and at the end of the semester	→	Modification of coaching stipend schedule to allow for more frequent monitoring of coachwork
Action research model of inquiry	→	Change in Critical Friends Inquiry format—CCs discuss the activities involving coach

Goal 1: Strengthen Teacher Education Programs

The Local District G PDS has been a laboratory for learning about the teacher education process; especially since it deals with teachers on emergency permit who are already wholly responsible for the academic progress of their students. CCs have continued to report how they have been completely surprised at how much they could learn in one year and principals report that their schools have become better places because of the program. The external evaluators report, "At the conclusion of this three-year grant, the PDS model has gained recognition as a valuable and viable field-based teacher training model to prepare new teachers" (Vital Research, 2002, p. 21).

Not only has the Local District G PDS model been disseminated through various articles (Cantor, 2002), and national conferences, it has received awards for innovation at the national, state, local levels. Its success in training teachers has received attention in the highest levels of LAUSD, and the model has been replicated in three additional local LAUSD districts (I, J, and K). In addition to the four PDSs for elementary teachers, there are now PDSs for Special Education CCs in these same four local districts, and three secondary PDSs have started for CCs teaching grades 6-12 in English, Math, Science, Social Studies, and Physical Education.

Goal 2: Increase Instructional Proficiency of New Teachers

The 13 areas measured to determine instructional proficiency of the CCs are taken directly from the California Standards for the Teaching Profession. These are the crucial areas for new teachers, and they include classroom management, student engagement, creating effective learning environments, planning instruction, and assessing student learning. Baseline information on each CC's teaching proficiency is gathered near the beginning of the school year, mid-year, and at the end of the year. In the Year 3 formal evaluation, the external researchers conclude that "Year 2 and Year 3 Programs yielded similar results. Overall, Cohort 3 CCs showed a significant increase in instructional proficiency" (Vital Research, 2002, p. 14) as measured by their increase in ability to engage and support students, create effective learning environments, plan intruction, and assess student learning (see Figure 1).

Goal 3: Increase Technology Skills of New Teachers

Pre- and post-test scores were calculated for each of the following technology scales: Basic Computer Use, Internet Use, and Advanced Computer Use. A two-way repeated measures ANOVA was conducted to compare proficiency in pre- and post-basic computer and Internet use across Cohorts I, II, and III. All Cohorts increased in skills in both areas. Although increases differed, there were no significant differences in the increases between the three cohorts for either of these proficiencies. Whereas about the same proportion of Cohorts I, II, and III felt that technology had changed the way they teach at baseline (61.1%, 68.4%, and 57.1% respectively), by the end of the year, 86.7% in Cohort 1, 100% in Cohort II and 91.7% in Cohort III felt this way.

Goal 4: Retain Proficient Teachers and Increase Leadership Capacity in Inner City Schools

In a school district that historically has been challenged to keep its credentialed teachers, retention of teachers from the PDS has been extremely high. Of the 113 CCs who participated in the first three years of the Local District G PDS, 100 are still teaching in Local District G and three more are still teaching in LAUSD.

Goal 5: Increase K-5 Student Achievement

Student achievement in Reading, Mathematics, and Language has been measured for each of the CC's classes during their year as a student at the PDS and in succeeding years. Data has been compared with a control group of teachers matched by school, grade and status (non-credentialed teacher). The body of student achievement data is large with over 1200 students' progress tracked in Years 1-3. In many cases, CCs were assigned to classrooms with significantly lower achieving students than were Control Group teachers. This may be because, overall, Control Group teachers had been classroom teachers longer than the CCs. Figure 2 and Figure 3 show examples of achievement of CCs' students compared to students of the Control Group of teachers. In all cases the students of the CCs outperformed those of the Control Group.

At the end of Year 3 the external evaluators note:

> . . . Year 2 and Year 3 programs yielded similar results. Overall, Cohort III CCs showed a significant increase in instructional proficiency and technology skills. Their students, while starting with significantly lower pretest (2001) reading and math

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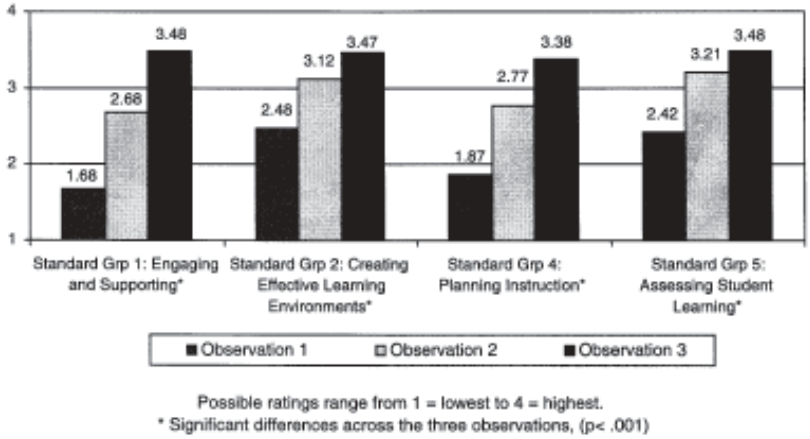
Figure 1:
Average Rating of Standards Groups from Three Observations



