

Preparing Teachers for Collaboration

At Fort Worth's summer "Lab School," teachers learn to facilitate collegial efforts back in their schools.



Observation and feedback are key components of collegiality. Charlsa Stewart, far right, collects data on the teaching methods of summer school teacher Lamar Favors.



coaching training. At this point, teachers who are interested in follow-up practice in coaching can visit the classroom of a Demonstration Teacher along with a more experienced coach to practice the skills of observing, gathering data, and delivering technical feedback. The Demonstration Teacher, who has been prepared for this role in Lab School, can then serve as an example of how a teacher who is receiving technical feedback can obtain the most from a peer conference. In this way, small groups of teachers learn from guided practice before selecting a partner and practicing in their own classrooms.

Another form of support that leads to coaching is the Released Time Sem-

inar Coaching Model (Leggett et al. in press) in which teachers are relieved by substitutes to attend half- or full-day seminars conducted by Cadre Trainers. Again, Demonstration Teachers exemplify the strategy being discussed. These participants, who register for the seminar as partners, are prepared to return to their buildings and coach each other on the new strategies learned. Again, this model extends the support of Lab School participants to their fellow teachers by preparing them to help each other try out new ideas and observe and be observed by their colleagues.

Breaking Down the Barriers

As Demonstration Teachers and Cadre Trainers complete the Lab School program and share their enthusiasm for collaboration in their respective buildings, school climate noticeably improves. Dialogue about the planning and delivery of instruction increases, and teachers share instructional strategies. New teachers are assimilated more quickly, and teachers are involved in peer coaching. In short, the Keystone Project has helped foster in Fort Worth's teachers the practices that are critical to collegiality, which in turn leads to positive change. Teachers' increased sense of efficacy has helped them overcome their isolation and open their classrooms to the potential of professional sharing. □

References

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"...Supervision is the over-the-shoulder prevention of mistakes.... Evaluation is finding mistakes after they have been made.... There is no supervision in the public schools of this country.... Every school child knows that...."

**Henry M. Brickell
and Regina H. Paul**

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The principal's role in a supportive environment is well known, but teachers, too, can initiate and facilitate collaboration in their schools. In settings where "collegiality and experimentation" are the norm, teachers themselves engage in certain "critical practices" (Little 1981). These teachers prepare and review curriculum units and lesson plans together. Further, they talk about and test new ideas and persuade others to try them. They extend collaboration into their classrooms by observing each other and inviting others to observe them.

Fort Worth Independent School District, an ethnically diverse district of approximately 65,000 students, has targeted, through its Keystone Project, the critical practices of collegiality that Little describes. This project, funded by the Sid Richardson Foundation, trains teachers in the use of effective instructional strategies including mastery learning and the writing process. Peer coaching and collaborative learning are two elements of this training.

The staff of the Keystone Project believe that collegiality does not just happen, it must be nurtured and developed. Teachers can learn to share in the planning and delivery of instruction. They can become change agents as they work collaboratively to improve their schools.

Lab School

The Keystone Project staff offer teachers the skills necessary for collaboration in "Lab School," a special four-week program overlapping a regular summer school for middle school students. Lab School participants learn how to work together in planning and implementing curriculum, in teaching other teachers, and in observing and coaching each other.



A spirit of comradery as well as a higher level of teaching skills is often the result of collaboration.

Teachers who apply for admission to Lab School are selected on the basis of a writing sample, an interview, an actual teaching tape, and their willingness to work and share with each other. In 1984, 30 teachers participated in the first Lab School. In 1985, 18 teachers returned, and 10 new ones were selected. Participation jumped drastically in 1986 to include 15 returning participants and 43 new ones. By the summer of 1987, Lab School included 43 returning participants and 39 new ones. Teachers who complete the four-week program are committed to return to their schools to assume either a formal role as a Cadre Trainer or an informal one as a Demonstration Teacher in promoting a supportive

