



PDS INTERN GUIDE

Written by Lynne Sanders, PDA

2004

Introduction

Dear Interns,

This PDS Intern Guide was written to answer some of your questions and to provide helpful suggestions for how to have a successful year as an intern in the Penn State – State College Area School District Elementary PDS. Keep the Intern Guide as a reference and refer to it this year when you wonder what’s coming next or are curious about what you need to do to be effective in the classroom. At times, your mentor or PDA may go over parts of the Intern Guide with you or ask you to think about some of the specific teaching behaviors that you should include in your daily practice.

Over the years, I have had the opportunity to work as an elementary classroom teacher, reading and curriculum specialist, elementary principal and teacher educator. In each of these roles I have had the opportunity to observe and work with excellent elementary teachers and observe the qualities that make them exemplary. When preparing to write this intern guide, I reflected on the behaviors that “outstanding” teachers demonstrate in their day to day teaching and tried to weave them into the suggestions included for you.

As you begin your journey to become an elementary teacher, please remember that this is a life long learning process. You will want to be “outstanding” immediately, but that is an impossible goal. Truly great teachers have spent considerable time learning and refining their practice. As a PDS intern, you must be willing to try many strategies, take risks, make mistakes, listen to ideas from others, and give yourself time to learn by “doing”. You will have a terrific PDS family close by your side to guide you when you need help. We are here to help you be successful. Good luck in your journey.

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PDS Intern Guide

Welcome to the PDS

We want to welcome you to an exciting year in the Penn State – State College Area School District Elementary Professional Development School (PDS) partnership. This collaborative started as a “vision” of providing year long student teaching internships to Penn State undergraduate elementary education majors in professional development school sites. It has developed into a national award winning program. How did this happen? After much planning between university and school district personnel, the partnership started at Ferguson Twp. and Matternville Elementary schools with fourteen interns during the 1998-99 school year. The partnership evolved from the initial 14 interns in two schools to 62 interns in all 10 State College Area School District elementary schools in 2004-2005. During this short journey in time, the PDS has received much recognition, including two national awards for excellence in teacher education and partnership work. . This year you will have an opportunity to become part of the PDS experience and join a very special community of professionals committed to excellence in teaching and learning. Welcome to the PDS family!

What Does PDS Mean?

PDS stands for Professional Development School which means that your Penn State professors, PDA (Professional Development Associate), mentor teacher and the school staff are committed to working together on the **3E’s**:

Enhancing the educational experience of all children

Ensuring high quality induction of new teachers (YOU) into the teaching profession

Engaging in furthering professional growth as teachers and teacher educators

In a professional development school, every staff member is committed to children and to excellence in teaching and learning. Some teachers serve as mentor teachers to individual interns for an entire year, others invite you into a partner classroom where you might observe and do some teaching during the year, while other teachers in the school

might take courses offered by the PDS, work on planning teams or just enjoy getting to know you during the year.

What Are My Roles and Responsibilities as an Intern in the PDS?

As an intern, you are joining a school staff. We do not look at you as just a student. The term “intern” means that you are a beginning professional. You will be welcomed as a contributing and valued member of the school staff. Parents will see you as an intern teacher in the classroom. Children will look at you as one of their teachers. Your mentor teacher will welcome you as a colleague. Just like every other staff member, you will be expected to conduct yourself in a professional manner at all times. As a Penn State student, you also must complete all the required coursework. When you think about your roles and responsibilities this year, think **PDS**:

P = Professionalism: You are now moving from being a college student to becoming a professional in the community. An important first step is excellent **communication skills**. Focus on being a good listener and developing a good working relationship and open communication style with your mentor teacher and PDA. You need to be friendly and courteous with everyone in the school and reach out to those around you – staff, students and parents. You are part of a school family and you also represent Penn State students in the community. You must set high standards for yourself, even if you sometimes are around less than professional behavior. As an adult in the workplace, always think about **adult/teacher behavior**. You must dress appropriately, speak and behave in a way that doesn’t offend, be ethical and honest, use good judgment when interacting with adults and children and maintain the privacy of all information about children and their families. Children need to see you as the teacher/adult, not a big sister or brother or friend. Teachers need to see you as a dependable colleague. When a problem occurs or you’re not sure of how to respond to any situation, just ask your mentor teacher or PDA for advice. We’re all here to help you develop into a poised, competent and confident teacher.

