A Research-Based Inservice Model for Secondary Teachers

The Basic Skills Instruction for Secondary Schools Program puts teachers in touch with research on teaching and helps them share solutions to their problems.

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Two years ago, the California Department of Education, in an effort to meet the increasingly complex needs of secondary teachers, asked us to create a comprehensive staff development program, one that would combine the best of the research on teaching with the most promising inservice programs available. The goal was to change teacher behavior in the classroom in ways that research has shown will directly affect student outcomes. We accepted the charge enthusiastically!

The state had already compiled a list of teacher needs, training topics, and exemplary inservice programs, based on the recommendations of staff developers, educators, and researchers throughout California. Thus, we spent the autumn months of 1981 pooling available resources to create the Basic Skills Instruction for Secondary Schools Program. We attended several inservice training programs that had been identified as highly successful: Jane Stallings' Effective Use of Time Training; project RAISD from Upland, California; Fred Jones' Classroom Management workshops; and Los Angeles County's Teacher Expectations and Student Achievement (TESA). We also drew upon our own knowledge of the research literature, extensive experience with inservice teacher training, and participation in the California State Department of Education's Program Review process. In January 1982 we began to pilot test the workshops.

The Research Base

The inservice program described here was based on the findings from recent research on teaching. Training topics were drawn from the research on teacher effectiveness; the design of the training process was guided by the research on inservice training effectiveness.

The Training Topics. The findings from the past 15 years of research on teaching indicate that effective teachers of basic skills are good classroom managers, design lessons to reach mastery, and have positive expectations that students can learn (Brophy, 1979, 1982). We decided that the workshops ought to focus on these three areas of teacher effectiveness.

We began with research on time-on-task and classroom management; we then moved to the effective sequencing of instructional activities, and continued on to the differential treatment of

Joyce and Showers (1980) had given us some guidance in designing the workshop activities. They recommended a presentation-demonstration-practice-feedback-coaching format. We included presentation, demonstration, and some practice and feedback in each of the workshops. However, most practice and feedback and some coaching occurred in the context of the peer observations conducted between the workshops.

The State Department of Education also encouraged us to include peer observation. Preliminary results of a study

tions and concerns about proposed changes. The workshop activities also allowed plenty of time for teachers to discuss the "nuts and bolts" of making a change in their classes and to share how the new techniques worked for them. We hoped this sharing activity would convince the teachers that it was possible and worth the effort to make some changes in their classes.

The Staff Development Model

Our goal was to create a program that put teachers in touch with the research on teaching; enabled teachers to share their problems, solutions, and expertise; and gave teachers a way to become aware of and consider the effects of their teaching on students. Our purpose was not to tell teachers how they must teach. Rather, we hoped to provide them with major concepts and tools so that they could analyze their teaching in light of the research findings.

Figure 2 shows the cyclical nature of the training process. The model included: (1) six small-group workshops (10–14 participants) three weeks apart, (2) peer observations, (3) post observation analysis and conferencing, and (4) experimentation and application of new practices in the teachers' classrooms.

The Workshop Sessions. The workshops were only one part of the entire training cycle. Each session included five major activities. First, we opened with a discussion of the peer observations conducted between the workshops. We asked, "How did it go? What did you find out about your students and your teaching?" Teachers often described interesting practices they observed in a team member's classroom. They also told each other what new things they had tried in their classes and how they had worked.

The second item on the workshop agenda was the introduction of the main topic for that session, for example, classroom management. Highlights of the most useful concepts and practices from the relevant research were presented, and teachers were invited to discuss them. We asked such questions as, "Do these research results make sense?" "Why?" "What techniques do you use to effectively manage the use of time in your classroom?"

At some sessions, we opened the discussion first, giving the teachers an opportunity to generate the major concepts and strategies themselves. Then we re-

Figure 1. A Research-Based Sequence of Inservice Workshop Topics.

1 Time On Task	2 Behavior Management/ Discipline	3 Classroom Management: Organization/ Grouping	4 Instructional Sequence/ Lesson Design	5 Teacher Expectations/ Differential Treatment of Students	6 Program Quality: Effects on Students
Quantity of Time Spent Learning	→	→	→	→	Quality of Time Spent Learning

students as related to teacher expectations. We concluded with a session on long-term planning of instruction and its effects on students. We reasoned that if a teacher has students "hanging from the rafters," it is pretty hard to consider the finer points of differential treatment of students or the quality of the instructional program without first addressing management needs. Thus, we planned the content of the workshops to proceed from an emphasis on the *quantity* of time spent learning to an emphasis on the *quality* of that academic time (Figure 1).

