

NCATE

The Standard of Excellence in Teacher Preparation

QUALITY

teaching

Resolving the Accountability Conundrum



Arthur E. Wise

Public officials are focused on raising student achievement levels and ensuring that teachers pass licensing examinations. However, the growing teacher shortage is forcing school districts to hire unqualified individuals who are officially identified as “teachers” the moment they enter the classroom. Some receive mentoring assistance; some do not.

State and local officials are recruiting people from all walks of life to staff the

schools. Yet these same public officials are responsible for students and their learning. Research is clear: students with licensed teachers outperform those with unlicensed teachers. Studies reveal that unqualified teachers are generally assigned to teach children in low-performing schools. Most of these students have failed state-mandated achievement tests. Individuals who are not prepared teach students who have already failed. Is it any wonder the achievement gap continues?

Moreover, unprepared teachers leave teaching at a much higher rate than

those who are prepared. Thus, the more unprepared persons assigned to classrooms, the harder it becomes to staff classrooms in the future.

Quick-fix approaches in which the recruit receives 4 to 6 weeks of ‘training’ do not work well. They do not create a high quality, stable teaching force that will help all students learn, year-after-year.

One better strategy is the professional development school, or PDS, described by

Marsha Levine in this newsletter. The PDS is akin to the teaching hospital where new doctors are trained. Like the teaching hospital, the PDS provides real-world teacher preparation in an elementary, middle or high school. The higher education institution forms a partnership with the P-12 school. The new entity, the PDS, makes a commitment to engage in the education of new teachers as well as the professional development of experienced teachers at the P-12 site. The school is devoted to

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Arthur E. Wise is president of NCATE.

New PDS Standards Introduced

PDSs Can Address Teacher Shortage



Marsha
Levine

NCATE has released new, voluntary standards for professional development schools (PDSs), innovative institutions formed through partnerships between colleges and universities, and elementary, middle, and high schools. PDS partnerships, carried out at P-12 school sites, are designed to achieve four goals:

- Provide real-world clinical preparation for new teachers
- Enhance P-12 student achievement
- Serve as a site for professional development for teachers, and
- Support research and inquiry about teaching and learning.

PDSs are a growing national trend. Of the 525 teacher preparation institutions accredited by

NCATE, 166 have professional development schools, according to a self-report survey. Many of the 166 institutions partner with multiple PDS sites, which train hundreds of teacher candidates each year. In addition, several states have developed initiatives to encourage PDS partnerships. Maryland recently enacted policy that expects all teacher preparation institutions to initiate PDSs, and policies encouraging PDSs have been enacted in Georgia and Louisiana.

Although in its infancy, research on PDSs indicates that these institutions improve the quality of teaching. Initial evidence indicates that interns who attend PDSs are better prepared to teach and that student achievement is higher in PDSs (Teitel, 2001).

PDSs also have potential to provide aid to districts experiencing teacher shortages. Teachers who complete their training in PDSs have a higher probability of remaining in teaching (Teitel, page 8).

Why standards for PDSs? The term 'PDS' was being used to refer to any type of cooperation—however minimal—between universities and P-12 schools. We wanted those interested in the PDS concept to see what a PDS looks like when it is fully functioning. The standards describe PDS partnerships at various stages of development, and also help to distinguish between PDSs and other kinds of school/university cooperation.

A national advisory group representing PDS partnerships and other educators and policymakers worked with me over a two-year period to develop the standards. A follow-up three-year field-test project included the development of an assessment process for using the standards, a handbook containing specific guidance for conducting the assessment process, the training of evaluators to conduct on-site visits, and visits to 18 PDS partner sites.

Marsha Levine is director of the Professional Development Schools Standards Project at NCATE.

NCATE Offers PDS Publications

The following PDS publications are available from NCATE. You can download the publications order form from the NCATE website at www.ncate.org:

- ★ **Standards for Professional Development Schools.** \$15.00.
- ★ **Handbook for the Assessment of Professional Development Schools.** \$25.00.
- ★ **How Professional Development Schools Make a Difference: A Review of Research.** Lee Teitel. \$10.00.

