# Using PDS as a Tool to Create Sustainable Inclusive Education Practices: A Roadmap for School-University Partnerships

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ABSTRACT: The purpose of this paper is to provide a roadmap of one way to use professional development school (PDS)-university relationships to create the foundations of sustainable inclusive education practices. This paper outlines PDS practices enacted the first year of a project that took place at a public elementary school that serves students in grades four to six. During the first year of the project, there were a total of 23 members of the PDS special education (SPED) sub-committee. The SPED sub-committee made conscious decisions to increase the number of students with disability labels in inclusive classrooms. Critical actions of the SPED sub-committee included: infusing a Disability Studies in Education (DSE) approach in professional development activities, and collaborating with administration to create structures that encourage students with disability labels moving from self-contained classrooms and into inclusive classrooms.

*NAPDS Nine Essentials Addressed: 1. A comprehensive mission that is broader in its outreach and scope than the mission of any partner and that furthers the education profession and its responsibility to advance equity within schools and, by potential extension, the broader community; 3. Ongoing and reciprocal professional development for all participants guided by need; 4. A shared commitment to innovative and reflective practice by all participants; 5. Engagement in and public sharing of the results of deliberate investigations of practice by respective participants; 7. A structure that allows all participants a forum for ongoing governance, reflection, and collaboration; 8. Work by college/university faculty and P–12 faculty in formal roles across institutional settings; and 9. Dedicated and shared resources and formal rewards and recognition structures.*

The purpose of this paper is to provide a roadmap of one way to use professional development school (PDS) relationships to create the foundations of sustainable inclusive education practices. Historically, PDS structures have been used to disseminate best practices in teacher education (Zenkov, Shiveley, & Clark, 2016). Attributed to John Dewey (c. 1894) at the University of Chicago, PDSs were first envisioned as lab schools that were sites for both teacher training and research through school-university partnerships (Colburn, 1993). Clinical practice opportunities within PDS have been cited as one aspect of teacher education that has the highest potential to positively impact student outcomes (National Research Council, 2010).

Professional development school practices have been used to achieve a variety of outcomes (Snow, Flynn, Whisenand, & Mohr, 2016) including: encouraging reflective teaching practices, instilling more confidence in teacher candidates (Stairs, 2011), improving teacher candidate self-perception as professionals (Conaway & Mitchell, 2004), providing teacher candidates with more demonstrable teaching skills (Castle, Fox, & Fuhrman, 2009), improving the quality of formative assessments given by teacher candidates (Sandholtz & Wasserman, 2001), and improving the cooperating teacher's instructional practices (Yendol-Silva & Dana, 2004).

Professional development school experience is also reported to produce high-quality teachers (Neapolitan et al., 2008), result in higher K-12 student achievement (Heafner & Spooner, 2008; Klingner, Leftwich, van Garderen, & Hernandez, 2004), and improve the quality of university teacher education courses (Higgins, 2002). Though these are compelling outcomes of PDS practices, there is a significant gap in the literature related to how PDS can be used to create the foundations of sustainable inclusive education practices.

The PDS research that does exist on inclusive education practices is minimal. Existing studies report that PDS can improve teacher candidate knowledge on how to support students with disability labels[1] (Walmsley, Bufkin, Rule, & Lewis, 2007), enhance the professional growth of special educators (Voltz, 2001), and improve attitudes of teacher candidates toward inclusive education practices (Strieker, Gillis, & Guichun, 2013). Though not specifically PDS literature, Waitoller and Artiles (2013) call for more professional development that infuses an intersectional approach to understand difference and exclusion to improve inclusive education practices. Though these studies represent the emergence of ways to better support student with disabilities in schools though PDS research, the small number underscores the need to leverage PDS research to better support students with disability labels in inclusive settings.

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[1] Elder writes "students with disability labels" purposefully to acknowledge the socially constructed nature of disability and how such labels are subjective and placed on people who deviate from an imagined norm (Taylor, 2006).

This paper addresses this dearth of inclusive PDS research and provides one way in which to infuse a Disability Studies in Education (DSE) approach into this body of literature in order to create sustainable inclusive practices into schools. This article and the provided PDS outline are not intended to be prescriptive. The goal of this work is to clearly articulate the actions the special education (SPED) sub-committee took so that others wishing to engage similar processes have a PDS roadmap to increase the number of students with disability labels accessing inclusive classrooms.

