

The Metropolitan Teaching Effectiveness Cadre

An interdistrict network with broad-based community support provides training in effective instruction and supervision for 22 Kansas and Missouri school districts.

Karen, a 10-year veteran teacher in a Kansas City-area school district, prepared for her teaching observation and conference as she had for many others. She cleaned her classroom, made sure the material on her bulletin board was colorful and clever, and bought a new outfit. But this conference, held in conjunction with the Metropolitan Teaching Effectiveness Cadre program, was different from anything Karen had ever experienced. A principal from a nearby Kansas school district joined her principal in observing Karen teach her 4th grade class.

In the follow-up conference, no mention was made of such superficial matters as Karen's dress or the appearance of her classroom. Instead, the emphasis was on teaching. The visiting principal pointed out that when Karen asked all students to solve a math problem at their seats and then walked around the room to check their progress, she not only involved all of the students in practice but also quickly diagnosed how well they had learned. Together, Karen and the visiting principal came up with some specific ways Karen could improve student learning by ensuring that homework assignments enabled students to practice skills they had learned. "What impressed me," Karen said afterward, "was that we actually talked about my teaching. They pointed out the things I do well—things I wasn't even aware I was doing. This kind of supervision I can handle."



Karen was not the only beneficiary of the conference. Her principal was also pleased with the help he received in learning how to better supervise Karen and other teachers through the conference modeling provided by the visiting principal, who is a member of the cadre. He remarked, "You know, no one ever conferenced me when I was a teacher. And, while I am responsible for supervising the 37 teachers in my building, you just modeled the first conference I have ever seen someone conduct."

A Universal Educational Dilemma

The cadre approach to teacher training was developed in response to a universal educational dilemma: how can school districts, within the limited confines of their budgets, effectively enrich teachers' skills and, at the same time, improve principals' abilities to analyze teaching and provide teachers with meaningful feedback and instructional guidance? The cadre is a local staff development program that provided training in effective instruction

to over 4,000 teachers, administrators, and resource persons in 22 Kansas and Missouri school districts surrounding metropolitan Kansas City in the 1984-85 school year. It evolved from an extensive two-year, multidistrict training program conducted by Madeline Hunter of UCLA and sponsored by the Inservice Directors' Network at The Learning Exchange. The Learning Exchange is a nonprofit resource center that assists Kansas City-area educators in their efforts to improve instruction.

Although the Hunter training was very successful, it had the same drawbacks as many staff development programs. For example, it involved costly out-of-state consultants who were available only on a limited basis. The Learning Exchange staff members knew that school districts in the Kansas City area needed a highly skilled group of local trainers who could provide affordable, ongoing training and the follow-up support needed to ensure long-range change. The Learning Exchange envisioned an interdistrict group of trainers, made up of both teachers and administrators, thoroughly trained in both adult learning theory and effective instruction. The only obstacle was the lack of seed



Photographs by Dalene Bradford

money required to coordinate such a project and to train principals and teachers to become cadre members.

Strong Community Support

Key to The Learning Exchange's success has been the broad base of community support for its projects. Governed by a board of directors representing business, foundations, and education, The Learning Exchange cultivates strong leadership and puts it

to work to benefit education. Using a \$30,000 foundation grant, The Learning Exchange was able to bring Hunter's training to Kansas City several times between 1982 and 1984. Board members and potential funders attended these training sessions with the educators. They also met later in small-group planning sessions with Hunter, exploring the community's role in staff development.

Community supporters were impressed with what they saw and encouraged by positive program evaluations. Therefore, when The Learning Exchange proposed to develop a cadre of local trainers who would spread effective teaching strategies, a coalition of seven funders pledged \$235,000 to be used over a three-year period to help finance the project.

In March 1984, following a rigorous selection process, 16 outstanding educators from 11 school districts were chosen to be cadre members. Each member had already completed at least 30 hours of basic training and immediately took part in an advanced clinical supervision course at UCLA with Hunter. During the next year, cadre members attended monthly study group meetings and took 40 hours of workshops and college credit courses taught by national consultants, including Ernie Stachowski, Marilyn Bates, Sue Wells-Walsh, Leslie Huling, and Ted Forte, all brought to Kansas City by The Learning Exchange with community dollars.



