

printed material dealing with various phases of the subject, but it also showed students additional possibilities for integration of learning experiences, on the secondary as well as the college level, through joint responsibility assumed by specialists in various fields.

Experiences Result in Principles

As the result of his experiences with the College Intergroup Study each Trenton State Teachers College student participating in the work adopted the following principles:

- There must be a continuing application of democratic philosophy to all normal relations if we believe in the dignity and worth of human beings.
- Intercultural materials and the philo-

sophy of intergroup relations must be an aspect of *all* experiences and curriculum content and must not be confined to specific courses dealing with the topic.

- To understand is not necessarily to approve. An occasional unit, lecture, assembly speaker, or program of folk dancing, or dramatization of racial differences will not necessarily create respect for any given culture.
- Continuing frustrations, insecurity, and fear are all related to the growth of prejudice.
- To make our country a good place in which to live, we should require pupils to become sensitive to the problems of others, and to feel an obligation to assist in improving our democratic institutions.
- We must have "more than tolerance" if the very existence of our democracy is not to be threatened.

Talking it Over Helps

MARGARET LINDSEY

Too many of the conditions for desirable learning, which we accept, are ignored in the educational programs of the very individuals who are expected to accomplish them in their work with children. The use of the conference as a means of personal and professional guidance is a practice gaining favor in colleges at the present time. Margaret Lindsey, instructor in education, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, gives suggestions on learning how to know the prospective teacher as a person and as an individual.

IT WAS FIVE MINUTES past four. Nancy, a beginning student teacher, and Miss White, her supervisor, had exchanged greetings and were seated in their classroom.

"You have a 5:10 class this evening, don't you Nancy?"

"Yes, I do."

"Why don't we go and have some tea while we have our conference?"

"Oh, I'd like to. I get so hungry before I can have dinner at seven."

When they were seated at the table, Miss White opened the conversation.

"I had the most interesting letter from my mother this morning. My father died just a year ago, and mother has made a remarkable adjustment. She was telling about the last day she spent at the church with the Ladies Aid. It's been a life-saver for her. She goes one day a week. They quilt all day and really have a grand time. Mother loves being with people, and it's so good for her. It's quite a joke in our family—the Ladies Aid and their Tuesdays together."

"Oh, I'm so sorry about your father. I lost mine when I was thirteen, but in a different way. Mother divorced him."

"That's too bad. Do you see him often?"

"No, I haven't seen him in months. We just don't get along."

"Is he located here?"

"Yes, he's a lawyer—and a good one. At least, they say he's good."

"Does your mother work, or keep house?"

"Mother never did work until about three months ago when she decided she might as well because she had nothing else to do. You see, I have a younger brother who just graduated from high school this past year. He's at Ohio State now, so Mother doesn't really need to stay at home any longer."

"What profession is your brother interested in?"

"Well, he and my father get along just swell. Dad wants him to be a lawyer and I guess he's going to try it."

"Does your brother see your father often?"

"Yes, Dad was married just four months after the divorce and they live near here. I've met his wife, but what he sees in her I don't know. Dad's always been good to us in one way. We've always had everything we wanted and gone everywhere we wished and he's sending us through college."

"I have a brother who went to Ohio State, too. He's the youngest of my three brothers."

"And, are you the youngest, or do you have sisters?"

"I've one sister, older than I."

"I envy you having such a nice big family."

"Yes, we always had such good times while we were all at home."

"Jack and I never did get along. He liked Dad and was on his side. I liked Mother and was on hers."

The foregoing is an account of about one-fifth of a conference. It was the supervisor's first conference with Nancy after her teaching placement had been made and she had begun to participate in the teaching situation. Upon analysis, it is apparent that during this brief chat, the supervisor was able to make these hypotheses and generalizations concerning Nancy:

Nancy had considerable social poise. Her mother and father were divorced when she was thirteen. Nancy and her father did not now and never did get along well together. There was financial security in the home—the mother had not worked in spite of having been divorced for ten years. There was a younger brother, nine when the divorce took place, now nineteen. The mother did stay at home and care for the children. There was conflict for the children—father and brother paired off, and

Nancy and mother clung to each other. There might have been considerable parental conflict before the divorce.

The supervisor recorded this information immediately upon leaving Nancy and was eager to add to it as their contacts increased in number and kind.

FREQUENT OCCASIONS FOR CONFERENCES

The conference with Nancy illustrates only one type which it would be desirable to employ throughout the four- or five-year period of pre-service education of a teacher. Such a conference would, in fact, have much less than full value were it not one of a long series of conferences held on various occasions.

The conferences in this series would be of two types: first, those dealing with problems that have been found to

be almost universal with prospective teachers, and second, those that meet the unique needs of individual students. Some conferences of the first type may well be group conferences and others individual.

Since not all students need the same kind and amount of guidance, it would be folly to plan in advance a set program of conferences. However, it is desirable to have in mind the various occasions in the career of a prospective teacher when there is special need or opportunity for them. These occasions seem to be as follows: the recruitment of students; the period of orientation; registration periods; student experiences in observation, participation, and student teaching; placement; and follow-up.

