

Revised Essential 8: the importance of boundary spanning roles

Michael Cosenza

California Lutheran University, Thousand Oaks, California, USA

Rebecca West Burns

University of North Florida, Jacksonville, Florida, USA

Bernard Badiali

Pennsylvania State University, Malvern, Pennsylvania, USA

Cynthia Coler

California Lutheran University, Thousand Oaks, California, USA

Krystal Goree

Baylor University, Waco, Texas, USA

Drew Polly

The University of North Carolina at Charlotte, Charlotte, North Carolina, USA

Donnan Stoicovy

State College Friends School, State College, Pennsylvania, USA, and

Kristien Zenkov

George Mason University, Arlington, Virginia, USA

Abstract

Purpose – This paper aims to provide details around Essential 8 of the Second Edition of the National Association for Professional Development Schools (NAPDS) Nine Essentials (NAPDS, 2021), which focuses on boundary spanning roles across university and P-12 school settings.

Design/methodology/approach – This paper represents an in-depth look at one element of a policy statement of the NAPDS. The Nine Essentials were reviewed over a 4-year period through meetings, focus groups and symposia with various stakeholder groups. These provided context and information for both the revision of the policy statement and the writing of this article (and the other articles in the series).

Findings – The intention of this series of articles is to provide a deepened understanding of the complexities of P-12 School and University partnerships. Each of the essential elements provides a framework for developing new PDSs and sustaining existing partnerships for the long term.

Originality/value – This is a reprint request.

Keywords Teacher education, Professional development, School-university partnerships

Paper type Practitioner paper



Introduction

This article provides details around Essential 8 of the Second Edition of the National Association for Professional Development Schools (NAPDS) Nine Essentials (NAPDS, 2021), which focuses on boundary spanning roles across university and school settings. Table 1 provides a comparison between the original Essential 8 and the Revised Essential 8.

The elaborate description of the Revised Essential 8 now reads (NAPDS, 2021, p. 16):

PDSs—figuratively the spaces between schools and universities—are conceived of as places of discovery and experimentation, governed by ideas and ideals and not bound by the traditions of any one institution. They are designed to renew a culture of teaching, learning, leading, and schooling. PDS participants span boundaries between university and P-12 settings; thus, their work is situated in the “third space,” which distinguishes it from work occurring solely in school or only in university organizations. PDS participants assume a variety of boundary-spanning roles, defined by each respective PDS. These boundary-spanning roles incorporate necessary functions and are integral to the operations of each PDS.

What's new in the revision

Essential 8 focuses on the importance of both institutions collaborating in a space that embraces the values of both partners without compromising ideals and goals. It places value on both the P-12 educator and the university educator giving them indistinguishable influence in creating goals for the PDS and overall decision-making. Too often, the university is seen as the primary decision-maker. Essential 8 emphasizes that neither the university nor the P-12 school is the “lead institution” meaning that a true collaboration of learners comes together to achieve the mission of the PDS.

Essential 8 encourages PDSs to go beyond the traditions and norms of the P-12 school and university. Oftentimes, policies of the P-12 school and/or university can create obstacles that inadvertently derail the work of the PDS. It is important to recognize that universities and P-12 schools have dissimilar work environments with differences ranging from daily work schedules to the manner in which educators are compensated. Universities and schools operate with distinct procedures and protocols; when a PDS is present, the stakeholders need to be keenly aware of those differences in order to sustain the PDS over the long term.

Essential 8 acknowledges that unique roles exist in a PDS. In some cases, these roles emerge informally and in other cases, roles are created. When roles emerge, it typically is in response to a need that arises within the PDS work or the absence of someone to handle specific aspects of the program. These informal roles tend to become necessary but are often unofficial and uncompensated. They are typically filled by leaders who are passionate and willing to do the work of the PDS. When roles are created, it is typically a collaborative response to a specific identified need. These roles are typically formalized with title and compensation. They are unique roles as compared to other positions at schools and universities because they are only necessary for the PDS. These roles can also develop as boundary spanning roles where the individual doing the work bridges both partners or represents both institutions concurrently. Whether they emerge on their own, or created in a formal way, these new roles typically concentrate on better teaching and better learning and

Original Essential 8

Work by college/university faculty and P-12 faculty in formal roles across institutional settings

Revised Essential 8

A PDS creates space for, advocates for and supports college/university and P-12 faculty to operate in well-defined, boundary spanning roles that transcend institutional settings

Table 1.
Comparison between
the original and revised
Essential 8

provide educators with more opportunities for leadership. Whatever manner they develop, the roles encouraged by Essential 8 are crucial to the success of the PDS.

