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ABSTRACT

Presented is the script for a showing of 14 slides on staff training, orientation, and role in a rural area for early childhood education of aurally handicapped children. The training program is divided into four areas of paraprofessionals, teachers, supportive personnel, and general staff. The seven slide commentaries on training paraprofessionals concern food service, clerical, social service, instructional, and equipment aides. It is emphasized that all staff members are informed of all activities in the early childhood education program. Training of instructional aides, special staff meetings, visits to other programs, and use of consultants are discussed with four slides. Two slides concern training of supportive personnel, and the concluding slide commentary explains the use of monthly staff meetings in the program. (CB)

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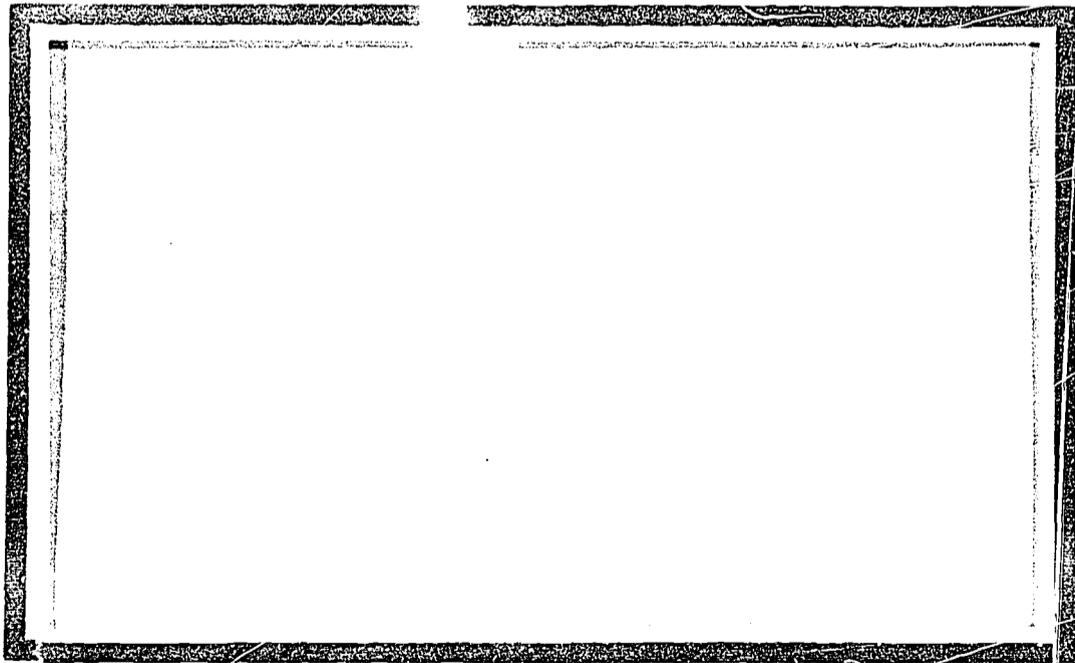
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THE DEPARTMENT OF SPECIAL EDUCATION
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STAFF TRAINING



A PROTOTYPE

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Program for Staff Training of Exemplary Early Childhood Centers

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P R E S E N T S

THE STAFF TRAINING PROTOTYPE SERIES

STAFF TRAINING IN A RURAL AREA

by

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Vol. II No. 2

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MAGNOLIA STAFF TRAINING MODEL

After Anne had asked me to do this, I thought about a title for our model. In the hall one day, I met one of our volunteers with a basket full of little puppies. In the course of talking with her, I asked her what kind of pups they were. Her answer was mixed feist. Well, a feist dog is pretty active to start with and if you mix them up, you get a greater mix. We considered calling our model "mixed feist", but we decided it was not dignified and (laughter) gave it up. However, we are the mixed model. We're in the country where we have to work out things a little differently. Our project made a completely different start from the one Dr. Bangs described when she indicated that they started with a staff of experts. We started with literally no experts and the Magnolia Model, which was improvised to meet the needs of a rural area with limited resources, both material and human, is of necessity a mixed model. Many of the specialists available in urban areas are not to be found in our area. We realized that we could not compete in money, even if this were desirable. We were concerned that we build a model that could show the way to develop practical mode's of training that would serve our need and could sustain us beyond federal funding. Our legislature is in session. We are currently working with them to improve funding of special education projects. We're also working with the state agency Title I, ESEA as we expect priorities to shift to the early childhood area. In Magnolia, we are working toward a possible millage increase. These are all essentials as we consider our model. I think you will realize as I discuss it, that along with staff training, a large portion of training is aimed at providing a

staff totally trained for dissemination within the community.

