Definition

Implementing effective behavioral interventions requires that all those involved in the intervention are thoroughly knowledgeable about and competent in the use of specific intervention techniques. Thus, staff training development is an essential preliminary strategy to avoid problems through proactive planning. This may involve formal and informal inservice training, individual consultation, and teacher support groups.

Things to Do

✓ Assess staff skills and needs.

✓ Select training method.

✓ Provide support, incentives, and follow-up.

☑ Assess staff skills and needs.

Staff Training

Conduct a needs assessment to determine the current level of performance of staff to be involved in the training program. The purposes of the needs assessment are:

☞ To identify content and skill areas that require additional training.

☞ To identify potential participants' training procedure preferences.

Typically, needs assessments are collected through self-report rating scales and questionnaires. The results of the needs assessment should be carefully analyzed to detect consistent patterns where priority consideration should be directed.
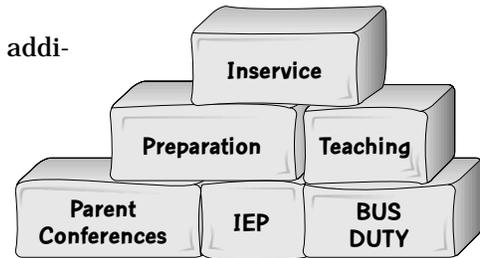
☑ Select training method.

Develop a staff training program using one of these three training strategies:

1. **Formal Presentation**

2. **Informal Conference**

3. **One-on-One Instruction**

Formal Presentation

The following procedures should be used in the development of a staff training program:

☞ Identify the contents of the staff training program.

☞ Design the training modules.

☞ Validate the content of the training program and the structure of the training modules.

☞ Revise based on participant feedback and analysis of learning outcomes.

Informal Conference

Develop policies and procedures for collaborative consultation and problem solving that can also be used for individualized staff training purposes.

A basic five-step process for staff training at the individual or small-group level would include:

Informal Conferences

1. **Identify the problem**
2. **Recommend intervention**
3. **Implement intervention**
4. **Evaluate**
5. **Modify if needed.**

✍ Problem identification

✍ Intervention recommendations

✍ Intervention implementation

✍ Data collection and evaluation

✍ Redesign intervention if needed

One-on-One Instruction

An effective collaborative process between two staff members not only may result in improved outcomes for the students who are the focus of the collaboration, but also may result in enhanced skills for the staff involved in implementing the collaboratively developed intervention.

One-on-One Instruction

- **Hands-on experience**
- **Immediate feedback**
- **Ongoing support**
- **Ask questions**

✓ Provide support, incentives, and follow-up.

Implement staff training program using best practices such as:

✍ Provide multiple practice opportunities during training.

✍ Provide evaluative feedback on trainees' acquisition of skills.

✍ Create an atmosphere that encourages trainees to share ideas, opinions, and expertise.

✍ Provide opportunities for continued classroom discussion, group support, and feedback.

✍ Assist trainees in understanding how the skills being acquired contribute to school improvement, student performance, and their own professional development.

✍ Schedule training sessions at times that do not interfere with trainees' other outside responsibilities.

✍ Enlist the full support from the various building administrators whose staff are participating in the training.

✍ Arrange the physical environment in which training takes place in a way that facilitates learning and interaction.

✍ Provide handout materials that are attractive and readable.

✍ Encourage the establishment of site-based or interest-based study groups to serve as ongoing support systems, facilitating the transfer and application of the content of the training program to their everyday experiences.

Examples

Example 1

A school district conducts a very comprehensive needs assessment of its staff to determine areas that may be considered high priority training targets for the upcoming school year. During the summer, a small work group of the district's teachers and supervisory staff develop training modules and schedules designed to address the targeted areas. The schedule of offerings is distributed to all staff at the beginning of the year. Included with the schedule is a description of the anticipated benefits as well as a review of the payoffs available to all participants.

Example 2

A middle school principal, in consultation with the school's special education team, develops a new role statement for the school's resource teachers. A significant change in this role description concerns the collaborative consultation process that will be employed during the upcoming year. A basic four-step consultation process is outlined in the role statement. The principal presents this information to the faculty at the beginning of the year and carefully monitors the implementation of this program throughout the year.

Variations of the Technique

✍ Mentor teachers, assigned to support and advise first-year or provisional teachers, can enhance the professional development of new staff. Similarly, a structured peer coaching program has shown promise as an effective staff training procedure.

✍ Building-based teacher assistance teams have demonstrated their capacity for enhancing the skills of staff that have utilized the expertise of these teams.

Potential Problems and Solutions

Staff May Not be Applying Concepts and Skills

Staff may not be applying concepts and skills delivered in training program. One of the primary purposes of the staff training is to encourage the application of preferred instructional practices in real-life situations. Encouraging the application of newly acquired skills can be increased by:

✍ Giving homework assignments after each training session involving application practices.

✍ Providing supportive feedback to participants concerning their homework assignments.

✍ Visiting participant classrooms between training sessions to provide support and on-site technical assistance.

✍ Using concrete and relevant examples in teaching new concepts and skills.

Staff May Not Seem Motivated

Staff may not seem motivated to attend training workshops or attendance drops after initial training session.

Make sure that the topics of the workshop are of importance to the intended participants. Collect and analyze evaluative feedback from participants to determine areas of needed improvement. Carefully examine incentives and/or payoffs for participating in staff training activities.

Getting Ready

✍ Encourage a culture of collaboration consultation among all staff. That is, communicate through policies and procedures that collaborative consultation between and among all instructional and supervisory staff is a primary means of staff training. Develop and disseminate role statements for supervisory staff that outline the collaborative process to be followed by instructional staff in their consultations with their general and special education colleagues.

✍ Review all district policies and procedures to determine how incentives for participation in staff training can be maximized. Released time, lane change credit, cash incentives, instructional resources, and other special recognition can all be utilized to increase staff interest and participation in staff training activities.

Materials and Supplies

The materials and supplies applicable to staff training is virtually limitless depending on the specific nature of the training to be delivered. A wide variety of audiovisual equipment and other technology to deliver staff training is also available.

References

Bay, M., Bryan, T., & O'Connor, R. (1994). Teachers assisting teachers: A prereferral model for urban educators. *Teacher Education and Special Education, 17,* 10-21.

Joyce, B., & Showers, B. (1983). *Power in staff development through research in training.* Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Rule, S., Fodor-Davis, J., Morgan, R., Salzberg, C. L., & Chen, J. (1990). An inservice training model to encourage collaborative consultation. *Teacher Education and Special Education, 13,* 225-227.

Sugal, G. M., & Tindal, G. A. (1993). *Effective school consultation: An interactive approach.* Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole.