Project RISE (Regional In-Service Education) is an inservice center serving teachers, administrators, support staff and parents in central Connecticut. It began in 1976 with state funding, and serves 500 teachers in nine rural and small town districts. An initial needs assessment provided a basis for planning and responding to individual teachers' needs as well as producing regional programs. Inservice planning teams were established at every school in the region, with a RISE staff member acting as facilitator at meetings. One-shot workshops were the chief means of inservice until the limitations of such random and short term offerings were recognized. A transition point was reached in 1980 with a new district inservice format, involving small groups of teachers working together over a longer period of time, drawing increasingly on each other and their administrators instead of outside experts. Former teachers or local teachers on leave are employed by RISE to serve as consultant/advisers. A Teachers' Center Policy Board, a Superintendents' Advisory Council, and an Interdistrict Committee form the governance structure of RISE. (FG)
Profile Of A Rural Teachers' Center

by PETER H. MARTIN

PROJECT RISE

Project RISE (Regional In-Service Education) is an inservice center serving teachers, administrators, support staff, and parents in the schools of east-central Connecticut. RISE, located on Halls Hill Road, Colchester, Connecticut 06415, currently serves approximately 500 teachers in thirteen schools within nine rural and small-town districts (Andover, Bozrah, Colchester, Franklin, Hebron, Lebanon, Marlborough, RHAM, and Salem). RISE is funded through local board of education assessments and federal and private foundation grants. Peter Martin, director of Project RISE, was formerly with the Center for Open Education at Storrs, Connecticut, has been a consultant to several Connecticut school systems, and was a teacher with the Hartford Public Schools. His original version of this paper "A Teachers' Center for Nine Rural Towns" was published in December 1977.

Our Beginnings

Project RISE (Regional In-Service Education) did not begin as a grassroots teacher movement. It began in 1976 when Robert Warren, an elementary school principal in Colchester, Connecticut, sat down with me to talk about how to provide more resources for teacher growth. I was not teaching at the time, but had been working for the school system for four years part-time as a resource teacher. Most of our teachers had never even heard of a teachers' center. Almost all were familiar with inservice workshops, but tended to view them as a waste of valuable time. Since many boards of education in our primarily rural part of the state regard inservice education as a frill, even the chance to discuss the "growth opportunity" of inservice workshops was a major victory. After all, teachers go to college to learn to be teachers. Why should a town waste its resources on "teaching teachers who already know how to teach"?

Warren told me about a funding source for inservice education. He asked me to list the components of a good staff development program, and then helped me translate those components into the kind of objectives that would be impressive in a grant proposal. My ideas came from my work as a teacher in Hartford, Connecticut: my experiences with many of the teachers' centers in the state; and my general perceptions of teachers' needs gained from working as an advisor in Colchester. We invited all interested teachers and administrators to come to a meeting to voice their ideas for establishing a regional staff development center. People came from five towns a year later we expanded to nine towns, ideas were generated, and we scrambled to... Continued on next page...
Meeting Face to Face to Assess Needs

Each school was visited, and a plan table was set up for each school containing the following:

- Project RISK, an intensive project evaluation form
- A matrix to analyze the needs of the school
- A checklist to identify the needs of the teachers, principals, and superintendents
- A teachers' description of their needs in a format

Data was collected from group sessions conducted with the staffs of each school while principals and superintendents were interviewed separately. Each group was asked, "In order for Project RISK to be successful, what would you do?" The responses to this question were ranked according to importance by the participants at each school. Both individual school needs and a regional composite were circulate for feedback.

Teacher-perceived needs included the following:

- Curriculum development or creating curriculum guides in the various disciplines
- Developing motivating curriculum for career education, science, social studies, language arts
- Curriculum implementation, individualizing instruction for the gifted, slow learner, learning disabled
- Fresh, meaningful activities for the rest of the students
- Record-keeping and student evaluation developing simple but effective record-keeping systems
- Developing honest student evaluations and consistent grading systems
- Teachers' professional and personal uplift ways for maintaining teacher morale, how to get published, increasing teachers' personal time, improving staff morale, increasing communication among staff, providing school time for sharing, brainstorming, and planning
- Teachers' relationships with the community increasing parental participation and involvement and involvement
- Selling educational programs to the community

This early assessment was a valuable starting point. It provided us with a knowledge of school-wide and system-wide needs that could be met through regional activities as building-level workshops. But we needed something more. We needed ways to hear about individual requests that could be met individually. Our on-site advisors who regularly visit schools described more fully later became our instruments for personalized, informal needs assessment. Presently, we are adding in-depth teacher interviews to our assessment repertoire.

