

Chapter 1

The Beginning: 1994-1996

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It all began as an idea. In the late 20th century, the professional development school (PDS) movement was emerging across the United States, and teacher education programs within universities were leading the way. The idea of PDS was similar to the university laboratory school model, but instead of university-organized PK-12 schools (pre-kindergarten through high school), which were often housed on university campuses, the laboratories became public schools in the surrounding community that partnered with universities to collaboratively promote school improvement, educator preparation, and student success. At that time, some extended PDS models were described as full service community schools or "one stop shops" that provided teaching and learning expertise, health care services, and community agency support such as counseling and parenting classes. The full service community schools model emphasized family-centered, interprofessional collaboration (Corrigan, 1986; Corrigan & Kirk Bishop, 1997).

By 1994, Bradley University's College of Education and Health Sciences was uniquely positioned to align with the full service community schools model and the school-university PDS partnership model. The College's five departments prepared professionals in health science, nursing, physical therapy, family and consumer sciences, educational leadership, human services administration, counseling, and teacher education. Moreover, as dean of the College, I was serving on several national boards in teacher education, such as the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE) and the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). Then, in 1995, I was invited to serve as a member of the NCATE PDS Standards Project committee, convened by the aforementioned agencies and directed by Dr. Marsha Levine, to develop national standards for professional development schools (NCATE, 2001). My involvement in this innovative national project led to the collaborative development of a conceptual framework, and soon, to the writing and submission of our College's first project proposal to

Standards for Professional Development Schools (NCATE, 2001)

- I. Learning Community**
- II. Accountability and Quality Assurance**
- III. Collaboration**
- IV. Diversity and Equity**
- V. Structures, Resources, and Roles**

the William T. Kemper Foundation. Our vision was to support systemic collaborations between our university, area schools, and other agencies in the community.

Because our proposed Kemper Project was closely aligned with the College's goals, faculty members in the College were enthusiastic about collaborating with one another and with area schools and community agencies to transform professional preparation in their various academic disciplines. We were excited about the prospect of teaming with other institutional systems in the Peoria area to better understand how they all worked together and ultimately, to improve services and build upon successes.

The first William T. Kemper Foundation grant proposal was submitted on May 15, 1995. The proposal, written by myself and Mary Beth Karr, Director of Corporate and Foundation Relations, requested \$130,000 over five years' time to fund a Fellowship for Teaching Excellence. The fellowship would honor a College of Education and Health Sciences faculty member for outstanding teaching and provide support for released time, mentoring, research, study, and "collaboration with area school districts as well as health care and social service organizations" (cover letter, para. 2). The proposal identified Peoria Public School District 150, Hult Health Education Center, and Valeska Hinton Early Childhood Education Center as community sites already engaged in collaborative projects with Bradley, and envisioned that these relationships might be further developed and expanded "to establish a system of 'professional development schools' in Central Illinois" (p. 3).

The first Kemper grant proposal envisioned collaborative creation of a "comprehensive services model for providing services to school children, particularly at-risk children" where "the school building becomes a center for student and family services designed to ensure the success and development of children" (p. 2). In addition to facilitating university-school-community collaborations, we envisioned that the Fellow for Teaching Excellence would be responsible for researching and assessing outstanding teaching practices at all levels, delivering professional development, and providing one-on-one and small group mentoring for College faculty. The grant proposal summarized, "Through the Fellowship recipient's research, mentoring, and collaboration, the grant will



benefit Bradley students and faculty members as well as many area students and professionals" (p. 3).

The first "Kemper grant," as it quickly came to be known, was awarded in fall 1995 with the first annual installment of \$26,000. In December 1995, Dr. Lori Russell-Chapin, associate professor in Bradley's Department of Educational Leadership and Human Development, was named the first William T. Kemper Fellow for Teaching Excellence (J. Sattler, personal communication, December 6, 1995). And the rest is now history.

Since 1994, Bradley University and its PDS partners, generously supported by the William T. Kemper Foundation-Commerce Bank, Trustee, have played a seminal role in the national professional development schools movement through shared scholarship, preparation and training of education and health care professionals, and the transformation of PK-20 (pre-kindergarten through graduate school) learning environments. The partnership professionals who have contributed to the Kemper PDS Project over the past 22 years hold shared ownership in the project's multiple accomplishments and dynamic successes.

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References

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