

**PORTRAITS OF SECONDARY PARTNER SCHOOLS
IN THE
NATIONAL NETWORK FOR EDUCATIONAL RENEWAL
1996-1999**

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DREHER PORTRAIT:

Dreher High School/University of South Carolina Partnership: A Portrait

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Originally built in 1938, Dreher High School, located in downtown Columbia, South Carolina, has been modernized and expanded into a modern, comprehensive high school. Dreher is a Nationally Recognized School of Excellence offering challenging academic courses as well as a wide variety of outstanding extracurricular and athletic programs. The award-winning faculty challenges a diverse student body to excel on standardized tests ranging from Advanced Placement Exams to the South Carolina Exit Exam.

Dreher has a student body of 1,250 with a faculty of 66 supported by 5 administrators. The school is characterized as having a fifty/fifty student body in terms of gender, socio-economic status, and ethnicity (African-American, Caucasian, with only a few Hispanics).

The University of South Carolina (USC) and Dreher have enjoyed a long history of working together in the areas of staff development and curriculum improvement as well as student teaching experiences. During 1978-79, USC and Dreher entered into a formal relationship and established a "Professional Development Center" on site with a half-time faculty member and a twenty-hour per week doctoral level graduate assistant. The initiative was discontinued after two years.

In 1994, USC modified its initial teacher licensure program by moving to a five-year graduate program with an education minor at the undergraduate level. During the planning process, the possibility for a more formal relationship was again initiated by faculty members from Dreher and from USC.

USC started its Professional Development School Network in 1989 but had only one high school in the group of eleven schools.

While 1996-97 was technically a planning year following USC-PDS Network expansion guidelines, including a self-study and site visits by USC and school-based PDS practitioners, many components of a "working" Partnership were initiated. These included a site-based undergraduate practicum coordinated and taught by Dreher teachers, a year-long internship for MT students, and regular semester-long student teaching by MAT students. At peak times during the spring semester, up to forty-five USC students were engaged in a variety of experiences at Dreher along with several students from Benedict College. Benedict is a member, along with USC and three other institutions of higher education in the state, in the South Carolina Network for Educational Renewal (a National Network for Educational Renewal site) and has joined with USC in forming the Dreher Partnership.

Key players in the evolving Dreher Partnership were asked to tell their stories as part of the portrait painting process. These included administrators and faculty from USC and Dreher and three new Dreher teachers who were part of the Partnership initiatives as USC students last year (1996-97). The story is presented below as a collective effort without reference to the individual storytellers.

The Dreher Story: An Evolving Partnership

Dreher High School is an exciting and

challenging place with all of the problems of a very diverse student body and a long history of academic excellence. This tradition remains strong as can be seen by the many awards for excellence the school has received over the years, including having the largest number of Merit Scholars of any high school in South Carolina last year (sixteen in 1997) and graduating several students over the past several years who have scored a perfect 1600 on the SAT.

The Partnership is fragile. It has enjoyed many high points and has encountered many problems. The evolution of the Partnership is visualized in many different ways by members of the tripartite:

- as a garden with seeds planted, a garden which needs nurturing in order to blossom.
- as the planting of flowers where roots and blossoms are all in a relationship with the plant; there are the seeds of professional development; the roots are the teachers in the school; the blossoms are the future teachers—all energized through the partnership.
- as a homemade car with many unknown and often unused appendages—it can run really well but it takes a lot of maintenance and fuel to keep it running.
- as a can of worms that is only somewhat better than a Medusa’s head.
- as something moving forward with excitement; forward looking, backward putting; a place where we can all share our expertise.
- like a really good math problem—one that is accessible to students with a lot of different knowledge bases and skills, but all those students have access to the solution.
- like an electrical conductor—things go through one point and back out again. I see a lot of students being funneled through—they absorb the influence as high school students, and then go on to the university and back to the school community. That can do nothing but help to make better teachers.
- as a set of dominant and recessive traits—when you cross them you sometimes get different things that aren’t expected and

sometimes not all that great, but if you work on them together you can work toward the best.

