

When Teachers Leave the Campus

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In too many instances teachers' colleges and colleges of education have seen their responsibilities as affecting only the pre-service education of teachers. More and more these institutions are taking responsibility for in-service programs as well. William T. Gruhn, professor of education at the University of Connecticut, Storrs, describes the follow-up program in practice with graduates there.

COMMENCEMENT DAY, in most of the teacher education institutions, brings to an abrupt close the responsibility of the institution for the student's professional future. He has been *trained* for four long years. His preparation has included, as a rule, some work in his teaching fields and in professional studies and some practical contacts with school situations. He is now ready, it is assumed, to launch out on his own and to succeed as a teacher in the schools of the country.

That this is the prevalent practice, all informed persons will agree. Yet it is in direct conflict with both the teachings of common sense and the thinking of many leaders in teacher education today. The responsibility of the teacher education institution is a four-fold one—the selection of candidates for the

profession, the education of teachers for the profession, the placement of teachers, and the follow-up of teachers in service to help them succeed. Except in a few institutions, the fourth of these responsibilities has been seriously neglected in the teacher education programs throughout the country.

THE PLAN FOR GRADUATES

At the University of Connecticut a serious effort has been made, for a number of years, to carry on a systematic program of follow-up activities to help teachers succeed in their first year or two in the profession. For teachers of home economics and vocational agriculture this program of follow-up, like in many other institutions, is of long standing. It is believed, however, that the institution should also assist teachers of



English, social studies, mathematics, science, and other subjects to make the adjustment to their first teaching position. Consequently, follow-up activities have been carried on for teachers in all subject areas since 1942.

Assistance Is Promised

The basis for follow-up in the Connecticut program is laid before the student graduates from the University. They are informed that faculty members, particularly those who supervised their student teaching, are interested in helping them succeed during their first year or two of teaching. Employing superintendents and principals are also informed that the University faculty is concerned with the success of its graduates. As a result both the beginning teacher and the employing school authorities look forward to follow-up activities on the part of the University faculty.

About the middle of August a letter is written to every graduate who has been placed, wishing him success in his first teaching position. With the letter is sent a booklet prepared by a faculty member entitled *Your First Job*, which gives suggestions on how to meet numerous responsibilities and problems the beginning teacher is likely to encounter early in the year. During the middle of October the beginning teachers are invited to return to the campus for a Saturday morning conference. There is no formal program—no lectures, panels, or reports. The teachers just talk, sharing their problems and asking for suggestions from the rest of the group. This year it is planned to have several conferences—the second one in December or January, and the third in the spring.

Frequent Visits Reassure

Follow-up visits are made by the faculty members beginning early in the year. In most cases each teacher is visited three times—in the fall, the winter, and the spring. For those teachers who encounter serious difficulties, more visits are made. These visits include classroom observation and conferences with the teacher. Beginning teachers are also encouraged to visit faculty members on the campus on Saturday morning. Such visits are very common.

After the first year the follow-up activities are continued, but on a less formal basis. If a representative of the University is in the neighborhood of a school where one of our graduates is teaching, a visit is usually arranged. Ordinarily most teachers receive at least one such visit during the second year, and less frequent ones thereafter. It is the policy, however, to keep in touch with the graduates by correspondence and otherwise as long as they teach in the state.

THESE NEEDED US

The nature of the follow-up activities at the University of Connecticut may be understood better if a number of actual cases are presented. These cases are typical of those which are encountered frequently.

Answering an S.O.S.

Jane Adams, for instance, began her first year of teaching in a city high school which drew a major part of its student body from low income homes. There were, therefore, an unusually large number of problem pupils in the school. To make the situation more difficult for Jane, she was assigned only the

average and low IQ groups, the better groups going to the experienced teachers and her teaching load was heavier than that of the experienced teachers in the school.

Jane was an exceptionally capable young woman, but she was a "worrier." By the end of the first month of school she was so overwhelmed by the difficulty of her load that she became very nervous and upset. Immediately after the opening of the school term she had written to her University supervisor about her situation. Although suggestions were given to help her, it soon became obvious that it might seriously affect her health to continue in the position. Consequently, she resigned.

