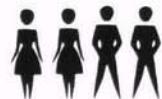


# TEAMING: INNOVATION IN TEACHER



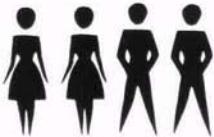
**T**O DAY thoughtful educators in universities and public schools are expressing concerns about teacher education. How often has the first-year teacher stated with considerable feeling, "Those methods courses! They didn't mean a thing to me. If they had only told me about . . ."? How often has the experienced teacher said of the first-year teacher, "The poor thing! She knows all the theory, but what she doesn't know about the children!" How frequently has the principal asked, "You don't know how to operate the projector?" or, "I know the children are hard to control but you can't resign in the middle of the year! What did they teach you in college?" How often has the college professor lamented, "If only we could bridge the gap between modern conceptions of teaching and classroom practice."

Such questions and comments point to a dilemma in teacher education programs—how to provide the proper balance between on-the-job teaching experience and the educational theory upon which enlightened teaching practice is based. How meaningful can an undergraduate course in methods of teaching reading be to someone who has never taught a reading lesson to children?

How effectively can the new teacher relate to 35 youngsters in a self-contained classroom—or to 135 youngsters in a team teaching situation—if his prior experience with pupils has been limited to observation of children and to reading about children in child development or educational psychology textbooks?

How can the prospective teacher gain even a modestly competent understanding of effective usage of common instructional equipment if he has not incorporated such media in classroom teaching? How can he be effective in various teaching roles involving other teachers or support personnel, for example, the school psychologist, nurse, art and music teacher, visiting teacher, science-math specialist, and teacher aide, unless he has actually worked with such people in a variety of educational contexts? How can the novice teacher be expected to assume the professional responsibility and ethical practice of his profession without having spent considerable time in an elementary school classroom?

Obviously (and it has been obvious for years) the knowledge, skills, competence, and attitudes possessed by good teachers are



# EDUCATION

**MARLIN L. LANGUIS \***  
**LORREN L. STULL**  
**JAMES E. KERBER**

gained through a combination of study and practical experience over a period of years. It is unreasonable to expect beginning teachers, regardless of their program of preparation, to possess the competence of their more experienced colleagues. Yet is it unreasonable to expect a higher degree of competence than is generally found in new graduates of teacher preparation programs? We believe not.

It is *not* unreasonable to expect beginning teachers to perform adequately in the classroom—to present adequate lessons in each content area for which they assume responsibility, to reflect in their relationships with children a functional understanding of children's problems, concerns, interests, and the life-style indigenous to the community served by the school, to make efficient use of instructional materials, to relate as appropriate to the needs of the children the resources available from various types of

\* Marlin L. Languis, Associate Professor; Lorren L. Stull, Associate Professor; James E. Kerber, Assistant Professor; all of the Faculty of Early and Middle Childhood Education, College of Education, The Ohio State University, Columbus

teacher teams and from support personnel, and to reflect in all of their actions a reasonably realistic understanding of the role of the teacher.

That beginning teachers do not perform at a high level in the areas described here may be attributed to many factors influencing the quality and nature of their preparatory program. For example, lack of adequate funds, inadequate supervision of in-school experiences, and failure to articulate on-campus and in-school experiences all weaken teacher education programs. Of primary importance, however, is the fact that the student teaching experience usually follows the sequence of methods courses, is restricted to one school in a single type of community, and provides only haphazardly for the student teacher's need for extensive and intensive self-evaluation.

Further compounding the difficulty is the fact that the responsibility for teacher preparation has remained largely in the hands of college and university faculties. The practicing professionals, the classroom teacher and the building principal—the people who know and can tell "how it is"—have not been permitted to assume, or have declined to assume, truly meaningful roles in the design and actualization of high quality programs of teacher preparation.

## An Innovative Program

Recognizing the above factors, the innovative two-year teacher education program described in the following paragraphs has been designed jointly by members of The Early and Middle Childhood Education Faculty of The Ohio State University's College of Education and by elementary classroom teachers, principals, and administrative staff members from the Columbus (Ohio) Public Schools. The program, known as the Middle Elementary Teaching Team (METT) program, began during the autumn of 1968 and is jointly sponsored and supported by university and public school faculties.

While consideration of the factors just described served as a catalyst for the METT program, the objectives of the program go

beyond concern for the elementary teacher's day-to-day operation within the classroom. They encompass a conception of a teacher's professional life-style in the emerging modern elementary school. The objectives of the METT program are defined behaviorally.

Graduating participants should be able to:

1. Select teaching positions in communities in which they are reasonably confident of survival
2. Sustain effective and productive relationships with other professionals and paraprofessionals in the teaching milieu
3. Demonstrate reasonable proficiency in assuming a variety of teaching roles
4. Adapt to professional role changes with a minimum of stress
5. Display capacity for effective self-evaluation, self-determination, and self-actualization.