- like a hand and glove—both fit well and work together and rely on each other for success.
- when I think of the Partnership, I see trees and branches or a newborn child. Dreher is an infant that is expected to be an adult.
- I think of a band director. I feel like we are the drum major. The director knows what’s going on, but no one else does, not even the drum major.

School-University Partnerships as Seen from the Perspective of the Six Participants Who Attended Phoenix Including Faculty from the College of Education, Arts and Science, Dreher Faculty and Administration, and Richland I School District Central Office

Members of the USC/Dreher/Airport Professional Development School steering group attended the secondary school partnership team meeting in Phoenix. This activity enabled the group to become better acquainted informally, to discuss problems of mutual interest, and to interact with others pursuing the same goals. Similar teams from eight other states participated.

Each of the schools participating made presentations. We heard about the benefits derived from professional development school relationships and the labor necessary to foster the relation. Teachers and principals spoke of the benefits of contributing to the development of new teachers and interacting with university faculty. They also expressed how much extra work this entailed on top of their regular responsibilities. Higher education faculty were able to meet with peers who discussed reward system problems and perceptions that faculty who spend significant time in PDSs are not contributing to the work of their units (a loss of collegiality). Arts and sciences faculty discussed ways that they might contribute to

the Partnership; there was a difference between smaller institutions in which higher education faculty are directly involved in teacher preparation, and research institutions where the arts and sciences faculty are indirectly involved.

Our team's response was one of enthusiasm and support for the Network's goals and for the conference. Arts and sciences faculty shared the excitement and saw for the first time the importance of the whole project. Generally, the idea of a school-university partnership is good; the challenge is to locate the right people, put them to work, minimize meetings, and maximize teaching/student contact. There was general support for the university-school partnership (working together with student teachers and practicum students, etc.) and the stimulation of thinking about school reform. The "working" nature of the conference was strange for the arts and sciences faculty and some high school teachers – they expected a more didactic approach. Many felt the need for more structure and direction. This is also something we may need to consider in our partnership with Dreher.

There was a general concern about more "work" on top of already heavy schedules. Generally, people were slow to see how PDS activities could be incorporated into their existing duties. PDS is not always seen as a new forum or alternative process for including existing staff development, curriculum development, and university-school partnership activities, but rather as an add on. Several questions were asked which have yet to be answered:

- 1) What is the role of the arts and sciences faculty in this?
- 2) How does this fit into the university's expectations (reward system) for arts and science faculty and College of Education faculty?
- 3) How can this effort be sustained over time without "burning out" individuals?
- 4) How do we use PDS activities to "kill two birds with one stone?" For example, how do we see the PDS conference as staff

development? Can't some of the district's staff development money be used to support staff development through PDS activities?

Partnerships between universities and schools can benefit both institutions. Cooperation should result in better training for prospective teachers and a general strengthening of teacher preparation programs. Also, universities have the possibility of recruiting the best students from the high school. Schools can benefit by getting a good look at future teachers and having a firm idea of their abilities prior to hiring. Also, schools can benefit from having access to resources at the universities.

The partnership at Dreher is presently working. The caliber of student teachers I have observed at Dreher this year has been high. In addition, one of the new teachers at Dreher did his student teaching last year, and he is adding strength and a fresh perspective to the English department.

In the future, Dreher will continue to benefit as the school and university find new ways to cooperate for their mutual benefit.

The high school faculty and the arts and sciences faculty were ready to proceed with exploring this new territory but were looking for leadership from the College of Education. The College is also exploring the relationship and could not readily provide the leadership which was needed at the time.

The Dreher Partnership as Seen from the Perspective of Three Staff at Dreher

One of the greatest benefits has been the Eric Nortons and Beth Olivers whom we hired this year. It is so much better to see how they interact and see how they fit. We haven't had a defined relationship in the past.

