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***Contact Information:***

**CENTER FOR EDUCATIONAL RENEWAL**  
College of Education  
Box 353600  
University of Washington  
Seattle, WA 98195-3600  
(206) 543-6230

**ROCKY MOUNTAIN HIGH SCHOOL**  
1300 West Swallow Road  
Fort Collins, CO 80526  
(970) 416-7005

## ROCKY MOUNTAIN ORIGINAL PORTRAIT:

# The Rocky Mountain High School/Colorado State University PDS: A Way of Being<sup>1</sup>

Cori Mantle-Bromley, Colorado State University

### The Place of Practice

At 7:00 a.m., Judy Elliott, a Colorado State University faculty, rushes from the faculty parking lot to Rocky Mountain High School's (RMHS) front entrance. Large granite boulders and young groves of aspen line the curving path, replicating the nearby foothills of the Rocky Mountains that rise to 14,000 feet in the distance. A lofty, 50-foot windowed entrance, lined with trophies and awards, draws students and visitors inward. Elliott passes the new library, hugging the curved glass walls that lead to her classroom. Greeting several Rocky faculty, she continues down the hall to Room 332, permanently labeled as the Professional Development School (PDS) classroom.

Room 332 is where Elliott teaches a university course entitled "Methods of Instruction and Evaluation." Approximately twenty teacher candidates – university students pursuing teacher licensure – take this course during the semester before their final semester of student teaching. The five-credit course includes an internship with a RMHS master teacher and a noon-hour seminar.

Today's 90-minute class starts at 7:30 a.m., twenty minutes earlier than the high school students begin their first classes. The twenty-one teacher candidates (TCs) sit at tables arranged in a circle. Several university and school visitors from Kansas, here to observe a secondary PDS in action, sit in the back of the room.

Elliott begins class: "What's happened in your Rocky classes since we met last?" The professionally dressed students quickly join in the discussion.

One relates an embarrassing moment when she asked her students a question and no one responded. "I got uncomfortable. I just moved on," she confesses.

"Was that a good choice? To go on, I mean?" a fellow TC asks.

"What do you wish you'd done?" asks another. Elliott begins writing their ideas on the board. Soon a list of possible ways to react to the situation fills the chalkboard. The TC who raised the issue nods and jots notes on a pad.

They move on. Another TC, John, says his Rocky students treat him as if he were one of them. It makes him feel sometimes that they don't take him seriously. A TC asks John, "So, do you talk to them the way you were just talking to us?" Puzzled, John nods. "Then no wonder! You're treating them too informally. You need to assert yourself in your language."

"I never thought of that. You're probably right," John says. After a few minutes of discussion, he agrees with his peers. He may have unintentionally sent messages to students by the way he talks and by his posture and actions.

Judy Elliott interrupts the discussion to ask who will be teaching in their Rocky classes today. Three TCs raise their hands. They have each prepared lessons for today's 90-minute second period. "Who can

observe?" asks Elliott. It takes about five minutes to decide which of the other TCs can observe in each of the three classes.

For the remaining 40 minutes of their class time, pairs of TCs present strategies they designed, created to elicit more student participation in discussions. They had earlier agreed this was generally a weak spot in their teaching. Elliott turns to the Kansas observers. "As they get teaching experience in the classroom," she says, "it always makes them realize that they need more ideas." The TCs write down each other's strategies and make suggestions to enhance others' ideas. By the end of the forty minutes, they're half joking that their work should be published. "They're definitely good enough," encourages Elliott.

Now there are only five minutes remaining before the TCs begin working in their assigned Rocky classes. Noticeably, the atmosphere begins to stiffen. TCs gather up materials. Two leave early, on today's roster to serve hall duty. Another tries to catch Judy Elliott's attention for a personal question. Elliott, too, is gathering her own materials. She answers a question, then signals to a university colleague, Val Middleton, who just walked in.

Middleton is the second university faculty, also working at RMHS. She and Elliott move to a corner. Their voices lower and they both frown uncharacteristically. They're discussing their mutual concern about a teacher candidate, Lew. They decide that this morning Middleton will take on observing Lew and Elliott will observe two other TCs' lessons. Middleton will have three TC observers with her. They step into the hall, merging with a steady stream of students flowing in and out of hallways and classrooms. Elliott watches them disappear and then turns back to her Kansas visitors.

They are brimming with questions. They ask Elliott whether the university class she teaches has changed since it was moved from the university to Rocky. She nods her head vigorously.

"Nothing is the same." She pauses. "Well, that's not entirely true. The topics are

the same. But everything else—the strategies, how the course is delivered—is totally different." She looks directly at them. "No one talks much about this. Discussion in the PDS literature is that the PDS students benefit and the teachers benefit. But it's the university people who really get renewed! You know, I'm doing the best teaching I've ever done. And that's every semester. I get better and better, and it's because we keep trying new things. We're constantly looking for ways to improve—sharing, pushing each other. Here everyone is a learner. And the PDS students are helping me learn. They see me in that light, as a fellow learner. We talk together, about getting better." Elliot looks up at the clock and takes a sharp breath. "Sorry, gotta go." She heads for the door.

