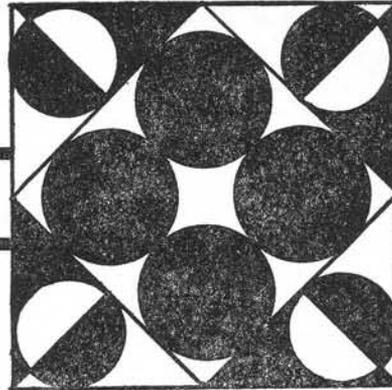# Idea Corner

Learning Leadership Through Interpersonal Experiences

"The fact that I could deal with myself and others really made me feel needed and it made me feel great."

This statement by a 16-year-old high school student typifies the comments of the 34 high school students who participated in a Youth Leadership Development Conference conducted by Wisconsin University Extension staff in the fall of 1970. The primary goal of the conference was to test a model for helping youth develop affective skills in an experiential setting. The objectives of the conference, which reflect its anticipated influence on the participants, were to help participants:

1. Develop an understanding of group dynamics.
2. Develop an understanding of interpersonal communication difficulties.
3. Deal more effectively with their identity.
4. Explore their individual potentials.
5. Develop a more positive self-concept.
6. Relate more effectively to others.
7. Enhance their ability to assist others in developing their potentials.
8. Increase their awareness of the affective learning domain.

The two-day conference was held in a remote youth camp setting. The secluded atmosphere, which minimized external distractions, was critical to the success of the conference. The cell-group technique was the principal format. After the first two hours, which involved total group interaction experiences, four cell groups were organized. Though these cell groups remained intact for the structured portions of the conference, provisions were made for periodic total group interaction on an unstructured basis.

Cell-group facilitators used a variety of interpersonal techniques with these groups to meet the developmental objectives. The opening statement, which echoes the prevailing reaction of conference partici-

pants, attests to the success of this approach in creating awareness of affective skills in youth at the senior-high age level.

The degree to which these skills were mastered by participants, and their effect on leadership ability, will require subsequent observation and evaluation.

The immediate positive effect was acknowledged by a high school principal who said: "I have never seen such an enthused, excited, and changed group of young people in all my years as an educator."

A secondary goal of the conference—to provide a vehicle for enlarging the Extension youth program clientele base at the county level—was satisfied by the method used to get conference participants.

High school district superintendents, principals, and guidance counselors in Vernon County were contacted personally in early spring of 1970 and presented with the idea of such a conference for high school youth. Support of the idea by several of these administrators and guidance personnel prompted a subsequent meeting, at which time the proposed conference was discussed in greater detail and the specific developmental objectives identified.

As a result of this meeting, University Extension county and state staff personnel agreed to conduct the conference with each participating school system developing its own criteria for participant selection.

Because of the success of this Youth Leadership Development Conference, administrators of two additional Vernon County area school districts have asked to be included in the next conference to be held in November, 1971. This increased interest and support of the leadership conference idea by high school administrators indicates local people have accepted University Extension's effort to expand on the traditional youth development clientele base.

The results of this first conference have also prompted 4-H and youth development staff in additional Wisconsin counties to try abbreviated versions of this model with 4-H junior leader winter weekend camps.

While a quantitative evaluation of this attempt to provide learning experiences in the affective skills area isn't possible now, staff observations, participant reaction, and high school administrator support indicate the conference's success.

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Make Life Easier

Tired of lugging large quantities of publications to meetings? If so, here's a suggestion to make life easier for you and your secretary.

I select the publications I wish to distribute at a meeting and mount them on a display board. I carry only this board to the meeting along with a supply of penalty envelopes.

pens, and paper. I ask each participant to list on the paper provided the publications he wishes to receive.

Sometimes I prepare a check list of titles of the available publications, so that only the desired material need be checked. This list or the paper requesting the selected publications is placed in the envelope. Each individual is asked to write his name, address, and zip code on the envelope. I collect the envelopes and at the office the requests are filled by one of our secretaries. The secretaries prefer this method because it eliminates the problem of trying to figure out the correct spelling of a person's name and saves time in addressing the envelopes.

This technique also limits the waste of publications. We've found that if bulletins are available, people will pick them up whether they're interested in them or not. With this technique for distribution, they only select the ones that interest them. This is an important element in this age of conserving resources and limited funds.

In summary, this method saves time, energy, resources, and eliminates frustration.

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The Mailbox Teaching Machine

Correspondence courses in agriculture and home economics are a vital part of the total program of Cooperative Extension in Pennsylvania. Recent techniques in adapting courses to correspondence study have opened new doorways and developed a base for additional educational experiences for many Pennsylvanians.

Established in 1892 by the College of Agriculture as a "Chautauqua Course of Home Study in Agriculture," they were a valuable method of placing a large number of agricultural books in the homes of Pennsylvania farmers.

Seventy-nine years and 250,000 students later, Extension specialists and resident staff still write these noncredit courses at the desired level, with the necessary technical and supplementary material forming the body of the correspondence courses.

Course Description

All of the 100 courses currently available are complete in themselves. They include a table of contents, biography of the author, a series of lessons (8-25 pages long), and a question paper for each lesson.

The courses provide a large variety of subjects to meet needs and objectives. Farm Management, Electrical Tips for Everyone, Food—Selection and Preparation, Landscape Planning for Small Properties, Community Planning in Pennsylvania, Self-Improvement—A Common Sense Approach, are examples listed in the free bulletin.