We made some mistakes when we started, such as the first time we picked the wrong time of day for practicum students. The second set in the spring was great and we had none of this griping as in the first group. We have now become a real teaching institute

... a reinvigorated school. Relationships have broadened and we have had an opportunity to branch out. I think of it as an important step. It has given many other teachers the opportunity to get involved with preservice teachers. Our doors are more broadly opened. I like the fact that we get to know people at other levels (other professionals) ... like the Maine and the Phoenix experience. I liked the fact that no one had titles. We talked about issues that have an effect on all of us.

The university is lucky to have us and they can benefit from our diversity. We are located close by so that student travel is minimum. The university needs to provide experiences to student teachers at a place like this – it is not like many of the suburban schools. Even with all of our diversity, people have the idea that we have recruited academically talented students. We have a tradition of excellence in our student body. Nowhere else is there a fifty/fifty high school – not in every class but in the school as a whole. USC students get to relate to both the most energetic learners and the least motivated. USC as an institution, to reach the vision it has created, will require more middle and high schools. A survey of interns last year showed that all got jobs. That's the goal, everybody wants to have a job. Familiarity is a benefit. We will know the practicum students this year and hopefully many will return next year as interns.

I would like a network of resource people. For example, I am teaching an adolescent novel and would like to bring in someone from USC who is an expert from arts and sciences. What a perfect connection. Apparently, there is some kind of directory of resource expertise to look through to identify people. As we serve USC students, USC needs to help train our students.

Young teachers have an advantage in that they are a little closer in age and interests to our students. They bring a fresh approach. The relationship with USC forces me to be a better teacher. I'll give you an example. I would like to believe that students will behave because I say so, but Eric said, "Let's

try something different." The point system really worked. I use it now because it did work. "Time on task" is a gift.

From an administrator's point of view, it is the diversity that I value. Interns bring different styles to instruction and students benefit from seeing different styles of teaching. The caliber of preservice teachers is so good now. At Dreher, USC students are getting a chance to be mentored by outstanding professionals.

The students have more choices of who to be with because of the Partnership. More teachers are involved. I don't think there is anywhere in South Carolina where teachers work any harder than at Dreher.

We have made a stab at trying to meet with these young people to introduce them to the school's culture; Airport does this well but Cheryl (at Airport High) has some release time to facilitate this process. It would be beneficial for us. We have got to have a conversation about that. We almost died last year. Until there is somebody who is supported by USC and the school district with release time, we are going to begin losing communication and conversations. We are going to have to think of alternatives. High school is a different commodity and someone needs to have release time. It does not serve our students for me to have to give up a planning period. I wish that some of the money for student teachers that goes to USC would come to us; the money that they are paying for the job that we are doing. The university needs to look at the distribution of money.

Money and communication are the important issues. How do other people find out about what we have written or accomplished? Harriet is our publicity guru. If we didn't have her thinking about positive publicity, we wouldn't get it. We didn't do enough educating other people about what we were doing.

Interns showed up a week earlier than what we were used to. We weren't ready and didn't know what to do with them. Some of them got lost. They were late on the first day (normal) but better communications would

help. I want someone at the university to be a funnel to let us know who all these people are coming into the schools. I wish USC would get a handle on this – we have PE students just showing up. At one point, we had forty-five students coming through here last semester, and we want them to feel welcome. We have to be careful.

We want to further define our PDS if we are to become a “lead” partner. We would need to ensure a high level of instruction. Other schools would have to buy into it and it must be defined specifically in order to work with others. If I come in and tell them what to do, they may resist.

Public relations is also an issue, especially with Airport High. We could share more in areas such as philosophy of teacher training – that would be a simple thing. But the funding is obviously a big concern at the university level. I know discussions between the College of Education and others have been held and the politics of USC has reared its ugly head. Many different opinions were apparent!

The biggest problem is lack of financial support. We hope the inquiry grants will still be available – time, money, and communication are key. We decided we would just do it – form the partnership. But now is the time for us to look at ways to move forward. We have cared about this for a long time and now it is formalized. We have given our commitment.

We need to explore non-monetary benefits for Dreher. We wanted “something” this year. I wanted Rae to be able to announce it on the first day. Teacher Cadets have library privileges, teachers should too. Teachers definitely need to feel like they have gotten “something.”