*Through a maze of burnt-orange brick hallways stands the door to the geography classroom. Teacher candidate Tom has just completed his lesson. It's 10:00 a.m. Rocky students work independently, occasionally discussing Tom's assignment with the regular classroom teacher. The two TCs who observed Tom move with him into the hall. They discuss a student who challenged Tom by talking throughout the lesson. Tom responds: "His questions and comments are on task, but he's not listening to me. I don't want to stop him from thinking. But at the same time, he's distracting the other students." The observers ask, "Have you talked with the other students? Is he a bother to them? Or is he helping? That's what you need to find out."*

Tom, tall and athletic, nods. He fidgets with a slip of paper. "There's another thing. I didn't know this material as well as I've known other material." The observers tell him he appeared confident, that they couldn't see that he was uncomfortable with the content. Tom shrugs. Then his face brightens. "Hey, you know what? While I was up there, I thought of the perfect activity. A different way to teach this. I know how I'm going to do this next time!"

Down another brick hallway, in Room 406, Rocky history students are arranged in small groups. Teacher candidate Lew occasionally monitors their work, but mostly

he socializes with one group of students. At 10:15, several students try unsuccessfully to get his attention. By 10:30, the students have given up and are not even pretending interest in the task. The regular teacher, Kurt Knierim, moves in and out of the classroom door, unobtrusively weaving between student desks. He answers questions, clarifies the task, and sends concerned glances back to Val Middleton, watching from the back of the room.

After the class leaves, the TC observers, along with Middleton and Knierim, sit down with Lew. "What was going on?" asks Middleton. The TCs' responses are candid. Lew admits that he spent only thirty minutes preparing for the class. A teacher candidate wrinkles her brow, saying, "Mr. Knierim is going to have to fill in your holes tomorrow. I've seen you process, Lew. Thirty minutes isn't enough time." Another TC describes how she teaches her cat everything she is going to teach the next day. "I'm better after I do it a few times. You might try something like that."

The conversation moves to fixing what they all agree was a bad lesson. The group brainstorms ways to handle this. First of all, Lew sees the need to apologize to the students, to tell them that his lesson did not prepare them as much as they need to be prepared. The observers try to get him to be positive, to learn from his experience. "You were smiling and positive, even when you saw it wasn't working. At least you didn't have a defeatist attitude."

A TC raises another concern: "The students are having difficulty telling when you're serious and when you aren't, Lew." Lew looks at the floor. "I can do better," he says. His eyes grow moist. Knierim puts his hand on Lew's shoulder saying, "You'll get it." The TCs and Middleton gather their materials and walk down near-empty halls to the PDS classroom, where their noon-hour seminar has already begun.

Three Rocky teachers sit among the TCs, in as much of a circle as the tables' straight lines permit. The teachers have volunteered their lunch hour to talk about student apathy.

The teachers are sharing stories about what works for them, when one enthusiastically jabs the air with his index finger: "We're talking about students feeling connected. Being involved. Actively participating."

A TC haltingly follows with a question: "Do you take it personally when students react poorly to your teaching? Does it bother you?"

"Absolutely," the English teacher and coach responds. "It's what makes you a good teacher. Constantly looking. You personalize it. And keep looking for ways to make it better."

The math teacher nods. "I think you should personalize it. Keep looking for ways to reach that kid. It's not unusual to lose sleep. If you're not connected, if you don't care, it'll get worse."

Elliott is sitting in the back of the classroom with the Kansas visitors, who continue to ask hows and whys of the Rocky PDS. Elliott explains that teachers' PDS participation often extends far beyond mentoring in the classroom. She lists various activities: this semester alone, over twenty Rocky teachers have volunteered their lunch time to discuss topics at the noon-hour seminars. The Special Needs Department has rearranged one teacher's schedule so that she can teach in the PDS class. Those teachers currently mentoring a TC or working with a student teacher also attend reflective seminars each month, discussing course content from the university methods course, sharing ideas, discussing readings, and brainstorming solutions to problems. The school's administrators join the teachers and university faculty for the seminars. And the administrators also teach in the PDS methods class. This semester, the three associate principals team-taught a unit on school law.

As third period approaches, the TCs thank the teachers for their time. The teachers enter the cacophony of student voices passing through the halls. The TCs, visibly tired, wait until the halls clear. In smaller groups, they wind their way back around the curved glass of the counselors' offices. They visit momentarily in the student

commons area where more giant granite boulders, speckled with maroon and gray, rise as sentinels from the blue and gray floor tiles.

At 3:30 p.m., the same protective boulders greet four Rocky teachers, a student teacher, and three university faculty as they pass through the commons area into the main office conference room. The windowless interior room, long and narrow, shuts out the frenetic pace of the outer halls as students leave the building. Cushioned chairs and soft carpet hush voices and invite relaxation. The group is joined by the RMHS principal, Karen Dixon, for the monthly PDS advisory meeting.

Nearly everyone present adds an item to the agenda. Elliott wants to discuss piloting a new student teaching model and she additionally proposes that the second semester student teachers formally mentor the incoming teacher candidates. Principal Dixon asks the group to think about how the PDS should be connected to the school's governance. Teachers raise several possibilities: "It's the PDS that's the catalyst for all the staff development in the building. Maybe we should merge with the staff development committee." Another teacher stares beyond her colleagues to the gray walls, "The PDS transcends them [the standing committees] all," she says. "It is climate, it is curriculum, it is staff development."

Dixon also wants to discuss who, other than she, should chair the advisory meetings. "I don't want to control the agenda and our direction." French teacher Liz Urban, concerned about the school's action research project, wants to discuss ways to improve the process. Student teacher Jim is not sure he's been a valuable addition to the group. "Just as I'm figuring out how everything works, it's time for me to leave and for someone new to join." For over an hour, the team discusses the agenda items. Rejecting the adequacy of the status quo, they often mention "the next level" of their work.