The PDS Standards are also available on the web: www.ncate.org.

Overview of the PDS Standards

The five standards describe in detail the characteristics of professional development schools as they appear at different stages of development.

Standard I: Learning Community

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. They believe that adults and children learn best in the context of practice. Learning supported by this community results in change and improvement in individual practice and in the policies and practices of the partnering institutions.

The PDS partnership includes principal and supporting institutions and individuals. The principal PDS partners are members of the P–12 schools and professional preparation programs who agree to collaborate. The supporting PDS partner institutions include the university, the school district, and the teacher union or professional education association(s). Arts and sciences faculty, other interested school and university faculty, family members, community members, and other affiliated schools are important PDS participants in the extended learning community.

Standard II: Accountability and Quality Assurance

PDS partners are accountable to themselves and to the public for upholding professional standards for teaching and learning. They define clear criteria at the institutional and individual levels for participation. PDS partners collaboratively develop assessments, collect information, and use results to systematically examine their practices and establish outcome goals for all P–12 students, candidates, faculty, and other professionals. The PDS partnership demonstrates impact at the local, state, and national level on policies and practices affecting its work.

Standard III: Collaboration

PDS partners and partner institutions systematically move from independent to interdependent practice by committing themselves and making a commitment to each other to engage in joint work focused on implementing the PDS mission. They collaboratively design roles and structures to support the PDS work and individual and institutional parity. PDS partners use their shared work to improve outcomes for P–12 students, candidates, faculty, and other professionals. The PDS partnership systematically recognizes and celebrates their joint work and the contributions of each partner.

Standard IV: Diversity and Equity

PDS partners and candidates develop and demonstrate knowledge, skills, and dispositions resulting in learning for all P–12 students. PDS partners ensure that the policies and practices of the PDS partner institutions result in equitable learning outcomes for all PDS participants. PDS partners include diverse participants and diverse learning communities for PDS work.

Standard V: Structures, Resources, and Roles

The PDS partnership uses its authority and resources to articulate its mission and establish governing structures that support the learning and development of P–12 students, candidates, faculty, and other professionals. The partner institutions ensure that structures, programs, and resource decisions support the partnership's mission. They create new roles and modify existing roles for P–12 students, candidates, faculty, and other professionals, to achieve the PDS mission. The partnership effectively uses communication for coordination and linkage with the school district, university, and other constituencies and to inform the public, policymakers, and professional audiences of its work.

Learnings from the NCATE P



Antoinette Mitchell

As the NCATE standards are implemented, both NCATE and the institutions that it accredits are challenged—NCATE to be clear in expectations and consistent in assessments of units; institutions to engage in a collaborative process and to develop and implement a comprehensive assessment system...

Over the past three years, NCATE developed, with the consensus of its 33 constituent organizations, new standards that focus on performance-based learning outcomes. These new standards expect colleges to demonstrate that teacher candidates are gaining the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to have a positive impact on K-12 student learning. The new standards place emphasis on systemic assessment of teacher candidate learning, increased collaboration in the development and implementation of clinical experiences, and new ways to approach diversity in teacher education. Together these changes promote increased accountability in teacher education.

The NCATE unit standards are in effect for all institutions as of fall 2001. Thirty-three institutions piloted the new standards during the fall 2000/spring 2001 academic year. Of these pilot institutions, 13 underwent accreditation review in fall 2000 and received accreditation decisions¹ in the spring of this year. Nine of the 13 were accredited, one received accreditation with conditions, one institution was denied accreditation, and decisions were deferred until the fall on two institutions.

Most of the institutions began their work by developing and/or evaluating their conceptual frameworks, which outlines the underlying structure of the professional education program, or 'unit.'