D = Dedication: When we think about the interns who have preceded you in this program, the one quality that stands out among all of them is **commitment and dedication**. What does this mean? First, you must be committed to following the school district’s calendar year. In Appendix A you will find the intern attendance policy which is the same as the attendance policy for beginning teachers. You must come to school by 8 am each day, stay as long as needed to complete your work and have everything ready on time. Teachers need to see you as someone who can take the initiative and be counted on to do your share of whatever work needs to be done. And that includes helping with daily housekeeping tasks. At times you may prefer to stay up late or spend time with your friends instead of preparing for the next school day, but when making decisions about how to use your time, you must always put the children first. They will be your first priority this year. That’s what dedication and commitment is all about. If you think you need help with organization and time management so that you can honor all your course and classroom commitments, your mentor teacher and PDA will help you.

S = Success: Our goal for you, just like for every child in a classroom, is a **successful school year**. You will be very busy and involved and there will be a lot to fit into each day. You will need to use your time well to meet all the requirements and deadlines and to juggle all of your responsibilities. Talk with your family, friends and significant others. Explain the rigors of the program and ask for their support. They won't have as much of your time this year as they may like to have! You will need to make time to eat well, get enough sleep and exercise. We believe that you will be successful in the PDS if you believe in yourself, are open to help and suggestions from others, are committed to becoming an excellent teacher, use your time well and strive for quality in all you do. We hope that this is one of the most successful years in your life.

What are the Roles of the PDA and the Mentor Teacher?

Your **PDA** (Professional Development Associate) and **Mentor Teacher** (called mentor) will be two of your most trusted supporters and guides this year. Your PDA will advise and supervise you, provide suggestions and feedback as you plan instruction and work with children, and help you learn many of the strategies and techniques that will enable you to become a successful teacher. Your mentor will invite you to spend the year as a co-teacher. In the early months (August through December), your mentor will usually take the lead in planning and delivering instruction while you will help carry out planned lessons and work with individual students or small groups. At times you will plan and implement your own lessons as required for your methods courses. In the next phase (January through March), you and your mentor will move to co-planning and co-teaching as well as planning your inquiry project. Your mentor will be the coach as you become a key player in planning, teaching and reaching instructional goals. In the final phase (approximately April through June), you will take the lead, when appropriate, in planning and teaching and will be supported by your mentor who will provide guidance, serve as a co-teacher under your lead and work with individual students or small groups. You will complete an inquiry project and present your findings at a spring conference during this phase. As you can see, in each of these three phases, your role and the role of your mentor changes. Throughout this process, you and your mentor and PDA will work together to ensure that the year long internship is designed to meet your specific learning needs as well as the needs of the children.

What Will My Year Look Like as a Professional Development School Intern?

August and September

Jump Start -Your year will start with a week of Jump Start which is your introduction to the PDS. You will meet the other interns, be introduced to your methods instructors and PDA's, start your coursework and begin to build a sense of community with your peers.

In-service Days – The true excitement of the year will begin as you help your mentor teacher prepare the classroom for the new school year, attend staff meetings and beginning of the year school functions, become acquainted with the school and staff, and eagerly await the first day of school. During these days, try to find out where everyone

and everything is located in the school, introduce yourself to other teachers, the principal, the secretaries and custodian and learn as many people's names and roles as possible.

September - This is the month you have been waiting for! You will meet your students, begin to work with your mentor teacher and become comfortable in your home away from home – your classroom. The first advice is to take care of your health. Start taking vitamins and wash your hands often. In the classroom, make sure you are a careful listener and observer as you learn as much as you can about each of the children in your classroom. As you observe your mentor teacher and help in the classroom, pay attention to everything your mentor says and does. Be especially observant of daily schedules, classroom routines and expectations, classroom management strategies and ways in which your mentor begins to build a community of learners who work and live well together. Try to become familiar with instructional materials and strategies. Ask often what you can do to help. When your mentor is teaching, be involved with the children. You will be assigned a partner classroom at a different grade level, be given some time to do observations in other classrooms and will begin to work with children under your mentor's guidance. You also will become very involved in your four methods courses. During the months of September – December, you will spend one full day each week and one day after school in methods classes and four full days each week in the classroom.