At 5:00 p.m., the meeting adjourns. Two Rocky teachers remain in the conference room

to talk with the university researcher studying the Rocky PDS. The three are continuing an earlier conversation about benefits of the PDS. Tom List, a social studies teacher, regularly works with PDS students and student teachers. List leans forward. "I wasn't ever at a worthwhile professional conference prior to PDS. But now, the opportunities are coming fast and furious. The cross-school conversations are real valuable. Talking to other schools' teachers who have answers to problems we face— incredible! And the work with content area professors—for the first time ever, this partnership has presented classroom teachers opportunities to meet with colleagues at the university level in our content areas."

Art teacher Rick Takahashi nods. "I feel comfortable coming to Val (university supervisor Middleton) and asking her to watch what I'm doing. We have that kind of professionalism." He hesitates, searching for words. "It helps me get better. The PDS has broken down the isolation. You see PDS students admit not knowing everything. We see that. We're more willing to ask for ideas."

At 6:00 p.m., the conference room door closes. The three colleagues walk toward the student commons area. Light boxes the floor outside the principals' offices. Cheerleaders' feet tap the floor in unison as they chant a new drill. The sanitary, slightly antiseptic smell of wax wafts its way from the hall where a custodian wrestles a heavy machine. The floors have to be shiny for tomorrow's 1,500 high school students, 75 high school faculty and staff, 20 university teacher candidates, 10 student teachers, and 2 university faculty.

### Serving Tea

There is a centuries old Japanese practice of serving tea, called Cha-no-yu, that requires a lifetime of dedication and commitment. Its values include simplicity, balance, response to the needs of others, and intense awareness of one's self. "The student of Tea," says tea master Sen, "learns to arrange things, to

understand timing and interludes, to appreciate social graces, and to apply all of these to daily experience. These things are all brought to bear in the simple process of serving and receiving a bowl of tea and are done with a single purpose—to realize tranquility of mind in communion with one’s fellow men” (1989, p. 9).<sup>2</sup>

The actual practice of lifelong study is rare in any culture. Experts in any field, however, are rarely satisfied with their current skills and knowledge. The chess champion, the concert pianist, the Olympic athlete all dedicate great periods of time to practice and reflection. And they know that even maintaining their current levels of mastery requires intense dedication and focus.

Contrast the ceremonial tradition of serving tea, rich in highly contextualized and anticipated movements, to the newly emerging phenomenon of the professional development school. The PDS purpose, too, is singular—the improvement of teaching and learning. Yet its students, the participants of the professional development school, have no master from whom to learn. There is no clear model to emulate, no book of wisdom that hints of answers to difficult questions, no tradition to ponder. And still, the learners in such ventures strive to understand more fully the acts of teaching and learning, with the belief that their work will improve and that students will ultimately benefit. The professional development school model suggests this possibility of lifelong focus on teaching and learning.

One such professional development school venture, the Rocky Mountain High School/Colorado State University PDS, is in its fourth year.<sup>3</sup> Its participants strive to achieve the high standards for school/university partnerships set forth by the National Network for Educational Renewal (NNER):

- (a) providing exemplary education for all students;
- (b) preparing exemplary teachers;
- (c) providing continuing education for all

professionals; and  
(d) conducting inquiry into educational practice.<sup>4</sup>

One day’s visit to the RMHS/CSU partner school<sup>5</sup> illustrates the potential of a PDS in becoming, as the tea master would say, “a way of being” for its participants. The PDS, in French teacher Urban’s words, “transcends” both Rocky Mountain High School and Colorado State University. It is becoming a way of thinking about teaching and learning and a way of involving everyone in the process. This potential can be seen in four interrelated ways:

- **Permanency.** The RMHS/CSU PDS has continued its work even after two key leaders (one from the university and the other from RMHS) moved on. The university faculty at RMHS has a permanent classroom designated as the official PDS space. School faculty members see the PDS influencing multiple aspects of the school—from the school’s environment to its teachers’ professional development. And perhaps most important, it is not just a few RMHS faculty who are involved. Nearly all the eighty-plus faculty, including administrators, has participated in some aspect of the PDS.

- **High Expectations.** University students looked and acted like school professionals. They respectfully challenged and supported each other. Teachers demonstrated high expectations for both the university students and themselves. Elliott was focused on constant improvement of herself, her students, and the PDS structure. The advisory meeting topics demonstrated an expectation that the PDS work would improve.

- **A Learning Community.** Elliott attributed improvements in her teaching to her university students and her RMHS colleagues. The TCs demonstrated high levels of learning, from both the university faculty and RMHS faculty, but also from each other. They listened carefully to their peers’

experiences and recommendations. And RMHS faculty eagerly talked about learning from the university students and from the university faculty.

· **A Process.** The PDS is seen by its participants as a process of continual improvement. As much conversation occurred about “the next level” of their work as occurred about the present. Elliott is searching for a new model of student teaching. Rocky faculty members wonder about governance issues and different ways to involve themselves in action research. The principal wants to expand leadership and ownership.

For its participants, the RMHS/CSU PDS has become their place of practice, the place where they can recognize their current expertise and contributions, and then safely and confidently work at improving.

### Insufficiency

Tea Master Sen suggests that recognition of weakness or imperfection is one more positive step in the process of becoming better. “Contrary to the belief that insufficiency is a source of discontent,” he says, “Tea seizes that very insufficiency and builds upon it” (Sen, 1989, p. 77). PDS participants and stakeholders of the Rocky PDS have a similar view. While they agree that good things are happening at Rocky, they also agree that Rocky’s progress brings with it both dilemmas and constant recognition that more is possible. No one claims satisfaction. And discussion about “the next level of the partnership” is common. The concerns and questions, however, change as one’s perspective changes.

