today’s situation/
A NEW BOSS

Developer’s concerns about staff retreat create opportunity and obligation

In the last issue, we met Bill Stewart. Stewart and an administrative team had planned the district’s annual fall staff retreat using feedback from the previous years’ meetings, but the new superintendent had his own plan — and it was not at all like Stewart’s and the team’s. Stewart had worked to design a retreat that met participants’ needs and the standards for high-quality professional development. Stewart was concerned about the new superintendent’s plan to use a consultant he knew. The consultant’s presentation, Stewart believed, did not align with the district’s needs, nor was it consistent with high-quality professional development. Stewart debated how to approach a superintendent he’d not yet met and whether to risk creating discord with his new boss or to keep quiet.

SUPERINTENDENT
A superintendent writes: “I want someone to be forthright with me and tell me if I am off base, especially in new situations. I depend on staff to help me understand what I can’t or don’t know. While I would expect to have the right to call the shots, I also do not want to act in a way that is not respectful of established norms, expectations, or standards of practice until I understand them and know the degree to which they contribute to the organization. I understand the superintendent’s desire to want to share his platform and hope that Bill will work with the superintendent to create a ‘both-and’ situation rather than an ‘either-or’ situation.”

STAFF DEVELOPER
A staff developer writes: “Bill is in a hard place. I understand not wanting to create waves with the new boss, yet he does have an ethical obligation not only to himself, but also to all the district administrators who have come to expect high quality. I encourage Bill to schedule a meeting with the new superintendent, to offer his support, and to inquire whether the superintendent wants some history about past retreats and what has made them successful.”

next situation/
FROM THE SOURCE
Darlene Preston is planning a new training session for teachers in her district. From conversations with teachers, principals, the director of curriculum, and the data expert, Preston recognizes that teachers want to develop their knowledge and skills in differentiating instruction for students as a way to address the learning needs of students who are falling behind and students who are ahead of the group. She knows there are gaps in student learning and that teachers feel unable to meet the challenges of teaching all students in their classrooms. Teachers frequently report that they do not have the skills and resources to address all students’ learning needs. Principals, too, are frustrated by their schools’ scores on district and national achievement tests.

After considering the research on how to address the learning needs of all students in a single classroom and talking with other staff developers, the director of curriculum, principals, and teachers, the district improvement team selects differentiated instruction as the appropriate
 intervention. The improvement plan calls for professional development for teachers and principals, so Preston decides her first step is to design a session for teachers on differentiation. She hopes this initial step will give teachers more confidence and competence to begin to think differently about instruction and allow her then to work with teams of teachers to plan and share differentiated lessons across classrooms and schools.

Preston consults many resources to design the course. She observes and interviews teachers who already have differentiated instruction. She videotapes several classes to use in the training. She draws from the multiple training programs she has attended and books she has read on differentiation. She talks with other trainers who are doing training on this topic and reviews other training programs on differentiated instruction.

As she reviews all the materials, information, and resources, Preston carefully selects those that would meet the course outcomes. She designs examples of differentiated lessons using the district curriculum and texts to use as models in the training. Preston wants to be sure that, as a staff development provider, she follows Principle V of the NSDC Code of Ethics for Staff Development Providers. Principle V states: *Staff development providers give appropriate credit to individuals or organizations whose work has influenced them.*

Preston does not worry about violating copyright laws. She sought permission to use the articles she has included in her training manual, contacted trainers whose materials she wants to use, and has permission to use their materials in her training. She has included references as appropriate.

Yet Preston realizes so many things influenced her thinking in designing the course. The few resources she includes from others with permission are only a small portion of those that influenced her thinking and understanding of differentiation. When she starts to make a list of the people who influenced her, she finds it easy to write down 20 names and expects that she might have a list of 50 with a little more thought. She has a library full of books she has read. She observed many teachers over the years who were competent at differentiating instruction. How can she acknowledge all of them? The task seems to be overwhelming.

She wonders whether she should list every author, every presenter of every workshop she attended, every teacher whose name she can remember, and every person with whom she has talked about differentiation. How might she acknowledge her own experience for the influence it had on her current understanding and skill in differentiation? Would she list the students who were some of her best teachers, especially those who helped her realize that she failed to meet their needs? What are the expectations if she is to meet the Code of Ethics? She wonders why she has not thought before about how to provide appropriate credit to those who influenced her thinking. Preston reviews the Code of Ethics again. It states that staff development providers understand and recognize the theoretical and research traditions that serve as the basis of their work, and that they acknowledge these contributions. Preston is confident she has done this appropriately in the materials she created. Somehow stating the names of those who have done research or who produced theory in this field seems inadequate. She wants to acknowledge all those who influenced her thinking. She just doesn't know how.

**JOIN THE DISCUSSION**

Readers are urged to share their comments about the situation online at www.nsd.org/library/ethics.cfm or with Joellen Killion directly at NSDCKillio@aol.com.

**QUESTIONS**

- What would you do in Preston’s situation?
- By including a list of references and appropriate citations, do staff development providers meet their ethical obligation to Principle V of the NSDC Code of Ethics for Staff Development Providers?
- How might Preston acknowledge some of those who influenced her?