Professional Development Schools – Learning Communities

Learning Together

Sharing Together

Changing Practices Together
The mission of PDS Partnerships is to promote:

- The professional development of teacher candidates
- Faculty development at all participating institutions
- Inquiry directed at the improvement of practice
- Enhanced student learning

Professional development school partners work together over time to:

- Build relationships and commitment to their shared goals
- Develop new strategies, roles, and relationships to support their work
- Influence policies and practices at the district, state, and national levels.

PDS partnerships are innovative institutions formed through partnerships between professional education programs and P-12 schools.
**INTRODUCTION**

**Who We Are**

The PDS is a learning-centered community that supports the integrated learning and development of P-12 students, candidates, and PDS partners through inquiry-based practice. PDS partners share a common vision of teaching and learning grounded in research and practitioner knowledge.

**What We Will Accomplish – Our Working Mission**

Serving the whole learner to bridge the achievement gap.

**How We Will Address the Mission**

Based on stakeholder input across the P-16 continuum, our PDS collective will focus on three key strands in serving the whole learner: early childhood – readiness for school; learners at risk – English Language learners; and family-school-community partnerships.

**The Nature of Conducting Our Work**

PDS participants will engage in a strand via a professional learning community. Over the course of three years these learning communities will purposefully learn, share, and create change to systematically inform and shape the educational culture of the PDS … ultimately bridging the achievement gap of our learners.

**PDS AIMS TO CHART OUR COURSE – NCATE “LEADING EDGE” CRITERIA**

1. Using a shared approach to candidate preparation, PDS partners include all content-area faculty, professional education, and school faculty.
2. Mechanisms are in place for PDS partners to share results and new knowledge with others in the extended learning community. All learners use this new knowledge to inform practice.
3. Institutions and local and state entities use PDS generated knowledge to inform policies.
4. Sustained collaborative inquiry into improved learning for P-12 students is at the core of the partnership’s vision and practices.
5. Vehicles for sharing ideas and practices that have been successful in the PDS partnership are in place and are used to influence practice in the school district(s) and throughout the university.
6. The PDS participants share their inquiry-based learning experiences and results with audiences beyond the local partnership.
7. Substantive conversations about teaching and learning infuse the PDS partnership.
8. There is a process for reviewing and revising the shared vision as the knowledge base of the PDS partnership changes.
9. The PDS partnership produces outcome data that drive changes in how P-12 students, candidates, faculty, and other professionals learn.
10. Partner institutions change policies and practices as a result of work done in PDSs.
11. Multiple avenues for interaction with the profession, family members, and policymakers lead to policies and practices that reflect outcomes of PDS work.
12. Intentional policies and practices at the institutional, local, and state level support PDS partnerships.
13. The PDS partnership functions as an extended learning community for all participants, including content-area faculty, family members, and other community, district, and university members.
14. Structures exist for linking the policy-making groups of all partner institutions.
15. Content-area faculty members are full partners in the PDS partnership, utilizing the professional education conceptual framework to guide teaching and learning practices for candidates.
16. PDS partners engage family members in focusing on identifying students’ needs. Family members are fully informed as stakeholders in PDS work.

---

MODELING “BEST PRACTICES” AS WE WORK – CREATING A CULTURE OF LEARNING

Educators may envision “professional development” as a series of workshops, a conference, or some other, mostly external, source of expertise. A new model which involves “collective learning” is called for, which would encourage teachers to recognize the value of their own pedagogy and the significant impact of learning from others. This type of learning involves “learning by doing, reflecting on the experience, and then generating and sharing new insights and learning with oneself and others.” This results in professional development becoming a part of the school culture, an ongoing, embedded activity which guides curriculum development, student assessment, and development and evaluation of instructional strategies. (R. Hasslen, TQE Draft Position Paper on Professional Development, May 7, 2004).

A key component in accomplishing the goals identified in the planning process is effectively structuring the work of the organization.

Professional Learning Communities

A Professional Learning Community (PLC) engages its members in job embedded professional development to enhance the capacity to build each other’s professional competence and to ensure continuous organizational growth. High standards are maintained through a continuous focus on planning for learning, reflecting on learning, and evidence of improved student performance. When partnership entities operate as PLCs, members are united by a clear sense of purpose, a common understanding of the learning organization they are trying to create in order to achieve that purpose, collective commitments regarding what they must do to move the learning organization in the desired direction, and shared goals that provide benchmarks of their progress. Members work together in collaborative teams that engage in collective inquiry on the big questions of teaching and learning, engage in action research, build continuous improvement cycles into the routine practices of the school, and assess their efforts on the basis of results rather than activities.
Learning Communities to meet/work on a regular basis (December-March). Preparations being made to inform others on a larger scale.

Monthly Progress Report submitted to the PDS Governance Council in regard to learning community progress. PDS Governance Council to provide advisement as to the direction and continuation of learning community work.

Recognize and celebrate the contributions and work of the PDS. Continue to extend invitations to P-16 community members within the partnership to become engaged in PDS work. Early Childhood/School Readiness Learning Community along with Teacher/Pre-School Assignment (TPSA) staff called to serve on 2006 Minnesota Kindergarten Association (MKA) Conference Advisory Board.

learning Communities will continue to meet/work on a regular basis (March-May). Preparations for “changing together” – the shift from “learning/informing to changing practices – action research agenda/public policy advocacy in strand areas.”

PDS National Conference TESOL International Conference


English Language Learners (ELL) Learning Community: Colorín Colorado Webcast (Sponsored by US Dept. of Education Office of Special Programs – 2005-2006) Participations – Differentiated Instruction, Assessment and ELLs, and ELLs in Middle and High Schools.


2005 National Professional Development School Association Conference – 2 proposals accepted/presented about the work/study of the PDS Learning Communities (“Learning Communities: A Sustainable Venue for Professional Development” and “Gathering on the Hill – PDS and Early Childhood Influencing State Policy”)

2006 International Teachers of English to Speakers of other Languages (TESOL) Conference – 1 proposal accepted/presented about the work/study of the PDS Learning Communities (“Learning Communities: A Sustainable Venue for Professional Development.”)

2006 Minnesota Kindergarten Association Annual Conference – hosted by Minnesota State Mankato, CEE, and PDS.

Planning to begin for continued conversations, research, writing, presentation, and field trips to inform the learning communities; learning Communities to revisit goals/objectives per advisement from Governance Council; opportunities are provided for continued conversations/work throughout summer.

Year-end Progress Report submitted to the PDS Governance Council in regard to learning community mid-point progress. Year-end assessment to maintain course or modify direction for Year 3.

Year-End Progress Report submitted to the PDS Governance Council in regard to learning community progress. Monthly Progress Report submitted to the PDS Governance Council in regard to learning community mid-point progress. Year-end assessment to maintain course or modify direction for Year 3.

Learning Communities to revisit goals/objectives per advisement from Governance Council.

Opportunities are provided for continued conversations/work throughout summer.

Year-end Progress Report submitted to the PDS Governance Council in regard to learning community progress. Year-end assessment to maintain course or modify direction for Year 3.

Year-end assessment to maintain course or modify direction for Year 3.

Year-end assessment to maintain course or modify direction for Year 3.

Year-end assessment to maintain course or modify direction for Year 3.

Year-end assessment to maintain course or modify direction for Year 3.

Year-end assessment to maintain course or modify direction for Year 3.

Year-end assessment to maintain course or modify direction for Year 3.

Year-end assessment to maintain course or modify direction for Year 3.

Year-end assessment to maintain course or modify direction for Year 3.

Year-end assessment to maintain course or modify direction for Year 3.

Year-end assessment to maintain course or modify direction for Year 3.

Year-end assessment to maintain course or modify direction for Year 3.

Year-end assessment to maintain course or modify direction for Year 3.

Year-end assessment to maintain course or modify direction for Year 3.

Year-end assessment to maintain course or modify direction for Year 3.

Year-end assessment to maintain course or modify direction for Year 3.

Year-end assessment to maintain course or modify direction for Year 3.

Year-end assessment to maintain course or modify direction for Year 3.

Year-end assessment to maintain course or modify direction for Year 3.

Year-end assessment to maintain course or modify direction for Year 3.

Year-end assessment to maintain course or modify direction for Year 3.

Year-end assessment to maintain course or modify direction for Year 3.

Year-end assessment to maintain course or modify direction for Year 3.

Year-end assessment to maintain course or modify direction for Year 3.

Year-end assessment to maintain course or modify direction for Year 3.

Year-end assessment to maintain course or modify direction for Year 3.

Year-end assessment to maintain course or modify direction for Year 3.

Year-end assessment to maintain course or modify direction for Year 3.

Year-end assessment to maintain course or modify direction for Year 3.

Year-end assessment to maintain course or modify direction for Year 3.

Year-end assessment to maintain course or modify direction for Year 3.

Year-end assessment to maintain course or modify direction for Year 3.

Year-end assessment to maintain course or modify direction for Year 3.

Year-end assessment to maintain course or modify direction for Year 3.

Year-end assessment to maintain course or modify direction for Year 3.

Year-end assessment to maintain course or modify direction for Year 3.

