

## Introduction

# The Equity Network

## The Contextual and Theoretical Frameworks for Urban Professional Development Schools

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### Context

Beginning in 1998, a group of relatively new faculty at California State University Sacramento's College of Education began discussions about innovations in teacher education that ultimately led to the creation of the Equity Network. The Equity Network aimed to provide outstanding teachers for low-income, racially, culturally, and linguistically diverse (LI/RCLD) pupils as well as learning environments that prepared these pupils to fully participate in our democratic society. This is our story—it is sure to resonate with the experience of others who daily face similar difficulties in making U.S. public schools achieve their promise. We hope our story will help inspire renewed national commitment to equity for those children left behind once again by our educational system.

Our pilot attempts to reform our own teacher education practice focused on closer collaboration among stakeholders in the K–16 system.<sup>1</sup> These laid the groundwork for establishing the Equity Network of professional development schools (PDSs) in 2001.<sup>2</sup> Ten elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school have been the consistent core set of Network PDSs, although one additional elementary school was added within the last three years and one high school dropped its membership, but was replaced by another. These schools are located in five districts within the greater metropolitan area of Sacramento: one large urban district, two large urban fringe/suburban districts, and two small urban fringe/suburban districts. Approximately 140 teachers participate to some degree in the Network, though the most active core group numbers about 60.

All of the schools serve predominantly LI/RCLD pupils, with especially high concentrations of these pupils in the elementary schools. Two teachers' associations (Sacramento City Teachers Association and San Juan Teachers Association) also participate in the Equity Network along with a community partner, Sacramento Area Congregations Together, an interfaith affiliate of the PICO National Network.<sup>3</sup>

The Equity Network was designed to address the concrete conditions faced by too many LI/RCLD children in our community. Chronic poverty, limited health/dental care, poor housing conditions, underresourced schools, and unsafe neighborhoods—intensified by racism and other forms of oppression—make the call for high standards a sham because the basic structures—inside and outside of classrooms—needed to reach such ambitious goals either have never been present or have recently been eroded for these pupils. The reality faced by pupils in the Equity Network parallels that faced by pupils in typical inner-city situations, but, in Sacramento, this is not always so apparent.

Take a drive through one of Sacramento's many tree-shaded neighborhoods or glistening new subdivisions, and images of the 1950s Cleaver family of television's *Leave it to Beaver* come readily to the imagination. Fathers and sons, uncles and nephews can be seen fishing for salmon and trout on the banks of the Sacramento and American rivers bounding the city. Scrapbooking sessions and Bunko games occupy many mother-daughter pairs. Residents from all corners of the city proudly display Sacramento Kings banners, some even rivaling the largest banner flapping from the city's highest radio control tower. Unmoved by the tastes of their highbrow San Francisco Bay Area neighbors to the west, readers of Sacramento's alternative weekly newspaper voted Red Lobster as the best seafood restaurant in town and Denny's as the best breakfast spot—bistros, sushi, and nouvelle cuisine are just beginning to get a foothold in Sacramento.

Actual data about demographics in the Sacramento Valley reveal the tension between the surface appearance of smalltown life and the underlying realities of economic and demographic shifts. In September 2002, *Time* identified Sacramento as the most racially integrated city in the United States, where "everyone is a minority. . . [But] racial tensions still exist." Sacramento is indeed rich with cultural diversity. Historic Chinese and Japanese communities with roots dating back to the 1840s gold rush and railroad-building era of coerced labor mix with new immigrants from Southeast Asia; Russian and Ukrainian enclaves establish new services that complement generations-old Mexican groceries and *panaderias*. Signs of revival can be seen in historically African American neighborhoods that were split apart by freeways and urban renewal's penchant for bulldozers. Enter almost any school in one of the metropolitan area's four large districts and you will

encounter pupils who speak a range of primary languages and bring a variety of home cultures to the classroom. In the central city district, there is no ethnic majority: whites, Latinos/Hispanics, African Americans, and Asians are almost equally represented among pupils. Their teachers, however, will not reflect this diversity since over 80% of them are white women, many of whom grew up in surrounding suburbs that share little in common with America's "most integrated city."

Sacramento also embodies the economic contrasts that define California. New subdivisions compete with commercial wine grape vineyards to replace the diverse agricultural tracts that made California the breadbasket of the nation and gave rise to César Chávez's historic organizing efforts. Median prices for new homes, fueled largely by Bay Area exiles' demand, have doubled in the last ten years. A median home in Sacramento costs over \$300,000<sup>4</sup> and the preponderantly civil service occupation base strains to keep up. Despite a veneer of prosperity, Sacramento sits at the northern end of the San Joaquin Valley, a region known historically for its agricultural productivity, but identified more recently for its chronic and widespread poverty and high rates of public assistance, earning it the dubious distinction of "the new Appalachia" (Doyle, 2005). Similarly, urban counterparts of this new Appalachia remain somewhat hidden beyond the tree-lined streets and quaint downtown Victorian homes that can obscure the inner-city realities that challenge this capital city of the country's largest state and the world's eighth largest economy. Countywide, 46% of public school pupils qualify for federally subsidized meals. In the central city district, 62% of pupils qualify for such assistance. Moreover, California still ranks near the bottom nationwide in per pupil funding, a fact that is glaringly apparent in Sacramento's central city schools that are characterized by overcrowded classrooms with few of the material, personnel, and technology resources common in suburban settings. Poverty and the problems associated with it are no strangers to Sacramento's children, and the tensions—racial, economic, linguistic, and cultural—easily threaten the promise that this highly integrated metropolitan area offers.

