

WESTERN SYDNEY  
UNIVERSITY



**Ms Jana Kovtun**

(02) 9772 6236 | [j.kovtun@westernsydney.edu.au](mailto:j.kovtun@westernsydney.edu.au)

**Ms Sue Heald**

(02) 9772 6663 | [s.heald@westernsydney.edu.au](mailto:s.heald@westernsydney.edu.au)

School of Education  
Professional Experience Office





# Bridging the gap between policy expectations and actual professional experience placement practices

“The success of partnerships depends on the willingness of schools and universities to embrace them”

(Brady, 2002, p. 2)







# Is there a problem?

- Through our experience, we have identified a variety of issues that obstruct the guidelines of the framework, such as:
  - partnerships between the school and university break down;
  - supply of placements is restricted due to direct competition with other institutions, and the lack of incentives to participate;
  - mandatory mentor teacher training and schools' perceptions of experience for mentor teachers
  - lack of interest from schools and/or mentor teachers





# Partnerships

- “Partnership between schools and universities is described as fostering collaboration in the development of ‘criteria, processes and procedures’ for the accreditation of those schools providing professional experience for student teachers”

(Brady, 2002, p. 1)

# Partnership Issues



- ‘Partner schools’
  - other universities
  - beginning teachers
  - previous offers unfulfilled
  - placement dates
- Communication
  - contact information and staff roles
  - internal communication



# Placement supply

- Competition
  - university preference
  - 'quota' reached
- Response rate
  - non-acknowledgement of request
- Timing
  - School terms
  - Pre-service teacher year of study
- Remuneration
  - mentor teacher pay rates in comparison to work required



# Mentoring

- Mandatory training
- Experience
- Current teaching practices



# Lack of Interest

- ❖ Confidence;
- ❖ Prior negative experiences;
- ❖ Long-term low opinion of the University;
- ❖ Perceived 'difficult' processes;
- ❖ Mandatory training;
- ❖ Implementation of university program;
- ❖ No recognition for outstanding mentor teachers





“The literature on school-university partnerships highlights the challenges involved in making such partnerships successful. Differences in language, culture and organisational priorities can be compounded by logistical difficulties”

(Greany & Brown, UCL 2015)

# Does the literature agree?

- According to AITSL, the professional experience landscape is currently facing challenges:
  - “chronic shortage of placements”
    - “differing expectations and systems”
      - “lack of time for mentor teachers to meet and work with pre-service teachers”
        - inadequate time for schools to allocate pre-service teachers to mentor teachers
          - “national approach to program accreditation”



# Does the literature agree?

- New Zealand's Post Primary Teachers' Association (PPTA, p. 6) agrees that partnerships have “always been of critical importance”, and highlight issues arising from both sides of the partnership:

University	Mentor Teachers
Availability of quality mentor teachers at schools	Excessive workload demands for mentor teachers, especially with at risk students
Ensuring mentor teachers understand their role	Poor remuneration for the role
Difficulties receiving honest feedback about pre-service teachers' performance	Worried about lack of response from university regarding challenging pre-service teachers



# Making the alliance work!

*“Our primary focus is always the quality of teaching and learning... so we do a lot around feedback, we do a lot around peer to peer learning, we do a lot around meta-cognition.”*

(Greany & Brown, UCL 2015)



Jana Kovtun & Sue Heald



# So what are we doing about it?

- ✓ Improved placement management system (InPlace)
- ✓ Earlier requests for placements
- ✓ Improved communication processes
- ✓ School Professional Experience Coordinator liaison
- ✓ Certificates of Appreciation



# Other positive initiatives...

- Advisor induction
- Professional development opportunities for mentor teachers
- Hub School initiative – Sydney & Rural
- NETDS (National Exceptional Teachers for Disadvantaged Schools) program
- “Shadow Days” (Secondary program)
- Continuous improvement of the “*Requiring Additional Support / At Risk*” processes across all programs for consistency, transparency and ease of use



WESTERN SYDNEY  
UNIVERSITY



# QUESTIONS?



School of Education  
Professional Experience Office





# References



- Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards NSW. (2013). *Great teaching, inspired learning: A framework for high-quality professional experience in schools*. Retrieved from <https://educationstandards.nsw.edu.au>
- Brady, L. (2002). School university partnerships – what do the schools want. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 27(1). Retrieved from <http://www.edu.edu.au/ses/educ/AJTE/ajte.html>
- Greany, T., & Brown, C. (2015). *Partnerships between teaching schools and universities: research report*. London Centre for Leadership in Learning, UCL Institute of Education. Retrieved from [http://researchrichschools.org.uk/uploads/resources/1429300990\\*1\\*Teaching-schools-and-universities-research-report.pdf](http://researchrichschools.org.uk/uploads/resources/1429300990*1*Teaching-schools-and-universities-research-report.pdf).
- Le Cornu, R. (2015). *Key components of effective professional experience in initial teacher education in Australia*. Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, Melbourne.
- Post Primary Teachers' Association. (2015). *Initial teacher education in change: But is it for the better?* Conference paper, PPTA annual conference