Section 2

The PDS Difference

**Realizing the Democratic Ideal**

Illinois State University has a historic and enduring commitment to prepare teachers and other school personnel who will be responsive to the ethical and intellectual demands of a democratic society. To teach in a democracy is to consciously take up the challenge of improving the ethical and intellectual quality of our societal dialogue by including in it as many educated voices as possible.

The democratic ideal unites caring and knowing: The more voices we call into thoughtful dialogue, the truer our convictions and conclusions will be. This is a demonstrable necessity of a democratic society, and it is why Illinois State University graduates aspire to teach and serve everyone, including those on the margins, those who have been or are in danger of being excluded.

The democratic conception of education informs all aspects of teacher education at Illinois State University. Graduates ready to meet the challenges and rewards of serving students in a democratic society embody the ethical and intellectual aspects of teaching and learning.

**The ethical commitments are as follows**:

* Sensitivity toward the varieties of individual and cultural diversity
* Disposition and ability to collaborate effectively with others
* High regard for learning and seriousness of personal, professional, and public purpose
* Respect for learners of all ages, with special regard for children  
  and adolescents

**The intellectual commitments are as follows:**

* Wide general knowledge and deep knowledge of the content to be taught
* Knowledge and appreciation of the diversity among learners
* Understanding of the factors that affect learning and appropriate teaching strategies
* Interest in and an ability to seek out informational, technological, and collegial resources
* Contagious intellectual enthusiasm and courage to be creative

Of the challenges facing teachers and other school personnel in the 21st century, none is more pressing than the need for them to develop and maintain a strong sense of their ethical and intellectual commitments — a professional identity. Toward this end, Illinois State University prepares teachers and other school personnel who have a dynamic, reflective sense of themselves and their mission; through caring and knowing, they work to realize the democratic ideal.

**PDS Conceptual Framework**

The Professional Development School program is a year-long experience occurring in a public school that replaces the traditional 16-week student-teaching experience. Aspiring teachers live the life of a teacher all year, going to conferences, contributing to and developing lesson plans on a daily basis, attending institute days, and creating classroom teaching strategies. Student interns are immersed in the culture of their school and are seen as members of the faculty as they attend opening school year meetings and departmental sessions. Unlike traditional student teachers, PDS interns experience all facets of the school year from beginning to end. Learning how to start up a class with opening day activities and conclude the class at the end of the semester/year provides a holistic approach to the classroom. Interns are more readily involved in creating and teaching lessons at a more intense pace than the typical student teacher. They quickly assume the role as co-teacher assisting the mentor in preparing lessons and working with small groups of students. Unlike the traditional student teaching approach, interns readily evolve into para-professionals and are perceived as members of the faculty rather than student teachers. They acquire an enhanced

pedagogical perspective and are much better prepared to launch their teaching careers. A very rich working relationship between the intern and mentor naturally occurs as both parties collaborate to educate their students. PDS interns feel like a second-year teacher as a result of their rich and intense year-long experience.

The following are key differences between the traditional 16-week student teaching experience and the PDS approach:

* Interns take classes on site or at school district facilities and directly apply their knowledge in the classroom.
* The PDS program allows more time to get to know students, administrators and other teachers in the building.
* Interns have more “complete takeover” time in the classroom than other types of student teaching.
* Interns have already experienced a whole year of teaching by the time they graduate.
* PDS interns are better able to generate bonds and network with professional peers for many years down the road.
* Interns can see right away how what they have learned in their college classes works with their students in a laboratory setting.
* Interns get to know the school district and the community much better than in traditional student teaching.
* PDS interns have many more opportunities to practice and hone their teaching skills while developing a meaningful rapport with their students.
* Interns get to know the school district and the community much better than in traditional student teaching.

**The Goals of the PDS Initial Field Experience**

* Complete one semester clinical experience at PDS partner school. The clinical experience includes a semester-long variety of experiences, which may include observing classes, tutoring,

instructional support and assistance, co-teaching, teaching, attending faculty and other meetings.

* Apply the knowledge about adolescent learners to the effective delivery of instruction and classroom management.
* Organize and design effective lessons.
* Deliver instruction that meets the needs of all adolescent learners.
* Use effective classroom management methods that are based on positive interpersonal relations models, and set behavior standards and classroom procedures.
* Demonstrate an appreciation of the significance of literacy in instruction.
* Demonstrate knowledge and ability to use the central purposes for instruction as comprehensively outlined in the Illinois Learning Standards, Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortia (INTASC) Standards, subject area national standards, the Illinois Professional Teaching Standards, and Illinois State University’s conceptual framework: Realizing the Democratic Ideal.
* Continue with a second semester culminating experience that is an enhanced student teaching internship comparable to a first- year teaching experience.