With our limitations firmly established, we began to look at our strengths. We do have strengths. Talent, creativity and innovation are not confined to the city. Our staff is possible because:

1. Many talented people prefer the small town way of life. They like being able to get to work in 10 minutes without taking to the freeways and becoming involved in the monumental traffic problems of the city. Hunting, fishing, boating and other recreational facilities easily available make possible a less pressured existence. With the movement of industrial jobs to the less populous areas, many of our men have come here and with them, trained wives.
2. Many of the teachers who are a part of our school system like to try new methods. When they go for advanced degrees, they are interested in preparing for specialties that will be needed in the local schools.
3. We have more freedom to experiment than do many large systems.
4. We have completed desegregation of students, staff and facilities, so that we may once again concentrate on education.
5. We have intelligent, informed leadership from the administration.
6. We have innovative planners.

After selecting staff for the project--we selected most of them from our school staff-- we searched transcripts for teachers who might have special training and found teachers who fitted our needs. To begin, we selected two teachers who seemed qualified for our needs. After discussing the project with them, they were asked to read the project, study

selected literature, and decide if this experimental program was one that would interest them. After they decided to join the project, we arranged visits to preschool projects in the state and out of state. They began a study of the literature and started preparing material lists and activities.

We searched the town for trained women who could be drawn back for part time work. It was from this area that we found our speech therapist and our nurse.

We use shared personnel with the Region VIII Education Center (a Title III, ESEA Project) and with the Magnolia School District. We share a social worker with the Center and our parent coordinator with the school district. Since our plans call for moving the program into the public schools in the fall of 1972, all connections with the public school is considered extremely valuable. We started the operation with all personnel "thinking public school." Our staff personnel attend the school district professional groups and are in every way involved in the life of the school and town. They are employed under Magnolia School District contracts and are aware when employed that the school district is the employer. To direct this project, the Board of Education and the Superintendent selected as director of the project an experienced curriculum worker who was given two years leave from her regular duties to direct this project. This started the project with a core group of trained workers.

Perhaps the most important two items to remember about our model is (1) that it is essentially a "boot strap" operation, and (2) we are dedicated to using all staff members and all training activities to inform

our patrons of the project and of the need for future monetary support.

Moving to our staff training, the first item of business was establishment of basic policy by the initial staff composed of the director, parent coordinator, social worker and the first two teachers. Prior to the start of the program, we spent hours and days thrashing out our procedures.

(Transparency 1)

Basically we divided our training program into four areas:

1. Training of paraprofessionals
- 2 Training of teachers
3. Training of supportive personnel
4. General staff training

(Transparency 2)

I. TRAINING PARAPROFESSIONALS

At the beginning, we decided that every member of the staff should be thoroughly knowledgeable of all activities in the building. Every member of the staff from the custodian to the director is constantly asked "what are they doing at West Side School?" The director took the project, pulled out the sections that had to do with operation and spent all the time necessary to brief each paraprofessional on the project operation - what it was, how it was funded, and how it fits into the public schools. Paid aides were given this information in a group orientation session.