One relatively advanced institution summarized four stages in the evolution of a performance-based system and in so doing, captured much of the work of the other pilot institutions. The four stages include conceptualization, development, implementation, and evaluation. In the conceptualization stage, faculty members and others in the educational communities began talking about the elements of the conceptual framework and identifying what they considered as learning expectations or outcomes for their students. They asked themselves questions about the types of educators they hope to develop; the knowledge, skills, and dispositions

they expect graduates to possess; and the methods used in their teaching. Through collective and individual readings, attending meetings on performance-based assessment, and meetings with faculty members, K-12 partners, and arts and sciences faculty, the institutions conceptualized the form that their performance-based systems would assume.

In the developmental stage, work began on curriculum and assessment. Again, through regular meetings, the institution challenged faculty to identify what was being taught in their classes, how it was being assessed, and the extent to which what was being taught related back to the learning expectations outlined in the unit's conceptual framework. Because of this process, faculty members were better able to fit their courses into the continuum of education programs and identify where essential knowledge, skills, and dispositions were taught. The institutions reported finding gaps in their programs and making adjustments.

In addition to reviewing curricula, the institutions began identifying key points in their programs where candidates would be evaluated. These key points were variously called gates, stages, and levels. What would be assessed, what the assessments would be, and how they would be evaluated to ensure accurate and consistent grading across a program and/or a unit were the next issues addressed. The institutions reported that grappling with these issues as educational communities made their programs stronger.

At the implementation stage, the institutions began to pilot assessments. Generally, they were testing scoring guides and rubrics for portfolio assessments and field and clinical experiences. During this stage, syllabi either had been or were in the process of being revised. In addition, assessments of the programs, including surveys of graduates, surveys of employers, and faculty evaluations, were being revised to reflect the conceptual frame-

This article is an excerpt from a longer paper detailing the experiences of the pilot institutions. That paper is available on the NCATE website, www.ncate.org/resources/papers/aera.pdf.

Pilot Institutions

work and the learning outcomes articulated therein. Policies and procedures were being adopted to ensure a systematic approach to assessment of students and programs.

Because NCATE recognizes that reform is a developmental process, institutions have the option to, and many of the pilot institutions did, submit a plan for a complete assessment system if the unit was in the developmental stage.² The plans that were provided to the BOE teams varied in the level of detail and institutions reported differences in their understandings of what NCATE expected. Some understood that NCATE wanted a vision for a comprehensive system and a description of how the unit would create it, while others incorrectly assumed that NCATE expected a vague reporting of faculty discussions about a system. The plans, to varying degrees, included timelines, assessment measures, descriptions of the work to be done, and provisions for ensuring fairness, accuracy and consistency in grading. To provide more direction for institutions in the development of assessment systems, a brief paper "Assessment Systems: An Explanation of the NCATE Transition Plan," is available on the NCATE website.

While not all institutions had reached the stage of evaluation, some had already started collecting and analyzing assessment data. The analysis involved summarizing and aggregating data (i.e., 30 percent of the students performed at the acceptable level on the portfolio assessment tied to professional knowledge; 90 percent of graduates earn a permanent license in 3 years, etc.). Further, a few of the pilot institutions were then using the information gathered to make program improvements.

The pilot institutions reported that various coalitions of actors worked together to develop and/or evaluate the conceptual framework and the performance assessment system. These groups included K-12 practitioners, higher education administrators, and often, outside advisors including civic leaders and K-12 parents who lived in the area.

The development of these systems was not without strife. Factors hindering the change process

included lack of collaboration among some faculty members, difficulty in agreeing on learning expectations and assessments, difficulty in understanding and conveying NCATE expectations, and institutional cultures that were slow to embrace change. The pilot institutions continue their work and correctly consider dealing with these factors as part of the change process.

Overall, the units reported that learning about performance-based assessment, thinking about their programs, and their learning expectations as a collective shifted the focus in their units from "what am I teaching" to "what are our candidates learning and how do we know?" This fundamental shift in focus from inputs to outcomes is a hallmark in the development of a performance-based system.

As the NCATE Standards are implemented, both NCATE and the institutions that it accredits are challenged. NCATE is challenged to be clear in our expectations and consistent in our assessments of units. Institutions are challenged to engage in a collaborative process and to develop and implement a comprehensive assessment system that generates data for program improvement. Changing policies, procedures, structures, and orientations is no small task. Though there is much work to be done, the encouraging news is that we as an educational community are up to the challenge and students in K-12 schools will benefit as a result.

