



Professional Development: Yours, Mine, and Ours

The continuous training of educators is known by many names, including inservice training, staff development, and professional development. So what's the correct term, and are they interchangeable? Who cares anyway, if all it amounts to is going to an uninspiring workshop that may or may not have anything to do with your teaching assignment?

The justification of any training is its potential to impact or be transferred to classrooms in the form of strategies or interventions. This transfer of learning generally will not occur without planned follow up to training. It is this sort of follow up that separates professional development from inservice training and staff development. All three offer new ideas, but only professional development includes systematic follow up to training that can ensure that new learning translates to changes in instruction.

Ideally, entire organizations will take up the effort to replace the one shot "sit and get" workshop with a well thought out system-wide professional development effort that promotes transfer of learning to classrooms. The motivation to accomplish this transition should be high, especially for those who are familiar with the work of preminent experts in teacher learning, Joyce and Showers. According to Joyce and Showers (1988), when teachers received training that included either a presentation of concepts, a demonstration of strategies, or limited opportunities to practice new strategies, only 10 to 15 percent of them transferred the information to their classroom practice. When teachers participated in a peer coaching process, which is a professional development technique, 80 percent of them transferred new learning to their classrooms.

Regardless of whether they work in a system that embraces a professional development approach, small groups of educators can set the wheels of professional development in motion. Three ideas for getting the ball rolling are described below. Each one begins with a core group of colleagues who are committed to achieving their own maximum achievement and a united vision of their students as successful learners.

1. *Start a read, apply, and reflect group.* In this strategy, a group of educators could each read the same article, chapter, or other material describing a teaching strategy. After discussion, each one tries the strategy, with visits to each other's classrooms to observe one another in action. After a few weeks of applying the new strategy, the group meets again to reflect on their experiences and share their successes or failures in using it.
2. *Attend a conference with an agenda.* When two or more colleagues from a school attend the same conference, they could, as a team, develop a list of priority areas that will direct their selection of sessions. Each staff member might attend a different session and seek information to answer a set of questions developed by the team. After the conference, they can share their learning and develop an action plan for trying new ideas. A few weeks later, the team can meet again to report on how the new ideas are working.
3. *Establish informal coaching relationships.* Pairs of teachers working at the same grade level or with similar populations of students can establish relationships where they observe in each other's rooms, share ideas to learn from each other, and choose to learn new things together.

The switch from a one-shot-deal training approach to a professional development approach will probably require some creative thinking to arrange scheduling that supports collegial interactions. It also may require those who plan "inservice" for the organization to allow teachers and other personnel to directly

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influence decisions regarding the content and format of training. No one would promise that the change is easy, but for those whose priorities include improved student achievement, the end will more than justify the means. Readers who are interested in more information on professional development should consider reading Joseph Bellanca's *Designing Professional Development for Change*, available at the T/TAC library.

--Jo Smith Read

Reference

Joyce, B. & Showers, B. (1988). *Student Achievement through Staff Development*. New York: Longman.

UPCOMING T/TAC WORKSHOPS

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO REGISTER FOR ANY OF THE T/TAC WORKSHOPS BELOW, PLEASE FAX ALL OF THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION TO THE INDICATED T/TAC OFFICE.

Region 1: (804) 828-6947
Region 8: (804) 848-6339

TITLE OF WORKSHOP
NAME
POSITION
SCHOOL
SCHOOL ADDRESS
SCHOOL PHONE NUMBER
SCHOOL FAX NUMBER



(If there is a cost to the workshop you plan to attend, fax your information and mail a check or money order to the Region 1 or Region 8 Office)

Supporting Non-Traditional Learners with Learning Styles Instructional Strategies

Presented by: Debby Wesson, M.S.
Date: March 3, 1999
Time: 4:30-8:30 p.m.
Location: United Methodist Center; Blackstone, VA
Cost: \$10.00 (includes dinner)

(Register with Cecial Patrick in the Region 1 Office)

Strategic SOLUTIONS: Ensuring the Success of All Students with Virginia SOLs - Content Instruction

Presented by: Pat Parrott, M.Ed.
Date: March 4, 1999
Time: 4:30 - 6:30 p.m.
Location: Chesterfield Technical Center; Chester, VA
Cost: Free

(Register with Sarah Clevinger in the Region 8 Office)



3rd Annual Tapestry for Learning Conference

Sponsored by The Training and Technical Assistance Centers at the College of William and Mary, Old Dominion University, VCU, and Together We Can: The Virginia Project for Integrating Children with Deaf/Blindness.

