

IMPROVEMENT OF STUDENT TEACHING

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Part of the basis for the material in this article is the experience that the author has had in supervising secondary student teaching. One of the co-authors was a student teacher at the secondary level last semester and the other one is student teaching in elementary education this semester.

In addition to our experiences and observations, we visited with several student teachers this semester, some who did teaching the previous semester, and some first year teachers who did student teaching last year. All of these people were very cooperative and helpful in making suggestions. We are very much aware that conditions will vary considerably amongst different colleges and universities in their student teaching programs. Also, we believe that you will agree that student teaching can vary considerably from semester to semester within the same institution. Regardless of how much improvement is made, probably no student teaching program in any certain institution will become perfect.

In this article we have attempted to consider some of these above mentioned suggestions for change in the Student Teaching Program at William Penn College. We are well aware of the fact that they cannot all be implemented into the program and certainly not all at the same time, simply because of the realization that improvement, at least worthwhile improvement, is a gradual process and one which continues to see new thresholds semester after semester and year after year.

Some of the suggested changes in the William Penn Student Teaching Program include:

1) The changing of the class hours. Secondary methods, for example, is a course which is two hours long every morning for seven weeks. Most students feel that it should not meet for any more than one hour and that this extra time could be better spent in the specialized methods classes such as Methods of Teaching Physical Education, Methods of Teaching Social Science, etc.

2) Student teaching should start at the beginning or the ending of the semester school year. The reasons for this are as follows: (a) see how the teacher sets control in the classroom at the beginning of the year, the first few days can make or break a teacher, (b) to do a turn at being the major decision maker in giving out grades for one grading period, and (c) to find out all of the routine things a teacher must do before the beginning of the year and at the end of the school year.

3) There should be weekly conferences with the college supervisor and with the co-operating teacher present at the same time. This never happened to some of the student teachers and they felt that there was a real lack of communication between the college supervisor and the co-operating teacher. They should have collaborated for a better evaluation.

4) Many student teachers believe that they should have had more leeway as to how they wanted the classroom to be run and not have to carry on all the little things his supervising teacher or co-operating teacher wanted him to do. They felt that this was supposed to be a learning experience for the student, not a peri-

od of carrying out someone else's directives. The most common complaint was that of getting treated like an errand person more than like an equal.

5) Something tended to gripe many of the students. This was the stringent dress code that was required of the student teachers before entering the actual period of teaching itself. This seemed to put on a false image. The school tells you not to be perfect and yet tells you to follow all of the rules. However, consider the fact that teachers have to be themselves and neat and dignified at the same time. There is the question of respect here and in most cases, the realization that teachers do set examples for their peers as well as their students.

6) In the making of lesson plans, most felt that they were a worthwhile experience and that they should be emphasized more in the classroom. Some felt also that the college supervisors should tell their student teachers what they wanted in them. However, it is not what the college supervisor wants, but what is appropriate for the class learning experience.

7) There was a deep feeling that the college supervisors should contact the school administrators where the student teachers are in order to find out what the administrations think of the students. In the same channel of thought, there was the feeling that the college supervisors should talk to the principals where the students are doing their teaching. In some cases student teachers were involved with the administration with discipline problems and this helped the administration get a look of how the student teacher handled the situation.

8) One thing that should help the student teacher would be for the college to let these people know what is happening while they are doing their student teaching. At times a student may be missing something very important to him because of a lack of communication, however the student teacher should be responsible enough to keep up with the outside activities. He cannot involve himself only with teaching but should be a part of the total curriculum.

9) One thing each student who takes Introduction to Education should do is make a visitation to a school and talk with teachers and administrators to decide if they really want to continue their student teaching program. Also perhaps student teaching should come earlier so that students could still switch career plans if need be. This could be done by being aids in the schools along with the courses of Introduction to Education, Educational Psychology, or any other beginning course in education.

10) One final idea that would be very beneficial to both programs, would be that of having a better opportunity for the elementary and secondary people to get together to exchange ideas about teaching and the types of problems each face.

Student teaching can make a world of difference to the individual, because it is during this time that he grows the most in his knowledge of the teaching profession. Improvement can only stand to enhance this knowledge, thus it should be evaluated at every opportunity.

THE CROOKS OF THE MATTER

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There is no doubt about it, envy is a sin. Teachers of practical subjects that have to do with service, doing things, and earning a living are leery of being called tradesmen and mercenaries. They want their professorial titles, their associations with the academic world, their degrees and honors, their caps and gowns. Yet they are practical persons and proud of it, so they can afford to be rid of envy.

By the same token, the scholar who teaches a subject which has to do with scholarly learning, with culture, and with abstractions and theory, is leery of charges that he is impractical, lives in an ivory tower consuming years of time in matters only indirectly related to bread and butter. Accordingly he is forever stepping out of line to show how practical his subject is and how practical he is. He invents courses in television techniques and calls them