The potential is out there. We have got to have a coordinator if we are going to realize the potential. We need the structure for it to run itself even if we are not here.

The Dreher Partnership as Seen from the Perspective of Five College of Education Faculty

A major advantage to the partner school is that they get first crack at some of our best students. This gives us a chance to place our interns/student teachers with highly qualified teachers who have a serious commitment to professional development. Three of our top student teachers at Dreher have been hired at Dreher this fall. We feel an even stronger connection with them. One of my goals is to continue my relationship with this beginning teacher beyond her first year of teaching.

The partnership is different from just placing interns/student teachers with “good teachers,” where we normally just go out and supervise them and talk with the teacher about the intern’s performance. With the partnership focus, we look at improving the teaching of the professor, the classroom teacher, and the intern. At Dreher, the expectation from here and from there is that, as we work together, we will not only improve the preparation of teachers but also the curriculum and instructional practices in the school. Dreher teachers also have an opportunity to interact with arts and sciences faculty and they also get the perceived prestige of being a PDS and having the PDS title.

A big part of the partnership will be the arts and sciences connection. It is going to be important for both the College of Education and the school to make real connections with the College of Arts & Science and to explore involvement opportunities in the kinds of instruction being used and content being taught in high school. Each member of the partnership has different roles: (1) School Faculty – informing the teacher education program on best practices; (2) Teacher Education Program – assisting the school in developing innovations; (3) Arts and Sciences Faculty – serving as a resource for students at the school. The real potential lies in working with some arts and sciences faculty who might even work with beginning teachers,

but this could be a burden. The enthusiasm and interest of a number of Dreher teachers for the opportunity to grow, for getting “unconfined” from their school/students—for having chances to learn and explore new things—is amazing. The arts and sciences involvement is a real plus, if we can figure out how to marshal it in terms of instructional improvement at the school and university. If we can get English and anthropology and history enthused about working with Dreher, much more than we have before, then we will be on the right path.

The students in the high school get fresh, new ideas (e.g., technology) from interns that teachers in fields may not have experienced. Our students take it, use it, share it, and it is passed on to high school students. In some ways our interns are helping to change teachers’ behaviors (e.g., taking laser disks out of the closet, using them, helping the teacher learn how to use them). I have also done inservice at Dreher on technology. This benefits their teachers and their students. Department chairs now know how to incorporate laser disk technology into their instruction. More of this should go on as part of our relationship.

Our USC students benefit because it is a very accommodating, comfortable environment; everyone there is dedicated to the students’ professional development across all content areas. However, we do place students at other high schools in the area since we only have two high school PDSs. We have to look at changes in the roles at a PDS vs. a non-PDS. Attitudes toward the university person on campus are different when you are in a PDS environment where everyone’s goal is professional development. You are a coach, a liaison, a mediator, etc., but do not carry the authority or “ivory tower” sort of image. The relationship is more congenial and conducive to good conversation with the students and the teachers. It takes about the same amount of time to supervise student teachers regardless of whether they are in a PDS or not. However, I do spend more time at Dreher because of the perks of camaraderie and

connections with the faculty.

If the cooperating teacher in the high school has a strong content background then it may not be absolutely necessary for the university supervisor to have a very strong background in the same area. In some cases, in working with teachers who teach humanities classes, for example, it is easier to work with more than one content area (English and social studies, for example). We may have more flexibility here. However, the organizational structure of the school itself is set up by departments, and they operate this way. High schools are more similar to universities than to elementary schools. This makes change difficult, especially if we look at the simultaneous renewal issue of whole school change.

There are so many differences between a high school partnership and an elementary partnership. We have struggled with what it really means for us with so many different content areas. We haven’t been able to place all of our students at PDSs. There should be some other distinctions between a PDS and other schools. I hope this sets us on a path of trying to delineate some ideas of what we as a faculty think a secondary PDS should be. What makes it more difficult for a liaison at the secondary level is that we are so much more involved in specific content. I know very little about what goes on in English except for knowing Ann or Francie. I am concerned about placing my students with the very best math teachers. But other schools in Columbia have excellent teachers where I would also like to place my students. Every department in a school may not be equally strong. The content is so much more challenging in a high school (e.g., geometry vs. elementary math). It is so much more difficult. British literature or advanced placement psychology are totally different from elementary schools. I could not talk with teachers about content with which I am not familiar. I supervise only math interns. I could not go into an AP class in a different discipline and help students. I could certainly discuss teaching, but not content issues.

