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A Staff Development Model for a Multicultural Society

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Introduction

The purpose of staff development is to improve and refine teachers' knowledge, skills, and attitudes so they become effective in their role as teachers. The changing nature of learning, however, presents a challenge to any staff development program since teachers should be trained to deliver instruction in a dynamic, interactive manner. Staff development is not an add-on but an integral part of school life.

The New Compact for Learning, adopted by the Board of Regents of the New York State Department of Education in 1991, supports a creative, cooperative, professional development program and reminds us of its pivotal importance in current school restructuring initiatives.

The New Compact recommends a professional culture of support in the school through staff development, thereby leading to academic excellence for all children. By raising standards of performance in all subjects to reflect challenging content and performance skills, the Compact has made professional development practice a major enterprise for educators.

Staff development is also important because of the large numbers of children of diverse languages and cultures who fill classrooms today. Because of these numbers, a sound staff development program is indispensable. According to Viewpoints (1992), a newsletter published by the New York State Federation of School Administrators, the Big Five School Districts (Buffalo, New York City, Rochester, Syracuse, Yonkers) have comprehensive English as a second language (ESL) and bilingual programs for limited English proficient (LEP) students. These programs serve students in many different languages. Teachers need to be trained in order to implement sound and effective programs. Figure 1 presents a broader view of the states with the highest enrollment of LEP population. In their order, the states are California, Texas, New York, Florida, Illinois, New Mexico, Arizona, New Jersey, Maine, and Minnesota. The pluralistic character of our country poses the following question: How will teachers be trained to adjust their practice to address cultural diversity? Staff development is a major vehicle to attain this goal.

Figure 1.
States with the Highest Enrollment of LEP Students.

MI	37,172
MA	42,606
NJ	47,550
AZ	65,727

NM	73,505
IL	79,291
FL	83,937
NY	168,208
TX	313,234
CA	986,162

Note: From the Newsletter of the National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education, March 1993, Forum, 16(3).

In recent years districts have met the challenge of educating limited English proficient (LEP) students by providing bilingual education and English as a second language (ESL) instruction. It is not enough for districts to provide these programs; consideration needs to be given to the training and retraining of the individuals who interact daily with LEP students. What is needed is an integrated and comprehensive staff development model which will give districts direction to serve our LEP population better and to support the New Compact's guidelines for equitable teaching, learning, and assessment. Figure 2 presents a model for staff development which will address the needs of our multicultural schools.

Figure 2.
A Staff Development Model for a Multicultural Society.

	DISTRICT	
Cooperative Learning		Learning Styles
Alternative Assessment		Research Research on Teaching Teacher Directed
	SCHOOL	
Critical Thinking		School/University Partnership
ESL/BIL Methods Theories/Programs		Peer Coaching
	STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOME	

Historically, severe criticisms have been launched at bilingual education regarding its effectiveness. The

recommendation has been made that it is important to immerse non-English speaking children into English instruction (Krashen, 1991). The generation-old debate regarding the effectiveness of bilingual education continues to stir heated discussion in many forums. Critics have questioned the eligibility criteria for entering the program as well as its methodology.

Another way districts are dealing with the effects of changing population demographics is to use various ESL program configurations. Since 1950, the field of ESL has undergone significant changes with regard to instructional strategies. The pendulum has swung from grammatical to communicative instructional approaches. While these programs deserve mention and merit, staff training in bilingual and ESL approaches is not enough.

Staff Development in Perspective

For the most part, staff development initiatives have not received the enthusiasm and status of current educational reforms. The reasons for their unpopularity are many. Guskey (1990) discusses some of the perceptions associated with staff development activities. According to Guskey, these activities appear isolated from each other; there is no continuity or long range planning associated with staff development. In essence, they appear to be piecemeal approaches to professional growth. The instructional ideas or strategies that evolve from staff development are seen as fads which will quickly pass on since the opportunity for sharing among teachers, follow-up, and evaluation are not made available by staff developers.