October

An important focus area this month is developing and practicing classroom management skills. You will be assigned specific management tasks through the classroom learning environments class and will get feedback from your PDA and mentor as you practice them. Remember that you want the children to see you as a teacher, not a big brother or sister or friend. You need to set the same expectations as your mentor and be clear and consistent in your language. You will assist your mentor with daily lessons and activities, do some large group activities such as read aloud and opening, begin the case study of an individual student and help your mentor prepare for parent-student-teacher goal setting conferences. Also, you will have your first goal setting conference with your PDA and mentor during late October or early November and complete Version 1 of your e-Portfolio. The workload in methods courses will increase as the month progresses. By the end of October, you should be developing a comprehensive understanding of what a day in the life of a teacher involves and begin to make real connections between theory and practice as you plan and teach your first lessons independently.

November

This will be your busiest month with methods courses. You will be designing lesson plans and implementing lessons for math, science and social studies. When possible, these assignments will mesh with classroom instruction. All lessons that you plan and teach must be developmentally appropriate for the children in your classroom. Your PDA or mentor will give you written and verbal feedback on many of these lessons. As you begin to teach your own lessons, you will realize the importance of management as you will need to manage materials, activities, children and time. You will learn that an essential key to success as an elementary classroom teacher is being well organized, not procrastinating when deadlines are near, and being able to multi-task (focusing on more

than one thing at a time). Clear communication with your mentor is a must as everything you teach must be approved by your mentor at least 24 hours in advance. You will also have other methods course projects due so you will be extremely busy and will not have much free time. As the workload and stress increase and there never seems to be enough time, some interns stop exercising, sleep too little and eat poorly. Don't fall into this trap! Take your vitamins and stay positive and focused. You are truly experiencing the "work" of a teacher this month.

December

This is a month for reflection on your growth as a teacher. You will continue to plan and teach specific lessons, take on additional responsibilities in the classroom, have your first experience with report cards, finish all course requirements for methods courses, develop your e-Portfolio and have your final assessment conference with your PDA and mentor. You will receive a Pass or Fail grade for the 3 credit classroom practicum and letter grades for each of the four methods courses (12 credits). Can you believe that half the year is over already! By the time you complete this semester, you should have a fairly good idea if teaching is the profession for you and if this type of school district and curriculum is a good match for your learning style. Sometimes we change intern assignments at the end of the first semester based on specific learning needs. Before you leave for a well deserved winter break, you and your PDA and mentor will discuss your progress and comfort level in this program, develop goals for the student teaching semester and a written plan for how you will be involved in your partner classroom during the second semester. You may also begin to discuss possible wonderings for your inquiry project which will be a major focus next semester.

January – March

These three months comprise the second phase of the internship and the first half of your formal student teaching semester. You and your mentor will co-plan and co-teach during the winter months. Your PDA and mentor will carefully monitor your planning and teaching and provide very specific feedback. You and your mentor will share your thinking about curriculum, instruction and the needs of individual students. During these months, you also will begin your inquiry project, develop a resume and add evidence to your e-Portfolio. There are many skills that you will need to display in order to be successful as you increase your responsibilities in the classroom, including:

Communication – Continue to work on communicating clearly and honestly with everyone: mentor, PDA, staff, students and parents.

Organization – You have to be able to do several things at one time, and you can't forget what needs to be done or what you promise. Keep "To Do" lists, careful notes and a detailed weekly/monthly planner so you can look ahead and be prepared. You are sharing space in the classroom with your mentor and the students. You will need a designated space where you always keep your materials. If you don't have a personal space (desk or shelf area), talk to your mentor and PDA. You need to be neat, have everything you need ready to go before a lesson begins, clean up and return the materials

that you use promptly, and teach children to share the responsibility of keeping the classroom in order. When you leave at the end of the day, the custodian should not have to pick up after you or the students.

Time – Learn to use your time well and keep a detailed calendar of when things are due. You can't procrastinate and wait until the last minute or until you have a large block of time to get things done. Neither can you wait until late at night to prepare as you will be too tired the next day to be alert in the classroom. You have to learn to make every minute count and prepare ahead of time.

Management – Practice tough love. Be caring, yet firm. Children need to see you as the adult. Children need to know your expectations and you must be consistent in your follow through. If a child is having problems, the child needs to know that you care but that you do not approve of the behavior. Your voice and body language must match your message. You must have “withitness” – eyes in the back of your head. Always be sweeping the room with your eyes to make sure all children are on task and appropriate. When you have your own classroom, you will probably be alone, so you must learn to be aware of every child all the time. Work on building and maintaining a sense of belonging and classroom community every day. Talk with your mentor if you would like to try new or different management strategies.

