

All teachers or the students in the core groups (both the core teachers and the special teachers) should help in planning the program.

The entire faculty should be regularly informed of the progress and development of the course.

Time should be provided during the regular school day for staff meetings.

Children should be helped to understand the reasons for change. If students are accustomed to day-by-day assignments by the teacher, it takes

time for them to see the values that come from long time planning, group work, and self-appraisal.

Parents should be in on the program from the start and should be helped to understand the purposes of the program. Study groups, individual conferences, visits to classes, participation in selection of materials, assisting in planning trips—these are techniques which might be used to acquaint parents with the core program and its purposes.

Workshopping for Growth

DONALD P. SUMRILL

"Why not try a workshop yourself this summer"? is the question asked by Donald P. Sumrill, principal, Southeastern Junior High School, Battle Creek, Mich., who goes on to provide some answers in his account of a successful workshop. He describes how this project provided new ways and means of learning, but equally important, he stresses the importance of what has actually been done in providing experiences for teacher growth in education.

THE WORKSHOP is not a unique instrument nor an innovation in the in-service training of teachers, but it does present a most interesting method of actually trying to live some of the practices one preaches. To the teacher who has had a wide experience with workshops, this account¹ of the workshop held at St. Mary's Lake, Battle Creek, Michigan, may be an old story, but to the uninitiated it may open avenues for teacher growth possible in almost all school systems. From the formal and informal evaluations of this

workshop, the participants showed clearly that it was one of the most interesting and significant of their educational experiences. With no thought of belittling the formal courses one may pursue in the regular university summer session, they were all agreed that the opportunity to study together informally whatever problem most interested them, to live together with their fellow workers, with no worry of marks, term papers, or set standards was a most worthwhile experience.

¹ The author wishes to thank Mrs. Nellie MacDonald and Vivian Beers for their help in editing this account.

We Find a Spot and Make Our Plans

The idea for the St. Mary's work-

shop was first conceived early in the spring of 1946. Its purpose was to give to the teachers of Battle Creek an educational experience based upon their own problems with a minimum of expense and time spent away from home. Battle Creek is most fortunate in having the facilities of a children's camp at St. Mary's Lake, about four miles from the city. This is a camp that had been set up by the Kellogg Foundation as a year-round camp for the boys and girls of Calhoun County. Groups of about seventy to eighty pupils attend the camp for two-week periods throughout the year. The physical facilities are excellent; a large central lodge provides a kitchen and dining room as well as rooms suitable for large groups. Huge fireplaces and comfortable furnishings give one the feeling of informality which is so necessary for successful group participation. On the hill overlooking the lake are four sleeping cabins, furnished with enough cots for the capacity of the camp. It is well staffed and headed by an excellent outdoor educator.

The camp was reserved for a two-week period in August. The University of Michigan was interested in sponsoring such a workshop for graduate or undergraduate credit. The staff at Battle Creek, working with the university, made the necessary arrangements with the resource personnel for the workshop. Valuable resource people, a rather large library of modern books on education, and a supply of audio-visual aids and equipment provided rich sources of help. A grant from the Kellogg Foundation helped defray the expenses of the workshop, as well as provide scholarships to the partici-

pants. These scholarships were in the form of greatly reduced camp fees.

The participants in the workshop were entirely from the Battle Creek school system. It was thought that by limiting participation to the Battle Creek teachers there would be a better basis for specific problems and the opportunity to get better acquainted with fellow teachers which is somewhat difficult in a large school system. The teachers registered for the workshop in the late spring. A planning committee was selected to make the necessary arrangements with the university and the camp and to draw up a tentative program for the two weeks. The work of this committee was completed prior to the workshop and in no way dominated the program once the workshop was underway.

Getting Organized Is the Problem

The first job of the participants after the enrollment at the camp itself, was one of organization. This was done at the first session of the workshop. This was the first opportunity to come to grips with democratic procedures. The only restrictions that were imposed were the title of the course, "Citizenship and Outdoor Education" and the dates set aside for the availability of the resource persons. A planning committee from among the participants themselves was elected and it was their job to set up a tentative program for the workshop, subject to the changes and improvements suggested by the rest of the members. In general the program for each day was outlined as follows:

9:00 to 10:00	General meeting
10:00 to 11:30	Working groups
11:30 to 12:00	Free period

12:00 to	1:30	Lunch
1:30 to	3:30	Working groups
3:30 to	5:30	Crafts
5:30 to	6:00	Free period
6:00 to	7:00	Supper
7:00 to	8:30	General meeting with one resource person

This procedure was followed for two days when by general agreement the supper hour was pushed up to 5:30 and the evening meeting was generally omitted. Even then it was not hard and fast, since from time to time changes were made for evaluation meetings, viewing of films, and the like. At no time did individuals feel that they were not able and welcome to suggest changes. Good fellowship and democracy in action was felt by all.

