

TEACHERS LEARN IN SERVICE

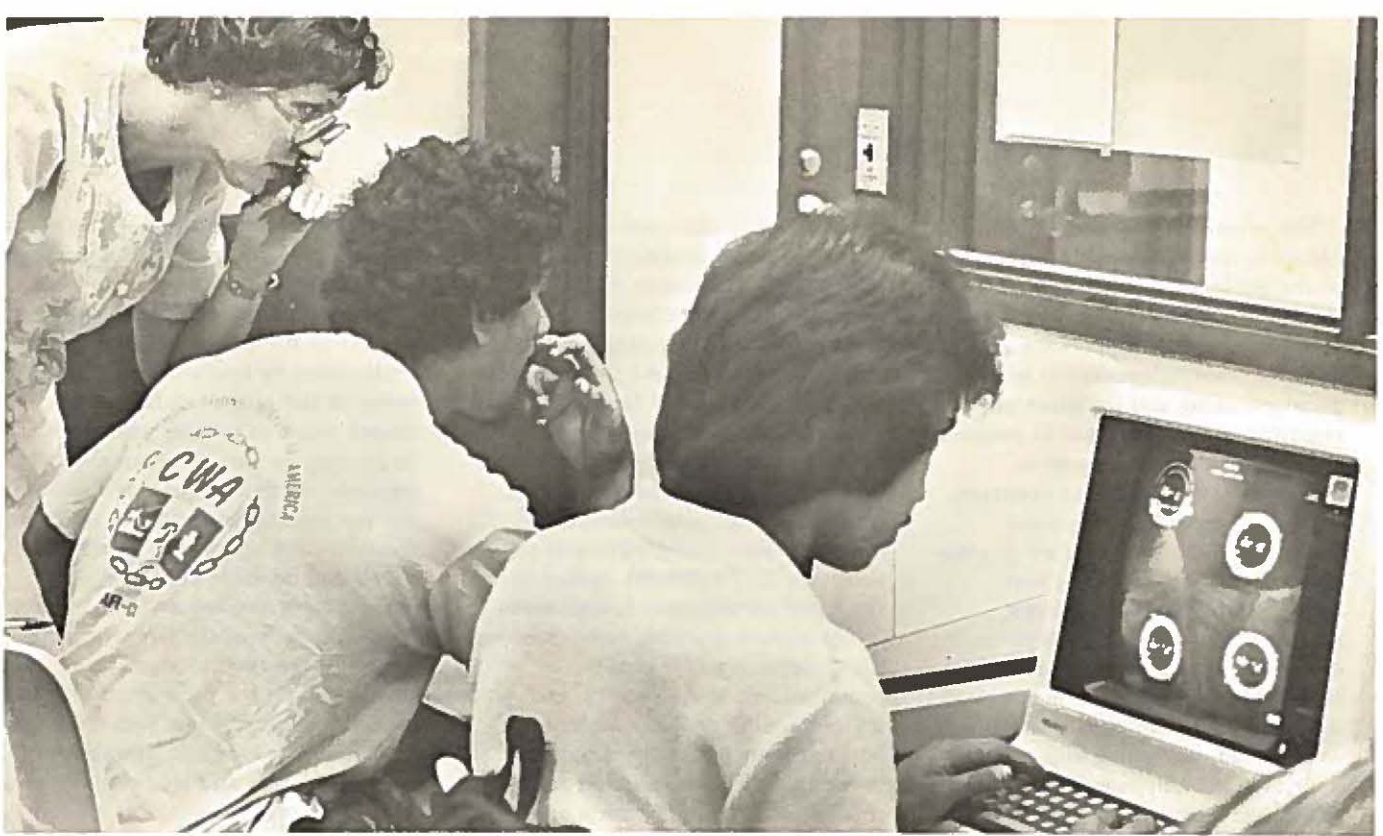
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In a general but very real sense, any learning situation is a nurturing situation because if learning is to occur it must be responsive to the needs of the learner. Adult needs, understandably, are different from adolescent or child needs. The primary difference lies not in basic human content, but in the fact that the adult will most probably have chosen to be in the learning situation; the child, very likely, will not have made that choice. Children usually exhibit a variety of needs spanning the gamut of the need for nurturance, while the adult will exhibit, predominantly, those needs which reflect the basic reason he is there in the learning situation. Over a period of time, however, as in a school staff development situation, this difference diminishes and the needs of the adult learner do expand into areas of personal growth and adaptation. Specific reference is being made here to the development of inservice teacher education programs.

