

How Can We Help Emergency Teachers? _____

A SYMPOSIUM

One of the critical problems in education today springs from the influx of emergency teachers into the profession. By "emergency" teachers, we mean substitute teachers, those with emergency certificates, those who are returning to schools after years out of the profession, and others who would not be teaching if there were no emergency. The profession welcomes these teachers because without them many schools would be forced to close. It is the responsibility of experienced men and women in education to help emergency teachers fit into the school program as quickly and easily as possible. The following statements by representative educators are presented in the hope that they will serve to bring attention to the problems of emergency teachers and to stimulate helpful action in their behalf.

ONE OF THE MOST important responsibilities of the school system employing emergency teachers is that of acquainting them with the philosophy under which the modern school operates. Literature in the field should be made available to them. Copies of statements of philosophy developed by teachers in the school system of which they are now a part should be read and discussed with them.

How the philosophy operates in practice can best be understood by observing master teachers at work. In one school system, planned visiting days with the supervisor have proved helpful. Substitutes were provided for a day or for a few hours during which the emergency teachers visited other teachers at work. If possible, observations were scheduled before the newcomer took over her work. After observing, she was given an opportunity to discuss the teaching, evaluate it, look about the room, and examine materials.

Group meetings and individual conferences to discuss techniques and to become familiar with curriculum materials and with the types of service provided by the school system have been practical and helpful. When the emergency teachers realize that the supervisory staff stands ready to give aid where the needs are greatest, many tensions are removed.

In one school system several emergency teachers have been given an opportunity to participate in summer demonstration schools as assistant teachers. These opportunities have come *after* the teachers have taught for a semester. However, the problems faced by a teacher who has returned to the profession after a long absence tend to make her conscious of her needs, and she has increased sensitiveness to effective procedures and techniques being carried on in the demonstration school.

All of the emergency teachers with whom I have worked have had an eager-

ness and a desire to fit into the present-day program which has compensated for many shortcomings. The problems they have had to face have not been simple but their splendid attitudes have facilitated the process of inducting them.—*Gladys L. Potter, Supervisor, Primary Grades, Long Beach, Calif.*

GREET THE NEW teacher with faith and understanding. How to help a new teacher, whether one with little professional training or one who is returning to the profession after long absence, might best be determined by thoughtful principles of guidance worked out by the supervisor and principal of the school. Such a program might center around the following considerations:

Meet the emergency teacher on her own ground. Work with her closely. Know what she holds to be good teaching. Observe her at work. Evaluate her progress in terms of what she and you believe to be good teaching. Make positive suggestions in order to give the teacher a feeling of security. Give her an opportunity to visit a school situation where desired growth is taking place. That situation may be either formal or informal, depending upon the needs of the individual teacher. Above all, good teaching must be observed.

Before visiting a desirable situation, outline definite points to look for. What kind of environment are the children working in? How does careful planning play a part in the program? How are books beginning to be used? What do the youngsters seem to be learning from the situation? After the visit, discuss with the new teacher how

the methods she has observed may be adopted to her own work.

By helping the emergency teacher to broaden and deepen her experience, you will lead her toward greater understanding and, in time, better teaching. With better teaching, children will give evidence of desired growth. That is our ultimate aim.—*Foy Ingram, Teacher, Laboratory School, State Teachers College, Troy, Ala.*

COOPERATIVE ENTERPRISE offers a firm basis for efficient educational practice. Many emergency teachers are coming to the profession this year to take the places of teachers who have been drawn from their work by the war. Those who have remained on the job will have a heavy responsibility: the responsibility of orientating the emergency teachers.

This job is a difficult one. It requires patience, tolerance, firmness, friendliness, and study. Success requires that both the old teacher and the new one understand thoroughly the job to be done. This in itself is a complicated problem.