We also wanted a basis for planning region-wide programs that would draw teachers from several participating schools and towns. Our original needs assessment showed considerable overlap among the
Program Planning: Turning Needs Lists into Workshop Calendars

Big-time RITs often have teachers' needs lists that they use to plan workshops. In one example, an administrator wanted a discipline program that better suited students for integration of the program. However, instead of advocating for discipline, the program was to promote student cooperation, mutual respect, and self-discipline. Therefore, what gain is at a site needs assessment if we ignore it in program planning? We don't ignore it. To continue with our example, the needs assessment has told us that we cannot keep the program with the assumption that activities in classroom discipline building is an effective discipline tool. Instead, we must begin with the examination of punishment and work on ways to build classroom climate-building. In other words, a useful needs assessment helps us to know where teachers are at when they come to a program, but our staff uses its judgment in determining how the program will go. Therefore, kind of discretion must be exercised by teachers. Center staff people who have exposure to enough different ideas, possibilities, teachers, and classrooms to have a broad perspective. We interpret what teachers say they need. Such a perspective sometimes makes it possible for center staff to draw a more precise design of how to address a common teaching problem than the teachers themselves can. However, the center staff are one or two steps removed from the realities of a particular classroom, so they may lack the appreciation of fully the conditions from which a particular teacher expresses a need. It is obvious that giving-and-taking between teachers and center staff is vital. The center staff cannot ignore a teacher's problem and how he or she is likely to try solving it, but if a teachers center is to be a place that stimulates new thinking about learning, that causes reflection and democratization of our assumptions, that helps people to think beyond their present concepts, then the teachers must be involved with the planning of the workshops.

An Inservice Planning Team for Every School

After the initial needs assessment, the next step in the development of RISE was to establish inservice planning teams at every school in the region. The teams were formed of the school principal and teacher volunteers from each grade level or grade cluster. With input from RISE staff members, acting as facilitators, the teams met regularly for planning team meetings. During
Thus, the facilitator role of the Project RISE team member was a delicate one. We wanted principals to come away from the meetings without feeling railroaded or their support and personal commitment needed so that inservice days could be provided by the programs that teams generated. At the same time, it was essential to encourage teachers to be open, launch suggestions, and make real decisions.

At one planning team meeting there were long periods of silence when the teachers were unwilling to take the first step. The RISE facilitator and the principal resisted the temptation to step in and take over. Finally, some of the teachers began to share their fears, perhaps simply to break the awkward silence. At the end of the session one teacher said to me in a quiet, almost apologetic voice, "You know, Peter, teachers aren't used to making decisions like this—this is going to take some getting used to." In contrast, meetings at another school had the flavor of a bargaining unit at contract time, with vociferous teachers sometimes making it difficult for the principal to get a word in edgewise. At still other meetings all too brief, it was obvious that the teachers and principal had previously established a cooperative relationship, and we could immediately get to the business at hand.

Most schools have five to planning team meetings a year or after-school time when the school needs assessment results are defined, refined, and translated into programs for which inservice half-days per year are provided. All the districts in RISE schedule inservice on the same dates. All programs in all towns are listed on the RISE calendar and any open to the teachers of any school. These teachers have a far greater choice of activities than small districts could offer individually, and the programs are still generated by local teachers.

Workshop Junkies: A Period of Withdrawal

At last, the limitations of a random potpourri of two-hour, one-shot offerings on inservice half days are generally recognized. Lack of follow-up, shallowness, inability to meet a wide range of needs with a single program are but a few of the problems increasingly observed by participating teachers and administrators. RISE remains responsible for helping plan the majority of district-sponsored, inservice half-day programs in our towns as well as for the voluntary programs that emanate from the RISE teachers' center. We've encouraged to see that the more individualized programming at the teachers' center is having an impact on the local district inservice. I believe the success of the teachers' center part of RISE gives our districts a new vision of what meaningful professional development can be.