The "Service Pool" Approach

The cadre operates as a "service pool." Each school district donates a minimum of 20 release days per cadre member to the pool, which members use to provide cadre services, such as inservice workshops, college credit classes, and peer coaching. In return, districts draw from the pool a certain number of cadre services at no charge, using any cadre member from any district. The Learning Exchange helps districts refine staff development plans and schedule cadre services.

Some Kansas City districts do not have a staff member in the cadre but have staff development plans that include effective instruction training. These districts can purchase cadre services from The Learning Exchange. The \$23,000 generated last year from sale of cadre services to 11 additional

districts was reinvested in the program.

Because of the availability of the cadre service pool, Kansas City schools now have access to more and better staff development resources. When the Belton School District scheduled inservice for its special all-kindergarten building, cadre director Elaine Mondschein referred three cadre trainers—a 1st grade teacher, a 2nd grade resource teacher, and an experienced principal—from three neighboring districts. "We can provide more than just qualified trainers," says Mondschein. "We can arrange a grade-level match, we can pair administrators with administrators, teachers with teachers ... we can even target subject-matter specialities, because the cadre has such depth of knowledge and experience."

Long-Lasting Benefits

Superintendents immediately realized that using the cadre program to develop in-house expertise would benefit their districts for many years. Local staff developers at last had adequate and affordable resources to meet inservice needs. The Center School District, for example, developed onsite college credit classes for staff members. Sessions for administrators were conducted by principals from both a Kansas and a Missouri district. While administrators were learning script taping and conferencing skills, the district's teachers studied practice theory, lesson analysis, classroom management, and other principles of learning, made meaningful by peer observations. Teachers watched colleagues teach and identified aspects of good instruction. Later, when the Center School District teachers and principals came together in the formal supervision process, they all spoke the same instructional language.

The success of the cadre project is currently being assessed by an outside evaluator hired by The Learning Exchange. In addition, a university research project was begun this fall to examine changes in student learning as a result of the program. Informal measures of accomplishment are notable: all 11 school districts with cadre members have returned to the program, all 7 funders have renewed financial support for the second year, and 18 new cadre members were chosen in March, increasing cadre membership to 27 and district involvement to 14.

But most telling, and probably most rewarding, are the comments made by the educators reached by this project. As one teacher said, "I used to think it was the kids' responsibility to learn the material. My kids didn't even know how to do the homework after I taught the lesson. Now I accept the responsibility for the student learning, and I have some ways to go about helping them learn." □

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The Learning Exchange

As a first time visitor to The Learning Exchange in Kansas City, Missouri, you might be surprised to find yourself in a converted warehouse, but perhaps only a warehouse could provide enough space for this well-stocked educational resource center. Open the door and climb one flight up.

Visit Computer Consortium headquarters to find the largest collection of commercial software in the Midwest plus a well-equipped microcomputer lab. Here, computer staff members operate Kansas City's only free electronic bulletin board for educators.

Browse through the Resource Center stocked with sample teaching activities, bulletin board displays, and resource books. Shop in the recycled materials center, talk to professional staff people who assist, advise, or just listen. Eight hundred educators use the Resource Center each month.

Through the next door you can stroll "around town" through Exchange City, a life-size minitown. This 5,000 square foot metropolis with its bank, city hall, radio station, newspaper, and 9 retail shops is the yearly destination of 12,000 5th graders and their teachers who participate in the Exchange City Economic Education Program. Classroom economic principles come to life as students become workers and leaders of Exchange City for a day.

Five other Learning Exchange programs are housed in the warehouse: Arts in Education, the Inservice Directors' Network, the School Advisory Assistance Center, Historic Kansas City, and the Metropolitan Effective Instruction Cadre.

Each program helps achieve The Learning Exchange mission: to assist educators in their efforts to improve the quality of instruction provided to students. The full-time staff of 24 former teachers provide teacher training, consulting, networking, and program development.

Community partnerships have helped The Learning Exchange accomplish its objectives. Since its 1972 founding, The Learning Exchange has nurtured partnerships with over 200 businesses, trusts, foundations, and individuals. Twenty-five percent of The Learning Exchange's \$1.2 million budget comes from these valued partners whose support benefits education in 52 Kansas City-area school districts.

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