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Part I

Foundations for Early Literacy Learning and Instruction

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Staff Development for Early Literacy Teachers *A Plan to Facilitate Change*

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Current research dealing with early literacy development has created the need for change in classroom practice. To enable teachers to implement research-based best practices, professional skills should be enhanced regularly (Guskey, 1986). It is important to investigate *what* teachers must know, and *how* they are going to be informed about current information. The answer lies in carefully constructed staff development opportunities.

OBSTACLES IN PROMOTING CHANGE

Staff development programs are a systematic or forward attempt to change professional practice and beliefs for a specified goal. These programs have had only a small impact on bringing research-based practice into classrooms (Griffin, 1983). In the past, staff development programs have not been very effective. This is often blamed on teacher resistance. A teacher's reluctance to change may be part of the explanation, but it is not the only one.

Current research suggests that the practice of simply telling teachers what to do most often does not result in change and can actually foster

teacher resistance (Sparks & Loucks-Horsley, 1990). Studies have found that change is more likely to be effected by focusing on the *process* of teacher learning as well as the *product* (Sparks & Loucks-Horsley, 1990).

MODELS OF STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Existing models of staff development fall in three major categories: externally driven, teacher-initiated, and collaborative (Richardson, 1990). Externally driven models are those imposed on teachers, typically training workshops. Teacher-initiated programs are teacher-generated and provide teachers with some degree of control over the changes taking place. Collaborative models involve individuals from various perspectives working together to bring new ideas to the classroom (Richardson, 1990). Collaborative procedures are quite successful, because they give individual teachers control over the changes taking place and provide support and direction from colleagues, administrators, and/or researchers.

Research has shown that all three models can be successful if those in charge take key issues of adult learning theory into account. It has long been established that the goals of staff development include changes in teacher practice, student learning, and teacher beliefs and attitudes. Many staff development programs try to change teacher beliefs and attitudes first. This goes against the natural learning process of humans. Guskey (1986) concluded that the three goals of staff development are indeed important, but that these goals should be addressed in a different order. He recommended the following order:

The first goal staff developers should focus on is *changing classroom practices*. Experts should model the teaching practice they hope will be implemented. When teachers can observe *changes in student learning* as a result of the modeled activities, *changes in teacher beliefs and attitudes* will follow (Guskey, 1986). The theory underlying behind this approach is that changes in the learning outcomes of students may be a prerequisite for significant change in the beliefs and attitudes of teachers (Guskey, 1986).

As the National Staff Development Council (NSDC) and the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) developed standards for staff development, they incorporated psychological research on human learning about the process of change. The following are the principles of adult learning that the NSDC and the NAESP (1995) have found to be the most relevant for creating successful staff development programs:

- Adult learning experiences must be based on research and proven principles.
- Adult learning is ultimately self-directed.

- Independent and interdependent learning approaches are equally important to adults.
- Adults are motivated by clear and measurable outcomes and ongoing support.
- Change requires time, resources, and support structures.

Supporting teachers through any change is complicated. For staff development to be well received, research must be combined with practical experience when brought into schools. Staff development must address the real details of teachers' daily work lives, and must be in a form that provides intellectual stimulation (Goldenburg & Gallimore, 1991; Sparks, 1988). Staff developers have to understand that they are working with adult learners and must be aware of their needs.

ISSUES IN LITERACY DEVELOPMENT THAT SUGGEST THE NEED FOR CHANGE

Language arts programs must support the development of explicit skills as well as constructivist problem-solving activities. Often referred to as a balanced literacy program, this idea suggests that teachers emphasize both form (phonics, mechanics, etc.) and function (comprehension, purpose, meaning) and recognize that learning occurs effectively in a whole-part-whole context (Gambrell & Mazzoni, in press).