Sacramento's LI/RCLD communities are rich with cultural and linguistic resources that could be a boon to classrooms and schools. The challenge emerges from both the inability of educators to connect with these resources and the economic realities that shape the choices and outcomes of many immigrant and minority families who struggle with structural barriers and roadblocks to success. Both the promise and the challenge are molded in turn by the increasing emphasis on standardization and accountability, introduced first by the state in 1998 and intensified by the federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. In characteristic fashion, political and school leaders "celebrate diversity" with numerous proclamations, while pushing policies and practices that result in standardization and conformity to dominant norms.

The tension that results strains school-community relations, and LI/RCLD pupils continue to bear the brunt of the negative consequences from the full force of state and federal government policies. The educational programming for our state's most diverse pupils has become increasingly narrow.

### Standardization and Accountability versus Engaged Pedagogy

All except one of the districts connected to the Equity Network have adopted scripted curricula for language arts and mathematics. These are virtually the only subjects taught in these districts, though in the handful of schools also serving significant numbers of middle- to upper-middle-class pupils, the curricular picture looks more enriched. As an outcome of standardized testing and the resultant grading of schools, Equity Network PDSs teach language arts, by mandate, for 3.5 hours per day. One hour is devoted to math. Thirty minutes are reserved for English language development, a bare minimum necessity considering that over one-third of the pupils are English learners (i.e., technically, native speakers of a language other than English) and another quarter have nonstandard English as their home language. Once recess and lunches are accounted for, there is less than one hour of instructional time left in a typical day. In Equity Network schools, this hour may be used to “catch up” on one of the multiple required elements of the language arts curriculum or to squeeze in P.E., art, social studies, or science. The latter two subjects have essentially been dropped from the curriculum, though teachers have tried to “integrate” social studies and science content into appropriate themes in the language arts curriculum. Despite an absence of adopted curriculum, science is slowly reappearing in the schools only because it is now to be tested in the 5th grade.

In addition to an almost exclusive focus on language arts and math skills and content, many of our partner districts and schools emphasize the importance of “fidelity” to the curriculum, which is monitored by “coaches” who provide “instructional support” but also keep track of the accelerated pacing schedules for lesson delivery. “Fidelity” means that only the materials provided by the publisher are used in instruction; that stories in the publisher’s anthology are not swapped out (e.g., one could not substitute a story about Diego Rivera for one about Pablo Picasso, despite the grounded relevance of Rivera for our region); that instructional strategies besides those indicated in the teacher’s manual for a particular lesson not be used even when they have proven effective with one’s pupils (reader’s theater, e.g.); that the teacher “move on” to the next lesson on schedule even if pupils demonstrate misunderstandings about the current lesson’s content; and so on.

Strict “fidelity” is most carefully monitored in schools where accountability targets have not been reached, which includes most of the Equity Network schools. Already disadvantaged by many factors, these schools are put in a double bind by the federal Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) accountability structure due to their high proportions of English learner (EL) and low-income pupils (Kim & Sunderman, 2005). Repeated failures to meet AYP result in increased monitoring and decreased curricular options.<sup>5</sup> The policy theory is that if test scores do not improve after implementing a highly scripted curriculum, the cause cannot be tied to the curriculum since “research” has proven that its “proper implementation” results in score increases. Thus, the “cause” is ascribed to “poor-quality teaching.” Administrators and policymakers blame “resistant” teachers whom they view as either willfully undermining the curriculum program or lacking the competence to implement it appropriately.

From our vantage point of working with schools in the program improvement process (which in California operates largely on the notion of increased “fidelity” to the curriculum and larger, more sustained doses of that same curriculum), we note the following net outcomes: (a) a curriculum that is often frustrating and unengaging to teach; (b) teachers whose professional knowledge is increasingly undermined and devalued—first by administrators and “expert consultants” and eventually by the very teachers themselves who lose confidence due to repeated “failure” as evidenced by low test scores; (c) removal of the teacher from instructional decisions about the pupils she or he teaches; (d) intensified focus by teachers on the “causes” of low test scores, whether blaming pupil limitations and family deficits or, conversely, blaming themselves, rather than structural flaws in the system; (e) slow and uneven gains for pupil achievement; (f) growing discouragement among low-scoring pupils, particularly as they progress through the grades; and (g) teachers whose professional practice is increasingly narrowed as they have less and less opportunity and support to create curriculum and to teach subjects other than language arts and mathematics. This last point has particular implications for teacher preparation models that use field experiences; incredibly, many candidates will earn a credential having never observed an authentic social studies or science lesson taught with children in a classroom.

Establishing professional development schools—in which a central goal is to develop professional learning communities that deepen theoretical and practical knowledge and effectiveness—during these years of increasingly rigid accountability systems has meant weathering enormous tensions and challenges. Equity Network university faculty and K–12 teachers were committed to the professional development and action research components of the PDS model, but were seriously constrained in implementing the results of such efforts, given that “experts” and “coaches” were the only ones with authority to alter

the curriculum or schedule. We observed that pupils were more engaged during instructional activities that offered choice and pupil-relevant purpose, but we could generally only squeeze such lessons in for one hour a week at the most. We identified significant opportunities for our immigrant parents to become involved in school activities, but it required deviations from the “script,” which could not be managed in all of our PDSs.

