

# In-Service Education of Helping Teachers

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MELDA W. CHAMBRE

An overview of how individuals work at meetings gives evidence of not only belief in group process but a willingness to put it into practice. Melda W. Chambre, the author of this account, is on leave from New Jersey where she was a helping teacher, and is at present county supervisor in Cullman, Alabama.

IN 1916 the first helping teachers, or rural school supervisors, were appointed by the State Board of Education to serve in the unsupervised areas of New Jersey. The number has now grown to sixty and includes specialists in music, art, and health education as well as the general elementary field. These people work under the supervision of the Assistant Commissioner in charge of Elementary Education. The law creating the position also provided that the Commissioner have a meeting of the group at least two days during the year. When the Commissioner and his assistant have meetings they not only believe in the democratic process—they practice it.

In March of 1946 a group of seven helping teachers was appointed to serve as a steering committee; and they made tentative plans for a three-day workshop to be held in October. A questionnaire was sent to each helping teacher asking on which of twelve committees she wished to serve. All first and second choices were tabulated and four committees were formed. Chairmen, assistant chairmen, and recorders were appointed for each. A librarian, hospitality chairman, treasurer, and evaluation committee member were added

later. It was the treasurer's job to collect six dollars from each helping teacher. Due to lack of state funds we financed the conference ourselves, and felt we got our money's worth, even in this inflationary period!

## Mapping Our Course

All duties were definitely outlined. These instructions were sent:

**Chairman**—*It is your duty to see that the time schedule is strictly observed.* This is important for a smooth-running conference. You should welcome the members of your group, outline your plans, and stress the importance of the conference. All this should take not more than fifteen minutes. With the help of your assistant you are responsible for guiding the thinking of the group and the work of the consultants so that worthwhile outcomes result. You must see that no person dominates the discussion and that there is 100 percent participation by your group members. You, your assistant, and your recorder should work together on drafting the final summary. (Chairmen must certainly be selected with care!)

**Assistant Chairman**—*It is your duty to help your chairman guide the discussion.* You are responsible for the welfare of the consultants. You should bring them up-to-date on planning and assist them

in making their contributions as worthwhile as possible. (They, too, must enjoy the conference and want to return to us again.)

(Assistant chairmen should have good broad shoulders on which the chairman can pile her troubles. They should be experienced leaders who know the problems of a chairman and how to guide a group.)

**Recorder**—*It is your duty to keep an accurate account of the findings of the group.* You and your chairman may allow a few minutes for daily evaluations so that you have the help of the entire committee. Your chairman and assistant chairman will work with you in compiling your final report. It should include:

A statement of your problem or problems

Suggestions for meeting these problems

An outline of further work to be done

Suggested readings—a bibliography

A list of the group participants.

(A recorder is the chairman's right hand man, and that's no small job.)

### **The What, Where, and When**

The fields selected for study included: the Non-Academic Child, Democratic Living and the Social Studies Bulletin (#10 available from the New Jersey State Department), Planning for the Nine-Year-Old, and Community Participation in Education. Specialists in each of these fields served as consultants, not as speakers, and stayed with the group for an entire day—or two or three. The Community Participation group included in its membership lay leaders in the state: the president of the state PTA, a member of the State Board of Education, the president of the Farm Bureau, and others.

The conference was held on the spacious campus of the State Teachers College at Trenton. The group was housed

in a nearby hotel, all under one roof. This made planning for social events easier and also gave an opportunity for small groups to meet informally and discuss common problems. The library facilities and the cafeteria of the college were open to us.

At 4:30 each day, after the study groups had disbanded, the chairmen and assistant chairmen of all groups met with the general chairman and briefly evaluated the day, made suggestions for changes in the next day's plans, and generally gleaned help from each other. These meetings were of immense value to the general chairman—the discussion served as her guide for the following day. The group chairmen had a chance to review their work and feel that glow of satisfaction so necessary to sustained enthusiasm.

The committees worked from 9:00 to 4:30 with an hour and a half for lunch for the three days. Each came out with a most worthwhile final report and the desire to plan a bigger and better conference for the next year. And the 1947 conference was bigger and better because it was built on experience.

### **Ingredients for Success**

The Evaluation Committee, made up of one member from each study group and a chairman, was one of the most active and efficient groups. They devised a questionnaire that sought out the weaknesses of the set-up and highlighted the strengths. Their report was an excellent guide for the 1947 planning group. In 1947 one new committee was added, Planning for the Five-Year-Old. The other committees felt they wanted another year of study.

In reviewing the 1946 and 1947 conferences and looking toward plans for 1948 (a five-day conference in February) we asked ourselves, "What are the necessary ingredients for a successful workshop?" Our answer was:

- ▶ Authorities who are forward looking, have faith in the ability of their co-workers, and confidence in their work
- ▶ Subjects for study chosen by the group because they are of vital interest to the group
- ▶ Careful pre-planning by a small but representative steering committee
- ▶ A carefully planned day-to-day schedule with a good balance of work and play so that nerves don't become taut
- ▶ Dur'ies of all workers definitely outlined so that each can proceed with confidence

- ▶ Carefully selected consultants who know before they meet the group just what pre-planning has taken place. This insures "consulting" not "speech making"
- ▶ A careful evaluation of the conference at its conclusion so that each participant has an opportunity to voice his criticisms—either favorable or adverse
- ▶ A follow-up on the work accomplished so that a satisfaction may be derived from work well done.

Every high speed engine needs a trained engineer (ours was Thomas Durrell, Assistant Commissioner), an efficient oiler who keeps the wheels turning smoothly (ours was Ann Hoppock, his assistant), and a train crew that works together to speed the journey (we had a crew of sixty).

## *In-Service Education in Florida*\_\_\_\_\_

DORA SKIPPER and SAM H. MOCRER

The Florida in-service program covers a wide range of activities which we do not have space to describe here; therefore, this article deals only with the in-service program of supervisors. The authors are Mrs. Dora Skipper, coordinator of the state supervisory program, and Sam H. Moorer, field supervisor, both in the State Department of Education, Tallahassee, Florida.

A BASIC PRINCIPLE in Florida's program for the improvement of instruction is that continuous effort should be focused on discovering and developing leadership among all groups interested in the improvement of education. The direct supervision of individual schools, classrooms, and teachers is assumed to be a local function. A corol-

lary of this assumption is that the state has the responsibility of bringing about the improvement of local programs through the development of local leadership.

The belief that educational programs in a democratic society should place primary emphasis upon the worth and dignity of human personality and high

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