

Students prepare to teach by presenting significant problems to be solved.

Edward J. Gordon

Yale's Summer Practice Teaching Program

OF ALL the problems associated with a graduate program for preparing secondary school teachers, none is more difficult than that of practice teaching. As an attempt at a solution, the Yale Master of Arts in Teaching Program put its practice teaching in the summer, after the students' year of graduate study, in a school created for the purpose.

Given the design of our program, there seemed to be no other way of handling it. The Yale Master of Arts in Teaching Program admits 50 students a year. They take three full year courses in their subject matter field: English, for example; in addition, one full course in the philosophy and history of education, and a half course in educational psychology. During the summer, while they do practice teaching, they also take a course in methods of teaching their particular subject. The exceptions to the last statement are the modern language teachers who begin their methods course during the first half of the graduate year and, dur-

ing the second half, combine this with conversation with native speakers of the language they intend to teach.

Objectives

The fact that our students have to fit a broad range of courses into the regular graduate schedule gives them no opportunity for clearing their mornings for teaching. And since nearly all of our graduate courses are year-long seminars of about 15 people, cutting classes will put a student hopelessly behind. After years of experimenting with various plans, we decided that we can not free our students during the academic year for a suitable period of practice teaching. The best we can do is to work at observation periods in different types of schools.

For these reasons we inaugurated last summer a Yale-North Haven Summer School, to strengthen our practice teaching program. We felt that if we could get the whole operation under one roof, a nearby high school, we could eliminate the customary weaknesses of such a program. First, we could pick our own master teachers. We would no longer

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be dependent on a system of going from school to school to find places where some teacher would volunteer to take on an intern. Second, we could control the subject matter and methods. The university would no longer find itself teaching an approach to French or mathematics teaching, and then having to put its student-teachers with people who used different methods. Third, we could supply intensive supervision. By having someone constantly working with the student on lesson planning and teaching, we would eliminate the fumbling efforts usually associated with the beginning teacher.

Our first problem was to attract high school students and to set up courses that would interest them and would not overlap with the traditional subject matter of their own schools.

On the basis of two news articles announcing the school, 400 students signed up and about 200 were turned away since we had no room for them. The group represented 59 different schools and grades 7-12. We took them in order of application, and had students who read at third grade level and many who had already been admitted to colleges.

Each was required to take, during a four-period day, four courses, choosing from: English, history, mathematics, biology, physics, chemistry, Spanish, typing, art, instrumental music (beginners and advanced), choral music, and music appreciation. The student paid a fee of twenty-five dollars. None of the classes received academic credit, and no grades were given.

Here, then, was the challenge. A mass of students of all abilities, coming to summer school of their own free will and able to walk out at any time. An educational philosophy had to be made to work.

Courses Offered

Our first assumption was that we would offer a solid bit of academic work. We would teach concretely enough so that those who think only concretely, one of the characteristics of low ability, could achieve some learning.

We gave courses in mathematics on three levels: beginning, intermediate and advanced. Our materials were the mimeographed booklets put together by the School Mathematics Study Group, working at Yale under Professor Edward Begle, evolving a high school mathematics program. In French we offered a similar pattern. Our methods were those developed during the war: listen, speak, read then write. They are directly contradictory to those used in most American high schools, where the emphasis is on grammatical structure and then reading. Our materials were those being worked out in Glastonbury, Connecticut, under the National Defense Education Act.

In history we centered on short periods of time and taught for depth. For seventh graders, for example, we taught the westward movement in American history. Biographies, travel books and histories of the times replaced the usual single text, loaded with generalities and abstractions. We were allowing for individual differences and were teaching something of the methods of the historian. We wanted the students to have the important understanding that one's general statements depend on what facts are available and how one masses those facts.

Our oldest students in history centered their work on the Golden Age of Greece. Here, rather than attempt the overly broad reaches of Ancient History, we could show one nation acting out its own

way of life and dominated by an idea of individual dignity which has been so important to the Western world—an idea we are in great danger of forgetting.

In music, to take one further and somewhat different offering, we had three interns working under an Associate Professor from the Yale School of Music. These teachers organized a choral group, a 60-piece orchestra, a beginning group of instrumentalists, a 15-piece jazz band, and a series of music appreciation classes. Each group met one period a day. The jazz band stayed after school to practice.

A further, exciting development was the use of 12 electric Wurlitzer pianos in one classroom with one teacher. By using electric keyboards and earphones, each student could listen to himself play, but there was no noise apparent to any observer. The teacher sat at his own master keyboard and could tune in, through master controls, on each piano in turn. He could listen to a student, talk to him, and demonstrate a piece for him. The procedure was much like that used in a modern language laboratory.

Only beginners were allowed to take this course, but over four daily periods we were able to teach almost 50 students. A feature of our final music assembly was that a few of the best played for the whole school.

Resources Available

This is enough to suggest our curriculum. To carry it out, we began by buying a good many pamphlets and paper-covered books. Since the North Haven High School had a fine library, we also hired the librarian who worked with our interns in setting out tables covered with books and organized by courses. She said later that she had never seen

high school students read so much. One reason was that the interns paraded their classes to the library and saw that each person had a book suited to his ability and interest.

For teachers we used about 50 Master of Arts in Teaching candidates working in teams of two or three under 17 master teachers; the latter were mainly from public high schools and were brought together from as far off as California, Arizona, and from nearer places.

