

*A flexible program  
will help meet needs of teachers  
in self-contained classrooms.*

Bertha M. Brandon

## In-Service Education for Elementary Teachers

TODAY it can be said that an instructional program moves forward on the in-service education of the professional staff. In-service education becomes the medium for professional growth of the staff and for the realization of goals determined by the staff. It can become the proverbial leaven in the loaf; a force, working silently but vigorously, to cause change. It can be a link that ties together the far-flung units in a large school system or a unifying force that gives meaning to the efforts of a single building faculty.

For the elementary teacher, the so-called "general practitioner" who is vitally concerned with all areas of the curriculum, in-service education can be a real adventure. Through well-planned in-service education programs elementary teachers can keep abreast of recent developments in child study and curriculum, explore special areas such as children's literature or elementary science, engage in hobby-developing activities such as ceramics or instrumentation, participate in surveys of community resources, or even take part in perennial

revisions of the methods of reporting pupil progress! The scope of in-service education opportunities is indeed as limitless as the tasks of the elementary teacher.

In-service education does not thrive on the three R's of rules, requirements and regulations. Where there is no vision, the idea soon perishes. There must be at least a nucleus of the staff that is thoroughly conversant with the philosophy and underlying purposes of in-service education and who can point with justifiable pride to accomplishments within the local school system resulting from in-service education. These individuals make for continuity in the program—a necessary ingredient. They are also the ones who seek out and put to use talents and abilities of newer staff members and thus add to the ever-increasing nucleus necessary to an effective program.

When a school system subscribes to the theory that in-service education is an essential phase of its total educational

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program, it accepts responsibility for providing leadership for organizing the in-service program. Organization is another prerequisite and many a program with an auspicious beginning has floundered because no plan was devised for placing the responsibility for the ongoing program with an individual or group.

In other words, in-service education pays dividends as it becomes a continuing project and an organization must be set up which will insure this continuity. Perhaps the most satisfactory plan of over-all organization is a type of council with elected representatives from each unit involved, some of whom serve for more than one year. Such a group can serve as a sounding board, a planning and coordinating body, and an instrument of evaluation. Membership on the council should be made up of teachers, principals and the director of curriculum.

### Program Design

There is no blueprint for in-service organization. The design or structure must grow out of the problem under consideration and the techniques of working often challenge the ingenuity of an organizational strategist. After a plan of attack is agreed upon, it usually becomes the task of the curriculum director, working with a small steering committee, to devise a method of work. Variety is the keynote in maintaining interest in a continuing in-service program and the search for interesting and challenging ways of working becomes one of the by-products of an effective program. Not one of the least rewards is to see evidences of many of these techniques of group process and skills in human relations learned in in-service carried over into classroom organization.

No other segment of the teaching profession has a variety of curriculum interests comparable to those of the elementary teacher. For this reason, not only are elementary teachers some of the most outspoken advocates of in-service education, but some of the most successful ventures in in-service education are chalked up to their credit. Perhaps elementary teachers have felt more need for assistance because of the variety of competences required for teaching in self-contained classrooms. Elementary in-service programs are usually of two types, namely: the one geared to individual needs where interest and self-selection are the keynotes and the one designed to improve instruction in a particular curriculum area where the entire staff engages in study, research and projects to accomplish its purpose. A brief description will be given of each type.

Probably the most satisfying in-service program is one planned on the expressed needs of individual teachers. This type requires a less complicated organization than does the system-wide program. Long-range planning insures a variety of offerings and a wide field of choice in consultants. Here is a place for the planning council to assume leadership in the last few weeks of a school year by determining the teachers' interests and desires for the following school year. If visiting consultants are to be used in an in-service program, arrangements must be made months in advance. By the end of a school year the over-all planning for the following year should be well under way by the council and left in the hands of the director of curriculum or other personnel employed on a 12-months basis.

The range of teacher interests will be wide and varied. For that reason, this

type of in-service program affords many advantages to the instructional program. In our local school system (Waco, Texas) this year, where such a plan is in operation, there is a series of workshops and seminars designed to meet the needs and interests of teachers.

### Seminars and Workshops

A distinction is made between the workshop and seminar. A workshop includes 12 to 15 hours of participation by the enrollees and is usually in three to four sessions beginning about 3:30 p.m. and continuing until about 7:30 p.m. with time off for "snacks." The workshops are extremely popular because of the opportunities for informal get-togethers and fellowship. The seminar is planned around the lecture-discussion technique and includes also a classroom project designed to try out some related phase of research. Seminar meetings are scheduled over several weeks' duration and attract teachers who are interested in study-research methods.