In order to address this gap in the literature, the following research questions undergirded this project:

1. How can PDS be used to responsibly and effectively increase the number of students with disability labels accessing inclusive classrooms?
2. How does the development and implementation of PDS trainings impact how faculty, staff, and administration are prepared (e.g., have increased capacity) to support students with disability labels in inclusive classrooms?
3. In what ways can PDS be used to improve inclusive education practices and positively impact educational outcomes for students with disability labels?

## Theoretical Framework

This research is grounded in DSE. Disability Studies in Education scholars understand disability as a natural variation of the human condition (Baglieri, Valle, Connor, & Gallagher, 2010; Hehir 2002; Linton 2005, 2006; Shapiro 1999). When viewed through a DSE lens, disability is understood as a "social phenomenon" (Taylor, 2006, p. xiii). In opposition to the traditional medical or deficit model of disability, DSE scholars do not locate disability within students with disability labels. Rather, they locate disability within related social, political, contextual, and environmental factors (Marks, 1997; Oliver, 1990). Through this perspective, students who carry disability labels *become* disabled when they encounter inaccessible spaces (*e.g.,* unmodified school work, school buildings without ramps, untrained instructional assistants). Put simply, DSE provides a space where "constructions of disability are questioned and special education assumptions and practices are challenged" (Taylor, 2006, p. xix). Infusing a DSE perspective in this project placed the onus on faculty, staff, and administration to create a more inclusive campus, rather than on students in self-contained classrooms who would otherwise have to earn their way into inclusive classrooms.

## Study Design

### Site of Study

This paper outlines PDS practices for the first year of an on-going PDS project took place at a public elementary school in the northeastern United States that serves students in grades four to six. There are approximately 500 students at this "high

needs" Title 1 school, with 44.2% of students living below the poverty line. There are 85 students with IEPs. This number includes 14 students with speech-only IEPs, and eight students with labels of multiple disabilities (MD). Four of the classrooms are "self-contained" special education classes. Three of these classes serve students with labels of "learning disabilities," with one class educating students with MD labels. In addition, six classrooms have students with disability labels included in them, and students are co-taught by one general education and one special education teacher in these settings. These co-taught classrooms are referred to as "inclusion classrooms."

### Participants

During the first year of the project, there were a total of 23 members of the PDS steering committee. While all participants were a part of the larger PDS steering committee, two sub-committees were formed due to the diverse professional development agenda of the teachers at this school. Most participants were officially a part of either the SPED or English-language arts (ELA) sub-committee, but many participants regularly participated in conversations and activities in both sub-committees.

Four participants were administrators, three participants had PDS leadership roles, nine teachers formed the SPED sub-committee, and seven teachers formed the ELA sub-committee. Of the four administrators, two were district-level administrators, and two were building-level administrators. During the course of the school year, one PDS teacher liaison transitioned from her role as a sixth-grade teacher to a district instructional technology coordinator. Participation in the project entailed attending monthly PDS committee meetings, collaborating to create professional development opportunities for faculty, staff, and administration, and participating in 1:1 semi-structured qualitative interviews at the end of the school year. See Table 1 for an overview of participant roles.

### Data Collection

Elder and PDS teacher liaisons collected data in the form of collaboratively written SPED and ELA sub-committee PDS action plans, mid- and end-of-year PDS progress reports, teacher and instructional assistant surveys, memos written after every PDS event, and audio-recorded semi-structured interviews. At the end of the first year of the project, Elder conducted 18 1:1 interviews that lasted roughly 30-minutes each.

### Data Analysis

Elder's data analysis was informed by a constant comparison method and a constructivist grounded theory approach (Charmaz & Mitchell, 2001) and regular member checks (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Lincoln & Guba, 1985) on the implementation of inclusive strategies and suggest directions for future cycles of research. This allowed for concurrent collection and analysis of data (Charmaz, 2005). Elder followed coding methods as delineated by Bogdan and Biklen (2007) to analyze all project data.