In RISE—our new district inservice format will involve small groups of teachers working together over time primarily at the building level, but with some crossovers when appropriate. Some groups will work on a district or building priority; others will pursue a need perceived by the group itself; all will draw more and more upon the resources of our own teachers and administrators. People who are exploring a topic in depth over several inservice half days and at other times, using a variety of avenues for learning and sharing internal strengths, will come to be resources for teachers in other participating districts who wish to pursue aspects of the same topic. In effect, we are gradually weaning ourselves away from an overdependence on outside experts to solve our problems through an assortment of two-hour extravaganzas.

It has taken us four years to reach this transition point. It is important to understand that in our rural and small-town area, the advent of a variety of inservice half day programs, often conducted by high-powered outside consultants, was viewed as the ultimate
Consultant Advisors:
School Dollars Well Spent

For three years we have operated an advisory system, employing former teachers and area teachers on leaves of absence who become part members of the RISE staff. Because of our funding fluctuations, as few as three full-time people and as many as three part-time and two full-time staff have been classroom advisors in a given year. Visiting each school approximately one-half day per week, we wish it could be more-or-on-a-request basis. Advisors are key people in fostering a continual, on-the-spot kind of needs-assessment, as well as serving as needs-fillerers informally and non-evaluatively. I believe our consultant advisors are essential to RISE success. These are the people who help build ethos. They help ensure that large-group workshops grow from real needs, and that the workshops are followed by personalized, in-classroom assistance when needed. Working with principals, the consultant advisors also foster buddy system approaches, set up work groups, run study groups, and other in-school growth activities. They conduct mini-workshops in their areas of expertise and encourage teachers in each school to do likewise.

Because they serve more than one school and meet weekly with advisors serving all the other schools, our advisors are able to arrange for inter-town classroom visitations and idea exchanges based on one teacher's need and another's strength. This is extremely important in our towns, which are predominantly single-school systems and therefore tend to be

One Teachers' Center
Serving Nine Districts

In summer 1977 we began to develop a place for teachers to work together that would give physical reality to our regional teachers' center concept. Teachers spent three weeks with me in July planning the initial design and construction work, receiving
Formal Curriculum Development: At Last

Curriculum development appeared as a major need in our original needs assessment, and for good reason. Our towns are too small and understaffed to keep anyone on their staff specifically to maintain the curriculum development store. Consequently, we have had to bear the brunt of keeping curriculum areas fresh, goals, pace, articulation through the grades, and an overall dependence of single texts. Where no series of professional staff is available to pull together the threads of a commonplace and social experiences in the town, there may be no guidelines at all.

Originally we planned to have curriculum development take place independently. The RISE staff would help develop-knowledgeable aides who would then be dispatched to schools which would then be dispatched to teachers who would then be dispatched to the local districts. We should have known better.

Mainly we supposed that small, recent independent districts could not swallow the idea of a regional group or curriculum development. At a Superintendent's Advisory Council meeting of our first operational year, the RISE regional curriculum process was sectioned off for study.

This year, however, the superintendents of one of our participating school systems asked RISE to develop a process by which a district could accomplish its curricular curriculum, articulation, and development with the assistance of curriculum specialists and coordinators who serve the larger, more affluent districts. Finally we have been asked, and having been asked, I write in my book: This is a challenge of the greatest magnitude; our educators are in a position to affect significantly core curriculum. Can we rise to the occasion?

We had better. To fail to respond to this request is to relinquish a major opportunity for our center. We now have a chance to go beyond a barrage of workshops and courses that, although they may deeply affect individual teachers, do not influence the entire school system. But how do we plan a teacher-involving, practical curriculum development process? How do we avoid the familiar deadening effect of long hours contributed by a few motivated and highly-skilled teachers, resulting in an impressive paper curriculum for the "elite"—a fat and awesome guide which pleases administrators, boards of education and which rounds the classroom shelves of most teachers?

Raising the Role of RISE in Teacher Evaluation

Teachers and administrators in our area still have not made a strong link between staff development and teacher evaluation. The two exist side by side, almost independent of one another. I reject the notion that
The primary reason teachers become involved in RISE is to meet the requirements to complete their terminal degree in educational administration. However, tuition remission, salary increases, and administrative release time at the teachers' center under RISE programs are often the major reasons teachers request to participate in the RISE program.

