

Parent and Family Education

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This column is devoted to innovative/special techniques and procedures for working with family and parent training. Contributions or questions should be sent to Joyce and Gary McKay, 18000 N. Heatherbrae, Tucson, Arizona 85715.

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Outreach: Innovation in Parent Education

When I first began teaching at Pittsburg State University in Pittsburg, Kansas, one of the graduate courses assigned to me was "Seminar: Counseling Special Populations." The class enrollment was 45 students, and after meeting with them, I proposed that we choose families as our special population. We had consensus and family counseling became the focus of the seminar course.

During the semester, I essentially taught a course in Adlerian Family Counseling. The structure of the course consisted of a three hour block. The first hour and a half was designed to teach basic philosophy, theory, and technique of an open forum family counseling program. The second hour and a half was an open forum family counseling demonstration, working with the families and children of those who were enrolled in the class. The final ninety minutes of the class was used as an in-class family counseling center. I would use as a co-counselor those students who signed up and felt that they were ready to move into the co-counseling position.

At the end of the semester, there was enough interest in family counseling that the faculty in the Department of Psychology and Counseling legislated a new course entitled "Family Counseling." From the original 45

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students, 21 returned wanting to take a follow-up course, which we called "Seminar: Consulting with Parents and Teachers." This course was designed to have the students participate and be involved in direct administration of open forum family counseling with all the different positions and responsibilities rotated on a weekly basis (i.e., intake interviewer, coordinator, play-room supervisor, recorder, etc.).

After meeting with the family counseling class for ninety minutes, we would join the consulting class for open forum family counseling. The families we worked with were from the University community as we began a pilot project for a University family counseling center.

In one year's time, we were able to create enough interest in Adlerian family counseling and parent education that, through contact with the Office of Continuing Education, the Department of Psychology and Counseling was able to negotiate off-campus courses of parent education to be taught by qualified people who had taken the series of family counseling and consulting courses. The Office of Continuing Education agreed to pay the persons to teach the parenting courses.

We experimented with different titles of courses under the general course title "Topics in Psychology." We offered at one location "Topics in Psychology: Raising a Responsible Child" (Dinkmeyer & McKay, 1973). At another location, a graduate student would teach "Topics in Psychology: Practical Parenting" (Corsini, & Painter 1975). At a third location, we offered "Topics in Psychology: Parents on the Run" (Beacher & Beecher, 1967). At a fourth location, we ran "Topics in Psychology: Discipline Without Fear" (Grey, 1974), and are currently running "Topics in Psychology: Single Parenting" (Baruth, 1979).

After we had found success in offering a series of courses once, we would follow up the original course with offerings entitled "Logical Consequence, a New Approach to Discipline" (Dreikurs & Grey, 1968). This course allowed us to get into more detail with the concept of logical consequences. We are currently following up by teaching a third course in the series, called "Turning People On: How to Become an Encouraging Person" (Losoncy, 1977).

The purpose of running the courses as we did was twofold. First, it was a way to get parent education into the different communities of southeast Kansas. Secondly, it was to provide graduate students, who had been trained in family counseling, experience in teaching parenting courses. Students selected to teach the courses were carefully screened beforehand. Likewise, they were, in a sense, receiving a graduate assistantship by having Continuing Education pay them for their teaching and travel.

Another unique situation arose during this time period. The State Department of Education in Kansas put out a directive that all home economics classes in the public schools have one unit of parent education. Therefore, this opened the door for home economics teachers to get involved in taking parent education courses. Rather than just focusing on home economics teachers, we designed a course entitled "Handling Behavior Problems in the Classroom," using *Maintaining Sanity in the Classroom* (Dreikurs, Grunwald, & Pepper, 1971). We designed this course to be attractive not only to home economics teachers, but to public school teachers in general. This course became very popular, and again, we were able to provide graduate assistantships, with the Office of Continuing Education paying people who had been trained in motivation modification. There was enough demand for follow up, so we offered courses entitled "Logical Consequence: A New Approach to Classroom Discipline" (Dreikurs & Grey, 1968), "The ABC's of Classroom Discipline" (Baruth & Eckstein, 1976), or "Encouraging Children to Learn" (Dinkmeyer & Dreikurs, 1963).

At the present time, the middle school counselors in Pittsburg and two of the school psychologists serving the Pittsburg area, have now established parent education/family counseling programs in cooperation with the Department of Psychology and Counseling at Pittsburg State University in the middle school and two of the elementary schools. Thus, the University now has practicum sites for those students who are interested in developing technique and expertise in Adlerian parent education and family counseling.

In this innovative manner, we have been able to share the ideas of Adler and Dreikurs throughout the many communities and public schools of southeast Kansas, western Missouri, and northern Oklahoma. One of the limitations and regrets is that we did not conduct any empirical research on the different courses. Data collected on the teacher's performances and the value of the course material would have been helpful in designing and providing future courses. The main purpose was to share the ideas of parent education and provide graduate assistantships for students who were qualified to teach such courses. The feeling among those who have been involved in the program is that we are just on the threshold and just beginning to touch the surface of parent education and family counseling in this area.

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