Date: March 11, 1999
Time: all day
Location: VCU Student Commons
Cost: \$25 (includes lunch)

(Call Cecial Patrick at (804)828-6947 for registration information)

Focus on PECS (The Picture Exchange Communication System)

Presented by: Sharon Jones, M.Ed. and Linda Oggel, M.A., CCC-SLP
Date: March 17, 1999
Time: 4:00-6:30 p.m.
Location: John Tyler Community College; Chester, VA
Cost: Free

(Register with Sarah Clevinger in The Region 8 Office)

Developing the Skills for Building Successful Partnerships with Families

Presented by: Mary Andrews, M.S. and James R. Andrews, Ph.D.

Date: March 25, 1999
Time: 9:00 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.
Location: John Tyler Community College;
Chester, VA
Cost: \$10 (includes lunch)

(Register with Sarah Clevinger in the Region 8 Office)



Doing Functional Behavioral Assessments and Providing Positive Behavioral Supports - Classrooms That Support Students! (part 3 in a 5 part series)

Presented by: Jayne Bradley M.Ed., Tracy Landon Ed.D., Jo Smith Read Ph.D., Doug Russell M.Ed., Sandy Wilberger M.Ed., and Emily Wilson M.Ed.

Date: April 12, 1999
Time: 4:00-8:00 p.m.
Location: Curtis Elementary;
Chester, VA
Cost: \$37.50 (incl. five dinners) per person on each team

(Register with Cecial Patrick in the Region 1 Office)

Tuition Support Available from Virginia DOE

Early childhood special educators and some speech-language pathologists who serve preschool children with disabilities may be eligible to receive \$400 in tuition support per semester. Support is available for graduate courses completed for endorsement, license renewal, or professional development. These funds are available through August 31, 1999. For more information, see Superintendent's Memo # 125, September 4, 1998 or contact Ms. Ossie Lawrence at (804) 225-2932.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Improve Reading Test Scores This Year

Sponsor: Institutes for Academic Success
Date: March 2, 1999
Time: One and two day sessions
Location: Richmond, VA
Contact: 1-800-845-3596

Learning to Read and Write: Developmentally Appropriate Practices for Young Children

Sponsor: International Reading Association and National Association for the Education of Young Children
Date: March 5, 1999
Location: University of Maryland
The Inn and Conference Center;
College Park, Maryland
Contact: Susan Pinson
(804)225-2539
e-mail: spinson@mail.vak12ed.edu

11th Annual Families are Special Too! Conference

Sponsor: Virginia DEC and Family Support & Advocacy Committee of the Virginia Interagency Coordinating Council.
Date: March 5-6, 1999
Location: Charlottesville, VA
Contact: Louise Homstead
(757) 683-3140

Autism Spectrum Disorders: Enhancing Communicative and Socioemotional Competence (Dr. Barry Prizant)

Date: March 11-12, 1999
Location: Philadelphia, PA
Contact: (301) 656-2190;
e-mail: PlanitNow@AOL.com

23rd Annual Conference: Pathways to Literacy Over 40 workshops and concurrent sessions on various topics

Sponsor: International Dyslexia Association
Date: March 12-13, 1999
Location: Holiday Inn Koger Center South
Contact: Edie Bennett
(804) 745-0632



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For more information concerning T/TAC workshops, professional development opportunities, or the services we provide, please call 1-800-426-1595 or contact the T/TAC office nearest you.

The Training and Technical Assistance Center (T/TAC) at Virginia Commonwealth University is one of a network of regional T/TACs funded by the Virginia Department of Education.

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