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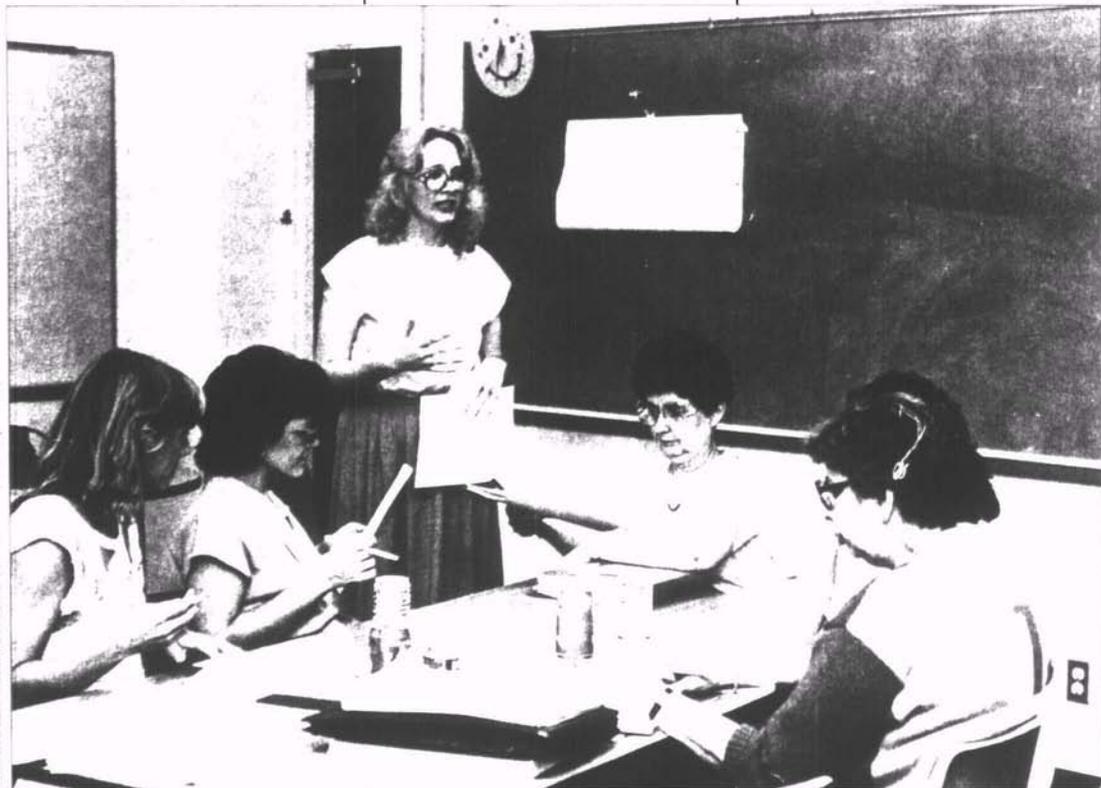
school climate. Both options encompass one or more of the critical practices of collegiality.

Cadre Trainers

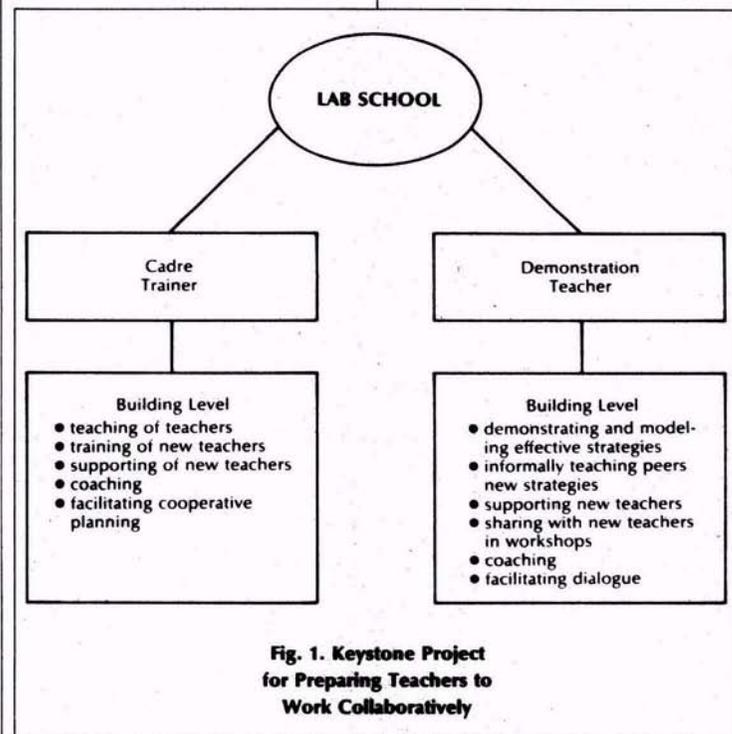
Cadre Trainers are practicing teachers who conduct staff development sessions after school on selected weekdays and on Saturdays for other teachers at the district or building level. Teachers who wish to become Cadre Trainers must first internalize the district’s staff development curriculum by using in their own classrooms the strategies they will eventually present in workshops. Keystone Project staff determine the degree to which a teacher has internalized the concepts by assessing tapes of teaching epi-

sodes, which are a prerequisite to admittance to Lab School.