Table 1.  PDS Steering Committee Members

| Participant | PDS Role | SPED or ELA Sub-Committee | Grade(s) taught (for classroom teachers only) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Administration | | | |
| 1. Administrator 1 | Chief academic officer | Both | |
| 2. Administrator 2 | Special education administrator assistant | Both | |
| 3. Administrator 3 | Building principal | Both | |
| 4. Administrator 4 | Building assistant principal | Both | |
| PDS Leadership Roles | | | |
| 5. PDS Liaison 1 | PDS teacher liaison, district instructional technology coordinator | SPED | |
| 6. PDS Liaison 2 | PDS teacher liaison, basic skills instruction (BSI) teacher | ELA | 4-6 |
| 7. Elder[a] | Professor-in-residence (PIR) | SPED | |
| SPED Sub-Committee | | | |
| 8. Teacher 1 | Child study team, case manager, learning disabilities teacher consultant | SPED | |
| 9. Teacher 2 | MD classroom teacher | SPED | 4-6 |
| 10. Teacher 3 | Self-contained classroom teacher | SPED | 4 |
| 11. Teacher 4 | Inclusion classroom teacher | SPED | 4 |
| 12. Teacher 5 | Self-contained classroom teacher | SPED | 5 |
| 13. Teacher 6 | Inclusion classroom teacher | SPED | 5 |
| 14. Teacher 7 | Self-contained classroom teacher | SPED | 6 |
| 15. Teacher 8 | General education classroom teacher | SPED | 6 |
| 16. Teacher 9 | General education classroom math teacher | SPED | 6 |
| ELA Sub-Committee | | | |
| 17. Teacher 10 | Gifted and talented (GT) teacher | ELA | K-8 |
| 18. Teacher 11 | BSI teacher | ELA | 4-6 |
| 19. Teacher 12 | Inclusion classroom teacher | ELA | 4 |
| 20. Teacher 13 | General education classroom teacher | ELA | 5 |
| 21. Teacher 14 | General education classroom ELA teacher | ELA | 6 |
| 22. Teacher 15 | General education classroom math teacher | ELA | 6 |
| 23. Teacher 16 | General education classroom ELA teacher | ELA | 6 |

[a]Elder was not interviewed

# Results

While it is important to note that rigorous standards of qualitative data collection and analysis were a significant part of this work, the results of those data will be the focus of future publications as this project progresses. The results presented below highlight the various activities and approaches to data collection the SPED sub-committee took during the 2016-17 school year.

## September

All initial activities were centered on assessing school needs, building trust, and establishing effective communication systems and committee procedures. Though the sub-committee members began the PDS process focusing on these issues, they constantly revised and revisited these matters regularly throughout the school year. To keep track of committee decisions and actions, Elder regularly documented PDS activities through routinely writing detailed memos and coding data to present to the SPED sub-committee.

## October

In order to maintain the previous year's ELA PDS activities, and support the SPED needs of the campus, Elder, the PDS teacher liaisons, and the administration decided to create two PDS sub-committees. In order to get a balanced view of inclusive education on campus, the principal invited five teachers to the SPED committee who were publically supportive of inclusion, and four teachers who were outwardly critical of how inclusion was enacted on campus. Both the ELA and SPED sub-committees identified goals and developed an action plan. See Appendix A for the SPED action plan.

## November

Once the sub-committees developed action plans, the PDS teacher liaisons gave faculty, staff, and administration surveys about professional development they wanted related to SPED and ELA. In particular, the SPED sub-committee used this information to develop professional development opportunities for the instructional assistants and special area teachers (i.e., art,

PE, computer lab, music, Spanish) during minimum days during parent-teacher conferences. Training topics included: data collection, behavior, curriculum modification, instructional assistant roles and responsibilities, and autism. Elder and two special education teachers co-developed and co-delivered these trainings during parent-teacher conference minimum days. While developing these materials, Elder also began designing the PDS research project and writing a research proposal for the institutional review board (IRB) that he would later use to receive school board approval for the project. Elder used the pieces of the IRB to apply for an internal university PDS seed grant. Similar grant writing activities occurred regularly throughout the school year.

## December

Due to disparate understandings of inclusive education on campus and the absence of a DSE perspective within the school's special education service delivery, Elder conducted an in-service to all faculty, staff, and administration on the foundations of inclusive education and DSE. The presentation focused on legal- and rights-based approaches to inclusive education and framed inclusive education as an equity and social justice issue. Through the presentation, Elder focused on constructing disability as a positive cultural identity and called attention to the systematic barriers impeding access to general education classrooms for students with disability labels at the school. Aside from the presentation, during December, Elder also continued working on receiving IRB and school board approval for the PDS research project.