Naturally the working groups were the core of the workshop. All agreed that these must be on topics that were real and of concern to the teacher of Battle Creek and to each individual participant. To achieve this, much time was taken the first day or two for an overall discussion of the problems and a specific listing of the problems by individuals. This list was given to the planning committee whose job it was to select from these problems four or five large areas of study so that the workshop could be broken down into groups of sufficiently small size for discussion and study. Four areas were chosen:

- Group A Democratic procedure and citizenship training
- Group B Health practices
- Group C Instructional problems
- Group D School and community relations

Group D actually combined with group A when the working periods

were started, due to the small size of the latter group. The groups were organized on a fairly permanent basis with a chairman and recorder. From time to time two of the groups combined for a meeting when the problem under consideration was felt to be common to both. There was also some provision for individuals to visit in one of the other groups if the discussions were of particular interest to them. During the general meetings of the whole group questions and ideas were brought up for general consideration. The day's work was always discussed and the periods changed by a vote of all. Altogether the program was very flexible, with the planning committee always on the lookout for improvement.

There's Time for Fun

One of the most important phases of the workshop was the feeling of informality and good fellowship. The democratic practices that already have been mentioned and the program of recreation helped to develop this feeling. The recreation was planned by a special committee whose job it was to see that the workshop was not all work, but mixed with it was a wholesome amount of fun.

In the afternoon a craft period was set up. This served to give relaxation from reading and discussions and also provided a chance to learn with the hands. A competent instructor taught various crafts such as carving, metal shaping, and clay modeling. Teachers found themselves in a pleasant learning situation. Many had greater pride in an ash tray pounded out by their own hands than in some intellectual achievement. The craft period was a most in-

formal one where fun and friendliness held forth.

Along with the craft period as a form of recreation were social opportunities during meal time and free periods. Never a meal went by without community singing, generally of original songs made up on the spur of the moment. The singing was spontaneous with everyone participating. In fact, one resource person became quite famous as a maker of impromptu verses. Adding to this informality was the job of "hopping" and general kitchen police. Tables were set and cleared and dishes wiped by the teachers themselves. Everyone took his turn accompanied by good-natured remarks.

During the free periods, trips around the camp, outdoor hikes, cookouts, and even fishing trips were planned. The books in the library were always available for those who wished to read during these periods and of course one's bunk was always ready for those who wished to relax with a short nap. Evenings were usually informally planned for a council fire under the stars. This was carried out in true Indian fashion and actually was quite a solemn affair. Tall stories were exchanged along with a reading of the Saber Tooth Curriculum by the firelight.

These Were the Problems

The greater portion of the time was spent in a serious consideration of the problems under each of the three main group topics. Although each group proceeded as they wished, by and large the main activities were the discussions of the individual problems by the group, research into the available written material on the subject, sharing of

reports from this reading, and further discussion by the group. The resource person best fitted to work with the group on their particular problem was always at hand to render all the service possible. Audio-visual aids were used wherever they would clarify the problem or add to the effectiveness of the discussion. Throughout the whole study the paramount issue was, "How can it help me to do a better job in my class next fall?" Since each of the groups were made up of teachers from both elementary and secondary levels, a consideration of this problem led to a wide understanding and provided opportunities for better articulation between the various departments represented. A great deal of credit should go to the elected chairmen and recorders in each of the groups for their fine leadership, as well as the planning committee who were constantly on the alert for improvements.

As had been stated, the workshop was divided on an interest basis into three major groupings. Group A, democratic procedure and citizenship training, was interested in three major problems: democratic procedures of instruction, student participation in school government, and student participation in community projects. Each member of the group chose the particular phase of the problem on which he wished to work. In addition, some compiled bibliographies of books and visual aids of particular help to the group. Through this study and discussion with the group and the consultants, a report of findings and general conclusions was given near the end of the workshop. Several of the more important conclusions reached were: there should be an orientation

period of from one to three weeks; pupils and teachers should develop together a large framework for the year's study, based on the knowledge, interests, and skills of the total group; subject matter lines should be less distinct; films should be previewed before showing; there should be greater pupil, teacher, parent participation in student government; a city-wide student council should be set up; teachers should keep a more complete record of each child's history and growth; more active student participation in the community as well as in school affairs should be provided. This list of conclusions is by no means complete, but it shows that Group A got down to brass tacks and arrived at some helpful suggestions for the next year.

Group B worked on health and considered the following large areas: organization of the health program; securing parent interest; mental health of pupils and teachers; and examination and evaluation of health materials. They proceeded in much the same manner as group A, but considered most of the questions in group discussions rather than as individual problems. This was because the group was smaller and the problems of a more general nature. The conclusions reached by the group are too lengthy for enumeration, but they were of a practical nature to each individual and have added greatly to the health program.

