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ABSTRACT

Staff development is the small school district's key to survival in the 1980's. Although small rural districts may face problems like isolation and limited resources, they have distinct advantages. Chapter 1 of this guide provides a list of advantages, which include close contact between teachers and administrators, strong ties to the local community, and staff development goals that effectively meet community expectations and student and teacher needs. The second chapter defines staff development in terms of adult learning styles, describes a program that works, discusses getting started in the small/rural school district, and provides suggestions to assist in avoiding staff development pitfalls. Chapter 3 contains ideas that work, i.e., individualized staff development, programs from state departments, staff development via technology at work, peer teaching as a technique, cooperation among districts, and some national attention (National Diffusion Network exemplary projects). Additionally, the guide provides a list of resources, and selected readings. (AH)

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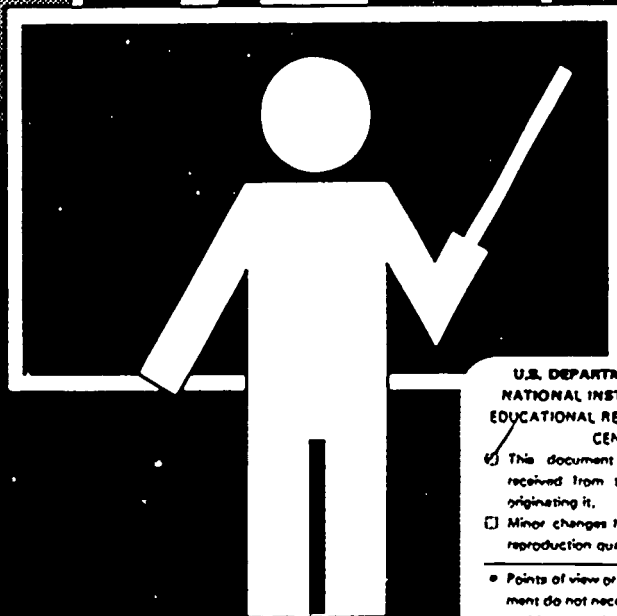
# Staff Development

## In Small and Rural School Districts

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# **Staff Development**

## **In Small and Rural School Districts**

Written By  
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## The AASA Small School Program

The American Association of School Administrators is the professional association of more than 18,000 district level educational administrators and others involved in elementary and secondary education. Beyond the general services AASA provides for all members, a special program has been established for the many school district administrators who manage smaller systems. Special services include a newsletter, convention and training programs, and an annual conference of small school district administrators.

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# Introduction

Staff development is a school district's key to survival in the 1980s. Declining enrollment and the accompanying reduction-in-force may mean that in some schools the average teacher may have been on the job for 12 years.

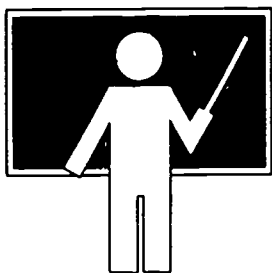
Schools used to depend on new recruits as a major source of innovation and new ideas. What now? In many districts, one-half to three-fourths of the teachers are at the top of the salary scale with master's degrees and little or no salary incentives to seek growth opportunities through advanced study. Dissatisfied or burned-out teachers often stay on because the sluggish economy doesn't offer them ready opportunities for employment in the private sector. Small and rural districts particularly are beginning to feel the pinch of teacher shortages in such fields as math, science, special education and industrial arts.

Could retraining of teachers already available in small/rural districts be the answer? Many administrators respond "No, no, with all the budget cuts I can't afford staff development." This response is short-sighted. Why? Because in the long run, schools can't afford not to retrain. Research shows that the most effective way to improve student performance is to improve the quality of teaching.

Since about 80 percent of schools' budgets go toward instruction, and community members in small/rural school districts want to get their money's worth, school administrators can't afford to be without a quality staff development program. Nor can they ignore emerging directions in education which include computer technology and special education, among others. Despite small budgets and remoteness, rural communities are not exempt. They too are affected by these changes. Farm families

often use computers to track production and inventory. Special education is mandated as a "civil right" of handicapped children and must be provided in every district where handicapped children reside. Staff development is the key to keeping pace educationally.





