

brainstorming, consensus building, and skill prioritizing. Our vision statement, developed during a one-day retreat held in March 1988 reads:

During the next five years, the employees of the Kenmore-Town of Tonawanda School District will continue to develop a positive work climate which values communication skills, trust, self-esteem, self improvement, individual expertise, and productivity. A shared decision-making model will evolve in the work place: A feeling of cooperation and respect among the district employees, the students, and the community will be based on the understanding and appreciation of our common values and goals. We will be recognized as a school district with a well deserved national reputation—a great place to learn.

Three design teams or task forces are working on goals to help us "become the best we can imagine." These design teams have enabled us to further expand and involve representatives from the 13 schools and central office.

School improvement, by its nature, involves long-range, visionary planning. Results are often not visible or tangible for a relatively long period of time. However, we have recently succeeded in achieving some tangible results, including:

- An employee information handbook for the entire staff;
- "You Make the Difference" workshops for improving the communication skills and self-esteem of all district support staff;
- A social/effective behavior styles workshop;
- An information handbook for substitute employees;
- An orientation and recruitment video;
- Inservice meetings and a timeline for implementing shared decision-making;
- A learning styles workshop.

These design team goals and results are reflections of planning team input

and our "climate inventory" needs assessment. The planning teams are not for problem solving; rather, they are visionary teams working together to be the "very best we can be." We are currently assessing where we are in relation to our goals and what adjustments we may need to make for our future plans.

We feel that all employees of the Kenmore-Town School District should be involved in our "Building on Excellence" school improvement process. Only by working together as a team can we benefit and promote our final product—successful students. □

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KAY D. WOELFEL

The Job-Alike Workshop: Staff Development for Classified Personnel

When support personnel learn student management strategies, their daily tasks are easier, and the positive effects are noticeable throughout the entire school.

Mr. Bitz: Would you pick up that paper?

Jimmy: I didn't throw it on the floor.

Mr. Bitz: I know you didn't, but would you please pick it up.

Jimmy: But Michael threw it.

Mr. Bitz: Would you pick it up so our washroom stays clean?

Jimmy: Okay!

If this dialogue sounds a lot like the "broken record" technique used in assertive discipline, well, it is. What makes it special is that Mr. Bitz is a custodian using effective student management skills identified in a Job-Alike Workshop designed for custodians, secretaries, bus drivers, nurses, aides, lunchroom attendants,

hall monitors, and recess supervisors.

As an elementary principal working with 50 staff members, I conducted a half-day Job-Alike Workshop for the one-third of my staff who were classified rather than certified. To make it easy for them to attend, I notified their immediate supervisors and, in cases where the meeting was scheduled out-

side their workday, paid them. My purpose was not only to discuss strategies for large- and small-group student management but also to emphasize the importance of their roles in the school day.

Here's my schedule for an afternoon workshop.

1:00-1:15 p.m.: Introduction/Warm Up. Because many staff members never cross paths due to varied work schedules, I included names and job titles on I.D. tags. Following introductions, I presented an overview of the afternoon.

1:15-1:45 p.m.: Late Lunch. Principals aren't the only ones who don't get a "real" lunch. Recess supervisors, custodians, bus drivers, and secretaries rarely get to sit down and chat with coworkers. I called the local deli, ordered a three-foot submarine sandwich and cole slaw, opened up the pop machine, and considered it catered. This was very much appreciated.

1:45-2:30 p.m.: Strategies. Any effective management material will work, but I shared part of Canter's *Assertive Discipline for Paraprofessionals*.¹ I discussed the three ways behavior is handled—hostile, nonassertive, and assertive—and put in a bid for the last. I outlined the "broken record" method of assertively handling students who argue by (1) stating what you want done (Would you pick up that paper?); (2) repeating up to three times what you want done (Please pick up that paper); and (3) listing the logical consequences that may result from noncompliance (You will lose recess time if you don't respond to a reasonable request). I also gave the participants a chance to share concerns, brainstorm solutions, and role-play assertive strategies.

2:30-2:45 p.m.: Wrap Up. Finally, I asked for responses to the question, "What can I do to make your job easier?" Their easily incorporated re-

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quests included posting playground rules by the exits, closing a communications gap between the nurse's office and the recess supervisors, and earmarking a hierarchy of decision makers in the principal's absence.

The skills acquired in a Job-Alike Workshop can go a long way toward reducing the I-don't-get-no-respect syndrome compounded by high student/supervisor ratios (66 students: 1 bus driver; 100 students: 1 lunchroom attendant; 8 acres of playground: 1 recess supervisor, etc.). When employees with similar responsibilities are empowered with management know-how, principals get the bonus of a corresponding reduction in such time-consuming problems as bus conduct notices, playground scuffle referrals, and school fights resulting in suspensions.

Would I do it again? It's already in the works. □

¹Canter, L. (1987). *Assertive Discipline for Paraprofessionals* (Santa Monica, Calif.: Lee Canter and Associates, Inc.).

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