

# University-Based Teacher Aides

JOHN C. REYNOLDS, JR.\*

**M**OST educators agree that the introductory course in education is a very crucial one in the development of prospective teachers. This is the first opportunity for the student to observe and evaluate professional education courses. What the student carries away from this course is important in terms of his self-concept, his continued interest in education, and his attitudes toward professional education in general.

Student feedback on course evaluation forms across the country usually reveals that students feel and report a lack of relevance, a lack of practicality, and a hazy grasp of the relationship between theory and practice in the classroom. Attempts at improving teacher education courses usually call for more, better, and earlier field experience for the prospective teachers. This article describes a recently introduced program for teacher aides at the University of Georgia.

A cooperative effort between the University of Georgia and the Clarke County School District, beginning in the fall quarter of 1971, provides an introductory education course for secondary students with emphasis on field experiences. This course is designed to provide a practical field experience for those students who elected to take the course. A regular introductory course with an emphasis on history, philosophy, counseling, and general education topics is also offered.

Nine sections of the field course, approximately 180 students, took the course in the two secondary schools in Clarke County.

During the academic year, the teacher aides spend a total of ten hours per week in the introductory course. Each teacher aide spends two hours on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday in the school, two hours on Thursday devoted to a human relations seminar, and two hours on Friday in a seminar. Each high school has the services of a full-time teacher aide coordinator from the university who supervises the aides and works closely with the teachers utilizing the aides.

The first two weeks of the course are conducted in the university classroom with the goal of preparing the teacher aides, most of whom are sophomores and juniors, for their many tasks as teacher aides. Some of these tasks may include: working with and assisting small groups and/or individual students; assisting with classroom roll, records, and reports; assisting with clerical work such as checking homework, objective tests, and workbooks; preparing teaching materials; conversing with teachers and other staff members concerning their respective professional roles; and, when directed by teachers,

\* John C. Reynolds, Jr., Assistant Professor, Professional Laboratory Experiences, University of Georgia, Athens

the gathering of available data which may be used to improve teacher understanding of students, students' understanding of the curriculum, and other action research activities.

Essentially, the teacher aide program has two purposes: to provide assistance for participating teachers and to provide an introductory work experience for prospective teachers. The sophomores and juniors in the program represent many subject areas. The course provides the opportunity for students to gain knowledge and understanding of the teacher's role and to appraise themselves and their aspirations in terms of the demands of that role. Because of this, some teacher candidates may decide not to become teachers. Other teacher aides may find reinforcement for their decision to be a teacher.

## Objectives of the Program

The six objectives of the University of Georgia teacher aide program follow:

1. Provide live working experiences with the what, when, and how of dealing with students in a classroom setting, under the guidance of the supervising teacher
2. Provide housekeeping and clerical experiences which will help each prospective teacher become acquainted with and come to understand objective demands made upon the teacher
3. Provide opportunities to render assistance successfully to individual students who have specific needs which the supervising teacher believes the aide can help satisfy
4. Provide opportunities for the aide to learn to function as a member of a differentiated teaching staff and to learn how a teacher aide can be effectively utilized
5. To enable the prospective teacher to learn about himself and to identify his needs and how he goes about satisfying them as he works with teachers and students; a type of self-appraisal vital in his consideration of teaching as a career
6. To provide assistance to the teacher and the school.

Were these objectives of the university-based teacher aide program accomplished?

Several comments randomly selected from teacher aides, teachers, and administrators provide a subjective evaluation of the course. These comments follow:

*Teacher*—"My aide has helped me spot some problems which I was having with various students."

*Teacher*—"I think the aide should get his 'feet wet' by making short presentations to the class."

*Administrator*—"We especially need an aide in French I because of the emphasis on small group work."

*Aide*—"I am in favor of this type of introductory course in education because of the realistic situations."

*Teacher*—"I like to see the aide take some initiative and get involved in the discussion."

*Teacher*—"The male teacher aides in our special education course have been able to get through to students we haven't been able to work with before."

*Aide*—"I believe that, next to actual student teaching, this course offers the most practical and helpful experiences which a student can gain from an education course."

*Administrator*—"Teacher aides don't place as much pressure on supervising teachers as student teachers do; therefore, we find it easier to place teacher aides."

*Aide*—"This class will make me a much more confident student teacher because I picked up some valuable advice on unit plans, discipline, and how to work with twelfth graders."

The response to course evaluation forms has indicated that the objectives, for the most part, have been accomplished. Administrator, teacher, and student feedback stresses the practicality of the course. A key to the program is the cooperative effort between the University of Georgia and the Clarke County School District. Without this cooperation, a program of this type cannot function effectively.

A close working relationship between the university aide coordinator and the administration and faculty of the secondary school is the main essential in the development of the university/public school teacher aide program.

Copyright © 1973 by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. All rights reserved.