In view of the lack of a professional culture associated with inservice training, this paper will support a model which shows long-range planning and interaction with the needs of the school for which it is designed. This would allow for feedback among teachers, follow-up, and fine tuning as needed. Also, the model would have to show that student learning outcome is the focus or the goal of all instructional activities. According to Guskey (1986) the most effective motivator for teachers to want to learn and use a new instructional strategy is if it enhances student achievement. In addition, a successful inservice program would show that all instructional options are connected or related because of their goal-student learning outcome. The program would be tailored to the school in that its scope and sequence would depend upon the needs of the student population. The scope and sequence of the program would be determined by the staff of the school through a needs assessment. The role of the district is to facilitate resources or to act as a supporting entity. Guskey (1990) has suggested a timeline of at least one year for teachers to feel comfortable with the implementation of a new instructional strategy. Guskey (1990) argues for the integration of all innovative strategies into a framework as it is represented in this paper. He also suggests that it is imperative to establish a relationship among all the components of the program. Finally, since experimentation and trial of all the components are suggested, support and follow-up by the district and administration during the entire process are vital. The schedule for staff development that seems to be most effective according to Sparks (1983) is one characterized by a series of four to six three-hour workshops spaced one or two weeks apart. Sparks explains that coaching among teachers is an important ingredient for a successful building improvement program. The staff development model described in Figure 2 is designed according to the recommendations of Guskey (1990) and Sparks (1983).

The delivery of effective instruction depends upon teachers having in-depth knowledge and competency about a variety of teaching techniques and methods. Teachers also need tools which promote their empowerment and sense of personal efficacy (Sergiovanni, 1989). This paper presents a model for professional development which incorporates both of these ideas. At the same time, the model gives districts direction for the implementation of the New Compact for Learning and, hence, a way to serve our diverse population of students.

The Model and Its Components

The components of a staff development model for our multicultural classrooms are Learning Styles, Research, School/University Partnership, Peer Coaching, ESL/Bilingual Methods, Theories and Programs, Critical Thinking, Alternative Assessment, and Cooperative Learning.

Learning Styles

The New York State Council on Curriculum and Assessment, which exists under the New Compact for Learning, has asked the Bilingual/Bicultural Committee to study and report the implications of second language learning as it relates to the instruction and assessment of LEP students. How these students learn is a central component in the report. In no other case is there a greater need for teachers to be informed about learning styles than when dealing with children of other languages and cultures. These students already face a multitude of challenges in the educational system. For example, they have to adapt to a new academic and cultural environment. Some have less than age-appropriate education. The emerging research on learning styles documents that when students' learning preferences are accommodated by choosing comparable teaching styles, these children made academic gains (Nunan, 1988). One source of individual difference that is related to cultural difference is cognitive style. Cognitive styles have been popularly described as field dependent and field independent. Sternberg and Stuben (1986) have suggested that schools operate from a field independent orientation, that is, they emphasize analytical, sequential, and rule oriented ways of dealing with information, but this type of instruction may not favor all children. Since the intent of this paper is to give districts direction for staff training, the components of the model will be described in abbreviated form.

Research

Improving teachers' professionalism has been designated as a priority program theme by the Board of Regents State Education Department for 1993 1994 and beyond. Teachers must be informed about research related to instruction, learning, and assessment. The information evolving from research may consist of personal theory building (Killion & Todnem, 1991), studying different types of knowledge (Leinhart, 1992), and learning about the recent shift in focus in the classroom from individual differences to learning communities (Prawat, 1992). To illustrate the need to keep teachers informed and trained, Glickman (1992) has contrasted traditional views of learning and teaching with a new developing framework for both. For example, Glickman has discarded the focus on teacher centered instruction and adopted an emphasis on learners actively constructing knowledge according to prior experiences and applying their knowledge to new learning situations. The teacher is seen as a facilitator who brings about change in cognitive structures. Learning is not viewed as a private, solitary endeavor but as a shared activity with other students. Teachers have opportunities to support, model, and coach.

Glickman's (1992) views cannot be treated lightly as they influence the way teachers deliver instruction and the way students learn. We may expect that those children who do not learn eventually become victims of disfranchisement in their school experience and drop out. The responsibility of keeping teachers informed about current learning theories via a rounded staff development program is critical.

School/University Partnership

This component has to do with closing the gap between theory and practice and strengthening the

relationship between the university and the school. One way Goodlad (1991) suggests closing the gap is to have faculty members in universities work systematically with teachers, studying their teaching behaviors and evaluating student outcomes, thus generating theories based on their observations. This collaboration would replace the present role of teachers as consumers of research.

Goodlad (1991) has proposed redesigning teacher education programs in the following manner:

- (1) Faculty groups that contribute to the education of teachers should be made one faculty. This faculty would include those who teach theory and practice, those who teach content, and those who supervise.
- (2) State mandated requirements should be removed, and teachers need to pass examinations as they exist in law and medicine (the teaching profession should adopt similar competency guidelines as those that exist in other fields).
- (3) A professional development center cultivated and guided by both the school and the university should be established where candidates would face similar issues as in the classroom.

