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## The GOALS Model: Rural Teacher Preparation Institutions Meeting the Ideals of a PDS Through Educational Technology

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A primary goal of teacher preparation units is to develop skills that the teacher candidate can successfully apply as a novice teacher. As such, teacher preparation units have implemented a variety of teaching models to prepare quality PK-12 educators including professional development schools (PDS). PDSs have become a central focus in systemic reform in many United States postsecondary institutions (Clark, 1999; Levine, 1997; Love, Emerson, Shaw, & Leigh, 1996).

In order for postsecondary schools to effectively make systemic reform, professional educators must view PK-12 teachers as active learners, who are willing to question and make needed changes in teaching and school-wide

practices. Creating educational networks that facilitate communication and collaboration about ideas, knowledge, skills, and experiences help both the practicing PK-12 teachers and teacher candidates (Cobb, 2000; Goodlad, 1990; The Holmes Group, 1990; Poetter, 2001; Sandoval, 1996; Shelley & Washburn, 2000). These networks can best be achieved through partnerships using the PDS model. This model focuses on four key areas: (a) providing authentic supervised training and experience for teacher candidates and new teachers; (b) enhancing PK-12 student achievement including diverse student populations, (c) serving as a site for professional development of teachers, and (d) supporting research and inquiry about teaching and learning (Clark, 1999; The Holmes Group, 1990; Love et al., 1996).

Postsecondary institutions that have adopted the PDS model advocate its implementation, due, in part, to a strong research base of best practices (The Holmes Group, 1990). Teacher candidates who have been trained at postsecondary institutions that implement the PDS model exhibit better teaching skills and higher academic performances (National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education [NCATE], 2001). Although the benefits of a PDS model have been documented, there are limitations that may prohibit some universities and colleges from fully implementing that model. Abdal-Haqq (1991) identified four limitations which include (a) consumption of considerable resources, (b) lack of professional kudos among university and college faculty, (c) poor school culture, and (d) a paucity of quality sites where teacher candidates might be placed.

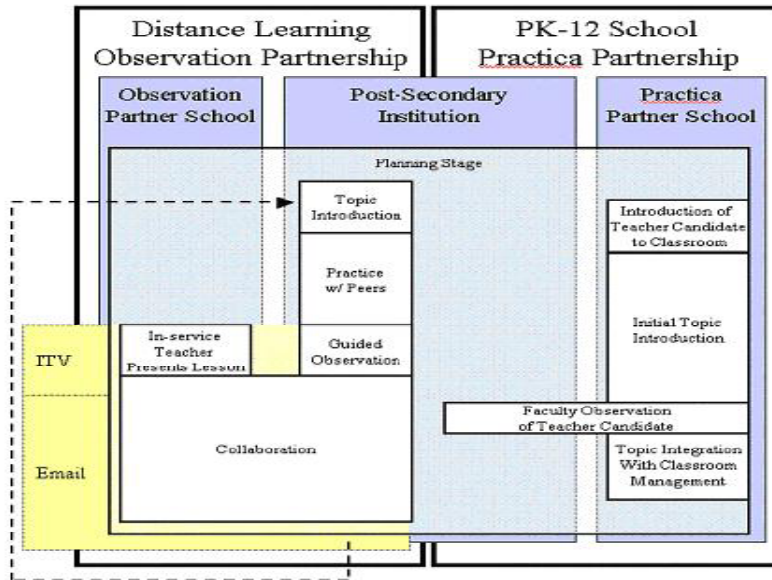
Many urban-based institutions have readily adopted the principles of the PDS model; however, rural-based schools may not be able to adopt the collaboration and connectivity level necessary to replicate effective PDS. The largest deterrent for rural-based schools to adopt the PDS model may be physical distance to PK-12 schools, which may raise the investment cost for postsecondary institutions to a prohibitive level (Clark, 1999). This problem requires that rural-based postsecondary institutions look toward educational technology alternatives that provide the same collaborative opportunities as a means to achieve connectivity with academic partners and development of quality coursework while maintaining integrity of programs (Albion & Gibson, 2000; Dunn, Gibson, Bohaty, Merritt, & Witherspoon, 1999; Gibson & Gibson, 1995; Gibson & King, 1997). More specifically, it is the belief of the authors that the utilization of distance-learning technologies, interactive television and e-mail may provide a viable solution to problems faced by rural-based schools. One such solution is suggested in the Guided Observation to Achieve Learning for Students (GOALS) model and subsequent pilot study.