Year-end assessment to maintain course or modify direction for Year 3.

Year-end assessment to maintain course or modify direction for Year 3.

Year-end assessment to maintain course or modify direction for Year 3.

Year-end assessment to maintain course or modify direction for Year 3.

Year-end assessment to maintain course or modify direction for Year 3.

Year-end assessment to maintain course or modify direction for Year 3.

Year-end assessment to maintain course or modify direction for Year 3.

Year-end assessment to maintain course or modify direction for Year 3.

Year-end assessment to maintain course or modify direction for Year 3.

Year-end assessment to maintain course or modify direction for Year 3.

Year-end assessment to maintain course or modify direction for Year 3.

Year-end assessment to maintain course or modify direction for Year 3.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PDS ACTION PLAN – YEAR 3 OF 3 “CHANGING PRACTICES TOGETHER”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minnesota State Mankato faculty continue research on effectiveness of PDS Learning Communities as “sustainable professional development.” Surveys distributed/collected from new members; follow-up/final surveys distributed to LC participants who have participated from 2005 to the present, and a focus group discussions were convened in May 2007.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognize and celebrate the contributions and work of the PDS.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continue to extend invitations to P16 community members within the partnership to become engaged in PDS work.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**FSC Partnerships Learning Community – Began 3rd Book Study for program implementation – Beyond the Bake Sale: The Essential Guide to Family-School Partnerships by Henderson, Mapp, Johnson, and Davies.**

In June 2006, LC submitted a preapplication to the Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation and Minnesota Department of Education for grant funding to support a pilot project with 2 PDS districts with the vision of increasing opportunity for academic success using a unique family involvement approach for severely at-risk eighth/ninth-grade students.

**Learning Communities continue forward in their work/research agenda to meet long range goals and objectives.**

**New members are continuously invited to participate/engage in the professional dialogues/activities.**

**Learning Communities consider new contexts in which their work is measured against – demographic changes, political climate, etc.**

**PDS Action Plan – Year 3 – CHANGING PRACTICES TOGETHER**

- **May 14, 2007** PDS Assembly reconvened to celebrate and “close” the three-year “work mission.”
- **Set the stage for longer-range planning for the next three/five years: PDS “All-Hands” event to be scheduled for September 2007.**
- **Conduct focus group discussions in relation to:**
  - Stakeholder needs
  - Capacity to meet needs
  - PDS Context for meeting needs/developing capacity.
- **Final Report submitted to the PDS Governance Council in regard to learning community achievements, recommendations, and future directions position/summary.**

**2007 American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education (AACTE) Conference – 1 proposal accepted/presented about the work/study of the PDS Learning Communities (“Establishing EL Professional Learning Communities for Understanding and Action.”)**

**2007 International TESOL Conference – 1 proposal accepted for poster session about the work/study of the PDS Learning Communities (“Gathering on the Hill – Professional Development Schools and Early Childhood/ELL Influencing State Policy.”)**

**Learning Communities will begin to formally evaluate their work, and prepare a summary of the new body of knowledge they have, and make formal recommendations to the PDS Governance Council based on their findings.**

**ECSR Learning Community – In February 2007, the PLC was invited to participate as an “organization” in the “Seize the Moment – Kids Can’t Wait to Learn” Conference sponsored by the Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation.**

**Position papers drafted by the LC were reintroduced to MN lawmakers in the 2007 session.**

**Special presentations given to LC: “SPELL Initiative” and “Early Childhood Education in Russia.”**

**LC members continue to inform each other of new initiatives, rulemaking impacting Early Childhood, and professional development opportunities for their staff.**

**ELL Learning Community – On December 13, 2006, an ELL Summit was convened whereby six positions were identified along with the “champions” who would lead the task of writing the first draft of their position. Drafting, editing, and further dialogue resulted in six completed position papers which were circulated at the 2007 MN Legislative Session.**

**Colorín Colorado Webcasts (Sponsored by US Dept. of Education Office of Special Programs – 2006-2007) were viewed – “Reading to Learn: ELLs in Grades 4-6” and “Assessment: On Track for Learner Success.” Special presentation given to LC: “SPELL Initiative.” ELL Program Evaluation” conducted in one PDS district with assistance from Minnesota State Mankato.**

**2007 American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education (AACTE) Conference – 1 proposal accepted/presented about the work/study of the PDS Learning Communities (“Establishing EL Professional Learning Communities for Understanding and Action.”)**

**2007 International TESOL Conference – 1 proposal accepted for poster session about the work/study of the PDS Learning Communities (“Gathering on the Hill – Professional Development Schools and Early Childhood/ELL Influencing State Policy.”)**

Learning Communities will begin to formally evaluate their work, and prepare a summary of the new body of knowledge they have, and make formal recommendations to the PDS Governance Council based on their findings.

**PDS Governance Council to convene a “Strategic Priorities Planning Retreat” FALL 2007.**

**ECSR Learning Community – In February 2007, the PLC was invited to participate as an “organization” in the “Seize the Moment – Kids Can’t Wait to Learn” Conference sponsored by the Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation.**

**Position papers drafted by the LC were reintroduced to MN lawmakers in the 2007 session.**

**Special presentations given to LC: “SPELL Initiative” and “Early Childhood Education in Russia.”**

**LC members continue to inform each other of new initiatives, rulemaking impacting Early Childhood, and professional development opportunities for their staff.**

**ELL Learning Community – On December 13, 2006, an ELL Summit was convened whereby six positions were identified along with the “champions” who would lead the task of writing the first draft of their position. Drafting, editing, and further dialogue resulted in six completed position papers which were circulated at the 2007 MN Legislative Session.**

**Colorín Colorado Webcasts (Sponsored by US Dept. of Education Office of Special Programs – 2006-2007) were viewed – “Reading to Learn: ELLs in Grades 4-6” and “Assessment: On Track for Learner Success.” Special presentation given to LC: “SPELL Initiative.” ELL Program Evaluation” conducted in one PDS district with assistance from Minnesota State Mankato.**

**2007 American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education (AACTE) Conference – 1 proposal accepted/presented about the work/study of the PDS Learning Communities (“Establishing EL Professional Learning Communities for Understanding and Action.”)**

**2007 International TESOL Conference – 1 proposal accepted for poster session about the work/study of the PDS Learning Communities (“Gathering on the Hill – Professional Development Schools and Early Childhood/ELL Influencing State Policy.”)**

Learning Communities will begin to formally evaluate their work, and prepare a summary of the new body of knowledge they have, and make formal recommendations to the PDS Governance Council based on their findings.

**PDS Governance Council to convene a “Strategic Priorities Planning Retreat” FALL 2007.**

**ECSR Learning Community – In February 2007, the PLC was invited to participate as an “organization” in the “Seize the Moment – Kids Can’t Wait to Learn” Conference sponsored by the Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation.**

**Position papers drafted by the LC were reintroduced to MN lawmakers in the 2007 session.**

**Special presentations given to LC: “SPELL Initiative” and “Early Childhood Education in Russia.”**

**LC members continue to inform each other of new initiatives, rulemaking impacting Early Childhood, and professional development opportunities for their staff.**

**ELL Learning Community – On December 13, 2006, an ELL Summit was convened whereby six positions were identified along with the “champions” who would lead the task of writing the first draft of their position. Drafting, editing, and further dialogue resulted in six completed position papers which were circulated at the 2007 MN Legislative Session.**

**Colorín Colorado Webcasts (Sponsored by US Dept. of Education Office of Special Programs – 2006-2007) were viewed – “Reading to Learn: ELLs in Grades 4-6” and “Assessment: On Track for Learner Success.” Special presentation given to LC: “SPELL Initiative.” ELL Program Evaluation” conducted in one PDS district with assistance from Minnesota State Mankato.**

**2007 American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education (AACTE) Conference – 1 proposal accepted/presented about the work/study of the PDS Learning Communities (“Establishing EL Professional Learning Communities for Understanding and Action.”)**

**2007 International TESOL Conference – 1 proposal accepted for poster session about the work/study of the PDS Learning Communities (“Gathering on the Hill – Professional Development Schools and Early Childhood/ELL Influencing State Policy.”)**

Learning Communities will begin to formally evaluate their work, and prepare a summary of the new body of knowledge they have, and make formal recommendations to the PDS Governance Council based on their findings.

**PDS Governance Council to convene a “Strategic Priorities Planning Retreat” FALL 2007.**
EARLY CHILDHOOD/SCHOOL READINESS LEARNING COMMUNITY

**Values**
- Key commitments and behaviors: respect, dialogue, preparation, collaboration, open-mindedness, awareness, support, positive outlook, and a willingness to embrace change.
- Goals
  - Enhance scholarly knowledge in topics of relevance that related to our work, students, and interests. The PLC will be a place to find, read, and discuss current best practices and research in the area of school readiness as well as community support programs for families of young children.
  - Since there are many philosophical beliefs surrounding early childhood and school readiness, the PLC should be a venue to better understand the issues and sort through the ideas presented.
  - Networking with other PLC professionals across P-16.
  - Building friendships with other EC professionals across P-16.
  - Opportunity to share local, regional, state, and national information as a conduit of exchange.
  - The learning community experience will contribute to each member's professional growth in working with/informing staff, students, and families.

