

Let's Not Shortchange the Next Generation of Teachers

The Jefferson School District in Daly City, California, uses a systematic procedure for selecting and pairing master teachers and novices.

A familiar scene: The principal strolls into the teachers' lounge, then asks, "Who wants a student teacher?" A hand pops up, and voilà! another master teacher is born to train the rookie. That scene, repeated across the nation routinely, ensures the continuation of haphazard training for the next generation of teachers.

In Jefferson School District (6,000 ADA, Daly City, California) we have implemented a plan that ensures high-quality training for student teachers while providing master teachers with excellent candidates to prepare.

Our district started by establishing a set of criteria on which principals would base their recommendations for master teacher candidates. These criteria include skillful lesson planning and execution; good rapport with students, staff, and parents; use of creative programs and lessons; delegation of routine tasks to competent aides and students; excellent classroom management, and responsiveness to students' needs. In addition, master teacher candidates are effective communicators, have stimulating classroom environments, and assume a leadership role in staff meetings and in site curriculum programs.

Next, a panel, including the superintendent, deputy superintendent for personnel, associate superintendent

for instruction, and principals with expertise in quality master-teacher selection, reviewed the qualifications of the candidates. Our next step was to ask the finalists if they were willing to assume the responsibility of training student teachers.

Subsequently, we arranged an understanding with local universities, in-

cluding San Francisco State University, the University of San Francisco, and Simpson College: the district guaranteed quality master teachers if we had the option of accepting or rejecting student teacher candidates. Through interviews with the student teachers, our student-teacher program facilitator was able to ensure that they were of a high quality and to determine the best possible pairing of student teachers with master teachers in terms of style, approach, and personality.

Finally, the principal and the selected master teacher met with a potential student teacher to determine if the pairing was compatible. Once this process was completed throughout the district, then the work of training the next generation of teachers for our district began in earnest.

We can implement all the reformers' recommendations and still short-change the next generation of teachers if we do not recognize the importance of pairing outstanding master teachers with student teachers. The Jefferson School District recommends our approach to other districts concerned about high-quality training for student teachers. □

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