We have not naively wished that accountability and standards would disappear, nor have we disdained the notion of transparency about the work of schools. However, the prevailing understanding of accountability and standards has imposed severe limits on our group’s capacity to respond to classroom conditions and make full use of its ongoing collaboration across institutional boundaries. Of course, the constraints have spawned ingenuity as well. We learned the state’s content standards better than we might have and now can use them to legitimize any number of pupil-centered, multicultural education projects! This has been an important first step in effectively countering the narrow, scripted curricula that dominate the schools. In addition to concrete alternatives for enriched and enhanced instructional projects, our partnerships afforded support to those teachers who *did* question the benefits of the accountability and standardization regimes but had no research-supported alternatives. These challenges also acted as a “reality check” for academics for whom the clampdown of accountability was initially a researchable policy question rather than a concrete school and community reality that confounded teaching and learning in myriad ways. For most, this “reality check” provided an opportunity to engage more deeply with the schools—for the benefit of the pupils in them, but also to advantage our candidates, who needed a sophisticated understanding of their professional context if they were to become the educational equity advocates we hoped they would. But, despite these benefits, the potential of our work has been seriously hampered by the policy context that established a system that neutralizes or negates the experiences, knowledge, and voices of key actors—notably teachers, pupils, and parents.

Of course, our situation was no different from that of any group attempting to question the dominant order or resist trends viewed as harmful to LI/RCLD pupils and the teaching/learning process. At times, we may have wished that we were establishing our PDSs during the heyday of California’s pupil-centered policy era (Chrispeels, 1997). Nevertheless, the consolidation of our partnerships at this particular time was significant and responsive to concrete conditions in our local community. The Equity Network afforded higher status for the teachers in LI/RCLD schools because of their collaborations with university faculty. University faculty became better informed about the constraints to teaching and learning imposed by external standards and accountability. With both groups working together, we were able to provide

more grounded and effective strategies for innovation than we might have if we had remained working separately and independently.

Our response to these specific sets of challenges in local schools became increasingly guided and informed by the principles of “engaged pedagogy” (Glass & Wong, 2003), a framework that drew from the critical pedagogy of Paulo Freire (1970), bell hooks (1994), and others, and from anthropological approaches to education (e.g., Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005). Our actions in classrooms and schools and at the university were also shaped by a sociopolitical critique of the U.S. educational system, informed by a range of intellectuals including Anyon (2005), Kozol (1991), Lipman (2004), Valenzuela (1999) and West (2000). Putting into practice the fruits of theories that were themselves grounded in particular struggles for more just and democratic schools, Equity Network educators understood that our projects were allied with a history being borne into the future through our labors.

Our vision of engaged pedagogy puts pupils—their lives, voices, perspectives, historical and cultural backgrounds, and emerging cultural formations—at the center of teaching and learning efforts. From this center, teachers who aspire to engaged pedagogy employ dialogical and praxis-oriented methods, pay close attention to pupils’ identity development, and tap the wealth of resources available in communities and from other adults who know these pupils. In addition, these teachers use critical reflection and continuous professional development to nurture their own self-actualization and professional growth. They ultimately use their engaged pedagogy to create classroom reform, based on curriculum and pedagogical innovation, whose success may lead to broader school reform. Finally, teachers practicing engaged pedagogy participate in a community of learners that includes the next generation of teachers as well as other educators from university and community settings.

### The Professional Development School (PDS) Model

We envisioned the practice of engaged pedagogy across contexts—K–6 classrooms, middle and high school classrooms, professional development efforts, and university classrooms. The PDS model was a logical approach, given the possibilities for comprehensive and systemic change that it offered, and the fact that a central target for change was our own teacher preparation programs and not just K–12 schools. PDSs emerged in the early 1990s as a promising model for transforming K–16 systems. As with any educational reform, the PDS effort builds on successful practices from earlier reforms, but adds enhancements and new orientations. Lab schools, partnership schools, service learning, and other efforts all influenced the conceptual development



of PDSs. At the same time, there are distinct elements of the PDS model that suggest a theory of action and a conceptualization of systemic change that is not present in these other reforms. The National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), through its published standards (2001), has been instrumental in advancing the thinking around PDSs and in guiding implementation of the model. The solid support of other organizations, notably the Holmes Partnership, has also strengthened the quality of work and the depth of the analysis of outcomes (Abdal-Haaq, 1998; Teitel, 2000).

A review of the literature on PDSs reveals agreement about four primary goals for PDSs (Darling-Hammond, 1994; Holmes Group, 1995; National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education, 2001). They include the following:

1. Enhance pupil learning.
2. Improve field experiences for candidates.
3. Engage K–16 educators in continuous and targeted professional development.
4. Use action research to inform teaching and learning in schools.