Studies that deal with teachers modeling effective and exemplary practices, specifically in the language arts, have found that these teachers' classrooms have the following characteristics (Morrow, Tracey, Woo, & Pressley, 1999; Pressley, Rankin, & Yokoi, 1996; Ruddell & Ruddell, 1995):

1. Varied teaching strategies to motivate literacy learning
2. High expectations for student accomplishment
3. Varied structures for instruction to meet individual needs, such as whole-group, small-group, and one-on-one settings with the teacher
4. Literacy-rich classroom environment with accessible materials
5. Careful organization and management of materials
6. Opportunities for children to practice skills taught
7. Guidance in structured lessons for acquisition of skills
8. Opportunities for children to work independently or in collaborative groups

This chapter discusses a 3-year staff development project that implemented theory about adult learning to help teachers change their instruction. In addition, the goal was to foster exemplary practice, or a balanced approach, to literacy instruction. Another major purpose of the project was to

develop a model of effective staff development for teachers, supervisors, and administrators. Regardless of position or level of authority, all educators interested in facilitating change can find something in this model to implement.

CREATING SUCCESSFUL STAFF DEVELOPMENT IN THE LANGUAGE ARTS

A project was undertaken to identify specific aspects of staff development that seem to promote change in teacher behavior. The project, which was a collaborative effort between a school district and a university in the north-eastern United States, emphasized change in literacy practices as a result of a staff development program that focused on the teachers as adult learners.

One of the goals of the staff development program was to help teachers create a balanced approach to literacy instruction through the reorganization of their language arts block. More specifically, there would be a transition from whole-group literacy instruction to small-group guided reading instruction and the development of literacy centers with independent work for students to use while teachers work with small groups. Creating a literacy-rich environment was another goal, through the use of word walls, morning messages, and so forth. The emphasis on classroom environment was for the purpose of supporting instructional practice.

Participants

Ten female teachers participated in the project, ranging in age from age 24 to 54. All taught in the same urban setting in preschool through third-grade classrooms. All had an opportunity to work collaboratively with their colleagues and faculty from a nearby university in an effort to improve the language arts education in their schools.

The university faculty worked with this district on a regular basis. The schools were referred to as Professional Development Schools (PDS). The staff development project was a joint effort between the teachers, administrators, and university faculty. The teachers were to work in collaboration with each other as they moved toward making changes in their literacy programs (Richardson, 1990).

Procedures

The project consultant created a staff development model to support the teachers as learners. The 3-year staff development project used the following techniques:

1. Administrative support for the project prior to beginning
2. Volunteer participation of teachers, to ensure interest in the project

3. A 14-week course on early literacy development to enhance knowledge
4. Goals to be accomplished set by teachers
5. A student aide provided for each teacher to help accomplish goals
6. Classroom observations by the consultant and an assistant to monitor progress
7. Teacher discussion groups to foster collaboration and reflection
8. Encouragement of teachers to become leaders in fostering change

Setting Individual Goals a Part of the Course Requirement

The teachers began their staff development with a 14-week course that met for 3 hours each week. Assignments for the teachers were tailored to fit their needs. The intent of the course was to expand teachers' knowledge of small-group guided reading instruction, assessment in guided reading groups, and center activities for independent learning. Because the teachers varied in personal needs, it was necessary to allow them to set their own goals related to what was being taught.

Facilitating Goals

To facilitate accomplishment of the individual goals of each participant, the teachers were provided with a packet of lesson plans entitled *Organizing and Managing the Language Arts Block* (Morrow, 2002). The plans were designed with the teachers in mind and included the following:

1. Independent activities when children arrive at school
2. The morning meeting
3. Center work
4. Guided reading
5. Assessment
6. Writers' workshop

The teachers selected plans from the packet to help carry out their goals. It was anticipated that each teacher would also draw information from the lectures, readings, discussions, and demonstrations that related to her goal.

In-Class Support

To facilitate the incorporation of goals, each teacher was assigned a student aide from the university who worked with the teacher once a week for 3 hours each time. In addition, there was a graduate student, who was an experienced teacher, who acted as a coach for those who needed further direction.

Observations and Assessments

The researcher and her research assistant observed the teachers regularly. After each observation, they met with the teacher to discuss current strategies and techniques the teacher could be using to create a more balanced literacy program. It was during these meetings that the three also reviewed the materials needed for change.

Teacher Discussion Groups

The teachers and the consultant met once a month for 2 hours after school to discuss and reflect on the changes taking place in their classrooms. After the 14-week course ended, the participating teachers continued meeting to update each other on their progress and to address any issues that arose during the period of classroom change. The teachers also observed one another's classrooms.