After a rest of a couple of weeks the University supervisor placed Jane in another school where the situation was a fairly easy one. Visits were made and she was assisted in making the adjustment to the new situation and in avoiding some of her previous errors. She completed the year successfully and was retained as a permanent member of the staff. Now in her second year of teaching, her superintendent and principal consider her an unusually strong and resourceful teacher.

Jane Adams, after her unpleasant experience in the first school, definitely intended to enter some other vocation. Because she was an exceptionally good teaching prospect, this would have been a loss to the profession and undesirable for her. The follow-up activities helped her make the adjustment in her new location and were instrumental in retaining her in the profession.

Applying Theory Isn't Easy

Ellen Baker is typical of many begin-

ners since her chief problem was concerned with classroom management and discipline. She was an excellent student at the University, both in her subject major and in her professional education courses. But she had difficulty applying what she had learned in her methods courses to classroom management problems in a practical school situation. Her problem was so serious that it was doubtful whether she could finish the first year. A University supervisor visited her about once a month during that first year, and her principal also observed classes frequently. The supervisor and principal formulated a series of suggestions to help her improve. With this help Ellen's classroom organization improved sufficiently so that she developed into a satisfactory teacher.

Personalities Sometimes Clash

Betty Clark was a capable beginning teacher as far as classroom performance was concerned, but she did not get along well with the principal. She had little confidence in his ability. Her attitude was, in part, justified because this was his first administrative position. The principal, in turn, was annoyed by the attitude of the teacher, feeling that she was too critical and uncooperative. The University supervisor, in this case, devoted most of his attention, in conferences with Betty, to a discussion of her working relations with the principal. Fortunately, she had sufficient confidence in the supervisor to tell him frankly how she felt. Some progress was made in helping her gain a better understanding of the problems faced by the principal in his first administrative position and develop a more cooperative attitude toward him.

On the Job Adjustment

Steve Johnson was prepared as a teacher of English but obtained a position in a small high school where much of his schedule consisted of the social studies. Although he had had some University courses in history and the social studies, his preparation both in subject matter and methods was inadequate for effective work. The University supervisor concentrated his efforts in this case in helping him develop a background for the teaching of the social studies. He sent the new teacher bibliographies of materials for both teacher and pupils, suggested sources of supplementary materials, and helped him with planning and organizing his work. Frequent observation of his classes, conferences at the school, and conferences with the supervisor at the University on Saturdays were some of the means employed to help Steve. The effectiveness of his work as a social studies teacher showed considerable improvement.

A Methods Course in Action

Louise Evans began her professional career in a small high school where she taught seven classes daily with six different preparations. She also had a homeroom group with a daily period of thirty minutes for homeroom activities and guidance. She assisted with lunchroom supervision during the noon hour and was a Girl Scout leader for a local troop after school. On Sundays she played the organ in a local church and taught a Sunday School class. Her comment to the University supervisor on his first visit was, "The preparation of teaching plans and the planning of

worthwhile pupil activities are fine in theory—but on the job you do well to teach from the textbook from one day to the next."

Louise's reaction to what students are taught in methods courses is typical of the beginning teacher in the small high school. There is much that can be done, however, to arrange one's work so that effective planning may be done. For instance, it was suggested to Louise that she begin by having a well-developed plan for at least one of her seven classes, shifting this emphasis from one group to another. Each class would, therefore, have one or more well-prepared teaching experiences during the year. Furthermore, numerous short cuts in the preparation of teaching plans were suggested, most of them leading to the implementation of good teaching theory with some effectiveness. With this help Louise was able to avoid assignments that required pupils merely "to read the next ten pages," and to apply in a difficult situation much of what she had learned in methods courses at the University.

EVERYONE BENEFITS FROM FOLLOW-UPS

These cases are typical of those which have been encountered in the follow-up program at the University of Connecticut. In most instances there has been considerable evidence of growth in the effectiveness of the teacher as a result of the follow-up activities. The favorable reaction of the beginning teacher and his principal toward the program is further evidence of its desirability. Experience with this follow-up work has been so satisfactory that it is now an established part of the teacher education program.

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