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The DELTA Initiative:

Reforming Pre-Service, Induction, and In-Service Professional Development

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Teacher professional development has a critical place in education reform. It is the method through which new skills and information are transferred to the teacher, and thus brought to the classroom to improve the educational experiences and achievement of students (Joyce & Showers, 1995).

For this reason, professional development is integral to the reforms being carried out in Los Angeles County through the Annenberg Challenge. It is included in the Learning Plans of all 28 "School Families" in the Los Angeles Annenberg Metropolitan Project (LAAMP). School Families—typically consisting of a high school, one or more feeder middle schools, and feeder elementary schools—each pursue a unique system of educational reform activities towards the end of increasing student achievement. Professional development in some form is a tool that all School Families will use to implement changes in instruction and curriculum.

Four LAAMP School Families (Francis Polytechnic, Lincoln, Long Beach Polytechnic, and Pasadena) are receiving additional funding from the Ford and Weingart foundations to participate in a more focused, integrated professional development system. Through their involvement in the DELTA (Design for Excellence Linking Teaching and Achievement) Initiative, these School Families and their university partners are working to reform and integrate teacher

professional development throughout the teacher career cycle, from pre-service training for beginning teachers (induction) to ongoing development for experienced teachers (in-service).

This issue of LACE Education Briefs is based on *Collaboration and Innovation: Professional Development in the LAAMP/DELTA School Families* (Griffin et al., 1999) which details the implementation of the DELTA Initiative in the four LAAMP School Families during the first two years of the reform process (1996-97 and 1997-98). The researchers collected data using large-scale surveys of teachers and administrators; in-depth interviews of K-12 teachers and administrators, university participants, Practitioner Team Leaders and DELTA governing board members; existing documents (e.g., program descriptions, in-service materials, self-assessment reports, logs of coaching activities); and achievement data.

This brief describes the goals and components of the DELTA Initiative and the innovations and "best practices" implemented by the four School Families. In the first two years of the Initiative, the School Families implemented activities at all three levels of professional development—pre-service, induction and in-service—with relatively more focus on the pre-service and induction reforms than on the in-service activities. The lessons drawn from their experiences should prove useful to all professional development reformers.

Professional Development Goals for LAAMP School Families

All School Families in the Los Angeles Annenberg Metropolitan Project must work within the "action principles" contained in the original Annenberg Challenge proposal. Action principles related to professional development include:

Linking professional development to stable learning communities by the creation of:

- incentives for teachers and principals to stay together over a sustained period so that kids receive continued and consistent support from a familiar group of adults;
- innovative professional development programs seeking to develop individual and team capacity to pursue higher levels of student achievement.

Creating time in schools and Families of Schools for teachers to engage in ongoing conversations about curriculum, pedagogy, standards, and students. Changing how teachers spend their time will:

- make new kinds of professional development possible;
- make it possible for professionals to observe and participate in each other's teaching;
- allow for technology training and use;
- enable new ways to support beginning teachers with experienced teacher coaches.

The DELTA Initiative

The DELTA Initiative is based on the premise that, in order for school reform to be successful, efforts must be focused on developing and maintaining a high-quality teaching staff. The DELTA approach to professional development is unique in that it:

- emphasizes the integration of three levels of professional development (pre-service, induction and in-service);
- focuses on innovative methods of teaching teachers and on real-world applications;
- links professional development activities to school goals;
- encourages collaboration between the K-12 and higher education systems in teacher education.

The goal of the DELTA Initiative is for all three levels of professional development—pre-service, induction and in-service—to be integrated in implementation and content. For aspiring teachers, DELTA is focused on redesigning teacher preparation programs at four participating California State University campuses (Cal State Dominguez Hills, Cal State Los Angeles, Cal State Long Beach, and Cal State Northridge). For beginning teachers, the Initiative contains a coaching component through which new teachers can receive one-on-one support from experienced teachers. The coaching programs were intended to primarily support new teachers coming from the reformed DELTA pre-service programs, but because of the high need, it was agreed that emergency credentialed teachers and other beginning teachers would also receive support from these programs. For experienced teachers, DELTA strives to provide innovative professional development activities relevant to their classroom practices. DELTA Initiative activities are all guided by the California Standards for the Teaching Profession (CSTP).