**Vision**
- Create a cleaner vision regarding school readiness and how to advance staff and families as they make decisions for their students about entrance into kindergarten and access in the first 2-3 years of school.
- Become a link for community and county collaborations.
- The PLC along with the Minnesota State Mankato Early Childhood Education program should serve the community and partnership schools by providing and promoting professional development opportunities to meet children's and families' needs. In order to do so, we should seek advice from others (advisory board, work, study other models, and gather awareness of new directions/trends/needs/state requirements).
- For Early Childhood programs to better align with K-3 programs. This will encompass communication between groups that currently is very limited.
- Development of an early childhood / kindergarten transition structure.

**Mission (Purpose)**
- Strengthen early childhood programs locally – become a voice for political change.
  - This PLC has been recognized as a potential/feasibility from the very beginning. Four white papers were crafted for the 2005 MN Legislative Session and were revised and recirculated for the 2007 MN Legislative Session.
  - Minnesota Ready-K continues to seek this PLC's input.
  - The PLC was invited to participate as an “organization” in the “Seize the Moment – Kids Can’t Wait to Learn” Conference sponsored by the Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation. The activities/strategies of our PLC have been shared on a local, state, and national level via school district presentations and district task-force committee assignments from 2005-2007, the 2006 Minnesota Kindergarten Learn Conference sponsored by the Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation.
  - This PLC has been full-circle on the “wheel of learning.” Many members, initially, had few if any interactions and understanding of the needs of English language learners, but changing demographics within their individual school districts prompted the need and desire to learn more... and subsequently advocate for change. The PLC spent two full years in an intensive learning cycle of reading, viewing, web and pod casts, and dialoguing with experts in the field both locally and nationally. In the fall of 2006, the PLC made a collective decision to share and advocate for the best practices and policies to serve ELLs and their families – learning transformed to teaching and advocating. On December 13, 2006, an EL Summit was convened whereby six practices were identified along with the “champions” who would lead the task of writing the first draft of their position. Drafting, editing, and further dialogue resulted in six completed position papers which are currently in circulation for the 2007 MN Legislative Session. The activities/strategies of this PLC have been shared on a local, state, national, and international level (regional and local school district presentations and district task-force committee assignments from 2005-2007, the 2006 National Professional Development School Conference, the 2006 International Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages Conference, and the 2007 American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education Conference).
  - One of the most significant achievements of this PLC is the relationships that have been further strengthened and enriched between P-12 and Higher Education – human and financial resources are being shared between entities so that EL programs within P-12 are being jointly P-16 evaluated and redesigned to more effectively meet the needs of ELLs and provide greater voice to ELL families in the educational process.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS LEARNING COMMUNITY

**Values**
- Acceptance and appreciation of differences. We must be respectful of all members’ thoughts and opinions. Be willing to get to know others personally, not just as a vague “other.” Listen to others and learn from them. Participate in a non-judgmental, yet analytical and questioning manner.
- Must be willing to change our own practice and that of others. Commitment to necessary changes.
- We must be willing to share ideas and be open-minded about programs, ideas, paradigms, etc. Visiting programs with innovations that are considered “model” ones, and possibly pilot ideas at a local site should be seriously considered.
- We must be willing to commit to ongoing study which will require time and energy. Keeping current with research, sharing tips, challenges, and concerns must be regularly attended to.

**Goals**
- Create a body of knowledge to share (i.e. resources, presentation that could be taken back to districts, Minnesota State Mankato classes to share, etc.). Be a leader/reserve in helping EL teachers and others working with EL: sharing and processing learning – developing methods for disseminating knowledge.
- Extend committees to schools with needs to collaboratively identify innovative ways we can both benefit. In other words, doing same problem-solving to assess needs and creating a new type of experience whereby our Minnesota State Mankato students practice and the ELs really benefit – not just doing what we’ve done before.
- Commitment to all learners. Must act to access and deliver differentiated instruction to meet needs of EL students and families.
- Action research. Common goal – in schools, involve mainstream teachers. A tangible change/project that impacts ELs in our local environments.
- Vision
  - Implement policies and practices that support ELs and families in a district (sense of trust/inclusiveness).

**Mission (Purpose)**
- Increased student achievement of EL students.
EARLY CHILDHOOD / SCHOOL READINESS LEARNING COMMUNITY

“POSITION STATEMENTS”

In December 2004, Minnesota State University, Mankato’s Professional Development School Partnership held a summit for educational leaders working within the context of Early Childhood Education. The PDS partnership convened leaders from Minnesota businesses, legislature, department of education, and early childhood communities for their work in developing bills that consecutively consider the nature of young children’s development and the systemic infrastructure required for early childhood education. The partnership also acknowledged the aforementioned leaders for promoting quality programs that will benefit young children’s development of school readiness skills, particularly those children who are at risk for school failure.

The following position statements represent the collective opinion of summit participants.

■ ASSESSMENT OF YOUNG CHILDREN FOR PROGRAM ACCOUNTABILITY

We value assessment in our work with young children and their families. Quality education for young children relies on assessment results for diverse purposes: improving instructional practice, screening and referring children for diagnostic assessment as warranted, evaluating programs, and monitoring progress to demonstrate accountability. Assessment of young children for accountability purposes poses unique challenges and concerns. Reliably assessing young children is very difficult; young children display varied developmental progressions, dispositions, focusing abilities, self-regulation skills, and verbal communication capacities, to list a few examples.

Because developmental nuances make assessing young children very challenging, rewards and sanctions for accountability should never be contingent on one child’s performance at one point in time. The US legislature, when creating the No Child Left Behind law, took these testing challenges into account and required testing to begin at grade three since young children’s single test results hold risk for erroneous decisions about programs and accountability. Young children’s differences and their situational variations make the likelihood of error quite high if one measure is used during one episode of testing. High-stakes assessments place unwarranted stress on young children and families and also may generate unintended consequences.

Accountability should be grounded in assessment of program quality with children’s progress over time embedded as only one indicator of effective programs. We recommend the following as guidelines when designing assessment systems using children’s performance data as one indicator of program accountability.

• Assess children over time using multiple measures to demonstrate learning
• Provide in-service education to teachers in using assessment data effectively
• Support assessments that are age-, culturally-, and linguistically-appropriate for young children
• Use assessments for the purposes in which they are intended; they should be valid and reliable
• Report data as matrix sampling or as aggregated data; do not report individual children’s results
• Protect the well-being and rights of young children who are assessed.

High-quality, early childhood programming can make a difference in children’s preparedness for school and their longterm abilities to learn in school. Public funding of such programs rightfully relies on assessment to measure program quality and effectiveness. We encourage policy makers to consider the challenges of assessing young children when decisions are made about accountability.

FAMILY-SCHOOL-COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS LEARNING COMMUNITY

Values

• Be honest and empathetic toward learning community members. Respect all opinions even if they are not similar to our own.
• Align learning Community events and activities as scheduled. Be prepared, read, discuss, and reflect.
• Recognize the importance of the family structure.
• Make a commitment to presence teachers in helping them enhance positive school/family partnerships.

Goals

• Create a collaborative environment where university and K-12 education work together / teach together.
• Study current research to increase our awareness and understanding about how to effectively establish stronger connections between schools, families, communities.
• Explore what is currently being done at the teacher prep level and school district level.
• Establish greater connections with K-12 settings. Work even more closely with K-12 schools so we are aware of the issues/challenges they face and work collaboratively with them.
• Explore parent-teacher communication models utilized by both public and private schools institutions.
• Provide models and share examples in Minnesota State Mankato classes so students realize the importance and the possibility of establishing strong relationships with families and communities.
• Advocate to the College of Education the need to implement additional parent/education coursework/clinical experiences for Minnesota State Mankato pre-service teachers and pre-service administrators.
• Foster a model that can be transferred to P-12 sites via learning community-based staff development.

Vision

• Work with parents and other community members as educational equals/partners.
• Help parents and teachers recognize their power as advocates for change in public education.
• To have an authentic, consistent dialogue with families and community members.

Mission (Purpose)

• To have a seamless and interconnected relationship between P-16 families, schools, and communities.

Critical Achievements

This PSC has studied/reviewed four books, read numerous journal articles, and is aware of numerous web-based support programs for P-12 interactions with family and community. The “capacity” that this group has built results in the following work of pre-service teachers and pre-service administrators.

• Minnesota State Mankato faculty members take their PSC materials directly into their departments and course curriculum for students to study and engage while P-12 administrators have taken their materials to their staff leadership teams for consideration. This PSC is currently in the early stages of developing a proposal to PSC sites for a pilot project with the vision of increasing opportunity for academic success using a unique family involvement approach for severely at-risk eighth/ninth-grade students. In June 2007, two grant proposals have been submitted to the Minnesota Department of Education and the Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation to seek funding for the development and implementation of this pilot project.
DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE PRACTICE

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), the nation’s largest professional organization of early childhood education, assumed a leadership role in adopting guidelines for developmentally appropriate practice for early education and development. Fundamental to the NAEYC core position is that early educational programs for young children are designed according to what is known about young children.

