



## Inservicing The Teachers

### A Pastoral Tale With A Moral

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I can't help but remember Grandpop breeding his old Jersey heifer, Flossie. She sure was a pretty cow, silky red with big gentle eyes. One summer day, Grandpop came in from milking and announced it was time to call the inseminator, Zeke Johnson, 'cause Flossie was acting mighty jumpy. Zeke had a 24-hour answering service; you had to strike while the iron was hot, he used to say.

Well, a couple of hours after the call Zeke pulled up in the yard in his old Chevy pickup. He got out kind of slow and important like. In the back of the truck was this great big barrel of bull semen and a long rubber glove. Grandpop told Zeke he wanted to breed his heifer to a bull with a good butter fat record. Zeke pulled out a big old long tube from the barrel and headed for the barn.

When we got there, Flossie had her head penned in a stanchion, and she was making funny noises low down in her throat. Zeke put on his rubber glove and checked her to make sure she was ready to breed. Flossie wasn't very happy about that, but then you don't ask a cow's opinion ('cause she wouldn't have one), and she sure didn't have any choice, penned up like she was.

Zeke turned around and said, "This here bull's been dead for 10 years, but his semen's got a strong history: Then he inserted that tube, gave a squeeze, and

it was done. Grandpop said he'd know in 21 days if she's settled. I felt sorry for poor old Flossie. She didn't have any fun. It just happened to her. And if it happened to her four times and she didn't take, it was off to the butcher with her.

I remember asking Grandpop why he didn't keep a bull of his own. He said, "For seven buck I can get the best bull there is, don't have to worry about his upkeep, and don't have to mess with his ugly temper. "So Flossie, from the time she was in heat, had a calf nine months later, nursed the calf for six months, and then got serviced all over again.

My last inservicing went pretty much like Flossie's. The only difference was that no one had the same clear proof that it took. The teaching staff was herded into a meeting, penned by contract language that said the principal could hold a monthly inservice meeting and teachers must attend. A visiting expert appeared, producing a projector and transparencies from the trunk of his car. He checked to see if we were ready by staging, "Everyone wants to know about Developing Functional Objects in Conjunction with the Warner Basal Series, Group Yellow, don't they?". Then he proceeded to insert an hour and a half of details into us. And in the end, like poor old Flossie, we didn't have much fun. It just happened.

Too often, those in charge of inservice training make decisions for teachers just like the ones Zeke and Grandpop made for Flossie. They decided when to bring us together. They assume that injections of information they select will be helpful to all teachers, regardless of their individual needs. They assume that teachers have too narrow a perspective and that teachers' opinions are not valid. And finally, they assume that a direct and measurable outcome must result from inservice training.

Unfortunately, it's all too easy to subscribe to those assumptions. Intimidated by the lack of control in my teaching environment and convinced by years of higher education that the visiting expert knows best what I need. I have allowed my head to be penned in the stanchion.

Now I want to take charge. I don't want to be mechanically and forcibly inserviced. I want to be the professional I thought I had become when I received my degree. I want to determine my own needs, set my own goals, decide when and how and with whom I'll work toward these goals. I am going to control my own learning.