Advanced PDSs also tend to include participation from legislative/political bodies, community organizations, and teachers' associations.<sup>6</sup>

PDSs operate on a theory of action and change in which improvements to teaching occur along the learning-to-teach continuum, from pre-service subject matter and pedagogy fundamentals to advanced in-service professional development and learning. Such improvements require significant involvement from the K–16 teaching community. In the preparation phase of the teaching career, curricula and practica should be informed by the grounded expertise of classroom teachers and university instructors who actively participate in schools, by careful examination of the theoretical and empirical knowledge bases for the field, and through field experiences structured to introduce the novice to the complex world of the classroom, the school, and the community as well as the multilayered demands on the education professional in that complex world. These premises are not unique to PDSs; however, the conditions for addressing them make PDSs distinct.

In an ideal PDS setting, K–12 teachers work side-by-side with university instructors to develop the teacher preparation curriculum, from the content covered in coursework to the activities included in student teaching. University instructors *and* K–12 teachers provide instruction, guidance, and mentoring to candidates, thus creating a cohesive apprenticeship experience for these future teachers with explicit instruction on key values and



practices needed to be effective. Moreover, this kind of collaboration shows great promise for firmly rooting a dynamic theory–practice exchange that is often lacking in conventional teacher preparation approaches (Melnick & Zeichner, 1998; Thompson, Bakken, & Mau, 1998; Zeichner, Grant, Gay, Gillette, Valli, & Villegas, 1998).

The PDS also makes possible thoughtful, purposeful teacher professional development cycles that deepen educators' content and pedagogical knowledge, strengthen their leadership skills, and broaden their ability to analyze, diagnose, and intervene in classroom issues, and beyond—but do so in ways that are grounded and responsive to the particular teaching context and the teaching/learning issues emerging from it. The PDS creates conditions under which this professional development also occurs in a community of learners—from explicit efforts to reflect on new teaching knowledge generated by mentoring candidates, to structured professional exchanges among K–16 educators, to new instructional opportunities (university courses, conference presentations, in-services for other teachers) facilitated by the partnership.

The pre-service preparation and ongoing in-service learning and development are rooted in a conceptualization of teaching that challenges dominant discourses and historical practices in teacher development. In the PDS vision of teaching, one is developing a craft (Shulman, 2004) and to be successful there must be a dynamic nexus between formal knowledge, the knowledge resulting from reflection upon action (Freire, 1970), knowledge constructed with colleagues and peers (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001), and knowledge distilled from the context (Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005; Hammond, 2001). Capacity in and knowledge of the teaching craft are continually (re)constructed, individually and in a community, with inputs from pupils, the professional community (K–16 and beyond), research literature, and the broader school context.

Such a vision of teaching makes sense particularly in relation to the vision of student learning that is at the heart of a PDS. The investment in educator learning and capacity is made specifically in order to provide learning experiences that are content-rich and demand high-quality thinking and production from pupils (in our case LI/RCLD pupils). Such learning experiences accelerate skill development, but are often mismatched with school expectations for our population. At the same time, these powerful learning experiences will reflect and integrate the funds of knowledge (Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005) present in their communities but often ignored or disparaged in conventional schooling. This approach to pupil learning is also linked to a view of schooling as part of a larger struggle for social change and social justice. Rich learning experiences for LI/RCLD pupils coupled with high expectations for achievement can be one part of a larger push for equal opportunities and fair outcomes for these pupils. Until now, these dreams

have been largely unfulfilled. The vision of pupil learning in our PDSs sits squarely on building the capacity to reverse this cycle of inequality.

In the ideal format, a strong collaborative partnership that links schools, universities, teachers' associations, community groups, and political actors provides the support needed to achieve these visions of teaching and learning that are at the center of PDS work. When pulled together, the K–12 system and the university system have the human and intellectual resource base needed to address the most vexing educational issues of our time. The challenge of the PDS is to bring these institutions together, despite the many structural and cultural barriers in the way. Through the collaborative work on these common goals, the partners are all forced to rethink fundamental modes of operation and basic orientations.

For teachers, the PDS provides an opportunity to think deeply about the teaching profession and mold its future—but this requires a critique of its present condition and the role of in-service teachers in the profession's formation. The PDS encourages participating teachers to view themselves as model practitioners and as advocates for the profession and for public schools. In this process, K–12 teachers grapple with translating practice and experience into theories and models, and they expand and deepen their own professional practice and knowledge base in order to appropriately guide and inform candidates. For university educators, the PDS redefines the role of the professor from one who researches school improvement from a distance, or guides student teachers and graduate students in their practice, to one who engages directly in school improvement. It overhauls the skill set and knowledge base needed at the professoriate level, and requires considerable strategic thinking since this kind of work is typically not recognized in the promotion and tenure process at the university. In addition to reconstructing university and school roles, institutional structures, practices, and resources must be re-aligned to facilitate these collaborations (Glass & Wong, 2003).

The Equity Network members viewed the PDS model as a strategic means for embracing responsibility for both pupil learning and teacher preparation within the K–16 system (K–12 public schools and undergraduate and teacher preparation programs). We also saw it as a reasonable vehicle for producing strong structures to support engaged pedagogy in specific schools serving LI/RCLD communities in our region. While our account will reveal that we were not always successful in meeting all the standards of high-quality PDS work and engaged pedagogy, we were emboldened by a vision of K–16 collaboration in which the various partners could pool their collective resources to address the twin goals of improved pupil learning and enhanced teaching, with each partner institution contributing its distinctive expertise and prioritizing efforts in these areas based on local context and dynamics.

