

**UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE/MILFORD SCHOOL DISTRICT
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SCHOOL OVERVIEW****Laurie A. Palmer****University of Delaware/Milford School District Professional Development School**

The University of Delaware/Milford School District Professional Development School (UD/Milford PDS) is a partnership between the University of Delaware and Milford School District that strives to offer an innovative approach to teacher preparation that consists of a clinical component that immerses university students in the school community with a strong connection between theory and practice, shares the responsibility for preparing new teachers with the Milford School District, and creates a strong learning community for university students, teachers, faculty, and district school students. Teacher candidates come to the PDS Center located within the Milford School District during their junior and senior years to both take classes and participate in student internships in district elementary schools. Although the requirements for completion of the program at the UD/Milford PDS are identical to the program on the Newark campus for ETE majors, the delivery of this program looks quite different in southern Delaware. The difference comes in the way that the courses are presented and the amount of time that students spend in field placements.

Students in this program are referred to as interns and work on both the theoretical and practical knowledge of teaching. Just like medical interns, teaching interns participate in a more intense learning experience that requires a strong commitment during the junior and senior years. Students must participate as full time interns and commit to the rigid schedule of teaching and learning. A strong clinical component is the cornerstone of the UD/Milford PDS, as is the link between theory and practice. Student interns complete four intensive internships during their time at the PDS, logging in more than 1,500 hours in district classrooms and participating in all of the responsibilities of a teacher for two years. District teachers take on a stronger role in regards to assignments, evaluation, and instruction for the interns than in traditional field experiences. The interns continue to take a full load of courses throughout their internships.

Courses are offered through variable credit and presented in one or two credit increments that take place over several semesters. This allows for the scaffolding of learning over a longer period of time as interns learn, practice and observe in the field, and then return to the course to continue learning and applying the knowledge in another placement. Courses are taught by a core group of faculty from both the University and school district who work to integrate courses that provide an interdisciplinary approach that increases efficiency and integrates instruction and field experiences. This demonstrates to the interns how instruction in the classroom is connected across discipline areas and allows them a more holistic view of teaching. In addition to courses being integrated, effort is also made to integrate assignments when appropriate. Interns may be assigned one project that is later assessed by one or more faculty members, each evaluating a piece of the project related to a particular course. This allows the program to be more efficient in their assignments as well as give the interns a more valid insight into how all of the pieces of their teacher education fit together to create one strong picture of teaching, learning, and assessment.

Reflective practice is an integral part of the UD/Milford PDS program for interns, district teachers, and PDS faculty and takes place in many different formats. All forms of reflection are intended to improve teacher effectiveness and/or improve the UD/Milford PDS partnership. Connecting field experiences to theory presented in UD classes takes place through reflection on the work of the interns in the classroom. This reflection supports the theories, concepts, and strategies presented in readings and lectures. Interns also reflect on their own teaching sharing successes and failures, insights, and problem-solving. UD faculty reflect with district teachers to support their work as teacher educators during beginning and end of the semester workshops and monthly reflection meetings. Interns and district teachers meet with PDS faculty at the end of each internship to reflect on the teaching and learning of the interns and discuss ways of improving instruction, assignments, and field experiences. This reflection is used to improve the PDS partnership.

The variety of roles of the PDS faculty are also unique in this program. Faculty are housed onsite within the school district and serve as instructors, field supervisors, and advisors, as well as providing professional development for

district teachers. Each faculty member is responsible for between 12 and 24 credits each year that cover a range of courses and observing students in the field. The many roles of the faculty allow them to have a rich insight into the strengths and needs of the interns both in the university classroom and out in the field and to find the best possible way to support the education of each intern.

The PDS Advisory Board brings together members from both institutions to support the work of the partnership. Members include university faculty, mentor teachers from each partnership school, district administrators and program graduates. This group meets monthly to solve problems and make recommendations for program revisions.

The UD/Milford PDS is a strong teacher preparation program that combines the quality UD teacher education program with the elements of a professional development school to prepare students in southern Delaware to be effective teachers and meet the challenges of today's diverse classrooms.