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ABSTRACT

This paper describes an in-service workshop for counselors which, although unique because of funding support, provided outcomes which are applicable to all in-service settings. The workshop featured a comprehensive attempt to provide in-service help in several areas of concern: time management, overall group work, behavioral counseling, decision making, and values clarification. Although goals in some of these areas were satisfactorily met, others were not. Several recommendations for others who plan similar workshops are offered. (Author)

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"Face to Face:" A Report of a School District's
Workshop for Counselors*

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The idea for this workshop came about through information acquired from a year-long guidance program self study, results of the Pennsylvania Educational Quality Assessment study of student attitudes in State College, and an inservice program preference questionnaire completed by the pupil personnel staff. The program organizer and the pupil personnel director of the State College Area School cooperatively planned the workshop and applied for ESEA Title III funding. Although the funding support allowed this school district to develop a more elaborate inservice program than many school systems may be able to afford, the guidelines, content and recommendations are applicable to all settings.

Features

Five rather ambitious objectives were established in the planning phase: 1) to develop systematic time and program management skills; 2) to develop small group organization and management skills; 3) to develop individual counseling skills related to decision-making, values clarification, needs assessment, and goal setting; 4) to develop expertise in some category of behavioral counseling; and 5) to develop the skills necessary to operate portable video taping equipment.

In order to implement these objectives the following instructional guidelines were established:

1. Voluntary participation (20 participants volunteered)
2. Pay participants a stipend for attending workshop sessions.
3. Evening training sessions (Wednesday evening was chosen in this case).
4. Ten 3-hour training sessions with allowance for a break (enough time for presentation and interaction).
5. Avoid the first weeks of a school term and the weeks before and after vacations and term breaks.
6. Provide for at least one follow-up meeting -- 3 to 4 months after the last evening class.
7. Establish individual objectives during the first session which can be measured at the time of the last class and the follow-up meeting.
8. Assign "homework" in the form of applying acquired knowledge to the work setting.

9. Employ "experts" for presentations and the training.

Evaluation

Self-report data were received from the participants relative to their original time management and small groups work objectives at the last evening session in the follow-up meeting and one year later. At the time of the follow-up meeting, better than 95 percent of the goals had been achieved to some degree. Of those who were sampled one year later (50 percent), all but one indicated that their present work was influenced by the workshop. Most comments reflected the influence of the small group training, but other areas such as time management and values clarification were also mentioned. In summary, self report data indicate both immediate and long-range influences of this workshop on the participants' work in the school setting.

Recommendations for Inservice Programs

The following recommendations are based upon the experiences encountered in this workshop but are applicable in other settings where inservice training is being contemplated:

1. Even though data acquired from the workshop participants are used to plan the content and format, it is recommended that an additional step should be implemented to involve the participants in the planning stage too. This may reduce the chances of participant inertia during the opening training session(s).
2. If training sessions are to take place outside of regular working hours, some form of compensation (reinforcement) is in order -- e.g., released time, educational credits, paycheck, etc. In this case, three hour sessions -- even with a break -- may have been too long. Meeting away from the distraction of the work setting did eliminate many potential distractions, however.
3. This workshop plan was too ambitious. Too many objectives were set and, as a result, some objectives were modified because of time constraints. Be realistic in setting goals and work hard to achieve the ones you set. Focus on depth rather than quantity.

4. It is recommended that ample time be allowed for participants to absorb content related to a new idea or skill in addition to planning time for implementation. Because small group work was a new experience for many of our participants, three of the ten training sessions were devoted to lecture, planning, and organizing sessions. As a result, the small group outcomes were the workshop's most successful accomplishment and have had the best long-range effects.

5. Establish long-range, out-of-class assignments in conjunction with in-class activities. In this way the participants are applying their acquired knowledge and skills to a real-life setting during and after the workshop--e.g., assignment: plan, organize and begin conducting at least one small group where you are working.

6. Allow the participants time for informal conversations and idea sharing. We found such relationships had a positive effect on staff morale during the training sessions and in their work settings.