Preplanning – You have to plan every lesson in advance. You must do the research and the reading needed BEFORE you plan a lesson.

Planning – Every lesson needs to be carefully planned in detail, and the written plan for each lesson needs to be shown to your mentor for approval at least 24 hours before you teach the lesson. Consider the best way to organize students for instruction (large group, small group, partners, etc), and the physical space needed. Think about how materials will be passed out and collected and how much time is needed. There's a lot to think about when planning. Whenever possible, stay after school to prepare materials and gather everything you need for the next day.

Teaching – Everything must be ready ahead of time. While teaching, constantly monitor the students to determine if they are with you and if they understand. Think about how to introduce the lesson, the steps of the lesson, and how to bring it to closure. Also, think about pacing, questioning, refining what you're doing as you teach, holding attention and being enthusiastic. You should be over prepared so that you can teach with confidence and competence.

Assessment – Begin to think about ways that you can assess your students' learning. Try keeping anecdotal records, checklists and grading student work. Your mentor will help you as you begin to use assessment to guide instruction.

Reflection and Inquiry – As you do more planning and teaching, you will learn to carefully reflect on your practice and develop an inquiry stance to teaching. You will be

involved in a course on teacher inquiry and will choose one of your “wonderings” to explore in depth this semester. Your mentor and PDA will guide you as you choose the topic/wondering for your inquiry project.

In March, you will have a midterm conference with your PDA and mentor. At this time, your progress will be assessed in each of four domains (planning and preparing for student learning; teaching; inquiring and analyzing learning and teaching; and professionalism). We will determine the timeline for when you will assume full time teaching responsibilities, review the progress on your e-Portfolio and finalize plans for your inquiry project.

April – June

During the last three months of the internship, you will enter Phase Three and begin full time teaching responsibilities. This is the period of time when you truly become the teacher. The length of time you will be full time teaching will vary depending on your individual situation. Your mentor and PDA will work with you to develop your plan. Your mentor will be available to give you guidance and support and to work with individual students or small groups, but you will be in charge of the majority of the planning and teaching during this time. Besides teaching, there will be other requirements during this final phase of the internship. You will complete your inquiry project and present your findings at the annual spring conference and finalize your e-Portfolio. In early May, you will complete your e-Portfolio, we will have a final assessment conference and you will receive your final grades. Although you will graduate in mid - May, your teaching responsibilities and commitment to the PDS internship will continue. Your mentor, PDA and you will decide together what responsibilities you will have during the last few weeks of the school year. Also, you will need to find time in your busy life to complete job applications and think about where you want to live and teach. Although all of these layers may feel stressful, they are just part of adult life. In order to be successful during the spring months, you must focus on the following:

You should now have a good sense of the “**whole**” and see everything that needs to happen and be done in a day.

Do a **Block Plan** for the week that a substitute could follow. For every subject, you need to have planned for the entire week and included objectives, steps and materials. You may need to adapt your plan during a lesson or from day to day based on student responses and schedule changes. All plans need to be discussed with and approved by your mentor in advance.

As a **Full Day Teacher**, you need to be in charge of many things besides direct teaching: opening (attendance, excuse slips, notes, lunch count, etc); communicating with specialists; taking students to specials, lunch and recess; dismissal; keeping records; grading or providing comments on completed work; attending school/team meetings; interacting with other teachers and staff members about schedules, team plans, etc. You will do everything you’d need to do if you were the teacher and by yourself.

Classroom Management is a #1 priority. You are in charge of making sure all students are productively involved in purposeful activities from arrival to dismissal. Students need to see you as “teacher”, and it is very important that you are fair, clear and consistent in your behavioral expectations. You need a sense of “withitness” – knowing what every child is doing at all times, and you need to anticipate off-task or noncompliant behavior and redirect a child before a problem occurs.

Communication with your mentor is to be initiated by you each day. You need to explain everything you are planning/doing and ask for advice/feedback. Always ask any question you may have even if you think you should know the answer. Your mentor is available to guide and help you.

