

Chapter 8 Creating a Caring Professional Culture: 2002-2003

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In 2002-2003, I was the Kemper Fellow leading Bradley's Kemper Professional Development Schools (PDS) Project. At the end of the 2002 academic year, Georgetowne Middle School elected to discontinue our PDS relationship, so during 2002-2003 the newly-renamed Kemper Executive Committee included the Bradley PDS site coordinators for the three PDS schools still involved: Valeska Hinton Early Childhood Education Center, Roosevelt Magnet School for the Performing Arts, and Manual High School. Dr. Sherrie Pardieck was the site coordinator for Valeska Hinton, Dr. Bob Davison Avilés was the site coordinator for Roosevelt, and I (Dr. Heljä Robinson at that time) was the site coordinator for Manual. In addition, Janet Jackson served in the newly-created role of PDS health coordinator for all three Bradley PDS sites, and Monica Mueller continued as our executive assistant and newsletter editor.

Well-being and empowerment were the big areas of focus during the 2002-2003 academic year. Members of the Kemper Executive Committee and other College of Education and Health Sciences faculty conducted over 20 workshops, presentations and professional development sessions at Bradley's PDS sites, including in-service sessions on diversity and community involvement at Valeska Hinton, student retention and test scores at Roosevelt, and respect and responsibility at Manual.



Throughout the year, Dr. Pardieck, Dr. Davison Avilés, and I participated in nurturing future professionals at all three Bradley PDS sites through beginning clinical experiences, internships, and student teaching. In addition, collaboration in class projects was evident with several different courses and classrooms among students and faculty at the various sites, including evaluation of children's progress and setting up partnerships across different age levels of learners.

The 2002-2003 academic year also marked vigorous nationwide dissemination of information about Bradley's Kemper PDS Project and the work being done within and between our partner schools and Bradley. Eleven presentations, three at international conferences, were delivered, one of the most significant being "Intercultural Partnering," which I co-presented with Dr. Leslie Graham at the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Conference in Jyväskylä, Finland in June 2003. In addition to presentations by College faculty, Bradley students participated in presenting at a regional conference and Manual faculty presented at both a state and a national conference. Moreover, several scholarly manuscripts were submitted for publication.

Manual High School Code of Community

We will act in a civil manner.

- Act respectfully toward others
- Be caring
- Consider the point of view of others
- Use positive forms of communication

We will work toward our potential.

- Be prepared
- Welcome challenges
- Work for continuing growth
- Be involved in the school and its activities

We will accept differences.

- Treat each person as an individual
- Interact without being influenced by prejudice

We will act responsibly.

- Meet understood expectations
- Do things in a timely manner

We will be accountable.

- Understand implications of choices: both actions and lack of action
- Accept appropriate consequences for inappropriate actions

Code of Community at Manual

The Manual High School Code of Community was a grassroots effort, led by Bradley's PDS site coordinators to create a positive and supportive environment for all Manual students, faculty, families, and personnel. The finalization of the code of community, which had begun with the civility project during the 2000-2001 academic year, marked a long process of empowering interactions at Manual and served as an important part of Manual's school culture through several administrations. The code, which was signed by all Manual students, faculty, and other PDS and school stakeholders, was displayed prominently in the school's main entrance foyer for all to see. During a celebration of the signing of the code

in November 2002, Garry Moore, from local television station WEEK Channel 25, brought his drums and participated with the celebrating community. The process of creating Manual's Code of Community was also the topic of several local, state, and national presentations, gaining the attention of many colleagues across the country who were also working on encouraging student learning in urban schools.



The Manual Code of Community was signed by students, faculty, and staff during a schoolwide celebration in November 2002.

Effective Communication at Valeska Hinton

At Valeska Hinton, everyone who worked or volunteered in the building met twice each week to discuss ways to improve teaching and collaboration among teachers, administrators, and staff. Educators, students, families and community members represented important stakeholders in Valeska Hinton's mission, and the twice-weekly meetings allowed for a free exchange of ideas and concerns among all who attended. While the educational purpose and mission of Valeska Hinton was always the central theme of the meetings, it was not unusual to hear educators discuss ways to help a colleague who may be experiencing health problems. The Bradley PDS site coordinators regularly met with the leadership team at Valeska Hinton to help plan professional development activities for in-service days. I especially remember the team planning wellness-related demonstrations on kick-boxing as well as programs about inviting and effective communication.

In December 2002, Valeska Hinton staff enjoyed a professional development session about the multiple influences and demands teachers face in their daily decision-making. Together the staff brainstormed ways to decrease stresses, prioritize, and organize tasks while remaining effective and concentrating on the core of teachers' work: student development and achievement. The Valeska Hinton staff discussed how self-talk affects all of those around, and how visual imagery can be used to assist in creating more positive outcomes.

Arts, Science, and Literacy at Roosevelt

At Roosevelt, the 2002-2003 focus was on arts, science, and literacy. In the Fall Semester 2002 *Keeping Current with Kemper* newsletter, Bradley student teacher Meghan Hembrough reflected on integration of the arts at Roosevelt:

In our teacher education classes, we are told how important it is to integrate the arts into our classrooms. At Roosevelt, this is actually done. There is not a single child who isn't experiencing the arts on a daily basis. There are so many different opportunities at Roosevelt for children with varying talents (p. 4).