The partnership is like an immersion process in the field, using the PDS as a site of instruction and a resource. Our faculty go and make connections with teachers to keep fresh with regard to what is going on in classrooms and the curriculum. When this occurs, the student intern can really be helped to grow. It is helpful to have two people working together to counsel, provide alternatives, etc. In the past, I have worked with student teachers where the agenda for the teacher was different than for the supervisor. Many teachers are looking for someone to help them out instead of helping the student learn. Now we are focused on the professional development of everyone. Developing a history with the school and a professional relationship with that school maximizes the student teacher's experience.

The university gains by having a relationship with the school in an ongoing partnership to get feedback from experienced and highly competent practitioners. We have the benefit of working with high quality teachers at a school that is close to the campus. Some of our best students who wanted to work at Dreher were able to find positions there. Although we have had many changes in our teacher preparation program, they are not directly related to the partnership effort.

In terms of research, we have not begun to do what we should be doing. We have some ideas that we are trying to put in place, but it is probably too early. We realize the need for a structured research component, something longitudinal in nature, that would allow us to look at the real benefits of a PDS for our students. The research that we were thinking about concerned the macro-level of the PDS as a school, including our faculty, their faculty, and our students. In some ways, teachers seem very open to what some of my student teachers/interns want to do, such as try methods class ideas in the classroom. There seem to be fewer constraints in PDSs. It is easier to take things directly from methods courses and apply them right away. This should open up opportunities for research. I suspect that, as we move further

into inquiry approaches to best practice, the partnership will be of even more benefit to high school teachers and students as well as to our own faculty.

I am working on inquiry in my own way, such as having all my methods students do research and frame an interview with a high school student based on that research. I have not really decided what inquiry is at the high school level. I am attempting to do some of the elementary-type inquiry and have had success having students develop questions and interview students.

We have thought a lot about how the secondary preparation program might change as a result of the partnership with Dreher. We need a departmentwide focus on the PDS environment as a good source for study and research because of the benefits to the school, USC, and our students. There could be a major research goal focusing on secondary PDSs. What's the best way to maximize the partnership? With longitudinal studies, we might pull in graduate students to help which would make them better candidates and would add research to the clinical aspect of teacher preparation. I would like to have had more research experience in my own program.

I feel so strongly about the research initiative involving the PDSs and our entire secondary education faculty. It would go a long way for all of us and help us gain a real sense of goals for PDSs and an understanding of what that is all about. Larry and Dick know about grant writing and can help the junior faculty become the next generation of researchers and grant writers. If we could bring in some money and some additional graduate students, we could make this a strong research effort along with the teaching effort. We don't have that many things that really bring us together at the secondary level since we are in different disciplines. The partnership could unite us.

We cannot realistically place all of our students in secondary PDSs, so we could do a comparison of the PDS experience vs. a non-PDS and have experimental and control groups. We could put some structure in place

with the PDS almost like a “treatment,” providing experiences we think are critical (e.g., classroom management) that would allow us to draw some inferences about what a PDS provides that a non-PDS does not provide. That would give us a handle on the PDS relationship benefits for our students and give the Secondary Education Program a research thrust. PDSs do cost more to pay the clinical adjunct.

In order to develop a sound research base, we would need to do it in cooperation with teachers at Dreher. My perspective is different because I am so new. Even though I do have good relationships at Dreher, I still have good ones with non-PDSs. I do about half and half. This is a dilemma that is hard for me, as a new person. Just trying to get a handle on this PDS thing is a major job. My question is, “What is it about a PDS that sets it apart from a non-PDS?” There is potential for this, but I think that is why we need more structure in place. We need to decide how to really develop the potential of a PDS to the fullest. This is so important because right now I can see the potential, but the reality is that I have as many relationships in a non-PDS. “Why should I place my students at Dreher rather than at Dutch Fork?” We see the need for some additional structure and direction for the PDS. In what ways is this a special place other than just an accommodating environment?