In all these activities, there is a focus on practical, field-based (relevant to the classroom) professional development. Enhanced fieldwork experience is incorporated in undergraduate, masters and certification programs to provide prospective teachers with time on school sites and in classrooms. Induction and in-service programs use innovative, hands-on activities to maximize the effectiveness of the training.

The DELTA Initiative activities are also marked by a focus on educating urban learners. The DELTA School Families are located in Long Beach, Pasadena, the San Fernando Valley, and near Downtown Los Angeles, all

large urban centers with diverse populations of students. The DELTA Initiative has sought to prepare teachers at all levels of professional development to meet the educational needs of urban students.

The content of professional development is linked to each School Family's curricular and instructional goals, as described in their Learning Plans. Topics are selected based on an assessment of teacher needs and interests and the priorities of the School Family. As a long-term goal, it is hoped that districts will realign the teacher salary-point credit structure so that the types of courses teachers could take to gain salary credits would be determined by the specific needs of the School Family (rather than teachers being able to accrue credits for taking any courses regardless of content).

In order to accomplish these professional development reforms, the DELTA Initiative encourages collaboration between K-12 and higher education representatives in the reform design. Collaboration is important to ensure that pre-service education reflects real classroom needs and offers appropriate fieldwork opportunities. Collaboration also is necessary to ensure integration of a teacher's education throughout his/her teaching career.

Several organizational structures facilitate collaboration among the various stakeholder groups involved in the process. A governing board—including foundation, university, teacher union and other representatives—oversees and provides ongoing feedback to the four School Families in their implementation of the Initiative. Each School Family has a steering committee, composed of a majority of K-12 teachers, which makes the final decisions about the design and implementation of the specific DELTA reforms for its Family. At each site, Practitioner Team Leaders (PTLs), including one full-time K-12 representative and at least two CSU faculty members who have half-time or full-time buy-out from their university duties manage the DELTA project. Each DELTA School Family also has its own Professional Development Center (PDC) located on a K-12 school campus. The professional development activities offered through DELTA are all coordinated through these PDCs, with many activities actually offered at the centers.

Implementing Pre-Service Reforms

The first two years of the DELTA Initiative were a time of pre-service program design and initial implementation. The four School Families have taken different

approaches to the pre-service design and reform process. For one, most of the pre-service efforts went into developing an alternative certification program at the partner university. Two others, with their partner universities, have focused on designing new undergraduate programs in education, in addition to revising existing masters and certification programs. At the fourth, the focus has been on revising existing university programs.

Despite the different approaches, all four School Families have made important inroads in implementing pre-service reforms by:

- involving a broad range of university faculty;
- establishing collaboration between K-12 and university representatives in the design and implementation;
- ensuring that the programs are field-based and applicable to the real-world classroom experiences of teachers.

Faculty Involvement

Because university faculty were not directly involved in the design or drafting of the original DELTA proposal, project administrators initially were concerned that there would be difficulties involving faculty in the implementation of the project. However, faculty involvement in pre-service program reform has been fairly high at all levels—from School Family organization to program planning, design and implementation. Faculty members have been involved as Practitioner Team Leaders, and have participated directly in design teams for the undergraduate degree in education or the education masters program, served in an advisory capacity, taught courses that have been redesigned as part of the DELTA project, and sat on the School Family steering committee. Some of their time is supported financially through DELTA, while other time is supported by each university or the California State University system, or volunteered by each faculty member.

Collaboration

In the implementation of the DELTA Initiative, the primary area for collaboration has been in pre-service reform. The field-based nature of these reforms made communication between the universities and K-12 sites necessary.

