

# Teacher Education:

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## A RESPONSE

It is heartening to see a leader in teacher education such as Robert Howsam define problems in his area of responsibility and propose a general solution. From the perspective of a practitioner, both the definition and direction are well stated and long overdue.

Too many candidates for teaching positions currently apply with credentials that barely meet basic state certification requirements. Too many teacher preparation institutions continue to award diplomas to those ill suited by training and temperament to be outstanding teachers.

On the other hand, some colleges and universities prepare teachers well, give them *several* student teaching experiences, and graduate only the best.

Perhaps it is my impatience with generalities that prompts me to ask a teacher educator to write a more concrete article for *Educational Leadership* in the near future.

In it, I would like to see some of the following:

1. My colleagues and I have succeeded in developing a teacher preparation curriculum consisting of rigorous courses in writing, literature, mathematics through calculus, history and science, along with the several courses mentioned in Howsam's article (psychology, anthropology, sociology, philosophy, and computer science). A core of these subjects will precede specific training for teaching at the elementary or secondary levels.

For elementary school teachers, extensive instruction will be given in the art of teaching reading, mathematics, writing, social studies, and

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science. In addition there will be courses in children's literature, music, and art. Secondary school teachers will receive intensive instruction in the academic disciplines for which they seek certification.

2. Only students with strong high school credentials and varied extracurricular accomplishments will be considered for admission to the program. In addition each candidate will be examined on writing skills by completing a three-page paper on site to be evaluated by members of our faculty.

3. A minimum of two carefully supervised student teaching experiences will take place in consecutive years.

4. We have made agreements with several neighboring public and private schools which establish:

—A mutual interview between practitioner and prospective student teacher to determine potential for a sound working relationship;

—A series of conferences among student teacher, supervisor, and practitioner to determine student teacher progress and goals to be reached; and

—An honorarium or full course voucher as a token of our gratitude to the master teachers who work with our students.

5. To further assure sound teacher preparation at our university, we have adopted the following changes:

—Each professor associated directly with teacher preparation will exchange positions with selected public school master teachers or administrators every fifth year. In this way our professors will remain in close touch with the classroom while master teachers and administrators will be able to share their expertise with future colleagues.

—The student assessment policy at the university has been changed so that no more than one third of any examination will be in multiple choice format with the remaining portion reserved for essay responses.

My recommendations will seem ambitious to many and incomplete to others. Some of them are in effect already (Hagberg and Walker, 1981).

After more than a hundred years of educating teachers, however, it is time for universities to further increase selectivity, rigor, and reality in teacher preparation. Howsam's contribution provides a framework for the needed reform. ■

### Reference

Hagberg, Hilma, and Walker, Decker. "Working It Out Together." *Educational Leadership* 38, 7 (April 1981): 563-565.

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