We attempted to work from premises of shared responsibility, collaboration across domains, and critical inquiry. Our projects aimed at enhancing the educational experiences and outcomes for LI/RCLD pupils in the partner schools and at more effectively training candidates to replicate this work as teachers. And, we understood that our own professional development as educators (both K–12 teachers and professors) was central to our efforts.

### The Equity Network: Structure and Operations

Because the Network crosses so many different jurisdictions and has operated for most of its existence primarily at the grassroots or school level, it has followed a more organic course of development and has not pursued a standardized agenda or required adherence to any particular program or curriculum for membership. Most of the PDS schools had been university training sites and were ready, at the time of the federal grant award, to focus and intensify that partnership. Though these organic evolutions undoubtedly made the establishment of PDSs easier, a different strategy might have produced better “reportable” outcomes. All of our PDSs have historically contended with huge test-score gaps among their various pupil subgroups. Many of them were part of the state or federal program improvement/accountability programs from the outset and continue in these programs today. However, our commitment to working in typical urban schools—where the problems seem intractable and the context is messy and complex—was shared across members of our faculty group who wanted to use the university and grant resources equitably and to focus support on the schools that were most in need and could benefit the most.

Thus, we strove to adhere to the principles of PDS work more than to conform to rigid pre-set implementation standards. We pursued the four PDS goals of improving pupil achievement, enhancing the student teacher field experience, engaging in continuous and targeted professional development, and using action research to inform our activities (Darling-Hammond, 1994; Holmes Group, 1995; NCATE, 2001). As we pursued these goals, we maintained a fifth principle: namely, to draw heavily on the expertise, experience, and knowledge of the local learning community—pupils, teachers, administrators, and community members—while purposefully integrating university actors (student teachers and instructors) into this learning community. As a result, each of our PDSs has evolved in a unique way that reflects its local context, and some of what is specifically done at one PDS may not be done at all at another. Though each PDS has distinct projects that involve student teachers, or candidates, and university instructors in activities to enhance pupil learning, all require additional and creative projects

from candidates related to understanding and interpreting their urban school context, and all have action research and other kinds of professional development activities that bring K–16 educators together to deepen and improve their professional practice.

Because of the resources of the U.S. Department of Education Teacher Quality Enhancement grant, we were able to offer each PDS a small discretionary budget to facilitate projects with pupils, candidates, and teachers. Each year, the PDS team at each site developed a request for funds, with specific requests tied to activities that furthered one or more PDS goal; however, all goals had to be addressed in the set of proposed activities. In addition, after the first two years, the PDSs were also required to implement evaluations to capture the effects and/or the outcomes of the proposed activities. These site-level assessments included such measures as pre/post tests of tutoring projects by candidates, analysis of English language development from lab reports based on small group science projects conducted by candidates, and pupil impressions of poetry days and other special curriculum projects. These data complement Networkwide data, including an annual survey and writing prompt for PDS teachers, and the disaggregation of College of Education graduate exit surveys into PDS and non-PDS responses. These various data sources and others inform the accounts in this book.

In addition to school-based projects, the Network conducted numerous activities that drew from all the PDSs: a cooperating teacher (CT) course in which CTs learn effective strategies for observing candidates and collecting evidence for assessments using standards-based tools (e.g., the California Standards for the Teaching Profession, CSTPs, for practicing teachers and the Teaching Performance Expectations, TPEs, for candidates); teacher research groups; lesson study teams; and various workshops and institutes (e.g., Grant Wiggins's Understanding by Design workshop (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005), science education and English/academic language development, etc.). The Equity Network is also a member of the Holmes Partnership, makes presentations at its annual conferences, and has had participants in the Leadership Development Institutes offered by the Holmes affiliate, the Urban Network to Improve Teacher Education (UNITE). Finally, Network educators have made presentations at such conferences as the Holmes Conference, NARST, SACNAS, AERA, and ICTR.<sup>7</sup>

The Equity Network Governance Council, which has representation from each PDS and district, two teachers' associations, Sacramento Area Congregations Together, and the university (faculty, departments, and college) used its fall meeting to review these requests for funds and determine levels of funding. A midyear progress report and a year-end report completed the basic documentation cycle, and provided a concrete record of activities at each PDS over the year. In the spring, the Governance Council met

again to review data generated by the PDS activities and to analyze key Networkwide indicators.

Each PDS has one or more assigned liaisons from the university, affectionately known as LENS faculty (LENS = Liaison for Equity Network Schools), who received release time from the College of Education to perform PDS work; altogether fifteen faculty members served as LENS faculty. It is significant to note that they came from two departments (Bilingual/Multicultural Education, and Teacher Education), which, prior to this effort, had not established any sustained, unified efforts. LENS faculty members participate in various ways at the PDSs, including teaching their teacher education program methods courses at the sites, integrating course activities with the site curriculum and projects, providing in-service professional development in their content area, facilitating the site steering committee, and so on. The LENS faculty remained relatively constant over the five years, with only two leaving (one to take an administrative position within the college and another to pursue campus-based activities). The LENS faculty meet monthly to share information and resources, provide professional and moral support, and to plan and strategize our work at the schools, in the districts and within the college. The result is a solid core of faculty members involved in an ongoing dialogue about partnerships, K-16 collaboration, school reform, urban schools, LI/RCLD pupils, and our innovative approach to teacher preparation.