Two three-hour sessions were set up for the volunteer aides who were to work with the project. These aides were given information by the project director about the total project, the way in which the program would operate, the activities they would be allowed to do, and the

activities in which they should not become involved. Emphasis was placed upon the confidentiality of information. The social worker talked with the group and gave them the best possible preview of the kinds of children they would be working with and the problems that would arise with these children. In the orientation meeting with these aides, it was emphasized that regularity of attendance, care in following instructions and extraordinary care in the use of information were essential. It was our belief that informed use of volunteer aides would provide a core of people knowledgeable about the project who could talk intelligently in the community. We selected our advisory committee fully aware of what we wanted; that we wanted to sell our program to Magnolia. So, among the people on the committee, we have three who were selected because, in my opinion, they are three of the most talkative women in Magnolia. They are a part of every organization. If they are going to talk to everybody, our feeling was to arm them with accurate information so they'd know what they were talking about. This we did and it's proving very effective. Bear in mind that in every segment of our operation we are aiming at the dissemination of accurate information to our patrons. If you will assume that each person involved in this project meets a different segment of the parent population of our community, you will begin to understand how we plan to use our volunteers not only to help with the immediate children in the project but also as a task force to carry the word to the community. This double motive appears throughout our staff training. We have spent more time in training our staff about the total project than we would normally do in other established programs of the school district.

We worked with three sets of volunteer aides. One group is supplied by the Junior Charity League. These young women brought to us a wide collection of skills ranging from a former teacher of ballet dancing to the one who was a trained speech therapist. These women make excellent classroom helpers. Their skills are being used in many ways. However, we meet with this group regularly to see that they understand the total project and that they understand the need for intelligent presentation of it to the community. They are fast becoming our best set of advertisers in the community.

The second set of volunteer aides come from the college. These young people are students at the college who want to see what is happening in the classroom. This group of young people have received the same orientation training as all others. In addition, we have pointed out to them at intervals when meeting with one or another of the staff members the vocational possibilities involved in the project. For example, one of the volunteers is a physical education major at the college. His volunteer work with one of our children who needed physical therapy has interested him in pursuing the study of physical therapy. Many of our young men who came in this group from the physical education classes have become much interested in early childhood motion activities. These young people meet regularly with a member of the project staff.

The third set of volunteer aides include parents of the children and other parents in town who are interested in contributing service. Training of this group is essentially the same. Parents who have children in the project like to work in the building. As we train them to do

various activities in the building, we have in some instances moved them away from their own child and let them work with other children. The second training experience for them in the building is available through two segments of regular kindergarten model set up to train teachers for the college. In some instances, this gives the parent an opportunity to see a "normal" child in action and gives her a base to evaluate her own child. This we have used as a training situation with our parents.

As the outline indicates, we have used all sorts of people: from the State Department of Education, the local college, consultants from outside our area and outside the states. Many people have given of their time in putting this program together. Starting in with our training of the paraprofessionals, we have worked with the entire building staff. If you wonder why I put the custodian at the head of the list, the custodian of our school is the deacon in one of the local Baptist churches. He meets a group of people no one else in the building meets and as a result if he is knowledgeable of what goes on in that building, he takes the word to a different segment of the community and does so very effectively. He thinks he invented the project. He works not only with the project director and the weekly meetings of the aides, but he works with the school district supervisor of custodians. We have aides working in a number of areas. (Transparency 3) The food service aide works on the same principle. Working with her are the school lunch supervisor from our district and a nutritionist from the state school lunch program. We did inherit a building with a completely equipped lunchroom so we had a teaching possibility here that we intend to pursue. We have scrounged equipment that we didn't have but we were blessed with a good kitchen to

start with. The clerical aides follow the same type of procedure. (Transparency 4) We had a beginning meeting where they were a part of the group of aides and then regularly at weekly meetings, they meet with either me briefly or with my secretary who keeps work assignments worked out with them. They, too, know how the project was funded, why we have it, why it's a part of the community and they ask questions at intervals when they do not understand. A part of our procedure is aimed at being prepared when you walk into the building. We want any person you speak to to be able to tell you what's going on there and not have to say "just a minute while I find somebody." We believe that for our community this is tremendously significant. A little diversion might interest you. During the November elections, school buildings in Arkansas are often used for elections. We had one scheduled for this building before we moved into it. As you would know, we let them come. We did some fast manipulation of movement around the halls but approximately 1,000 citizens in our community discovered what we had done with the West Side building. They saw what was actually there and went away feeling that the building was being profitably used.