### The GOALS Model

The GOALS model is designed for the teacher candidate's professional preparation prior to the student teaching semester. During this period of preparation, teacher candidates have completed general studies curriculum and are enrolled in methods coursework and field experiences. Typically teacher candidates are restricted to surrounding school districts to complete field experiences during this period of preparation to allow for postsecondary supervision. Therefore, at a rural postsecondary institution, field experiences may be largely homogenous.

One of the core features of the GOALS model is the significance of field experiences in providing opportunities to work with diverse populations. The GOALS model is designed to capitalize on field experiences and to initiate and reinforce the professional development of individual teacher candidates through observation and collaboration with diverse master teachers. Through access to master teachers, exhibiting a variety of techniques, and observation of diverse PK-12 students, teacher candidates are better equipped to develop techniques for working with diverse PK-12 students (Love et al., 1990).

To meet both the objectives of a PDS model and to improve the diversity of field experiences, the GOALS model uses two concurrent quasi-PDS partnerships: the distance-learning observation partnership and the PK-12 school practica partnership. Each partnership setting provides valuable assets necessary for fulfilling the ideals of the PDS model (Figure 1 GOALS model).



**Figure 1.** GOALS model

### The Distance-Learning Observation Partnership

To achieve the desired objectives of the GOALS model, distance-learning observation is paramount. In the GOALS model, this partnership is realized in several stages. Prior to embarking on the initial distance-learning observation partnership stage, agreements must be made between the postsecondary institution and participating PK-12 schools. The PK-12 schools selected should have an existing relationship with the postsecondary institution (Dolly & Oda, 1997). Additionally, both the postsecondary institution and participating PK-12 schools must have a commitment to improve teaching (Clark, 1999; Goodlad, 1990; The Holmes Group, 1990; Levine, 1997; NCATE, 2001; Sandoval, 1996).

The distance-learning observation partnership within the GOALS model consisted of four linear stages: (a) *topic introduction*, (b) *practice with peers*, (c) a *guided observation*, and (d) *collaboration*. These four stages

were repeated with each new topic. Within the *topic introduction stage*, teacher candidates were exposed to the theoretical basis for a specific topic by the postsecondary methods faculty. This stage consisted of a period where students had the opportunity to understand the theoretical underpinnings of a specific topic. The second stage of the GOALS model, *practice with peers*, gives students an opportunity to practice the topic by presenting lessons to their peers. These two initial stages of the GOALS model reflect current best practice in teacher education institutions.

The uniqueness of the GOALS model was exemplified in the *guided observation* and *collaboration* stages of the distance-learning observation partnership. The *guided observation stage* required that both the postsecondary institution and the PK-12 inservice teacher had access to an interactive television (ITV) system and that the two sites were connectivity compatible. Additionally, the ITV system had the capability for both one-way communication originating from the PK-12 school, and two-way communication between the postsecondary institution and the partner school.

Using the ITV system, the *guided observation* consisted of the teacher candidate observing an inservice PK-12 teacher teaching a selected topic using a strategic method of instruction. During the guided observation, the inservice PK-12 teachers presented complete lessons to their own PK-12 students. During the lesson, one-way ITV communication allowed teacher candidates and postsecondary faculty to observe instruction without distracting PK-12 students from a lesson. By observing in this manner, the teacher candidates remained physically outside of the PK-12 classroom and may, in fact, be less disruptive to PK-12 student learning.

During the ITV *guided observation*, the postsecondary faculty member engaged teacher candidates in learning by asking questions, guiding their observations, or leading them through the lesson plan or topic. For example, teacher candidates beginning their programs were guided through introductory components of a lesson plan. These guiding questions asked students to identify preplanning tasks, lesson openings, lesson objectives, and student assessment plans. More advanced teacher candidates ready for higher-order thinking skills were asked to analyze or compare components of the lesson. The guiding faculty member asked students to analyze the observed lesson for necessary adaptations to meet the needs of diverse learners, how technology may be incorporated to improve the lesson, or

analyzing the lesson to determine which state or learned society standards were met within the lesson.