## January

Following winter break, the SPED and ELA sub-committees collaborated to create an all-day faculty professional development day. Guided by their respective action plans, and by utilizing existing teacher expertise on campus, each sub-committee developed a series of 45-minute professional development activities. Teachers were able to choose which breakout sessions they wanted to attend, which included strands on SPED and ELA, technology, and a built-in personal work session. See Appendix B for an overview of the professional development day schedule.

## February

In February, Elder was invited by a teacher on the ELA sub-committee to attend fourth grade intervention and referral service (I&RS) meetings because there happened to be a high number of students without disability labels struggling at that grade level. During these meetings, two fourth grade teachers invited Elder to their classrooms to observe the students discussed by the I&RS teams. These observations led to Elder co-teaching with both teachers in math and writing, and modifying content to help better meet the diverse needs of all students in each classroom. Co-teaching continued weekly through May until the university semester ended.

## March

The end of the third marking period meant parent-teacher conferences and minimum days similar to the conference schedule November. The conferences provided more time to conduct trainings with instructional assistants and special area teachers. Once again, members of the SPED sub-committee distributed professional development surveys to instructional assistants and special area teachers. Instructional assistants expressed they wanted time to dialogue with special area teachers about how to better support students with disability labels in "specials." Other topics covered during the trainings included how to better understand challenging student behavior and classroom behavior policies. At the end of the month, Elder presented preliminary results of the project at a national PDS conference.

## April

Project activities in April were minimal due to Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) testing. However, Elder continued co-teaching in fourth grade and networked with a PDS special interest group at a national education conference.

## May

After state testing, the SPED sub-committee began actively planning transitions with faculty, staff, and administration to transition six students with disability labels from self-contained classrooms to more inclusive classrooms. Self-contained classroom teachers and a district administrator identified six students they felt would be good candidates to spend more time in the general education classroom. The students were chosen because their teachers felt they would be a good fit for general education classrooms for one or more subjects throughout the school day. For example, one teacher chose a student who excelled in her math class, so she wanted to include him in the general education math class. In order to better understand what would be needed to make these student transitions successful, Elder conducted 1:1 qualitative interviews with members of the entire PDS steering committee. During the interviews, PDS steering committee members expressed that they were open to such transitions, but that supports needed to follow the students, and a discussion with the entire faculty, staff, and administration was necessary for buy-in and effective bottom-up school reform.

As a result of such suggestions, faculty, staff, and administration came together during a two-hour professional development school delay to discuss how to responsibly support students with disability labels transitioning from self-contained to inclusive classrooms. In that meeting, faculty, staff, and administration worked in small groups to identify the most pressing support needs of the campus in order to make these transitions successful. The faculty and staff indicated that they wanted to have input on the development of class lists and student placement for the following year, as well as more planning

time to articulate supports for students with disability labels during their transitions between buildings, grades, and classrooms. In addition to planning such supports in May, the PDS teacher liaisons and Elder began writing a practitioner manuscript about the collaborative first steps of the PDS process.

## June

At the end of the school year, the chief academic officer used professional development funds to bring together self-contained, inclusion classroom teachers, and Elder for two days of planning to support the transitions of the six transitioning students with disability labels. During this time, teachers worked to look over Fast Facts for the six transitioning students. Fast Facts provide an overview of student strengths and needs, as well as specific information about students in specific content areas as well as specific school locations (e.g., library, computer lab). During these two days, teachers also planned recurring Action Plan Meetings every six to eight weeks throughout the next school year. The aim of these meetings is to establish an on-going communication system between members of each students' IEP team so that adequate student supports are developed and monitored to ensure student success and to provide proper in-class supports. For more information on developing these inclusive systems and supports, see Elder, Rood, and Damiani (2018).

During these two days, teachers also developed IEP matrices so that every person responsible for teaching these students have their IEP goals at their disposal. This process was done for teachers sending and receiving these students to different grades and classrooms. Teachers also planned out very specific student supports so that every minute the student spent transitioning into an inclusive classroom was accounted for. Teachers looked at the curriculum and classroom environment and discussed how to create appropriate access points for each student. Teachers from a different building, with students transitioning from third to fourth grade, attended the second day of the planning meeting to help develop class lists and discuss appropriate student supports for the following school year.