The university’s School of Education director worries about people and money resources: “PDSs don’t create great numbers of FTE.<sup>6</sup> We are a small faculty. We try to have two faculty involved at each PDS. That is very labor intensive and stretches us thin. I’m worried about how we keep our model

afloat with the resources we have.” He worries about the lack of involvement from arts and sciences faculty and, additionally, about the political need to share resources equally across all of the PDS sites.

A dean from the College of Liberal Arts applauds the progress at Rocky. He too, however, sees the noticeable lack of systematic involvement of arts and sciences faculty. “We all know that the PDS model is built around a three-party partnership: the schools, colleges/schools of education, and the arts and sciences. For a wide variety of reasons,” he continues, “the creation of actual partnerships has been overwhelmingly two-party affairs rather than three. The Rocky example is representative. There is a healthy and significant partnership, but it is two-party, not three.”

The superintendent of the school district is concerned with the potential conflict between the district’s mission, clearly stated as serving K-12 students, and the amount of time and effort spent on preparing new teachers at the PDS sites. “This is a compelling reason for us to talk about our mission being K-16,” he says. A second concern of the superintendent’s is a political reality. “I continue to get pressure from other universities to place students in our district. They’re starting to feel like they’re shut out of our district.”

A second administrator, one heavily involved in partnership activities, returns to the issue of resources: “At both the district and the university levels, how do you find resources for as much activity as people are asking for? What will the district provide? How do we make people’s visions happen?”

Rocky’s principal continues to puzzle over the issue raised at the advisory meeting. “One real dilemma is the governance issue. Once PDS takes hold, it becomes what you are. What group monitors and revisits the vision? PDS has become our staff development. But because no one representing the PDS is a part of the decision-making process, we don’t allocate money for it. Grants have allowed us to do some things. But the staff development

committee is not in tune with the vision for PDS. The site-based management system we put together two years ago met our needs then. But now, at a different level of PDS involvement, we have to figure out how the PDS relates to the governance of the school.”

The principal also questions how to advance school ownership of the PDS vision. “It’s so complicated. Not everyone gets the big picture. It’s the intense conversations. When people are drawn away from their day-to-day concerns – that creates the bigger understanding.”

When Rocky teacher List talks about his concerns, his shoulders sag and his head lowers. “I’m struggling. Struggling to find time. Time to take advantage of everything our partnership has made available to me.”

University faculty Middleton worries too. “I spend a lot of time at Rocky. Developing relationships at Rocky. Which are very good. But, back at CSU, I’ve lost touch with what’s going on with my peers. And to some extent my other students. I don’t see them in the halls. I don’t have the same connection at CSU anymore. I’m hardly ever there.”

These questions and dilemmas were not being raised four years ago. They reflect the university’s institutionalization of the PDS semester, expanding from one experimental PDS in the district, Rocky, to three, with a fourth being added soon. They reflect increased district expectations of collaboration and higher levels of cross-institutional trust than previously experienced. They represent some of the challenges Rocky and CSU face and must solve together if they are to continue learning together.

The dilemmas that face RMHS and the Teacher Licensure Program, as well as the school district and CSU’s School of Education and arts and sciences faculty, represent new challenges that were not recognized four years ago. These challenges, resulting from previously unexperienced relationships, represent future possibilities.

## A Beginning

The Rocky Mountain High School/ Colorado State partnership has, from its participants’ perspectives, made great strides in four years. Faculty members have formed close working relationships across institutional boundaries. Small grants have created joint professional development opportunities for school and university faculty and university students. And the concept “community of learners” now means a great deal to the PDS participants. Teacher candidates, for example, see themselves as both learners and teachers. Rocky faculty recognize their own expertise and experience, but also talk about relearning concepts they had forgotten and learning new ideas and approaches from the university students. And the university faculty members claim they have learned more than anyone else, totally changing the ways they teach and integrate theory and practice. Even Rocky high school students regularly coach the prospective teachers, taking them aside to suggest ways of fixing something that did not work so well.

The “pupils” in this venture – public school and university administrators, faculty, and students – have learned a great deal. They have learned the importance of relationships and have begun to appreciate the long and steep journey ahead. And they have been rewarded by seeing their work improve. Together, they have begun the focused, daily practice of intentionally focusing on the art of teaching in its authentic context. This intense awareness of one’s self and one’s actions in relation to teaching others has great potential for improving teaching and learning. Rocky PDS participants become like the lifelong students of Tea, who accept that they will never stop learning. The PDS provides opportunity for learning as a way of being.

By participating in the Rocky PDS, these learners bring increased understandings of self and others to the seemingly simple act of teaching a student. They are learning what

James P. Carse<sup>7</sup> concluded as he studied the extraordinary in ordinary experience: “Every step on our journey adds to what we know but it also reveals there is no end to knowing” (1994, p. xi).

## Notes

1. This writing was supported by funding from the Institute for Educational Inquiry and the Arthur Vining Davis Foundations.

2. References to the Japanese tea ceremony are taken from a book entitled, *Tea Life, Tea Mind*. It was written by Grand Tea Master XV, Soshitsu Sen, of the Urasenke School of Tea. In its seventh printing, this book was first published by Weatherhill (New York) in 1979. Tea Master Sen explains a way of life, which is based on principles of the tea ceremony called, *Chado, The Way of Tea*.

3. It is difficult to establish an exact date that the CSU/RMHS partnership began. Informal conversations, friendships, and joint projects led to formal discussions, which began during the 1992-93 school year. Nancy Hartley, then director of the School of Education, talked with the school district superintendent, Don Unger, and Karen Dixon, RMHS principal, about forming a collaborative partnership.

