

Teaching may be compared to driving an automobile. If the car has plenty of gasoline and a good battery and the mechanism for igniting the gasoline vapor, the engine will purr happily and the automobile will travel under its own process of internal combustion. The driver guides its course according to his own ability and wisdom. But if there is no gasoline, no spark, no internal driving power, the driver has little choice but to push or be towed—a laborious, exasper-

ating and often a totally unnecessary hardship.

Children and young people not only respond to effective leadership in the classroom—they seek it, they are eager for it. At all developmental levels, from kindergarten through college, the teacher is best remembered who, by virtue of the kind of person he is, reveals worth-while goals to be sought, effective ways to achieve these, and an over-all zest for living in the process.

MARJORIE KINGSLEY

Helping the Student Become a Teacher

What is the room teacher's contribution in helping the student teacher become a competent, confident member of the teaching profession?

HOW DID you feel, the very first time you entered the classroom in which you did your practice teaching? Do you recall that hollowness in the pit of your stomach, the general feeling of uncertainty about the situation into which you were moving and your ability to operate in it? How suddenly all the courses you had taken and the preparations you had made for this day seemed of little consequence? Did you feel woefully inadequate in the face of a whole new world about which you had read a great deal and which you had observed a little? Although you were thrilled to be actually embarking on this most important step in becoming a teacher, did you, down underneath, have a sneaking desire to

gather up your belongings and bolt? As you stepped into that first classroom teaching experience, you probably took with you a very mixed set of feelings.

A little later, remember too how you felt, as you tried various plans with the youngsters? The situations looked so well organized in the hands of the room teacher but simply disintegrated when you tried them. You seriously wondered if you were capable of learning to teach. Some of the youngsters were impudent, some weren't learning a *thing*, and you were *so* tired at the end of each day. And then there was the day when things went better, no one was sassy, a discussion went well, and you had been blessed with a shy smile from a youngster who

had theretofore been very uncommunicative. That day your pendulum swung high and your confidence with it. Life was a series of ups and downs, but the ups became more frequent as you had an opportunity to work things through with the children.

Remembering these feelings, let us think through the means by which a room teacher can help a student grow into a competent, confident teacher. Two main ways are considered here: first, the room teacher sets examples for the student teacher through his attitudes toward all aspects of the teaching profession; second, the room teacher provides the student teacher with opportunities to try his wings in all possible areas.

Through Attitudes

The room teacher sets examples through his attitudes. There are a number of areas in which a teacher's attitudes may have a considerable effect on the student. The first and possibly most crucial attitude of the teacher is that which he exhibits toward the student teacher. The student gets his first real picture of himself in the role of a teacher through the eyes of his room teacher. By the same token that children acquire a self-image through the eyes of important adults, so does the student acquire his "teacher" self-image through the eyes of his room teacher. The student teacher goes into the situation with a generalized picture of a "teacher." The room teacher has the responsibility of translating that generalized picture into a specific picture through precept and example. It is imperative that the student teacher be accepted and welcomed as a peer, with potential as a

teacher and with a unique contribution to make to this particular situation and group of children. The student's being accepted in this fashion will set a pattern for him in his dealings with others, both peers and children.

Another very important attitude is expressed in the room teacher's feelings about children and their learnings. Does the room teacher have an awareness of the individual differences among children—emotionally, intellectually, physically? Does he really believe that youngsters learn by different means and at different speeds and that this is all right? Does he then set both expectations and tasks accordingly?

What kinds of feelings does the room teacher have about *parents*?² Does he genuinely appreciate the help that parents can be in working out youngsters' problems? Is he sympathetic with and understanding of those parents who have problems themselves and thereby unintentionally contribute to their children's problems? A student teacher very quickly becomes aware of these feelings, expressed directly or by implication, and tends to acquire and reflect these same feelings.

A teacher's peer relationships give the student another clue in putting together the parts of the "becoming-a-teacher" puzzle. A student soon learns to reflect the ethical pattern exhibited by his room teacher. That teacher who is scrupulously ethical about his peers rarely finds unethical comments cropping out in his student teacher. A free give and take of ideas among the teachers in the building is another demonstration of healthy peer relations. Does the room teacher willingly give solicited information or help to others? Does he occasionally have an unsolicited recommendation to make and can he make it in a way that is easily

MARJORIE KINGSLEY is a teacher in the Fairhaven Junior High School, Bellingham, Washington. ♣

accepted by others? Does he receive ideas graciously and incorporate these when it is reasonable to do so? Every act of this kind makes the student teacher more able to respond in a like fashion himself.