When the teacher was asked by one of our staff at RISE to accept an advisory role, she reported, "I had to think it over. I work more at the teachers' center, where I feel I'm part of the evaluation process."

Ms. Williams was asked by one of our staff at RISE to accept an advisory role. She reported, "I had to think it over. I work more at the teachers' center, where I feel I'm part of the evaluation process."

Our advisors have been asked by principals on a few occasions to assist them in completing their evaluation report. In some cases, our advisors may spend more time in the classroom of a particular teacher than does the principal. We have declined in all cases, explaining that the role of the advisor is that of a teacher helper and supporter, and that the success of the partnership depends greatly on the mutual trust that builds between the two. This trust would be shattered if the advisor were to contribute the results of classroom observations to evaluation reports.

We are not comfortable, however, if we ignore our potential for helping bridge the gap between teacher evaluation and teacher professional growth. One approach we take is to encourage greater administrator participation in teachers' programs. We believe that if the school principal is to be a helpful contributor in setting meaningful professional growth objectives with faculty members, he or she must know a great deal about the teaching-learning process and spend enough time in classrooms to understand teachers' needs first hand. Even though the paperwork and management of schools can be all-consuming, we want our principals every excuse we can think of to be active in curriculum and instruction. All administrators in our districts have a standing invitation to attend any program for teachers, but we made an effort to remind them of the opportunity and the program designed for them by the educator. We plan to increase the number of RISE advisors to implement some of the new ideas in our districts and encourage them to participate in the RISE program.

University and College Involvement: Not Yet

Our teachers' centers exist because they have been created to address needs that universities and colleges have left unserved. They serve needs that universities and colleges have not served in the local school districts. The universities and colleges, which are reasonably close to their towns, might do much of what we do, but the fact is they have not.

RISE exists to fulfill needs that local educators and institutions have. If we stay too far out with our programming, we lose the teachers who voluntarily attend our programs. We lose the local deans who support our work. Universities and colleges avoid this local accountability because of their state funding. They do the bulk of their work within the safety of their ivory tower.

Yet it is these same walls that help to create an environment conducive to research, study, and the potential for initiation and experimentation that local school systems, buffeted by intense pressures coming from all sides, usually cannot afford. It is hard for the teachers' center, based in the local school system, to create an environment that helps teachers think beyond a simple reaction to the immediate pressures of classroom teaching, but universities and colleges should have a greater capability to help teachers do this. Professors dedicate their careers to deliberate, painstaking, unpressured research and thought. It is not their obligation but their opportunity to pursue research into teaching questions. Teachers' centers appear to be more able to deal with immediate concerns and issues that have direct, obvious, local classroom applicability. This is an oversimplified division of roles, but I think we are committed to each other's work. There are few areas where the threat of competition genuinely exists, and we must cooperate to take advantage of each other's strengths.

To date, RISE has failed to find a way effectively to make this case and to provide enticing opportunities for joint efforts. It has been a nightmare trying to get our programs accredited by these institutions, and it costs an arm and a leg to interest them in providing...
GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE
Project RISE

Rise Advisors
Describe Their Work

Below are reports from two of our advisors about their work in 1979-80. Two other half-time advisors and one other full-time advisor comprised the rest of the RISE advisors staff that year. Some RISE advisors are hired on a one-year, leave-of-absence basis from schools that participate in RISE, and none receives a contract of more than one year at a time because of the uncertainties regarding our level of funding from year to year. The importance of having advisors serve for several years is evident in both reports and is a major goal for us in the future.

Jane Cook
I began working as a RISE advisor in September 1979 on a one-year, half-time fellowship. I serve as a secondary school resource person in three of the RISE region schools, meeting weekly with teachers in my schools. My advisor, colleagues, and I all work independently but cooperatively, sharing an inadequate work space and other frustrations. A strong sense of community has evolved among us so that we share our triumphs as well as our frustrations; we help each other through the valleys and rejoice together over the peaks.