High-quality programs for young children consider the environmental, teaching methods, curriculum, relationship, and assessment aspects of educating young children. We believe that high-quality programs for young children are based on developmentally appropriate practice.

> Developmentally appropriate practice in a child-centered program utilizes curriculum that is based on sound research of how children grow and develop. In addition, the program and curriculum should be redefined and culturally sensitive.

> A developmentally appropriate program differs from the elementary school program in that it includes active exploration through hands-on learning experiences that extend the child's current knowledge. These curriculum activities involve interaction between the child and environment, teacher, and peers. As a result, curricula are of high interest and are highly meaningful to the child.

> Learning experiences and assessment focus on the child's development in all domains—physical, social, emotional, and intellectual—as well as unevenly within different areas of each child's functioning.

Researchers have noted that parents and family members are a child’s first teachers. It is our position that for every child to succeed, responsive and comprehensive family partnerships must be established for the scaffolding of a child's social, emotional, physical, and intellectual wellbeing for the child's individuality and cultural heritage. In addition, it is important that children have the opportunity to experience a rich environment that supports skill development and provides a foundation for future success.

We encourage policy makers to view our youngest citizens by drawing on the fundamental values of developmentally appropriate practices listed above when making decisions about the care and education of young children.

RESPONSIVE AND COMPREHENSIVE FAMILY PARTNERSHIPS

It is our position that for every child to succeed, responsive and comprehensive family partnerships must be established for the scaffolding of a child's social, emotional, physical, and intellectual wellbeing from birth through adolescence. We concur with the Minnesota School Readiness Business Advisory Council's WOBAC's position in "Winning Start: A Plan for Investing Wisely in Early Childhood Development" that "all parents would benefit from knowing more about early brain development and what forms of care, stimulation, and surroundings are best for their children at different stages of growth." (p. 25).

A 2004 NAEYC white paper also acknowledges that "the family is the primary and most important provider of care and education for young children. Early Childhood education must start with the family and should involve the family throughout the education process." (p. 7). We believe responsive and comprehensive family partnerships are a two-fold collaboration between employers and the greater community.

> High-quality family education must be available to and accessible for all families via traditional education venues as well as in partnerships with employers.

> Family/education being offered at the worksite to all parents/caregivers.

> Work-based grants offered by employers for family members to attend family/education events that occur off site.

> Financial incentives offered for families to participate in continuous family education opportunities.

This commitment to family education becomes truly a community effort. Families and educators working in collaboration with social services, from birth through adolescence, will yield a coherent learning context for a child—asserting that all stakeholders assist in “readying” a child for school. The opportunities and collaborative solutions that can make significant, positive change for ELLs and their families.

It is our position that for every child to be successful in the kindergarten year and beyond, schools must first be ready for the child. For schools to be ‘ready,” particularly for children who bring language and cultural differences to school, there must be a significant support structure in place that translates best practices from preschool education to that of kindergarten. This can be accomplished if school experience includes the following:

> Access to high quality, public, after-school, everyday kindergarten programs.

> Kindergarten classrooms that are supported in having a no greater than 1:15 teacher/child ratio, and provided with comprehensive services initiated in preschool programs (Special Education, EI, Student Wellness, etc.) being allowed to follow the child through the age of 8.

> Appropriate system of assessment and evaluation must be implemented following the vein of “continuous progress” models as opposed to “graded” models.

> Curriculum that bridges preschool to grade one by a seamless, developmentally appropriate, and culturally responsive learning base should be one of the most significant actions taken in “readying” schools for children entering kindergarten.

> Transition programs for all children to prepare them for the unique opportunities and challenges that the kindergarten curriculum will present.

We believe “readying the school” is to create an environment in which each child can thrive upon entrance in kindergarten. Schools can provide all-day everyday kindergarten programs as well as transition programs, assure low teacher/child ratios, and implement developmentally appropriate curriculum and assessments. We encourage schools to proactively accommodate each child’s needs by first taking measures to “ready the school” for the learner!

ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS LEARNING COMMUNITY

"POSITION STATEMENTS"

In December 2006, Minnesota State University, Mankato’s Professional Development School Partnership held a summit for educational leaders working with English language learners and their families. The summit identified the following:

> The dynamic profile of English Language Learners in southern Minnesota.

> The challenges and obstacles that ELLs and their families face within their school communities.

> The opportunities and collaborative solutions that can make significant, positive change for ELLs and their families.

Call to Action:

Our PDS Partnership believes the following are the most timely and relevant areas for P-12, Higher Education, and the Minnesota State Legislature to act upon:

1. United Home-School-Community based Family Support and Coordination

2. Professional Development for Educators Focused on English Language learners

3. Bilingual Education and Multicultural Awareness

4. Research based Programming for English Language Learners

5. Assessment and Funding for ESL Services

6. All-Renewal Support/Transition Programming (Mentoring, Partnerships with Vocational, 2-year, and 4-year Higher Education Institutions)
A strong economy, a good quality of life and excellent educational opportunities attract many immigrants to Minnesota. English language learners in southern Minnesota are composed of Latinos, Somali, Sundanese, Hmong, Russians, and others, all of whom come from diverse backgrounds. Isolation, limited integration into the broader community, and cross-cultural conflicts between generations all are contributing to the enormous obstacles faced by the English Language Learners (ELLs) in these communities. In southern Minnesota, our PDS partnership believes a critical step in removing such obstacles is for the creation of effective home / school / community partnerships that benefit English Language learners and their families. There need to be adequate resources and personnel to foster and develop parents’ literacy and job skills, as well as personnel to maintain open lines of communication with ELL family members. See Issue Brief – “Unified Home/School/Community-based Family Support and Coordination.”

More than 70 different languages are spoken at home and more than 50,000 children are classified as English Language learners in Minnesota. While some communities have a history of high levels of literacy, others have a limited tradition of literacy in their home language. With increasing numbers of ELLs in Minnesota, educators are seeking increased professional development to develop their knowledge base and skills in culturally competent teaching practices and awareness of how to effectively nurture bilingualism within the school environment. See issue Brief – “Professional Development for Educators Focusing on English Language learners” and “Bilingual Education and Multicultural Awareness.” School districts are seeking ways to offer learner-centered/research-based programming that sets high expectations for all ELLs, while advocating for accountability and public reporting of ELL’s progress through appropriately designed assessment and evaluation. Realizing and increasing funding for these programs and services at state and local levels is essential for success in serving the ELL. See Issue Brief – “Research-based Programming for English Language learners” and “Assessment and Funding for ELL Services.”

According to the 2006 State of Students of Color report, English Language Learners are less likely to be prepared for higher education than are their mainstream classmates. Their undocumented legal status and lack of opportunity after graduation force many English language learners to drop out of high school (Shaw, Latino Alliance Council 04-06 Biennial report). While the high school graduation completed by young adults has increased from 48% in 1977 to 62% in 2004, their education level is lower than whites or blacks. Furthermore, only 11% of Hispanics have a Bachelor’s degree or higher (Child Trends Databank). With increasing numbers of Hispanics in the U.S. (approximately 25% of the population by 2050 according to the U.S. Census Bureau), the high dropout rate and lack of postsecondary education will negatively affect U.S. society. Studies have found that young adults with low education and skill levels are likely to live in poverty, receive government assistance, and become involved in crime. A 2004 report released by the U.S. Census Bureau stated that the annual income of high school dropouts is $19,169, which means less payroll taxes for the government and greater strain on Medicare and Social Security (Presser, Ruben-CNN.com). The lack of adequate educational support and concerned experiences present enormous obstacles for these learners; therefore, it is imperative that K-12 public schools partner with vocational, 2-year, and 4-year institutions of higher education to provide after-school support and transition programming that involves a high degree of mentoring. See Issue Brief – “After-school Support and Transition Programming.”

The Professional Development School (PDS) partnership at Minnesota State University, Mankato has made a commitment to assist policymakers and stakeholders in understanding the dynamic profile of who the English language learner is in southern Minnesota; the challenges and obstacles that ELLs and their families face within their school communities; and the opportunities and collaborative solutions that can make significant, change for ELLs and their families. To this end, we invite you to read the issue briefs, dialogue with us about the issue briefs, dialogue with us about the issues, and use our resources to help advocate for policies and practices that support ELL learners and families in our districts. Our goal is to help these populations demonstrate significant increased achievement and to increase ELL families’ sense of trust / inclusiveness.

UNIFIED HOME-SCHOOL-COMMUNITY-BASED FAMILY SUPPORT AND COORDINATION

Parents and families are children’s first and primary teachers. However, when recent immigrants first entrust their children to the US system of education it is frequently confusing, intimidating, and overwhelming. This is often true for other families, including migrant workers and refugees. In addition to overcoming a language barrier, parents must navigate a school system that is likely very different from what they are accustomed to in their home country and likely have very different expectations regarding parental involvement in their child’s schooling. Additionally, as refugees, immigrants or migrants, parents and families may have had limited or interrupted schooling, may have faced adverse or dangerous environments, and may need a whole range of other services simply to function on a daily basis. These include access to adequate food, housing, job training, childcare, mental health counseling, etc. These are often provided by social service agencies, but there may be a failure to involve the school community, a lack of communication among agencies or duplication of services. As such, schools should be the focal point for contact with families and provide as education and support centers for the entire community.