Observation Information

Information was gathered through observations of the teachers, from teacher discussion sessions, from individual interviews, and through reflective surveys. Discussion groups were taperecorded, and notes were taken as well. During the first year, teachers were observed every 2 weeks during the language arts block, for a total of 20 hours per teacher. Notes were taken as to the skills taught, the strategies used, the environmental design of the classrooms, and the materials used. There was an effort to note the practices used by the teacher when the program began, what the classroom was like in the middle of the program, and at the end.

The teachers were asked to fill out three reflective surveys. The first survey was designed to obtain information about each teacher's attitude toward change. The second provided a chance for the teachers to reflect on their initial goals and to modify them if necessary. The third and last survey asked teachers how they had changed, what had made them change, and how they would continue to change. The surveys and observations offered a broad picture of each teacher's progress and enabled researchers to examine the types of changes that took place and to what extent they could be considered successful.

What Was Discovered?

The following section presents descriptions of two of the ten teachers with whom we worked. They were selected because they were representative of the two different groups that emerged, based on the observations of all the teachers. These two teachers, like all the others, made changes

to their classrooms. The following descriptions illustrate that the goals set by two of the teachers, and their perspectives toward change, were quite different.

One of the teachers was very enthusiastic about the staff development program. She started out with goals that were easily accomplished, but as time went on she became more ambitious with her goals. The second teacher needed only minor work for change, inasmuch as she already used many of the strategies discussed in the staff development program. This teacher, however, was more resistant to change.

The teachers in the group differed in age, years of experience, their attitude toward change, and the types of changes undertaken. Change proved to be very personal. Yet, whether young or old, expert or novice, positive about change or hesitant, teachers did change. As the following case studies trace and analyze the progress each teacher made toward her stated goals, they discuss how the individual teachers handled change and identify the factors that facilitated this change.

CASE STUDY 1: SARAH

Background Information

Sarah is a kindergarten teacher in an at-risk urban setting. In her 24 years as an educator, she has been a classroom teacher and a reading specialist. She is in her early 50s, married, with one adult child. She is an enthusiastic teacher with a lot of patience and energy. Sarah admits, "I'm a bit slow with change, but I'm willing to think about it and then try. If there's an idea I like, I'll try it, but I'm not going with everything. If I see things are not working, I'll try something else."

Sarah will incorporate new ideas into her classroom, but likes to be well informed about the concept and appreciates having a choice as to whether to use different ideas. She admits she needs to be nudged by administrators and colleagues, but it is ultimately her own desire to become a better teacher that has kept her interested in the PDS program. She said, "When I try new things and they work, it makes me feel proud when other teachers ask me about what I am doing in my classroom." It was interesting to watch Sarah over the 3 years. During the first year, she made a few small changes; in the second, she became more willing to listen and try more. In the third year, her change was dynamic.

Sarah's Goals

Although Sarah was always enthusiastic, her goals in the first year were modest. She admitted that she was in the program because her building principal strongly suggested that she participate. Sarah decided that she

wanted to enhance her classroom environment with a literacy center that would encourage the students to read or look at books. This became her goal for the first year. To accomplish the goal, she asked her student aide to arrange the books in baskets according to categories. All the changes that occurred were directed by Sarah, but her student aide carried them out.

In her second year Sarah worked on creating a rich literacy environment in her classroom. She labeled materials, created a word wall, and posted class rules. These were all things she had never done before.

In the third year Sarah made major changes. After the first review session at the beginning of the school year, Sarah was definitive about what she wanted to achieve. She announced that her main goal for this year was “To make my classroom a place where students’ individual needs are met, where all students develop at their own pace, and to the best of their abilities. I want each of my students to feel confident and capable about literacy and about him- or herself.” In the third year of the project Sarah began to see a need to individualize her reading instruction. To achieve this goal, she began to move toward guided reading groups. This led her to focus on creating better center work to keep children on task while they worked independently during the guided reading group period. Finally, Sarah needed to find new and better ways of assessing students. She stated, “I’m learning that there is a lot of stuff that I didn’t know, and you can always get better. I didn’t see the value of what was being presented when we started. Somehow now it is coming together for me, and it has taken 3 years.”