More recently, faculty members from the Colleges of Education and Natural Sciences and Mathematics collaborated to offer science education professional development to Equity Network teachers.<sup>8</sup> We developed a summer institute with five major strands: content knowledge, effective lesson design (Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2001; Wiggins & McTighe, 2005), educational equity strategies in science (Lee & Fradd, 1998), English/academic language development strategies in science (Merino & Hammond, 2002), and an introduction to the lesson study process (Lewis, 2002; Lewis, Perry, & Hurd, 2004). Ongoing professional development is also provided through academic year lesson study teams facilitated by a university faculty member. Teams use the lesson study process to develop “research” lessons that deepen teachers’ content and pedagogical knowledge, develop their assessment repertoire and ability to analyze pupil work, and enhance the science learning of their pupils. Not only have we built a common body of work across the Network PDSs (currently two-thirds have lesson study teams and all but the high school site have sent teachers to the three summer institutes), but also we have integrated more content area university faculty into the life of the PDSs.

In Table 1, we note a variety of projects that will be more fully elaborated in subsequent chapters. In addition to describing them, we will analyze their impacts and relation to broader Network aims.

Table 1. Equity Network PDSs: Key Activities

| <i>School Name/Type</i>              | <i>Key Activities</i>  |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| Bidwell Elementary                   | Curriculum mornings jointly run by candidates and teachers, incorporating contemporary innovations in different content areas  |
| Bowling Green Elementary             | Site-based science methods course culminating in a community health fair addressing key health issues for LI/RCLD pupils and their families  |
| Florin Elementary                    | Lesson study teams and science education   |
| FruitRidge Elementary                | Lesson study teams   |
| Golden State Middle School           | Middle school certification program with two content blocks (science/math/technology and language arts/social studies/multicultural education) that were integrated into curriculum and service learning projects at the school                |
| Greer Elementary                     | Teacher capacity-building for candidate evaluation, including new candidate evaluation protocol and service learning projects for candidates, including before-school tutoring lab   |
| Howe Avenue Elementary               | Teacher expert program with monthly guest lectures on topics identified by candidates  |
| John Reith Elementary                | Cooperating teacher mentoring course, lesson study teams and community outreach programs   |
| Kingswood Elementary                 | Cycles of inquiry—discrete teacher research projects focused on pupil learning needs and on-site math methods course with a weekly one-on-one tutoring lab for methods application and improvements to pupil learning and candidates' practice |
| Language Academy (Elementary)        | A community study conducted by teachers, candidates, parents, and pupils, leading to community-based generative themes that guided dual immersion curriculum development   |
| New Technology High School           | Team teaching and curriculum development for project-based learning  |
| Westfield/Elkhorn Village Elementary | Teacher research groups and the implementation of findings, particularly related to English learners and their academic and social integration into the school community   |

Though it is tempting to represent the Equity Network as an orderly package that has systematically reached all of its lofty goals, this would not only be off the mark from a truth-value perspective, but it would minimize the important learning that has occurred due to oversights, mistakes, and missteps. Our shortcomings have been equally as important as our achievements in the difficult and deep learning that all Network members have benefited from as they have strengthened their commitment to using partnerships to improve the education and thus the life chances of LI/RCLD children in Sacramento.

### Sacramento State College of Education: Transforming Institutional and Professional Cultures

The creation of the Equity Network was significant for the College of Education in many ways. With the exception of special education and bilingual certification, the college as a whole and its largest department (Teacher Education) had not previously articulated a philosophy or set of priorities to provide overall programmatic focus. It was as if the college prepared the “average” teacher for “average” pupils; however, this approach was disconnected from the actual “average” reality in our local districts as well as the research emerging about the specific knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed for urban educational settings (Murrell, 2001; UNITE, 2004; Villegas & Lucas, 2002; Weiner, 1999; Wilson & Corbett, 2001). The Equity Network explicitly focused on settings serving LI/RCLD pupils exclusively, and did so in tight partnership with the urban schools and districts where these pupils were concentrated. In addition to prioritizing urban communities, the Network represented the first formal college structure that brought school/district personnel and university faculty members together for substantive deliberations around school and university programs and policies. Further, the Network crossed college and university borders, bringing faculty with long-established track records working in LI/RCLD settings together with those exploring nascent interests, and forging professional bonds across departments and colleges whose prior experience with successful collaborations was limited. In many ways, the borders separating arts and sciences colleges and departments from education departments were as difficult to cooperate across as those separating the university from the schools and communities.

Equity Network faculty members came primarily from the Teacher Education and Bilingual/Multicultural Education departments and entered the initial conversations about teacher preparation innovation from different vantage points. Several, having just finished doctoral programs in which inventive school-university partnerships already existed, were attracted by the



chance to recreate these ventures. Others were anxious to implement changes to a teacher preparation process that they viewed as fundamentally flawed. Still others had done advocacy work in LI/RCLD communities and saw the Network as a way to further this work from their position as a university faculty person. Each faculty member came to the Network with a different set of orientations and commitments. For some, the political and equity dimension of PDS work in LI/RCLD communities was paramount. For others, the primary draw was increased and improved collaboration and the opportunity to enhance K–12 instruction and student teaching experiences. For several who were committed to these general factors, the most compelling attraction was the sense of community offered by the cross-departmental grouping. These varying purposes were problematic at the outset, but less so as time went on.

