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ABSTRACT

Because of the special nature of teaching in a rural environment, teachers in these areas need alternative approaches to preservice and inservice training. Approaches to preservice education for rural teachers include: (1) the field-centered or field-based practicum in which the student lives and teaches in a rural community; (2) recruiting teachers from among local people; and (3) the teacher exchange program which combines preservice and inservice training. Methods of implementing inservice training include: (1) traditional staff training; (2) a field-based professor who goes into the rural community to teach graduate-level courses; (3) cadre training in which a core group of educators is trained to provide assistance to other educators; (4) self-instructional materials; (5) television and satellite technology; and (6) satellite radio. (DC)

PRESERVICE/INSERVICE TRAINING OPTIONS FOR RURAL SCHOOL PERSONNEL.

Rural Education Fact Sheet.

ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools

Prepared by:
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RURAL EDUCATION

FACT SHEET

PRESERVICE/INSERVICE TRAINING OPTIONS FOR RURAL SCHOOL PERSONNEL

Education students who will be teaching in rural areas need somewhat different training from other prospective teachers. Rural teaching is especially demanding, as teachers are more isolated from on-going developments in their fields and are often expected to teach a wider range of courses than their urban counterparts. Rural teachers must also interact much more with the community in which they work than is the case with urban and suburban teachers, and so need more background in interpersonal skills. Thus need exists for preservice education programs directed specifically toward education majors intending to teach in rural schools and for inservice training for teachers already on the job in rural areas.

What are some approaches to preservice training for teachers who will be working in rural areas?

One of the current emphases of preservice programs is that of exposing education majors to the reality of teaching and living in rural communities, so they will have a better perception of the demands and rewards of rural teaching and thus be less likely to be unhappy with the actuality after they begin to practice. It is hoped that this will reduce the rapid teacher turnover which has been a perennial problem in rural areas and will produce teachers who are more content with life and work in rural communities.

The FIELD-CENTERED or FIELD-BASED PRACTICUM is a basic element of rural teacher education programs at a number of universities. Brigham Young University (Utah) and 10 rural Utah school districts have cooperated in a field-based, competencies-centered approach in which student teachers are required to spend from 8 to 16 weeks living and teaching in a rural community. Trainees are assigned to a collaborating local teacher and complete much of their professional coursework on-site by using two rural training centers, each over 100 miles from the university campus, which provide training manuals, instructional materials, and individualized teaching units Trainees use the center to complete their coursework, plan teaching units, attend seminars, gather for social occasions, and confer with their university supervisors, center directors and others. The program has been most successful· a high percentage of participating students have indicated a preference for teaching and living in a rural area, and the participating school districts have tended to hire the students who served as rural teacher trainees (2,7). Universities in a number of other states have implemented similar programs involving total immersion of student teachers in a rural community for varying lengths of time.

Another type of program recruits POTENTIAL TEACHERS FROM AMONG LOCAL PEOPLE and creates a mini-campus in the community. In Idaho, 53 local school superintendents found that their districts contained a number of long-time residents who were outstanding teacher prospects, but who lacked the state's teacher certification requirements. The 53 districts formed a consortium with Idaho State University and developed individual course syllabi for 12 separate professional courses, which were offered in the local communities by the College of Education. Instruction evolved around actual public school experience; student teachers took part in classroom teaching, prepared media materials for classroom use, and performed other tasks common to teachers in a small school. Courses needed to complete subject matter requirements were provided by extension services and correspondence courses. This method of field-centered teacher training reduced adjustment problems usually experienced by new rural teachers and also reduced teacher turnover (7).

TEACHER EXCHANGE combines preservice and inservice teacher training, and has been used successfully in an number of states, including Iowa and Utah. In a 2-day exchange program between the College of Education of the University of Northern Iowa and a community school, the school staff took an intensive inservice training course on transactional analysis and other people-oriented teaching methods, while university personnel (professors, graduate students, seniors who had finished their student teaching) took over the teaching of the community students. Local families served as hosts for the university people. The program received enthusiastic support from all participants, and provided advantages for all (5). Brigham Young University has used a similar teacher exchange program, and has also devised a CREATIVE FAIR program, based on cooperation between a university department and a rural school district. The district's teachers decide what grade level or class they wish to have participate in a 1- or 2-day program and select topics from a list provided by the university's student teachers, who come to the school and give 15-minute presentations on the topics selected; 10 to 12 topics will be presented at one time, with students free to attend the ones they want to hear (8).