It is our position that for there to be effective home/school/community partnerships that benefit English language learners (ELLs) and their families, there must be increased resources and personnel to foster and develop parents’ literacy and job skills, as well as personnel to maintain open lines of communication with ELL family members. This must involve culturally and linguistically competent liaisons who can serve as cultural intermediaries to help establish welcoming school environments and communicate effectively with parents about educational services and their children’s progress in school.

- Family literacy programs that are fully funded through appropriations rather than through grants.
- Funding for before and after school homework assistance and career development as well as funding for summer programs, specifically designed for ELLs, to extend their learning opportunities.
- Funding for culturally aware home-school-community liaisons to coordinate social services for families
- Collaboration among agencies for translators and interpreters to increase communication between parents/families and schools and social agencies.
- Creation of community support groups to support parenting, literacy, social connections.
- Increased family education for literacy and parenting.

Action Needed by Minnesota Legislature:
- Fully funded family literacy programs
- Funding for after school homework assistance
- Funding for home-school community liaisons

Action Needed by Higher Education:
- Staff development support for school districts
- Improvement of parental involvement and community collaboration components in preservice teacher education.

Action Needed by P-12:
- Increased home-school communication and partnerships
- Increased collaboration with other social service agencies
- Improvement of after school homework help programs and family literacy programs
- Hiring/training of homeschoool/community liaisons
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR EDUCATORS FOCUSED ON ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

Today's teacher candidates should have the kinds of experiences that will allow them to identify the set of beliefs and assumptions they hold about teaching and learning and about the children with whom they will interact. The ability to respond to a range of student profiles and to work in the most challenging learning situation should be at the core of all preparation. “New teachers must acquire a clear understanding of community needs, concerns, and issues and embrace collegial collaboration” (Cummins and Minamar, 2008). For experienced teachers, the National Association of Secondary School Principals also endorses the previous recommendations and further promotes the following for principals to foster within their school communities:

- Encourage and support teachers and others to learn about students and their communities
- Cultivate caring, engaged relationships with students and their families
- Provide information about the educational system and the larger U.S. society
- Support professional development to build knowledge, skills, and dispositions for teaching ELLs
- And facilitate and participate in collaboration to bring about educational change

We have the potential to enrich our country with a generation of new Americans. It is the responsibility of our educational system to educate them as they are prepared to make a positive contribution to our world. As the diverse needs of our ELLs cannot be adequately served by the ESL teacher alone, it is necessary to build the capacity within our schools for educating these students.

It is our position that inservice education programs, as well as preservice teacher candidates, need to be required to complete professional development to differentiate instruction for the English language learner. This training needs to be specific to the special needs of the language learner and to be informed by the current research of best practices. This training needs to be part of teacher licensure programs and also ongoing staff development within elementary and secondary schools. Both content and mainstream teachers need time consistently built into the schedule to collaborate with ELL teachers.

We recommend the following actions:

- Increased ESL staff development for content and mainstream teachers
- The addition of an ESL instruction component in teacher licensure programs
- Increased staff development dedicated to collaboration for ESL and mainstream educators

Profound changes in educators result from and is revealed through deeper understanding of complex issues related to teaching English language learners, beliefs that are aligned with quality teaching and high levels of learning for all students, and ‘next action thinking’ that moves learning into action and sustains the momentum of change over time (Sparis, 2005). We encourage policy makers to place a high value on quality education of our English Language Learners, beliefs that are aligned with quality teaching and high levels of learning for all students, and ‘next action thinking’ that moves learning into action and sustains the momentum of change over time (Sparis, 2005). We encourage policy makers to place a high value on quality education of our English Language Learners, beliefs that are aligned with quality teaching and high levels of learning for all students, and ‘next action thinking’ that moves learning into action and sustains the momentum of change over time (Sparis, 2005).

BILINGUAL EDUCATION AND MULTICULTURAL AWARENESS

With our growing commitment to globalization, we see much of the country focusing on learning the Chinese language and culture. While these goals are laudable, they are expensive and time consuming. We have many obvious reasons right here in the state with our growing immigrant populations. If our students and community members can learn to view themselves as having been created by our own cultures and learn to understand and appreciate others in our midst who have been created by different cultures, we would find ourselves well down the road to successful communication with people from a wide variety of cultural and linguistic backgrounds, including Chinese.

We advocate that one of the strongest keys to academic success for an English Language Learner is heritage language instruction, which ensures the continued learning of the first language of ELLs. In situations where dual immersion bilingual programs (where ELLs learn English and native English-speaking learn the native language of the ELLs) are possible, the opportunities for success are even greater. Additionally, we advocate increasing our children’s, schools’, and communities’ cultural competence, paving the way for successful global interaction. We recommend the following:

- Make dual immersion bilingual programs accessible for more students and at younger ages
- Support language education in nontraditional forms (after school/Saturday school, heritage language instruction, world language instruction in earlier grades)
- Support professional development for effective service delivery in early childhood programs (ECSE, ECFE and Head Start)

Bilingualism not only supports global communication, but has been shown to support cognitive development in young children (e.g., Cloud, Genesee, & Hamayan, 2000; Cummins, 1981). For our monolingual English speaking students, learning another language (especially one that can be supported within the community) would increase their cognitive development and have a positive effect on test scores as well as future successes in the world and community. For our already bilingual students, it increases focus on linguistic ability in the heritage language(s) increases their ability in English, boosts their cognitive development in general, and supports their understanding of content material. Bilingual programs also foster cultural competence among students and their families.

Culturally Competent Students, Schools, and Communities

- P-12 education needs to integrate students’ cultures and languages into curriculum
- Community education, via public awareness campaigns and open dialogue, needs to increase awareness about the high demand increases in literacy and cultural differences for community members (religions, social, economic)

By increasing the opportunities for dialogue among individuals from various cultural backgrounds, we increase our cultural competence, or ability to communicate effectively with individuals from other backgrounds. In order to become fully competent global communicators, our students and community members should first become competent communicators with our neighbors from diverse backgrounds.

Action Needed by Minnesota Legislature:

- Inclusion of culture and language into standards
- Financial support for public awareness campaigns
- Financial support for bilingual education programs

Action Needed by Higher Education:

- Offer professional development for P-12 teachers and administrators focusing on cultural awareness
- Increased partnerships with P-12 districts and community groups to support cultural competence

Action Needed by P-12:

- Hire/Train more bilingual professionals
- Increase professional development to focus on cultural competence for all faculty and staff
- Include cultural competence components in curriculum
- Increase partnerships with higher education and community groups to support awareness

Action Needed by Minnesota Legislature:

- Inclusion of culture and language into standards
- Financial support for public awareness campaigns
- Financial support for bilingual education programs
There is currently no legislation that protects the language rights of young English language learning students. Educational programming for these students can only be focused on language acquisition. Giving the low academic achievement of this group statewide we can no longer afford an educational system that is still deficit focused and half-baked. We need to dig deep to educational programming for ESLs. In order to more effectively educate these students, our school systems need to be more sensitive to the variability in the population of English language learners. Educational programming on the native language skills of ESLs. Educational programs that support native language development through content-based language instruction in the child’s native language have been shown to close the achievement gap and reduce dropout rates (Coller & Thomas, 2004; Oller & Eilers, 2002). Furthermore, in school districts that provide native language instruction to ELL preschool students or that even have someone on site who can speak the child’s native language. In addition, research has shown that native language support in Pre-K settings also leads to improved kindergarten readiness and long-term academic outcomes in the ELL population as a whole. Having arbitrary limits such as only five years of service does not take into consideration the significant variability in the learning ability and life experiences in the ESL population as a whole.

Early Childhood programs should be required to make special accommodations for young English language learners. There is currently no legislation that permits the language rights of young English language learning students. Educational programming for these students can only be focused on language acquisition. Giving the low academic achievement of this group statewide we can no longer afford an educational system that is still deficit focused and half-baked. We need to dig deep to educational programming for ESLs. In order to more effectively educate these students, our school systems need to be more sensitive to the variability in the population of English language learners. Educational programming on the native language skills of ESLs. Educational programs that support native language development through content-based language instruction in the child’s native language have been shown to close the achievement gap and reduce dropout rates (Coller & Thomas, 2004; Oller & Eilers, 2002). Furthermore, in school districts that provide native language instruction to ELL preschool students or that even have someone on site who can speak the child’s native language. In addition, research has shown that native language support in Pre-K settings also leads to improved kindergarten readiness and long-term academic outcomes in the ELL population as a whole. Having arbitrary limits such as only five years of service does not take into consideration the significant variability in the learning ability and life experiences in the ESL population as a whole.