Soon after, a retreat was arranged. Faculty and administrators from RMHS joined faculty, administrators, and student teachers from CSU to talk about visions of teaching and learning and ask questions: What could we do together that we couldn't do apart? In what ways could our collaboration provide mutual benefit? By the end of the day, the forty-plus attendees of the meeting were enthusiastic about possibilities and committed to talking to more people. Conversations continued throughout the year and by the fall of 1993 the first cohort of twenty-two CSU teacher candidates began taking coursework on the RMHS campus.

Every Tuesday and Thursday, the CSU faculty and students are on the RMHS campus. The students participate in a 90-minute theories class (which is often co-taught by RMHS faculty and administrators), work with departments and teachers in classrooms for a 90-minute block, and then return to a seminar to debrief classroom experiences and connect the earlier theory to practice. From this group of approximately twenty pre-student-teaching teacher candidates, the RMHS faculty select a maximum of ten teacher candidates to continue at RMHS for their final semester--student teaching. For results of a study that compared the beliefs and experiences of the teacher candidates at RMHS to those taking the methods course on campus, see the article by Blocker, L. S., & Mantle-Bromley, C. (in press): “PDS vs. Campus Preparation: Through the Eyes of the Students,” in *The Teacher Educator*.

4. School/university partner schools in the NNER share a commitment to John I. Goodlad's 19 postulates, described in *Educational Renewal: Better Teachers, Better Schools* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1994). A total of 16 NNER settings embrace 34 colleges and universities, over 100 school districts, and more than 400 partner schools. For more information regarding the four functions of a partner school, see the NNER *Compact for Educational Renewal*, written by Richard Clark.

5. Data for this RMHS/CSU portrait was actually collected during two days of observation (April 24 and May 1, 1997) by the author. All quotes are verbatim, except for very minor editing for clarification. The actual context of the quotations is taken from detailed notes. Quotations from the “Insufficiency” section are from individual interviews conducted over a period of several weeks in the spring of 1997. Names of professionals have not been changed. University teacher candidate names have been changed.

6. Student credit generated per faculty load.

7. James P. Carse writes about seeing and understanding the universe through everyday experience. His book, *Breakfast at the Victory: The Mysticism of Ordinary Experience* (San Francisco: Harper, 1994), serves to remind PDS participants that their experiences, if paid attention to, have the potential of revealing extraordinary understandings.

## ROCKY MOUNTAIN UPDATE:

# A Story of Becoming: Simultaneous Educational Renewal— Moving from Isolation to Conversation

Val Middleton, Colorado State University

### A Time for Celebration

It is the end of the school year for the Colorado State University/Rocky Mountain High School Professional Development School (CSU/RMHS PDS partnership), and as always it is a time for celebration and reflection on the year's accomplishments. Almost before the lunch bell finishes its high-pitched whine, the Rocky Mountain High School Mini-theatre becomes flooded with the laughter and collegiality fostered by this collaborative partnership. In a matter of moments the Mini-theatre bulges with Colorado State University student teachers (STs) and their corresponding cooperating teachers (CTs); Colorado State University teacher candidates (TCs) and their corresponding match-up teachers (MTs); Rocky Mountain High School special education teachers, administrators, and staff; Colorado State University faculty and administrators; and Poudre School District administrators—all hunting and gathering as they greet those seldom-seen colleagues while simultaneously loading their plates with delicacies provided by RMHS and the teacher candidates.

The roar of conversation from more than seventy individuals begins to die down as stomachs become filled and Dr. Karen Wangsvick, the principal of Rocky Mountain High School, approaches the microphone and begins speaking. "I want to thank all of you participating in the program this year. I realize the amount of energy, time, and work

the teachers put into the Rocky Mountain program, but I also know we get so much from it." After several more statements of acknowledgment and praise for the faculty and staff at Rocky, Dr. Wangsvick addresses the student teachers and the teacher candidates before concluding with: "We're appreciative that you've chosen Rocky Mountain High School to further your education."

Those who are seated applaud themselves and the others with whom they work. Center stage awaits anyone who wants to verbally share a partnership experience. Tom Michoski, a social studies teacher at RMHS, takes the lead. "I just wanted to say that this is the first time I've worked with a PDS student [TC] in a while and I had a pretty good experience with the way I think it's supposed to work; in particular, one experience with Bill [a TC]."

"The way it's supposed to work" is that PDS students or teacher candidates from Colorado State University who are in the Teacher Licensure Program and one semester away from student teaching are enrolled in a General Methods and Assessment course taught on site at RMHS by two CSU faculty, Judy Elliott and Val Middleton. PDS teacher candidates are matched with RMHS teachers for the purpose of connecting theory and practice. Teacher candidates attend their on-site methods course every Tuesday and Thursday from 7:30 a.m. - 9:20 a.m., and then spend a minimum of two 90-minute block periods with their match-up teachers. The

methodology course provides theoretical information on planning, methodology, learning styles, classroom management, and assessment while simultaneously maintaining a focus on professionalism, technology, and democratic principles. During the first few weeks of the semester, teacher candidates are taught the components of lesson planning as well as five different teaching methodologies. Teacher candidates are then expected to write a lesson plan utilizing the components and at least one teaching methodology. In order to enhance relevancy for this lesson-planning activity, teacher candidates use materials provided by their match-up teachers and teach RMHS students the lessons they have created. Additionally, the teacher candidates are to meet with their match-up teachers to discuss their plans and the educational theories they have been taught.

