

A New Model for In-Service: When Clients and Resources Cooperate for Growth¹

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IS GOING back to the campus next summer and taking three or four credits the best way to further the professional growth of school faculty members? Would it be better to ask the university to give an extension course in the school district, convenient for teachers to attend? There is growing disillusionment with both of these procedures, since they place the major responsibility for in-service teacher education with the college or university.

In the fall of 1967, representatives of universities in southeastern Michigan,² under initiative taken by the Wayne County Intermediate School District staff, resolved to undertake a new approach to in-service teacher education which involved a different set of relationships between the clients and the resource personnel. The project has now progressed through six field trials, each providing for some modification of the preceding one. The model, as it is evolving, should

now be described more widely so that it may benefit from the reactions of professional colleagues.

The Interinstitutional Model

School districts select teams of teachers and administrators who work together on a problem of their choosing. The problem is identified before the workshop begins, and has priority for the total school staff or district. During the course of 16 four-hour, once-a-week sessions the teams work on their problems, assisted by the staff members from the various universities, the state department of education, and the intermediate school district. General sessions are designed to support team activities and to promote inter-team communication. College credit of four semester hours is given at the university of the student's choice. A flat fee is paid by the student to the intermediate school district, which in turn, pays the student's tuition at the university of his choice.

University, State Department of Education, and intermediate school district resources are utilized in a new way. The staff

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¹ This article was developed in collaboration with Charles Blackman, Morrell Clute, and Scott Street.

² Included were officers of the extension or field service divisions; key staff members with specialization in curriculum at the University of Michigan, Michigan State University, Eastern Michigan University, and Wayne State University; a representative of the State Department of Education; as well as staff members of the Wayne County Intermediate School District.



Team members receive registration materials from any one of four universities participating in the workshop.

members are seen as a link with the resources of the researcher and the specialist. The retrieval of appropriate knowledge, and assistance with its interpretation and utilization are highly important services needed by a local school team intensively engaged in problem-solving activity. The opportunity for continuing association among the varied institutions over a period of years pays additional dividends in the building of relationships of mutual trust and collaboration. The opportunity for college staff members to become intimately involved with problem-solving activities in local school settings provides a reality-testing of their conceptual and process resources.

Advanced graduate student interns specializing in curriculum leadership add to the resources of the workshop staff. Workshop teams profit from the additional resources provided by competent doctoral students who are preparing for positions of curriculum leadership. The students find the workshop provides an invaluable opportunity for developing their skills as educational change agents under an intimate collegial relationship with senior faculty members.

Management of the workshop is collaborative among the several universities, the State Department of Education, and the intermediate school district. Effort has been made to reduce red tape to a minimum. Registration can be arranged with any of the

colleges and at least one staff member is furnished by each institution. If enrollments are insufficient from one college to cover costs, another institution makes a financial adjustment. Assumption by the intermediate school district of responsibility for fiscal administration tends to de-emphasize the college credit aspect of the workshop, and enhance the notion of payment for a professional development "package."

Teams recently participating in the Interinstitutional Workshop worked on the following topics:

Developing and implementing a model for institutional self-renewal

Implementing changes in the organizational pattern of the school such as non-graded, open classrooms, cross-age grouping, team teaching, and middle school

Engaging in curriculum development activities, such as reviewing the total school program, developing a guide for teaching educable mentally handicapped, or devising a program of study in ecology

Developing procedures for diagnosing pupil learning style, improving student self-image, or pupil involvement in school activities.

Teams are action oriented and plan to initiate new programs based on their findings and decisions.

Evaluation

Participants in the workshop have been involved in evaluating the effectiveness of the program. They have responded to questionnaires concerning specific presentations and activities, as well as rating how well their own objectives were met. Approximately 90 percent of the participants have provided examples of improvements in their schools or in themselves resulting from involvement in the workshop.

One participant stated, "I think we have gone beyond my personal goals. I now feel as if I am part of something important to our school." Another made this comment, "I feel our workshop efforts have been extremely

beneficial because our efforts not only involved the school we are in, but the whole school system and the community."

An independent researcher surveyed team leaders the school year following involvement in the workshop and reported that: "Of the 19 team leaders surveyed, 15 (78 percent) replied the teams had remained working together."

The format of the workshop has changed each year in response to the data gathered. These changes include (a) involvement with the teams prior to entry into the workshop to ascertain whether there is sufficient clarity regarding the problem focus, and evidence of administrative support to predict a reasonable chance for success; (b) fewer general sessions of the total workshop and more meetings with each team in its own school.

A Look Ahead

The interinstitutional model appears to have considerable potential for responding to the urgent demand confronting American

education for more effective in-service professional growth programs. Some of the potentials have not yet been explored. For example, opportunities could be provided during the summer for team leaders from each of the participating school systems to engage in some "tooling up" for their leadership role. More emphasis can be given to pre-workshop planning sessions between the team leader, the administrator, and a workshop staff member early in the fall to work on problem clarification, team selection, and start-up strategies. Follow-up arrangements could be instituted between university or intermediate school district based resource people and the local school for continuing support.

Use of the model has spread to Kent County, Genesee County, and St. Clair County, Michigan. Staffs of other school systems and universities who are examining their own potential for responding to needs for a new approach to in-service education are invited to share their reactions with the authors or to seek such further information as may be helpful. □



Team members from the Pioneer Middle School, Plymouth, Michigan, meet with the team from Barber Middle School, Highland Park, to discuss strategies for establishing an interdisciplinary program.

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