(Transparency 5) One of our aides, a social service aide, has a BSE in Sociology. The social worker works with her weekly on assignments. It is our intent to teach her to be a school-home visitor who may check on each absentee child. Her training is under the direction of our experienced social worker. This aide works weekly with the group but she is also responsible to the social worker who meets with her bi-weekly to instruct in ways to make home visits and to look at the

home visits that have been made and work out better procedures. Through this instruction, we hope to raise some home visitors who can effectively follow-up on any problem that occurs at school.

(Transparency 6) The instructional aides work regularly with the teachers where they are given specific training in how to do things in the classroom and the specific things they will do in the following period. In the weekly meetings, they discuss problems in the building. This is usually done under the direction of the project director or a designated person on the staff. It is in this meeting that we work on ways to control movement in the lunchroom, in the halls, and on the grounds. At this time, the aides from the preschool handicapped project meet with the aides from the regular kindergarten group for exchange of ideas. Their daily planning meeting with teachers is under the direction of the teacher and is directed to the specific classroom activities.

(Transparency 7) At the beginning of the year, we selected two young men from the college to serve as part-time equipment aides. These two young men have had the same orientation activities as all other aides. They meet briefly once a week with the project director to lay out the activities they will perform and for any needed instructions on these projects. Periodic special meetings are arranged for them to work with representatives from equipment firms and they regularly work with the media specialist from Southern State College. They were given much of this training prior to the start of the program and have continued it at weekly intervals during the program. The special consultants who come in and work with them often also work with other aides. When these young

ment

men are not working with equipment, they work in the classroom at the direction of the teacher.

(Transparency 8)

II. TRAINING OF INSTRUCTIONAL STAFF

The overall training of the instructional staff through college and university preceded the selection of the staff. We selected people who were already well trained. During the orientation session, teachers worked with the project director on ways to implement the program we had delineated in the project. We worked out together plans for implementing an instructional program. The orientation session included information on policies that would be followed in regard to pupils, parents, other school personnel and visitors. During the course of the project at stated intervals we have worked with consultants in many fields. The pattern following the selection of a specialist has been to ask them to spend one or more days in our building with us. First, we like to have them look at the program in operation. Then, we set up a staff conference where the staff may ask questions and ask for suggestions as to ways to improve the particular piece of work being done. For example, when our child psychiatrist comes to us once a month (we get a child psychiatrist to come down once a month from the University of Arkansas Medical Center in Little Rock), the staff prepares cases of specific children that need help in emotional problems. When the psychiatrist comes, the teacher presents the case and gets the reaction of the consultant on it. This is a helpful training experience since the psychiatrist who works with us is well oriented to education. He has given us much helpful information on a single child and then pointed

out ways that this might apply to others. As a training experience, the staff is able to extend this training to other children.

As a second example of the same things, we are not able to hire a full-time physical therapist. We have a physical therapist who comes to us once a month as a consultant. When he comes in, the teachers who are interested in picking up special information on specific children have their questions ready to discuss with him. He gives suggestions on equipment. He helps to find patterns of equipment that we can build to fit the needs of particular children and he serves as a liaison between our staff and the hospital that may have suggested therapy. We are not able to do all of the therapy that would seem necessary but we can, with the use of our teachers and aides, carry out some of the simple exercises that are prescribed.

(Transparency 9) Special staffing meetings are held weekly. The teachers meet once a week for an hour or more with the staff social worker as a coordinator to discuss special problems that occur with particular children. Any specialist staff member who is needed attends these meetings. Sometimes the need is for a discussion of a particular child and what everybody in the building can do to help further his educational plan. Each of these meetings becomes a learning meeting and we learn from each other. In this comfortable exchange of information, the social worker has learned a great deal about the curriculum plans and the teachers have learned a great deal about what they need to know about and from parents.

(Transparency 10) Another useful training tool has been visits to other programs. In addition to visiting specific kindergarten models, we

have used one tool that we have found very effective. In some instances, we can get more for our money by sending a team of our people to the site where this service is available than in having this person come into our school. For example, we needed to have someone on our staff learn to give one of the tests that we wanted to use - a pretest on the language development. In this particular instance, it was easier for us to take the team to the consultant and permit her to train them where she had her materials and equipment available. We sent a team, a speech therapist and one teacher, to Dr. Tina Bangs to learn how to use this test. She gave them a thorough workout in its use. After their return to the school, they practiced giving it. Then they were able to ask additional questions on the use of it.