The most essential ingredient of school restructuring, according to Goodlad (1991), is to correct a chronic prestige deprivation related to teaching that has evolved throughout the history of educating children. He has suggested that the ill-defined boundaries of a university teaching program be made clear entry points for candidates and that thematic, coherent, sequential coursework be established. It is not surprising that the collaboration of teacher-education colleges and school districts has been stated as a goal by the New Compact for Learning.

Peer Coaching

The idea that learning is a social act has spread to include teachers learning from each other. Peer Coaching is a system where colleagues learn to teach better from each other, using observations and conferences. What appears to be most attractive about peer assistance is that it is based on trust, ownership, confidentiality, and a validation of professional expertise. It differs from traditional supervisory evaluation in that it promotes professional growth in a nonjudgemental manner.

Peer Assistance serves as a springboard for other major changes in the school as well as involving secure risktaking. It can build creativity and receptivity, leading to teacher empowerment which is a central tenet of effective teaching.

Sergiovanni (1989) has supported peer coaching by expanding the role of teachers beyond that of a technician who is confined to the classroom and who ultimately may experience apathy and disfranchisement. Through collegial support and a culture of inquiry, Sergiovanni portrays a vision of teachers as public and professional leaders. Teacher knowledge and empowerment are at the core of the vision and consist of teachers being informed about the school and classroom as they exist in the larger environment of local, state, and national structures. Peer Coaching also addresses the isolation of teachers which, according to Sergiovanni, has prevailed in the teaching profession. He sees a need for professional exchange among teachers, consisting of opportunities to interact with the larger community outside the school.

ESL/Bilingual Methods, Theories, and Programs

Conceptual frameworks for teaching English as a Second Language (ESL) and for teaching content-area

instruction in a child's first language-bilingual education-have grown since the passing of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. Insight into bilingualism, language proficiency, and academic achievement has been provided by experts (Cummins, 1984; Lambert, 1967; Krashen, 1982). Although the theories and practices of bilingual education and ESL have been around for a while and continue to be revised and embellished by new research, this information remains, for the most part, inside university walls with little relationship to teachers (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1990). In light of the concern for instructional equity for all by the New Compact for Learning, school districts have the responsibility of preparing teachers to implement bilingual and ESL programs.

Another point to be considered is that in 1991 the National State Boards of Education published "The American Tapestry: Educating a Nation." The document makes recommendations to state boards of education for implementing teacher training programs with a multicultural perspective consisting of learning styles, cooperative learning, linguistics, and varied instructional techniques which may consist of a bilingual program and English as a second language instruction. The report is consistent in establishing a strong correlation between the dropout problem and the apparent differences in culture between the school and the home. The training component of ESL/bilingual methods, theories, and programs will address the need of using different methodologies with students from diverse ethnic backgrounds.

Critical Thinking

A wealth of information is available to educators about how thinking occurs. Information about what ought to be involved in thinking so that it becomes a worthwhile activity in the classroom setting is also available. Marzano's (1992) dimensions of learning, based on cognitive research illustrate an example of a thinking program reflecting the theory that learning is the active construction of knowledge which involves (a) the attitudes and perceptions of the students; (b) acquiring and integrating new knowledge through past experience; (c) modifying previously acquired information; (d) using information meaningfully, i.e., making decisions; and (e) developing good habits which facilitate learning. The field of philosophy has given us a guide for the essential ingredients of thinking effectively. These ingredients consist of (a) reasoning to gain information; (b) learning argument skills of distinguishing a claim from a simple communication; (c) using critical judgment which involves being able to evaluate thinking, whether one's own or somebody else's; and (d) supplying criteria in order to determine the quality of a claim (Beyers, 1990).

The teaching of critical thinking has escalated since 1980. Developments in cognitive psychology, changing views of instruction and learning, and a market- place demanding creative, capable problem solvers have become catalysts for teaching students to think creatively. That schools must make an instructional shift is evident in the calls for higher achievement standards. A need exists to sensitize and train teachers to value critical thinking as it pertains to the existing diversification of approaches and diverse population of students. The latter can be achieved through a well-designed staff training program.