The keynote of the program is teamwork. Public school teachers, principals, and supervisory personnel, together with university faculty, meet regularly and function as a clinical teacher education team, sharing responsibility for the design, guidance, implementation, and evaluation of the program. Specifically, the clinical team (including the public school personnel) assumes responsibility for final selection of program participants, directs on-campus instruction of the participants, shares responsibility for student teaching opportunities, and joins the participants in an evaluation workshop at the close of the first year of the program.

The 24 program participants also operate in teams. Each of the six four-member teams includes one student with special interest and strength in each of the four major areas of the elementary school curriculum: science and mathematics, language arts, social studies, and art-music-physical education. At the end of the first academic quarter of the program, the participants (juniors in the College of Education) formed teams as the culminating activity of an orientation and screening seminar in which they were enrolled.

To prepare participants for the team

selection, they were required to work in trial teams given the responsibility for planning, preparing, teaching, and evaluating lessons. Teaching aspects of these activities were carried out in inner-city and outer-city classrooms of Columbus elementary schools.

The inner-city, outer-city component of the program will continue until the participants' graduation in June of 1970. During the winter and spring quarters of the first year of the program, three of the teams are assigned to student teaching in fourth, fifth, and sixth grade classrooms of an inner-city school (Hamilton Avenue Elementary School). The remaining three teams are given comparable assignments in an outer-city school (Cedarwood Elementary School). During the autumn and winter quarters of the second year the student teaching assignments will be reversed, that is, a team assigned to an inner-city classroom during the first year will be assigned to an outer-city classroom during the second year and vice versa. Participants will teach half days during each of these four quarters.

## **Teaming**

The student teaming aspect of the program is intended to serve several purposes:

1. Because each team member possesses an academic area of comparative strength, the teaming affords him the opportunity to provide leadership for other team members and to serve as a resource person for the team. It follows that this arrangement affords each participant the opportunity to play supportive roles as well.
2. However, at times each member is responsible for teaching the class in each area of the elementary school curriculum. Although student teams frequently share responsibility for instruction, on other occasions the instruction is provided by one or two team members. At those times the team member teaches in the manner of the self-contained classroom teacher.
3. Therefore team members are regularly freed to give their attention to related concerns of classroom instruction such as planning and evaluation and to other METT experiences. Of particular interest is the study of influences outside the classroom which affect the child's

school performance, specifically a child's family, home, and community.<sup>1</sup>

4. Teaming enables participants to develop skill in using a variety of resources and to develop additional competence in all areas of the elementary school curriculum. These competencies are developed as team members interact with one another.

5. Placing four participants with the clinical classroom-teacher reduces considerably the pupil-teacher ratio and thus provides time and opportunity for the participants to develop techniques of working with individuals and small groups of children. These techniques are equally important for the self-contained classroom teacher and the team teacher. However, they frequently are not developed when the student teacher is placed alone in the classroom and must spend most of his time in managing and teaching the entire class.

6. Reduction of the pupil-teacher ratio should result in improved pupil achievement and adjustment.

Obviously the concept of the teaching team in the METT program differs considerably from many team teaching arrangements throughout the country today in which team teaching is nearly synonymous with departmentalization. The METT teaming organization by contrast serves the broad purpose of developing each participant's competence to work effectively in any of a variety of ways (see objectives 2, 3, and 4).

The usual methods courses in teacher preparation programs are replaced in the METT program by practicums. These on-campus experiences are scheduled during the four successive quarters of classroom teach-

<sup>1</sup> Each METT participant will make a study of this nature in both the inner-city and outer-city environment. These experiences, in conjunction with the total METT program design, should enable each participant to make a realistic decision concerning the type of school setting in which he can best function. This may create some difficulty for school administrators because the participant can be expected to request assignments to particular types of schools, but the difficulty should be offset by better teaching and less disenchantment during the participants' early years of teaching.

ing and represent the basic areas of the elementary school curriculum. The practicum experiences are built around the ongoing classroom teaching. Classroom curricular materials and approaches to teaching are identified and developed, field-tested in the inner- and outer-city classrooms, and then evaluated in subsequent practicum sessions.

As mentioned earlier, the clinical classroom teachers are involved in the practicums. Working with university faculty, the classroom teachers share responsibility in planning, instructing, and evaluating the practicums. The classroom teachers also coordinate and evaluate in the classrooms the tryout of various teaching techniques considered in the practicums.

A process approach to evaluation is emphasized throughout the METT program. METT participants' proficiency in teacher behavior analysis is developed in a practicum early in the program. Through the use of portable video-tape equipment, METT teams periodically record their classroom teaching. Ongoing evaluation of the teaching is carried out through critiques: (a) by the METT team peer group acting as teacher behavior analysts; (b) in large-group evaluation discussions in the practicums; and (c) in individual conferences guided by the clinical teacher education team.

The METT program is a development project employing a variety of techniques for continuous evaluation of the total program. Data collected will be used to make modifications in design or procedure within the framework of the broad objectives of the program. An evaluation workshop at the end of the first year of the project will provide additional input for program modification. During the final quarter of the program a "capstone seminar" is planned for purposes of debriefing the participants and evaluating the program in terms of its broad objectives. A five year follow-up study of the participants after graduation is envisioned. □

Copyright © 1969 by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. All rights reserved.