Sarah’s Classroom Environment

Before the Program Began

Before she participated in the Literacy Project, Sarah’s classroom was a typical kindergarten room, with a dramatic play area, bookshelves for the library, round tables for the students, a block area, a playhouse, and decorated walls. But it was not a literacy-rich environment.

Since the Program Began

Sarah has made changes to her classroom environment since the program began. She has consciously incorporated more literacy materials into the room. For example, she arranged the books in her literacy center to be more accessible. She ordered an open-faced bookshelf to display thematic books. She began to introduce new books regularly to entice children to use the literacy center. Sarah began a word wall to build on with her students throughout the year. She began labeling parts of her room, such as the “Book Nook,” and “Helper Chart.” She has also added a large erasable

board with markers near the Book Nook so that the children can draw and write. Sarah ordered and hung a pocket chart near her literacy center that helps with lessons for sequencing sentences, building words, matching letters with pictures, and the like. She has a bright rug and a big wooden rocking chair that she uses to define an area for whole-group lessons, story reading, or retellings.

Sarah rearranged the seating in the room as well. The children are divided into heterogeneous groups of five at four different tables. She has designated two extra tables for small-group reading instruction. One table is for materials, and one for the children.

Small-Group Reading in Sarah's Room

Before the Program Began

A main goal for Sarah was to become confident in using small-group reading in her classroom. She was accustomed to teaching in a whole-group setting whereby the same instruction was given to the entire class. She commented, "I used to try to teach to the middle level; however, lately I've felt frustrated. I realized that the high-level students were ready for more sophisticated lessons and the lower-level students were struggling to keep up." She recognized that she needed a better format for teaching literacy skills. She noted, "Small-group reading instruction has forced me to look at kids' needs."

Since the Program Began

Through the staff development program, Sarah had access to information and support for implementing reading groups in her classroom. She experimented with this information, read books on the topic, and asked for advice from the consultant and other teachers in the school.

Sarah has begun to group children according to their needs, and as children progress or need more work on specific skills, she *regroups*. Sarah selects her groups by, "putting together students who have similar needs and abilities." Sarah realized that she needed the materials for the guided reading lessons to be easily accessible and well organized, so she created a "guided reading tub." This is a large plastic container in which Sarah stores each group's books and materials. In the tub are leveled books, folders, and manipulative materials, such as magnetic letters, for teaching skills. Small-group reading lessons are of many different forms in Sarah's classroom, because this is kindergarten and most children are not conventional readers. In the following lesson, Sarah is helping a group to match uppercase and lowercase letters.

TEACHER: Let's review the letters *B*, *D*, and *P* that we learned about a while ago. Can you find the upper- and lowercase *B*, *D*, and *P* cards?

(The children begin to sift through the letters, looking for them.)

TEACHER: (after the letters are found) Very good! Now I want you to find the big and little letters for your names, so Jose will look for the big *J* and the little *j*, Edward will look for the big *E* and the little *e*, and Nichelli will look for the big *N* and the little *n*.

Again, the children sift through the letters. One child finds another's letter and gives it to him. Sarah commends the student for recognizing other letters. Within a few minutes and with just a little prompting from Sarah ("Oh, you're close to your letter, I can see it"), the children find their letters. She then gives them erasable boards.

TEACHER: Try and write the letters you just found and your first names.

(The children write their names. She then helps them with their last names by writing them on a 5 × 8 card and then having them copy what she wrote. She takes notes about the children as they are writing.)

TEACHER: Now write down all the letters of the alphabet that you know, and look around the room at labels that will help you. *(She takes notes while the children write the letters.)* That was great, Jose, I saw you look up at the letter train on the wall to find letters you needed to write.

At first, Sarah found herself constantly being interrupted during her guided reading lessons, and asked for help. Based on input from a colleague and the consultant, Sarah spent time before and in between the guided reading groups, walking around the room talking to students at centers to see that they were on task.