## On-Going Monthly Activities

Aside from the myriad PDS accomplishments that occurred throughout the school year, a number of PDS activities occurred regularly. Following any PDS event, Elder wrote comprehensive memos to document project activities. Memoing requirements varied depending on the schedule of PDS activities. These data were subsequently coded for analysis at a later point. Grant opportunities were also available on a regular basis and required Elder and the teacher liaisons to collaborate in order to submit grant proposals. Opportunities to submit proposals to local and national PDS conferences also occurred with regularity requiring further collaboration between Elder and the PDS teacher liaisons. Table 2 presents all PDS activities as well as data sources Elder collected each month.

## Discussion

As highlighted by the *Results* section and Table 2, the PDS committee engaged in numerous activities to increase the number of students with disability labels in inclusive classrooms. Without necessarily having DSE language to describe their goals for students, throughout the year, teachers on the PDS steering committee consistently expressed interest in removing structural barriers to improve inclusive education supports so students with disability labels could access more inclusive settings. Through PDS meetings and activities, the SPED sub-committee was able to identify structural barriers prohibiting student access to more inclusive classrooms (e.g., the need for faculty, staff, and administration training), and then take actionable steps to dissolve such barriers.

At the start of the school year, these barriers were more abstract and related to the need to establish communication, trust, and transparency between members of the PDS committees. As communicative norms, trust, and transparency started evolving, the SPED sub-committee began working on more concrete barriers, like introducing a DSE perspective to the faculty, staff, and administration, and establishing a unified foundation of inclusive education through professional development. These professional development experiences eventually led to questions like, "What does this actually *look like* in my class?" and "How would this work with *this* student?" This led to the PDS teacher liaisons to surveying faculty, staff, and administration on their training needs and the SPED sub-committee subsequently providing professional development based on the surveys.

Though small barriers to inclusive education were removed each month, the most significant evidence of systemic inclusive school change occurred in June when some members of the PDS committee and the administration worked together over two days to put in place structures that systematically and responsibly increased access to more inclusive classrooms for six students. This entailed establishing communicative routines (e.g., scheduling Action Plan Meetings throughout the 2017-18 school year) and putting in place consistent data collection practices (e.g., teachers developing student Fast Facts and IEP matrices), and sending and receiving teachers creating class lists and collaborating on the needs of the students exiting self-contained classrooms and entering inclusive classrooms.

Teachers expressed that even if their class lists changed by a student moving in or out of the district, they felt more prepared for the next school year by knowing there was a regular communication plan in place for transitioning students. They felt they had data collection routines in place for students with IEPs, and at least knew their incoming students with IEPs through Fast Fact sheets and conversations with their previous year's teacher. They also expressed that they valued being given the professional courtesy to collaboratively create class lists and then discuss students who were either leaving their self-contained classrooms or entering their inclusive classrooms. The administration said these were practices they plan on maintaining in the future. All of these actions were taken with the intention of

Table 2.   Month-by-Month PDS Steering Committee Actions

| Month | Actions | Research data sources |
|---|---|---|
| September | • Identify school needs for PDS<br>• Establish trust<br>• Establish communication | • Memo writing |
| October | • Create of SPED and ELA sub-committees<br>• Develop PDS action plans | • See Appendix A for a completed action plan |
| November | • Give surveys to faculty, staff, and administration about professional development needs<br>• Begin planning and executing SPED and ELA professional development<br>• Begin writing IRB<br>• Work on school board research clearance<br>• Begin researching/writing grants | • Survey results<br>• Instructional assistant training evaluation forms<br>• IRB draft<br>• Grant draft/submission confirmation |
| December | • Provide faculty- and staff-wide in-service on the foundations of inclusive education<br>• Revise IRB<br>• Continue working on school board research clearance | • Faculty and staff professional development evaluation forms<br>• IRB draft |
| January | • Provide all-day professional development day | • See Appendix B for a sample schedule of PDS presentations |
| February | • Attend I&RS meetings<br>• Begin co-teaching | • I&RS meeting minutes<br>• Modified lessons/student artifacts |
| March | • Continue co-teaching<br>• Continue planning and executing SPED and ELA professional development<br>• Network and present at a national PDS conference | • Instructional assistant and special area teacher evaluation forms<br>• Conference presenter acceptance letter |
| April | • Continue co-teaching<br>• PDS activities limited due to PARCC testing<br>• Present at a national education conference and connect with the PDS special interest group | • Conference presenter acceptance letter |
| May | • Continue co-teaching<br>• Active planning with faculty, staff, and administration to move students from self-contained to more inclusive classrooms<br>• Conduct qualitative interviews with PDS steering committee members<br>• Begin co-authoring practitioner and research manuscripts | • Meeting minutes<br>• Interview transcriptions<br>• Draft of manuscripts |
| June | • Teachers create class lists for the next school year<br>• Articulate student transitions between buildings/grades/classrooms through the development of Fast Facts and setting up Action Plan Meetings for the next school year | • Completed class lists<br>• Fast Facts sheets<br>• Action Plan Meeting letter to parents<br>• IEP goal matrices |
| On-going monthly activities | • Write and code qualitative memos<br>• Look for PDS grant opportunities<br>• Submit proposals to and present at local, regional, and national PDS conferences | • Grant submissions<br>• Conference proposal submissions |

