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ABSTRACT

An internship program involving university students placed in public school classrooms for a full year was initiated through the cooperative efforts of Wright State University and the Yellow Springs, Ohio school district, an innovative district which embraces the concept of individually guided education and which utilizes team teaching at all levels. The interns were considered full members of the teams on which they served and increasingly became identified as regular teachers as they were phased into more complex tasks and greater teaching responsibilities. This document describes the internship program and summarizes the interns' assessment of program strengths and weaknesses. Also summarized are the results of an evaluation by staff members who had had some working relationship with the interns. Recommendations are made for changes in the internship program based on these evaluations. (DLO)

Internship as an Alternative to Student Teaching

by Don Richards

An internship program involving university students placed in public classrooms for a full year, initiated through the cooperative efforts of Wright State University and the Yellow Springs, Ohio exempted villate school district has been the subject of interest and research this past year.

The participation in many ways represented a union of two institutions that were both committed to and involved in innovative programs in education. Wright State as a new university has a staff that was young in outlook and dedicated to action. They felt at ease in new programs and were given the opportunity to develop new approaches by a progressive administration. Yellow Springs, better known as the townsite for Antioch College, was a locale long used to change. In many ways what could have been a very mundane midwestern small town dominated by a concern for agriculture and preoccupation with local politics, was actually a surgent, unique arena for international concerns and philosophical rationales, as well as also the midwestern small town.

As a school system dedicated to the values of a quality education and thereby willing to support them financially as well as philosophically, Yellow Springs had developed aspects of individualization, ungrading, embraced the concept of individualized guided education (IGE), utilized team teaching at all levels, and had built a new open

space middle school. Since these innovations often require additional personnel, and since the town was an exempted village with a limited tax base, the outcome of the desire for a better educational program and therefore a more expensive one, and the limited ability to pay for it left alternative methods of staffing to be explored.

Although volunteer aides were used well in the system, it was felt that the continuity of a program is often seriously impaired by the very nature of volunteer help, so Wright State was approached as a source of teacher-trainees that might fit into staffing patterns found in IGE or team teaching situations. Wright State had previously established three teaching education centers in neighboring communities, with resident supervisors and on-site classes in the model increasingly becoming popular with colleges of education. The commitment to an extension of this concept to provide teaching interns for Yellow Springs was a logical development.

By mutual agreement the university was to provide students, the supervision, and the professional courses. The Yellow Springs school system was to utilize, supervise and guide the students into fully occupied and decision-sharing participants in the educational teams in the three Yellow Springs school buildings. In addition, the school system was to pay the tuition for each Intern so that he or she could enroll for full-time credit at the university for the three quarters in the academic year. The Interns were able to enroll in late afternoon or evening classes for additional hours needed toward completion of degree requirements since Wright State, as a commuting college, had

a sizeable number of courses offered at those times.

A schedule of credit hours by quarter, divided between professional courses and other elective and/or required courses is shown below:

Course Load for Interns in Credit Hours

	Student Teaching	Senior Seminar and Student Seminar	Electives	Total
Fall	7	3	3	13
Winter	6	2	4	12
Spring	2	2	6	10
Total	15	7	13	35

Students interested in the program were soon secured and enrolled in especially identified courses carrying the same number of credit hours as the regular student teaching, the coordinated seminar, and senior seminar or final course of the teacher education program. They also enrolled in other courses to the maximum number prescribed (and occasionally more) in the above diagram. A conference was held in May so that all twelve (three in high school, four in the middle school, and five in the elementary) could become oriented to the program. The interns started school when the system began in fall, attending pre-school meetings and building orientation sessions along with other staff members. From that time forward they were thought of in terms as full members of the teams in which they served, and increasingly became identified as regular teachers as they were phased into more complex tasks and greater teaching responsibilities. By late all all Interns were teaching and carrying full loads which they

continued to hold for the remainder of the year.