4. Early Childhood programs should be required to make special accommodations for young English language learners. There is currently no legislation that permits the language rights of young English language learning students. Educational programming for these students can only be focused on language acquisition. Giving the low academic achievement of this group statewide we can no longer afford an educational system that is still deficit focused and half-baked. We need to dig deep to educational programming for ESLs. In order to more effectively educate these students, our school systems need to be more sensitive to the variability in the population of English language learners. Educational programming on the native language skills of ESLs. Educational programs that support native language development through content-based language instruction in the child’s native language have been shown to close the achievement gap and reduce dropout rates (Coller & Thomas, 2004; Oller & Eilers, 2002). Furthermore, in school districts that provide native language instruction to ELL preschool students or that even have someone on site who can speak the child’s native language. In addition, research has shown that native language support in Pre-K settings also leads to improved kindergarten readiness and long-term academic outcomes in the ELL population as a whole. Having arbitrary limits such as only five years of service does not take into consideration the significant variability in the learning ability and life experiences in the ESL population as a whole.

2. It is possible to improve outcomes for English language learning students, but Minnesota needs to be willing to change current practices. Across Minnesota, specifically in rural and small district areas, the most common model for ESL programs is a pull-out type program where students are brought out of their classroom for academic content. Research shows this model is ineffective. The models are designed by an ESL teacher who usually does not speak the native language of the student. What we know from research is that this type of program is one of the least effective at closing the achievement gap and reducing dropout rates (Coller & Thomas, 2004; Oller & Eilers, 2002). Statewide about 68% of ESLs are graduating high school as compared to 95% of English-speaking students (Minnesota Department of Education, 2007). Minnesota needs to move toward research-based practices by developing and implementing one new and dual language bilingual education programs, which capitalize on the native language skills of ESLs. Educational programs that support native language development through content-based language instruction in the child’s native language have been shown to close the achievement gap and reduce dropout rates (Coller & Thomas, 2004; Oller & Eilers, 2002; Reza, Mahoney, & Gliss, 2003; Thomas & Coller, 2002). For other minority language groups we could learn from this model programs and move closer to providing more native language support and use differentiated instruction to better meet their needs. The following is a list of suggested practices to improve outcomes for ESL students.

1. Dual Language Immersion Programs have been shown to be most effective (Rolland, 2003; et al.)
2. Native language content and literacy instruction should be provided in conjunction with English instruction.
3. For students where it is impossible to provide native language instruction and in the English-language education classroom teachers must be able to differentiate instruction for all students by using flexible grouping within a classroom according to readiness, interest, and learning style. (Driscoll, 2004) This means providing specific instruction to address the unique language needs of specific students with English language needs when appropriate (Kinslow, 1999).
4. ESL teachers should be able to access special ESL services until they clearly can perform academically on grade level with their peers in English. Having arbitrary limits such as only five years of service does not take into consideration the significant variability in the learning ability and life experiences in the ESL population as a whole.

3. Just because we can’t provide dual language bilingual education for all minority language groups is it fair not to do it at all?

Across Minnesota about 75% of all ESLs are Spanish-speaking and in certain geographic areas 30-40% of elementary school populations are Latino (Minnesota Department of Education, 2007). In these areas dual immersion programs or Spanish-language content core classes should be piloted. These programs have been successful in southern Minnesota to purposely provide programs that capitalize on native language skills of students from research that there is a cross-linguistic transfer of literacy skills from Spanish to English and Spanish-speakers who have had literacy instruction in their native language actually outperform those students who have had English-only instruction in English reading ability and overall academic performance (Cummins, 1979; Dognygivil, Nagy, Hancine-Bollard, 1993; Oller & Eilers, 2002). The lack of funding for bilingual teachers limits the use of bilingual instruction, which has demonstrated more rapid second language acquisition (Gonzalez, 2006).

4. Early Childhood programs should be required to make special accommodations for young English language learners. There is currently no legislation that permits the language rights of young English language learning students. Educational programming for these students can only be focused on language acquisition. Giving the low academic achievement of this group statewide we can no longer afford an educational system that is still deficit focused and half-baked. We need to dig deep to educational programming for ESLs. In order to more effectively educate these students, our school systems need to be more sensitive to the variability in the population of English language learners. Educational programming on the native language skills of ESLs. Educational programs that support native language development through content-based language instruction in the child’s native language have been shown to close the achievement gap and reduce dropout rates (Coller & Thomas, 2004; Oller & Eilers, 2002; Reza, Mahoney, & Gliss, 2003; Thomas & Coller, 2002). For other minority language groups we could learn from this model programs and move closer to providing more native language support and use differentiated instruction to better meet their needs. The following is a list of suggested practices to improve outcomes for ESL students.

1. Dual Language Immersion Programs have been shown to be most effective (Rolland, 2003; et al.)
2. Native language content and literacy instruction should be provided in conjunction with English instruction.
3. For students where it is impossible to provide native language instruction and in the English-language education classroom teachers must be able to differentiate instruction for all students by using flexible grouping within a classroom according to readiness, interest, and learning style. (Driscoll, 2004) This means providing specific instruction to address the unique language needs of specific students with English language needs when appropriate (Kinslow, 1999).
4. ESL teachers should be able to access special ESL services until they clearly can perform academically on grade level with their peers in English. Having arbitrary limits such as only five years of service does not take into consideration the significant variability in the learning ability and life experiences in the ESL population as a whole.
According to the 2006 State of Students of Color report, English language learners are less likely to be prepared for higher education than their mainstream classmates. Their lack of opportunities after graduation and undocumented legal status cause many English language learners to drop out of high school. (Chicana/Chicano Affairs Council 04-06 Biannual report). While the high school graduation completed by young adult Hispanics has increased from 48% in 1971 to 62% in 2004, their education level is lower than whites or blacks. Furthermore, only 1.1% of Hispanics have advanced degrees or higher. (Child Trends Databank) The lack of adequate educational support and career-related experiences presents enormous obstacles for these learners.

With increasing numbers of Hispanics in the U.S. (approximately 25% of the population by 2050 according to the U.S. Census Bureau), the drop-out rate and lack of postsecondary education will negatively affect U.S. society. Studies have found that young adults with low education and skill levels are likely to live in poverty, receive government assistance, and become involved in crime. A 2004 report released by the U.S. Census Bureau stated that the annual income of high school dropouts is $10,169 which means lower postsecondary rates for government and greater strain on Medicare and Social Security. (Navarrete, Rubio-CNN.com)

**What can be done to ameliorate the problem?**

- **Support for Preparation for Higher Education**
  
  Preparing English language learners to prepare for higher education will help them to aspire to make great contributions to society. Programs with strong academic and career preparation are essential for English Language Learners to help them see themselves in higher skilled and well paying jobs. In addition to academic and career preparation, English language learners and their families need information about financial support that is available for higher education.

  Access to after school programs is crucial in providing academic and social support for English Language learners who are likely to be on their own after school each day. Most of these students’ parents are not home because they are working themselves. Without the support from school and home, these learners have a tendency to get into substance abuse and fall behind in academics.

- **Support for Funding in Higher Education**

  "The Dream Act is a bipartisan legislation pending in Congress to clear up the immigration status of and address federal barriers to education and work confronted by the U.S.-raised children of undocumented immigrants." (National Immigration Law Center, Feb., 05) The result of passing the DREAM Act could lead to reduced dropout rates, increased income, tax revenues and social services savings.

It is our position that for English Language learners to be successful in K-12 and beyond, access to higher education and academic training, transition, and additional support in after-school programs are needed regardless of these learners’ legal status.

**Action Needed:**

- The legislature should pass the Dream Act and grant special permission to allow English language learners without legal status to have access to higher education.
- The legislature should provide funding in collaboration with businesses and community organizations to develop vocational training as well as transition programs to better prepare English Language Learners to help them see themselves in higher skilled and well paying jobs.
- The legislature should fund after-school programs to support English Language learners’ social and academic needs.

---

**FAMILY–SCHOOL–COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS LEARNING COMMUNITY**

**MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION/LEARN & SERVE AMERICA COMMUNITY DIALOGUES PROJECT PROPOSAL**

**Rationale and Context**

St. Peter Public Schools is composed of two elementary sites, one middle-school site, one high school site, and two alternative learning sites. The Markéta Area Public Schools is composed of ten elementary sites, three middle school/junior high sites, and three high school sites. The Center for School-University Partnerships (CSUP), housed in the College of Education at Minnesota State University Mankato, was established in 1988 to formally bond the partnerships of the St. Peter Public Schools and the Markéta Area Public Schools. The Center for School–University Partnerships facilitates the Professional Development School (PDS) model between seven P–12 public school districts (Fairbault, Le Sueur-Henderson, Markéta, Owatonna, St. Peter, Sibley East, and Waterville) and postsecondary programs at Minnesota State University Mankato. Markéta involved in educator preparation. Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation is constantly building and refining the capacity of communities and businesses to foster growth and vitality. Through loans, grants, and various regional initiatives with a network of committed partners, they are strengthening the fabric of communities in the region.

We are proposing a dialogue between these partners to promote parents’ capacity to support their children’s learning and development skills for lifelong education. Our target audience will be families (a minimum of 10 families and no more than 25 families) of students in grades K-12 who have been identified as academically at-risk for entering high school (bottom quartile based on NWEA Spring 2007/Fall 2007 test data).