Sarah's goals for guided reading included organizing the groups properly and acquiring more materials such as leveled books. After doing guided reading for a few months, she realized that she needed a better way to keep notes on each group's performance. She created a chart similar to one demonstrated at the staff development sessions, which she filled in after each guided reading session. This system allowed her to keep notes on student progress and plan for future lessons.

Sarah started by having guided reading once a week and now does it three or four times a week. She was concerned that this approach would not go as smoothly without the student aide present, but since the aide left Sarah felt that it is still going well and she really likes doing it. Sarah said,

"Guided reading allows me to have quality time with my students. When

you work with them in small groups, you get to know what they know and what they don't know, and what instruction is appropriate. I've found that this year, since starting the guided reading groups, I know more about the children I teach than I ever did before."

Centers in Sarah's Room

Before the Program Began

Sarah originally did not have independent center activities in her classroom. She had several activities that the children worked on in small groups, but they only occasionally incorporated literacy skills. She was concerned about the ability of her students to work independently, stay on task, and be accountable for what they were working on. Sarah was also concerned about the amount of planning time needed and acquiring the appropriate materials for the various centers recommended for the program. However, she said, "I'll give it a try."

Since the Program Began

Sarah has implemented the use of independent center work while she does guided reading. She has four or five independent center activities and one teacher-directed center. Her centers include a book nook, math center, science center, and a computer for writing. One of the centers deals with a concept students are working on at the time. Sarah has a student leader for each center who attempts to resolve problems as they arise. This helps decrease the number of distractions during her guided reading lesson. She said, "Students need to be engaged without the teacher, so activities should be at an independent student level."

Sarah models the activities at each center before assigning students to it. She makes sure that everyone is engaged at his or her center activity and then calls the designated children for their guided reading. Each activity center has four to five children in it, and the activities alternate with guided reading lessons. Sarah said, "I like center activities because they allow the children to be in charge of their learning. They teach students to cooperate with each other and help to develop leadership qualities."

Assessment

Before the Program Began

Before participating in the program, Sarah used daily work samples as her major source for assessment. Feeling she needed more information to reflect student progress, she set a goal of investigating assessment measures.

Since the Program Began

Sarah decided to try portfolio assessment in her classroom, which she learned about in the staff development program. For the portfolios, she now collects daily work samples, observations, and anecdotal records. She collects language samples by taperecording students' story retellings, which she evaluates for sense of story structure and to measure comprehension as well as language development.

Changes Made Through the Staff Development Program

The staff development program helped Sarah with some major changes in her classroom. She said, "Many teachers won't try new things. Sometimes it is because they are burned out and because the district keeps asking them to do so many things without time to learn about them and without the help needed for implementation. The best way to foster change in teachers is to introduce ideas through the use of a consultant and to demonstrate strategies using videotapes of real teachers teaching. The lesson plans we had were very helpful. I also found that visiting other classrooms to see live teachers doing these strategies was extremely valuable. It is very important to realize that change happens slowly. I liked our discussion groups because we needed to talk to each other about change." Sarah went on to say, "The discussion meetings helped me a lot because we talked with our peers, exchanged ideas, and got advice from the consultant."

CASE STUDY 2: TRACI**Background Information**

Traci is a second-grade teacher. She is in her early 30s, married, with one child. She has been teaching for 9 years and has taught first, second, fourth, and sixth grades. She has an upbeat attitude and is intent on making her classroom an ideal setting for learning. She hopes to become a "model" teacher, but in spite of the fact that she is an excellent teacher, she does not adjust well to change.

The changes that Traci could make to her program were minimal. Traci's room needed some reorganization of materials. When asked whether she would consider organizing the information on the walls in her classroom, she said, "Don't touch my mess, I like it the way it is." Although she knew her room needed some organizing, she was reluctant to change.

Traci is creative in the activities she plans for her children and in getting the students on task. When she notices that the children seem tired, for example, she pulls out a purple bottle she calls "brain spray" and sprays it into the air to activate and motivate their minds. The bottle is actually air

freshener. She enforces class rules but has an excellent affective relationship with her class. She shares her enthusiasm for learning with the children.

Traci's Goals

Originally, Traci did not set any goals. Although these roles were never defined, she became a self-appointed mentor to the other teachers and an assistant to the consultant. She had an open-door policy for project participants. She made herself available for consultation at any time during the day. As mentioned, Traci did not set goals for the first or second year. In the third year she was more open to change.