Collaboration in the four School Families occurred in the organization/planning stages by having faculty members involved as Practitioner Team Leaders or as steering committee members. Collaboration also

Sample Activities in the Implementation of the DELTA Initiative

During the first two years that the DELTA Initiative was being implemented, the four LAAMP School Families instituted a wide variety of approaches to reforming pre-service, induction and in-service professional development. For example:

Pre-Service

- New undergraduate programs in education
- Revision of masters program
- Revision of teacher certification programs
- Alternative certification program at university campus
- Joint teaching of teacher education classes by university faculty and K-12 teachers
- Expansion of fieldwork opportunities

Induction (Coaching)

- Structured observations by coach of beginning teachers' classrooms
- Informal observations of beginning teachers
- Beginning teachers' observations of coach's classroom
- Beginning teachers' observations of other classrooms
- Co-teaching
- Provision of curricular and other resource materials
- Regular formal meetings of coach and teacher
- Informal discussions

In-Service

- Assessment of teacher needs related to in-service professional development
- Alignment of in-services with curricular goals of the School Family
- Expansion of innovative forms of professional development, such as "Critical Friends Groups" (school-level work teams) and university faculty coaches
- Expansion of hands-on activities with practical applications, such as classroom demonstrations, coaching, etc.

occurred in the development and design of the DELTA programs at the universities, and in some instances at the implementation level in the joint teaching of pre-service education courses.

An initial period of "culture building" was needed for this collaboration to proceed effectively. The K-12 and university systems have their own distinct roles, rules, expectations, schedules and perceptions of one another, and considerable time was spent integrating these unique cultures.

Field-Based Programs

The four School Families identified field-based pre-service teacher training as an important component of the redesigned teacher education program. All the universities have made concerted efforts to incorporate more fieldwork into their classes by introducing fieldwork earlier in the programs and/or adding more time on school sites and in classrooms later in the programs. Many courses are actually taught at K-12 school sites. The focus on incorporating fieldwork from the beginning of the undergraduate program is unique.

Implementing Induction Reforms

One-on-one coaching programs designed to support beginning teachers in their first professional experiences through working with experienced teacher-coaches were a significant component of the professional development reforms in the four School Families. They were especially important because of a high influx of beginning teachers, including emergency credentialed teachers, resulting from a new statewide class size reduction program. Ensuring the quality of the new teaching staff was viewed as essential to improving the educational experiences of the students in their classrooms. Overall, both the beginning teachers and coaches interviewed reported high satisfaction with the coaching program and high support for its continuance.

Training/Support of Coaches

In the initial training of the coaches, the four School Families relied on some form of the training model used at the time in the state mentoring program. This training focused on issues such as how to observe beginning teachers, ways of providing feedback, and components of the teaching process to work on with beginning teachers. Most of the teachers who participated in the training found it informative and useful both to their work as coaches and in terms of their own classroom practices.

In addition, although there were few formal, structured coach support activities, most of the coaches reported a great deal of informal support and feedback. They were comfortable approaching Practitioner Team Leaders when any problems or questions arose, and also received support from other coaches at the school level about the coaching process and how to address specific problems of beginning teachers. Although few coaches interviewed had any suggestions for improving the program, some did recommend additional, ongoing training and less paperwork for coaches.

Structure of Coaching

Coaches used a wide variety of strategies to support beginning teachers. These included structured observations of beginning teachers' classrooms, informal observations of the beginning teachers, beginning teachers' observations of the coach's classroom, other classroom visits for the beginning teacher, co-teaching, and provision of curricular and other resource materials to the beginning teachers. Some coaches used all these activities on a regular basis; others primarily used the required classroom observations.

The amount of time spent on coaching activities also varied widely. Most coaches set up formal meeting times with their beginning teachers, whether once a week, twice a month or once a month. Beyond that, some checked in with their beginning teachers on a daily basis and planned weekly development activities, while others assumed that the beginning teachers would seek them out if any problems arose. For accountability purposes, coaches maintained and submitted logs of their coaching activities.

Content of Coaching

The issues addressed in the program varied among the coach/teacher pairs. They included such issues as teacher goal-setting, curriculum and instruction, classroom materials, student assessment, discipline and classroom management, observations and visitations, and paperwork/procedures.

