

A School System Builds Its Own Workshop_____

VERNON E. ANDERSON AND WATT A. LONG

WHEN an extension division of a state system of higher education and a public school system put their heads together to provide a summer fare for the growth of teaching skills, something is bound to happen. It did in Portland. Here in a city of some 450,000 people is located—fortunately for the schools—an Extension Center of the Oregon State System of Higher Education. It has been found possible through cooperation between the Portland Public Schools and this center to provide workshop facilities in the actual situations in which the teachers work.

Cooperation Furthers an Idea

Once the idea had been mulled over, it was relatively easy to perfect the organization. All the ingredients were there. The school district had the buildings and necessary equipment. A teaching staff was secured by the Extension Center from the Oregon College of Education and the Oregon State College. The Portland teachers furnished the working group devoted to an important summer job—improving their skills in educating children. For the six weeks' work, the Extension Center

granted five quarter hours of undergraduate credit, the character and nature of the work being determined by nature of the schools and by mutual agreement of the cooperating agencies. A fee of \$17.50 for the five hours has been found sufficient to finance the venture.

Three distinct workshop groups were organized, one at the first-grade level, one at the sixth-grade level, and one for junior high school home economics teachers.

Demonstrations Show How It Is Done

The planners saw another possibility for making the workshop practical for teachers. Portland children participated in demonstration classes. Such a group has been organized for the three workshop sections mentioned: first-grade children, sixth-grade children, and 8B girls. The demonstration classes became an integral part of the workshop in which the techniques discussed in the workshop groups were observed in actual practice.

The workshop time was divided in such a way that the discussions could be built around the demonstration groups. Three hours in the morning were set aside for each section, when all teachers in that section worked as a group. During the first hour, they met with the instructor for a general discussion of techniques to be observed; the second hour, they observed the class; and the third hour, they gathered together again for further discussion of what they had seen and to work on teaching materials to use in their own classes the coming year.

The workshop groups were divided into

We don't always have to move out of familiar surroundings to learn by the workshop method. Through a cooperative plan shared in by the Oregon State System of Higher Education and the Portland Public Schools, teachers of Portland are attending summer workshops in the school environment in which they work, learning to solve their problems by on-the-spot analysis. The way Portland has developed its own workshop program is described here by Watt A. Long, assistant superintendent of schools, and Vernon E. Anderson, director of curriculum, both of Portland Public Schools.

small committees in order to provide opportunities for people with similar interests to work together in producing materials for their own use. Out of these committees' study came subject-matter units which were used later by each teacher in her classroom.

A Home-Town Product

This is the way in which the demonstration classes were used. The children worked under average classroom conditions in one of the Portland elementary-school buildings. The conventional furniture found in the majority of the classrooms of the city's elementary schools was used. The basic instructional materials were the same as those available in the regular classes during the school year. No attempt was made to set up a classroom which could not be duplicated by any teacher attending the workshop. The displays on the walls, the classroom reading materials, and the furniture were rearranged from time to time in accord with the wishes and suggestions of the children attending the class. In fact, the whole demonstration was pointed toward illustrating how the teacher could improve her use of materials, her knowledge of children, her techniques of teaching, and her room environment under the conditions in which she actually worked.

The work of the class carried on in the demonstration classes was planned within the scope and sequence of the curriculum of the Portland Public Schools. Here was a further opportunity for showing how a course of study should be adapted to the needs of the children.

The classroom demonstrations raised questions regarding good classroom practices. To these the instructor devoted some time during the third hour. This procedure was especially helpful to teachers who were observing for the first time new

classroom techniques. Moreover, it tended to focus attention on the whole picture of what was going on in the classroom, rather than on smaller segments. The plan of work in the class, as developed with the children, gradually unfolded before the workshop group through pre-demonstration discussion, observation, and further clarification of questions.

Taking a Look at Ourselves

One of the problems that became evident as the workshop progressed was the need for more time for the post-demonstration discussion. The third hour was used both for this purpose and as a work period. Time was available for smaller working groups in the afternoon, which might have been used more effectively. Four or five hours rather than three could advantageously have been scheduled for the workshop. In the case of first- and sixth-grade classes, the instructor or director of the workshop did not teach the demonstration class, as was done in the home economics group. There was a considerable advantage in having the same person take charge of both the workshop discussion group and the demonstration class.

As in any real workshop teaching materials were produced by the participants. The development of these materials was not begun, however, until the majority of the group had become acquainted with some of the basic principles of the "how" in their development. One of the most difficult tasks for the committees who were undertaking the production of subject-matter units was making the statements of general and specific objectives. For those who were used to thinking in terms of subject-matter units only, it was particularly troublesome to state goals of behavior as specific attitudes, appreciations, skills, and understandings. The construction of

instruments for evaluation caused some of the teachers considerable trouble. Most of them were fairly proficient in constructing objective instruments but were hard put to develop the more subjective means of measurement.

We See Results

The above described workshops have been in operation for the past two summers. In these two years, approximately two hundred and fifty Portland teachers have participated. The principals, supervisors, and directors who have had an opportunity to observe the work of the two hundred and fifty teachers following their workshop experience report definite

improvement in classroom instruction. The results are in some cases more indirect in that the techniques learned by the teachers who attended the workshops have been discussed at building professional meetings and have been observed by other teachers in the building.

The summer workshops are implemented by an in-service training program carried on through the winter months. In this plan, under the direction of the assistant superintendent in charge of curriculum and instruction, the superintendent, directors, and supervisors actively participate at least one day a week in meeting groups of teachers. But that's another story.

◀ *Michigan likes the workshop method!*

The August Working Conference

ROLAND C. FAUNCE

BIRDS SING in the birches. The sun weaves patterns through the leaves. Clean breezes from nearby Higgins Lake refresh the pedagogical soul; and in every nook and corner of the Michigan Conservation Training School grounds, men and women are hard at work on the problems of the impending school year. For this is the fourth week of August, and the clan has returned to the annual Working Conference.

Hard work and hard play, few speeches and much discussion are tip-offs to the success of the Higgins Lake workshop in Michigan. The August conferences spring from the expressed need of school people for help in solving their problems. The purpose of these annual gatherings and the way they are conducted are described by Roland C. Faunce, chief of the Division of Elementary and Secondary Education in the Michigan Department of Public Instruction.



Learning group processes

A one-week summer workshop on general curriculum problems has been held annually in Michigan for five years. These working sessions, attended by administrators, teachers, college representa-

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