

# Making Staff Development Programs Work

The Adams County, Colorado, model combines adult learning theory, principles of effective instruction, and developmental supervision.

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How can school districts make staff development programs work for everyone? In Adams County School District No. 12, we have examined this question over the last three years.

New staff development programs, we have observed, are more apt to be successful when several components of effective training are aligned. These components include:

- Findings on developmental adult learning (Hunt, 1966; Harvey and others, 1961)
- Aspects of effective instruction (Bloom, 1976)
- Principles of clinical supervision (Glickman, 1981):

Figure 1 depicts how these three elements interact to form a framework for matching adult learning characteristics with appropriate teaching techniques and supportive follow-up. This concept of matching is critical to creating flexible arrangements that best meet participants' needs.

## Adult Learning Theory

David Hunt and others see adult learning as an interaction of personality development and environmental conditions. He states that "optimal development occurs when the environment facilitates the conceptual work necessary for conceptual growth" (Hunt, 1970, p. 4). Joyce sum-

marizes "as the individual becomes more complex, his environment needs to change with him if growth is to occur at an optimal rate" (Joyce, 1980, p. 19).

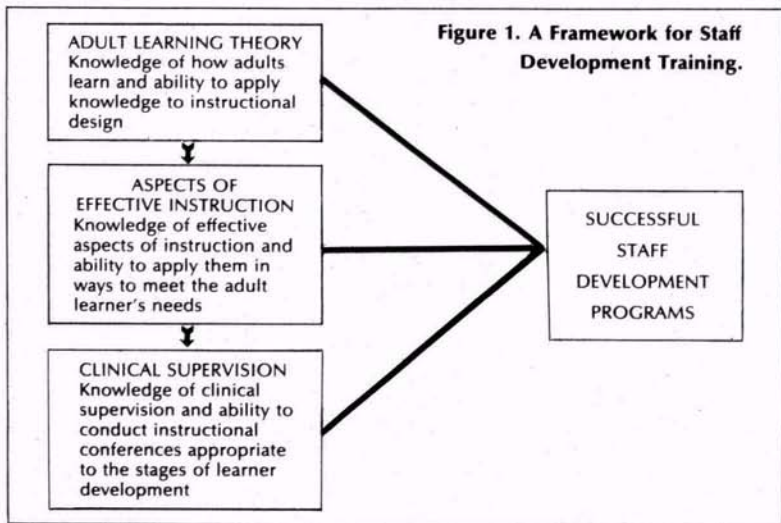
Figure 2 examines the characteristics of adult learners at various stages of development and the implications for conducting training sessions. This information is drawn from the work of Joyce (1980) and Bents and Howey (1981) and their interpretation of Santmire (1979).

## Aspects of Effective Instruction

In our district model, certain elements are expected to be included in all staff development courses regardless of content: overview, standards, diagnosis, presentation, practice, closure, and application assignments. Because in any given training session learners are at varied stages of development, instruction must integrate structured proce-

dures with more flexible approaches. For example, in the course, Classroom Management at the Elementary Level, practice activities that follow a presentation on the components of a behavioral system might proceed as follows:

1. Identify and describe in your own words the four components of any behavioral system. (This practice option is highly structured as participants must draw directly from the key points made in the presentation.)
2. Analyze the use of the four components within a discipline system with which you are familiar. (This practice option is moderately structured and provides some choice in discipline systems to be examined.)
3. Based on your knowledge of a variety of discipline systems and the four components of a behavioral system, cre-



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**Figure 2. Adult Learning Theory and Its Implication for Training.**