We realized that Traci needed to notice things that should be changed in her room rather than being told. One staff development session focused on organizing and managing independent work in a way that made children accountable for what they do. We watched videotapes and visited classrooms of teachers with exemplary management skills. Very quietly, Traci took the consultant aside and said, "I think I need to improve the organization of my independent center time when children work on their own. After watching that tape and visiting that classroom, I think my kids aren't on task enough, and it might be that I'm not asking them to be accountable for completing tasks."

Another important goal that Traci set was to work on teaching more skills during guided reading. Traci understood grouping and some guided reading strategies, but she could go further. At the beginning of the staff development program, Traci was a leader in the group. She was already using many of the strategies discussed. As time went on, however, she did not change. During the first year, Traci offered a great deal of help to teachers who were just getting started with some of the strategies. Throughout the second year, she took the same role. During this time, the other teachers were implementing new ideas and continually refining their instruction. In the third year, Traci suddenly realized that she did need to change. She felt she needed to improve skill development in guided reading and to organize her centers so students were more accountable.

Traci's Classroom Environment

Before the Program Began

At the beginning of the program, the centers and furniture in Traci's room appeared to be cluttered. The following was written by her student aide:

"Traci said that the students didn't seem comfortable in her centers any more and it seemed as if they didn't know where to find things. I suggested that first we reorganize the literacy center. It was too cluttered

and children couldn't sit anywhere and be comfortable and read. Books were not categorized, and they were not leveled to inform students of their difficulty. I helped Traci figure out how to level her books and store them in a categorized system on her bookshelves."

Since the Program Began

During the first two years of the program Traci resisted changing her environment, but during the third year she came to us for help. Once we got her going, Traci was inspired to continue on her own. She reorganized the furniture to display several different, clearly defined centers. The materials were labeled and placed in containers in the math and art centers. The books in the literacy center were divided into levels and genres. She outfitted the writing center with different writing paper and erasable mini-boards. The desks were placed in pods of four and angled across the center of the room. Clean pillows replaced the old soiled ones.

These initial changes did improve her classroom, but she didn't stop. During the course of the third year Traci kept moving things on a regular basis to try to make improvements. Each time she worked on the room, it looked more spacious. Her bulletin boards were now defined, and she was reorganizing them regularly to match the theme the class was working on.

Guided Reading

Before the Program Began

Another goal selected by Traci was to improve her guided reading instruction. Traci had been doing guided reading for a while and felt comfortable with it in her classroom. She was aware of the benefits of small-group instruction for individual students. She said, "I like the fact that I get to have the kids in small groups. I really get to focus on individual needs. And I like to see the growth that they're making. I believe that children benefit from guided reading since they have one-on-one attention from the teacher." As a goal, Traci decided to systematize instruction more than she had to be sure she was emphasizing skills.

Since the Program Began

Now when asked about guided reading, Traci says, "I try to provide personal attention that students need in guided reading and get right down to business. I realized recently that I was quite pleased with getting into the structure of doing guided reading, I hadn't thought about the lessons as well. I need to be sure I am teaching skills." The following is an example of

how focused her guided reading sessions have become in her second-grade class. Traci read aloud:

I fell down hard
And broke a bone
I got a cast and went back home
Dad read me books and told me jokes
I ate a chocolate ice cream cone
It's not so bad to break a bone!

The students were asked to discover things they knew about the print in the words in the passage before they read. When they finished reading together, they were asked to let the group hear their discoveries.

CHILD 1: There are one-syllable words—*so, bone, bad*.

CHILD 2: There is a title and an author.

CHILD 3: *Fell* has short *e*. *It's* is a contraction.

CHILD 4: *Books* is a plural.

CHILD 2: *Got* has short *o*.

TEACHER: What words are plural without an *s*?

CHILD 1: *Mice, sheep, feet, fish, people, children, geese, teeth*.

CHILD 2: Bones are inside the body.

CHILD 3: *Read* makes a long *e* sound.