The content areas cited by beginning teachers as being the most helpful included discipline/classroom management, curriculum/lesson planning, paperwork, and emotional support. Although curricular issues were important, many beginning teachers, particularly the emergency credentialed teachers, were more concerned with day-to-day "classroom survival" issues of managing the classroom, completing paperwork, etc. Almost all the beginning teachers interviewed could cite several specific ways in which coaching activities influenced their classroom practices, from adopting new curricular materials to changing classroom seating strategies.

Implementing In-Service Reforms

Unlike the pre-service and induction components of the DELTA Initiative, changes in in-service professional development required altering an existing system rather than designing or implementing entirely new programs. District, school and School Family in-service professional development activities often were in place at the beginning of DELTA.

During the first two years of the DELTA Initiative, all four School Families implemented some LAAMP-based professional development (Wohlstetter et al., 1999), but this did not include a high number of DELTA-specific activities. The School Families felt that the pre-service component and especially the coaching component were areas of greater need for change, and that their time and resources should be prioritized to focus on those areas. Nevertheless, the School Families have laid the groundwork for reforming the in-service program and have implemented a number of innovative practices, such as the use of Critical Friends Groups.

Alignment of Professional Development With Curricular Goals

One of the goals of the DELTA Initiative was to bring in-service activities in line with the unique curricular goals of each School Family. To a large extent, this alignment has begun in the four School Families.

Results from the LACE 1997 Teacher Survey found that, although there were variations across School Families, teachers reported spending the most time on traditional, specific curricular issues such as language/literacy or math. This is consistent with LAAMP's emphasis on language development, the high priority given to literacy reform in the state and the participating districts, and the focus of School Family Learning Plans. Student assessment was the second major focus of professional development, consistent with the push in many of the School Families to adopt an assessment system that will lend itself to reporting results, as stated in the LAAMP action principle pertaining to public accountability.

At the start of the DELTA program, all four School Families made efforts to assess teacher needs and interests regarding in-service professional development, and most teachers interviewed reported feeling that they had opportunities for input, both in terms of responding to professional development they attended and requesting new topics or formats.

Collaboration

There was evidence of collaboration between the K-12 and university participants in the planning and imple-

mentation of the DELTA-specific in-service activities. The opportunity for collaboration often was provided through the DELTA steering committees, which included both K-12 and university representatives. Furthermore, university faculty members sometimes led or co-led in-service activities, and one School Family linked each school with a university faculty coach.

Innovative In-Service Activities

At the beginning of the program, the four DELTA School Families were already spending more time on professional development practices that tend to be viewed as innovative in the field (e.g., online computer networks, coaching, professional development teams) than the other LAAMP School Families, which tended to use traditional forms of professional development such as whole-school in-service and workshops. Then, in 1997-98, the DELTA School Families attempted to expand the use of innovative professional development.

One type of innovation that was noted by participants as being particularly useful was the "Critical Friends Groups." Implemented in three of the DELTA School Families (with the fourth Family planning implementation in the upcoming year), these school-level teams met to deal with curricular and instructional issues deemed important at each school. Either the DELTA leadership or the general School Family leadership oversaw the groups and selected Critical Friends Groups coaches.

Another School Family is taking a unique approach to school-level professional development by linking each school with a faculty coach through the partner university. Each coach is matched to the unique needs and interests of the school and is involved in both the planning and implementation of professional development.

Most teachers surveyed felt that the professional development activities in which they participated had practical, classroom-based applications. Primary school teachers and beginning teachers reported the highest levels of satisfaction with the professional development activities.

Overall, teachers reported a preference for more "hands-on" activities such as those incorporating classroom demonstrations, coaching or other innovative practices. Although there appeared to be a growing availability of these types of activities, teachers clearly desired more.

Recommendations

The preceding findings suggest some tentative recommendations based on the experiences of the DELTA Families in the first two years of the Initiative. These

recommendations have broad applicability to schools, districts, and professional development reformers.

Pre-Service Reforms

Collaboration between K-12 and higher education is an essential tool in the design and implementation of teacher support and training. Districts would benefit from seeking or furthering relationships with universities on a partnership or consultant basis. Also, universities should support faculty involvement in these efforts by providing funding, time and appropriate recognition of faculty efforts in the performance review process.

