

## **Inquiry/Action Research and Service Learning are aligned with the School Improvement Plan**

These are two key features of the Towson PDS Internship, required in our PDS model. These features can be separate projects, e.g., an action research project on student achievement using a math strategy in a classroom and a service project on a reading club. Also, action research and service learning can be *combined*. For example, data collected on a service learning project involving math tutoring before or after school can additionally be used for action research provided the data are analyzed and shared to inform next steps in the research cycle. Inquiry/Action Research and Service Learning projects can be implemented by individual interns or group of interns (whole cohorts or small groups). Teachers, mentors, and/or school administrators should be involved in the suggestion, identification, and approval phase of the projects.

### **Inquiry/Action Research**

#### *Rationale*

“The learning community that evolves through a PDS offers an ideal medium for inquiry and action research surrounding teaching and learning. Inquiry groups and/or action research groups and the training necessary to participate in these groups are an integral part of a PDS partnership” (*Professional Development Schools: An Implementation Manual*, Maryland Partnership for Teaching and Learning K-16 Superintendents and Deans Committee, 2003).

#### *Definition*

“Action research is a deliberate, solution-oriented investigation that is group or personally owned and conducted. It is characterized by spiraling cycles of problem identification, systematic data collection, reflection, analysis, data-driven action taken, and, finally, problem redefinition” (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1982).

For more information:

Calhoun, E. F. (1994). *How to use action research in the self-renewing school*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

Hubbard, R. S., & Power, B. M. (1993). *The art of classroom inquiry*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Maclean, M. S., & Mohr, M. M. (1999). *Teacher researchers at work*. Berkeley, CA: The National Writing Project.

Jane Neapolitan, Director, Institute for PDS Studies at Towson University.

## Service Learning

### *Rationale*

The Towson University PDS Network has a long history of providing “added value” to its partnerships through service projects that make a contribution to the school community. As part of the reciprocal impact of the Towson PDS, interns help make a difference for the overall improvement of teaching and learning and for reaching school goals.

### *Definition*

“A method of experiential education that links academic learning with student service which benefits the community. Service learning projects must include academic preparation, service activity, and structured reflection” (*Maryland’s Service-Learning Leadership Handbook*, Maryland Student Service Alliance, 2000-2001).

For more information:

Teacher Education Consortium in Learning (2003). *Learning to serve, serving to learn: A view from higher education*. Salisbury, MD: Salisbury University.