The teachers worked in groups of one master teacher to three interns. Each master teacher was assigned to supervise three classes in a four period day; the actual teaching was done by the interns. Each intern began teaching one class a day while the others in his group watched. As the summer went on, large classes were broken into smaller groups so that in some periods all three interns might be teaching.

Supervision, however, extended beyond mere watching. Each intern, before he taught, had to justify his lesson plan to his group by answering: What concept are you planning to teach? Can you reduce it to a sentence or two? What questions or problems will you put to the class? What do you expect them to learn? What evidence will you have that they did learn? After the lesson ended, the group sat down to an evaluation session. The general pattern, then, was: preparation, teaching, and evaluation. These sessions often ran through a luncheon meeting, and often the group met at night or over weekends for planning.

To be brief, we were putting practice teaching on a par with football practice. Careful explanations of the job to be done, then the demonstration, and finally the evaluation of whether it got done. When the job was not well done, the intern tried it again. The method does

not produce exceptional teachers in the relatively brief time available, but it does produce people who, we hope, will always ask the right questions of whatever they do during the rest of their teaching career. We want teachers to have a vision of what good teaching can be and who will agonize over failures to communicate their ideas. We begin, of course, and this is very important, with people who have ideas.

Evaluation of Program

Since we gave no marks, we had none of the usual holds on the high school students. Motivation was an important problem; knowing the students was another. We had many for whom school had represented one defeat after another. We tried to give some successful experience every day to each person in a class. We set general problems that each could solve in his own way. Each pupil wrote a paper every day, and this we marked, especially for what was good. We tried to make each person value himself. We made special efforts to search out those overly quiet people, of whom there are so many, who have learned that keeping their mouths shut is the best way to face the challenge of a hostile environment. Our Yale students tried to be friendly with them, to find out and encourage their interests.

Each intern was asked to "adopt" five students whom he would watch especially carefully. He would talk with them, when he could, before school; he would watch where they sat in class and what their reaction was to people and to books. Each intern was given a series of questions which he should be able to answer about his five students; among the questions were: What is the student's ability to learn? What measures do you

have of his ability? What is his attitude toward his fellow students? toward teachers? Do emotional problems, including boredom, interfere with his learning? What kind of family does he come from? What do you think is his family's attitude toward school? What hobbies does he have? How good a reader is he? What does he read? Can he express his thoughts in writing? What is his attitude toward school? Does he speak up in class? Does his relationship to his peers affect his learning?

The beginning teachers were asked to take at least one day and to follow at least one student from class to class—to see how he reacted to different types of situations. The ordinary teacher in an academic year has to get to know more people, but he will not get to know most of them well. We wanted our beginners to find out that one teaches better as he gets to know his students better.

As further help to our interns we held a Parents' Night and turned up an audience of 500 people. We had a brief program explaining the purposes and mechanics of our school, and then turned the parents over to their children's teachers.

The administration of the school was a divided responsibility; Dr. Thomas Aquila, Principal of the North Haven High School, was also the Principal of our summer school. He took on the usual tasks of organizing and running the school. The master teachers and interns were the responsibility of Edward Gordon, Director of the Yale Office of Teacher Training. An assistant handled absences, discipline, and visitors. Both Aquila and Gordon spent most of their time visiting class after class, seeing that the work of preparation, teaching and evaluation was being well done.

(Continued on page 246)

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physical education, music, and art. How have they done it? Have they been pressured? Do they show the strain of their schedule? Sometimes I wish they did—it might calm their high spirits.

The children from kindergarten to eighth grade are certain that their school is the best in the world. They pour in every morning as if to a celebration—and how about their teacher? How have I adapted myself to a school situation wholly new in concept? To a group of parents bound together in a religion not my own? To a program that compresses the public school curriculum into half-time? To a school year in which we celebrate Channukah instead of Christmas, Passover instead of Easter?

First of all, I have discovered that the Jewish parents with whom I work are remarkably important people, in their interest in their children, their outspoken affection and appreciation of their children's teachers, their generosity and their zest for work. My own experience has been deepened and broadened by

the knowledge and understanding I have gained of their great religion and history. Just think what it means to one who has always rejoiced in holidays to celebrate now Rosh Hashana, Succoth, Channukah, Purim at school, as well as Christmas and Easter at home. Each of the Jewish holidays, new to me just a few years ago, has brought me its meaning, its special songs and forms of greeting, its traditions, symbols and ceremonies.

And so, I have kept on sweeping with the wind and appreciating the importance of people. I have also, each day, tried to teach as if my very life depended upon it. I have kept on learning, too—learning that theories and testing programs are necessary, but that there are many enticements to learning. Blithe spirits, driving purpose, difficult goals and zest for hard work under the guidance of understanding teachers are leading these Jewish children with their double load steadfastly and happily on their way.

Have I forgotten to say that I think children are the most important people in the world?

—ELSIE W. ADAMS, *Principal, English Division, Hillel Academy, Denver, Col.*

Practice Teaching Program

(Continued from page 212)

What we learned was that good lesson planning was the major bridge to teaching for the well-prepared, able graduate of a liberal arts college. As a person managed that art, he became a good teacher. So our major tasks in teacher preparation, during the past summer, were to teach our candidates to respect the minds and hearts of children, and to learn how to present these children with exciting, worthwhile problems to be solved.

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