THOSE involved in the preparation of teachers have long been aware of a need to revamp this process. With the end of the teaching shortage and the current economic situation, taxpayers are taking a hard look at what they are getting in education for their tax dollar. Moreover, all signs (such as free schools, student riots, apathy) indicate that many pupils are being turned off by the curriculum and methods used in numerous schools throughout the nation. It is essential, therefore, that we produce teachers who are humanistically oriented and of a quality never matched before.

To develop this type of teachers, the Faculty of Education at the State University College at New Paltz believes it important to work on an intimate basis with public schools. Selected public schools are to become clinical centers, where future teachers may be trained by college professors and key public school faculty members who would become, in essence, clinical professors. The values inherent in such a relationship are many and, indeed, the connection should be a symbiotic one with benefits accruing to the college faculty, future teachers, public school faculty, and the students. Professors of education bring to this relationship a theoretical framework from which all intelligent action must proceed, a broad vision which stems from years of experience and from viewing education from different angles, and a desire to use the school as a laboratory to train teachers and develop ideas. In short, one might say that college faculty members must connect their theories with the real world if they are to be relevant.

Public school personnel are on the “firing line.” They view things in a practical way. Many teachers are seeking solutions to the problems they face. At conferences and in graduate courses one sees an avidity for solutions to the problems of teaching reading, slow learners, or the use of innovations such as simulations, open education, and team teaching. Because teaching is often an isolated act, teachers find themselves needing to rethink what they are doing to prevent a hardening of the professional arteries. With these thoughts in mind, Mario Fantini, Dean of the Faculty of Education at New Paltz, and Kenneth R. Depree, Superintendent of Schools of Hyde Park, New York, felt that a close working relationship between the college and the public schools which, in part, the former institution was established to serve would be extremely beneficial. This paper is a description of what has occurred during the past year.

An Ongoing Process

It is one thing for a superintendent of schools and a dean of education to agree on something, and quite another matter to secure the involvement of their respective faculties. The team members from New Paltz were aware that they would be, as Dean Fantini put it, “invading the culture of the school.” In the initial meetings with the faculty of Haviland Junior High School (the school which was selected to be the pilot clinical center), Dean Fantini stressed the fact that both institutions would assist each other. There would be periodic evaluations of the relationship, at which time either part-

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ner could declare the union dissolved. Nevertheless, there were feelings of apprehension on the part of the respective college and junior high school faculties. It takes time, patience, and working together to cause such fears to vanish.

Many meetings were held with New Paltz faculty members, Haviland teachers, Haviland students, and parent groups. A team from New Paltz worked with Haviland teachers in identifying three areas of concern: overcrowding, discipline, and program development. Overcrowding is quite severe, and it was decided to have the school go on split session for the beginning of the next school year. This arrangement allowed for pre- and post-session planning time, which is essential for program development. The approximately 15 youngsters who were causing teachers considerable difficulty were carefully counseled into individually tailored programs.

In order to set the stage for a positive working relationship between the school and college, and to make Haviland teachers aware of some of the potential resources they could tap from the university, several educators made contact with Haviland. Professors from the elementary and secondary education departments met with Haviland’s academic teachers to identify curriculum concerns. A professor of educational administration was assigned to aid the school in developing a schedule for the following year. College students and professors from Africa, India, and Japan gave lectures at the junior high school. A noted environmentalist discussed the population-resource balance with student groups, and an anthropologist brought an American Indian to speak to the American history classes. The enrichment was greatly appreciated. By the end of the semester, evidences of warm feelings were noted. Moreover, the climate in the school changed from one in which routine was the order of the day to one in which teachers were eagerly looking for ways to innovate.

One should not enter a school-university relationship with fixed ideas. Rather, one undergoes a process out of which educationally sound ideas will emerge. These will be educationally sound because they will represent the ideas of those who will be involved in implementing them as they jointly hammer them out. To effectuate this process, the faculty at Haviland Junior High School

* Joseph Eulie, Chairman, Department of Secondary Education, State University College at New Paltz, New York; and Frank Gray, Assistant Superintendent for Instruction, Hyde Park Central School District 1, Hyde Park, New York
elected members to a Planning Committee to serve as a communications link between themselves and the team from New Paltz.