Possible ratings range from 1 = lowest to 4 = highest.
* Significant differences across the three observations, ($p < .001$)

scores, held their own in reading and math achievement as the Control Group students' scores decreased significantly. (Vital Research, 2002, p. 56)

Discussion

Various kinds of assessment, both formal and informal, have been critical to the success of this unique PDS. It is precisely because of the formal formative assessment provided by Vital Research that another innovation; the Operations Team (OT) was spawned. The OT is a more informal means of program assessment, yet it is regular,

Figure 2:
Cohort III, Year 1, SAT 9 NCE Adjusted Means for Reading

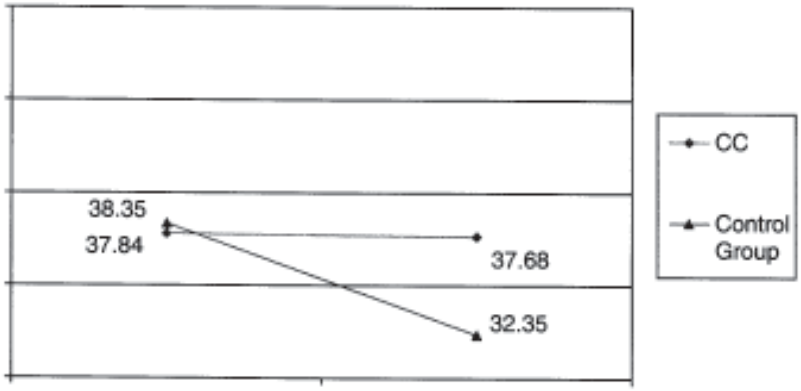
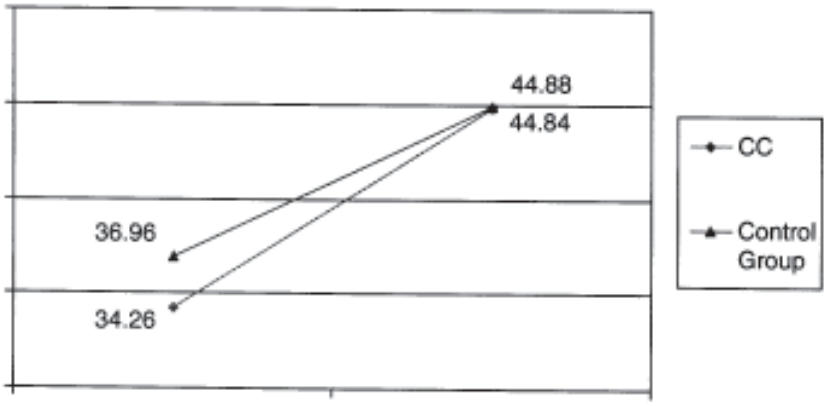


Figure 3:
Cohort I, Year 3, SAT 9 NCE Adjusted Means for Math



frequent, dynamic, examines all aspects of the program, and it provides feedback to the Advisory Board three times a year. In turn, the Advisory Board can make decisions mid-year to keep this innovative program robust and successful. The coaching process, for example, has been strengthened systematically over the three-year period so that it provides monitored, effective support for CCs while building leadership skills in coaches. Both the OT and Advisory Board were involved in this process.

Implications and Recommendations for PDS Program Design and Development

Several important lessons have been learned in the beginning years of the Local District G PDS. First, innovation and assessment are dynamically linked. Program development benefits from a design that is based on frequent feedback from multiple sources. While formal assessments are essential, informal formative assessment and evaluation can make equally important, more frequent incremental changes possible. Both formal and informal evaluation structures should be based on the goals of the project and both should be embedded in the program design at the outset. While data gathering can be a messy business in education because of the many variables, multiple kinds of tools form the foundation for well-rounded program development. High-stakes, standardized tests do not tell the whole story; self-report and observation of participants are necessary to identify more subtle information that can have profound affects on a program. A more accurate picture emerges when analyses include both quantitative and qualitative data.

Secondly, program design should allow for a certain amount of elasticity in the structure so that problems can be solved in an efficient and timely manner. A framework of support was provided in the first year of the PDS, but there was no mechanism that that was effectively able to fix the initial misalignment of theory and practice that happens when any plan is piloted. The Advisory Board provides the necessary support for the OT, which has become the supple adhesive that holds the program together. Weekly meetings keep the OT on alert for things that need to be done for the first time or supported for the tenth time. It is truly the glue that helps hold the entire program together.

