Expanding on the Revised Essential 7: shared governance structures

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Abstract
Purpose – The study aims to review the Nine Essentials.
Design/methodology/approach – The authors worked with groups from different conferences to gather data.
Findings – A PDS (Professional Development School) is built upon shared, sustainable governance structures that promote collaboration, foster reflection and honor and value all participants’ voices.
Originality/value – Nine Essentials are foundational to PDS work.
Keywords Collaboration, Relationships, Partnership, Professional development
Paper type Practitioner paper

Introduction
This article provides more details about Essential 7, which focuses on shared governance structures. Table 1 provides a comparison between the original and revised Essential 7.
PDS partnerships include structures that not only guide the work of the partnership, but also enable collaboration, ongoing communication and reflection among all participants. These structures provide opportunities for shared decision-making to matters such as:

1. How the PDS identifies and meets its goals,
2. How the work of the PDS is assessed,
3. How the outcomes of the PDS will be used for continuous improvement and
4. How resources will be best utilized for the benefit of the relationship.

Participation in the PDS community should be mutually beneficial for all partners and participants (NAPDS, 2008).

Rationale and what’s new in the Revised Essential 7
During the multiple meetings, forums and work sessions while creating the Second Edition of the NAPDS Nine Essentials, discussions about the former, these discussions members when reviewing Essential Seven included requests to provide more clarity on the type of governance in partnerships created, how resources would be best utilized to benefit these partnerships and the importance of equity and shared ownership centered in this governance. This article shares a bit more about the revised in-depth Essential Seven, additions and the importance of a “Shared Governance” for partnerships to strive for when building their community to ensure all student learning.

The revisions to Essential Seven attempt to bring clarity to the type of “governance” that supports PDS growth, clearly states the importance of listening to everyone’s voice and encourages reflection to build upon sustainability. PDS partnerships do not have a universally prescribed format or plan about how the partners create them and how their agreements are arranged. Therefore, it is compulsory to share the importance of building a shared, sustainable governance for PDS partnership.

PDS members must promote collaboration and make collaborative work central to all partnership activities and decisions. It is a true component of the partnership. True collaboration in a learning community works to help establish sustainable governance and the “third space” that often is created when trust and honor have been established over time. Within this space, partners continue to work on shared and sustainable governance and new ideas to benefit all learners. The value to all students and how the voices of all participants are respected and honored support and sustain partnerships.

As members of any sustainable partnership, it is important to foster reflection and continually review the direction and the goals the partnership is achieving or not moving toward. Respect and value for each individual member of the team are critical in building a sustainable PDS partnership to have all members’ voices be heard. This part of Essential Seven reflects on Essential One and the significance of establishing equity and social justice in the beginning of your work as partners.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Original Essential 7</th>
<th>Revised Essential 7</th>
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<td>A structure that allows all participants a forum for ongoing governance, reflection, and collaboration. (NAPDS, 2008)</td>
<td>A PDS is built upon shared, sustainable governance structures that promote collaboration, foster reflection, and honor and value all participants’ voices</td>
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Key concepts
There are several “Key Concepts,” from the fourteen “Key Concepts” built into the Essential Seven foundation. The words “shared governance,” “collaboration” and “reflection” are included in the essential. The shared governance description in “The Nine Essentials, Second Edition” is fundamental to any partnership. “Partnerships must be strategically based on the recognition that no one can fully do the job alone” (NAPDS, 2008). PDS partnerships are constructed using “shared governance” and a commitment from both partners to establish a continual pattern of collaboration and dialogue focused on long-term sustainability (Coler & Cosenza, 2018). Developing shared governance takes time and continual work that is focused on transparent communications where participants are encouraged to share their thoughts and ideas without judgment.

It is impossible to have a shared governance without equity and social justice. Both are key concepts that were a part of the original document in a subtle manner. In the revised document, equity and social justice are explicit in that it is well established in Essential One and embedded in the essentials that follow. We asked ourselves, “How can a partnership be established if equity and social justice are not a part of the basic foundation of the partnership for respect, collaboration, and all voices to be heard in a shared governance?”

The second “Key Concept,” collaboration, requires respectful relationships, which follows the need to have equity and social justice at the forefront. Respectfulness is synonymous with honor, which is necessary if all voices are to be heard. As stated, PDSs cannot be created in silos and require shared ownership in mutually beneficial partnerships (Burns, Jacobs, Baker, & Donahue, 2016).

Collaboration is a foundation in teaching that teachers often model. Collaboration among grade levels, collaboration when working with parents and collaboration school-wide when working toward a common goal are just a few examples of how collaboration is a foundation for teachers. PDS partnerships are not different when being created. The university and school partnerships must be willing to collaborate with all members, listen to all member’s voices and honor and value their voices.

Part of the process of building and growing a sustainable partnership requires a time for reflection for all members. Reflection requires time, opportunity and support to engage in reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action (Lieberman & Miller, 1990; Zeichner & Liu, 2010). In building partnerships, members must be intentional in laying a foundation by modeling reflection. As a team member and as an individual of the team, the partnership must provide a protocol to take the time to reflect on the achievements, programs and direction that the partnership is moving. This provides an opportunity for all members to reflect and share their thoughts.

Possible impact of this revision on PDS work
Essential Seven clearly states the importance of building a PDS on shared and sustainable governance structures to foster a reciprocal partnership that enables all voices to be heard. This truly takes time and commitment from all members in the partnership to create trust, honor and value. Trust is often mentioned as one of the top five important traits individuals are looking for in leaders (Kouzes & Posner, 2012). PDS partnerships will have leaders that may vary and fluctuate to meet the needs of the time, and trust will be one of the critical traits other members will want in that leader. Partnerships allow teachers to become leaders in areas with varied skills and areas of education that have been available to them. Trust is key in establishing a sustainable governance structure for the partnership’s foundation to be solid.

When the partnership begins to recognize the mutual benefits of the expertise in the partnership, the conversations begin to be focused, rich and meaningful for all members.
PDSP

Teachers can share their ideas or ask questions in a safe environment, and university faculty can work with their teacher candidates to assist the P-12 teachers and provide the best practices for all learners. Reciprocal learning can take place and begin to guide the partnership in the areas they feel the need to be addressed to ensure learning is happening for all members of the partnership. Essential Seven should give you the direction needed for a sustainable PDS partnership.

Conclusion

It is difficult to provide broadly the possible impact that Essential Seven will have because of the uniqueness of each school-university partnership. Continuing to review what Essential Seven recommends is vital in the sustainability of all partnerships. Changes can take place over the years in both the school and university, including changes within the faculty, which means it is important to have an “essential seven” established. As new members join, it is clearly communicated to them by the other team members the significance of a PDS and how it is built upon shared, sustainable governance structures that promote collaboration, foster reflection and honor and value all participants’ voices. Those voices from school staff, university faculty, teacher candidates and students sustain partnerships.

References


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