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There is general agreement that it is not possible within the constraints of undergraduate programs and the limited time frame for preservice teaching experience to train highly professional teachers before the first year of teaching (McDonald, 1980). Thus, professional education should be considered a continuous process (Feiman-Nemser, 1983).

One obvious problem with the profession of teaching is that it is a very isolated one (Lortie, 1975). One study in the Southeast showed that 85% of experienced teachers had never seen another teacher in their own school teaching a lesson (Glickman, 1986). Teachers find themselves in their classrooms all day long with a room full of students, a situation which prevents them from being able to collaborate with peers, and drastically reduces the possibility for them to learn from each other.

What assistance is available for teachers who need additional skills and training in the teaching of reading? Two distinct opportunities occur. One model serves to fill a deficit; i.e., the teacher is experiencing a void and the goal is to fill that void. Another model tends to be developmental; i.e., the teacher has a specific set of skills but these skills need to be refined, extended, or modified (Kester and Marockie, 1987).

Excellent teachers can assume the important role of assisting other teachers in the improvement of identified instructional problems. They are particularly effective in observing

and coaching other teachers in a far less threatening context than is possible in an administrative observe-and-evaluate model (Bushing and Rowls, 1987). The purpose of this article is to identify five assistance models which rely on formal support systems for classroom teachers as they engage in the teaching of reading.

The individual assistance model

This model, which is utilized in a school district in the rural Southeast, follows the pretest-posttest design in experimental research. During preplanning week, an "Inventory of Teachers' Knowledge of Reading" is administered to teachers as a pretest measure to identify any deficiencies in competencies in teaching reading that may affect student achievement. The test can be administered in a group setting and scored like a criterion-referenced test, with feedback provided in terms of lists of the competencies achieved and not achieved.

Test results are used as a basis for planning both individual and staff development for the next school year. When staff development is completed, competencies previously considered deficient are reassessed. Specific staff development workshops are designed to meet the individual needs of each teacher. Some teachers may need to attend only a few conferences while others may need to complete all the learning opportunities.

This pretest-posttest model serves as a needs assessment. Since the items on the inventory can be grouped according to specific areas in reading (such as structural *analysis, context, vocabulary, and comprehension*), *it is easy* to determine in what specific areas a teacher needs assistance. An example of a question taken from an assessment

inventory in the phonic analysis- consonant section might be:
    In the word *black*, the *bl* is considered:

     a) a consonant digraph
     b) a speech consonant
     c) a phoneme
     d) a consonant blend

with the correct response being *d) a consonant blend*. When teachers miss similar questions on the inventory it is an indication that they need additional assistance in the area of phonic skills.

An approach similar to the model — one which does not require a testing instrument — is to offer a questionnaire to reading teachers to chronicle the problems most often perceived in their teaching. This approach, however, has the disadvantage of being static and retrospective, and it has the possibility of yielding self-report data that may be unreliable.

The resource teacher model

This model is more informal than the previous one. A resource teacher, one who holds at least a master's degree in reading, may serve a number of schools or only one school in the district. The job of the resource teacher is to offer assistance when needed or when asked by the principal or the classroom reading teacher. Another job is to serve as a demonstration or model teacher for the classroom teacher. Under these circumstances, the resource teacher does not serve as an evaluator but more as a teacher advocate, a primary purpose of assistance.

These are among the areas in which the resource teacher may provide individual assistance. The resource teacher may:

• examine student records and determine where weak

areas occur, and then offer suggestions, materials or support to the classroom teacher;

• supply materials, set them up in the classroom, and help the reading teacher begin to use them with the students;

• teach a demonstration lesson in the classroom — an effective way of helping a new teacher in the system or assisting when a new basal series has been adopted;

• help with diagnosis for individual students and make recommendations to the reading teacher;

• use student records on a specific reading level to determine the objectives which need remediating, and then conduct workshops on these specific areas — at which, for example, each classroom reading teacher might demonstrate one activity used to teach the objective;

• serve as a coordinator for workshops in specific areas, such as test construction and time management;

• use time at faculty meetings to discuss various topics, such as the time-on-task literature;

• conduct a survey of staff development needs, with the aim of improving student achievement through promotion of teacher effectiveness.

The reading needs assessment model

This model can be used as a total school system project. A trained committee goes into the classroom during reading instruction with a check sheet in hand to determine if instruction is taking place in the specific areas designated on the checksheet. Examples might include "establishing purpose" and "coming to closure." This model needs to be viewed as an assistance rather than an assessment model. Once the data is collected, appropriate measures may be established to assist the classroom teacher in areas where discrepancies between district goals and classroom observations have been noted.