TEACHER: That was excellent, you really found a lot of things in that passage. Now let's take just one of those, the short *o* sound. (*Traci then focused on short o in a mini-lesson.*)

Traci's new guided reading routine of walking the children through the text, using various cues, is based on her exposure to guided reading instruction through the staff development program.

Centers

Before the Program Began

Before participating in the program, Traci did not recognize that her center time was disorganized. She did not have a system for assigning students to centers, and she did not require any accountability for the work done. She also did not know how to ensure that the children would stay on task. It took until the third year of the program for Traci to discover that the staff development program, with its lectures, videos, visits, and

discussions with other teachers, was causing her to realize the necessity for change.

Since the Program Began

It is apparent that Traci spent a good amount of time creating the activities for the centers in her classroom during the third year of the program. She has 14 different centers to assign students to: computer, listening, oral language, writing, newspaper, book nook, art, social studies, research, math, pocket chart, science, learning games, and activity sheets. Traci commented, "I love centers. They provide many ways to reinforce skills and meet the individual needs of students. They allow me time to work closely with small groups since the others are working independently."

The staff development program provided Traci with several ideas for organizing the center work. She chose to adopt the idea of the sign-in sheet, which shows which students were at which centers. In addition, she made a center wheel with various colors signifying the various centers that can be used. As students select a center, they put their clothespins with their name on it on the color of the center they are working in. She also chose to use center folders to organize their center work. Periodically, she evaluates the work in the folders to see what the children are accomplishing and what their needs are. She uses this information for report cards.

Before center time begins, Traci informs the students about the areas that are open, how much time they have to work, and the activities available at each center. With this new organization, Traci says, her students enjoy the activities more than ever and almost everyone is on task. She checks on the students during center time to make sure they understand what they are to do.

Traci has incorporated several useful tactics from the staff development program, and her center time is now quite structured. Traci notes, "You really have to teach your kids how to be independent and responsible for completing work."

Changes Facilitated by the Staff Development Program

The staff development program helped Traci to better organize the physical space of her classroom. It also helped her to better organize her instruction during guided reading lessons. Traci reflected:

"The thing that influenced me to change the most was the realization that my students' needs were not being met and therefore they were not reaching their full potential. Soon after I started to change my instruction, I began to see change. The students were now capable of what was

being asked of them. This was true for my guided reading lessons and in the center work as well.”

Reassured by the positive results in her students’ achievements, Traci continued to make improvements. Guskey (1986) notes, “When teachers see the effects new instructional techniques have on student achievement, they are more likely to incorporate the techniques into their classroom. Evidence of improvement (positive change) in the learning outcomes of students generally precedes and may be a prerequisite to significant change in the beliefs and attitudes of most teachers” (p. 7). Traci felt assured that the children were making greater gains from the changes she had made in her literacy program, and consequently she was inspired to move forward.

HOW THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECT HELPED TO CREATE CHANGE

It is interesting to note that *significant change* did not happen until the third year of the project. Sarah believed that the consultant’s role was necessary to disseminate the information and provide support for change. She also found that it was equally important to work with other teachers in her school. She said:

“I found that it was extremely helpful to have someone observe me and give suggestions based on my needs. Visiting other teachers’ rooms and meeting with each other was very beneficial. I enjoyed taking the course and applying the information based on my personal needs. The lesson plans for me to use made change easy.”

Sarah spoke most favorably about the information sessions led by the university consultant, in which she was able to learn about best practices and view them in action via videotapes and classroom visitations. She enjoyed sharing the work of her students and discussing the changes in her classroom environment and teaching techniques. For example, Sarah took her children on a field trip to a farm and related this anecdote: “When we got to the farm, the children noticed that the sheep had numbers branded on them. One child said, ‘Hey, Mrs. R., those sheep have labels like we label the room, but we put words in our room and they used numbers. That isn’t right, they should label the sheep with their names.’ ” The children were transferring what they were learning in school to other situations.

Overall, Sarah’s year was filled with one success after another. The researcher commented, “Sarah had a definite agenda. Once she determined her goals, she did what was necessary to achieve them.” At the end of the year Sarah stated that she still felt as though she had a lot to learn about

teaching reading through small-group reading instruction, but now thought she had learned a lot, and, more important, had the motivation to keep on learning. She intends to remain active in the Professional Development Project: "I will definitely participate in meetings with the consultant and my peers. I will also be happy to help other teachers who may want to begin guided reading in their classrooms." The skeptic for the first two years had become a believer in the third.