Group C, dealing with instructional problems, was interested in the following fields: remedial reading, comprehensive reading, vocabulary building; study habits, remedial problems, and evaluation and promotion. The group proceeded largely on the method of in-

dividual problems with research done by individuals and reporting back to the group, followed by a discussion of the whole group. Some of the more important conclusions of the group were: a pupil never fails, he merely succeeds less well than others; children should be allowed to utilize various means of learning; individual differences should be recognized with provisions for child growth and development; better teacher, child, and home relationships should be created.

Evaluation was felt to be a very important phase of the whole workshop and as a result, a mid-evaluation and a final evaluation were made. The mid-evaluation gave an opportunity to increase the effectiveness of the procedure used thus far, while the final evaluation made it possible to draw general conclusions and to bring the thinking to a more condensed and specific form. Regardless of what might have been learned at the workshop itself, it was agreed that the most important test would be the effect on the actual teaching in the classroom in the fall. Naturally, the enthusiasm was at its height at the conclusion of the workshop, but, nevertheless, several outstanding results have been noted in the Battle Creek school system throughout the year.

Here Are the Results

Democracy learned firsthand

For many of the participants, the workshop was a first contact with democracy in the classroom. Here they actually practiced it themselves. This was a new experience and the results were so gratifying that the impact has been lasting throughout the year.

Teachers who formerly had only heard of pupil-teacher planning and democratic procedures are now ready to try them. Naturally the process has been slow, but it has been sure. Probably more pupils in Battle Creek have had a chance in planning what they study and how to study it than ever before. Naturally some have met with far greater success than others. The core program in junior and senior high schools has been particularly improved from the training received at the workshop. Subject matter lines have begun to break down, and adherence to the old courses of study has decreased in many instances—to the point where at least some of the pupils are studying what is important to them in a modern world and not subject matter for the sake of subject matter.

Materials available to all

Another important effect of the workshop has been the establishment of a greatly enlarged and more accessible professional library. Many of the teachers found books at the workshop that were so helpful that they wished them kept in the system so that they might be read at their leisure. So little time was found at the workshop for reading and so many different books were found to be of help that bibliographies were made of the best books and these were added to the already existing professional library in Battle Creek. The room utilized for this was found to be too small and out of the way to be readily available to the teacher. Professional books found at the various schools were also turned in for cataloging, and old copies were discarded. Now all copies are available for the whole school system. It has also been

suggested that small groups of professional books be placed in the schools on a rotating basis and left in each building for a month to stimulate further study. As new books are available or good books are recommended, they are added to the library. These books have been particularly helpful to working committees and study groups throughout the year.

High schools get together

The suggestion that a city student council be formed has been followed up and is now in the process of being organized. This started out as a greater Battle Creek Student Council Workshop that was held at St. Mary's this last fall. Representatives from both elementary and secondary schools of Battle Creek and the surrounding communities and rural schools met for a full day's conference and discussed such common problems as how to increase participation in discussions or how much authority a council should have. Out of it came the idea of a community student council with representatives from each of the secondary schools in the area. Several organization meetings have been held with this group and they are now ready for their regular monthly meetings. A much better understanding of the various schools' problems has grown out of this and the students are looking forward with great eagerness to getting this organization under way. They feel that many of the common community problems can be solved by the group. It is a unique experience for the students and for the community.

Faculty meetings under study

Also growing out of the workshop was the problem of teacher blocks—in

other words, the problems that make the teacher feel unable to do her best teaching. One person in particular was interested in this and proceeded to take a survey at the workshop itself. This brought out the problem of improving weekly school faculty meetings. As a result, after school started in the fall a committee was appointed from the local teachers' association to draw up a questionnaire regarding faculty meetings. The results of this questionnaire formed the basis for a helpful principals' meeting at which time it was discussed fully. Later, because of this study, the teachers of Battle Creek became interested in "Ways of Working," a study that is being made by the Horace Mann-Lincoln Institute of Columbia University. Since this study touches a broad aspect of educational procedures, it should produce a good basis for discussion and get at some of the more important problems facing the teachers as a whole as well as in each particular building.

Health becomes a city problem

One of the most profound effects growing out of the workshop is in the area of health. The group felt that its work was far from finished and as a result a committee from the whole system has been considering the problem

along with health committees that have been set up in most of the buildings of the city. The problems in this area are great and will probably not be solved in one year, but headway is being made with the help of the county health department. One of the real values of the work this summer was the compiling of source material for teaching health. This has been made up into sets so that one may find what material is available on any particular phase of health and the source from which it may be obtained. The question of who teaches health and its place in the curriculum is still a problem particularly in the secondary schools, but the impetus given by the health discussion in the workshop has been invaluable.

It is true the problems of the Battle Creek school system have not all been solved and will never be, but the teachers of Battle Creek agree that the workshop last summer at St. Mary's Lake has been a major factor in their partial solution at least. Plans are already under way for a bigger and better workshop this summer. Now they know from experience that teachers may learn from each other and that getting together and talking things over in comfortable surroundings with helpful leaders goes far in making them better teachers.



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