The Training Process. Although there was a rich research base to guide the selection of topics for the inservice training, there was much less research to guide design of the process of training. We had to make critical decisions about the training schedule, activities, and group size.

We knew from the Rand studies that long-term training efforts are more likely to succeed than short-term ones (McLaughlin and Marsh, 1978). Thus, we designed the program to continue over several months.

of inservice effectiveness using peer observation supported the success of this technique, especially when the observations were student-centered and nonthreatening (Mohlman, 1982).

The decision to use a small-group, problem-solving workshop format was based on the work of Jane Stallings (1980). She has had positive results with an inservice training model that includes five workshops, one week apart, where six or seven teachers share their experiences as they try new techniques in their classrooms.

We were also aware of research suggesting that teacher implementation of training may be greater when the training is designed to overcome certain barriers to teacher change. Teachers resist change when they lack philosophical acceptance of new ideas, perceive a high "cost" or effort involved in the change, or when the recommended practices lack specificity (for a more detailed discussion, see Mohlman and others, 1982).

We thought the supportive small-group atmosphere would allow teachers to "hash out" their philosophical objec-

viewed the findings on that topic—this was often closely tied to what the teachers had already said! The third activity involved demonstrating or providing examples of the recommended strategy. Where the techniques lent themselves to simulated practice, teachers role-played teaching situations. For example, in one session, teachers designed and taught a lesson using the elements of an instructional sequence.
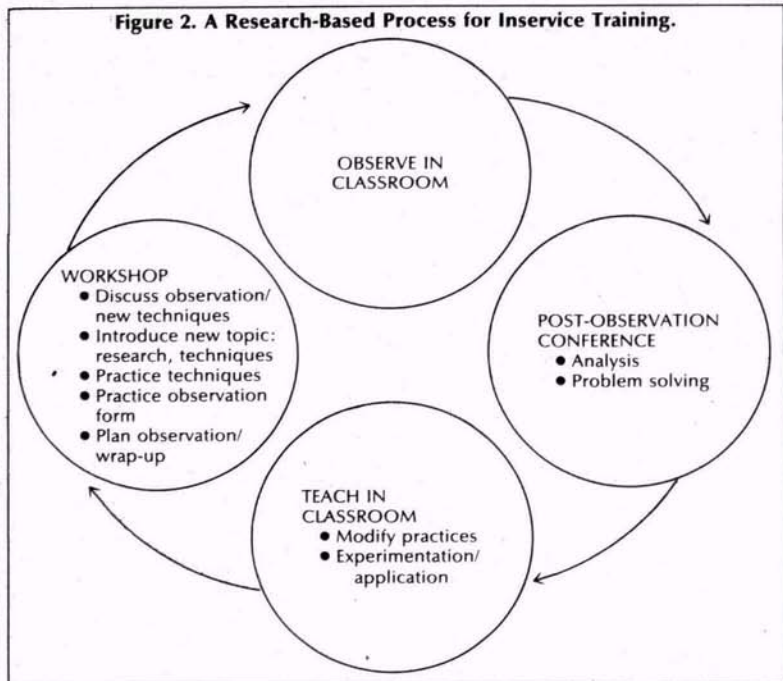
The fourth workshop activity involved learning how to use the new peer observation form. We explained the purpose of the form and what could be learned from it, demonstrated its use, and conducted practice coding sessions.

Finally, teachers scheduled their observations, filled out feedback forms, and were asked to read articles that clearly summarized the research related to the next workshop topic (for example, Emmer and Evertson, 1981; Good, 1981).

Peer Observation. We considered the process of peer observation to be critical to the success of this training model. While developing the workshops, we were aware of the anxiety that teachers might feel about having a colleague observe them. Thus, we designed our peer observation instruments to focus on the pupils rather than the teacher. In this way we not only reduced the teachers' fear of being judged, but we were able to give them objective feedback about their students' activities and experiences during class. And, of course, the student behavior gave them a lot of information about their own teaching.

The observation forms were seating charts with space on the side for a description of class activities. On one form, the observer made a "sweep" of the class every few minutes and indicated which students were off-task. During a later observation, the seating chart form was used to indicate student opportunities for response and teacher movement in the classroom.

The peer observation process served as a follow-up to what had been previously presented and as an awareness-raising activity for the next workshop topic. For example, during the period between the Behavior Management and Classroom Management workshops, observers coded students off-task and recorded the number of academic and nonacademic minutes. Later observations focused on the elements of instructional sequence and response opportu-

Figure 2. A Research-Based Process for Inservice Training.