For the last five years, the College of Education of the University of Hawaii and the Hawaii State Department of Education have been

collaborating in a project aimed at improving the learning climate in the schools. The Teacher Corps Project was sited at Jarrett Intermediate School from 1976 to 1978 and, since 1978, has been field-based at Royal Elementary, Washington Intermediate, and McKinley High schools of the McKinley Complex in Honolulu. The Project can best be described as a cooperative venture among its primary participants who represent a wide range of interests: teachers, administrators, and staff members of the field schools; state and district officers of the Department of Education; faculty members of the College of Education; graduate students in the College; parents of students in the project schools; and other interested community persons. These participants truly collaborate in a management of resources and are committed to the belief that the development of adults who will make continuing contributions to the lives of children and youth is the one investment that will reap the greatest profit for education. In this respect, the development of inservice teacher education programs has been a major effort of the Teacher Corps.

The large and rather awesome mission of the Teacher Corps Project was to improve the learning climate of the field schools through school staff development. Our broad definition of school climate, based on a fundamental purpose of education—that of helping students grow and helping students learn, determined the relevance of any topic of study related to: (1) parent and community involvement in the school, (2) interpersonal relationships among students and adults in interactive situations, and (3) the curriculum of the school. The most direct and permanent strategy seemed to be to develop responsive and caring individuals who would be effective change agents within the school community. The basic programming philosophy, within this context, needed to reflect the fact that one needs to be nurtured before he can be nurturing. This philosophy was translated into an administrative reality that the project staff had to be responsive to any and all participant needs. The abiding premise was that only the teacher becoming fulfilled in his professional



role could make the commitments and contributions that would change the learning climate of the school.

Nearly everything we set out to develop in the program had no precedent either at the college or at the school. Although inservice education for teachers as a concept was not new, the commissioning of teachers to design their own professional development experiences was an anomaly in most school districts. Historically, the development of teacher inservice programs across the nation has been haphazard and unsystematic, and many of them have been described by educators as inadequate and unsuccessful. The following question characterized the general status of inservice education: "Why do teachers, who almost universally appear eager to improve their professional performance, frequently respond with disdain or outright hostility to local efforts to inservice them?"¹ We, too, faced a similar predicament in our project. Teachers had become so accustomed to being given a curriculum plan and the inservice activities for implementation of the plan. To be granted the opportunity to shape the course of their own professional

development, therefore, was altogether new and somewhat disconcerting to them at the onset of the program.

The programming loophole of our intended management-by-needs-data-assessment was that teachers had learned too well the procedural regularities of delivery of inservice education. Teachers were well-adapted to the customary formal, catch-all needs assessments and information-dispensing workshops that they responded by habit to what had the appearances of familiarity. It was not easy to instill the processes of collaboration. The project staff learned quickly that the actual needs of teachers did not appear in the tallies of formal survey assessments, but, rather, in casual conversations in faculty lounges, in-house debates in departmental meetings, and straightforward advice. Establishing true collaborative decisionmaking was an outcome that needed careful preparation and nurturance. It was, in fact, critical to the whole enterprise of effecting change.

The project, nevertheless, was committed to a model of collaborative decisionmaking. Our aim was the development of a sense of ownership of the program by the teachers, for it is ownership that induces investment of time and energy to assure the success of a program. We acted on our conviction that teachers, given the chance to identify their needs and the needs of their school and to realize the significance of concerted effort of a total faculty to improve the school, would be more apt to be drawn to participation. We were persuaded by a principle of effective inservice education that, "Teachers are more likely to benefit from inservice programs in which they can choose goals and activities as contrasted with programs in which the goals and activities are preplanned for them."²

The vehicle by means of which the collaborative process operated was the teacher cadre, which was given full inservice programming responsibility. It was essential, therefore, that its membership represented every known social and interest group in the school.

