

Follow-Up of Beginning Teachers— A Team Responsibility

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A fifth year of college preparation and a well-planned follow-up program of guidance and help in the classroom make induction into teaching a creative professional experience in the state-wide program described in this article.

PREPARATION for teaching does not end when a student leaves college after his academic training and becomes a classroom teacher in a school district. His initial teaching experience can be a part of his preparation and can provide clues for planning further college study. A new program of teacher education recently instituted in the State of Washington recognizes this. In this program the first year of teaching, and in some cases the first three or four years of teaching, becomes an integral part of a teacher's basic preparation.

Actually there are three distinct

phases of this new teacher certification pattern. After four years of professional study in one of the state's fourteen institutions of higher learning engaged in teacher education, a student is granted a provisional certificate. This Provisional General Certificate marks completion of the first phase of his preparation and certifies him for teaching at all public school levels. His undergraduate courses were so arranged that he had had course work and laboratory experiences at the various levels of public education with special emphasis on one level. At least one year of teaching is required of the provi-

sional teacher before he completes his fifth year of college study. This initial teaching experience becomes a second phase of preparation for his teaching career. The additional year of college study, which constitutes the third phase of the program, carries no requirements for specific courses to be taken. The individual teacher and his advisors select those courses which they believe will improve his competency as a teacher. Upon completion of his fifth college year, he is granted a Standard General Certificate authorizing him to teach in the public schools of the State of Washington on a continuing basis as long as he remains in active teaching.

The presence in Washington's schools in 1952 and 1953 of a large number of beginning teachers who had received the Provisional General Certificate has given educators an opportunity to weld themselves into a stronger educational team. During their beginning experience the teachers have an opportunity to analyze their abilities and interests. They can determine the areas of their work in which they need to strengthen themselves and which their college preparation did not cover. Through this analysis they can choose courses during the fifth college year that will help them overcome existing weaknesses and strengthen their potentialities for eventual success as teachers.

A beginning teacher has responsibility for mapping his future academic efforts with the guidance of the other members of his educational team. The college of his undergraduate days is responsible for following him into his school district, especially during his initial year of teaching. His school administrators, experienced fellow teach-

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ers and county superintendent also are members of his team. He needs the best supervision that can be provided during the first year. Planning a follow-up program becomes a great necessity in this situation and requires close cooperation among all members of the educational team.

Colleges Give Assistance

All the teacher education institutions have continued their long established practice of responding to requests of school administrators and supervisors for assistance in their work with beginning teachers. They also, as in the past, have requested reports from school administrators on the progress of their graduates in their school experience. Many of the colleges have increased their efforts to visit beginning teachers in school districts. Many also have developed report forms or questionnaires for their beginning teachers so that college advisors can be kept informed during the course of the year of their progress and thinking regarding future college study. In organizing personal visits to beginning teachers the colleges are attempting increasingly to make arrangements in advance for situations in which visiting college staff members can talk with administrators and advisors as well as with beginning teachers. In many instances, joint conferences of all members of the educational team have been possible.

Several of the teacher education in-

stitutions have formed follow-up teams composed of two persons—one member being from the professional education staff and one from a subject matter field. This arrangement has made it possible for a greater number of the faculty members to participate in the program and has promoted a closer friendship and greater understanding between the college faculty in teacher education and the academic fields. When the colleges have completed visits with all their graduates, conferences have been held on the various campuses to evaluate the follow-up program and to consider its significance for general program planning of summer sessions as well as for evaluating strengths and weaknesses of the pre-service program.

One of the colleges has developed an extensive interview questionnaire which is used in a joint conference of all members of the educational team during the follow-up visit. The questionnaire or schedule is designed to assist people in the follow-up conference to cover all important points relating to the student's orientation into the school district, supervisory practices of the school district in assisting the new teacher and also in helping him evaluate his progress and plan his future educational program.

Each of the beginning teachers is expected to have initial planning for the fifth college year completed by the late spring months of his first year of teaching. He is urged to keep a folder of pertinent information concerning his teaching experience so that this information can be used in the planning. Final plans for the fifth year result through frequent consultations with his school administrators, supervisors and

fellow teachers and through discussions with his college advisors. An effort has been made to have evaluation of progress and all planning result from joint efforts of all members of the educational team. To facilitate the follow-up process, the State Superintendent of Public Instruction has furnished the colleges with a list of all beginning teachers which indicates their school locations and teaching assignments.

Attendance at Regional Meetings

During the past year eleven regional meetings were held throughout the State of Washington which were attended by most of the beginning teachers, their school administrators, representatives from teacher education institutions, county superintendents of schools, and staff members from the office of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction. The meetings were organized by the county superintendents of schools with committees of school administrators and beginning teachers in their counties.

Participation of teachers and administrators in these meetings was encouraged to secure as much reaction as possible on the nature of the experience that beginning teachers were having, the problems that presented themselves, ways in which teachers were experiencing most success, the extent of orientation and guidance procedures of the school districts and the thinking of the new teachers on individual needs that had become apparent from the first year of teaching. Together, in friendly and informal situations, the team members of Washington's teacher education program were able to share

ideas and make suggestions for improving the program.

In each of these regional meetings time was allotted for beginning teachers to meet with their college advisors. This was necessary because many of the colleges had had to limit their visits to individual or district requests for assistance. The regional meetings made it possible for advisors to visit more graduates than had been possible previously. With these opportunities for personal conferences with their graduates, college advisors have been able to reassess and reorganize their follow-up practices in light of the new teacher education program and the added responsibilities that this has placed upon them in the fifth college year.

At least once a year, representatives of the fourteen teacher education institutions in the State gather for two days of conference on different phases of the education program. Time is devoted at these meetings to the exchange of experiences and discussion of future plans in connection with the follow-up program. Ideas are shared on ways of organizing the follow-up program so that it can be conducted as efficiently as possible in terms of time of college personnel and available funds.

The entrance of these beginning teachers in the school districts of the State of Washington has given school districts an opportunity to examine their orientation procedures and their guidance and supervision programs for new staff members. School administrators and experienced teachers have responded eagerly to the opportunities provided by the new program and have extended their efforts in giving assistance to new teachers in their beginning

days of teaching and in their planning for an additional year of college study.

Although this is a new program and many improvements are yet to be made, results thus far have been heartening. The program has provided a great opportunity for experimentation by colleges and school districts in improving the teacher education program. This experimentation is possible in an atmosphere of freedom from excessive controls and direction.

Another worth-while result of the program thus far has been the development of a closer working relationship among the colleges and between the colleges and the school districts. College faculty members have been able to broaden their insights concerning education at the school district level. It has been possible for them to examine their teacher education programs with a greater knowledge of the needs and interests of their students. In school districts a greater concern and interest has grown among administrators and experienced teachers in the problems of the beginning teachers. As the focal point of the educational team, beginning teachers have been able to secure more help and guidance during their initial efforts in classrooms.

Educators in the State of Washington are aware of the responsibilities that are placed upon them in their new program for the basic preparation of teachers. They recognize that during the years ahead members of the educational team will need to be especially diligent in their efforts to make the first year of teaching a "truly educational experience" and to perfect their ways of working with teachers for continued professional growth.

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