Lastly, Essential 8 refers to a “third space” that exists when universities and P-12 schools partner. The “third space” is where the work of the PDS resides. It is in this space that stakeholders collaborate to do the work of the PDS and it provides a place to go above and beyond the goals and ideals of either of the institutional partners.

Key concepts related to the revision

In order to best support the partnering institutions of a PDS in understanding and readily implementing the revised Essentials, each is now enhanced by specific glossary terms included in the full Essentials publication. The following definitions are provided to articulate the key concepts in Essential 8:

Boundary Spanning: means engaging in and understanding professional life in both P-12 and college/university contexts or cultures (NAPDS, 2021).

Boundary spanning roles may not look the same when comparing PDSs across the nation. These roles emerge or are created to specifically address the needs of the PDS. What is similar is the concept that a boundary spanner is someone who has a strong understanding of both the P-12 and university cultures. They are those people who need to spend time navigating both environments to accomplish the work. Boundary spanning roles typically are related to areas where the work of the PDS intersects both institutions. This is typically in the areas of course instruction, seminars, clinical supervision and governing/steering committees.

Third-Space: is the unique space created at the joining of at least two partners that gives rise to something different or something new (NAPDS, 2021).

Third space in a PDS is an important concept highlighted in Essential 8. Though the university and P-12 school are equally important, not all of the stakeholders are actively involved in PDS work. Consider university provosts and school district superintendents. Though people at this level are aware and support the work, they are not involved in the regular tasks and duties of the PDS. The people who work in the third space where the PDS resides are actually doing the day-to-day work of the PDS. It is within this third space that they are free to create new norms and ideals for the PDS. It is in this third space that they can go beyond the goals and ideals of each individual partner.

Too often the P-12 school is referred to and labeled as the PDS, the PDS site or the PDS school. The reality is that the PDS is not the P-12 school alone, nor is it the university alone. The PDS exists in the third space. When thinking of a Venn diagram (Figure 1), we can picture

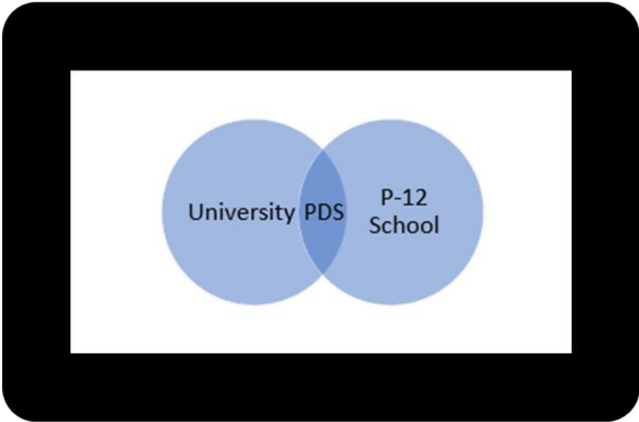


Figure 1.
Third space concept
in PDS

one circle representing the university and one circle representing the P-12 school (Cosenza et al., 2021).

Boundary
spanning roles

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Impact and implications of revised Essential 8 for PDS efforts

The National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE, 2010), the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP, 2013) the American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education (AACTE, 2018) have all published guidance documents emphasizing that the preparation of teachers is a coequal responsibility of university teacher preparation programs and P-12 schools (and districts). Though this call has been put forward over and over again, including state education agencies, the partnering of universities and P-12 schools is not an easy task and requires a great deal of work and dedication (Kansas Dept. of Education, 2020). The PDS model is best positioned to meet this call and Essential 8 provides relevant guidelines to improve the collaborative relationship.

Essential 8 puts at the forefront the importance of boundary spanning roles. These roles may not share common names or duties from institution to institution, but Essential 8 encourages the PDS stakeholders to be comfortable with both the P-12 and university environments. This requires flexibility, creativity and commitment to supporting these unique roles. Flexibility is needed because these roles do not fit neatly into established norms. Issues such as compensation, work schedule and supervision require the institutions to be flexible in developing a role that meets the needs of the PDS. Creativity is needed because these roles are distinctive and will need to span both institutions. This may require a special reporting structure or a combination of duties that are not typically integrated. Commitment is needed because these roles are key to the success of the program. Without commitment to the PDS work, developing and supporting boundary spanning roles cannot occur.