Get Them Interested

The scope of a good teacher-education program is now not only deepened and broadened during the four or five years of formal college work, but it is lengthened to include contacts with students before they enter and after they leave college.

In a certain small college in Pennsylvania a recruitment person is employed on a full-time basis. The function of this position is to make follow-up contacts after students have indicated an interest in the program of the college. The typical follow-up procedure by this recruiting officer includes conferences with high-school students, high-school teachers and principals, community representatives, and parents. Such conferences are held in high schools, in homes, and on the college campus.

The purpose is twofold: to acquaint the students and their parents with the college program and to gather information which will later facilitate the selection of students. In many cases, the recruiting officer arranges still other conferences with teachers and students on the campus, or with alumni in service.

Put Them at Ease

One of the first obligations of teachers when dealing with children who are entering the public schools for the first time, is helping them to develop an "at home" and a "belonging" feeling. This obligation should be no less important on the part of those dealing with students when they first become a part of a college environment. Many teachers colleges now have elaborate orientation programs to accomplish this purpose.

One method for avoiding such weaknesses in orientation programs is that of conferring with students. It is important at this time that every student feel that he has at least one person on a college staff to whom he may take problems as they arise in his living and working. It is likewise important that from this period on, a student be known by a faculty person who will take a personal interest in him and follow him through his college career. Many colleges are now using the advisor-advisee system so that each freshman has an advisor whose job is to help him in any way possible during the period of orientation. The point being made here is that such advisors should continue their close contact with advisees in frequent conferences throughout the four or five years in college.

Help Them Plan

While the tendency in teacher-education programs at the present time is in the direction of prescribed curriculums, there still are opportunities for planning and selecting courses to be pursued by a student at a given time. A group of college students ostensibly following the same curriculum, present no less an array of individual differences than do a group of ten-year-olds in an elementary school. If these differences are to be cared for, some provision must be made for students to have guidance from time to time in planning their programs.

Certain individuals on a college staff become important resources in this particular aspect of the guidance of students. If the individual conference is to be used effectively during the registration period it would seem reasonable that many persons should be available to help the student's advisor, the registrar, the deans, the heads of departments, and the coordinator of the teacher education program. As in the case of the orientation program, these persons should follow through on the guidance they give to students.

Increase Direct Experiences

In the program that is built on two years of general education and two or three years of professional education, students will likely begin their direct contacts with children and community organizations during their junior year. In schools where programs are built so that general and professional education are integrated and proceed simultaneously, students will have firsthand experiences with children throughout the entire college program. It would seem

that at no time are conferences more important than when students are engaging in observation of children, participation in school and community programs, and in student teaching.

Throughout the development of deeper and broader firsthand experiences with children and their community, conferences are crucial. The kinds of help which may be given prospective teachers at such a time include the following:

1. Checking generalizations which are the result of research in child growth and development.
2. Studying children at given levels of development and drawing hypotheses.
3. Studying an individual child intensively, verifying the importance of and giving reality to such concepts as that of the "whole child."
4. Studying materials for children, observing and experimenting with their use.
5. Studying and participating in planning experiences for and with children.
6. Checking theory in practice.
7. Analyzing the society of which a particular group of children are a part.

Certain members of the college staff should be well equipped to give the help indicated in the foregoing list: *the critic*¹ (laboratory-school teacher) because of his understanding of children in general and of a particular group of children, his current experience in developing materials and planning with children, and his close contact with students working with him; college teachers; specialists in human growth and development; supervisors of student teaching; and labora-

¹ Although the term critic teacher has an undesirable connotation, it is so commonly employed and so well understood that it is used throughout this article to denote the laboratory school teacher who is responsible for direct and continuous guidance of a prospective teacher engaged in student teaching.

tory-school principals—each with his special background and current experiences.

If such personnel is used wisely to care for the common and the unique needs of prospective teachers, the resulting conferences will be varied in kind and procedure. The variety that is possible is indicated in the following list of persons who might compose a conference group:

‡ Critic, student—Critic, student, supervisor—Critic, student, parent—Critic, student, child—Critic, student, school staff—Critic, student, committee.

‡ Critic, student, community person—Critic, student, college teacher—Critic, student, specialist—Critic, supervisor—Critic, supervisor, college teacher—Critic, supervisor, specialist.

‡ Supervisor, student—Supervisor, college teacher—Supervisor, specialist.

‡ Supervisor, all student teachers—Supervisor, all students, all critics—Supervisor, all students, all critics, all specialists—Supervisor, all students, college teachers—Supervisor, all students, community representatives.

Such conferences should be planned as the need emerges with the student or students or as those responsible for the development of students sense a need which may or may not be felt by the students. This makes it imperative that there be effective coordination and cooperation among all those contributing to the development of prospective teachers.

Maintain the Personal Touch

The interest in and the concern for the welfare of students should not end with the completion of their college program. The staff of a teachers college has much to gain in the selective placement and follow-up of its graduates.