The job of advisor calls for a wide variety of skills: A partial list includes a sense of humor, good organizational skills, flexibility, creativity, a self-directed nature, perseverance, patience, minimum
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both the Interdistrict interaction and\r

need for positive reinforcement, humility, a good\r

self-image, good salesmanship skills, high motivation,\r

availability, self-confidence, sensitivity, empathy,\r

good listening skills, a strong back, and lots of\r

trunk space in a runsarealcreater car. I'm not\r

suggesting that all advisors possess all of these\r

skills since none of us is the necessary cross be\r

between Wonder Woman, Superman, Buddha, and\r

the Rock of Gibraltar, but the need for all of these\r

skills surfaces at one time or another during the\r

job.\r

The job of an advisor is varied and changes as the\r

seasons change. In the fall, an advisor's job is both\r

exciting and frustrating. It's a time of beginning—\r

going into the schools, meeting the staff, starting to\r

develop some connections with each school's unique\r

functioning. It's a time for organizing and defining,\r

for breaking ground and building trust. You're not\r

really sure what you're supposed to be doing and\r

the teachers aren't really sure what you're doing on\r
turf. You may spend a lot of frustrated time in the\r

teachers' lounge trying to get something started. You\r

may be scattering your energies, fulfilling strange requests, and wondering how you ever got into this line of work. Energy levels are\r

high but job satisfaction is low because you just\r
don't seem to be making any inroads.\r

As winter approaches and the weather grows\r

bleaker, so grows your mood. Work is punctuated by frequent trips to the Colchester Bakery for a fattening confection—just a little pick-me-up to\r

bolster sagging spirits. I reached my lowest point\r

at the end of November. I felt like a missionary\r

without a mission and dreaded going out into the\r

schools just as I was sure they dreaded my coming.\r

I was ready to quit and go north, but sought\r

solace and security at the RISE Center since at
Valuing Practical As Well As Philosophical Styles

I think the most unfortunate thing that happens to many of us is that we are not the teachers that we should be. It is more than a matter of what we can do and what we want to do; it is a matter of how we can make the best use of the things that we can do. For example, it is easy to say that we cannot give our students the information they need, but it is a different matter when you consider how to present that information in an interesting way. The main problem is that we are not doing enough to help our students to understand the material.

Further, I believe that people who say that they cannot teach too much do not understand the effects of a lack of instruction. A lack of instruction does nothing to improve the situation; it only tends to make the situation worse. The statement indicates that the teachers themselves have not been able to bring about changes because of the lack of interest in the classroom and the teachers' dissatisfaction. I believe that it is no use when the teachers should still be satisfied with the subject, even though others may well have moved to the subject.

Marx stated, "A society, of course, needs teachers. A well-trained teacher, on the other hand, must be satisfied, and the schools can only be considered successful if there is a proper balance of the two levels. The next level is the most basic need for the students to be successful in the school. A teacher who is successful in the classroom is necessary for the students to be successful in the school. The school, on the other hand, must provide meaningful services for people with needs at the second level. They can help the teacher feel successful in terms defined by the school, e.g., having enough activities to keep reading groups going, making sense out of the Elementary Science Study program, laying colorful bulletin boards and a bag of tricks for classroom control. Once teachers begin to feel successful on the school's terms, it is possible for them to move beyond the urgency of Monday. Since survival is no longer a question, that fear of total mindlessness can gradually subside. New ideas and suggestions don't seem so threatening and criticism can be handled more easily, therefore, long-range planning and more profound thinking have a chance to take place."

Enter the Stage Two program for people with needs at the third level. These programs recognize that some people and their work with materials will continue to be important to teachers, but they may be so new, people pleased me. It was a rough time, but I felt that it lasted too long.

Nothing surprised me and I was not sure what it was. It was probably my first or second day, but it was hard to make a decision. I might be able to make a better decision after all the work was over. Maybe I just didn't know how to recognize that and realized I wasn't going to go away. I felt I just kept hanging and moving enough. Maybe it was more. More likely it was just a combination of all of these, and more, but since things were more or less unimportant, things started getting easier. Teachers started smiling and saying hello when I walked into the building, and public attention from the Teachers' Room. I stopped dreading my way to the school and, in fact, found extra energy for going on. I started feeling that I had some people pleased me. It was a rough time, but I felt that it lasted too long.

Now it's spring and the earth is growing. The schools are humming with outdoor activities and things are slowing down for me. I've put on about ten pounds from those frequent trips to the Colchester Bakery, but I've gained innumerable experience.