And, who’s to say that Dutch Fork would not be just as accommodating if they had a chance to develop a special relationship with us? We need more structure, definite agendas for teachers at Dreher, and more opportunities for them to come over and teach our college students and us to go over to Dreher and teach their high school students. We need to spell out what we would do and what they would do, but the direction we might take varies from university faculty to university faculty.

This is very new for me just coming in. I graduated from the University of Wisconsin and had not heard of PDSs. I am just learning that there is an attempt to develop a special relationship between the COE and different

public schools. This commitment on all sides has really been a high point for me, something I had not experienced previously. Another high point was when I was asked to put together a panel of student teachers in the spring to talk to the PDS annual conference about experiences in a PDS. It was a pleasure to hear Eric Norton, one of our top English students now hired at Dreher, talk about the amount of knowledge that he had about the relationship and his excitement of being involved in a PDS from a student perspective and then being hired as a teacher at that school. Developing a friendship with Francie was also important to me. She came and talked to my students, and I developed a relationship with someone in another discipline I would not have had a reason to meet. This has been wonderful for me, broadened me. I came in “math education” but this has helped me broaden my capabilities. I have taught in high school and middle school and now have the chance to work at a middle and secondary PDS. Last year, they had a math lab for students who needed enrichment. I got to go in there and teach. I love to work with students. Getting an opportunity to teach middle school students again was a real treat for me.

I am not sure that our faculty as a whole has embraced the PDS concept or really understands what it can mean. All of us are struggling to move forward. It has been five to six years since we started our first partnerships, and we are still trying to reach a decision about how to approach PDSs. It seems that every year we avoid the hard questions. These meetings may help some things happen. I just e-mailed the faculty and said we need to decide where we will make commitments and show interest. We need to define it, discuss it, and get beyond the theoretical level. It has come down to, “What we are going to do?”

A collaborative relationship is difficult for everybody – early childhood, elementary, and secondary – to be equal partners with schools. We have not really enjoyed strong central office administrative support from the districts. It is better in some districts than in

the others. We have three new superintendents this year; last year we had two new ones – that is five of our six PDS districts with new superintendents. We also have four new principals. Turnover, plus our lack of real partnership agreements with central office administrators, has held us back and caused some problems. Many schools want to be PDSs. One teacher from a PDS was tapped to start a new school in her district and would like to have taken PDS status with her, yet we couldn't expand any more. We have moved from eleven to seventeen PDSs; the school folks really made that happen. Central office support is not negative – just not active in positive ways. Some PDSs like it better that way since they are less exposed. Our Professional Development School Network is strong enough to make things happen even without strong administrative support. Losing our dean (Dick Ishler) is a problem since he is no longer in a position to help us make things happen. Our [interim] dean is supportive, but he can't really move us ahead as an interim. Harvey is going to do a great job as interim dean. He is not so intimidating for me as a new faculty since he is from here and I know him. But to have to deal with a new dean from somewhere else will be more of a challenge when we don't know how supportive of partnerships s/he might be. The real support must now come from faculty and from the teachers. Once you develop a relationship with the teachers, it doesn't go away just because something else (i.e., dean, superintendent, or principal) goes away. You just want to keep growing with these people. I don't want to let go of Dreher or Crayton. I have a commitment to them, but I would like to get more involved at Airport.

Trying to maintain a balance between the two high school PDSs is a problem we must solve. We have so many more faculty invested at Dreher than at Airport because Dreher is close to the university and so many faculty have children who attend Dreher. I want to have a better relationship with Airport but don't know how to do that. We need to balance this relationship. We need to

bring our PDSs together along with Richland Northeast (partnered with Columbia College). The teachers want this, and it is a reasonable expectation. But teachers need some release time so that they are not so pressured to be available.