Supervision was carried on in a rather traditional manner, with the supervisor visiting each Intern on a semi-regular and on-call basis, touching frequent base with the Principal and teachers in an informal and unobtrusive manner. Classes were held on Monday afternoon for an hour and forty five minutes in the middle school in the fall, in the elementary school in the winter, and were "traveling" ones in the spring quarter. At least two supervisory visits were made somewhere in the system weekly in addition to the classes. Interns frequently were in university offices as a result of their other classes, so a high degree of intercommunication and liason was maintained.

The on-site classes were divided into a series of three endeavors: first; a lecture and discussion of an aspect of public school organization or control with which a text was used, second; an Intern initiated topic stemming from some concern in which he must lead, but in which all must read background material, and third; a class featuring some aspect of teaching method, film, or field trip. In the spring quarter these were organized into an intensive series and all classes were held in different local sites so that the Interns could experience the many and diverse approaches to education such as a laboratory school, parochial school, private academy, inner-city school, orphanage school, military school and others.

As might be expected with such frequent, sustained, and varied associations between supervisor and students, a high degree of rapport

and guidance became possible; rarely encountered in other advisor-advisee or professor-student relationships. The supervisor also found himself involved in informal counseling in the schools to which he traveled. Although little was done to deliberately pursue such incidental relationships, there could have been possibilities for some type of credit class or off-campus study group in the system if there had been planning for it.

In the spring an assessment was solicited from the Interns relative to their positive and negative feelings about their program. Their reactions, most several pages in length, are summarized below:

The strengths of the Internship program were recorded as giving greatly increased opportunities for experience with much emphasis on the practical aspects of teaching, bringing about greater awareness and confidence to the respondees, working as a "real" teacher with a full year's experience, and being a member of a team. They felt working in an innovative school that provided the chance to orient to IGE and the freedom to enable one to pursue some of one's own directions and develop one's own philosophy were important. They also saw benefit in the university courses taken on site.

The Interns listed as weaknesses of the program as they saw them the length of time to complete the program as too long (especially when they saw others of their acquaintance that were not in the program rapidly completing student teaching in the "regular" manner), being in only one school system instead of several, too much

pressure, too much work, not enough time and difficulty in scheduling their work requirements, college requirements, and whatever extra jobs they may have held on the side. The highest degree of dissatisfaction was registered about the lack of adequate compensation, extra expenses of driving to and from teaching, the tuition payment by the school not being enough to compensate for their time and effort, and the lack of opportunity to substitute to earn a little extra money. They also felt that the newness of the program (some lack of communication between the school district and the university, lack of a backlog of experience to use in advising them, some lack of feedback on the part of the school staff, and not being prepared for the unique programs they encountered) were weaknesses. They would have liked more credit hours and preferential treatment in scheduling as far as the university was concerned.

The positive reactions can be commented on by allowing the summary to stand for itself. The Interns saw the experience, the length of time, and the quality of the school's program as the outstanding features. Aside from the latter point which was a determinant in arranging the cooperative relationship in the first place, the length of time and the "real" experience tends to bear out the advantages hoped for when the program was conceived.

As far as the negative reactions are concerned, they also fall into distinct patterns. The lack of compensation was a serious point. Several Interns worked part-time in evenings and week ends to earn

living expenses, which coupled with a full day and university classes as well, became a severe strain mentally as well as physically. Since they early assumed full intern responsibilities, were regarded as teaching equals by the school staff members, and viewed as teachers by the students, the lack of any financial reward proved quite psychologically defeating. Some comment was seen regarding the confusion over the program management which would be expected during an introductory year. An additional thread of comment indicated dissatisfaction with the feedback by school staff members regarding the Interns' behaviors. Possibly this represents simply a staff's reluctance to criticize itself; a common enough characteristic among most staffs, and since the Interns became identified as regular teachers, it was shown in avoiding a discussion of evaluations. The Interns performed very adequately in their teacher roles, and this concerned may merely be an expression of insecurity on their part and not any indication of their progress being a taboo topic. It might be observed that staff members seldom go about praising one another either.

