

The Teacher Education Alliance for Metro: An Alternative Approach To Student Teaching

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Although there are many differences of opinion as to how the function can best be carried out, student teaching is generally viewed as an indispensable part of teacher education programs. In an attempt to improve current student teaching practices, the Nashville Metropolitan School System has joined with nine area colleges and universities in an organization referred to as the Teacher Education Alliance for Metro. This organization received funding through a United States Office of Education grant to operate a Triple-T, "Trainer of Trainers of Teachers," program.

The Triple-T Program

The focus of this project has been upon teacher training at all levels, with an emphasis upon preparing student teachers, their trainers (supervising teachers), and the trainer's trainers (college supervisors) to improve urban education. Perhaps the most important venture has been to place college faculty members into three public school sites in Nashville. College personnel are released from their usual responsibilities in order to spend anywhere from a tenth of their time to all of it, in the public schools.

These college participants supervise student teachers (who have volunteered for the program), work in teams with school personnel to revise curricula, and even teach children themselves. They take part in seminars and workshops related to the school system, the community, and professional training.

To become better acquainted with the urban community, student teachers in the Triple-T program spend the first four weeks of their student teaching experience, for example, attending church, doing their washing, visiting community agencies and medical facilities, as well as visiting the homes and parents of many of their students. Seminars provide the student teachers with an opportunity to share

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what they have learned with each other as well as interact with university personnel. This community experience is designed to provide the student teachers with a better understanding of the lifestyle prevalent in the urban community.

As the term "trainer of trainers of teachers" implies, the Triple-T program focuses upon classroom teachers who supervise student teachers. A major goal is to help teachers develop a commitment to and competence in the role of cooperating teachers. However, the classroom teachers also become trainers of university personnel, collaborating with university participants in developing new teacher training roles.

The program also provides services to school staffs interested in solving problems in their schools. The services of participating university personnel are not limited to student teaching. For example, if teachers express a desire for help in improving reading skills, resources from the cooperating institutions can be brought to bear on the problem. These services are provided at no cost.

Summary

Although the student teaching experience may be viewed as being indispensable, it is not above improvement. In reality, teacher education programs must be constantly re-examined and adapted to meet the needs of a rapidly changing society, with a closer relationship between universities and school systems. Perhaps, the fact that nine colleges and universities have joined together with the Nashville Metro school system in operating a Triple-T program is evidence that new relationships are not only desirable, but are workable and beneficial.

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