## Chapter 1

# Small/Rural School Districts

## Ideal for Creative Staff Development

Staff development programs in small and rural school districts have unique problems and opportunities. It is easy for rural or small school district personnel to become pessimistic about staff development because resources are limited. When the attributes of small and rural school districts are examined, the advantages as well as the obstacles become clear .

### Special Problems

The low population density of rural areas can mean fewer peer contacts for educators and, therefore, fewer models to observe or emulate. The long distances between schools over poor roads sometimes add to the isolation. Teachers at the secondary level are faced with multiple assignments. A school district with 250 students in grades K-12 may have one science teacher for grades 7-12.

Teachers in rural areas have to be competent generalists. Teachers who are not qualified by experience or training often have to be called upon for extracurricular assignments. Small

districts also may lack sufficient staff to write proposals for state and federal funds. The number of teachers seems insufficient to justify the cost of the traditional programs delivered by the college and university system. In addition, travel time and costs might seem prohibitive. But, quality staff development programs are possible.

### **Small and Rural Schools Can Do It Better**

Administrators in small/rural school districts have some built-in advantages in planning and implementing quality staff development programs. Here are just a few advantages:

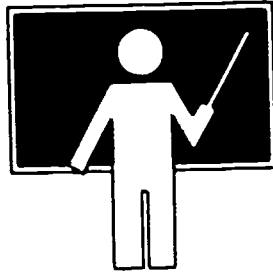
- In smaller districts, teachers do not feel so isolated from the "seats of power" as they might in larger districts, i.e. there is usually an "air" of personal contact between administrators and teachers. Issues of trust and confidence are often easier to address.
- In rural areas, teachers often tend to be involved as leaders in community activities, and staff members feel an added responsibility for school improvement.
- If staff development planning is to be done through consensus building, it is easier to identify common goals with 25 to 50 staff members than with a group of 1,500 to 2,000. This situation is especially true in areas such as curriculum development.
- Because of scarce resources, rural and small district teachers and administrators have had traditionally to rely on creativity and ingenuity for meeting the district's challenges. Innovative staff development can be the result.
- Integrating staff development goals, student needs and community expectations is easier because staff members usually are intimately aware of district and community needs. In addition, rural and small school district populations tend to be more homogeneous.

Considering these advantages small and rural school administrators should feel confident about getting a successful staff development program underway.

# *Involving The Community*

Because small and rural communities often identify closely with their schools, cooperation is not difficult to initiate. There are many ways that community involvement can enrich the staff development program. Here are a number of suggestions:

- Invite community members to serve on a staff development planning committee.
- Design a staff development project to identify resource people in the community.
- Plan a year's staff development around the theme "the school and the community." Invite community members to teach mini-courses on topics like area history, interesting people and local industry.
- Invite community members to attend staff development sessions of general interest, i.e., computer literacy, substance abuse.
- Ask local experts and agency representatives to present staff development programs; i.e., the district attorney might teach a session in juvenile justice, or social workers present a program on child abuse.
- Help community volunteers design programs that can earn them university credit while they share their expertise with teachers.



## Chapter 2

# What Is Staff Development?

Staff development is a planned system for educational and personal experiences. It contributes toward the continuing professional growth of an individual to function effectively within the school organization in his or her assigned position. Staff development can occur on the district level, at the building level, and on an individual basis. It can be directed toward achieving districtwide or school-based goals or it can enable teachers to develop and achieve individual goals.

Inservice education is but one of the functions of staff development. Staff development can include visitations; peer counseling; model teaching; travel experiences; workshop development and presentation; authorship of articles or programs; service on educational committees; developing, implementing or evaluating new programs; attending courses or workshops; designing creative solutions to classroom problems; doing professional reading, etc. As Louis Rubin, an authority on staff development, states, "The potential pattern for organizing continuing professional growth is limited only by the constraints of the imagination. . . . Less creativity has been applied to the design (of staff development programs) . . . than to virtually every other aspect of educational administration.