OBSERVE IN CLASSROOM

POST-OBSERVATION CONFERENCE
● Analysis
● Problem solving

TEACH IN CLASSROOM
● Modify practices
● Experimentation/ application

WORKSHOP
● Discuss observation/ new techniques
● Introduce new topic: research, techniques
● Practice techniques
● Practice observation form
● Plan observation/ wrap-up

nities.

To conduct the observations, teachers formed teams of three. Each person observed and was observed two times between workshop sessions.

Post-Observation Analysis and Conference. We planned to gradually phase into the peer observation process some of the conferencing aspects of clinical supervision. Consequently, we encouraged teachers to conduct a short pre-observation conference before the second observation cycle. By the end of the series of workshops, team members conducted both a pre-observation and post-observation conference. The post-observation conference included a shared inspection and analysis of the observation forms, and, when team members had developed sufficient rapport, a mutual problem-solving effort.

Classroom Experimentation. Based on what was learned from the observation forms, readings, and workshops, teachers chose to modify some of their teaching practices and to monitor the results. This classroom experimentation and application phase was an integral part of the training cycle.

Teacher Reactions to the Training

The six workshops were pilot tested between January and May of 1982 with 14 volunteer teachers from one junior high and one high school in the Sacramento area. Attendance was excellent—only a few teachers missed one workshop and none missed more than one. Their reaction to the workshops was overwhelmingly positive. In their comments, feedback forms, and questionnaires, the teachers mentioned several components of the model that seemed to be exceptionally valuable to them. They appreciated the peer observations and the chance to share their ideas at the workshops. They were especially pleased that the workshops emphasized practical, specific techniques that were easily transferred to the classroom.

Peer Observations. The peer observations were a resounding success. All teachers were observed at least four times—many of them six times or more. At the beginning of every workshop the participants enthusiastically shared what they had learned from the observations. For example, "I can see I need to call on those kids in the back more often," or "I've been trying an incentive system I saw during one of my observations—it works!"

When one workshop was postponed, the teachers used the extra day for cross-

school observations. The junior high and senior high school teachers observed each other. They found this to be a real eye-opener and recommended that it become a permanent part of the training.

One teacher used the observation form with her student teacher, another shared it with a school administrator, and another suggested that the whole English department at her school observe one another.

Group Sharing and Support. All teachers appreciated having the opportunity to share their problems, solutions, and good ideas. As one teacher said, "It's so nice to know you're not alone in the boat!" Several teachers mentioned that the hour of sharing at the beginning was "the most valuable part."

One of the most exciting results of the workshops for us as trainers was watching the mutual support and group solidarity grow during the five months of training. As one teacher put it, "At first it was threatening to think of someone coming in to observe your room. But because we're mostly looking at what students are doing and not evaluating each other, and because we have time during the session to share ideas and try to help each other work out problems, it's not threatening at all! I now feel I have someone I can go to at school—someone who will help me think things out."

Specific, Practical Techniques. Teachers also liked the emphasis on practical, easy-to-use techniques. A typical comment made at the final workshop was, "The methods have been concrete; they're things I can specifically use in the classroom." Some of the teachers felt that they already knew about many of the methods, but had "gotten out of the habit" or become "sloppy." They were glad to be reminded of those effective practices.

Improvement of Teaching. The acid test of any inservice training program is whether or not teachers actually change their teaching behavior in desired ways. Based on the questionnaires and comments, they did. All teachers reported a decrease in student off-task behavior and an increase in time spent on active academic instruction. They also reported a greater awareness of expectations and differential treatment of students. Finally, teachers reported "usually"

teaching to a clear objective through a planned instructional sequence.

They also described specific changes in their own classroom teaching. For example, one teacher said, "Even when I don't have observers, I find I'm in the habit now of making 'sweeps' to check on students off-task while I'm teaching. . . . This has raised my awareness. I have a sharper vision now of what I do."

At the final workshop, teachers identified the things they would be sure to do next year in their classes. For example: "I will use the time on task observations to aid in seating students." "Begin classroom management Day 1 and continue throughout the year with expectations, consequences, etc." "Try to equalize opportunity for response." "I need to be more precise on sequencing in my lesson planning." "Encourage a few teachers to 'join in' (on observations) and have a little fun and learn some new ideas and concepts."

What we have described here is a collaborative professional growth model where teachers can share their concerns and knowledge and where reflection and experimentation are encouraged in a supportive atmosphere. The collegial spirit generated by this model also serves as a source of reinforcement for improving one's teaching. From our experience, teachers thrive in such a professional development setting. As one teacher said, "The workshops were a

real upper—a sort of revitalizer." It may not be as hard as we've always thought to revitalize teachers! **EL**

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