Michoski continues his story. "It started out [when Bill and I] talked about doing a cooperative learning [lesson] on WWI. First, he went in and [spoke with] Judy, got some feedback on his lesson plan, and brought it back to me and I suggested some things. When he actually acted on the lesson plan the first time, it went well, but not perfect. Then Val, Bill, and I got together at lunch [in order to reflect on the lesson]. Bill turned right around and did the same lesson plan with a few adjustments and it went about as well as [a lesson] can go. I thought it was a great lesson plan."

Michoski elaborates further. "What I got out of it was a cooperative lesson I've been thinking about for five years, one that works for WWI and would be applicable to U.S. History and World History." He continues, "I ran over to Kinko's right afterwards and copied all the 175 pages and put it in my envelope and made sure I had it because I really think it was outstanding."

In closing, Michoski summarizes the process that has taken this partnership years to establish. "All the players participated. First, Judy looked at the lesson plan. Val sat there and listened and made some very direct suggestions for Bill after the first

performance. Bill turned right around, plugged it in a half-hour later, and I saw immediate improvement. The [RMHS] kids were falling all over me afterwards. They said, 'hey, that was a nice change.' And while [the students] were going through [the lesson], I, the traditional lecture-type that I am, sat there with the lesson plan I would have done ticking off all the points that I would have covered. And I could say they were all covered plus about four or five [more]. The kids enjoyed it. I enjoyed it. It was a nice thing. I hope to do more of the same and am looking forward to working with Bill as a student teacher in the fall."

After thanking Michoski for sharing, Dr. Wangsvick reinforces one of the year's goals of the partnership – providing simultaneous renewal by moving from isolation to conversation – when she states, "I think that example really demonstrates what the program is all about – it's an opportunity for all of us to share. When we put our heads together we can see so much more than we can by ourselves. So often teaching is so isolated. This program is an opportunity to bring us out of isolation and learn to share with each other."

### **Sustaining and Renewing the Partnership**

The CSU/RMHS PDS has discovered that educational reform is more than preparing preservice teachers in a new way. Educational reform involves actively engaging in the four functions of partner schools enumerated by Richard Clark in his pamphlet, *Partner Schools: Definitions and Expectations*, which are: to educate children and youth, prepare educators, provide professional development, and conduct inquiry. The CSU/RMHS PDS believes in the importance of the four functions and is actively engaged in making those functions a reality. The CSU/RMHS partnership has been in existence since 1992. Data on the life span of partner schools and data gathered from participants in the CSU/Rocky Mountain partnership show the likelihood of

the partnership decaying as it ages. In an attempt to keep the partnership going full strength, it was critical that efforts toward growth be turned inward to encourage new ideas and new life. During the 1997-98 school year, RMHS acquired new ideas and new life by expanding its staff by over twenty new members (one-fourth of the teaching staff). The abilities of the new teachers, combined with the expertise of those who have long been a part of the partnership, set the stage for expanding the goals of the partnership. The four functions of partnership schools are becoming a reality for RMHS due to understandings regarding “where we are” and “where we want to be.”

Sustaining and renewing the partnership by advancing school ownership of the PDS vision was a complicated process. Part of the process involved creating opportunities for staff to “get the big picture” of the partnership relationship and its functions. Approximately forty RMHS teachers were identified for participation in “big picture” sessions to create “bigger understandings” of the partner school agenda. A plan was created for the learning activities and discussions, which included a grounding in the history and philosophy of school-university partnerships and democratic schools. Discussion sessions were designed to build on previously accomplished work and questions raised about the previous year’s portrait of the partnership. The main concerns included, but were not limited to, the following: How is simultaneous renewal working? What are the benefits to teacher candidates and student teachers? What are the benefits to the high school staff? What are the benefits to RMHS students?

Additional sessions involved providing support to first-year and tenure teachers in combining theory and practice as they related to topics such as lesson planning, teaching methodology, classroom management, learning styles, and authentic and alternative assessment.

Discussion sessions were established and held on site at RMHS. Separate discussion sessions were organized for cooperating

teachers, match-up teachers, and new/first-year teachers. In some cases, RMHS faculty combined with CSU preservice teacher candidates for class sessions and/or reflective discussions and seminars. CSU faculty facilitated the sessions by leading each session and providing articles and other reading materials appropriate for the topics being discussed. Money for facilitators, supplies, release time, substitutes, and stipends was made available by the Arthur Vining Davis Foundations grant and other sources.

The main goals provided for by the grant are as follows: (1) to provide opportunities for new RMHS faculty to learn about the philosophy, goals, culture, and functions of partnership schools in general, and about the CSU/Rocky Mountain PDS; (2) to provide opportunities for the professional growth of Rocky Mountain teachers and CSU teacher candidates through a connection of theory and practice; and (3) to continue to elevate the partner activities to higher levels of simultaneous renewal and collaboration.

### **Let the Conversations Begin**

New/first-year teachers and veterans of the RMHS PDS gather in the RMHS Front Range Conference Room. Cori Mantle-Bromley, a university professor, leads the discussion of the two articles assigned to the group. Angie Yamashita, a first-year teacher in language arts, is quick to respond with statements and questions on individuality and moral values while sharing a recent conversation held by her students during a class discussion. Angie and her students want to know if school is, “a place where we not only teach reading, writing, and arithmetic, but also set up values that we can all agree on?” Angie follows with another question, “But if we do [teach certain values], then are we stepping on individuality?” Cori asserts some assumptions regarding diversity: “Diversity is a key element of individuality. Individual rights come with democracy, and all of these individual rights

are based on the concept of diversity and that diversity is good." Angie continues with her references to Emerson and her in-class activity, then comes back to the original question, "Should schools be democratic?" Cori rephrases the question, "Why is it that we're having conversations about schools in the context of a democratic society?" Maggie Barnhill, a first-year special education teacher, asserts, "Because we want critical thinkers." Maggie continues, but Alain Henry, a special education teacher, helps her find the words: "The goals we have as educators are wanting kids to conform [and wanting] them to be independent thinkers. Those two [ideals] clash. The two roles of schools always clash: one is an autocratic model and the other is not." Alain ends by asking for clarification on the question. Cori elaborates using theoretical and research-based references. An additional question arises, "What is the purpose of schools?" Discussion ensues.

