

M. V. Adams

MDTA SERVICE WORKER CLASSES --1966-67

Supervised By
FARIBAULT AREA VOCATIONAL-TECHNICAL SCHOOL

Conducted At
FARIBAULT STATE HOSPITAL
OWATONNA STATE SCHOOL

The pilot project, MDTA Service Worker Classes, for the educable retarded, has come to a successful close. In reviewing the year, we can note with pride the progress that has been made in many different areas.

Faribault State Hospital, where three of the six classes were held, is an institution for mentally retarded located in Faribault, Minnesota.

Owatonna State School, where the balance of the classes were conducted, is an institution for the mentally retarded to age 21 located fifteen miles from Faribault.

The first meeting relative to implementing a program of this type was held in January 1966. This was a planning meeting involving representatives from three different departments in the state who cooperated in this undertaking-----

1. Department of Employment Security
2. Department of Education
3. Department of Public Welfare

There followed additional meetings. Simultaneously, the Faribault Area Vocational-Technical School was preparing a budget and training proposal.

Patients selected for the program were mildly and moderately retarded. They had been in the institutions from one to forty-five years. Two criteria were used in the selection process for the MDTA candidates: (1) Can they learn the job to become employable? And, assuming they can, (2) Will they be socially acceptable?

As the final step before the program started, DVR and the social workers contacted each candidate and described the program, getting their assent to become involved in it. Only one person declined.

Training for the project was the responsibility of the Faribault Area Vocational-Technical School. Food Service Classes, Nursing Aide Classes, and Housekeeping Classes were under the jurisdiction of the MDTA Coordinator of the Area School. There were seven students in each class making a total of forty-two, in both institutions, running a total of thirty weeks.

In hiring instructors for the classes, thought was given to the background of the applicants relating to the classes they were interested in teaching. We endeavored to find the type of instructor who had skill knowledge as well as experience in the field. More than that, we hoped to procure individuals who had the kind of personality which would enable them to understand the student whom they were going to teach. As we look back now, we can feel that we were close to 100% as one can expect to come in this regard.

To further reinforce the teacher in his or her efforts to make the program a success, a three week "preparation period" was conducted. Minnesota MDTA Coordinator, Mr. Henry Teichroew, opened the meetings, followed by speakers who were

experienced in working with retardates. DVR representatives explained their part in the project and their desire to be of help in the coming months. Teacher training units were developed from which lesson plans were written and instructional materials prepared. Orientation meetings were held at the state institutions and joint planning of work by the instructor and department supervisor was carried out.

One of the most encouraging things was the early evidence of the tremendous enthusiasm and cooperation by the State Hospital and State School staffs as well as DVR and Minnesota Vocational Education personnel. From the superintendents of the institutions on down the line the feeling one received was "we want to help you make a success of this because this is the kind of thing we need and have waited for a long time."

So the continuing meetings held were most beneficial. Problems with the students were brought out into the open and mutual ways of solving them were discussed. The MDTA instructors, as well as the Coordinator, took active participation in all meetings. Their opinions were not only welcomed but respected.

It can be truthfully said that the most important by-product to come out of the MDTA program was the working-togetherness that evolved. All agencies had one thought --the good of the student and his future. With this kind of reinforcement, the MDTA program had a much greater chance for success.

Rooms were assigned, equipment was put into place, students and instructors were brought together on an eight hour-a-day basis, or a total of forty hours a week. The time was September 12, 1966.-----the six classes were started-----we all looked forward with anticipation to what the future held.

As a part of the instructor's routine, weekly lesson plans were encouraged to be developed. Along with this, summaries of each week were required indicating what had been accomplished, what problems were incurred, what steps had been taken to solve them and other pertinent information that would give the supervisor an up-to-date reviewal of each class.

Frequent visits were made by the coordinator to the classes and with the instructors individually and collectively. The MDTA instructors were considered a part of the Area School staff. This gave them confidence.

Monthly progress reports were sent to the DVR office. Along with that the Faribault Area Vocational School rating and progress reports were handed in. These are kept on file for each student and would be available for reviewal.

The MDTA Coordinator kept a running record of all meetings, activities and information pertinent to the program from the beginning until the final events in April, 1967.

As a base text, the book published by Science Research Associates, called "The Job Ahead" was used and the teaching staff joined in judging this "good" to "very good." We used level 1 and the workbook that accompanied it.

Other instructional materials used were: "Money Makes Sense", play money, real money, puzzle maps, charts relating to the individual class, overhead projection transparencies, "Useful Arithmetic", "Training for Nursing Aides", along with materials developed by each instructor which are kept in a binder for future reference.

A total of forty-one films were shown. These proved to be an excellent teaching device. Films selected had to do with job skills as well as those pertaining to personal grooming and social graces.

As the classes progressed, it was felt that there would be a great deal of benefit possible if experience could be gained in work experience situations outside the confines of the institutions. As a result, twenty-six of the students were able to test their skills alongside employees in regular employment. Such institutions as: parochial schools (both elementary and high school), nursing homes and a county hospital cooperated with us on this venture.

Nearly all training stations reported that the students were doing their work efficiently and were able to get along with fellow employees in a harmonious manner.

The Food Service Class from the Faribault State Hospital spent one month working alongside the Food Class at the Faribault Area Vocational-Technical School. This association gave the MDTA class members a tremendous lift. They found that they could measure up with their normal counterparts in the skill areas very well. There was more growth noted by the instructor during this time than at any other period.

At the conclusion of the training program, appropriate graduation activities were held at both institutions. Mr. Teichroew, who was the speaker at the beginning, gave the address in the concluding event of the year. Presentation of diplomas and certificates was made. State Staff personnel made noteworthy contributions to both programs, which proved to be very successful.

Both at Faribault and Owatonna there were seasonal parties held for the students. A great part of the planning and the carrying out of the plans was left to the students themselves. This responsibility had a desirable effect because the students were able to see that they could function acceptably in such situations.

A program within a program developed when Economics Laboratory, manufacturers of detergent products, cooperated in the establishment of a warewashing training procedure. An outline was drawn up and the students in Food Service, both at Faribault and Owatonna, were put through a concentrated course in this field. Impressive graduation ceremonies were held at the State Capitol. Some students have already been placed and the prospects for the future look bright for more job opportunities.

The office of the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation is concerned with the placement of the MDTA students. There are problems involved with the counties that are charged with the supervision of each person. This takes time to resolve. However, it seems certain that the placement of a large number will be possible. At Faribault, at this writing, there is more than half of them that are on their own in jobs for which they have been trained. Owatonna cannot report as high a number but efforts are being expended to this end and the possibilities make us all feel optimistic in this regard.

Proposals for on-going classes have been initiated. These would be open to institution level as well as community type educable retarded. The need for vocational training of this kind of individual is urgently needed. The surface has hardly been scratched.

Many worthwhile associations evolved with the agencies interested in the training program. The door has been opened and the welcome is there when and if the Fari-bault Area Vocational-Technical School indicates it is ready to go ahead with more training of this type.

Further, when we went into the community with our students, we spread into the hearts and lives of many others. The graduation gifts the students received from the employers, and associates, indicated how much they appreciated the efforts of the students and their interest in helping them to succeed.

It would undoubtedly be true that when a future program began, it could be done with a smaller amount of supervision. Although, with the possibility of new instructors taking some of the classes, there would have to be a considerable amount of coordination work, at least at the outset.

Yes, many people did look through many windows. We hope, and we feel they did, turn away with a smile indicating satisfaction in what they observed.

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