**Primary Goals**

One of our primary goals is to identify how the partners listed above can collaborate/partner to involve parents of at-risk students, who are transitioning to high school, to increase the likelihood these students will have post-secondary options upon the point of graduation. A secondary goal is that parents of these at-risk students will also experience weakening and feeling education through this collaboration/partnership. Included in these goals is educating these potential partners about the possibilities and opportunities Minnesota State University, Markéta College of Education students enroll in the Elementary and Early Childhood Human Relations in a Multicultural Society could also be involved through the required 18 hours of class service learning clinical experience.

We believe this dialogue opportunity will deepen understanding of the mission of goals of all partners involved and will create new partnerships to meet our primary goal and “increase community investment in service learning.”

**Dialogue Format**

Our “Linking to Learning Vision Rally” will be a dinner meeting held in August at Minnesota State University, Markéta Heritage Room for approximately two hours. It will be facilitated by the Family/School/Community Partnerships Learning Community which has studied/reviewed four books and read numerous journal articles regarding the facilitation of effective school-family partnerships during the 2006-2007 school year. This learning community is also aware of numerous web-based support programs for P-12 interactions with family and community. The “capacity” that this group has built results in the five futures of preservice teachers and preservice administrators. Minnesota State Markéta faculty members take their PIC materials directly into their departments and course curriculum for students to study and engage while P-12 administrators have taken their materials to their staff leadership teams for consideration. This PDS developed a proposal to PDS sites for an action research pilot project with the vision of increasing the opportunity for academic access using a school-family involvement approach for severely at-risk eight/ninth-grade students.

Participants will explore how their organizations are linked to this proposed action research project through small group discussions and mapping activities. Each group will determine their role in the action research pilot project and set future meeting dates.
Targeted Audience

The Linking to Learning Vision Rally will include representatives from each of the partner sites including Minnesota State University, Mankato College of Education, Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation, St. Peter Public Schools, and Mankato Area Public Schools. Identified attendees will include Minnesota State Mankato faculty members participating in the service-learning initiative classes described earlier, the Urban Teacher Education Partnership (UTEP) coordinator, Minneapolis State Mankato Office of Cultural Diversity, Ethnic Heritage Summer Institute coordinator, and Minnesota State Mankato Student Responsibilities Coordinator. District principals, text coordinators, guidance counselors, Community Education Directors, Teachers on Special Assignment, data coaches, and reading and literacy specialists have also been included. Tim Penny, President of the Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation will be invited to attend along with representatives from the Southern Minnesota Leadership Circle identified as having an interest in the dialogue. We anticipate inviting 50-60 individuals to the Linking to Learning Vision Rally.

Primary Activities

Following an overview of the proposed action research pilot project by the Family-School-Community Partnerships learning community, small groups will meet and discuss their role in the action research pilot project and set future meeting dates to discuss: how to build relationships and trust with families, designing a field study to monitor the project; interpreting and analyzing NWEA data with families; strategies and interventions for getting students academically on track; joining families and students in a course-mapping activity; and providing campus visits.

Marketing Plans

Minnesota State University, Mankato, St. Peter Public Schools, and the Mankato Area Public Schools will send invitations to attend the Linking to Learning Vision Rally. The Linking to Learning Vision Rally will become part of the CSUP Annual Report and included in the quarterly newsletter reaching all seven CSUP Professional Development Schools.

Creating New Steps

Next steps include sharing the action research pilot project with the seven Professional Development School districts including a proposal for a tri-funded, creating new Steps Professional Development School. The Linking to Learning Vision Rally will become part of the CSUP Annual Report and included in the quarterly newsletter reaching all seven CSUP Professional Development Schools.

SOUTHERN MINNESOTA INITIATIVE FOUNDATION “7 REVOLUTIONS” PROPOSAL SUMMARY PILOT PROJECT OF 2 PDS SITES

Organization Information

Proposed Award Pending
as of July 2007

St. Peter Public Schools is composed of two elementary sites, one middle school, one high school site, and two alternative learning sites. The Mankato Area Public Schools is composed of ten elementary sites, three middle school/junior high sites, and three high school sites. The Center for School-University Partnerships (CSUP), housed in the College of Education at Minnesota State University, Mankato, was established in 1988 to formally institutionalize the University-Professional Development School partnership. “Serving the whole child to bridge the achievement gap” has been more than just a catchphrase...it is the shared vision that guides this PDS’s strategic plan.

During 2004/2005 academic year three key issues were identified as presenting significant challenges to seven PDS partner districts over the next five years. These interconnections have deepened, a transformation has occurred whereby systemic educational reform has become the focus for both district and university Professional Development School partnerships. “Serving the whole child to bridge the achievement gap” has been more than just a catchphrase...it is the shared vision that guides this PDS’s strategic plan.

At their core, learning communities deepen the understanding of the issues, transform beliefs and assumptions, and create a stream of continuous improvement. During 2004-2005 academic year three key issues were identified as presenting significant challenges to seven PDS partner districts over the next five years. These interconnections have deepened, a transformation has occurred whereby systemic educational reform has become the focus for both district and university Professional Development School partnerships. “Serving the whole child to bridge the achievement gap” has been more than just a catchphrase...it is the shared vision that guides this PDS’s strategic plan.

Brief summary of organization mission and goals.

St. Peter Public Schools. While programs, curriculum and facilities are important, the spiritual growth of a child is the essence of education. St. Peter seeks to be a community where children flourish. Partnering with parents, St. Peter Public Schools works to make that happen, and to instill a lifelong love of learning in every child. From birth to the first wave goodbye in kindergarten to the handshake at graduation, the personal involvement of caring adults powerfully influences this development.

Brief description of organization’s current programs or activities, including any service statistics and strengths or accomplishments.

Carefully determining truly meaningful, relevant, and essential content is at the core of Professional Development School (PDS) partnerships – creating a shared vision to serve children, families, and communities. As all stakeholders embrace a shared vision, responsibility for action and outcomes is eagerly taken on as well. This vivid interplay between mutual cooperation and responsibility uniquely characterizes a midwestern university-Professional Development School partnership. "Serving the whole child to bridge the achievement gap" has been more than just a catchphrase...it is the shared vision that guides this PDS’s strategic plan.

At their core, learning communities deepen the understanding of the issues, transform beliefs and assumptions, and create a stream of continuous improvement. During 2004-2005 academic year three key issues were identified as presenting significant challenges to seven PDS partner districts over the next five years. These interconnections have deepened, a transformation has occurred whereby systemic educational reform has become the focus for both district and university Professional Development School partnerships. “Serving the whole child to bridge the achievement gap” has been more than just a catchphrase...it is the shared vision that guides this PDS’s strategic plan.
Your organization’s relationship with other organizations working with similar missions.

- The Family-School-Community Partnerships Learning Community has studied/reviewed four books, read numerous journal articles, and is aware of numerous web-based support programs for P-12 interactions with family and community. The “capacity” that this group has built results in the future work of preschool teachers and preschool administrators. Minnesota State Mankato faculty members take their P/C materials directly into their classrooms and engage while P/C administrators bring their materials to their staff leadership teams for consideration. This P/C is currently developing a proposal to PDS sites for a pilot project with the vision of increasing opportunity for academic success using a unique family involvement approach for severely at-risk eight/ninth-grade students.

- When parent become involved at school, they tend to become more active in the community. Well-planned family learning and support activities tend to increase self-confidence, so parents and family members go on to pursue a high school diploma, additional job training, and higher education. Knowledge is power. Well-informed parents can be effective and productive partners. Many studies have documented the benefits of family-school-community partnerships.

- Students whose families are involved in their learning earn better grades, enroll in higher-level programs, have higher graduation rates, and are more likely to enroll in postsecondary education.

- Children from diverse cultural backgrounds tend to do better when families and school staff join forces to bridge the gap between home and school.

- Children do best if parents can play a variety of roles in their learning: helping at home, volunteering at school, planning their children’s future, and taking part in key decisions about the school program.

- Middle and high school students whose families remain involved in these ways make better transitions, maintain the quality of their work, and are less likely to drop out.

- Children from diverse cultural backgrounds tend to do better when families and school staff joint forces to bridge the gap between home and school.

Purpose of Grant Proposal

- Situation

- The Family-School-Community Partnerships Learning Community has studied/reviewed four books, read numerous journal articles, and is aware of numerous web-based support programs for P-12 interactions with family and community. The “capacity” that this group has built results in the future work of preschool teachers and preschool administrators. Minnesota State Mankato faculty members take their P/C materials directly into their classrooms and engage while P/C administrators bring their materials to their staff leadership teams for consideration. This P/C is currently developing a proposal to PDS sites for a pilot project with the vision of increasing opportunity for academic success using a unique family involvement approach for severely at-risk eight/ninth-grade students.

- Activities

- The Family-School-Community Partnerships Learning Community has studied/reviewed four books, read numerous journal articles, and is aware of numerous web-based support programs for P-12 interactions with family and community. The “capacity” that this group has built results in the future work of preschool teachers and preschool administrators. Minnesota State Mankato faculty members take their P/C materials directly into their classrooms and engage while P/C administrators bring their materials to their staff leadership teams for consideration. This P/C is currently developing a proposal to PDS sites for a pilot project with the vision of increasing opportunity for academic success using a unique family involvement approach for severely at-risk eight/ninth-grade students.