Before discussing programs that work, let's look at adult learning and the characteristics of good staff development programs.

# *Suggested Topics for Staff Development*

## **Community Issues**

- Substance abuse
- Law enforcement and juvenile justice
- Child abuse
- Needs of the elderly
- Childhood emotional problems
- Problems of community isolation

## **Issues Related to Parenting**

- Single parent families
- Blended families

## **Educational Issues**

- Curriculum for rural areas
- Brain growth research
- Writing in the schools
- Parent-teacher conferencing
- Clinical supervision
- Teachers helping teachers
- Mainstreaming
- Humanities programs for small and rural schools
- Needs of the gifted and talented
- Adaptive physical education
- Economic education
- Discipline
- Children's literature
- Library skills

## **Special Interest Areas For Teachers**

- Retirement
- Investment
- Career renewal
- Stress
- Exercise
- Health
- First aid

## **Other Areas**

- Sex equity
- The role of athletics in the school and community

## Adult Learners

Teachers and administrators in the public school system should be experts on educational theory and practice. Yet, as educators plan staff development activities for adult learners they often violate every tenet of good teaching. According to Fred H. Wood, and Steven R. Thompson, the research has a lot to say about adult learners.

- Adults want to prescribe their own learning; to define the objectives; and select content, activities, assessment tools and evaluative criteria.
- Adults resist learning situations which are an attack on their competence. Thus, adults reject prescriptions by others for their learning, especially when they are viewed as an attack on current practice.
- Adults commit themselves to learning something when the goals and objectives are considered realistic and important to the learner—job-related and perceived as being immediately useful.
- Adults learn, retain and use experiences that are perceived to be relevant to personal and professional needs.
- Adults come to learning experiences with a wide range of previous knowledge, skills, self-direction, interests and competence.
- Adults are generally self-motivated in their learning. For good staff development, it is necessary to create conditions that nurture the motivation which already exists.
- Adult learners work best in an environment where respect, trust and concern are demonstrated.
- Adult learners are motivated to risk learning new behavior when they believe they have control over the learning situation and are free from threat of failure.
- A higher proportion of adults than formerly thought are operating at what Piaget calls the concrete operational stage of intellectual development. Research findings suggest that it is useful to focus on direct concrete experiences where the learner *applies* what is learned. Abstract, word-oriented presentations are not enough to change behavior.
- Adults prefer to learn in an informal situation where social interaction can take place among the learners.

These findings should have an impact on the design of staff development programs.

## A Program That Works

Here are the characteristics of a good staff development program.

- Those who are the recipients or the participants in the staff development program must be involved in the decisions regarding the objectives, experiences and assessment of the program.
- Staff development should be based upon clear, well-understood objectives that are congruent with district and personal goals.
- Staff development must be conducted in an environment of trust, peer support, open communication and staff commitment.
- The administration and the school board must show their support by providing time, personnel, materials and funds to implement the staff development program.
- Staff development activities should not steer away from complex tasks. Sometimes the more difficult the task, the higher the level of staff commitment and success.
- Staff development programs should be based upon assessed needs of the participants.
- Staff development programs tend to be more successful when decentralized and focused on actual school level problems, goals, needs and plans. Greater success has been noted when the work takes place in the school setting.
- Staff development programs which include positive incentives have higher commitment and performance. Rewards such as participation in decision-making, increased competence, advancement, increased autonomy, positive growth opportunity, public recognition by peers and administration are but a few of the incentives that have proved successful.
- Staff development programs should provide options which will accommodate individual differences.
- If a staff development plan includes an inservice training component, the training should include:
  - a. Presentation of theory or description of the skill or strategy;
  - b. Modeling or demonstrating the kind of behavior or teaching which the teacher will use in the classroom as a result of the training;

- c. Opportunities for participants to practice what they have learned in simulated and real work settings as part of their training;
  - d. Structured and open-ended feedback about performance;
  - e. Follow-up and assistance to educators as they use their new skills and knowledge in the work setting;
  - f. Long term follow-up and reteaching if necessary.
- Staff development programs should include a component for evaluating the progress toward meeting objectives.
  - Staff development programs should be dynamic, changing as the personal and professional needs of staff change.