questioning existing special education, and pushing back against deficit-based assumptions about disability (Taylor, 2006).

## Limitations

Though this paper is meant to provide one example of a roadmap of how to use PDS-university relationships to create the foundations of sustainable inclusive education practices, it is not without its limitations. In this paper, only the actions of one SPED sub-committee are highlighted. Similarly, the demographics, location, special education practices, and school district resources are specific to this one region and may not be generalizable to other regions in the United States and beyond. However, Elder hopes that these approaches can be easily modified to meet the needs of other schools with similar resources around the world.

Also, in this project, only six students with disabilities were transitioning from self-contained classrooms to more inclusive settings. Though, transitioning six students out of segregated classrooms is better than transitioning none at all, Elder recognizes that the project is focused on moving a very small number of students out of self-contained classrooms. However,

Elder believes there is value in starting small and making purposeful decisions for those six students which can eventually translate into sustainable practices that will lead to the inclusion of more students with disability labels over time.

Another limitation of this project is that on this campus there are "inclusion classrooms," or classrooms where some, but not all, students are welcome. The simple presence of these classrooms implies that there are "exclusion classrooms," where other students with more complex disability labels have to stay until they can earn their right into inclusive placements. This is by no way a judgment on the current faculty, staff, administration, or school. Rather, this is an acknowledgment of the need for more resources (e.g., trainings, planning time) to better help faculty, staff, and administration *responsibly* support the needs of more diverse learnings in inclusive classroom settings.

Finally, though not an exhaustive list of limitations, only students who were considered "good candidates" for transitions to inclusive classrooms were considered. This means that students with more complex support needs (e.g., multiple disability labels, students who may require significant behavioral supports) were not considered as initial candidates to move into more inclusive classrooms. Though supporting all students with disability labels in inclusive classrooms is a future goal, at the time of writing, appropriate inclusive supports were not in place to responsibly and sustainably support such students in those placements.

## Implications and Future Research

Elder concludes this paper by revisiting the research questions and discussing the implications and future of such research.

1. How can PDS be used to responsibly and effectively increase the number of students with disabilities accessing inclusive classrooms?

From the activities outlined in this paper, more students with disabilities can access inclusive classrooms, but this requires the removal of structural barriers to the development of sustainable inclusive education supports. Establishing communication, trust, and transparency were pivotal to the SPED sub-committee initiating this work. Additionally, providing professional development opportunities built faculty, staff, and administration capacity to effectively support students with disability labels in inclusive classrooms.

2. How does the development and implementation of PDS trainings impact how faculty, staff, and administration are prepared (e.g., have increased capacity) to support students with disabilities in inclusive classrooms?

In this particular project, the implications of inclusive education-focused PDS work are yet to be determined. At the time of writing, the six students who are transitioning to more inclusive classrooms were not yet accessing those spaces. Though many structures were put in place with the intention of increasing faculty, staff, and administration capacity to support these students (e.g., Action Plan Meetings, Fast Facts, professional development activities), future research is required to know if teachers feel they are more prepared to support these students after the first round of qualitative interviews occur during the first marking period of the 2017-18 school year.

3. In what ways can PDS be used to improve inclusive education practices and positively impact educational outcomes for students with disabilities?