With approximately 500 elementary teachers, 15 seminars and workshops were planned for the Waco elementary schools' 1959-60 school year. These include topics such as: fundamentals of music, art for the elementary teacher, techniques of individualized reading instruction, ceramics for teachers, elementary science, instrumentation, children's literature and library resources.

These workshops and seminars are scheduled at intervals during the year, making it possible for teachers to choose one offered at a time convenient to them. A teacher may attend one or as many as he chooses during the year. The main objective of the planning council is to make each seminar or workshop so at-

tractive and challenging that teachers will want to attend. A limit is set on the enrollment for each workshop or seminar. Every time so far the requests have exceeded the limit.

A typical example of a workshop is in ceramics where two visiting consultants worked with 36 teachers for five afternoon sessions of one and a half hours, one session each week. The workshop was climaxed with an exhibit of articles created by the "workshoppers," and all members of the faculty were invited to view the exhibit. But, even more significant perhaps than the teachers' exhibit, were the 30-odd classrooms where teachers' new skills and interest in ceramics afforded several hundred children opportunities to create with clay.

A seminar in elementary science is an illustration of a somewhat different plan. For this seminar an outstanding authority in the field of elementary science was the leader. A panel of teachers made advance plans for the three two-hour sessions with the specialist leading a discussion on pertinent problems in the teaching of science. The specialist conducted the 70 teachers on a field trip and at least 70 classrooms will profit through the excitement, enthusiasm and interest of those who accompanied this top authority in the field of elementary science.

Seminar sessions were held during the school day with principals arranging for student teachers to take over classes or, in some instances, helping with this themselves. Projects growing out of the seminar include plans for a community survey of natural resources and a "film festival" to acquaint teachers with up-to-date science films in the local school film library.

A second type of in-service program, designated as system-wide for the pur-

pose of improving instruction in a particular curriculum area, can also be profitable and challenging. However, the planning and organization for work will be different. Need for such a study must grow out of a realization by the faculty that a rethinking of purposes, goals and procedures in an area is necessary. Often this results from a self-evaluation by the entire faculty. Because most elementary schools are organized on a self-contained classroom basis, all teachers are concerned with the area selected for study. This makes possible the use of the talents and resources of many teachers in an all-out attack on the problem.

A study of this type requires the overall guidance and leadership of the director of curriculum, working very closely with a curriculum council that serves as a coordinating body. Membership on such a council should include experienced teachers from the several grade levels and principals who are well-qualified in curriculum.

A system-wide in-service program involving a large number of teachers can accomplish some objectives. Caution must be exercised, though, in agreeing upon the objectives that can be achieved by large group participation. These goals can be determined through general elementary faculty meetings. Here the problem is presented and followed up by building faculty meetings for further discussion, suggestions and opinion surveys. When there has been ample time for faculty orientation to the problem, the curriculum council can suggest a plan of operation which will include somewhat specific jobs to be done, classroom experimentation to be conducted, and projects to be developed.

It is possible to use any one of several plans for organizing groups to perform these tasks, depending on the task to be

undertaken. Building faculty study groups can be used effectively, as can grade level meetings, vertical or horizontal committees. Much choice should be left with building faculty groups in the selection of a project and membership on various committees should be voluntary. A plan of this type provides many opportunities for leadership from teachers, principals and consultants and, at the same time, serves as a vehicle for developing leadership. Fundamental to a study of this type is an adequate professional library and access to consultative services as needed.

The system-wide approach was used by the Waco, Texas, schools in a two-year study of the social studies-science program in elementary grades. Throughout the first year attention was centered on an analysis of the present program; a review of current trends and literature in the field; data collecting activities such as daily logs of activities; and decision making on purposes and goals. Several general elementary faculty meetings were held, after which the curriculum council set up specific problems. Building faculty groups were then asked to express their opinions on these problems. A series of science fairs were held in the elementary schools to stimulate interest in this area.

In the following summer intensive analysis and study of the year's work were accomplished by the curriculum council and several principals. A second year's activities were planned to include the development of resource units in social studies-science by grade level committees. The second summer was used by the council to review and synthesize materials developed by the study groups.

The best insurance policy a school system can have is a well-informed professional staff.

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