### Getting Started in the Small/Rural School District

Here are some steps to get a good staff development program going:

- Identify several enthusiastic staff members, including an administrator, to design a districtwide needs assessment.
- After the results of the assessment are reviewed, list the needs in order of priority.
- Have the committee develop a plan to address the identified needs. The plan should include objectives, materials and/or resources, activities, timeline and evaluative criteria. Remember that activities can take place on many different levels—districtwide, school or individual.
- Share plans developed by the committee with the staff and make revisions if necessary.
- Implement the program.
- Evaluate each activity for its success in meeting the objective.
- Adapt the plan according to evaluation results. Remember, the plan is a dynamic document which will change as the identified needs of the district and the staff change. Planners should include a mechanism to monitor the feelings of staff members.
- Formally revise inservice education plans on a yearly basis

### Avoiding the Staff Development "Pitfalls"

Millions of inservice education dollars could be better spent each year if staff development programs were designed to succeed.

Despite good intentions, inservice educators often omit key ingredients for success. They therefore fail to get optimum value for their inservice dollars. What is lacking is often achievable



and, with some effort, can be provided by small or rural school districts.

*Realistic and relevant* staff development can be achieved with planning and programming which allow teachers and administrators to set development goals, parameters for participation, evaluative criteria and follow-up in a cooperative manner.

Thorough planning is necessary to avoid the traditional pitfalls of staff development, even in the small district where communication may be direct between teachers and the highest levels of administration.

The following examples illustrate some of the reasons that staff development projects fail to achieve their goals.

#### Decisions Made At The Top

Staff development which is planned and executed by the administrator, based solely upon his or her perception of what is needed, may have problems. Teachers don't like to be "inservice." They believe they can define their problems and should have a say in the training presented to improve their performance. Small school districts can have an easier time gaining consensus from their staffs on objectives for staff development programs. But that depends on the willingness of leaders to involve people in decisions which effect them.

#### Hit and Run Training

A popular inservice approach is to send a team of local teachers or administrators for special training. They then bring that new knowledge back to their home district. New skills are shared at one or more gatherings of the staff. These sessions may be interesting—but fully successful inservice training requires more. Why have a well-trained team available if it is not used on an ongoing basis? The team might be assigned to assist individual teachers throughout the year. Schedules and red tape should be loosened to allow the trained team members to give follow-up help for any innovation or improvement they introduce.

#### The Annual Inservice Day

Children come to school with various backgrounds and experiences. They are each unique and educators stress the importance of meeting children's individual needs as much as possible. Of course, that situation is true for adult learners as well. It cannot be assumed that all staff can best be served at one time by one set of inservice topics. Individual or small group

staff development programs are often the best approach.

### Inside and Outside Experts

Experts can provide needed and high-quality training to schools. But before bringing in a consultant, see if local resources can be enlisted. The local resource has several advantages. The local resource 1) usually knows the school system and community; 2) is probably less expensive than the expert, 3) may have more credibility among staff, 4) will more likely be available for the important follow-up activities, and 5) if he or she is a staff member, the administrator may have a chance to develop leadership and give recognition to one who has excelled. If, after careful consideration, it is decided that an outside "expert" would be most effective, make sure the following is done first.

- Work with a group of staff members to define the problem carefully and then outline precisely how the consultant is expected to help with the issues defined.
- Clearly articulate this expectation to the rest of the staff and to the consultant
- Make sure that follow-up activities are planned and executed

### The Theoretical Approach

Educators want realistic training that will pay off in the classroom *today*. Teachers are looking for workable, concrete ideas that have immediate application. Theoretical presentations are acceptable only if practical activities are included. And staff in small and rural schools are well-aware of the limits of their resources. Presenting theoretical descriptions of expensive programs can be demoralizing. It's important to remember the audience and bring ideas that will work for *them*.