Immediately following completion of the lesson within the *guided observation stage*, two-way communication was restored and the *collaboration stage* began. During the collaboration stage, teacher candidates, postsecondary faculty, and the inservice teacher discussed questions or discussion points posed by the teacher candidates. The questions teacher candidates asked were not restricted in any way. The questions or discussion points served to clarify some aspect of understanding for the teacher candidates or may serve to provide an opportunity for reflective thought by any participant of the collaboration stage: teacher candidate, postsecondary faculty, or inservice teacher.

Teacher candidates had the opportunity to continue the dialog begun during the *collaboration stage* through e-mail communication with the inservice teacher. This communication afforded teacher candidates and cooperating teachers to continue to dialog. Additionally these e-mail contacts served as a catalyst for teacher candidates to continue a mentoring relationship with inservice teachers, a relationship that could continue for as long as each found it mutually rewarding.

### The PK-12 School Practica Partnership

Within the PK-12 school practica partnership, the *planning stage* was entered a full semester prior to placement of teacher candidates in practica placements. Partner schools select which teacher candidates participate in practica experiences within their school districts and classrooms. The selection process was based upon the teacher candidate's ability to communicate their prior practica and youth-related experiences. In addition, teacher candidate selection is based upon the teacher candidates' availability to experience curriculum at the practica partnership school related to their teaching endorsement grade level(s) and cocurricular methods course content. For example, Elementary Education Endorsement students enrolled in Language Arts Methods may only be selected for elementary placements during a time the teacher candidate is available and that corresponds with the time when Language Arts will be taught at that partner school.

In addition to receiving information concerning the teacher candidate, cooperating teachers received information concerning the postsecondary institution and teacher candidate expectations. Expectations for teacher candidates within the experience may include a variety of evidence of the teacher candidate's ability to improve PK-12 student learning using each of the topics. Artifacts of the experience included digital portfolios, lesson plans, activity plans, videotapes of teaching sessions, and PK-12 student work. Once all participants understood the expectations, a one-on-one practica placement was coordinated based upon the PK-12 principals' recommendation. The practica placement continued for a few hours each week for one full semester.

The PK-12 practica school partnership was based largely upon the benefits of an individual teacher candidate working with one inservice teacher and their classroom. Since only one teacher candidate was assigned to a PK-12 classroom, the teacher candidate was afforded a greater opportunity to work with PK-12 students. Although this relationship was primarily a mentoring relationship, the postsecondary faculty member traveled to visit the PK-12 classroom at least once during the semester. During the visitation the teacher candidate was required to present a lesson to the PK-12 students.

#### **PILOTING THE GOALS MODEL IN ELEMENTARY/MIDDLE SCHOOL LANGUAGE ARTS METHODS**

A preservice language arts methods class was selected to serve as a pilot population ( $N=22$ ) for development of the GOALS Model. Prerequisites for the class assured that participants were either junior or senior status and were enrolled in the teacher education program majoring in either elementary education or middle grades education. Additionally, students enrolled in the language arts methods class were required to concurrently enroll for a 20-hour practicum in language arts at either an elementary or middle school.

The pilot project was designed in collaboration with two administrators, an elementary teacher, a middle grades teacher, and two postsecondary faculty. In the initial stage, the postsecondary faculty members contacted area elementary and middle grades administrators from school districts that had a strong existing relationship with the postsecondary institution to further nurture the collaborative nature of a PDS. Additionally, the participating

school districts possessed the required ITV facilities. These administrators identified elementary and middle grades teachers from their districts who were exemplary language arts instructors to participate in the project. The language arts faculty member shared the topics and tentative schedule for the coursework for the semester with the participating teachers. Each teacher selected topics that were part of their existing curriculum and with which they had demonstrated expertise. Dates and alternative dates were selected for the guided observations. Each observation was recorded on videotape for future reference.

While all observations were focused on the cooperating teacher, the postsecondary students viewed the classroom from two perspectives: the inservice teacher and elementary or middle grades students. Videotaped sessions were made of the inservice teacher, however, incidental identification of the elementary or middle grades students was a possibility. To ensure that the privacy rights of the elementary and middle grades students were not violated, participating schools obtained parental permission for taping sessions.