Alternative Assessment

Implementation of a critical thinking program leads to developing alternative and authentic means of assessing knowledge where respondents can demonstrate competence using a variety of criteria in different situations. The problem is not so much accepting alternative assessment as a viable means of assessment but in training teachers to be able to design authentic performance tasks. Another obstacle according to Neil and Nadine (1989) is our preoccupation with standardized testing. According to Shepard (1989) "traditional" tests cannot assess the types of knowledge and skills that have been unveiled in the literature regarding critical thinking.

Wiggins (1992) has given us some guidelines for implementing authentic tasks: (a) The way to approach the task is not readily discernible at first; (b) the task may result in many solutions; (c) it involves using multiple criteria where student judgment is required; (d) the task has many uncertain features which require self-monitoring of the student's thinking process; and (e) it requires the student to find some order in the task.

Alternative assessment is valuable to students of other languages and cultures since it gives teachers an opportunity to understand students who see and react to the world differently than mainstream students. Hebert (1992) describes this opportunity as a means for demonstrating different kinds of intelligences and skills not visible through the use of standardized tests.

Cooperative Learning

The emerging view that learning is best understood as a social act is explicit in the cooperative learning movement (Leinhardt, 1992). Teachers, therefore, need to know the principles of cooperative learning and how to use cooperative learning strategies if they are to keep pace with the changing nature of education. Moreover, where ethnically diverse children are concerned, training in cooperative learning gives teachers the avenue to understand whether students favor independent or interdependent relationships and how each of these orientations affects learning. For example, one would expect that an interdependent child would not do well in a classroom where individual achievement is valued. But, an interdependent orientation would emphasize mutual and reciprocal dependence. Cooperative learning is a teacher-created learning situation where a heterogeneous group of students work together for a common outcome according to Sleeter (1991). The basic elements of a cooperative learning situation according to Johnson and Johnson (1986) follow: (a) positive interdependence among all members of the group; a need for each other in order to complete the learning tasks; (b) interaction among the members of the group in the form of asking questions, elaborating a topic, or explaining a term; (c) individual accountability so each student in the group shares the responsibility of achieving the group's goal; (d) growth in interpersonal skills, consisting of communication, decision making, conflict resolution, and collaboration; and (e) group processing or the opportunity for the team to discuss and evaluate what has been learned as a result of the collaboration among all.

The emerging research on cooperative learning has been summarized by Slavin (1991). When the academic achievement of cooperative learning groups and control groups has been compared, the achievement of cooperative groups has been greater. As a result of intermember interaction and collaboration, social relations have improved in the classroom. Improvements in students' self-esteem have been found with several models. Greater tolerance and acceptance of handicapped and ethnically diverse children have developed as a result of a cooperative learning environment.

Recently, Calderon, Tinajero, and Hertz-Lazarowitz (1992) confirmed Slavin's findings, using an adaptation of the Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition Model by Stevens, Madden, Slavin, and Farnish (1987) with bilingual elementary students. The authors reported promising results consisting of: (a) LEP students out-performing English control groups in reading and writing skills; (b) greater development of social skills by LEP students in experimental groups consisting of helping and cooperative behaviors; (c) the development of transitional skills by LEP students in control groups consisting of academic language and cognitive strategies. The authors attributed the positive results of this study to the interactive nature of the model used and the high caliber of instructional materials which in turn produced higher achievement in oral, reading, and writing proficiency in both languages.

Conclusion

As we seek ways to serve better our ethnically diverse population of students in our schools, an integrated staff development program is a promising road to instructional improvement. The proposed model is designed to give school districts direction for the implementation of a school improvement plan. The New Compact for Learning has focused attention on all children having access to achieving the educational standards that have been prescribed by the Council on Curriculum and Assessment. The implication of this concern is that variations with respect to cultural identity, cognitive style, and language form and usage influence what children know and how this knowledge is manifested. We now face the challenge of educating a growing number of LEP students.

One way of meeting this challenge and accomplishing change in the schools is through an integrated, focused staff development program which incorporates selected instructional innovations under the umbrella of current educational reform (Guskey, 1990). The proposed model has been designed with eight components; five components are instructional, and three have been guided by Sergiovanni's (1989) philosophy for teacher empowerment.

Although change is desired, a review of the history of staff development reveals an array of flaws in the content and implementation of these programs. Programs have not been designed in an integrated fashion with a common goal for all instructional ideas; they also have not afforded teachers time to adapt to the new program or the opportunity for feedback and support from the administration and among teachers (Sparks, 1983). The proposed model addresses these concerns.

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