Liz Urban, a veteran French teacher and long-time participant in the PDS, references the article "Dialogical Pedagogy" by Juan-Miguel Fernandez-Balboa, as well as some ideas from Paulo Freire. "Both authors focus on the issue of empowerment of individuals," she says. Liz explains her thinking: "What it reminds me of is when we started this [PDS] project. We had some concerns about the student teacher training here at Rocky, and a group of teachers was established to work with people from CSU. The way we came together [was that] we had a concern, a problem, a challenge, but neither party had the answer. It was really an incredible experience because we came together in dialogue, which to me is explained in this article." Liz continues, "Both parties had a common interest and neither side had a solution, and put together in dialogue, we learned about ourselves and each other and possible solutions. I don't know if that can happen in every classroom, but sometimes I wonder why it can't."

Alain, reminds the group, "We don't have a purpose that's defined by any one thing. Each teacher brings his[/her] own set of purposes to the classroom. Parents bring

another set of purposes." Alain sees no resolution to who determines the purpose. To add to the discussion, Cori focuses the group on Roger Soder's writings on the moral obligations of schooling. Discussion ensues, taking several tangents before stopping on the topic of consensus.

Carol Seemueller, a veteran science teacher and veteran to the PDS agenda, reminisces and enlightens the group on how difficult it was to come to consensus about district objectives that included critical thinking and multicultural sensitivity. She believes it will be equally or more difficult to come to consensus about the purpose of school. The conversation continues.

Jo Turman, a veteran physical education teacher and PDS participant, adds, "Maybe it's not that we teach right or wrong but that each individual has a voice . . ." She continues, "Somehow or another my eight-year-old son is getting the message that his voice counts." Jo explains that her son wants to call the mayor in order to keep a wildlife area from being turned into a playground.

Maggie Barnhill tries her voice at gaining consensus: "One thing we all seem to agree on: kids need to know the democratic process and that they have a voice; and [they need] to learn how to express it . . ."

Carol concludes, "What I read loud and clear in a couple of these articles was, not just our teaching but our classroom management and culture have to be [democratic]. That's really the difference and [that for me] is part of being involved in the PDS because I don't think I know how to do that by myself."

### **Connecting and Reconnecting Theory and Practice**

Carol's statements make the shift from teaching in isolation to the need for collaboration and conversation. The General Methods and Assessment course and its corresponding Reflective Seminars provide another forum for discussing democratic principles, educational theory, and best practice. New, first-year, and veteran teachers

are invited into the methodology course where collaborative learning is practiced on a daily basis by the teacher candidates. Judy Elliott welcomes the RMHS teachers to a session on classroom management and asks them, "Can you help us sort through some of the things as novice teachers we need to be thinking about?" Helen McGuire, a language arts teacher in her twenty-third year of teaching, adds, "I don't remember anything [from the early years] about behavior management. Now I'm using a lot of behavior management."

Judy explains to the teacher candidates additional reasons why the RMHS teachers are attending the methods class: "The PDS is an integral part of RMHS. We develop together and learn together. You learn from your match-up teachers and I learn from you. What we really are is a community of learners." She continues, "Twenty-five percent of Rocky's staff is new. [We need] to have the new teachers learn about PDS."

Judy continues with the class. She begins by describing the method the teacher candidates will use to complete their exam on methodology. Judy holds up a single sheet of paper. "You can see from my example that I've [taken your exam]." Next, Judy lists her expectations. "I will take one page only. What that's asking you to do is to be concise. Show me on your tests you know methodology."

Jennifer, a teacher candidate majoring in language arts, asks, "I was wondering if we could turn it in on Tuesday and have a couple of days [to work] on it?" Judy models a democratic process, "I'd rather have you do a good job than rush. What do you want to do?" The students decide on a few extra days. Judy gives one last reminder before the start of the day's activities. "I need an e-mail from each of you about how things are going. Let us know how things are going and what we can do to help you."

Judy verbally signals the beginning of the lesson. "Within your tables, see if you can figure out from the literature and theories that we've read three kinds of things that happen in a class that are zero tolerance. That

is, if these kinds of things happen in a class, you respond immediately.

Before anyone is able to respond, Judy asks two teacher candidates to share a recent experience. Valerie and Al describe a fight that occurred outside of the school building while students were on their way off campus. Valerie and Al break up the fight and send the students and their supporters on their way. Al continues telling the story to his wide-eyed peers, "We called Judy and asked 'What do we do?'" Rather than give an answer, Judy returns the question. "So what did you do?" Valerie answers, "We did what we could do. I yelled at him until I realized he was bigger [than me]. We also talked to the peace officer. I was all shaky afterwards." Al finishes the story, "Valerie had a class right after that [incident] or else we would have gone right away to report it. We were shook up."