One can also see in the variety of motivations and aims some reflections of race, gender, and status positions. Five of the fifteen LENS faculty were men; one was Latino and the rest white. Three of the ten women were women of color, a Latina, a Chinese-American, and a Filipina. Initially, most LENS faculty members' expertise was in social-cultural foundations and multicultural education, though gradually content experts joined in, with more science methods than language/literacy methods instructors. For the first three years, only three of the fifteen faculty members had earned tenure and promotion to the rank of associate professor; all have now earned tenure. Our own positions within the education system and within the racial and gender order of the dominant society impacted the ways in which we understood, interpreted, and acted on the issues central to the Equity Network's purpose as well as our capacity to connect with the various actors at the school site—pupils, teachers, administrators, and family/community members. The educational challenges in LI/RCLD communities are so persistent that one must be equally persistent in using a critical perspective to disentangle causes from effects, structures from anomalies, and broad trends from individual exceptions. Our collaborative work required all of us to interrogate carefully the myth of an educational meritocracy and come to understand how we achieved success in a system that sets many up for failure. For the white, monolingual faculty members, confronting the privileges accorded to middle-class, European culture in the norms and structures of schooling as well as in the transmitted knowledge base eventually deepened a critical consciousness that allowed for significant connections at the PDSs. For faculty of color, it was necessary to analyze the events and circumstances, often related to social class, that fueled our success, while so many of the friends we began school with experienced failure. Moreover, connecting to the richness of our own heritage required us to learn more about the role of advocate in these LI/RCLD communities. Each of us had to engage in honest and critical

reflection that involved uncovering knowledge, rejecting knowledge once thought to be valid, and constructing new knowledge; through this, we found our commitment to educational equity and democracy strengthened.

Disentangling issues of race, culture, language, and social class within an academic setting can be disquieting and unsettling (Jacobs, Cintrón, & Canton, 2002). But even as we tackled the complex issues of our own positionality, we had to interrogate some mainstream intellectual constructs. We discovered that our own formal education had closed off certain questions. For example, does the agricultural knowledge exhibited by immigrant communities with a history of farm labor “count” as “science”? Are the “fundamental” questions of mandated science curricula—how does wind work, what is matter—really “fundamental”? Are other questions like “how can science help us think about and address high rates of diabetes and heart disease in our community” equally, or even more, “fundamental”? Is math made more useful by designing problems related to balancing presumed future checkbooks, or by understanding what educational, social, economic, and political fairness and equality might look like in our community? If we read formal poetry *and* hip-hop lyrics, if we read classics of the canon *and* contemporary literature produced in LI/RCLD communities, wouldn’t pupils and teachers develop a more enriched understanding of language and its power as well as a new appreciation for the complexity of the human condition? As academics, we consistently grappled with such questions precisely because they were raised while developing meaningful, grounded PDS projects. Even though our state content standards privilege the scientific concepts of states of matter and properties of wind, our PDS pupils were much more likely to be engaged by inquiry into pollutants spread by wind throughout their communities and what they could do to keep their and their parents’ respiratory systems functioning well.

Questions of for what and in favor of whom knowledge is taught (Freire, 1970) overlaid issues of the power and privilege accorded to members of our LENS group due to race, gender, and language. Without a commitment to equity issues, none of us would have sought out the Equity Network in the first place, but our own experiences with and understandings of these complex issues in our own lives as well as in the realities of LI/RCLD communities were quite varied. Confronting such truths about privilege, power, oppression, and injustice can evoke shame, outrage, and denial, and sometimes induce a disempowering despair. Unless white academics, in particular, are willing to face honestly the systemic discrimination that privileged their own schooling histories, thereby troubling the myth of meritocracy that has no doubt shaped their own sense of achievement and self-worth, they may fall prey to the prevailing ideologically tinged claims about LI/RCLD children’s “underachievement” stemming from a range of individual, family, and cultural deficits. For

white men and women, the daily realities of racism and discrimination faced by people of color may move them to resistance and action, but it is more likely that they will simply experience these violent acts as titillating stories that produce momentary feelings of outrage and wonder. When committed whites begin to grasp the truth that racism constitutes a continual assault on people of color that erodes their identity and self-worth, they begin to understand that their own sense of worth is also at stake. Developing a commitment to an embodied engagement in the struggle against discrimination and oppression within the educational system requires ongoing and difficult work on the part of all faculty members, but in particularly disturbing ways for white faculty members given the dominant ideologies that permeate the schools serving LI/RCLD communities.

For faculty of color, the issues are somewhat different. Like our white colleagues, we must question the system that helped us achieve academic success, and try to understand the complex interplay of ideological frameworks that make race and ethnicity both a help and a hindrance. Often times, our class privilege provided the opening we needed to take advantage of educational opportunities, and we must also come to terms with how our class privilege as academics interferes with our relations with the LI/RCLD school communities, despite our racial, ethnic, and linguistic solidarity with them. As we fully (re)connect our own experiences with the struggles, successes, and systems that shaped us all, then we can more accurately and adequately represent the issues confronted in our PDSs. We must find ways to succeed in a context that often negates our knowledge and experiences, while not falling victim to ideological biases and assumptions that can seem to be conditions of our professional advancement.