The issue of scheduling with Dreher, which is on a non-block schedule, and with most other schools, which are on block schedules, causes some problems. Also, we have not clearly communicated the benefits of the partnership to Dreher, nor have we followed through on some of the rewards discussed. The worst feedback was hearing teachers from Dreher ask for "D" parking stickers (which USC faculty can get only after 6-8 years) and other rather mundane things. Library privileges were also requested, and we have not yet responded. The whole issue of compensating teachers for the time given to the partnership, especially since we have gone to year-long internships, is a problem. Our system is set to provide a small reward for one semester only.

One of the most exciting projects is the inquiry project in geometry being carried out at Dreher by Ed, his friend at Dreher in math, and the professor from mathematics. A professor in math or science can find out the kind of instruction and the kinds of things being done at Dreher. This may well influence instruction at the college level in math or in math education, including the use of technology. I feel like we, in the College of Education, will see improvement in content, and the math teacher at Dreher will help us with pedagogical strategies. We can expand our and their resources. The math department is research focused and uses a lecture format. Seeing innovative practices will have an impact on college teaching.

I see us at the very early stages of development. The parties involved do not have the time or the priorities to move it to the next level (all three members of the tripartite). We do not have time to work with one school at the expense of others, and we have more students than one or two schools can handle. A question we must address is, "Why do we focus on Dreher at the expense

of other schools in the area?" Dreher teachers have full-time jobs teaching students. Arts and sciences faculty's goal "is to do research," not service.

The Dreher Partnership as Seen from the Perspective of Two Arts and Sciences Faculty

The Dreher-USC Partnership is off to a good start and has lots of potential. Partnerships are a great idea. They bring a convergence of university College of Education, Arts and Science (the theory people), and teacher practitioners together in a way to make school renewal a reality.

But it seems that the Dreher Partnership needs further developing. We have had meetings but nothing really happened, and something needs to happen. How to galvanize that is the question.

The next step may be to set specific objectives, such as to identify Dreher's needs in terms of academic areas, then to look for USC faculty who have children at Dreher or, more importantly, who have children in the pipeline – at Hand Middle, perhaps even in primary school feeders – they have the most to gain. Programs begun now will really start paying off in the future, when their children enter Dreher. Current Dreher parents are certainly an important source, but their commitment will vanish within a couple of years.

As a cultural anthropologist, my potential input is minimal (unless Dreher begins to teach AP Anthropology, as some schools around the state are doing). But for example, Tom Leatherman, a biological anthropologist and his wife Marge Aelion, an environmental chemist in Public Health, have two children heading towards Dreher and have skills in areas where Dreher already can use help. On the whole, it seems that science is in relatively good shape and relatively easy to help. The most important need at Dreher (and its feeder schools), it seems, is in languages, and here I should think that USC could be of real help whether or not there are parents who fit the

profile.

Another way to give the partnership a future is to correlate closely with Richland Northeast and Airport High Schools. Each could share and build on strengths. The impetus may have to come from the schools themselves, but faculty must be supported by the school administration. Dreher, it seems, is a grassroots school where most of the things that happen come from teachers and students. The administration must make the partnership work a rewardable effort.

The Partnership as Seen from the Perspective of Three First-Year Teachers Who Graduated from USC and Are Teaching at Dreher

First of all, I have heard almost all of the ideas coming through because I was a student teacher here. This is a good opportunity for Dreher to reap the benefits of having young, newly trained teachers with new ideas (i.e., technology), especially since one-third of the Dreher staff will be retiring. It is a good opportunity for Dreher to see the quality of student teachers who are coming through. Maybe an exchange program will develop not only with COE professors, but with professors from other departments. Also, teachers at Dreher can go to the university and talk to preservice teachers about topics such as working on Internet integration or balancing ideology and practice. The reciprocal process also needs to be developed. There are lots of opportunities for both the university and the high school in terms of educational growth and development.