Antoinette Mitchell is Associate Vice President, Accreditation at NCATE. A bibliography supporting the article is appended in the web version of the document, available at www.ncate.org/resources/papers/aera.pdf.

¹ A description of accreditation decisions is posted on the NCATE website under NCATE Policies.

² Although a plan will be accepted as institutions make the transition to performance-based assessment, all institutions should have state test scores (where available), information on the proficiencies of candidates, the competence of graduates, and summarized data on clinical practice and internships at the time of the visits. Procedural guidance is available at www.ncate.org.

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Many Happy Returns

I am a Middle Childhood Generalist, a title I prize more highly than any other... But more important is the impact the National Board certification had on me.



Martha Hopkins

Everyone's heard the phrase, "You can't go back." Returning to relive the past can be frustrating and disappointing. It was with those thoughts that I chose to return to the elementary classroom after 15 years at the University of Central Florida.

Prior to joining the faculty at UCF I had taught grades 2-6 in elementary schools in New Jersey and Florida. After earning my doctorate I began teaching elementary mathematics methods courses to undergraduate and graduate students. I was promoted to full professor and was anticipating a peaceful end to my career. Then I heard about the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards.

My first experience with the National Board involved serving on a university committee whose purpose was to (a) design curriculum that would incorporate the NBPTS standards and (b) support candidates through the certification process. Frustrated that we had such a limited knowledge base, I volunteered to go through the process. I agreed to complete all parts of the portfolio and take the written examination at an assessment center. I also made the commitment to study myself as a candidate and keep a daily log noting those parts of the process that seemed to be the most difficult.

To my surprise it all worked out with relative ease. The dean agreed to allow me to work full time as a teacher in one of our professional development schools; the college agreed to pay the application fee to the National Board; and the principal of the school agreed to assign me to the fifth grade team. I had been teaching

demonstration lessons in that school for three years and two of the fifth grade teachers were former students of mine!

With the help of my previous experience and colleagues, my studying resulted in a successful attempt to become a National Board Certified Teacher. I am a Middle Childhood Generalist, a title I prize more highly than any other I've ever included after my name. But more important is the impact the National Board certification process had on me as an educator. I'll outline the impacts as they relate to the five core National Board propositions.

Teachers are committed to students and their learning

I can't begin to count how many times I've told my university students how critical it is to remember that ALL students can learn. It is the teacher's job to recognize individual differences and respect them by adjusting the curriculum accordingly. Teachers teach children, not curriculum. I soon realized when I was back in the fifth grade classroom that I was not nearly as committed to individual students as I had professed. I found that if I tried an alternate method of instruction and it failed, I tended to give up on that child way too soon.

The National Board certification process forces you to look very deeply at your practice...to find the warts as well as the freckles. As I wrestled with respecting each child's uniqueness I sharpened my ability to provide more appropriate instruc-

**Without a doubt,
the National Board**

tion to each child and developed a stronger respect for myself as an educator. This has had a major impact on my college teaching.

Teachers know the subjects they teach and how to teach those subjects to students

As a professor teaching mathematics education, I had become an 'expert' regarding the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics standards, but I had never used them while working with children.

Throughout my year in the fifth grade, the boundaries between subject areas become more and more blurred. We used math to solve problems in science, social studies, and reading. We used literature to learn all subject areas. We wrote constantly. Learning how to think systematically crossed all disciplines. I developed a renewed commitment to integrated instruction!

Many universities tend to compartmentalize the disciplines at the elementary level by offering separate methods courses. Since becoming certified, I've been exploring how we might be able to blend courses so students will gain an appreciation of how the disciplines are linked.

Teachers are responsible for managing and monitoring student learning

Using a variety of performance assessment methods provides the teacher with rich data about each child. In the classroom I reawakened my 'kid watching' abilities and implemented performance assessment on a regular basis. I collected data on each student every time I interacted with him or her, not just on weekly tests. I listened to their reasoning, observed the types of learning activities that worked or didn't work for them, and watched how they applied skills and concepts. Since returning to the universities I have attempted to do the same. Unless elementary majors experience performance assessment themselves, I don't believe they will fully understand how, when, and/or why to use them with children.