The reward of any project of this nature is the witnessing of growth of the persons involved. Many teachers became confident of their own professional competence and demonstrated independence in decisionmaking and initiative in regard to pursuits related to personal and professional development. Maintaining a stimulating program, therefore, presented a genuine challenge to the project staff. It grew obvious very quickly to us that formal courses and workshops, resource teaching, and leadership development experiences were not sufficient in meeting the needs of all teachers. To accommodate those who were already designing and creating their own growth experiences, the project staff planned inservice activities that provided direct assistance and support tailored to the specific requests of these individual teachers (see Table 1).

Needless to say, the program included a large number and wide range of activities. Moreover, it demanded the commitment of a substantial amount of personal time by those who participated. Still, participant response to the project was very favorable. A summative evaluation of the program by teachers at Jarrett School revealed a high degree of satisfaction: (1) 90 percent of the teachers indicated that

the changes in the school as a result of the inservice program was positive; (2) 89 percent of them felt that the inservice activities enhanced their professional development; (3) 85 percent felt that the teacher cadre was a feasible way of facilitating teacher direction of the program; (4) 83 percent felt that their interpersonal relationships and communication with colleagues improved since participating in the program; (5) 76 percent agreed that the inservice activities helped them increase their teaching competencies; (6) 75 percent felt that their communication, interaction, and understanding of their students improved since participating in the program, and (7) 63 percent felt that their knowledge of learning and behavioral problems in the classroom increased. The areas of greatest change over the two-year period involved the improvement of interpersonal relationships and communication among faculty members (+54 percent), positive changes in the school over the year as a result of the inservice program (+43 percent), and increase in their teaching competencies as a result of the inservice activities they participated in (+32 percent). The responses of teachers in the current program in the McKinley Complex show similar favorable results.

Collaboration and nurturance were the two primary means of developing the teacher inservice education program of Teacher Corps. The success of the project, as reflected in evaluations by teachers, validated the belief of the project staff that a school is apt to achieve goals for improving its climate when the personal needs and goals of teachers are not ignored but, rather, are given consideration equal with professional needs and goals, in both the development process and the content of an inservice education program. This empowerment served as a useful vehicle for teacher growth in professional competency and attitude and in interpersonal relationships with colleagues and students in the Teacher Corps Project.

Footnotes

- ¹King, James C., Paul C. Hayes and Isadore Newman. "Some Requirements for Successful Inservice Education," in *Phi Delta Kappan*, LVIII, May 1977, p. 686.
- ²Western Washington State College. *An Overview of A Planning Process for An Inservice Education Program. An Informational Booklet*, January 1977, p. 5.

References

- Roy A. Edelfelt. *Inservice Education: Criteria for and Example of Local Programs*, Bellingham, Washington: Western Washington State College, 1977.
- James C. King, Paul C. Hayes and Isadore Newman. "Some Requirements for Successful Inservice Education," in *Phi Delta Kappan*, LVIII, May 1977, pp. 686-687.

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TABLE 1.
TABLE OF INSERVICE DELIVERY MODES

Delivery Mode	Individual Need Focus	Primary Design Suitability
I. Formal (workshops, seminars, lectures, courses)	Curricular/ knowledge/skills	Whole school large group/departmental
II. Resource Teaching (resource teachers, demonstrations, visitations)	Strengthening role concept	Individual/small group
III. Leadership training (development of group processing skills, administrative skills, program and curriculum development)	Personal growth and development	Individual/cadres/ small group
IV. Direct assistance (resource personnel, assigned staff development person, administration-staff liaisons)	Support in task accomplishment	Individual/small group/departmental
V. Initiative support (making time and resources available to support efforts of initiative)	Professional development	Individual/small group/departmental