Through the first year of this project, the SPED sub-committee has found that PDS can be used to infuse a DSE perspective into school reform and provide faculty, staff, and administration a common language through which to discuss inclusive education and disability. As a result of a concerted effort by the SPED sub-committee to push back against negative views of disability and to question traditional segregated special education practices, this school will have six students with disability labels who will be accessing more inclusive spaces. Not only will these students be attending more inclusive classrooms, but their presence will be anticipated and welcomed due to the proactive measures taken by the SPED sub-committee and administration.

The implications of the SPED sub-committee actions outlined in this paper are far reaching for this school, the school district, and beyond. At this school, the SPED sub-committee hopes these six students accessing more inclusive classrooms leads to their full-time membership in those classrooms over time. In addition, the SPED sub-committee anticipates that the structures they put in place to support these six students will lead to more students moving from self-contained to more inclusive classrooms. Eventually, the hope is that there are no longer "inclusion classes" and "self-contained classes." Rather, the goal is that all students belong together in classrooms that anticipate, celebrate, and support disability in all forms which can ultimately lead to better learning outcomes for all students.

At the district level, the SPED sub-committee anticipates these practices will be adopted by the two elementary schools that feed into this particular school, and all special education services will be delivered in a cohesive and articulated manner. If supports are articulated, then students and families will transition between district buildings, but the delivery of services remains familiar and consistent. As inclusive elementary supports become rooted in district culture, the SPED sub-committee anticipates similar practices expanding to the intermediate and high schools. Thus, taking the district from a constellation of disconnected PDSs to a cohesive professional development district (PDD). At the same time, as the SPED sub-committee fine-tunes and revises their inclusive PDS practices, they hope to become a model school district through which other schools and districts across the nation (and beyond) can develop similar practices. SUP

## Appendix A

*SPED Action Plan*

## ACTION PLAN FOR SPED SUB-COMMITTEE

**GOAL SUMMARY:**

1. Modification of curriculum- Clarity on what this can look like from administration

2. Co-teaching

3. Instructional assistant training/support

4. Special Area Teacher and Instructional assistant training

5. Grant Writing

➢ **PDS Members & Position:**

| | |
|---|---|
| Administrator 1 | Teacher 3 |
| Administrator 2 | Teacher 4 |
| Administrator 3 | Teacher 5 |
| Administrator 4 | Teacher 6 |
| PDS Liaison 1 | Teacher 7 |
| Author | Teacher 8 |
| Teacher 1 | Teacher 9 |
| Teacher 2 | |

**Goal 1: Modification of Curriculum**

| Action Steps | Person(s) Responsible | Resources Needed | Projected Timeline | Indicators of Success |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Modification of curriculum training | Case manager, self-contained teacher, PIR | Copied handouts | January 2017 | Faculty feedback forms |

**Goal 2:   Co-teaching**

| Action Steps | Person(s) Responsible | Resources Needed | Projected Timeline | Indicators of Success |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Co-teaching training | Inclusion teachers | Copied handouts | January 2017 | Faculty feedback forms |
| Author One co-teaching in fourth grade with two teachers | Fourth grade teachers, PIR | Copied materials/curriculum modifications | February-May 2017 | Weekly debriefing sessions with co-teaching team |

**Goal 3:   Instructional Assistant Training**

| Action Steps | Person(s) Responsible | Resources Needed | Projected Timeline | Indicators of Success |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Data collection/behavior | Case manager, self-contained teacher, PIR | Copied handouts | November 2016 | Instructional assistant feedback forms |
| Behavior/Curriculum modification | Case manager, self-contained teacher, PIR | Copied handouts | November 2016 | Instructional assistant feedback forms |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Roles & Responsibilities/Curriculum modification | Case manager, self-contained teacher, PIR | Copied handouts | November 2016 | Instructional assistant feedback forms |

**Goal 4: Special Area Teacher and Instructional Assistant Training**

| Action Steps | Person(s) Responsible | Resources Needed | Projected Timeline | Indicators of Success |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Behavior/Classroom Management | Case manager, self-contained teacher, PIR | Copied handouts | March 2017 | Training feedback forms |
| Communication | Case manager, self-contained teacher, PIR | Copied handouts | March 2017 | Training feedback forms |
| Roles & Responsibilities | Case manager, self-contained teacher, PIR | Copied handouts | March 2017 | Training feedback forms |

