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ABSTRACT

This paper describes the five teacher education learning centers developed by the University of Maine at Portland-Gorham to integrate theory and practice in teacher education, to shape responsibility for teacher preparation, to better utilize university and school resources, to provide inservice teacher education, and to extend individualized learning experiences for interns and children. Juniors and seniors spend an academic year in a center with their professional courses delivered on site. Concurrently, inservice courses, minicourses, graduate courses, and seminars are provided on site. Formal and informal evaluations of the center programs indicate the following: (a) interns manifest greater intrinsic motivation, greater transferability from theory to practice, more effective self-appraisal and positive self-image, a more pragmatic philosophy of education, and higher achievement in courses and (b) public school teachers, administrators, and university faculty benefit from the inservice programs, more open communication, and opportunities to exchange roles. This center-intern model is now being used in the review of state certification standards. (Author)

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TEACHER EDUCATION LEARNING CENTERS

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TEACHER EDUCATION LEARNING CENTERS

Teacher Education Learning Centers began in Maine in 1972 as a collaborative effort of the School of Education at the University of Maine at Portland-Gorham, a public school district, and the State Department of Educational and Cultural Services.

Since this initial development, four additional Centers have been established--three in cooperation with public school districts and one, located in England, in cooperation with King Alfred's College and Whitelands College. Before the development of Teacher Education Learning Centers, teacher preparation at the University of Maine at Portland-Gorham was typical of such preparation programs at most colleges and universities--a number of discrete professional courses unrelated and almost unrelatable to each other; one-half or a full semester of student teaching generally isolated from other courses and seen as the opportunity for the student to "practice at" teaching rather than the development of a unique teaching style; and, sometimes, a pre-professional experience with children largely informal and generally unsupervised.

In-service teachers had little opportunity for professional development other than enrolling in a graduate program, taking an occasional course at the University or participating in local school district programs for re-certification credit. A great part of all of these opportunities were unrelated either to the facts of the teachers' existence or to their professional needs and goals.

In attempting to remediate these conditions, the Teacher Education Learning Centers began with the following objectives:

1. To integrate theory and practice in the preparation of teachers.
2. To enable the pre-professional student to test out the model of "teacher as learner."
3. To share responsibility for teacher preparation among school teachers, school administrators, and University personnel.
4. To exchange ideas and information between school and University personnel in continual renewal.

5. To utilize better the resources of the University and the school districts in a cooperative project.
6. To provide in-service education for school personnel through graduate courses, seminars, workshops, mini-courses, and undergraduate courses on site.
7. To provide additional personnel to extend individualized learning experiences for children in district schools.

Though each of the four state-side Centers differs in degree from the others, each has the following common characteristics:

1. A public school either K-5 or K-8.
2. University courses delivered on site.
3. Student Interns teaching across grade levels.
4. Public school teachers and administrators involved in both direct and indirect teaching.
5. In-service education as an integral part of the Center's program.
6. Interns involved on-site for a full academic year.
7. Pre-school year workshops for both University and public school personnel.
8. Emphasis on individualization for Interns and diversity of teaching experiences.

The British Infant and Primary School Center varies from the above in that student Interns spend a single semester in England in a number of separate schools. For the first time this year a University of Maine professor will be on site in England.

The administrative responsibility for each Center is placed in a Director. The Director in one Center is a school principal; in two others a University faculty member; in the fourth the assistant superintendent and a University faculty member serve as co-Directors. The Director of the London Center is a University of Maine faculty member who has an informal counterpart in King Alfred's and Whitelands College.

Interns are generally junior students who apply for the Internship to each Center Director and are selected by that Director in consultation with public school personnel and the University Director of Clinical Experiences.

University faculty other than Directors are involved in a Center on a need basis as determined by the Center Director. Public school teachers and administrators are also utilized differentially either teaching formal courses, counseling Interns, participating in seminars or just being available for professional small-talk.