If seems like the blank of a new year since I first walked into RSU 1, and now in the blink of an eye I will be walking out. I'll take with me a lot of laughs and a lot of good experiences, a lot of frustrations, and a lot of hopes. My hopes are that the person who takes my place next year will find the job a little easier because I was here this year. My regrets are that spending only one year doing the work of an
Can a Rural Service be Cost Effective?  
A Question of Survival

During my first year in the RISE program, I was fortunate to work with teachers who were experienced, confident, and used to classroom management. They were able to guide the students effectively, creating a positive learning environment. Their teaching experience made a significant impact on my growth as a teacher.

Many of the rural students in our program are from small communities, and they are often more focused on their future careers than on their current education. Some students are actively involved in sports or other extracurricular activities, while others are more focused on their family's needs. Despite these challenges, the students are motivated and eager to learn.

The RISE program has been very successful in promoting the integration of technology into the classroom. The students are encouraged to use technology to enhance their learning experience, and many of them have developed a strong interest in STEM fields. The program has also provided opportunities for students to engage in hands-on learning activities, which has helped them to become more confident in their abilities.

The RISE program has also been successful in fostering a sense of community among the students. The students are encouraged to support each other and to work together to achieve their goals. This has helped to create a positive learning environment, where students are more likely to succeed.

In conclusion, the RISE program has been very successful in promoting the integration of technology into the classroom and fostering a sense of community among the students. The program has helped to improve the academic performance of the students and has provided opportunities for them to develop the skills they need to succeed in the future.

John J. Contessa

The RISE program has been instrumental in helping me develop the skills I need to be a successful teacher. I am grateful for the opportunity to work with such a dedicated and committed group of educators.
In an urban area where a greater centralization of service is possible, the same degree of service could doubtless be provided for considerably less. We must go where the people are, and this costs money.

Considering the intense level of service provided, $183 per person seems very modest. However, in terms of long-term survival, our population base cannot support the cost of our present level of effort. Our local districts currently contribute $32 per person, the remainder coming from federal, state, and private foundation grants. Conceivably, our districts might be able to raise their contribution level to $45 or $50 per person served, but our small, low-tax-based towns really could not do much better than that under current school financing methods. This means that RISE would need to raise three dollars for every one dollar contributed by the districts in order to maintain the present intensity of service. Can we continue to do it?

Grant sources seem to be drying up with the federal government's inflation-fighting cutbacks; private foundation funds are difficult to obtain and those dollars don't last. It is clear that we must begin to look beyond the grant scene for survival. Currently, we face an "opportunity" to become an active part of a state educational service center. As nearly as we can determine right now, our service area would triple but our level of actual financial resources would remain about the same or decrease. Moreover, there is a high likelihood that, in the interest of cost-effectiveness, the resources of our physical center would eventually have to be consolidated in a location central to the enlarged service area but too far from our present towns to provide the kind of service we now offer. If this happened, our towns once again would find themselves on the fringes of a service area and the original justification for our current location would be disregarded.

Would dispersal and watered-down services be more "cost-effective," we couldn't possibly know our teachers by name. We couldn't possibly understand the dynamics of each school and the politics and characteristics of all the towns we would serve. We couldn't possibly make our programs grow from local circumstances and people. Our governing boards would be expanded to such an extent that no one individual or town would be able to exert enough of an influence to make the service truly locally responsive. We would lose the sense of ownership and commitment our governing boards now enjoy, which is critical to our local accountability. We would, by design, have to become less personal, more formal, and more bureaucratic. However, our chances of long-term survival would be quite good.

I'm not convinced that this kind of survival is worth the trade-offs. The very reasons for our existence, those which have made us successful and valuable, would very likely be lost to cost-effectiveness. Therefore, we must find other roles to survival. If large-scale expansion is not the answer, what is?

An approach we will try next year is to expand our base by opening certain locally-requested programs

Continued from previous page

As the degree and kind of teacher-advisor interactions increase, the advisor's role begins to acquire shape and substance. One teacher wrote, "It takes the school advisor a great deal of time to become part of the school system. After three years the teacher in this building have grown through their association with the advisor. His first year was one of building trust and becoming part of the staff."

Another teacher noted, "By the end of the advisor's first year, I was ready, relaxed, and clear enough about his role to utilize it."

