

Editorial

Toward Effective Staff Development Plans and Programs

Raymond E. Hendee

Staff development is the sum of all planned activities designed for the purpose of improving, expanding, and renewing the skills, knowledge, and abilities of participants. This includes institutes, workshops, seminars, special purpose meetings in and out of school, as well as in and out of education.

To make all of these things happen, administrative staffs of school districts require resources in the form of money, people, equipment, and materials. They need to be able to recognize areas of staff deficiencies.

Some person designated as a "staff developer" and given sufficient time and authority to act should be assigned the specific responsibility of planning programs emanating from perceived needs. This individual must be attuned to the educational and social forces that influence district personnel. Among the more persuasive forces are changes in educational material; delivery systems; behavior patterns of pupils; educational technology; declining enrollment; and local, state, and federal requirements.

When district personnel examine their needs, they often become preoccupied with money and their lack of it. Money is important in providing personnel with learning opportunities, but, in many districts, funding in-service activities is a low priority. This is an example of being "penny wise and pound foolish." Although most of the school budget does go for salaries, funds expended to improve the skills of the work force are a good investment.

Members of school organizations should look to the staff, their greatest resource for staff development. Among those who can be helped are some of the greatest providers of assistance. A survey to determine areas requiring in-service programs can reveal expertise among the working force.

The first step must be a realization that all organizations need an active, aggressive staff development program. The naming of a staff developer is the next step. His or her first determination is to discover who among various professional associates will be the resource persons. Next, a committee should be established, composed of those persons who are to benefit from the growth. They should actively solicit suggestions from the entire staff. As the staff developer and the committee members are mustering resources, they should survey personnel needs.

Some essentials are determined by the nature of the educational or social force demanding recognition, such as: (a) change in basic program materials, (b) moving from a "self-contained" to an "open school" approach, (c) new manifestations in pupil behavior, (d) the expanding field of educational technology, (e) declining enrollments, and (f) state and federal requirements. We cannot ignore these areas that cry out for immediate attention. Provisions for these needs should be encompassed in a coherent, coordinated, and articulated in-service program that will capture the attendance of the affected workers. I believe that we must strive to attract our employees to such a program.

Appeals to professionalism will reward the district with several willing and attentive staff members—but not all. There are numerous ways by which staff members can be attracted to in-service activities. One method is to provide recognition of in-service training through the compensation program.

The staff developer can expect to receive help from the agencies and staff cited earlier and, in addition, can get valuable assistance from the Association for Supervision and Curriculum De-

velopment and its state and local units. This organization is preparing materials that will be available soon to provide the staff developer with useful items designed to sharpen leadership skills in this important area. The National Curriculum Study Institutes of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development offer outstanding leadership workshops in selected areas across the country.

The American Association of School Administrators also provides workshop opportunities for leadership development through its National Academy for School Executives. The National Education Association has available excellent units in specific areas of education that can be used by a resource person in conducting staff development sessions. Many colleges and universities are looking for opportunities to work with school districts in developing cooperative projects to provide profitable in-service experiences to school personnel. Equally important is the help available through journals such as *Educational Leadership*. The feature section of this particular issue provides advice in several facets of staff development.

Attendance at professional association meetings is also an excellent means for gaining ideas and suggestions, for such meetings yield an abundance of ideas that can readily be adapted to a local situation. Each reader should be an active participant in such meetings. Each must reach beyond the local area to exchange ideas and to become the dynamic leader his or her district needs to keep the staff growing professionally.

Today, declining enrollment presents educators with a startling new dimension and challenge. Over the next few years, staffs must be provided with ways to change their teaching field from a unidimensional to a multidimensional one. All staff members must be brought to the realization that math teachers may also have to teach a section of science, that a language arts teacher may have to conduct a history class.

Administrators at all levels must face the possibility that they, too, may need to teach in order to maintain their positions. This presents a different kind of challenge in staff development, one that is somewhat similar to the employment of individuals—during the 1950's and 1960's—who could meet the laws on certification, but who were not fully equipped to teach the subject or grade level assigned.

Another dilemma asserts itself. Many staff members have worked for a number of years in a district, and there is an obligation to help them become more flexible in what they are qualified to teach as a means of maintaining their positions in a district.

This is not to advocate reducing the work force by eliminating seniority, but only to remind the reader of the obligation to help fellow educators help themselves. The adversary role created by the bargaining table must not cause the day-to-day functioning of the staff to deteriorate. A true leadership role is earned; it does not necessarily accompany an administrative contract.

In conclusion, consider the major elements in staff development. These include: recognizing need, assigning someone to be responsible to search out all available resources (that includes the resources of staff as well as non-staff members), making certain there is a well-thought-out approach clearly articulated, and including staff members in the planning and evaluating of activities. In the development of this program, make certain that staff time devoted to improvement of instruction is at the same time effectively and efficiently utilized. [E]



Raymond E. Hendee is Superintendent of Schools, Elementary School District 64, Park Ridge, Niles, Illinois.

Copyright © 1976 by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. All rights reserved.