Soja (1996) put forward the notion that the third space is a hybrid place, which lies between first and second spaces. He describes the first space and second space as very different places that can often be in conflict. Essential 8 acknowledges that P-12 schools and universities are also very different places with different cultures, goals and ideals. This is what makes PDSs particularly challenging to create and sustain. If the concept of a third space is embraced, the place that is generated expands opportunities for those differences to be reconciled.

Deepening your learning about Essential 8

The development of boundary spanning roles is critical to the success and sustainability of PDSs. As you work to better understand Essential 8 within your partnership, we would like to offer three books that might be useful. The entire citations can be found in the References.

Three recent books have helpful information about boundary spanning roles and third space. The books are: (1) Buchana and Cosenza (2018) *Visions from Professional Development School Partners: Connecting Professional Development and Clinical Practice*, (2) Shoemaker, Cosenza, Kolpin, and Allen (2020), *A Pathway to PDS Partnership, Using the PDSEA Protocol* and (3) Garin and Burns (2020), *Clinically Based Teacher Education in Action: Cases from Professional Development Schools*.

Chapter 6 of Buchana and Cosenza's (2018) book is titled, *Dynamic Liaisons: Creating New Roles, Responsibilities, and Relationships*. This chapter discusses how new boundary spanning roles were developed over the course of time in a 15-year partnership and why these roles are important to the work of the PDS.

The book, *A Pathway to PDS Partnership, Using the PDSEA Protocol* (Shoemaker, Cosenza, Kolpin, & Allen, 2020), focuses on a research-based protocol that is designed to determine the compatibility of the partners prior to creating a PDS. This book embraces the idea that partnerships between different types of institutions are challenging. It posits the notion that thorough exploration and understanding of each partner is key to a successful

PDS. The book is a step-by-step guide, complete with resources and instruments, that takes the partners through a process that gathers data and promotes dialogue to gain a deeper understanding of each institution. In the end, an informed decision can be made about going forward (or not) with the partnership to create a collaborative third space where the work of the PDS takes place. On a side note, the graphic on the cover of this book symbolizes the third space in recognition of the importance of PDS work.

In [Garin and Burns \(2020\)](#), we discover a book that takes the reader through a journey of all the NAPDS 9 Essentials with examples of how they are implemented in different settings. Several chapters focus on Essential 8. They include, (1) *Critical, Project-Based Clinical Experiences: Formalizing the Roles of University and School-Based Teacher Educators*, (2) *A Developing Partnership that Spanned Boundaries* and (3) *Penn State Elementary PDS Partnership's Professional Development Associates: A Vehicle for Facilitating Cross-Institutional Work*.

Lastly, we recommend a recent article, *A Thriving Third Space: California Lutheran University PDS Network*, published last year in *PDS Partners*. This article highlights how the implementation of all of the NAPDS 9 Essentials contributes to a vibrant third space.

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About the authors

Michael Cosenza is a professor and chair of the Department of Learning and Teaching in the Graduate School of Education at California Lutheran University and also serves as Director of the PDS Residency Program. Michael Cosenza is the corresponding author and can be contacted at: mcosenza@callutheran.edu

Rebecca West Burns is the Bill Herrold Endowed Professor and Director of Clinical Practice and Educational Partnerships for the College of Education and Human Services at the University of North Florida and co-author of the new book, (Re)Designing Programs: A Vision for Equity-Centered, Clinically Based Teacher Education.

Bernard Badiali is an Emeritus Associate Professor of Education at Pennsylvania State University.

Cynthia Coler is an adjunct professor in the Graduate School at California Lutheran University, Thousand Oaks, California.

Krystal Goree serves as the Director of Professional Practice and School University Partnership Liaison in the School of Education at Baylor University.

Drew Polly is a professor in the Elementary Education program at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte.

Donnan Stoicovy is a retired educator with 45.5 years of experience in public and independent schools including her PDS work at State College Area School District and her recent work as the Head of School at State College Friends School.

Kristien Zenkov is a professor of Education at George Mason University and is co-author of the new book, *Fires in Our Lives: Advice for Teachers from Today's High School Students*.