### After Hours Training

After five o'clock and on weekends may not be the time for working on professional improvements. Educators work hard and some do not have much reserve for extra activities after a long day or week. This is especially true in small and rural districts where difficult weather and terrain add time and stress to travel to and from school. Staff members in small districts often supervise a wide variety of extracurricular school activities and their after-hours time may be stretched to the limit. If possible plan for release time, creative use of substitutes, and informal moments to be the focus of staff development scheduling.

### **Administrator Commitment**

Without the display of administrative support for staff development programs, the staff quickly will get the message that inservice training is not important. Research studies indicate that the attitudes of top management were the signal to staff on how seriously to take a project at hand. The superintendent and principals need to be present and involved in staff training, their role is key to the success of staff development.



## Chapter 3

# Ideas That Work

Staff development is a *system*, not a single idea or one inservice program. Staff development is ongoing and occurs at many different levels. The following are effective examples of building blocks that can be used to build a comprehensive program of staff development.

### **Individualized Staff Development Programs**

Individualized programs are ideal for small/rural school districts. They capitalize on the staff members' self-directed goals and their creativity. In addition, they have the advantage of being very inexpensive.

#### **Teachers Write Their Own IEP (Individualized Education Plan)**

In School Administrative District No. 54, Skowhegan, Maine, the staff development committee provides a wide variety of activities to address identified district needs. One that has been very successful according to the district, is having the teacher write his/her own individualized staff development plan much like handicapped students receive in special education. During the summer, the superintendent and the board develop the district's goals and objectives for the school year. Principals and the special education director then incorporate those directions into their objectives for the coming year.

Using these objectives as a basis, individual teachers may develop their own IEPs. Teachers' plans usually go beyond the district and building level objectives to their own goals for personal and professional improvement. A teacher's IEP might

include such items as visitations, piloting experimental programs, developing new materials for special students, attendance at workshops, and writing or reading articles or books. Other options include working with other teachers on curriculum improvement, developing information exchanges, taking courses, working on schoolwide or districtwide projects, being a mentor for a less-experienced teacher, serving on district or school level committees or developing models or programs which can be shared with other schools or nearby districts. Programs which have been developed and shared include assertive discipline, handicapped awareness, the teacher and school law, improving communication, and substance abuse.

### **Madonna College, Offers "Improve Your School Program and Earn Credits"**

Madonna College, Michigan, has attempted to reach out to rural teachers through this innovative program. Applicants select their own course title, formulate objectives and propose an outline to be approved by college faculty. The course can include committee work, individualized programs and on-the-job research or activity. Consultation with experts is available either through telephone conferences or on-site visitations from college staff.

### **School Union No. 98's Answer**

School Union No. 98 is located on Mount Desert Island, Maine. For years, teachers had been traveling over a difficult and at times dangerous 60-mile stretch of road to attend courses at the University of Maine to receive their state mandated recertification credits. The state education department offered to SU No. 98 the option of piloting an experimental program through which teachers and administrators could develop guidelines for recertifying their teachers locally through a locally designed and approved plan. A committee of 13 teachers, administrators and community representatives worked for one year on a staff development plan which was approved by the local school board, the faculty and the state.

Teachers and administrators still must earn recertification credits, but the plan is locally devised and accepted. Options for professional improvement and recertification credit might include attendance at workshops and conferences, work on study committees, development of improved teaching methods and materials, authorship of programs, purposeful travel, research and experimentation, participation on accreditation teams, par-

ticipation in experimental programs and traditional university work. Needs assessments are conducted regularly. Teachers and administrators present their plan, project or course to the elected teachers and community members who serve as the local staff development committee. The committee is empowered by the state to approve re-certification locally.

## **Programs from State Departments**

State education departments (SEAs) can provide leadership and resources to help rural/small districts develop quality staff development programs. The following are examples of the SEAs at work.

### **Vermont's RAP (Resource Agent Program) Workshops**

These workshops illustrate an innovative approach to state department service in a rural state. A catalog of 30 workshops is available to local Vermont districts. Resource agents, selected from the ranks of highly skilled practitioners, serve as workshop leaders. One or more teachers may select a desired workshop and arrange topics, times and locations directly with the resource agents. The workshop's activities expose teachers to new techniques in various subjects. The workshops stress active participant involvement through practice, simulation exercises, construction of learning games and the development of instructional objectives.