What are some useful ways to implement effective inservice training?

STAFF TRAINING, the traditional mode of inservice development, may be designed and organized by the teachers themselves, by the school administration, or by a university College of Education, and can involve anything from in-school workshops, through classes on university campuses, through training outdoors in environmental education, leadership, and first aid.

One variant for inservice training is the FIELD-BASED PROFESSOR. Alma, a rural Georgia community which was unwilling to abrogate authority for educating its teachers and students to educators who knew nothing of the community's needs, began a cooperative effort with Georgia Southern College, in which four college professors did on-site teaching of graduate courses adapted to Alma's needs. These courses had a reduced number of actual class hours, and instead featured the professors working in the classroom with the teachers; thus the courses could be used as a laboratory system for introducing new ideas. The resident professors also served as curriculum development specialists. Staff who were not interested in graduate credit could get recognition for independent study and curriculum projects (3).

CADRE TRAINING was used for a project by the Cashmere School District in Washington, which developed nine modules for presenting different career education topics. These were used in three 10-day workshops to train a cadre of 51 rural educators, who have gone on to make effective use of the training by using the learned materials in their own work situations and by giving workshops to train other teachers, administrators, school board members, guidance and media specialists, and community members (4)

SELF-INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS have been used to provide inservice training in particular subjects. A Utah State University project developed packets of self-instructional materials, containing all of the necessary materials and directions for elementary classroom teachers to train themselves to deal with mildly handicapped children in their classrooms. Depending on the subject covered, self-instructional packets may contain slides, audio or video tapes, workbooks, instruction books, films, and/or multi-media modules, and are a particularly useful tool, as they allow for individual learning rates; all materials are portable, exchangeable, replicable and modifiable; and they can be developed for almost any content area. Once teachers have trained themselves by using such kits, they can then use the same materials to train others. This approach is very efficient, as it saves faculty instructional time over traditional lecture classes, and also saves travel time, as neither instructor nor trainee has to be transported to some other location (6).

TELEVISION AND SATELLITE TECHNOLOGY can be used effectively to bring inservice training to rural teachers in isolated areas, without their having to travel any great distance from their community. The Appalachian Education Satellite Project (AESP) conducted four graduate courses, two on career education (elementary and secondary) and two on reading instruction, for teachers in Appalachia, by using NASA's ATS-6 communications satellite, in conjunction with ancillary materials packets, at 15 sites throughout the Appalachian region, from New York to Alabama. The courses used videotaped lessons or prelaped television programs, in association with audio-transmitted review segments, laboratory sessions, unit tests, and libraries of related materials at the sites. The satellite was used to transmit the pretaped television programs and audio review segments, as well as live interactive seminars which were interspersed throughout all of the courses. For these, seminar participants in the television studio at the University of Kentucky would receive questions and comments from course participants at the sites, via VHF radio and teletype-via-satellite, and would broadcast their comments and answers on television via the satellite. Response to the courses was generally favorable; teachers involved preferred this type of inservice course to on-campus graduate education courses; they gained knowledge and are using it in their classrooms (1).

SATELLITE RADIO can also be used for teacher-to-teacher professional communication and to provide continuing educational opportunities for teachers in remote areas. An NEA-sponored experimental involvement in satellite communication offered the Satellite Seminar, a 13-week course, accredited for 3 hours by the University of Alaska School of Education, for teachers in small Alaska villages who had no access to other professional development activities, and also implemented the NEA Satellite Alaska-Hawaii Association Hour (NEASAT), a bi-weekly teacher center of the air planned, implemented, and evaluated by teachers in Alaska and Hawaii as an open learning and professional development opportunity. NEASAT topics included "What Works for Me in the Classroom" and "Native Land Claims"; discussion questions and support material on each topic were mailed to participants in the villages well in advance of the radio broadcasts (9).

Does ERIC have any helpful publications for planning preservice / inservice training for rural teachers?

You can write to ERIC / CRESS to receive a free Directory of People and Organizations in Rural Education, which includes a section listing rural / small school centers in many parts of the country, located at colleges and universities.

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9. National Education Association. *Using Satellite Technology to Increase Professional Communication among Teachers: A Report of Experiments Conducted by the National Education Association.* 1975. ERIC ED 118 140.

All articles cited may be obtained from your nearest ERIC microfiche collection.

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