One example of community outreach during 2002-2003 was the Roosevelt student group Folklorica, which performed in November 2002 for the Peoria Area Friends of International Students (PAFIS) harvest dinner. Those in attendance included Bradley faculty, staff, and students as well as several Peoria area community members.

During the 2003 spring semester, Bradley teacher education majors in Dr. Shari Britner's ETE 336: Teaching Science in the Elementary Grades course assisted Roosevelt teachers and students in holding their first science fair. In ETE 336, the Bradley students each completed an experiment, study, or investigation as a part of their course work, which involved many of the same components as the Roosevelt science fair projects. With this preparation, the teacher education majors assisted the Roosevelt students in identifying an appropriate topic, gathering materials, setting up their science projects, and completing their final displays. Roosevelt's first science fair was held in March 2003.

In April 2003, Dr. Davison Avilés and Dr. Pardieck participated in literacy night at Roosevelt. Using the school's computer lab, the two Bradley faculty members conducted an interactive, web-based workshop for Roosevelt parents and guardians. After identifying their top five parenting challenges, participants surfed two websites to find solutions. Parents left the workshop with a list of parenting tips and directions on where to find computer resources at the public library.



Roosevelt Magnet School's Folklorica student group performed for the Peoria Area Friends of International Students (PAFIS) in November 2002.

Kemper Teaching Academy

Participants in the 2002-2003 Kemper Teaching Academy continued to focus on well-being and professionalism with the idea of personal and professional empowerment through mutual encouragement and collegial interactions. The fall 2002 teaching academy sessions included topics related to professionalism, emotional literacy and the workplace in September; dealing with student criticism in October; and creating an empowering collegial and learning culture in November. The 2003 spring semester focused on professional well-being and supporting wellness within a framework of empowerment orientation for the purpose of creating a positive learning culture. More than 50% of College faculty participated in these sessions.

"We all do better in encouraging, warm environments where we are being listened to, and where we have room to be our authentic selves."

~ Dr. Heljä Robinson, May 2003

Overall Focus on Health, Wellness, and Positive Human Interactions

Overall, Bradley's Kemper PDS Project emphasized health, wellness, and positive human interactions during the 2002-2003 academic year. To begin, Bradley nursing student Kathy Uno and Mrs. Jackson presented a workshop titled "Chaos, ChaosCatch the Calm" at the District 150 Early Childhood Conference, which was held at Valeska Hinton in November 2002. The workshop was such a hit that it was presented again at Roosevelt in February 2003 and at the Midwest Association for the Education of Young Children (MAEYC) Conference, held in Peoria in April 2003. In addition to this and other health-related presentations, Mrs. Jackson conducted assessments of wellness and health needs at each of Bradley's PDS sites. In follow up, Mrs. Jackson, Julie Baylor, Andrea Parker, and Wendy

Kooken met several times with school nurse Heather Young to discuss the issue of teen pregnancy and other student health needs at Manual, and Kathy Uno developed an in-school walking track for faculty and staff at Roosevelt.

Similar to health and wellness, positive human interactions have always been at the core of the energy in Bradley's PDS projects. During the fall 2002 semester, two Bradley student teachers reflected about the positive human interactions they experienced through their placements at Bradley PDS sites. Cristin Evans, who student taught at Valeska Hinton, noted that one of the biggest challenges she had to face was the emotional needs of her

students. By working with her cooperating teacher and associate, an environment of safety, caring, and learning was built. "I feel extremely fortunate that I was able to spend my student teaching the way I did," she commented (*Keeping Current with Kemper*, Fall Semester 2002, p. 3). Meghan Hembrough, who student taught at Roosevelt, shared:

At staff meetings and grade level meetings we discussed what exactly was being done that was a best practice. Not only were the teachers using best practices, but they could articulate that. I feel this will help me as a future teacher, as well as at interviews for teaching positions (p. 4).

The Kemper PDS Project's focus on positive human interactions was celebrated in March 2003, when Dr. Harry Wong, nationally known educator, author, and classroom management expert, visited Bradley University and Valeska Hinton. During the visit, which was sponsored in part by the Peoria County Regional Office of Education and the Anne H. Griffith Academy for Professional Excellence, Dr. Wong had a chance to interact with professionals from our community, including Bradley teacher candidates and Bradley PDS stakeholders.



Cathy Wiggers, Sharron Doubet, Dr. Harry Wong, Elaine Greer, Dr. Heljä Robinson, and Kathy Welch toured Valeska Hinton in March 2003.

Closing Thoughts

PDS work is, at heart, the work of people engaged in powerful interactions. Awareness of the influence we have on one another and how this influence translates to curiosity about the world and success in learning lend the energy with which the Kemper PDS Project developed. In the Spring Semester 2003 *Keeping Current with Kemper* newsletter, I reflected on this energy as I concluded my first term as Kemper Fellow:

As my Kemper Teaching Excellence Fellowship ends this May, I want to thank you for the rewarding experiences I have been able to share with you. We touch each other's lives in the work we do. You have touched mine. We all do better in encouraging, warm environments where we are being listened to, and where we have room to be our authentic selves. You have encouraged me to grow professionally and I wish ongoing professional growth for all of us (p. 1).

The focus on dynamic PDS events and interactions varies depending on what is happening in the school community, as well as what is happening with the individuals involved. The 2002-2003 academic year was successful in creating a caring professional culture for all who were involved in the Kemper PDS Project.