During the past academic year the following formal courses were offered in the Centers:

Human Growth and Development
 Atypical Reading
 Elementary Curriculum
 Elementary Science
 Elementary Mathematics
 Childrens Literature
 Seminar in Teaching
 Supervision of Student Teaching
 Measurement and Evaluation
 Preparation of Classroom Materials
 Language Arts
 Learning Disabilities
 Elementary Reading

In addition, Interns and public school teachers taught or participated in the following types of non-formal workshops and mini-courses: non-gradedness, environmental education, instructional television, drug education, integrated day, physical education, and sex education.

Funding of the Center continues to be of concern. The School of Education at the University of Maine at Portland-Gorham develops most of its re-direction efforts through reallocation of funds rather than through new financial resources. Though the first Center was partially established through an ESEA grant from the State Department of Educational and Cultural Services, all other Centers were begun and continue without outside funding and without any increase in University support. This was accomplished by:

1. Utilizing cash funds already established for student teaching.
2. Scheduling University professors into Centers as part of their normal teaching load.
3. Exchanging in-kind services.

The Centers have been evaluated formally and informally on:

1. Student classroom achievement and attitudes.
2. Intern accomplishments and attitudes.
3. Public school teacher and administrator attitudes.
4. University faculty attitudes.

The formal evaluation by the State Department of Educational and Cultural Services of one of the Centers in regard to student achievement and attitudes revealed mixed results--greater achievement in some areas and some grade levels, no differences in others with generally inconclusive results.

Intern evaluation by the State Department of Educational and Cultural Services, the University and public school systems using self-evaluation, personal opinion scales, Minnesota Teacher Attitude Inventory and interviews, indicated the following:

1. Heightened Intern motivation.
2. Higher Intern achievement levels in professional education courses compared to on-campus programs.
3. Improved human relations skills.
4. More effective appraisal of Intern strengths and weaknesses.
5. More self-screening.
6. Immediate application of concepts.
7. A less "idealized" view of teaching (MTAI).
8. Acceptance of the Intern as a contributing member of a teaching team and not a "student teacher."

Public school teachers and administrators overwhelmingly claim:

1. More positive attitudes towards University professors and teacher preparation programs.
2. More opportunity to individualize instruction.
3. More "open" communication in the school.

4. In-service courses related directly to their needs without being limited to such needs.
5. More positive attitudes towards each other.

Perhaps the greatest indication of a change in role comes from the University professors themselves. Some screened themselves out of the Centers preferring a more conventional delivery system. But most continued and found they needed to modify, sometimes drastically restructure, their course content and their methodology as the realities of the school setting bore upon both. Almost all found themselves "actually teaching" children in classrooms, something they had not done for years, attempting to make their theory and practice come alive in a public school setting.

What impact Teacher Education Learning Centers will have on the improvement of teacher education remains an open question. We are certain that our experience with Teacher Education Learning Centers should be shared with others. And we are equally certain that such Centers are a beginning step towards preparation programs that are truly collaborative and which will, for once, break away from the theory-practice, university-public school, traditional separations. In this respect, the Teacher Education Learning Centers of the School of Education at the University of Maine at Portland-Gorham have already had a definable impact on the State of Maine:

1. Recommendations for changes in state-wide certification presently before the State Professional Standards Advisory Commission emphasize year-long internships.
2. The award of a Teacher Corps Grant presently in operation in six school sites was a direct result of discussions on Teacher Education Learning Centers.
3. The Certification Committee of the State Department of Educational and Cultural Services recommends the Center-Intern model to other teacher preparatory institutions in the State.
4. The State Department of Educational and Cultural Services identifies the Center model as a viable in-service model.
5. The School of Education has more requests than it can meet from public school systems requesting a Center.
6. New majors, minors and course formats in the School of Education are a direct result of experience in the Centers.
7. The British Infant and Primary School Center has attracted students from other campuses in the State and has led to the establishment of a University-wide international exchange office.

8. Ninety-five percent of all Interns have secured a teaching position as opposed to forty-seven percent for the more conventional program.

In the final analysis, however, the kind of partnership model reflected in the Teacher Education Learning Centers has the best chance of developing a teacher, pre-service and in-service, who is humanly effective, technically competent and substantively knowledgeable, and thus the best chance of improving the life of children in school.