It does take considerable time to build up trust with teachers and to establish interpersonal relationships. The process of bringing this about, which requires patience, perseverance, compassion, and a multitude of other saintly qualities, is frequently filled with frustrating and unsatisfying experiences. It is not uncommon to feel that you are just spinning your wheels, accomplishing little. However, you are laying the necessary foundations for meaningful relationships, and the time spent doing this is important. Regrettably, the year may end before you see enough evidence to feel that your year was successful.

As a result, I have articulated the following strategies that a new advisor might consider using:

1. Get to know the pivotal teachers in each school that you are serving as quickly as possible. These are people who often have taught for a while and whose opinions are highly regarded by other staff members. They also frequently control the flow of messages in a building. Communication about you and your role will spread more rapidly through them.
to those outside the RISE area for a fee, hoping to generate enough income to substantially reduce the cost of a program for our own people. We hope to use more and more of our own teachers and administrators as workshop leaders, and to invest in training a few of our people by outside consultants in a given need area so that these people can then train others. We hope to work out bartering and exchanges with other teachers' centers and organizations. For example, we would provide two outside teachers with free room, board, and attendance at one of our training programs. In return, two of our people would receive free training at another center's program. (We have discovered fundraising efforts such as placing ads in newspapers for donations and holding lotteries, but I feel strongly that we should not have to stoop to this level to provide a needed educational service. My stomach begins to churn when discussing such possibilities.)

In any event, while none of the above ideas are original, many are new to us and some deserve a try. Other possibilities will be generated by our staff, policy board, Interdistrict Committee, and superintendents' advisory in brainstorming sessions next year. I firmly believe that we have the will and that there are ways not only to survive but to survive on our own terms. The test of this conviction is just around the corner.

A Dream for the Future

Who can dream of grand things when merely maintaining our existing program will be difficult? To me, it's the only way to go. Understandably, many programs and institutions retreat and adopt defensive postures under financial pressures, but this only makes it harder for them to justify their continued existence.

My dream has come in pieces from many places and people over the past year. First, we need more space for the teachers' center, and I envision in my dream four interconnected rooms: a recreation room, a lecture workshop room, a professional library, and quiet area, and a room for our office and fully-equipped kitchen. For many centers this part of the dream is a reality.

But we can't stop there. In the dream I see a room for satellite-beamed television with video equipment and computer terminals tying our relatively isolated area to the rest of the world's people and information.

I see a small experimental alternative school where every five years teachers and administrators from our participating districts might work for a year in a new situation with stimulating people. I see the lab school providing a site for university and college field work, acting as a meeting ground for local educators and those from institutions of higher education.

2. If you are working in an elementary school, it has been my experience that primary grade teachers are the most consistently receptive and enthusiastic. It was this group of teachers who made my first-year advisory work meaningful, even though my teaching experience had been in seventh and eighth grades.

3. Seek out teachers who have experiences interests in grade levels or content areas similar to yours. When advisors and teachers share similar concerns and interests, the chances are better for effective communication. The majority of my in-depth advisory work was with teachers who, like myself, were interested in science and mathematics.

4. Another population to tap is teachers new to the profession or new to a school. Since both the first-year advisor and "new" teacher are in a similar situation, empathy exists that can be the groundwork for establishing a relationship.

5. Participate in social or other activities where you can get to know teachers more personally. The importance of knowing an advisor as a person is seen in the following teacher comments: "A relationship between advisor and staff can only grow through dedication and informal knowledge of the person."..."The advisor has made his position more than advice giver or recommender of authority, but as a position of personal concern for our staff..."..."He is invited to all school functions, both professional and social. We consider him part of our staff."

Continued on next page
I see a center that would encourage people of all ages and walks of life to be continued, varied, and open that would be a cultural exchange center for everyone in the communities we serve. I see a center for young and old to learn about and participate in the arts—a center equipped with an art gallery, music, art, and craft studios, and a theater for the stimulating performances of burgeoning small community drama and arts groups. I see cultural and ethnic exchanges of performances, art works, and ideas between local groups and similar groups in the major cities, thereby helping to offset our rural young people's limited exposure to those of very different backgrounds. This would positively prepare students for the differences they'll encounter when they leave our towns to find new lives and work in the cities.

I see a center that would help the people of our communities—both children and adults—explore and appreciate our natural environment, which is rapidly being spoiled, the historical richness of our small communities, and our own heritage and rural roots. I see a center that would help parents to be the morals and values educators, the disciplinarians, and the sex and drug advisors of their own children, freeing the school teachers of these seemingly misplaced burdens.