### **Maryland Professional Development Academy**

Sponsored by the Maryland State Department of Education, the academy provides principals a live-in institute aimed at answering their most pressing needs and thereby improving instruction. The academy offers a wide range of activities, including a pre-institute planning workshop, a week-long live-in institute and two overnight follow-up conferences held three and six months after the institute itself. Participants agree to design and implement a building level action plan as a part of the institute. The academy offers programs in assessing teacher effectiveness and implementing special educational programs.

### **Maine Comprehensive System of Personnel Development**

Under the leadership of Margaret Arbuckle of the Maine Department of Educational and Cultural Services, Maine's Comprehensive System of Personnel Development focuses not on the topics of staff development, but on the process itself. Rather

than impose a state-created plan, the emphasis of the Maine SEA is to assist school districts to devise local staff development systems. To start, several districts were identified that wanted to be part of a system of staff development. Six to eight persons from each district trained for approximately eight days, returned to their districts and helped to develop a local plan for staff development. The state department provided the coordination, training and identification of resources districts could use to promote their work "back home."

Often a new approach to scheduling is required to conduct effective staff development. This kind of flexibility is more easily arranged in a small school setting.

### **Extended Year Program**

From a larger suburban school district comes this idea that could work very well in small/rural locations. Community Consolidated School District No. 146 in Finley Park, Illinois gives one-fourth of the district teachers and all of the district administrators from 15 to 18 consecutive days of inservice training immediately following the close of school each summer. Teachers are paid a daily training stipend which is equivalent to each participant's regular daily teaching salary. The board of education allocates more than 1 percent of the educational fund each year to inservice training in the district. Based upon a needs assessment, the program focuses on three major topics: interpersonal relationships, teaching strategies and specific content areas of the curriculum. The extended year program was designed with the assumption that *time* is a critical factor in successful inservice training. CCSD No. 146 believes that the traditional approach to inservice education does not allow the concentrated time needed for creative change. Some of the advantages of an extended program are:

- The program is designed and carried out locally.
- Follow-up adds continuity during the school year.
- Teachers have time to work together without closing school during the school year.

### **Staff Development: Technology at Work**

As part of their creativity and inventiveness, many districts are using media and other technology to promote staff development and enrichment. The following are examples of innovative use of technology:

### **Telephone Inservice**

The Kansas Statewide Continuing Education Network conducts classroom instruction via two-way telephone lines into 23 Kansas communities. Voices are amplified so that the instructor and the student can converse freely. Verbal instruction is supplemented by hand-out materials.

### **Training by Satellite**

The Appalachian Education Satellite Project attempts to bring inservice training to rural teachers in isolated areas. The Appalachian project provides four graduate level courses to teachers using NASA's ATS-6 communication satellite, at 15 sites throughout the Appalachian region, from New York to Alabama. The courses use videotaped lessons or pretaped television programs, in association with audio-transmitted review segments, laboratory sessions, unit tests and libraries of related materials. The satellite transmits the pretaped television programs and the audio-review segments. Live interaction seminars are interspersed throughout the course.

### **Radio Transmission**

Satellite radio is used to promote teacher-to-teacher professional communication and continuing education opportunities for teachers in remote areas. In Alaska, there is a National Education Association-sponsored experiment in satellite communication. This 13-week course is accredited for three hours by the University of Alaska especially for teachers in small Alaskan villages who may have no access to other professional development activities. The National Education Association also implements the Satellite Alaska-Hawaii Association Hour (NEASAT), a bi-weekly teacher center of the air which includes such topics as "What Works for Me in the Classroom" and "Native Land Claims." Discussion questions and support material on each topic are mailed to participants in the villages well in advance of the broadcast.

### **Professional Development on the Road**

Rural Pennsylvania, working with Pennsylvania State University, has equipped a mobile van for computer-assisted instruction. The van brings a course in special education to teachers in Pennsylvania who are unable to return to the college campus. The course, called CARE (Computer-Assisted Remedial Education), enables a teacher to recognize and help children in the



regular class who have handicaps that might go undetected. The van contains a central IBM computer with 15 student terminals. It is parked at a particular school where teachers have private tutoring at a time convenient for them.