Interdisciplinary studies are brought to the students through the new views of young teachers. Student teachers bring in a fresh view or approach to teaching methods from which the students benefit. You can actively involve more students with the new approaches. Things like graphing calculators, technology, inquiry-based learning, and laser disk technology are all elements that are developed in methods courses with which older staff at Dreher may not be familiar.

Having two teachers in the class is also a benefit to the students at Dreher. Cooperating teachers view the student teacher or intern as an extra set of capable hands rather than someone they have to train. This allows you to be more of a mentor to the students instead of being removed. It is sort of like a guidance counselor regarding college issues as the student teacher is more closely connected to the needs of the high school students. A younger person provides another opportunity for connecting with the students.

It is nice to have an idea about the other interns located in the same school. The biggest thing is that you do have the resources of USC and you know all the USC personnel and feel comfortable knowing that a familiar, supportive face will be on campus frequently. The people at the university are familiar with the way Dreher is run, are comfortable with the environment and teachers, and the close relationship makes the situation more comfortable for the student teacher. The relationship can also begin easily at the beginning of the school year instead of following the university semester. Just knowing that the school wants you to be there is important. At Dreher, you feel welcome; you know that people care about your professional development. This is not the case at some other schools.

In the future, I hope that there will be more time in the classroom. I hope that more schools come on board in this process because we do spend more time in classrooms here than interns at other schools. Maybe some classes could be geared more toward the development of an understanding of the future student teaching placement. There may be time to develop more set policies to give the program stability instead of "it's all up to the cooperating teacher." Maybe more classes in the education program could be made more valuable. Real school curriculum development could be funneled into the methods program to make them more realistic.

A lot of things were redundant in the program. There could be more consistency in the courses. Discipline procedures were

taught over and over. It would be nice to see these courses streamlined so that you are not exposed to the same material over and over. Human Growth and Development and Psych 101 are redundant and overlap.

USC should look at accepting some of the core courses to meet education requirements. More time should be spent in content area courses, and focus on teaching development should be emphasized in the education courses. It is frustrating to be tied up doing redundant education coursework when you want to be focusing on content material. For math, the math content courses were really high level and did not exactly apply to what I would be teaching in a high school. I would like more practice in preparing lessons in methods courses. What about a course entitled "High School History?" It would be nice to have courses that spoke directly to developing a knowledge base appropriate to high school curriculum.

I did feel like I had a say in what was going on. We were totally supported in terms of management and discipline. There was an actual situation going on with a management problem, and the student teacher felt totally supported by the school. The high points for me were different episodes with the children such as having a student tell you that you made an impact on them. And just getting the job done. It was important to know that students want to help you and support you; that students care that you do well in your experience; knowing that they want and appreciate you. But being really backed up by the school staff . . . a nurturing, caring staff, and not only the cooperating teachers but the entire staff.

A student wanted to know if all the student teachers would be working at Dreher next year because she felt that it would be "good for Dreher" to have these new teachers working here.

I think the partners have too much of a narrow view: What can USC do for us? What can Dreher do for us? They seem to be getting caught up in equality/fairness. Don't sweat what you get, view things with teacher preparation at the focus. There are simple

things that could be done that would make a difference. Things that are time intensive are just as important as money. Don't get caught up in minutiae. For example, Dreher teachers need to know their content area colleagues at the university. More collaboration between university professors and high school classrooms would benefit everyone.

If Dreher students are left out, they may grow to resent student teachers. Students at Dreher need to have the opportunity to come to the PDS table and let their voices be heard. Student Council representatives should be able to voice their opinions about the student teachers in their school.

We should make sure that a teacher wants a student teacher instead of coercing teachers to take on students because they need a placement. Poor students should be weeded out before student teaching instead of letting them get into the schools and flop.

The USC-Dreher Partnership is indeed very much like a newborn child. It is an infant that is expected to be an adult. It must simultaneously learn to crawl, walk, talk, read, and do calculus. It typifies many school reform initiatives where we are not able to shut down to retool. All changes must take place even while old images, habits, and practices continue while we gradually learn to do business differently as collaborative partners striving for excellence in education for all of our students. It is indeed a difficult time and an exciting time with unlimited opportunities.