Finally, I envision a building to house all of these dreams. A home that has not seen a wall, yet. A home that was built by the efforts of the people in our communities. I see the people entering the lobby of this structure and proudly reading on the oak entry their names and their contributions of time, labor, ideas, and support.

I see hundreds of names, but they begin to fade as Monday morning approaches. I awaken fully, put my dream under my pillow, pull on a sweater to cover my not-time-to-iron shirt with its button missing, hop in my pick-up, and head for work at our one-room teachers' center at the Hall's Hill School, Colchester, Connecticut, remembering as I drive that our present one-room reality was itself a dream just four years ago.

After three years of advisory work in one elementary school, the depth and breadth of my role have grown considerably. This year, the kind and frequency of interactions with teachers have noticeably increased. The bonds of trust and confidence that took so long to establish have made it possible for me to become involved in several in-depth classroom curriculum projects with teachers and students.

The following examples indicate the substance of that work. For more than three months I have been team-teaching a science unit with a third-grade teacher. This unit, part of the third-grade science curriculum, is laboratory-centered and inquiry-oriented. Thus, it requires a different set of teaching strategies, such as questioning techniques and evaluation procedures, and an untraditional set.
of learning strategies, such as observing, predicting, and communicating. Since I have had prior experiences with similar science units, we agreed that I would serve as a role model by teaching two of the four groups in the class. During this time the teacher observed, took notes, asked questions, and on the following days taught the other two groups. Periodically, we have switched groups so that each of us has had an opportunity to work with every student. Students are required to keep notebooks and record their data. Thus far, feedback of learner progress has consisted primarily of conversations with students about experiments and data in their record books. Although we have not yet completed the unit, the teacher has expressed that she now has the high confidence to teach it next fall. At the same time, I have been working with another third-grade teacher in similar fashion, with comparable results.

More recently, I have assisted two staff members with the purposes and uses of a variety of math lab materials. Initially, I discussed the materials with them, and I am now conducting a series of demonstration lessons with gifted mathematics students of grades K-3. This approach seems to be particularly useful because these teachers are observing how to use and adapt such materials for children of different ages and abilities. One teacher, expressing what others have indicated, wrote, “In addition to support, ideas, and resources, our advisor has added a continuity to our learning process. Relationships do not develop instantly, and this continuity over a period of years provides the time and proximity for meaningful working relationships.”
BUILDING A TEACHERS' CENTER

Building a Teachers' Center, edited by Kathleen Digonay, is a collection of essays that bring together accounts from teachers' center leaders of aspects involved in starting a teachers' center. Some of it includes additional articles that have been extracted from the proceedings of workshops, small conferences of teachers' center leaders, which the Exchange has sponsored since 1977. This book represents the substance, grassroots experience, and the style; collective reflection and voluntary sharing of others' work of the teachers' centers networks. The book begins with two papers that relate how a combination of observations, experience, high energy, and happenstance formed the first American teachers' centers. Following are several essays on practice matters, stating needs assessment, evaluation, space programming, workshops, outreach, managing, budget, advocacy, board funding, and self-publishing. Finally, three articles are provided on centers' relationships with school districts and with parents and community. S9.75 prepaid. Order from Teachers College Press, 1234 Amsterdam Avenue, New York, New York 10027.


- Occasional Paper No. 3. Teachers' Center Exchange: An illustrated guide to getting started. Kathleen Digonay. Available from Teachers' Center Exchange, Far West Laboratory, 1500 Polk Street, San Francisco, California 94109. 15 copies, $12 or more.

- Occasional Paper No. 4. Teachers' Center Exchange: An illustrated guide to getting started. Kathleen Digonay. Available from Teachers' Center Exchange, Far West Laboratory, 1500 Polk Street, San Francisco, California 94109. 15 copies, $12 or more.


- Occasional Paper No. 6. The Advisor-Faculty Relationship: A Teachers' Center Case Study by Cathey Thomas. October 1979. 100p. 15 copies, $12 or more.

- Occasional Paper No. 7. Writings from The New Teachers' Centers: An annotated bibliography of publications of interest to people in teachers' centers or similar forms of staff development. October 1980.


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