### **Mobile Teaching Unit**

The University of Iowa Center for Educational Experimentation, Development and Evaluation sponsors a similar mobile teaching unit. The van expands into a 17x40-foot classroom accommodating 20 students. It contains computer terminals, videotape players, other audiovisual equipment, and 400 pieces of instructional material. Materials are organized for self-directed learning. Staff members check their level of knowledge with the computers and select appropriate steps in the learning process. Course materials include information on the educational abilities of various exceptional children and on the mainstreaming process, strategies and techniques for assisting handicapped children and a review of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, P.L. 94-142.

### **Peer Teaching as a Technique**

Another creative staff development technique is peer teaching. The expert from out-of-town may not be the right resource for small/rural school districts. As an alternative, small districts might look first to individuals from their own locale who are capable of providing staff development expertise

### **Training the District Team**

Hastings-on-Hudson, New York, for example, trained five teachers from two schools and a high school principal as program leaders in a pilot project. In the second and third year of the project, the five teachers became trainers of other staff members in the district. Inservice training in the district is voluntary, but teachers are eligible for inservice credit. Teachers who complete the course learn 1) to group students heterogeneously so they can teach each other, 2) to observe and be observed by their trainers and their peers, and 3) to develop units on vocabulary, reading comprehension and patterns of organization. In addition to improving students' reading in the content areas, the teachers will gain personal skills to enhance communication among faculty members within the school district.

### **Local Communication Leaders**

Improved communication was the greatest need identified by teachers and administrators in Maine's school district No. 54 during a staff development needs assessment. Instead of calling in an outside expert, the committee decided to train a team of the district's teachers in group dynamics, problem identification and brainstorming techniques. The trained teachers then returned to their local schools to work with fellow teachers on defining their communication concerns. On a staff development day the participants drew up plans to improve their communication. As the year progressed, the staff development committee sponsored many activities to facilitate communication on a district level. As a culminating event, all staff members were invited to attend a districtwide field day and barbecue. The superintendent cooked breakfast. A districtwide dinner-dance was held. Teachers made a concerted effort to send positive notes home to parents.

### **Cooperation Among Districts**

Joint efforts among districts also can solve staff development problems in rural and small systems where the individual district staffs are small.

#### **15 Rural Districts Establish Inservice Center**

Southeastern Colorado is a sparsely settled agricultural and ranching area. Teachers and administrators in the area felt that they had to find a better way to provide for the professional growth of staff members. Not only were the classes offered at the closest University not suitable for their needs, but the 200-mile drive to the institution was burdensome as well. Therefore, 15 districts formed the Southeastern Colorado Educational Renewal Center to serve the 400 teachers and administrators in the area. The center was approved by the Colorado Department of Education to offer recertification credit. The center runs a one-week summer session in June and a second in August.

The offerings fall into two categories: 1) horizon-expanding courses such as history of the area, administrative renewal and arts and crafts in the classroom, and 2) skill-building courses such as reading, classroom management and discipline. Two basic requirements of all courses taught by the center are that the courses be practical and authoritative.

Potential course instructors must conduct a one-hour trial lesson in front of other instructors. Several of the center's instructors are not educators. For example, a district court judge who handles juvenile cases teaches a course on Colorado's child abuse law. Courses taken during the summer lead to staff development activities during the school year. In addition, a course is offered during the winter. Activities range from a physical fitness course to discussions by a minister on the power of positive thinking.

### **Some National Attention**

Small and rural districts also can take advantage of tried and tested programs that work. Some are known nationally, while others may be less well known.