The teachers and professors would seek answers to questions about the emerging relationship with the university and its implications for program development consistent with the varied teaching styles of the Haviland staff and learning styles of the junior high student. During summer sessions the planning group has attempted to provide a framework for enabling teachers to begin their work in the fall and establish a basis for raising their own questions. As the planning process proceeds, community members and students will become more deeply involved.

The seventh and eighth grade teachers have formed interdisciplinary teams on each level. Four teachers (English, social studies, math, and science) will teach approximately 120 students. In all there will be eight team-family groups. The Planning Committee raised several questions concerning team-family groups. Would they be set up merely for team planning, partial team teaching, or would subject matter lines be deliberated? Would there be a team leader? How may special service teachers and administrators best serve the needs of the teaching teams? These issues have not been completely resolved to date. But New Paltz faculty members will be assisting the planning process.

**New Resources**

Some of the other areas explored by the group have been the use of the pre- and post-session planning periods, common team planning periods, the function of the library, a remedial resource center, discipline, guidance, and mechanisms for solving and raising problems.

The Planning Committee has devoted considerable time to the Instructional Enrichment period provided all seventh and eighth grade classes each day. It was immediately decided that this would not be used as a study period. Instead, it is to serve the following purposes:

1. Provide remedial and enrichment help for those diagnosed
2. Provide time for extracurricular activities such as stamp collecting, coin collecting, photography, arts and crafts
3. Provide group guidance. The Planning Committee felt the guidance department spends too much time in clerical work and working with students on an individual basis. The role of the guidance counselor must change. A teacher is also a guidance counselor, and the function of the expert is to help him perform this duty better. Testing and group guidance (dealing with self-image, concerns youngsters have with parents, siblings, peers, and life in general; and vocational aspirations) are to be handled during this period. Serious individual problems will be given to the guidance personnel and school psychologist.

To cope with overcrowding and, more important, to deal with those who are alienated by school, high priority was given to the planning for an alternative school. Next year will be devoted to the development of this school, the selection of a coordinator (or head teacher), and the attraction of faculty, parents, and students.

The Faculty of Education at New Paltz has much to gain from the relationship. Many educators believe it is essential for freshmen who aspire to a career in teaching to have opportunities for early experience with young children and adolescents. In this way they can discover whether teaching is for them. College faculty and Haviland teachers will be able to make judgments concerning a college student’s ability to work with youngsters.

Those manifestly unfit for teaching will be counseled out. No longer will students wait until they take practice teaching in their senior year to discover that they really do not...
like teaching, at which time they feel they have invested too much to stop. We will have fewer student teachers, but the quality will be improved. Moreover, those who participate in this experience will find their education courses more relevant. Performance-based criteria for middle/junior high school personnel can be developed cooperatively by college and public school personnel at an early entrance level.5

Providing freshmen with an opportunity to work in a school is fraught with promise and peril. To work well it must be carefully planned; otherwise the college student can stand about, learn nothing, and serve only to interfere with the educational process. The college professor must develop a questionnaire to ascertain the strengths his students have. Some may play instruments, have hobbies, have traveled, or have been to camp where they acquired interesting skills. Knowing this can help the schools make full use of these students, for junior high school should provide youngsters with a rich curriculum which will help them explore the world and develop interests. A college student with a knowledge of photography or arts and crafts can be an invaluable asset to junior high school students.

These students can also help with tutoring although they may require assistance from college and public school faculty members to do this. An orientation meeting is essential to enable the college supervisor and the classroom teachers to plan experiences and explore possible problems. The college professor also holds seminars with his students to help them with their concerns and to bring meaning to the process.

There are other areas of institutional cooperation planned for:

1. Developing orientation sessions to aid the faculty to understand the potentials of team-family groups
2. Assistance with reading
3. Development of minicourses
4. Helping individualize instruction in heterogeneous groups
5. In-service courses to deal with such topics as behavioral objectives
6. Offering graduate courses at Haviland Junior High School
7. Having Haviland faculty assist in teaching courses in education
8. Applying for government and foundation grants to develop innovative programs
9. Workshops on innovations in education which will be offered starting this spring.

Where will we go from here? At this point we cannot answer this, because we are in an evolving process. One thing is certain, however, and that is that neither the faculty nor the students of our respective institutions will be the same as a result of our collaborative efforts to improve the education our students receive.


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On Early Learning:
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