Once selected for the Lab School, a Cadre Trainer chooses a workshop segment from the existing staff development curriculum and prepares a presentation for a variety of settings. A trainer first makes a presentation to a small group of peers, then to the workshop consultant, and finally in the actual workshop setting to an audience of 30–40 people. Constructive feedback from peers is processed at each step. After making a sufficient number of presentations to assure internalization of the concept, the trainer selects a new concept and begins again. Because this procedure is extensive and time consuming, Cadre



Laura Carson trains Lab School participants to plan and implement curriculum and to observe and coach other teachers.



Trainers continue their training during the school year with at least 30 hours of released time seminars. The role of Cadre Trainer itself ensures that teachers engage in some of the critical practices of collegiality: publicly talking about new ideas, persuading others to try them, and formally and informally teaching others.

Demonstration Teachers

Another option that prepares teachers to facilitate collegiality is the more informal role of Demonstration Teacher. Again, persons who select this role must be willing to adapt the concepts learned in the Lab School to the levels of their students and to share those adaptations by allowing others to observe. These observations are usually conducted as part of some coaching model being implemented at the building level, but a Demonstration

Teacher may also model use of a particular concept for an individual teacher. After any observation, formal or informal, the Demonstration Teacher asks for feedback and helps the observer(s) analyze what has been seen. In addition to observations, the Demonstration Teacher is available for collaboration in planning and developing content, curriculum, and instructional strategies.

While Cadre Trainers feel comfortable instructing a large group, Demonstration Teachers prefer sharing information and knowledge informally as discussion leaders or small-group facilitators in workshop settings. Demonstration Teachers provide grade-level examples and models that clarify the content being presented and relate it to the needs of workshop participants. As with Cadre Trainers, Demonstration Teachers continue their prep-

aration during the school year with 30 hours of individualized follow-up training that focuses on aspects of the curriculum they did not address during Lab School. In this way the group finds common ground for exploration during the next Lab School and school year, thereby extending opportunities for members to support each other through discussion of new instructional strategies and techniques.

Throughout Lab School and the school year, Demonstration Teachers plan and implement curriculum together, try new ideas, talk to others about them, and informally teach others—setting in motion the elements for change. Their willingness and openness to share within their schools is instrumental in developing a supportive environment.

Additional Support

The roles of Cadre Trainer and Demonstration Teacher help diminish teachers' feelings of isolation in other important ways. For example, teachers in both roles actively support new

“Each Cadre Trainer . . . is also responsible for maintaining contact with new teachers in the group. Such a lifeline when they really need it establishes a ‘sense of community’ for inexperienced teachers.”



Lab School participants discuss how to give nonevaluative feedback during a coaching conference.

teachers in the district. Before school begins each year, Keystone Project staff schedule a Classroom Management Workshop for the district's 200-300 new teachers. As a result of attending Lab School, Cadre Trainers and Demonstration Teachers have learned to share classroom management strategies and to facilitate these new teachers' small-group discussions during the workshop. Also, each Cadre Trainer or Demonstration Teacher is responsible for maintaining contact with new teachers in the group. Such a lifeline when they really need it establishes a "sense of community" for inexperienced teachers (Gray and Gray 1985).

Another form of new teacher sup-

port is the New Teacher Buddy system. During Lab School each participant devises a plan that outlines the kinds of information new teachers will need to function in the classroom and to feel a part of the faculty. New Teacher Buddies also develop a yearly timeline to offer new teachers support at critical points—at grading periods, before and after vacation, at opening and closing of school—instead of only once or twice a year.

Coaching

One of the critical practices of collegiality is observing and being observed by other teachers. During Lab School, Demonstration Teachers and Cadre Trainers learn to work with teachers

back at their schools who are interested in establishing coaching teams. This training equips them with skills basic to peer coaching—data collection, observation, and giving nonevaluative feedback—and prepares them to schedule and coordinate peer coaching. As these teachers work to create and maintain comradery among teachers in a given building, school climate improves.

Lab School participants also play a key role in implementing other models of peer coaching in the district. For example in the Group Guided Practice Model (Leggett et al. in press), teachers attend district training that includes implementation of the steps in planning for mastery and basic peer

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