Chapter 8
The Professional Development School
A Building Block for Training Public School Faculty on New Technologies

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ABSTRACT
In his recent text (2011), Educational Leadership and Planning for Technology, Picciano noted that “an important ingredient for implementing change, improvement, and innovation in education is a knowledgeable and vibrant staff” (p. 215). However, there is a body of research (Goodson, 1991; Becker, 1994; U.S. Congress, 1995; Northrup & Little, 1996; Trotter, 1999; Cuban, 2001; Park & Staresina, 2004; Christensen, Horn, and Johnson, 2009; Hargreaves, Earl, & Schmidt, 2002), that clearly indicates that teachers are not making the best use of technology in classroom. To meet this challenge, the authors secured a professional development grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Education which provided an opportunity for them to hire a highly skilled workshop facilitator who conducted a full day workshop that covered smart board technologies, web quests, and synchroneyes software to a group of teachers from our local PDS school. In an earlier chapter, the authors shared information about the workshop. The primary focus of this chapter is to revisit our findings from the faculty training workshop and present additional information from the faculty perspective and the current relate literature.

INTRODUCTION
As one of the premier accrediting agencies in education, NCATE (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Educators) strongly endorses the Professional Development School as a major force in training new and practicing teachers. In fact, they (NCATE) have developed five standards or defining characteristics of a PDS school. By
definition, the professional development school is a partnership between a school district and a university for the primary purpose of improving student learning (Teitel, 2003). Therefore, the success of a PDS depends largely on aligning with this goal of improving student learning and not shifting the focus to ancillary goals of student teacher placement, inservicing faculty, providing teaching experiences for graduate education teachers, etc. Here at Robert Morris University, we had a few working partnerships with local school districts but never really pursued this more meaningful path toward the goal of improved student learning with any one of the school districts. However, recently we succeeded in providing an intense weekend training program using a grant opportunity with the PA Academy for the Profession of Teaching and Learning.

Since the purpose of this grant from the Department of Education was seed money for developing and expanding the model of the professional development school, we had the perfect opportunity to work with local faculty in the Moon Area School District which is the home of our university, Robert Morris University. With the support of the Moon Area School District administration, we devised a technology training program that closely aligned with the expressed technology needs of faculty as outlined by the Director of Curriculum in the district. The grant also provided the funding needed to hire an expert, a faculty stipend for attendees, and for any other operational costs from the training program. The district administration embraced the idea of establishing a closer tie with the university, especially in the area of working with teachers to better understand how to apply new strategies and technologies in the classroom such as web quests, smart boards, and sychroneseyes software. This would be for us the catalyst to build future workshops and develop future plans to work with the school district.

Further, by establishing this Professional Development School faculty training program with the Moon Area School District (MASD), this afforded the university greater opportunities to expand our pre-service student placement program and our community relationship which supports the community, national and global vision of Robert Morris University.

**RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

We formulated the following research questions based on our follow-up work on the impact of the grant workshop with Moon Teachers:

1. As a result of the University/Professional Development School partnership, has there been an increase in the number of student teachers placed in grades K-12 in the Moon Area School District?
2. Has the School of Education and Social Sciences offered subsequent technology training sessions with the Moon Area School District or other school districts?
3. Do the teachers who participated in the initial technology training workshop believe that the training impacted their content knowledge and pedagogy of technology-mediated instruction? In what ways?

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

With the increase in technology use and the increasing demand for teacher technology training in the public school system today, there is a definite need to better prepare teachers for this educational goal. Further, it is incumbent that school districts provide the most adaptable and most functional technological training that will have residual value in the classroom. As argued by Browne and Richie (1991); Harvey and Purnell (1995), and Stager (1995), effective staff development should have flexible content and opportunities. Teachers should see purpose and value in training. This is especially important since much of the research