Effective collaboration between K-12 and higher education requires concerted efforts to bring two very different cultures together—the university and K-12 systems. Participants in pre-service reform must be willing to commit the time necessary for "culture building" and to find common ground and compromise.

Pre-service teacher education should include fieldwork opportunities as early in the program as possible. In addition, to better support the field experience component of pre-service programs, university faculty might benefit from spending more time at the K-12 school sites observing and participating in the teaching process.

Induction Reforms

The one-on-one coaching model is a useful form of professional development that has demonstrated success with beginning teachers, especially those with little formal teacher education (e.g., emergency credentialed). A coaching program could be structured in a similar fashion to the DELTA coaching programs or done by a team of coaches as in another LAAMP School Family (Wohlstetter et al., 1999).

Considerable attention needs to be paid to the selection and assignment of coaches. The coaching program has a higher likelihood of success when coaches are selected through a rigorous screening process, perhaps involving formal classroom observations, and when K-12 and university partners collaborate in the selection. Then, to the extent possible, beginning teachers should be matched to coaches who teach the same subject and grade level in the same school. No coach should be given more than one beginning teacher who has very high support needs (e.g., emergency credentialed).

In addition to the initial training of coaches, ongoing support and learning activities should be provided. Follow-up activities might include meetings of coaches throughout the school, district or School Family, and regular supervision of the support provided by coaches

to beginning teachers. K-12 and university partners should collaborate in providing training to coaches.

School districts should support coaching programs by approving job descriptions for coaches, providing time for related activities, and providing adequate financial compensation for coaches.

In-Service Reforms

Increasing the connectedness and integration among the various professional development activities offered to teachers should be an important focus for schools and districts. In-services also should be linked to broader school and district goals for student achievement.

In-service activities should go beyond the traditional lecture-style or workshop format to incorporate strategies such as classroom observations, demonstration lessons, group problem solving, and other "hands-on" activities.

Professional development activities should be followed up with information and practice in order to reinforce the concepts and skills learned.

Professional development must address the needs of teachers at the various stages of their career cycle. In addition to covering basic information for beginning teachers, offerings should be aimed at providing new depth or breadth of information for teachers with advanced levels of training and experience.

Institutions of higher education should be viewed as a collaborative resource in the planning, design and implementation of in-service activities. The value of higher education goes beyond the use of universities as an outside provider of professional development.

Conclusion

The four LAAMP School Families participating in the DELTA Initiative have made important steps toward professional development reforms at the pre-service and induction levels and have begun to implement innovative practices at the in-service level as well. Pre-service teacher training programs have been designed through collaboration between K-12 and university representatives and include a focus on fieldwork in order to connect teacher education with real-life situations.

Coaching (induction) programs implemented by all four School Families provide individualized assistance to beginning teachers and have been highly successful in the eyes of participating teachers. Reforms of in-service programs began with efforts to assess teacher needs and interests and have incorporated many innovative, hands-on activities.

These experiences indicate the value of viewing teacher education as a continual process that extends throughout the teacher's career. As such, the responsibility for ensuring a high-quality teaching staff falls to no single institution; rather, both the university and K-12 education systems share responsibility and should work collaboratively to identify and meet the needs of teachers and their students.

To maximize the limited opportunities available to teach teachers, professional development should be reformed to focus on the content and types of activities that will have the greatest impact on teachers' knowledge and skills, and ultimately on student achievement.

Endnotes

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About LACE

The Los Angeles Compact on Evaluation brings together educators from the Center on Educational Governance in the Rossier School of Education at the University of Southern California and the Center for Research an Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing (CRESST) in the Graduate School of Education and Information Studies at the University of California, Los Angeles. LACE's mission is to assess school reform efforts and to make information accessible to a variety of groups of people around Los Angeles County. For more information, please call Barry Gribbons at (310) 794-9167 or visit www.usc.edu/dept/education/cegov/lace/lace.html on the web.

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