#### **A National Network**

The National Diffusion Network (NDN) is a federally funded program that enables schools to improve their educational offerings by helping them "adopt" more than 160 exemplary NDN projects. NDN makes it possible to select programs that seem appropriate and meet a district's identified needs. NDN projects appeal to teachers because most of them were developed by classroom teachers who had a good idea about how to solve a classroom problem. The most important aspects of the project adoption are teacher and administrative commitment and the inservice training that is provided with each adoption. For more information about the NDN or a listing of NDN facilitators and projects, contact the Division of Educational Replication, U.S. Department of Education, Room 3616, 7th and D Streets, SW, Washington, DC 20201. (Phone: 202/245-2243)

# Resources for Staff Development

*Margaret Arbuckle and Daryl Habn*, Maine Staff Development Network, State Department of Education and Cultural Services, Augusta, Maine 04333, have written a very practical "how to" booklet entitled, *Guide to School Improvement and Staff Development*. (Phone: 207/289-3451)

*The National Academy for School Executives (NASE)*, The American Association of School Administrators, 1801 North Moore Street, Arlington, VA. 22209, offers workshops and seminars and custom training programs to administrators and teachers. Seminar schedules and information on contract programs are available on request. (Phone: 703/528-0700.)

*Hampshire Educational Collaborative of Massachusetts*, 137 Russell, Hadley, MA 01035, has published a guide entitled *Helping Teachers Become Inservice Facilitators*. (Phone: 413/586-4590.)

*National Council of States on Inservice Education*, Syracuse University, 123 Huntington Hall, Syracuse, NY 13210, is a good resource, particularly in relation to questions of staff development policy. (Phone: 315/423-4164)

*National Inservice Network*, Indiana University, 2853 E. 10th St., Bloomington, IN. 47405, has over 30 publications covering a wide variety of staff development topics. (Phone: 812/337-2734)

*The National Staff Development Council*, 5198 Westgate Drive, Oxford, OH 45056, published an excellent newsletter containing practical ideas and guidance in staff development. (Phone: 513/523-6029)

# Summary

Staff development is the small school district's key to survival in the 1980's. Although small and rural districts may face problems like isolation and limited resources, they have distinct advantages too. Small and rural districts often provide for close contact between teachers and administrators, have strong ties to the local community, and are able to set staff development goals that effectively meet community expectations and student and teacher needs. Staff development should be viewed as a planned system for educational and personal experiences, which can occur on the district level, at the building level, or on an individual basis. In order to be successful, staff development program designers must understand that when adults learn, they prefer to prescribe their own objectives and activities; bring diverse knowledge and skills to the staff development situation; are generally self-motivated; and work best in an informal environment where respect and trust are evident. A good staff development program for small and rural schools involves the participants in the planning, sets clear objectives, is supported by the administration and school board members, is based on assessed needs, and accommodates individual differences. Some steps for getting started in small and rural districts include: 1) identifying several staff members to design a districtwide needs assessment; 2) developing a plan that includes objectives, activities, a timeline, and evaluation criteria; and, 3) sharing the plan with the staff for their suggestions before beginning. Some of the common pitfalls to avoid are one-time activities without follow-up, the use of outside experts when local people might be enlisted, emphasizing theory rather than practice, and insufficient administrator commitment. Many small school districts have designed creative staff development programs that can serve as models. These include plans where staff members write their own staff development "individual education plans;" innovative assistance from state departments of education, cre-

ative scheduling; special uses of technology such as satellite broadcasting and mobile training vans; peer teaching, and joint efforts among several small school districts.

Small and rural school districts have proven that outstanding staff development can be provided. A number of resources are available, including the National Academy of School Executives at the American Association of School Administrators, the National Council of States on Inservice Education at Syracuse University, the National Inservice Network at Indiana University, and the National Staff Development Council in Oxford, Ohio

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Mary Helen White Pelton developed outstanding staff development programs when she served as superintendent in both the School Administrative District No. 54 in Skowhegan, Maine, and School Union No. 98 in Mount Desert, Maine. She has been a reading and language arts teacher and an ESEA Title I Director. Pelton has been active in the American Association of School Administrators' small school programs and was president of the New England Coalition of Educational Leaders, a member of the Maine School Management Association, and served on several school accreditation teams. Dr. Pelton has shared her expertise in staff development and the management of small and rural schools in numerous speeches and presentations. She received her B.A. degree from Emory University and her M.A. and Ed.D. degrees from the University of Denver.

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