

Teacher Preparation: A Shared Responsibility

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THE curriculum for teacher preparation programs usually has reflected the college's philosophy, certification requirements, accrediting association requirements, and requirements of the state board of education. Often the public school system, the largest employer, has had little voice in content or methods. Of course, the prime responsibility must rest with the college, as it is not practical for the institution to be entirely controlled by a local school system.

George Peabody College recently evolved a cooperative elementary teacher preparation program with the Nashville Metropolitan Public Schools. The program is at Cora Howe Elementary School in Nashville, Tennessee. Metro acts as a representative voice in the undergraduate elementary teacher preparation program. Students are encouraged to view the situation to gain a realistic understanding of what they may find when they are employed.

Representatives from Peabody and Metro collaborated in designing the school's facilities and have continued their collaboration, planning curriculum and staffing patterns toward the implementation of a pre-service and in-service teacher development center. Metro's relationship to the Peabody

program has changed to include input for the preservice program, while Peabody faculty and students have left the confines of the campus and are working cooperatively on real, day-to-day school matters. Often, such an involvement is nearly impossible because of the poor relationship between the college and the public school system. Realizing personal need and mutual benefit, Peabody and Metro are working together to increase positive relationships.

Three-Phase Program

Peabody is developing a three-phase in-school program for the preparation of elementary teachers. The first phase encompasses a foundations of education course which meets at Cora Howe School. During this semester the students serve as teacher aides at all levels and in all areas, including junior and senior high school. The students see the relationship between the historical and philosophical foundations about which they have been reading and daily school ac-

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tivities. Teachers at Cora Howe, with the course instructor, plan activities for these students which allow the students to see and participate in various teacher roles—instructor, prescriber, evaluator, friend, materials maker. The Phase 1 students and their instructor meet together for discussion of student activities and implications for their future role in education. All of these activities help to provide the students with a basis for a career choice and give the college faculty opportunities to observe, guide, and influence change in student behavior.

During the second phase of the program, students in methods courses have practicals at Cora Howe. These experiences are more closely allied with the particular subjects and related areas than in Phase 1. For example, students in reading methods courses have experiences in language arts classes in addition to reading classes. Peabody methods course instructors meet with Cora Howe faculty members to discuss objectives, expectations, and appropriate activities.

The third phase of the program encompasses the traditional student teaching semester, but it is more than that. By this time the students are able to assume full teaching



Peabody students serve as teacher aides while enrolled in a foundations in education course.

responsibilities and to become members of the teaching team. School faculty members assist the student teachers through weekly observations, conferences, planning sessions, and ongoing evaluation. In weekly seminars coordinated by a college faculty member, students are encouraged to synthesize and evaluate their experiences.

Several shifts in role have occurred as a result of this program. The school is suggesting content and experiences for the teacher preparation program and is providing facilities, instructional materials, and personnel to implement the suggestions. For example, Metro encourages each school to plan the curriculum to reflect new, individualized approaches and would like teachers new to the system to be familiar with individualized approaches and to be flexible and open to change. The curriculum at Cora Howe is an individualized approach with teacher-directed, small group instruction. The faculty is organized in a cooperative staffing pattern with two aides for each team. Phase 3 students are assigned to the team



The cooperative teacher preparation program involves undergraduates in realistic school situations.

rather than to individual teachers, thus eliminating a singular role model. The students become functioning members of the team and use the school's instructional resources as well as most supplies. Each certified teacher on the team has scheduled conferences with each Phase 3 student at least once a week. The Phase 3 students also participate in the daily team planning sessions.

Sharing Responsibility

The Cora Howe faculty has assumed a greater responsibility for the evaluation of the college students. For Phase 1 students, the faculty is consulted by the college instructor for a resulting formal evaluation, which is sent to the student's college advisor for use in advising and screening in the teacher education program. Phase 2 students are evaluated by the faculty according to the instructor's request. Phase 3 students are formally evaluated, and a copy of this evaluation as well as a recommendation concerning



School faculty members schedule conferences with each student teacher.



Students become functioning members of the teaching team.

certification are inserted in the student's placement file.

The college supervisor's role has shifted to include consultant to the school, liaison between the Cora Howe faculty and the faculty of the Department of Education, and coordinator of all three phases. The supervisor (Peabody Program Coordinator) is assigned to the school on a full-time basis and maintains an office there. She heads a staff of Peabody instructors assigned to the Cora Howe program and works with the instructors of the various methods courses which have their practica at Cora Howe.

The program coordinator still assumes the traditional responsibility of representing the college in evaluating student teachers; but her role, although supervisory in nature, has expanded. She knows the school setting, faculty, curriculum, and instructional materials; therefore, she can truly be in a helping relationship with the teacher candidates. Cora Howe has a curriculum coordinator, and the Peabody program coordinator works closely with her in planning, implementing, and evaluating curriculum changes. This cooperative effort places the Peabody program coordinator in an in-service program

role also, since she has the opportunity to work directly with Metro teachers.

As a result of the direct involvement with the school, the college students are learning professional responsibility early in their career preparation. Because these students are depended upon, they learn to be dependable at Cora Howe; they learn the necessity for accurate, confidential records; they learn to be fair and impartial. One may well say that professional ethics become realistic experience rather than dry, textbook explanations.

What has been the reaction to the program? The Cora Howe faculty is appreciative of the extra help and is conscientious in planning for the college students. The Peabody faculty feels that observable behavior provides a valid basis for advising, refining, and practicing new skills, and strengthening learned skills. The college supervisor no longer wastes time in travel.



Classroom activities enable undergraduates to evaluate their career choice.



College students learn professional responsibility early in their career preparation.

By spending full time at the school and by better knowing the school's program, the supervisor can facilitate the students' learning experiences and provide continuous formal and informal supervision. The emphasis on doing, the opportunity for career choice, and the personal interaction with adults and children in an educational setting are parts of the program that the college students find most beneficial. For its part, Peabody is so pleased with the results of the program that plans are under way to involve additional public schools, and Metro welcomes the increased involvement.

With the concept of a preservice and in-service development center, teacher preparation becomes a continuous process, with the public schools taking their rightful place in preservice programming, while the college is involved in a viable, on-the-job in-service program, though not in the traditional campus-bound way. College faculty members are involved in the instructional program of the schools, and the public school faculty is involved in the previously exclusive domain of the college. The college is not abrogating but rather sharing the responsibility it has for teacher preparation. □

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