Stage of Adult Development	Structure of the Training Environment
<p><b>Stage 1</b> Learners have a right-wrong orientation to situations. There is only one way, their way, to view the world. Only when learners perceive that what they are doing is not working do they see a need for new knowledge. Information that does not fit the learner's current belief system is adapted to fit categories that exist rather than create new ones. These learners prefer hierarchical relationships. Practical concerns about what to do in specific situations (how would team learning work in my second grade classroom?) are the major focus for this type of learner.</p>	<p><b>Stage 1</b> The learning environment must be highly structured. Presentation of practical information should emphasize (1) what to do, (2) how to do it, and (3) circumstances in which it should be done. Instructors should model behaviors applicable in classroom settings including what to say to students and sample materials to be used. Several examples of how principles apply in specific situations need to be demonstrated. Outlines, handouts, and other support material should be organized in sequence to help learners focus on what is important. Discussions should include practical examples and applications rather than theory or generalizations. Ample time for the consolidation and application of ideas must be allowed. Follow-up is necessary for learners at this stage since they are often insecure in applying new learnings and prone to abandoning ideas that do not work immediately. Follow-up assistance needs to be directive. Learners at this stage benefit from a supervisor who is willing to tell them what to do and how to do it.</p>
<p><b>Stage 2</b> Learners at this stage begin to break away from strict rules and beliefs. They ask more questions and are more willing to express their points of view, yet they still have difficulty understanding differing points of view. They exhibit interest in principles and issues and desire to develop their own applications or adaptations of principles. Learners at this stage of development often resist control by authority.</p>	<p><b>Stage 2</b> The training environment needs to provide choices in content and its presentation. Specific applications of ideas become a secondary focus rather than central to the presentation. Discussions that include various points of view relative to the issue should be concluded with a rationale of why the views are held. Follow-up assistance should be collaborative, allowing learners to express their opinions and suggest alternative actions.</p>
<p><b>Stage 3</b> Learners at Stage 3 recognize that they have a variety of alternatives and can choose the one that best fits the situation. They are able to accommodate contradictory information by balancing or connecting differing ideas.</p>	<p><b>Stage 3</b> Learners should be given opportunities to participate in the planning and delivery of staff development programs. Training should include discussions that allow learners to share their viewpoints and experiences so that colleagues may learn from each other. In this way learners are able to develop broader, more comprehensive perspectives. Follow-up assistance should be collaborative or nondirective. These learners benefit from active participation in identifying relevant issues and possible solutions.</p>
<p><b>Stage 4</b> Learners are able to synthesize information and create additional categories to accommodate new information. They approach problems and situations in a systematic fashion, which enables them to quickly review alternatives in order to make effective, spontaneous decisions.</p>	<p><b>Stage 4</b> These learners need an environment that allows them to work easily and comfortably in a variety of ways. They should select and pursue topics of personal interest. Opportunities for critical and creative thinking should be available. Follow-up assistance should be nondirective, allowing these learners to design their own targets and standards for achieving their goals.</p>

ate your own system for classroom discipline. (This practice option is open-ended in that learners synthesize information to create a system to use in their own classrooms.)

Building skill in adjusting instruction to meet learners' developmental needs is an evolving process. It requires staff developers to critically analyze their decision making over a period of time to identify effective procedures. Figure 3 (page 38) depicts the aspects of effective instruction and the range of adjustments available to the staff developer.

#### **Follow-Up Support Through Clinical Supervision**

In providing follow-up support, on-site supervision gives participants assistance in adapting ideas and making necessary

changes in order to implement the knowledge, skills, and attitudes acquired in training. Building on the rapport that has been established throughout the course, staff developers can encourage and support the application of new learning in a way that is nonevaluative.

Just as staff developers must consider the match of learning environments and the stages of adult development, they must also adjust their orientation to supervision. Glickman (1981) has identified three distinct supervisory orientations—directive, collaborative, and nondirective—that can be used in providing follow-up.

Figure 4 (page 43) presents these supervisory orientations, the behaviors most frequently associated with each, and the amount of responsibility each

orientation places on both the supervisor and the learner.

In accordance with Figure 4, a Stage 1 learner needs a supervisor who assumes most of the responsibility and who directs the conference by identifying the problem and establishing the plan of action. Given another situation with a Stage 4 learner, the staff developer alters supervisory behaviors to accommodate the characteristics of the learner and personalizes the application of training.