**Goal 5: Grant Writing**

| Action Steps | Person(s) Responsible | Resources Needed | Projected Timeline | Indicators of Success |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| $35,000 grant (unfunded) | PDS teacher liaison, PIR | N/A | 2018–19 school year | Receiving the grant |
| $5,000 grant (unfunded) | PDS teacher liaison, PIR | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| $10,000 seed grant (awarded) | PDS teacher liaison, PIR | N/A | 2017–18 school year | Receiving the grant |

| $5,000 grant (pending) | PDS teacher liaison, PIR | N/A | 2017-18 school year | Receiving the grant |
| $5,000 grant (pending) | PDS teacher liaison, PIR | N/A | 2017-18 school year | Receiving the grant |

Appendix B.   January 2017 Professional Development Day Breakout Sessions

| Time | Title and Description |
| --- | --- |
| 10:00-10:45 | Developing Mini Lessons Through Alternative Sources (20 people)<br>Participants in this workshop will explore how to develop mini lessons for reading strategies often seen in reading workshop classrooms. Different support books will be used to assist in creating lessons. |
| 10:00-10:45 | Accommodations vs. Modifications Part 1 (MUST CHOOSE A PART 2 for your next session) (20 people)<br>This presentation will provide a better understanding of how changes can be made to components of a curriculum to support and improve student learning outcomes in regular, inclusive, and self-contained classrooms. |
| 10:00-10:45 | Tech support for Special Needs Students (20 people)<br>Many of our students struggle with self-management, but there is ''an app for that,'' several in fact. We will briefly look at some technology options for helping your students with executive function tasks. |
| 10:00-10:45 | Teacher Prep Time (20 people)<br>We all wish for more time. Take this time to work in your classrooms. |
| 11:00-11:45 | Assessment in Reader's Workshop (20 people)<br>Participants in this workshop will learn to develop weekly formative assessments for mini lesson reading strategies. In addition, other types of assessments will be shared that are quick and meaningful to support your efforts in reading workshop. |
| 11:00-11:45 | Accommodations vs. Modifications Part 2 (Math) (20 people)<br>A math-focused modification session where attendees will be asked to bring content they are going to teach in the near future so they can modify it. |
| 11:00-11:45 | Accommodations vs. Modifications Part 2 (Content Area) (20 people)<br>A Content Area focused modification with Brent and Tina Stump. Attendees are asked to bring content they are going to teach in the near future so they can modify it. |
| 11:00-11:45 | Tech support for Special Needs Students (20 people)<br>Many of our students struggle with self-management, but there is ''an app for that,'' several in fact. We will briefly look at some technology options for helping your students with executive function tasks. |
| 11:00-11:45 | Teacher Prep Time (20 people)<br>We all wish for more time. Take this time to work in your classrooms. |
| 12:00-1:00 | Lunch |
| 1:00-1:45 | Notice and Note Strategies for Fiction and Nonfiction (20 people)<br>Notice and Note ''Signposts'' are found in all works of fiction and nonfiction. Teachers will learn how to teach each signpost and leave with resources for implementation. |
| 1:00-1:45 | Tech support for Special Needs Students (20 people)<br>Many of our students struggle with self-management, but there is ''an app for that,'' several in fact. We will briefly look at some technology options for helping your students with executive function tasks. |
| 1:00-1:45 | Teacher Prep Time (20 people)<br>We all wish for more time. Take this time to work in your classrooms. |
| 1:00-1:45 | Autism Overview (20 people)<br>This professional development activity will provide participants with a general definition of autism as well as characteristics that are typically seen in these students. Classroom strategies to optimize the success of these students will be provided. |
| 2:00-2:45 | Grammar Strategies for Writing Success (20 people)<br>Join in a professional discussion of students' needs. Explore ready-made strategies/activities that you can implement immediately. |
| 2:00-2:45 | Tech support for Special Needs Students (20 people)<br>Many of our students struggle with self-management, but there is ''an app for that,'' several in fact. several in fact. We will briefly look at some technology options for helping your students with executive function tasks. |
| 2:00-2:45 | Teacher Prep Time (20 people)<br>We all wish for more time. Take this time to work in your classrooms. |
| 2:00-2:45 | Data Collection (20 people)<br>Participants be provided with ideas and materials to create smooth student programs where data is maintained and updated regularly. |
| 2:00-2:45 | The Beauty of Co-Teaching (20 people)<br>This session will address misconceptions regarding team teaching. We will explore the Six Approaches to Co-Teaching and highlight best practices that meet the needs of our diverse student population. |

## Acknowledgments:

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