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Michael P. French

Beaver Dam Unified School District, Beaver Dam, Wisconsin

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AN INSERVICE PLAN FOR TEACHING READING IN KINDERGARTEN: A DESCRIPTION

Michael P. French
Director of Reading
Beaver Dam Unified School District
Beaver Dam, Wisconsin

The appearance of basal reading systems which include materials for the kindergarten level has caused many school systems to examine the appropriateness of reading instruction at this level. The adoption of these materials, along with the fact that many teachers of kindergarten lack basic preparation for teaching formal reading lessons (Bailey et al, 1982), has created the need for specific staff development plans for this grade level. The present article reviews one district's process for helping kindergarten teachers integrate formal reading instruction into their classroom curriculums. These inservice sessions, which have been developed and implemented in the Beaver Dam, Wisconsin schools, were an outgrowth of a system wide adoption of a new reading series which included materials for the kindergarten level.

In planning for the implementation of the new reading series it was found that a specific kindergarten inservice component, in addition to district wide orientations, was essential to the success of the new adoption. In formulating this inservice effort a model was devised which was founded in current research (Shannon, 1979; Byrne, 1983; Lawrence, 1974; Smith and Dauer, 1983) which exemplifies effective staff development. Specifically, the inservice sessions would be teacher oriented and would focus on the teachers' immediate need to use the new reading materials effectively. The sessions would be planned in a specific sequence--each session related to the others. Further, a variety of human resources would be utilized.

The Beaver Dam elementary staff development plan provides for monthly grade level meetings. These meetings would provide the setting for the sessions.

Initial planning took place in September and October, coordinated by the reading specialist and grade level leader. Others actively involved initially were the

school psychologist, the consultant from the textbook company, and the elementary principals who gave their support to the plan and leadership in the buildings--an essential to any school based staff development plan (Lieberman and Miller, 1981).

Following planning sessions at the September and October grade level meetings, three separate inservice sessions were planned. These sessions, each limited to one hour, were implemented at the December, January, and March kindergarten grade level meetings.

The goals of these inservices are summarized as follows:

- 1) To reexamine the reading philosophy of the district as it related to the teaching of reading at this level.
- 2) To integrate the instruction and assessment of reading using the new series.
3. To help the participating kindergarten teachers develop competencies using the basal system in the development of their reading lessons.

The three inservice programs are summarized below:

Objective:

To review the district's reading philosophy.

Activities

Review and discussion of district reading philosophy as it relates to each teacher's understanding and views of reading at this level.

Major Participants

Reading specialist

Kindergarten teachers

Comment--Although the teachers agreed with the philosophy of the district that children should be taught at the level of their ability, different teachers in the grade level did in fact view reading instruction at the kindergarten level in different ways ranging from "enrichment for the talented" to "essential for all children."

Session two

Objective - To review instructional techniques used in the basal series at the kindergarten level.

Activities

Formal presentation of basal reading system components by textbook consultant with emphasis on the instructional techniques used in the series.

Major Participants

Text book consultant

Reading specialist, and kindergarten teachers

Comment - This session was most useful in regard to answering concerns on how the series presented skills and how its philosophy of early reading related to that of the district. Also, at this session, the reading specialist discussed techniques which could be used in addition to the series; e.g., language experience approach.

Session three

Objective--To review the placement procedures, pacing, and questions dealing with program management.

Activities--Review of management component in the basal system by the reading specialist with emphasis on placement tests and periodic criterion testing.

Participants--text book consultant

Reading specialist

Kindergarten teachers

Comment--In this session all agreed that not all children should begin the series at the same time or progress at the same pace once they did begin. Also, the testing component in the series was reviewed so that all teachers could become familiar with the tests and would use them in the same way.

Following each session, follow-up visits were made by the reading specialist to review certain points covered in the meeting, to assist in individual planning, or to answer any questions a teacher might have relating to the new reading series. The textbook consultant was also available for follow-up visits.

Overall, teachers felt that these sessions provided a common framework for the teaching of reading at their grade levels. Generally, communication among the teachers improved as a result of the meetings. Also, when two new teachers came into the grade level in 1984, the sessions provided a framework for their initial staff development at the kindergarten level.

Discussion

This article presents an overview of one district's plan for meeting specific teachers' needs to use new instructional materials at the kindergarten level. This plan focused on the following essential components for successful inservice programs.

1. There is a systematic, sequential plan for the staff development.

In this model, planning sessions were held to develop specific goals and objectives for each of the three

sessions. Each session was developed based on the session before.

2. There is staff involvement in the development of the plan.

In the preliminary meetings, the kindergarten teachers were able to express their needs in regard to the reading adoption. Other staff involved in the planning of these sessions were the school psychologist, the reading specialist, and several elementary principals.

3. All possible human resources are used in the implementation of the plan.

Although the reading specialist assumed the coordination role in this model, other resources were used. These included the textbook consultant, grade level leader, and school psychologist.

4. The inservices are teacher oriented and based on the specific needs of the participants.

All kindergarten teachers would be using the new series in their classrooms. This model provided them with the specific answers to their questions.

In summary, as more schools adopt reading series which include materials for the kindergarten level, the training of staff in the proper use of the materials will be essential to the success of these adoptions.

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