Judy encourages all of the teacher candidates to look at the appropriate actions taken by their peers. She compares those actions with the information found in their text. For the teacher candidates, theory made a direct connection to practice. Judy refers the students to her original query on the three actions exhibited by students that need immediate responses by the teacher. "The first one was obviously physical abuse." Judy asks for the second category. A teacher candidate is correct in responding "verbal abuse." Judy provides an example, a string of reprimands, and reminders. "You hear a student call another student a name. You stop them. Zero tolerance. You tell them, 'That's not OK in this class.' Give them clear messages. By pretending you didn't hear it, you're condoning it. As an adult in the classroom you are a role model."

The teacher candidates offer several other examples as the third category. Judy sums them up as "noncompliance." Judy offers a fictitious example: "A student is leaning back in his chair. You have tried several subtle and not so subtle methods from your handout, 'The Mode of Least Intervention,' to get the student to put all four legs of the chair on the floor. You finally ask the student to put the

chair down. The student looks you in the eye and tells you to ‘Make me.’ What do you do?” The teacher candidates offer several suggestions. Judy combines and paraphrases several of the suggestions. Judy asks if any of the RMHS teachers would like to add anything. Helen adds, “It seems like the consequences for staying should be worse than for leaving.” Mliz Imes, another RMHS teacher, supplements, “I try to disengage the audience. I try to talk to the student one-on-one. I leave the situation, get the rest of the group going, and then deal with the student.” Jennifer, a teacher candidate, offers support, “I agree with that,” and shares her rationale.

Judy continues, attempting to get the teacher candidates to recognize discipline styles but also to examine themselves, to be who they are, and not to become replicas of their match-up teachers. Judy points to the headings she has on the board: Canter’s Assertive Discipline, Dreikurs’ Logical Consequences, Glasser’s Classroom Meeting. “Do any of your match-up teachers exemplify any of these? Which teacher are you?” Kristie, a teacher candidate majoring in exercise and sport science, responds, “I think my teacher is probably the logical consequences kind. I think for me, I’m probably a combination of assertive and logical consequences.” Judy concludes, “It’s not about what you must do, it’s about finding your comfort zone. You can watch your match-up teacher. You can try some things yourself in this safe atmosphere. See what works. You can get feedback from your match-up teacher and your peers.”

Judy changes directions and poses another series of questions to the group. “How much student talk are you going to allow in your classroom? How much down time? How much student movement? What procedures will you have for turning in work? Does the teacher dismiss the students or does the bell? Talk about the kinds of things that work or things you’ve seen or what you would choose to do in your classroom, because soon it will be your classroom.” She gives the class some time to think, share, discuss, and problem-solve

among themselves.

A question regarding students with special needs arises from the discussion. John, a teacher candidate majoring in social studies, asks, “For exceptions, do you have to tell the [rest of the] students why you are making that exception? Are you setting up a system of unfairness?” Judy turns the question over to the RMHS teachers: “Let’s ask the teachers who are doing it.”

Helen responds first. “I’ve made the class accessible to everyone. I don’t treat everyone the same.” John interjects with another question, “But won’t you be perceived as playing favorites?” Lexi, a teacher candidate majoring in science, defends Helen’s statement. “People know who the kids are who have problems. They know that something else is going on.” The discussion goes in circles for a while before Judy concludes the topic and changes direction. “Let’s change seats. Let’s count off. Take a break and come back to the tables numbered 1-5.”

Upon their return, Judy asks the group to look at the policies and expectations they have received from their match-up teachers. The teacher candidates are now in different seats and are able to share, converse, discuss, and problem-solve with a different set of peers and RMHS teachers. Two teachers have an opportunity to share with the large group before time ends.

Mliz shares: “My big deal is tardiness. Not only do I have [tardiness] on my expectations but I also have a piece of paper that has the rules on it and I make every student sign it, and that way they know I’m serious. One thing I have not put on there [that would have been] extremely helpful is that I do not accept extra credit. Sophomores are all running to me at the end of the term expecting to raise a grade. Maybe if I had put that on [my list of rules] they would know there are no second chances.”

Helen offers her final words of wisdom, “I would advise you to have a file where you collect [expectation sheets] from all different disciplines. It takes me a while to get them just the way I like them and all on one page. I

also have a one-line disclaimer [about no extra credit] that I have the students read out loud." Helen asks a question: "So what's the psychological advantage?" She answers it herself, "Kids always come up with 'so we do it right the first time.' It's a huge 10 to 15 minutes. And you kind of have to smile when you do it."

The bell ending class punctuates Helen's statement. Judy holds the teacher candidates for a few more minutes, "Can I point out to you that Mary is teaching? How many of you are going to watch Mary teach?" Three teacher candidates raise their hands. Judy adds, "Aaron is teaching tomorrow. Is anybody else teaching right now?" Two other students raise their hands. Other teacher candidates volunteer to observe and provide feedback. The teacher candidates thank the participating teachers, gather their materials, and rush off to their assignments.

get some cake. This is the last celebration. Thank you to everyone for your involvement."

### **The Celebration Continues**

The 1997-98 school year offered many opportunities for conversation, reflection, and professional growth. In addition to the above, some teachers were able to go to national conferences and share the successes they have had as a result of the partnership. Rick Takahashi enthuses: "We just had an opportunity to go to Kansas City for a conference on professional development schools. I want to tell you that it's really nice to go to a conference where you're recognized as one of the leaders in the field. Oftentimes, we don't see that [recognition]. People were asking me a lot of questions about our program."

The stakeholders of the partnership have learned to see themselves as both learners and teachers by recognizing each individual's expertise and experience and by accepting and implementing new or perhaps forgotten ideas and approaches. These stakeholders are also willing to do their part in keeping the partnership moving ahead. With all that said and done, Dr. Wangsvick enjoys the last word. "We'd like to have you come up and