The learning community model

This model (Dodd and Rosenbaum, 1986) depends on two key concepts: small groups of teachers working together, and process being emphasized over product. Curriculum and staff development become vehicles to encourage all teachers to become active learners, to share what they learn, and to support one another in growing professionally.

The first requirement for implementing this model is to set goals which are individualized to meet the needs of various groups. Group meetings are then scheduled, focusing on specific aspects of reading instruction. After sharing teaching ideas and brainstorming new possibilities, each teacher in the group decides on a new method or activity, or a refinement of one presently used, to try with students. The learning community model allows teachers to grow professionally and personally because they learn more by learning together.

The team coaching model

This model has been described by Neubert and Bratton (1987). The coaches in this model are school-based language arts coordinators, resource teachers, or lead reading teachers who have flexible schedules, and previous experience and training in the teaching methods to be learned. They are relative experts in the methodology to be taught.

The coach in this model does not simply observe the reading teacher but rather team-teaches the lesson in partnership with the reading teacher. The coach and teacher plan, execute, and evaluate the lesson together.

According to Neubert and Bratton, there are five basic characteristics which the coach must exhibit to promote an effective coaching partnership:

• *knowledge*   The coach must know more than the reading teacher about the methods being learned.

• *credibility*   The coach must demonstrate success in the classroom as a participating teacher, not merely as an observer.

• *support*   The coach must encourage the efforts of the reading teacher and offer constructive criticism with praise.

• *facilitation* The reading teacher should continually maintain ownership of the classroom, lessons, and students. The coach's purpose is to facilitate, not dictate.

• *availability* The coach must be accessible to the reading teacher for planning, team teaching, and conferencing.

Certain factors must be taken into consideration when an assistance model is to be developed:

• Support personnel must be trained in the process of evaluation, observation, and clinical supervison. They are typically veteran teachers who possess high levels of teaching competence in reading and are capable of sharing this competence with others.

• Continous feedback must be given to the reading teacher.

• Released time will be necessary for support teachers during assistance time.

• Supervisors should be given only limited case loads so that they can be effective. The responsibility of making assignments often falls to local school district administrators.

• Information must be provided to administrators from both the support supervisors and reading teachers seeking assistance.

• A non-evaluative atmosphere of openness for the reading teacher seeking assistance is necessary.

Finally, characteristics of a support teacher need to be carefully scrutinized (Odell, 1987):

• To achieve credibility with reading teachers, it is important that the support teacher have recent classroom reading experience at a comparable grade level.

• The support teacher should be drawn from the ranks of current excellent teachers of reading.

• The support teacher should also have had success in working experiences with adults.

• The support teacher should be sensitive, responsive to the ideas of others, and should possess an open personality.

• The support teacher should have the ability to offer unconditional support to people experiencing trouble in the teaching of reading.

The assistance models described in this review adhere to the basic assumption that peers are a valuable resource in the learning process. Many experienced teachers do not have much opportunity for discussion with peers about learning and instruction. In a study of experienced teachers (Glickman, 1986), 50% reported that they had never been observed and given feedback about their teaching. Although someone did enter their classrooms with a checklist to tell them if their teaching was adequate or not, they never had a serious dialogue about the decisions they were making in their teaching process. Assistance means *teachers helping teachers* — cooperative learning at its finest.

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.... Expanding Horizons ...

This teaching idea is shared by Barbara Mumma, Gifted and Talented Coordinator, Plainwell Schools, Plainwell MI.

When I was a fifth grade teacher, I assigned a variety of projects to substitute for traditional book reports. The most popular by far was the "Book Report Floats" project. Each student created a Book Report Float based on a non-fiction book. Floats were made from shirt or shoe boxes, and labeled with the title and author of the book represented. The floats were designed to illustrate interesting facts.

Students mounted their boxes on toy trucks, roller skates, skateboards, or anything small with wheels. Eventually the project was so popular that on the day the reports were due, other classes assembled in the gym to see the parade of floats. Each student took the microphone to share title, author and "most interesting fact" as the float passed.

This activity was a great motivator for students who had difficulty with book reports or speaking in front of groups. We displayed the floats in a safe place for a week to allow students to examine each other's floats, and we also held small group discussions about the books represented. Some students had difficulty completing the project at home. I kept updated on their progress and provided materials and extra time to work on the project in school.