Teachers think systematically about their practice and learn from experience

The National Board process required me to look

**certification
process has been
the single most
powerful staff
development
experience of my
career.**

deeply into my practice, and to justify every action as being the most appropriate for individual children as well as for the class. I found that there was one very important element missing in my college instruction... the importance of reflecting on the children and the situation in which the activity is to be taught *before* and *during* the teaching as well as after. Without conscious reflection, good teaching can happen only by accident! Children deserve better.

Teachers are members of learning communities

I was reminded that a teacher belongs to several communities...several of which can be at odds with each other at any given time! Parents, school administrators, colleagues, and universities all play incredibly important roles in the education of each child. I had forgotten the pressures involved in collaborating across each of these communities while juggling the pressures of one's own family. Teachers truly are amazing!

I suspect that after reading this account you've predicted that a person really can go back. If so, you'll be disappointed. Yes, I returned to the elementary classroom. Yes, I was successful. But did I go back? No. I went forward. And I've continued to move forward since 'going back' to the university. Without a doubt, the National Board certification process has been the single most powerful staff development experience of my career. It was only because I went back that I was able to leap so far forward on the incredible journey we call teaching. Going through the National Board certification process helped me develop a much deeper understanding of the kinds of support candidates want and need. This has strengthened the courses at UCF. My return to the classroom has helped update my understanding of recent changes in the elementary curriculum. There is no doubt that this knowledge has improved both my teaching and my credibility. You see that's the beauty of the National Board Certification process. It's an incredible, lifelong journey...one I feel fortunate to have begun!

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Accountability Conundrum

PDSs need support from states and districts in order to become part of the established and accepted structure of teacher preparation.

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ment and conducts research about teaching and learning on-site to improve teaching practice.

The PDS partnership incorporates many reform ideas. The school and university share roles and responsibilities equally. In this new structure, the roles expand beyond the traditional boundaries. Professors teach on-site at the P-12 school; P-12 teachers hold joint appointments and serve as adjunct faculty at the university; clinical instruction is jointly planned and delivered. Induction of teacher candidates and new teachers is carefully planned and conducted.

Staffing patterns are reorganized so that teams of experts and novices work with several classrooms. In the PDS, new staffing patterns can be implemented in which National Board Certified Teachers and other highly accomplished, licensed teachers are responsible for student learning and the induction and supervision of teaching interns, as well as individuals entering with little or no preparation. Staffing can be accomplished with integrity. While these novices aid in the teaching and learning of students, they do so under the supervision of experts. A team leader, two licensed teachers, and several candidates, interns and others might serve as many as 125 to 150 students. This resolves the accountability conundrum. It places the responsibility for student learning in the hands of teachers identified by the state and district as caring, competent, and qualified—i.e. who have been licensed to practice—while providing for the supervision of

individuals who are learning how to teach. Accountability rests with the licensed personnel who will have to ensure that through the efforts of the team, all students are being well served.

PDSs work in all environments, but they are especially useful in low-performing schools, where teacher retention is usually lower. For example, the University of North Florida has professional development school partnerships in Jacksonville, Florida, in which teacher candidates learn to work with children from backgrounds vastly different from their own. Spending a year in this environment, working closely with a variety of mentor teachers and supervisors, with ongoing support and instruction, enables the teacher candidate to feel at home in a new environment and to become committed to helping at-risk children. Retention is 70 percent, much higher than normal in an inner city environment.

The professional development school is a concept whose time has come. PDSs need support from states and districts in order to become part of the established and accepted structure of teacher preparation. Policymakers can enact supportive legislation, creating incentives for higher education institutions and P-12 schools to work together this way. More and more P-12 schools can become teacher training sites. Partnerships such as these, dedicated to improving student learning, are an important part of the equation as we tackle teacher shortages in the foreseeable future.

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