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Gerald D. Bailey

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Focus on staff development

Staff development as a concept in American education projects a highly visible and volatile topic for the future. Questions of how to design, implement and evaluate staff development programs will continue to be highly debatable in the 1980s. All contributors in this special edition of **Educational Considerations** have had a strong interest in staff development over the past few years. In addition, these writers have been locally and nationally recognized for their conscientious efforts in seeking solutions to specific problems in staff development. They represent a broad array of professionals: classroom teachers, public school administrators, faculty in higher education, administrators in higher education and professional consultants. Collectively, their viewpoints represent the current state of affairs in staff development.

The articles have been organized around ten major themes in staff development: (1) the design of staff development programs, (2) existing practices in staff development, (3) prerequisites for staff development practices, (4) the role of the administrator in staff development, (5) the classroom teacher in staff development, (6) educational organizations and staff development, (7) the consultant in staff development, (8) organizational development and staff development, (9) specific strategies for planning staff development programs and (10) faculty development programs in higher education.

The Design of Staff Development Programs

Loucks and Zigarmi's article draws heavily on their personal research and first-hand experience with staff development. The authors contend that successful staff development activities occur when the program is designed according to the developmental needs of participants.

Seagren and Solomon argue that in-service education programs continue to be developed without regard to the body of existing research. This research consists of a definite set of principles that should be used when creating staff development programs.

Existing Practices in Staff Development

Van Horn and Healy outline a series of five alternative approaches which have been developed for staff development practices. Each of the alternatives addresses the inadequacies of previous piecemeal approaches to staff development.

Bailey, in "Teacher Self-Assessment: A Self-Directed Staff Development Program," describes a series of complimentary strategies which equip teachers to direct their own staff development activities. The author concludes that the classroom teacher is capable of directing a personalized self-improvement program provided each professional has adequate training.

"The Anchorage Program," described by Harder, identifies a proven program in staff development. The nucleus of the program involves the evaluation of professional employees. Activities and procedures for both teachers and administrators are discussed. While the program has been successful, the author admonishes the reader that each school district will need to develop a professional development program based on its needs.

Prerequisites for Staff Development

Edington presents a different viewpoint in answering the questions found in staff development. In sum, the author argues that staff development can never be adequately addressed until educational leaders deal with the issue of educational change.

The Role and Practices of Administrators in Staff Development

As a practicing administrator, Stansberry believes that administrators have a distinct and definite responsibility for guiding instructional improvement activities in the school district. The author outlines specific phases for successful staff development and program development practices.

The Classroom Teacher in Staff Development

Langford's article is a practitioner's reaction to staff development. In the narrative, the author combines past experiences with projected solutions for the future. A critical, yet insightful series of suggestions are offered with renewed hope and enthusiasm for staff development practices.

Harris's article speaks to the role of the vocational educator. A college degree, workshops, or college courses are no longer sufficient for effective classroom teachers. The author enumerates a number of principles which should allow the teacher to become better prepared for classroom instruction.

Educational Organizations and Staff Development

"Staff Development and the North Central Association" by Brainard provides an enlightening view of how the North Central Association can become the core of an effective staff development program. The author's conclusion is that accrediting associations can have a positive impact on staff development in school districts.

The Consultant in Staff Development

The use of consultants can be a crucial step in staff development activities. According to Littrell, there are exact procedures to be followed when employing a consultant. The author believes wise and prudent use of consultants should lead to more effective staff development programs.

Organizational Development and Staff Development

Valentine addresses the issue of professional development for the building level principal. Since the principal plays a key role as an educational leader, specific activities must be undertaken to assist his/her professional growth. Valentine believes that the personal development of administrators effects the growth of the entire school district.

Van Meter explores the use of organizational development techniques as a method for staff development. The

author sees a natural interfacing of curriculum and organizational development.

Specific Strategies for Planning Staff Development Activities

Scott and Carlin's article, "Surfacing Teacher Perceptions of Educational Needs," focuses on change. The theme of the article is that schools must learn to deal more effectively with the dynamics of educational change. The data-based article provides a look at the techniques of "needs assessment" and how it can be used in school districts as a tool in staff development.

Staff Development in Higher Education

Wright's article, "Faculty Development for Higher Education," describes faculty development programs at the collegiate level. Wright issues a warning that faculty

development programs have the potential to become an integral portion of the university structure or become extinct. The outcome depends on the degree of insight, knowledge and commitment that higher education brings to the faculty development programs.

The editor is grateful to all of the authors for their enthusiasm and dedication. Some readers will contend that the authors have raised more questions than provided answers. However, only time and experience will allow us to determine which solutions are creative and long lasting answers to the complex problems found in staff development.

Gerald D. Bailey, Guest editor