(Transparency 11) The second type of this sort of training that we found effective has been to have a consultant come in and specifically work with the teacher in our system on a given procedure. We needed to learn more about how to use the audiometer in our mobile unit. We brought in a speech therapist who had worked with this particular audiometer to work with our speech therapist and to teach her how to use this particular machine. This saved several days of trial and error experimentation and gave us much better use of the equipment.

Professional literature has afforded us a great deal of training. Obviously, all the staff have not had courses in preschool handicapped instruction. We have needed to study other programs as well as the ideas of other people. We are particularly indebted to the many people who have

written detailed articles pointing out ways to perform certain activities. Our staff has constantly read as much of this as could be sandwiched in. We feel that the curriculum activities of other people have been helpful to us.

(Transparency 12)

III. TRAINING OF SUPPORTIVE PERSONNEL

As we have established job descriptions and assigned particular activities to each staff member, we have found that training of supportive personnel has become a process of teaching each other what is available in the respective fields. The parent coordinator has been involved in parent education for years but finds that the social worker has had more experience in visiting parents of children with problems. Exchange of information is helpful.

Our social worker has had much experience in working with home-school situations and, as a result, has been able to help all of us in developing our parent program. The nurse, with help from the project director and other staff members, has pursued a course of study as she searched other schools and projects for activities that have been performed in them. Her training has been on the use of the screening equipment such as the Titmus and the Cardio-Scan and on reworking her ideas on health education. As we worked out her procedures, we have found that we are in the process of writing a different type of job analysis for the nurse. She serves, of course, as a liaison between medical authority and the health agencies. In addition to this, she does work with children in the school and in the classroom on specific activities of health

education. We have had working with her on a regular consultant basis the director of the nursing program at Southern State College. She has helped a great deal in our health planning. As a result of the interaction, the College sends all of their student nurses to the school for four days to give them an opportunity to see children in action preceding their pediatric training.

(Transparency 13) The speech therapist added to the staff had been away from teaching for sometime and as a result, needed a great deal of refresher work. She has secured this by working with the speech therapist from the Center and with the help of consultants from the University of Arkansas, Child Development Center, and with some help from the Houston Speech and Hearing Center. The staff conferences of teachers on specific children include the speech therapist on the team and exchange plans from improving language development.

(Transparency 14)

IV. TOTAL STAFF

On the growth of the total staff, we have several points we consider significant. (1) Monthly staff meetings are held where every staff member in the building from both the preschool handicapped project and the regular kindergarten project meet together and discuss ways of improving the building morale, the direction of activities on the grounds, halls, and lunchroom and any other problems that might create friction. At this conference, we also discuss regular ways in which we can effectively tell our story to the patrons of the Magnolia School District. We are

conscious daily of the need to make an imprint on the community in favor of a future planned operation for all of our five-year olds. Since in the foreseeable future we will need a millage increase, we are perhaps overly conscious of the need to have people visit us and see what we are doing and to have the people in our community know what goes on at Westside School. We have, in the course of these planned activities, sponsored an open house for parents, grandparents and patrons. We consider this training in the sense that every person who visits our building is offered an opportunity to talk to some staff member about what is actually happening here. We use our one-way glass window in one of our classrooms as an instructional tool to teach parents how to do certain activities with the children. We are at the same time teaching them what is being done in the building with these children. If the explanation of our training activities sound sketchy and sometimes improvised, we would have to admit that such is the case. Nobody has been able to tell us precisely how to train staff to fit into a rural community. We have from necessity used a good deal of trial and error, but we are working out patterns that seem to fit our need. Our greatest asset is our hard working staff eager to learn everything they can to help the children with whom they are working. This is our strength. Talented people, concerned with the children where they are. And where they are, in this particular instance, is in a rural area with many small districts unable to supply the service that we think every child deserves.