Subject matter and objectives determine course level. The bee-

keeping course is at a tenth grade level; the cost accounting course requires advanced mathematics.

Many of the related individual courses can be used in forming a course of study that meets the needs of individuals. In two instances, however, a series of courses was developed deliberately to meet identified needs. One of these series consists of eight courses designed for Professional Pest Control In-Service Training Courses. They're written for servicemen and supervisors of commercial pest control firms and were developed along with the Pennsylvania Pest Control Association.

The second series, Public Affairs, was developed to provide guidance to local elected officials who are relatively inexperienced in government or legislative acts relating to their performance. Two of the present six courses pertain to township government, two to borough government, and two to community planning. Developed at the request of, and assisted by, officials of various associations and governmental agencies, the courses have become a welcome aid and potent force in Pennsylvania.

The complete course is forwarded to the enrollee when he pays the fee. He completes the question papers at his own rate, with no time limitation. In 1969-70, a total of 25,963 question papers were returned for correction.

Although the original concept was to provide courses without charge, the increasing number of enrollees and rising production, han-

dling, and postage charges make it necessary to charge for each course. The fee varies from $1.85 to $6.65, according to production and mailing costs for that particular course.

"Study points" are awarded for each course according to the difficulty and amount of anticipated time needed to complete the course. The number of hours needed varies from 4 to 45; the number of study points awarded varies from 5 to 20. A Certificate of Accomplishment is awarded to those who have successfully completed sufficient courses to earn a total of 60 or more study points.

The courses have received wide acclaim. All states and the District of Columbia were represented by enrollees in 1969-70. There were 278 individuals from 24 foreign countries enrolled in courses other than the dairy or dairy-related courses published in Spanish.

Methods of Use

Extension personnel use correspondence courses for increasing their knowledge. In fact, all Extension members of Pennsylvania are required to take the course "Fallout Protection for Family, Food, and Farm."

Some county staff use courses for group instruction, meeting regularly over a four- to eight-week period. The Public Affairs series is the one used most in this way. Eventually seminars on this series will have been conducted in every part of this Commonwealth.

Courses are also recommended for use by 4-H Club group leaders—either for group instruction or self-improvement. In one case, a televised program used a different lesson of the Flower Arrangement course once a week for eight weeks. A prebroadcast campaign urged viewers to purchase the course and suggested they study that week's lesson in advance. Group viewing of this course, with a staff member as leader, was also practiced in one county and was considered an excellent experience by the enrollees and county agent.

The county staff recommend courses to individuals who have a specific isolated need, such as the sheep course to the individual in a predominantly dairy area. This technique enables county staff to use their time more efficiently.

An unusual but effective use of a course is demonstrated in providing a training program for supervisory, administrative, or sales staff of large milk processing companies. In many instances, these industry staffs have no dairy manufacturing or agricultural background . . . their formal education has been in business administration, chemical engineering, biochemistry, liberal arts. Under contract with the Pennsylvania State University, companies arrange for their staff to enroll in the Market Milk and/or Ice Cream Manufacture correspondence courses. On a prearranged date, these dairy company staffs come to the campus for a one-week short course. The prior completion of the pertinent correspondence course provides a common base of knowledge and a springboard for discussion.

Conclusions

The advantages inherent in these "mailbox self-teaching machines" haven't been completely achieved. Much of their potential lies not only in the subject matter, but also in the methods used. Their flexibility means they can be adapted to many circumstances in an effective and efficient manner, with limited expense to the individual. Although the self-teaching machine helps the enrollee achieve his objective, the Extension staff member considers them another tool, another approach, another facet, in educating the "whole" person.

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Dimensional Models: A Tool for Adult Educators

Can we observe adults while they're expressing what they know, creating and judging ideas, and practicing what they learn? Yes, I think we can by designing and using dimensional models as one of our teaching techniques.

Models—miniature representations—are a likely tool because of their strong realism in game-like learning. I've found that some adults

get more learning mileage for their time by using models.

At one meeting, it was our objective to learn basic meal planning. The group included both men and women who were enrolled in basic adult education classes. When they came to class, they found 200 paper models of different kinds of food in the center of the table. The models were varied to include foods in the milk, meat, cereal, and vegetable and fruit groups. The assignment was for the class to plan balanced, nutritious meals for one day by arranging the individual models in place settings for the morning, noon, and evening meals. After the task was completed, the Recommended Daily Food Guide was presented and each person judged whether the food items he'd selected met the established requirements for a day.

These same food models have been used in work sessions on comparison shopping, budgeting the food dollar, convenience foods vs. basic food preparation, storage of foods, and nutrient values of foods.

At another meeting, our objective was to explore leadership styles of individuals. This meeting was one of a series of staff meetings for Extension para-professionals. Case situations were displayed with a series of alternative reaction cards along with small models of people representing the tendency to act autocratically, democratically, or in a laissez-faire way. With each case situation, the learner chose one way or alternative ways of handling the situation. At this meeting, models were used by the adults to make organizations portraying their thoughts and their tendency to act.

In designing the educational models, I was concerned with subject matter, visual arts, engineering, and educational psychology. Generally, I found the models helped adults portray their ideas and knowledge of the real world. Models facilitate practice of what is to be learned, while letting the learner use problem-solving processes in the learning situation. Because models can be designed so they can be modified, rearranged, combined, taken apart, or put together, they allow flexible thinking.

I invite you to test and design models that make real life easier to understand . . . see for yourself how the editing of reality can be a tool to you as an adult educator.

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