These struggles are all the more significant as one realizes that they are ongoing, thrust to the fore repeatedly by unanticipated conversations, events, and actions that are inevitable in PDS work with LI/RCLD communities. As we grappled with these issues of positionality, we aligned our PDS efforts with our rooted experiences growing up in the working class, working with communities of color as activists and advocates, witnessing racial discrimination in the South and in Appalachia, and remembering our ancestors' stories woven by Spanish, Chinese, and Tagalog mixed with English. We learned to listen more carefully to the experiences and voices of the PDS teachers and pupils, connecting them to a new reading of the research literature. We came to depend on the honestly and thoughtfully shared rich backgrounds and knowledge of our faculty group. These practices helped to bring each of us closer to a form of engaged pedagogy that melded our own heightened consciousness and clarified commitments to the deep potential in our PDSs. Ultimately, our ongoing critical analysis and determination to connect with the PDSs' communities produced a clear and grounded vision that we

needed to create meaningful learning experiences amidst the pressure for standardization and accountability.

Our confrontation with the race and class limits of the education system had multiple fronts. Whether or not we had long-standing connections to local schools or were just beginning to forge such bonds, the Network faculty's commitment to collaborate fully with the schools paved a path directly from the university into the heart of Sacramento's LI/RCLD neighborhoods. LENS faculty members typically spent a minimum of one entire day per week at their sites. Their presence quickly enmeshed them in casual, everyday connections with teachers, pupils, and families. They also gained firsthand knowledge of school programs, resources, and processes that provided a counterpoint and contrast to their prior school experiences in more affluent and less diverse settings. LENS faculty members had to examine critically their own experiences and positionality in order to work effectively and develop meaningful projects in PDS relationships centered in communities struggling against poverty, racism, sexism, and linguisticism.

Windows opened into the lives of pupils in the PDSs by virtue of one LENS faculty member's roots in Appalachia, another's working-class childhood, and another's experience of living abroad and fumbling with a second language. These insights emerged through the supportive relationships of the LENS group and enabled new roles and skills to solidify. We became advocates, intermediaries, and shields in order to address the needs and interests of the LI/RCLD pupils and their teachers, both in the collaborative PDS work and in other arenas such as policymaking and program development. We used our positions of power—whether related to university status, race, gender, or language—to positively affect teaching and learning in LI/RCLD communities. A strength of our learning community was its ability to support deeper engagement in arenas where we felt most comfortable and competent, while also pushing us to revisit assumptions, stretch our understandings, and shape new strategies to resist forms of oppression and domination in schools. That the LENS faculty members consistently modeled the principles of engaged pedagogy is a testament to their embrace of the difficult work of developing a reflexive, critical consciousness.

Though Network faculty members generally worked in the PDSs and the LI/RCLD communities from a position of power and privilege, the reverse was true in the university setting. Only two of the LENS faculty members had tenure when the Equity Network was formed. During the initial years when they were annually reviewed in the formal university processes, department and college committees questioned both their role and its importance. Senior faculty members voiced concern about the overt commitment to “failing” LI/RCLD schools, and questioned whether they were appropriate places to invest faculty time or to prepare candidates. Some

expressed skepticism about spending so much time in one school and suggested it compared unfavorably with results obtained with traditional forms of professional service at multiple sites.

The LENS faculty members began to educate the college leadership and department colleagues about the nature of PDS work. As PDS projects solidified, clearer positive outcomes resulted that could be more readily “counted,” not only by university committees but also by school and district colleagues who were facing similar questions. All LENS faculty members eventually earned tenure and promotion. Moreover, it became accepted in the college—sometimes wholeheartedly, sometimes begrudgingly—that it was important for the college to prioritize LI/RCLD schools, concern itself with the teaching and learning experiences of LI/RCLD pupils, and create structures to involve LI/RCLD communities and educators in decision-making processes about our programs. These accomplishments are as much a tribute to the successes at our PDS sites as to our skill and courage in reshaping university structures and standards.

### Organization of the Book

This book chronicles our efforts and our learning as we established the Equity Network. The first section, “Toward Improving Urban Children’s Lives,” examines the scope and potential of PDS projects meant to impact the concrete conditions of children’s lives, with full and humble appreciation for the severe limitations of school-based work that seeks to affect broader social and economic conditions. We feature several exceptional projects that connect classroom and school reform with the social and economic struggles waged by LI/RCLD families and communities. Each chapter details how pupils gained a critical understanding of the conditions of their lives and the social, cultural, and historical forces that shape their communities and schools. Each project integrated community funds of knowledge with the mandated core curriculum, not merely as an exercise in learning, but as integral to efforts to make a concrete difference in pupils’ realities—whether in their classrooms, at school, or in their communities. Though this work is perpetually incomplete—poverty, oppression, and lack of opportunity seemingly have no limits—these projects nonetheless demonstrate that educators (pre-/in-service teachers, administrators, and university faculty), pupils, and families together can be a substantial force for educational equity and change. Chapter one, “Floating Boats and Solar Ovens,” and chapter two, “Science for Social Responsibility,” describe extraordinary PDS collaborations that resulted in transformed science curriculum for pupils and for candidates. In both cases, the science curriculum was reoriented toward community issues