**Figure 3. Adjusting Aspects of Effective Instruction.**

Aspect of Instruction	Possible Adjustments	
	Stage 1 Learner <----->	-----> Stage 4 Learner
<p><b>Overview</b> Staff developers should provide participants with an introduction that explains workshop objectives, purpose, activities, and assignments.</p> <p><b>Standards</b> Relate expectations for desired behaviors during the training session (that is, ask questions at end, get up for coffee, be on time, and so forth). Identify materials needed for the training session.</p> <p><b>Diagnosis</b> In order to determine the correct level of complexity of the presentation, the staff developer diagnoses participants to relate entry-level skills of learners to the instructional material.</p> <p><b>Presentation</b> The staff developer selects instructional models most closely aligned with the level of the learner and the material to be presented. For example, if the staff developer discovers that learners have some baseline knowledge of the content, he or she may alter the method of presentation from lecture to discussion.</p> <p><b>Practice</b> The staff developer assists and guides participants in applying the new learnings.</p> <p><b>Closure</b> By using open-ended questions in closure, the staff developer determines if participants recall the critical points of the instruction. This provides a necessary check for the staff developer to make decisions about application assignments and to plan subsequent training sessions.</p> <p><b>Application Assignments</b> Design application assignments that provide opportunities to pull together the learning and to apply it in relevant situations. In subsequent training sessions, the staff developer must be certain to debrief these application assignments and answer questions or concerns.</p>	<p>Describe how the information presented in the workshop will be helpful to the learner by giving examples and relevant illustrations.</p> <p>Standards are set and enforced by the staff developer.</p> <p>Diagnosis can be conducted so that learners demonstrate rather than simply state what their current knowledge is.</p> <p>Use structured lecture/discussion format that includes practical examples, frequent checks for understanding, and modeling.</p> <p>Practice is structured by the trainer and is directly linked to key concepts in the presentation.</p> <p>Questions asked during closure should focus on knowledge, comprehension, and application of the learnings.</p> <p>Application assignments should be structured to allow participants to practice key concepts. During class presentations, staff developers tell participants what to do on application assignments and demonstrate how to do it.</p>	<p>Overviews can identify theory and generalization to be discussed and their implications in the field of education.</p> <p>Standards are negotiated in the group and enforced by its members.</p> <p>Diagnosis is informal and provides a self-evaluation.</p> <p>Use less structured instructional models that require a greater degree of abstraction, such as problem solving, simulation, inquiry.</p> <p>Options for practice are provided or designed by the participants. Practice opportunities incorporate several concepts so that learners analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information.</p> <p>Questions asked during closure should focus on analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of the learnings.</p> <p>Options for application assignments should be available. Participants select and structure assignments to achieve personal and professional goals.</p>

*continued on page 43*

**Figure 4. Situational Supervision.\***

Orientation to Supervision	Amount of Structure		Supervisory Behaviors Most Frequently Used	Stages of Adult Development
	Learner Responsibility	Supervisor Responsibility		
<b>Directive</b> The supervisor determines the plan of action and establishes standards of performance. The supervisor knows more about the context of teaching/learning than the learner does.	Low	High	The supervisor clarifies the problem area by collecting data, presents his or her point of view, directs the plan of actions, demonstrates appropriate behavior, sets performance standards, and provides incentives or reinforcement for success.	Stage 1
<b>Collaborative</b> The learner and supervisor share decision making and establish a mutual contract. The supervisor believes in the importance of learner and supervisor collaboration.	Moderate	Moderate	The supervisor presents his or her views, questions the learner to clarify the area needing improvement, listens intently, initiates problem solving, and negotiates for a workable, mutual solution to the problem.	Stage 2 and Stage 3
<b>Nondirective</b> The learner ultimately determines the course of action. Supervisor assumes the learner will make the wisest and most responsible decision about the situation.	High	Low	The supervisor listens to the learner, encourages the learner to discuss issues; clarifies the learner's issues, presents ideas or point of view if requested, and initiates problem solving.	Stage 3 and Stage 4

\*Adapted from Glickman (1981)

**Summary**

In School District No. 12 we plan training sessions knowing that the participants will be at varied stages of adult development and consciously design aspects of effective instruction to meet participants' developmental characteristics. We provide on-site follow-up assistance through clinical supervision, which enables individual learners to translate ideas presented in training to everyday working situations. Conducting training programs in a developmental manner as outlined in this framework is critical to making staff development programs work for everyone. EL

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**Note to Readers**

The April 1983 issue of *Educational Leadership* will be concerned with "Educators and Social Issues." We expect to have articles by noted scholars and experts on selected current social issues followed by commentaries from educators about the educational significance of their ideas. If you would like to be considered for selection as a respondent, please send a note stating the issue in which you are interested and briefly explaining your views on that issue. It will be helpful if you include a writing sample.

We also welcome, for possible publication, brief (1-4 pages, double-spaced) but specific statements or anecdotes representing a variety of opinions and approaches to questions such as these:

1. What social issues concern you the most?
2. What is the responsibility of educators in helping students cope with social issues?
3. What have been your experiences dealing with social issues and what were the results?

Papers are due no later than January 1, 1983; expressions of interest in writing responses should be sent by November 1, 1982, to *Educational Leadership* at the ASCD office in Alexandria, Virginia.

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