Perhaps we can get our lead from the way we help children orientate themselves. A new child enters the group. Every effort is made to help him adjust himself to his new surroundings as soon as possible. This is accomplished through the best efforts of the administration, the teachers, and the pupils. To be done well, it must be carefully planned. In like manner, planned cooperation becomes the most effective means for helping emergency teachers fit into the school environment. The administration and the faculty must orientate the emergency teacher as efficiently and as

quickly as possible. With them lies the responsibility for training the new teacher with a minimum amount of loss to the pupils. A job well done by the experienced teachers will earn for them another star in their crowns of sacrifice and patriotism.—*T. Q. Srygley, Principal, Thomas Jefferson High School, Port Arthur, Tex.*

EDUCATORS and educational institutions have a grave responsibility to teachers re-entering the profession in these critical times. Even more important than teaching the three R's is that teachers shall understand children. The interest and welfare of the child must be the first concern of every teacher. We must help them to so live with children that a real feeling of security and worthwhileness, so necessary to emotional security, will be the result of each child's daily school experience.

Our problem is to find efficient ways of helping returning teachers sense this larger responsibility and to help them better apply the basic principles of good modern education in living democratically with children.

A most successful set-up for accomplishing this is an eight-week course given in one of our large universities. The course was instituted nine years ago as an experiment for in-service teachers. It is housed in a public school and consists of the following:

A group of 150 children, ranging from 3 to 12 years, who, under the guidance of experienced teachers, plan and carry out activities appropriate for each age level.

An Arts and Crafts Workshop where adults and children work with many types of materials.

A group of seventy-five experienced teachers who meet with a director once a week to plan for such learning experiences as lectures, discussion groups, personal conferences, observation in Children's School, excursions, social activities, work in the Arts and Crafts Shop, and library reading. There are no set requirements for the course. The staff, working with the adults, treats them as people who have definite, but individual, needs and problems which need to be met. For many teachers this opportunity to help choose what and how they shall learn is a unique and challenging experience. They, as a class, learn to plan and share together as the children are doing in the demonstration school, thus giving reality to educational theory.

The following quotations taken from teachers' "Reflections" on their summer's work show what such a course means to them: "You practiced what you preached in one of the few courses where class procedure exemplified the theory taught. . . . We were allowed to work under the same conditions which were considered best for children, and I believe they proved equally valuable for adults."

"This course has been a real eye-opener to me, an old school-marm. . . . I feel my responsibility as I never did before. . . . My job is far reaching—much more than the three R's. It is a way of fitting a child for life in a democracy."—*Mary Reese, Classroom Teacher, Harper Elementary School, Wilmette, Ill.*

IN ARKANSAS we estimate that conditions growing out of the war have resulted in the employment of from

2,000 to 3,000 beginning teachers with little or no professional preparation. For the most part, these men and women are teaching in isolated one- and two-room schools.

An in-service program designed to help these teachers perform their duties with some degree of adequacy necessarily had to be a field program and not a campus one. College personnel was not available to perform this work because of the Army and Navy Cadet training programs.

The procedure we were compelled to follow then was: Through a co-operative arrangement with the University of Arkansas and the Arkansas State Teachers College (the two State institutions maintaining extension divisions) and the State Department of Education, a workshop on the graduate level for extension instructors was con-

ducted at the University of Arkansas. The purpose of the workshop was to prepare instructors for conducting in-service courses in the field for beginning teachers. Outstanding school administrators and elementary teachers were selected to participate in this work. During the summer of 1943, such courses were conducted in thirty-five of the seventy-five counties of the State. The approximate enrollment in these courses was 800.

The same procedure has been applied to the field of physical fitness and health. Short, intensive field courses will reach 600 teachers in this work. This field program is financed largely by State appropriation of teachers' license funds.—*T. M. Stinnett, Director, Teacher Education and Certification, State Department of Education, Little Rock, Ark.*



Sketch by Vera Nelson
Courtesy Manitowoc (Wis.) Public Schools

Starting on October 20, forty million Americans will visit our schools to register for War Ration Book IV. This will offer an opportunity to introduce hundreds of new teachers to members of their communities. What plans have you for making this meeting mutually pleasant and helpful?

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