- Your organization’s relationship with other organizations working with similar missions.

- The Family-School-Community Partnerships Learning Community has studied/reviewed four books, read numerous journal articles, and is aware of numerous web-based support programs for P-12 interactions with family and community. The “capacity” that this group has built results in the future work of preschool teachers and preschool administrators. Minnesota State Mankato faculty members take their P/C materials directly into their classrooms and engage while P/C administrators bring their materials to their staff leadership teams for consideration. This P/C is currently developing a proposal to PDS sites for a pilot project with the vision of increasing opportunity for academic success using a unique family involvement approach for severely at-risk eight/ninth-grade students.

- Activities

- Overall goal(s) regarding the situation above.

- Address the issue of relearning and lifelong education identified for Revolution 4. Information regarding the issue of relearning and lifelong education.

- According to data collected by the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS): “In a highly dynamic, knowledge-based economy, constant learning and retraining are not simply desirable; they are necessary to stay relevant. Education systems must adapt to prepare individuals to compete in the global arena. Groups that were once outsiders can organize and impact policymaking on a real-time basis. Ninety-nine percent of the public schools in the US have access to the Internet.”

- According to a New Wave of Evidence: The Impact of School, Family and Community Connections of Student Achievement (Southwest Educational Development Laboratory):

- Students whose families are involved in their learning earn better grades, enroll in higher-level programs, have higher graduation rates, and are more likely to enroll in postsecondary education.

- When families take an active interest in what the children are learning, students display more positive attitudes toward school and behave better both in and out of school.

- Children do better if parents can play a variety of roles in their learning: helping at home, volunteering at school, planning their children’s future, and taking part in key decisions about the school program.

- Middle and high school students whose families remain involved in these ways make better transitions, maintain the quality of their work, and are less likely to drop out.

- Children from diverse cultural backgrounds tend to do better when families and school staff joint forces to bridge the gap between home and school.

- Long-term funding strategies (if applicable) for sustaining this effort.

Next steps include sharing the project with the seven Professional Development School districts including a proposal to a funded venture between Minnesota State University, Mankato College of Education, St. Peter Public Schools, and Mankato Public Schools.
Evaluation

Describe criteria for success.
Our criteria for success involve students and families: (a) improvement of NWEA scores, (b) students actively pursuing postsecondary education, (c) increased parent involvement with the students’ education, and (d) parents to experience relearning and lifelong learning.

Expected results from our activities include:
- Increased NWEA RIT scores from baseline scores.
- Increased parent involvement at parent-teacher conferences and parent meetings.
- Increased parent capacity to support their children’s learning and to develop lifelong learning skills.

How will changes be measured?
We will measure the changes by analyzing:
- RIT scores
- Parent attendance at parent-teacher conferences and project meetings
- Oral interviews of parents (group interviews and exit one-on-one interviews)

Who will be involved in evaluating this work (staff, board, constituents, community, consultants)?
The Field Study Team will develop, implement, and evaluate the project.

What will be done with the evaluation results?
We will use the evaluation results in the following manner:
- If a loss of academic learning is evident, suggest winter and summer interventions. Data will be used to identify specific areas.
- As information for use with a parent reflection process.
- As data to share with school boards, PDS governance, and teachers to obtain support for institutionalizing the program.
- To determine expansion and/or next steps.
- To analyze each student case to determine referrals to stay in cohort or refer to other services listed in our partner relationships.

Objective | Activity | Responsible person(s) | Time frame | Resources Required – Budget Narrative
--- | --- | --- | --- | ---
Engage families via strategies from Beyond the Bake Sale to increase parents’ capacity to support their children’s learning. | A. Identify students and families | St. Peter and Mankato East principals, Nicklay/Peterson; Dahman/Poplau, test coordinators, St. Peter Teacher-on-Special Assignment (TOSA)-Applen | August | Time/Human Resources
- Professional staff from partner school districts
- Clerical staff from partner school districts

Build relationships and trust with families | B. Build relationships and trust with families | St. Peter and Mankato East principals, Nicklay/Peterson; Dahman/Poplau, Community Ed. Directors, Center for School-University Partnerships, College of Education Student Relations Coordinator, Minnesota State Mankato Adventure Education Program, College of Education Learning Community | September/April | Time/Human Resources
- Professional staff from partner school districts
- Facilities rental
- Language Interpreter(s)
- Meeting Supplies (monthly packets, recognition items, and tote bags for families)

Provide one-on-one family consultations via a Community Education venue (family, friendly/non-threatening), corporate venues, or home visits. | C. Design a field study to monitor project | John Solis – Department of Educational Studies: K-12/Secondary Programs, St. Peter and Mankato East principals, Nicklay/Peterson; Dahman/Poplau, St. Peter TOSA-Applen | August | Time/Human Resources
- Minnesota State Mankato faculty
- Professional staff from partner school districts

Steer and analyze NWEA data with families | D. Interpret and analyze NWEA data with families | St. Peter and Mankato East principals, Nicklay/Peterson; Dahman/Poplau, test coordinators, St. Peter and Mankato Area Public Schools TOSA-Applen | October-March | Included in Activity “B” above.

Share strategies and interventions for getting students academically on track. | E. Share strategies and interventions for getting students academically on track | St. Peter and Mankato East principals, Nicklay/Peterson; Dahman/Poplau, test coordinators, St. Peter and Mankato Area Public Schools TOSA-Applen | October-March | Included in Activity “B” above.

Join families and students in a course mapping activity | F. Join families and students in a course mapping activity | SRC, Jr. and Sr. High Counselors, Student Relations Coordinator, J. and Sr. High Counselors | October-March | Included in Activity “B” above.

Provide campus visit | G. Provide campus visit | CSUP, Jr. and Sr. High Counselors, Education Advisors | April/May | Time/Human Resources
- Minnesota State Mankato faculty
- Professional staff from partner school districts
- Food
- Travel
One of our goals was to study current research to increase our awareness and understanding about how to effectively establish stronger connections between schools/families/communities. Resources, including books, videos, Web sites, and current professional literature facilitated our growing awareness and understanding. The collaborative environment in this learning community allowed K-12 educators and University representatives to explore and share what is currently being done at both the school district and teacher preparation level.

Currently, we are reading *Beyond the Bake Sale: The Essential Guide to Family-School Partnerships* (2007) which has sparked our interest in piloting a model focused on parentcommunication in a secondary setting. This pilot could potentially involve Minnesota State Mankato students and model the importance of establishing strong relationships with families and communities.

Over the course of three years, the Family-School Community Connections Learning Community has purposefully worked toward meeting the mission of the PDS – Serving the whole learner to bridge the achievement gap.

Marcia Applen, PLC Member (2006-2007)

The agenda for the seven sessions this academic year was multifaceted consisting of sharing of experiences from the classroom, discussing literature and research, as well as brainstorming ideas to improve the educational experiences and outcomes of ELLs served by these districts. In addition, the Mankato district undertook an extensive evaluation of their English as a Second Language program, which was in part, and outgrowth of these discussions and will also provide direction for other districts interested in reflecting on their ESL programs.

The energy generated from these meetings fueled the fire for another major task of the Learning Community which was to function as a task force to create a collection of white papers arguing for the implementation of selected research-based policies that would result in significantly improved learning conditions and outcomes for ELLs. Some of the positions the group advocated for were funding for school-community liaisons to improve communication with families and agencies serving ELLs, funding for before and after school homework assistance programs, and increased attention to bilingual programs that maintain students’ first languages while they acquire English skills. Several of the group members presented these recommendations at the state capital to reinforce the urgent messages.

Members agree that participation in the ELL Learning Community has increased awareness of issues facing ELLs, developed strategies for better serving these students, and helped create a vision for future action. Individuals or groups interested in learning more about this Learning Community are encouraged to contact any of the participants.

Patricia Hoffman, PLC Member (2004-2007)
Anne Dahlman, PLC Member (2004-2007)

The agenda for the seven sessions this academic year was multifaceted consisting of sharing of experiences from the classroom, discussing literature and research, as well as brainstorming ideas to improve the educational experiences and outcomes of ELLs served by these districts. In addition, the Mankato district undertook an extensive evaluation of their English as a Second Language program, which was in part, and outgrowth of these discussions and will also provide direction for other districts interested in reflecting on their ESL programs.

The energy generated from these meetings fueled the fire for another major task of the Learning Community which was to function as a task force to create a collection of white papers arguing for the implementation of selected research-based policies that would result in significantly improved learning conditions and outcomes for ELLs. Some of the positions the group advocated for were funding for school-community liaisons to improve communication with families and agencies serving ELLs, funding for before and after school homework assistance programs, and increased attention to bilingual programs that maintain students’ first languages while they acquire English skills. Several of the group members presented these recommendations at the state capital to reinforce the urgent messages.

Members agree that participation in the ELL Learning Community has increased awareness of issues facing ELLs, developed strategies for better serving these students, and helped create a vision for future action. Individuals or groups interested in learning more about this Learning Community are encouraged to contact any of the participants.

Patricia Hoffman, PLC Member (2004-2007)
Anne Dahlman, PLC Member (2004-2007)