Traci's story was a bit different from Sarah's. First impressions of Traci suggested that she was a leader and a good teacher who was confident in her abilities. This confidence allowed her to act more as a mentor to the other teachers than as a participant in the staff development project. This same confidence, however, got in the way of her implementing change in the first two years.

Traci told us that at the beginning of the project she did not think she needed to change, because what was described as goals for staff development she was already doing. She finally realized that she did need to make some changes when she observed that her colleagues were moving forward while she was standing still. This encouraged her to look more carefully at her own classroom practices. It was then she realized that she had many of the procedures and strategies required for balanced literacy in place, but the disorganization of the physical environment, the mess she loved so much, was impacting her instruction. As Traci began to make both her room and her instruction more orderly, she was delighted with the results. She learned to listen more at meetings and look more carefully at what was being presented by both her colleagues and the consultant. She began to realize that being a good teacher was not just a matter of sharing what *you* did well with others, but was also about being receptive to what others could do well. The teacher-leader of the first two years had become a true learner in the third.

CONCLUSIONS

This project demonstrated that learners of all ages require the same types of experiences to ensure that learning takes place. We know from the literature that teachers need similar contexts for learning as they provide for their students. Therefore, we created learning experiences that have been found to facilitate change. In considering these experiences, the ten teachers listed the following as the elements that were most important in promoting change:

1. Accessible information.
2. Flexible goals.

3. Accessible materials.
4. Collaboration with peers.
5. Administrative support.
6. Working with a consultant.
7. Modeling guides to support change.
8. Time for change to occur.

Although no two teachers rated these factors equally, the breadth of this project enabled each one to find the support needed to change.

Our analysis of the case studies of the 10 teachers in this project demonstrated that motivation for change is highly individual. All of the teachers, regardless of experience, age, and willingness to participate, made changes in their programs. Some were more intrinsically motivated than others, and some needed more extrinsic motivation to learn and change. Those more resistant to change were likely to set goals that appeared easy for them to accomplish and seemed to ensure quick success. These teachers selected activities such as “Morning Message” or creating a word wall as part of their goals. Those that were more confident and able to take risks attempted small-group guided reading and allowed children to work independently in centers. With one success, no matter how small, all of the teachers were willing to continue to take another step.

Investigating the change process in teachers, and in particular in Sarah and Traci, provides further insight for staff developers. Despite their differences in style and previous knowledge, the factors that influenced their changes are quite similar. In both cases, these teachers needed background knowledge, support from the administration and their colleagues, objectives and deadlines, and *time* for peer discussions. Although they started at different points, it took both Sarah and Traci until the third year of this project to make significant changes. Change does not happen overnight, and it cannot be neatly packaged in a single workshop or meeting. Instead, it is a *process* that involves multiple participants and varied experiences.

In our staff development project we were helping teachers to create literacy-rich environments and a balanced language arts program that would be developmentally appropriate, meaningful, interactive, and cooperative as well as independent. We hoped that teachers would use multiple measures for assessing children and offer positive and constructive feedback to them. The teachers moved forward and are continuing to do so in their quest to create a more balanced literacy program. This is a journey that has no end. It will always be necessary to provide staff development in the area of language arts to find the best way for all children to succeed.

The variety of the staff development approaches that the teachers in this project rated as effective suggests that there are many ways to begin, or

to continue, the change process. It may not be feasible for every school or district to take on a staff development program of this magnitude. There are pieces of this model, however, that can be implemented with relative ease. Teachers can form study groups with one another to pursue common interests. Supervisors who lack funds for university consultants can arrange time for teachers to visit one another's classrooms. Administrators who do not have access to university students can arrange for interested high school students to become aides. Most important, both supervisors and administrators can provide *support* and *time* for teachers embarking on new endeavors. The possibilities are endless. As this project has demonstrated, there is more than one approach to effective staff development, and all educators, from teachers to administrators, have a role to play in facilitating change.

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