Finally, this program has demonstrated that research can aid institutionalization. What started out as an experiment has become a preferred program in four of the Los Angeles Unified Local School Districts—professional development schools for in-service, non-credentialed teachers. The Local District G PDS has demonstrated that it is possible, in a relatively short amount of time, to prepare quality teachers who will remain in inner city schools, and it is possible for these emerging professionals to help improve student achievement, even among culturally and linguistically diverse populations. Because of the success of the Local District G PDS, LAUSD and its partners have committed to expanding implementation of the model in additional

districts as well as supporting this with human and financial resources, such as space for professional development schools and coach release time.

In a time when many educators are feeling that the weight of intense demands for accountability and assessment may be stifling innovation, the early years of the Local District G PDS offer hope that with thoughtful design and adequate support assessment can nurture innovation. The future is uncertain as powerful, unforeseen forces are dramatically changing the educational landscape. Already hiring practices are upside down as school districts strive to meet *No Child Left Behind*'s, definition of a "highly qualified" teacher. Substantial budget cuts are causing teachers to be laid off and class sizes to increase. Professional development budgets are disappearing in the school districts, and at the university, teacher education programs are finding themselves with not enough money to support essential components of their programs, such as field supervision and a full offering of scheduled classes.

The Local District G PDS has had to modify its program because it no longer has the money to support technology training, and monthly professional development for coaches now occurs every other month. Budget cuts have also made it necessary to reduce the number of school-based educators who team-teach the teacher education courses. We expect that educators will face these challenges head-on, and they will develop new innovative programs, utilizing what has been learned from innovations such as the Local District G PDS. A major challenge will be to assure that these new innovations are linked to effective assessment systems right from the start and that there will be resources to assure on-going, longitudinal research in mature programs. Further research is needed to learn more about the importance of this dynamic duo, innovation and assessment, in molding and supporting programs for the professional development of beginning teachers.

Addendum:

Update, January 2005

The process for publishing in a refereed journal is long and deliberate, and in the time that has transpired since this article was submitted, edited, and approved for publication, NCLB and drastic budget cuts (mentioned above) did cause this PDS to cease its operations, at least for the time being. LAUSD has currently filled all of its vacancies for elementary classroom teachers with credentialed teachers, largely due to three factors: (1) the district proactively complied with the requirements of NCLB and successfully recruited and hired credentialed teachers from across the nation; (2) the district signed students from local teacher education programs to early contracts, promising them classroom positions as soon as they graduated; and (3) demographic changes resulted in less of a demand for classroom teachers as local public schools saw significant drops in student enrollment.

The partnership that developed this PDS did so in order to address a crisis—children in urban schools were being taught by beginning teachers who had little

or no professional development in teaching. Children suffered as thousands of unqualified, non-credentialed teachers were failing in their attempts to teach in very challenging situations. The Local District G PDS was custom-designed to address this issue, and it's successful praxis of theory and practice is described and documented in this article. We all agree that quality teaching matters and children do better when they have teachers who are highly qualified. However, an argument can be made that no one is more suited to be successful than the University Interns from programs such as the Local District G PDS.

Although we have not conducted a formal study, we believe that there might be unintended consequences of federal legislation, such as NCLB, and state initiatives that affect innovative teacher education programs, such as the one described above. In our case, we have two significant concerns. The first is a fear that there will be an adverse effect on the retention rate of teachers. Instead of student teaching in a "model school," the Local District G PDS CCs learned their craft in the same urban schools in which they will be expected to continue their careers. An issue that has confounded teacher educators has been the difficulty that many white novice teachers have teaching what Lisa Delpit calls "other peoples' children," (Delpit, 1995). The participants in this PDS closely matched the cultural, social, and economic backgrounds of the children in the schools. They served as role models and were comfortable teaching in these challenging schools. It seems to us that many of our "novice" CCs were, in fact, successful role models and quite experienced in ways that really do matter when it comes to knowing children in urban settings. More importantly, they were successful in their practices and willing to remain in the urban setting even after they had their credentials in hand. Our second concern is that we believe that a pathway has closed that had increased the chances for urban college graduates of color to become teachers. Many of the PDS CCs were the first college graduates in their families, and it was possible for them to participate in a teacher education program only because they were able to earn a salary and a credential concurrently. We fear that these dedicated, first-generation college graduates may not ever become teachers because they cannot afford to quit working in order to become student teachers. They now will only be able to work as teacher assistants.

More study is needed to determine the full effects of the policy changes spawned by NCLB. Will the policies that demand fully credentialed teachers produce outcomes equal to or more effective than the PDS in terms of teacher quality, student outcomes, and retention of teachers in urban schools? Or will policy that was intended to narrow the learning gap continue to leave urban students and would-be teachers of color behind?

Note

[1] Subsequent to publication of this article, LAUSD consolidated and re-named its mini-districts. The Local District G PDS is now part of Local District Seven.

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