All observations were conducted in ITV settings: postsecondary distance-learning lab and the elementary or middle school ITV lab. At the beginning of each observation, teacher candidates observed an inservice teacher demonstrating a language arts strategy to his/her class. During that time, with a few low-tech alterations, the removal of outgoing video and audio signals from the postsecondary site made the GOALS observation unobtrusive. The only obstruction into the elementary or middle grades classroom was the television screens, which appeared black during the observation. During the observation, the faculty member guided student questions and verbal observations while the inservice teacher was instructing the class. This unobtrusive observation afforded the faculty and the teacher candidates to critique the lesson as it was being taught. The teacher candidates were encouraged to write questions on sticky notes for later reference during the collaboration stage. After the lesson was finished, the elementary or middle school students left the ITV lab and the audio and video were restored. This modification allowed the teacher candidates and faculty members to discuss lesson planning, teaching strategies, and classroom management with the inservice teacher.

### Faculty Observations of the GOALS Pilot Study

Evaluation of the GOALS pilot determined that the teacher education candidates have benefited from both the guided observations and the verbal interactions with the cooperating teachers. A review of the teacher candidates' journal entries provided evidence of both a transfer of teaching theory to practice, and, unexpectedly, this transfer also included classroom management. Journal entries were collected through weekly e-mail reflections and teacher candidate surveys. This evidence was supported by videotapes illustrating interaction among teacher candidates, cooperating teachers, and postsecondary faculty.

As reported in Table 1, teacher candidates indicated that observing a cooperating teacher demonstrating literacy strategies that were first introduced, demonstrated, and discussed at the postsecondary institutions allowed the teacher candidate to transfer theory to practice and resolve questions. In addition, teacher candidates determined how instructional strategies impacted student learning and the modifications that may be necessary for their instruction. As mentioned above, these journal entries were supported by evidence recorded on videotape.

An unexpected outcome in this pilot project was the attention teacher-candidates' directed at classroom management. As reported in Table 1, teacher candidates described classroom management techniques that redirected students' behavior and/or maintained students' ontask behavior. The classroom management techniques described within journal entries and documented through videotaped sessions were not presented within the methods classroom prior to the observations.

**Table 1**  
Teacher Candidates' Journal and Survey Responses

<b>Theory to Practice:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● I could see the strategies we discussed in class being taught by a classroom teacher.</li> <li>● It (the strategy) made more sense to me when I saw these strategies taught by the classroom teacher.</li> <li>● I'm curious how the teacher writes a lesson plan for an emergent literacy lesson. These lessons make more sense when I can watch the teacher teach these lessons, but I wonder how to plan for them.</li> <li>● I have read our textbook about the strategies she (the teacher) taught. It wasn't until I could watch her teach that it made sense to me. Is it all right to change the way the strategies are taught?</li> </ul>
<b>Classroom Management:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● I really enjoyed how she (the teacher) handles the class.</li> <li>● I liked how she (the teacher) used "Give me 5" and "L-I-S-T-E-N" to have them (the students) pay attention.</li> <li>● Mr. XXXX talked about how important it was to get students working at the beginning of the year. I had no idea how busy middle school teachers are in the spring.</li> <li>● The most important thing I learned was classroom management. I know it will be important for me to have kids listen and on-task.</li> </ul>

### LIMITATIONS AND CHALLENGES

The small number of teacher candidates ( $N=22$ ) enrolled in the language arts methods class presents a limitation. Although the small sample size increased flexibility in developing the working model, it provided limited evidence that using ITV improves the quality of teacher education field experiences. The researchers plan to gain additional data by expanding the model to all areas of teacher preparation within the college.

A significant challenge was moving the elementary or middle grades students from their classroom to the ITV lab. It is concluded that mobile

distance-learning carts with the same capabilities as the standard ITV lab would provide greater flexibility and afford greater authenticity for the observation. These carts would provide the mobility needed to observe the actual elementary or middle grades classroom and simply replace the televisions and VCRs located in most elementary and middle grades classrooms. An additional benefit of mobile carts would be the potential for faculty to make ITV visitations of teacher candidates during their practica experience. Funding to purchase mobile carts for participating schools is currently being sought.

## DISCUSSION

The results of the pilot project suggest that the educational technology tools in the GOALS model can be effective to meet the principles of a PDS model for rural teacher preparation institutions. Based on their experiences with the GOALS Model in the elementary language arts methods class, all participants concluded that the project should be expanded to other methods coursework within the teacher preparation program. The subsequent institutional commitment to expand the project to all content areas within the elementary education program affirmed the administrative support of the potential of the GOALS model. Finally, the high level of collaboration between PK-12 schools and postsecondary participants to improve the quality of teacher education preparation through the GOALS model validates the potential of this teacher preparation approach.

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