To discuss the pros and cons as if they were of equal standing is misleading. All Interns overwhelming were in favor of the program and expressed much more favor toward it than disfavor.

An evaluation instrument was devised and given to those staff members of the three schools willing to respond to it and who had some working relationship with the Interns. About seventy percent responded. The questions attempted to investigate three areas; 1) the school system's role in the intern program, 2) the university's

contributions, and 3) the Intern's characteristics. Standard student teaching evaluation forms were also used, but this instrument attempted to assess the Intern's effectiveness as a group rather than individually.

In terms of the first area, the system's or administration's role, the teachers saw the Interns as wisely placed, much more desirable than student teachers, and expressed a desire for more, although this was not always a strong expression. They saw them as somewhat remunerated poorly, but there was widespread disagreement on this subject. The response to a question sampling their being aware of other Interns in addition to the ones in their own teams indicated that there were about as many that said that they were aware as said that they were not. The staff balanced agrees and disagrees to the question asking if Interns might have performed more adequately than some of the regular teachers.

In terms of the university's role, the teachers polarized themselves rather consistently. They were fairly evenly divided on questions asking about the value of its role, the supervisory habits of the supervisor, benefits of the classes held for the Interns, and feelings about the conflict between the time the Interns needed for school work and the time needed for their classes. They saw that the Intern's classes were well related to their teaching, but felt that they themselves received little benefit from the supervisor, and little stimulation from him or the classes taught in their school. In general, they indicated some disapproval about the nature of the

supervision. Many did not respond to this series of questions, apparently indicating little awareness of the activities being sampled.

In terms of the Interns themselves, the teachers saw them as greatly beneficial to the IGE program and to the school, and as active participants in team work and team decisions. They saw them as regular, healthy, neat, consistent, adequately prepared, and good disciplinarians. They saw them also as occasionally available for substituting, and as steadily increasing in competence. In several ways they appeared to see them in an almost reverse image to the ways the Interns saw themselves.

Some recommendations for the program is set forth here in light of the first year's experience: 1) That such a program be continued in the same district and be expanded in other districts. No program should be assessed as to its success during its initial year, but its success make such a conclusion the foremost one. Aside from whatever success it showed, such a program should exist as an alternative to regular student teaching for students who need financial help, for districts who wish to work with interns, and for those college students who feel a need for long-term experience and increased practical application. In terms of innovative programs such as IGE, the internship holds greater promise toward competence than classroom lecture or short-term student teaching. In light of increased competition for teaching positions, the extra training increases an Intern's employability. Many alternatives to "standard" education should exist, with

the internship program being merely one from which to select. 2) That the Interns be compensated with a salary that covers at least their transportation expenses for the year and their meals at school. An additional stipend would help not only their meagre standard of living, but also give them a definite psychological boost. It can be seen that even a small stipend, coupled with tuition cost for all the Interns, would not exceed the cost of an additional single teacher. 3) That actual use of the Interns as substitute teachers be utilized every time possible. Not only would they be familiar with the program, but such employment would raise their financial base, and as stated previously, give them a psychological assist. Certification could be initiated immediately upon enrollment and accomplished by the beginning of the school year. 4) That university enrollment in such atypical programs as this be a routinized procedure, thus cutting some of the difficulty in taking such a course. 5) That the Interns in no way be thought of as avoiding the employment of regular teachers or saving money. They were not used this way in the Yellow Springs system, but one could imagine that several Interns might be thought of as an equivalent to a single teacher.

Interns should be regarded as additional benefits to a system. The Interns should continue to occupy neutral positions usually held by student teachers since they would be vulnerable in the same ways and to the same forces; those in power as well as those in a peer

relationship. In this way they would hold the emerging position in the hierarchy of the master teacher concept.