Noel Lawrence

In-Service Programs for High School Teachers

Off-campus courses and observation are useful in improving practice.

A MODERN and rapidly changing society must have a diverse and a rapidly changing educational system. We need to work steadily and constantly through in-service education to improve our methods of instruction.

It is largely in the area of teaching methods that modern education has made progress. Results of newer methods of instruction are so widely accepted and used today that the difference in education is largely one of superior application. It is in this area, the dissemination and application of known techniques, that the best hope of improving the educational program lies.

The most likely way that mature teachers will continue to grow and that beginning teachers will become mature is through in-service education. Not only is in-service education needed to overcome deficiencies in teacher preparation, it is also necessary to keep the staff informed and to improve instruction.

In-service education is equally as important for experienced teachers as for new teachers. In-service programs are a major means for bringing instructional content and methods "up to date." For these reasons and others, no two years will see identical in-service programs within a school.

Many procedures are used in in-service education. Described here are two promising programs that have proved effective. The first of these consists of "off campus courses"; the second, of "observing teachers who use good teaching techniques." Neither of these programs is new; however, it is possible that some of the procedures used in implementing the programs are different.

Off-Campus Courses

Many high schools are located either in a college town or are within 100 miles of a college or university that offers off-campus courses.

A first step in implementing such a program is to encourage in faculty members a desire to improve their teaching methods and techniques. To do this, all possible stimulation must be used. We need to make all teachers aware that

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today the educational systems of two of the world's greatest nations are locked in combat, and the winner is likely to be the system that can do the most effective job of teaching its young people. Teachers need to know that if taxpayers are going to shoulder the added costs of education, they must be able to see quality teaching in the classroom. Quality teaching comes about only through improved methods and techniques.

Such improved methods and techniques are learned mainly through in-service education. Salary schedules with additional pay increments for further training will stimulate many teachers to favor on-campus or off-campus courses.

Once a desire for self-improvement has been established, participants are ready for a second step; namely, the counseling of teachers as to the type of course that will likely lead to improved teaching. This will vary with different faculties depending upon the amount of training, the recency of training, and the teaching experience of its members. Courses from which teachers are likely to derive greatest benefit are those of a workshop nature or courses dealing with better understanding of children or improved techniques of teaching. A few off-campus courses that may be made available are: Principles and Practices of Guidance, Education of Gifted Children, Contemporary Educational Trends, Education and Democracy, Improvement of the Curriculum, Improvement of Instruction and Problems of Secondary Education. After adequate counseling with teachers, an off-campus course may be set up.

Sometimes, in order to have adequate enrollment in each class and where more than one course is offered each semester, teachers from neighboring high schools may be invited to enroll. The principal can play an important part in working with the college or university in selecting capable staff members to teach such courses. Stimulating and challenging teachers are needed for such work.

Once the program is under way, conversation among the teachers may stimulate interest among those teachers not participating in the classes to the extent that they will desire to come into the program. Thus, this type of in-service education will perpetuate itself as long as the principal keeps his finger on the pulse of the faculty and continues to offer challenging courses with stimulating instructors.

Observation

A second type of in-service education is that of observation or visitation. This plan enables teachers during their free period to visit other teachers in the system whom they consider to be expert. Under certain conditions, this type of in-service education may be more effective than demonstration teaching. However, before such a program can be initiated, careful groundwork must be done. The faculty as a group must have a sincere desire to improve instruction. They must appreciate the fact that anything that adds to the quality of education in a school adds to the school's reputation and in turn to the prestige of every faculty member. Once this idea has been established in the minds of all, many teachers will ask for the opportunity to observe good techniques in teaching and others will be happy to take turns in being observed by fellow workers. Some teachers, through private conferences with the principal, in which nondirective counseling techniques are used, will be helped to reach a better understanding of themselves and their

work. They will want to use this observation method in improving their own teaching techniques.

Once an attitude of "I want to evaluate my work and improve my teaching" has been developed, the principal is ready to move in as a coordinator in making this visitation or observation program more effective.

After a teacher has indicated a desire to observe, he should be given a voice in selecting the teacher whose room he wishes to visit. Occasionally the teacher needs further guidance in the selection. The teacher selected for visitation needs to be contacted and a date set for such observation.

Sometimes the observed teacher may want the visitor to know in advance what the class will be trying to develop during the scheduled period. After the observation period is over, it is a "must" that these two teachers have opportunity to talk for a few minutes in order that the observer may understand thoroughly all the teaching techniques employed and why.

These two in-service techniques have been found to be quite effective. In struggling to meet rapidly changing aims through alterations in our educational system, it is perhaps not surprising that our educational world is in a continual ferment. But this ferment does not necessarily mean chaos. Society from time to time is shocked by events, and sooner or later such events cause us to re-examine our educational procedures.

We cannot change an educational system overnight or suddenly eliminate deficiencies. Our educational system must be kept sound and our educational goals must be clear to everyone, particularly to teachers. We need to be constantly alert for new techniques of teaching that are being developed through educational research. If this is done, we can work for desirable change quite rapidly and our schools will remain strong.

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room procedures and community understanding. It is difficult to evaluate change in these areas; often, observable change resulting from an activity comes long after completion of the activity. In the meantime, the group needs the best evidence available to determine immediate direction. At every stage of the program, in-service education groups face decisions as to how to secure and use evaluative data.

Today's challenge to education places upon educators responsibility to provide opportunity for growth within the profession. The potentialities of this opportunity can be realized through the cooperation and active participation of all concerned. We will solve our problems in education as we continue to search for answers.

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