Similarly, public education has much to gain from the contact with pre-service educational institutions. To insure best results from this reciprocal relationship all parties in the enterprise must cooperate in the launching of beginning teachers and in-service educational program of all teachers.

While lectures, summer-school courses, extension courses, professional literature, teachers meetings, institutes, and professional organizations all contribute to the improvement of teachers in service, it remains true that the most effective method is that of individual and small group conferences based on the individual immediate needs of teachers, and the use of human and material resources to meet those needs. The teachers college must begin to accept more of the responsibility for planning and participating in such in-service educational procedures. Not only will the teachers in service be helped thereby, but the teachers-college program for prospective teachers will ultimately be improved to meet better the needs of its students.

PRINCIPLES REMAIN CONSTANT

Regardless of the kind of conference, the number of people involved, or their status, certain principles of conferring remain constant.

Promote Mutual Understanding

For years, emphasis has been placed on human relationships in all cooperative enterprises. The emphasis, however, has in too many instances been one-sided. Teachers must know the backgrounds and current problems of their students in order to build good working relationships with them; supervisors must understand teachers; the

supervisor of student teachers must understand them as persons. But this is not enough. Mutual understanding, in operation, means that those in positions of leadership must be willing to give of themselves and their backgrounds so that those with whom they work can likewise have a basis for understanding them as persons. Witness Nancy and Miss White's conversation.

Encourage Flexibility

Because it is impossible to predict the number, length, and subject of conferences, it is necessary to maintain a program flexible enough to permit conferences at unexpected times. Conferences should run in length to the satisfaction of the participants and discussions should be centered on the needs of the students. The staff member and the student each should have the privilege of initiating a conference. Sometimes conferences should "just happen."

It would seem desirable if those persons who are closely related to the student would find it possible to have regular scheduled times for conferences and to maintain an "open door" policy at other times. This provides definite time for a critic, a supervisor, or any other staff member, as well as the student, to meet and discuss their problems. Likewise, it makes it possible for these same people to take care of needs as they emerge.

Provide Pleasant Environment

The physical conditions under which conferences are held are important for at least two reasons: (1) because they often condition human relationships; and (2) because materials must be at hand to facilitate the best results.

The best physical atmosphere for a conference is that of a regular conference room or office, which has been arranged and beautified to be pleasant and comfortable. If there is only one desk in such a room, it is desirable that the desk does not form a barrier to effective working together. Certain conferences, on the other hand, may be better held in a more informal setting.

Plan and Follow Through

Purpose is intrinsic in the conference when it is based on needs. The more immediate the need for those involved, the more real the purpose and the more valuable the conference. The purpose of the conference will vary according to the occasion that prompted it and the personnel of the conference group.

Some conferences need special preparation but all conferences need some preparation. There are times when it will be profitable for the person requesting the conference to indicate in advance to other participants the purpose he has in mind. In such cases, preparation might involve the careful observation of a particular aspect of the teaching-learning situation, or intensive study of records and behavior of certain children, or careful analysis of certain curriculum materials. At other times, reflection on the experience which gave rise to the conference constitutes the preparation for it.

Since the learning process is continuous and since like or similar situations recur in the experiences of prospective teachers, some follow-up of conferences based on needs is automatic. It is not enough, however, to let follow-up be a matter of chance. There should be careful and continuous check on the

changed behavior that it is hoped will result from conferences. This in many instances will be inherent in the process of discovering needs for further conferring.

Keep a Log

For a number of reasons it is helpful for all those participating in conferences to keep adequate and accurate records. Such records serve as instruments to be used in checking the completeness of past experiences and in planning future experiences with students.

In all cases, records of conferences should become a part of a larger project. For the student, his record of a conference can well become a part of a "professional diary" in which he keeps a full account of all of his experiences related to working with a group of children. For the staff member, the con-

ference record should be part of an accumulated file on the student. It is important in all conference situations that necessary records be available for immediate use and that they be used freely.

Where conferences have been used liberally by those working with prospective teachers the results have been satisfying. The need now is for more and better conferences of all kinds with many staff members and all students. Toward this end programs of staff people will have to be planned so that each member has free time to devote to personal and small group conferences; staff members will have to take personal interest in students; and all college personnel will need to develop better techniques of conferring and to work for a more wholesome emotional tone in all staff-student relationships.

The Individual—or the Masses?

IRWIN A. HAMMER

That general education is an integral part of a good professional program if teachers are to be community citizens and competent human beings, as well as specialists in their particular vocations, is stressed by Irwin A. Hammer, chairman, Department of Education and Psychology, Western College of Education at Bellingham, Wash. and formerly coordinator of instruction, and head, Department of Education, State Teachers College, Troy, Ala. Mr. Hammer describes some aspects of the Troy program which contributed to the general education emphasis in the Freshman year.

THE AMERICAN schools and colleges have begun to feel the heart-throbs of a movement that is revolutionary and yet peculiarly American. This movement is directed toward a larger recognition of

the individual and the social realities of his efforts to cope with his immediate problems of living. The college freshman comes to grips, in a very real way, with these problems but he usually finds

Copyright © 1946 by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. All rights reserved.