

News Letters Ease Transition

To all participants, staff and graduates, the "news letters" seemed effective in easing the transition from pre-service to in-service status. Space does not permit more than a sampling of letters and responses. The sampling is adequate, however, to demonstrate some of the values of this effort. Of the thirteen beginning teachers from the original seventeen-member seminar, nine responded to the news letters, six with regularity.

For the staff the "news letter experiment" was a valuable one. The eagerness with which it was received and turned into a two-way experience was gratifying. A firsthand account of conditions in teaching as they affected our

graduates was revealing in reflecting needs and strengths of our program. Of the graduates, seven taught kindergarten—three in public schools, three in private schools, one in a settlement house. Six became primary teachers—three each in public and private schools. One we lost track of. In all but two instances progress of varying degrees was reflected in the quality of success in teaching experienced by graduates during their first year on the job.

This experiment in bridging the gap between pre-service and in-service experience has demonstrated that the extension of the guidance program of a teacher-education institution has a legitimate function in the successful orientation of the beginning teacher.

Why In-Service Education?

SCHOOL BOARD OF AUSTIN, TEXAS¹

How do school board members regard local in-service education programs? This article describes the forward-looking practices officially adopted in the Austin, Texas, public schools.

IT IS axiomatic in the professional, business and industrial fields that those persons who are involved continue to study and to grow. The doctor who does not continue to study soon becomes antiquated in his field. The man who was an expert mechanic on the Model T Ford can do little with a modern automobile unless he has con-

tinued to study the new developments. The bankers hold regular courses for in-service education so as to be able to meet the new demands and follow the new laws. Likewise with teachers.

Whether a teacher is new to the school system or is a veteran educator, whether he has no experience or many years' experience, he needs the benefit of an effective in-service program. The school that does not have such a program soon lags behind. A teacher who lacks opportunities for some type of in-

¹This article was prepared by the Board of Education (W. I. Kocurek, president) and the executive staff, Austin Independent School District, Austin, Texas.

service education quite likely becomes antiquated. No school and no faculty is static. Staff members either are striving to improve the program of their school or an increasingly poorer job of teaching is being done and the youth that the school is set up to serve are thereby being penalized.

Board Sets Up Program for Growth

The school board and the administrative staff of the Austin Public Schools, realizing the need for continuous growth on the part of faculty and board members, set into operation a definite program for in-service education. Development of this program was made a responsibility of the director of instruction and his staff.

One of the first steps in the in-service education program was to extend the contract year for all teachers from one hundred and eighty days to two hundred days. Principals and supervisors are now employed for eleven months. One hundred and eighty days are used for regular class work and twenty days are used for in-service training. The schedule for the twenty days varies somewhat from year to year but is generally as follows:

- Four days for pre-planning before school opens in September. Three Curricular Days during the year. Thirteen days after school closes in June.
- The four pre-planning days used in (a) orienting new teachers, (b) orienting all teachers into plans for new year, (c) study of materials, (d) review of workshop productions, and (e) discussion of special services such as guidance, visiting teachers, special education, etc.
- The three special Curricular Days are spaced throughout the year. The program on these days is divided into two blocks. The entire faculty works on some common program in the morning. Areas in which work was done this past year were reporting to parents, school public relations, and democracy in action. The other half day is spent on special interests such as mathematics, reading, art, music, social studies, etc.
- The in-service education program in June is so set up that teachers may select, within limits, from five areas. Fifty per cent or more of the teachers work in local curriculum workshops. Fifteen per cent of the staff may teach in local or other summer schools. Twenty-five per cent of the faculty may attend summer school while five per cent may travel and another five per cent may be involved in related educational activities.
- All teachers new to the Austin Schools are requested to participate in the workshop the following summer. Only in special cases may teachers participate in some activity, other than workshop, two consecutive summers. Interest was so high in the two problems selected for the 1951 workshop that seventy-nine per cent of the faculty participated.
- The 1951 workshop had two large areas of interest, namely reading and promotional policies. The areas vary from summer to summer. We cannot commend too highly the results that accrue from the workshop each summer.

Relationship with University

We should like to refer to other phases of the Austin in-service education program. The working relationship with the University of Texas is excellent. Special classes are operated for Austin teachers in late afternoon and evening at the university. A teacher may take up to six semester hours of work for credit during the school year. Not only are classes offered but staff members from the university are available at any time for faculty meetings, study groups, P.T.A., etc.

Each local school faculty has in-service study programs under way at all times. Some typical topics of the past year were:

- An Effective Program of Public Relations
- The Bilingual Students
- Reading Techniques
- Reporting to Parents
- The Life Adjustment Program.

Our local supervisors are working constantly with groups and with individuals in methods and materials. They are on call at any time when help is needed. Likewise they spot and give aid where it is needed even when a request for help may not have been made.

Representation at Professional Meetings

The local board and administration believe that another excellent phase of the Austin in-service program is the practice of having representation at various state and national meetings. The local schools are represented at such meetings as those of the Associa-

tion for Supervision and Curriculum Development, American Association of School Administrators, National Association of Secondary-School Principals, Association for Childhood Education International, National Education Association, American Association for Health, Physical Education and Recreation, National Guidance Association, and others. Teachers attending give detailed reports upon their return and this information is made available to all faculties.

Professional libraries have been developed in each building as well as a special section in the city library. Also, there is a central professional library in the Administration Building.

Not only has a program of in-service education been developed for the local teaching staff but also for the Board of Education. Each board member is associated actively with the Texas School Board Association. Members of the Board of Education attend the American Association of School Administrators conference each year and also attend the National Meeting of the School Board Association. Special educational literature is placed in the hands of board members. Examples of this are: *The Pasadena Case, School Boards in Action*, and special copies of bulletins of the N.A.S.S.P., and professional magazines.

The Board of Education of the Austin Public Schools has seen definite growth and improvement in the administrative and teaching staffs as a result of this program for in-service education. It is expected that through a continuation of this program the Austin schools will continue to improve.

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