During each day, you need to **Be Involved** with the students at all times. Any preparation or recording must be done before or after school, during specials or on weekends. You should be ready for the next day when you leave the school in late afternoon. Of course, some last minute preparations are inevitable but they should never interrupt instruction. Your advanced preparation and organization of materials are keys to being successful.

Your **Mentor’s Role** is to help you plan in the areas in which you need help, to assist with teaching as agreed by the two of you and to provide you with ongoing feedback. This is a true collaborative and teaming experience.

Be Creative – Include innovative ideas, activities, and materials. This is your opportunity to show us creativity in planning, preparation of materials and teaching. An important goal is to capture the attention and interest of students and make instruction and learning interesting and stimulating for every child.

Be Purposeful – It is essential that instruction meets curriculum objectives and standards, is developmentally appropriate and helps students make connections in their learning. Be mindful that the ultimate goal is excellence and quality in all teaching.

Differentiate Instruction to meet students’ needs. Remember, you are not teaching a “class” of students. You are teaching every individual student in the class. There is a big difference!

Assess Student Learning - This will be a priority when you are teaching full time. Try many ways to assess student learning and progress such as: rubrics, tests, portfolios, projects, written responses, student interviews, etc.

Adopt An Inquiry Stance – Develop “wonderings” and continually ask yourself questions about your practice and student learning. Collect information systematically to answer these questions. Take a few minutes each evening to reflect on the day. Try to see problems as opportunities for growth. Enter into discussions about teaching practices with peers and colleagues.

Use Time Well – Plan instructional time carefully. Watch the clock while teaching. Pay attention to transitions. Make sure your day flows smoothly from one activity to the next.

Practice Good Housekeeping – It is important to create an organized, welcoming and attractive classroom learning environment. Display student work, make certain that students take care of classroom materials and put everything away after an activity. Clean up the room together at the end of the day so that the custodian’s job isn’t increased because of you or your students. Make sure that students have time to gather homework assignments, school correspondence or any work to be shared with families before leaving school. You must provide a few minutes at the end of the day for all this to happen! Also, remember to return all borrowed school materials on time.

Enjoy – Even though you will work harder than you ever thought possible and you will never feel “done”, make sure you enjoy the students and every moment you spend in the classroom. This is the life work you have chosen and you should feel a sense of satisfaction and accomplishment at the end of each day. Your enthusiasm and positive attitude sets the tone of the classroom. You need to laugh at yourself once in a while and realize that none of us is perfect. Making mistakes is part of learning! Believe in yourself, do your best, listen to others and you will make progress every day on your journey to becoming an excellent teacher.

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Appendix A

Intern Attendance Policy

What is the Intern Attendance Policy?

Interns will follow the same attendance policy as that contracted for beginning teachers by the SCASD bargaining unit. You are entering the world of work. Your students and their parents, and your mentor and PDA are expecting you to be in the classroom each day. Absences are allowed under the following circumstances:

Personal Illness – Each intern will be allowed a maximum of 10 days sick leave: (It is important for you to know that it is very rare for any teacher or intern to miss 10 days of work in a given year unless there is a serious illness or a need for surgery). Interns are required to notify the mentor and PDA as soon as they realize that they will be absent for the day, but no later than 7 AM. Any lesson plans that the intern is responsible for teaching must be received by the mentor via another person or by e-mail by 8 AM.

Death in the Immediate Family – 5 Days Each Occurrence: Immediate family shall be defined as wife, husband, parents, (including step or foster parents), sister, brother, daughter, son, parent-in-law, grandparent, grandchild, son-in-law, daughter-in-law, brother-in-law, sister-in-law, or other members of the same household. Two days for each occurrence for aunt, uncle, niece or nephew. The mentor and PDA must be notified.

Death of a Close Friend or Relative – One day each occurrence: The mentor and PDA must be notified.

Illness in the Immediate Family – Not to exceed six days per year: Immediate family shall be defined as wife, husband, parents - including step or foster parents - , sister, brother, daughter, son, parent-in-law, grandparent, and grandchild; also the following who are members of the same household: son-in-law, daughter-in-law, brother-in-law, sister-in-law, niece, nephew, aunt and uncle. Both the mentor and PDA must be notified and grant approval.

Personal Business – Three days each year. Both the mentor teacher and the PDA must approve these days in advance.

Educational Purposes – A limited number of additional days are available for activities such as job interviews or professional conferences. Both the mentor and PDA must approve these days in advance.