Another area of considerable import is that of the teacher's attitude toward the school administration. A room teacher who respects his administrator and shows it by his actions sets the student teacher an example he may well carry with him his entire professional life. A cooperative teacher who feels free and knows how to make constructive criticism of situations lays before the student a desirable pattern for tackling problems.

A room teacher's evaluation of the contributions of the non-certificated personnel in the building is quickly apparent to the student. Observance of practices in the classroom which can lighten the work of the custodian indicates an appreciation of his work in making the school a pleasant place in which to be. Care in getting in reports and lists to the secretary when these are due indicates an awareness of that individual's job in the smooth functioning of the school. Similar considerations apply to the cooks, the delivery people, the dishwasher, the bus drivers—to all who contribute to the school's operation. These considerations say more clearly than words that all these persons are important and essential to the well-being of the entire institution, a learning most important to a beginning teacher.

What is the room teacher's attitude toward the formal curriculum pattern of the school or district? Does he work within the basic requirements, making adaptations where he deems these advisable for the best development of the children in his care? Does he feel free, after intelligent consideration of some part of

the pattern, to raise questions or make recommendations for changes which might well lead to improvement? In the college classes, student teachers learn how to evaluate pupil achievement. They can best learn how to adapt the curriculum to the developmental status of the learner in the actual teaching-learning situation. The room teacher's belief that the needs of the learner are more important than the curriculum itself needs to be communicated to the student teacher.

Attitudes toward specific school regulations and rules are developed during the course of the student teaching experience. A room teacher can easily show, by implication and application, the idea that the rules are for everyone. If some rule needs changing, that change comes about as the result of group consideration and not through non-observance by a single teacher or group of youngsters. Certainly this is an essential in teaching and a premise of our democratic way of life.

A room teacher can help a student teacher build an excellent foundation in the matter of participation in professional groups. One of the simplest ways is merely to have the student observe the room teacher's activities in connection with the various groups. The student might well be invited to attend several meetings with the room teacher—perhaps the local NEA organization or ACE, as well as a state or regional meeting of ASCD or conferences in special areas. Care needs to be taken that the student realize the objectives toward which professional groups work.

What is the room teacher's attitude toward his continued professional growth? Does he attend extension classes or summer school out of a real desire to do a better job of teaching? Does he do it for his own personal growth and satisfaction? Is it more than another step on the

salary schedule? A room teacher's attitude toward professional growth will be implicit in the kinds of comments he makes to the student teacher.

Finally, how does the room teacher view himself as a person in his role as a teacher? Does he feel that the job he does is important and that he can and does make a contribution to youngsters? His awareness of his strengths and weaknesses and his actions in line with that awareness will help the student teacher be more realistic about and accepting of his own assets and liabilities.

Through Actual Experience

The room teacher provides the student opportunities to try things out. Along with the pattern of attitudes shown by the room teacher must come opportunities for the student teacher to try out many kinds of things with youngsters. Just as we all learn things by doing them, a student teacher learns to teach by teaching. A room teacher has the responsibility of watching for the time when the student is ready for a given experience and of making available the opportunity for that experience. The student has the right to try, to evaluate, to try again, and re-evaluate. The more realistic opportunities the student has to work with children in a classroom, the greater growth is possible. He can really learn only those things which he has the opportunity to experience.

During the term, the room teacher will have made possible the gradual induction of the student into all aspects of the teaching program. Toward the end of a given term of working with a group of children, the student who has demonstrated his capacity to do so has an abso-

lute right to work independently with children. The period of time should be long enough to demonstrate to both student and room teacher the fact that the student is emotionally and intellectually capable of doing the job of teaching youngsters. If at all possible, this means carrying the responsibility of planning (assisted by the room teacher) and executing the planning with the room teacher out of the classroom. The student needs to know beyond a doubt that he has enough of the tools to plan and carry out a lesson, to evaluate it, and to make further plans. He also needs to know that he is able to acquire additional knowledge, tools and skills to meet the all-day, all-year task of teaching. Only then can he be judged ready to assume such responsibilities as a regularly certificated teacher without the immediate guidance of a room teacher.

How does a room teacher best serve as a part of the "becoming-a-teacher" puzzle? First, he recalls how it felt to be a student teacher. He considers his attitudes and feelings toward the student teacher, children and their learnings, parents, peers, the school administration, the non-certificated personnel, the curriculum pattern, school regulations and rules, professional groups, professional growth and finally, toward himself. Secondly, he makes adequate provision for the student teacher to do all the things with children that would come within the responsibilities of a regular classroom teacher.

The room teacher makes a contribution to himself, to the individual student teacher, and to the profession as a whole, when he assumes the responsibility of working with a student teacher.

Copyright © 1956 by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. All rights reserved.