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ABSTRACT

Research on the first year of teaching reveals consistent experience with particular problems which can be organized into the following categories: culture shock, instruction, students, parents, administrators, fellow teachers, and extensive isolation. The beginning teacher's insecurity about himself and his professional ability serve only to compound the original problems he encounters during his first year. The effects of inadequate introduction to the profession and insufficient support for beginning teachers are that a) 30 percent of personnel trained for teaching never enter the field; b) one out of five beginning teachers reports that he or she does not anticipate teaching five years later; and c) 12 percent of trained teachers leave the profession each year. Suggestions for improvement of this situation include the following: a) teachers and their organizations should consider the inadequate introduction to teaching a priority problem; b) teachers should study the problem and explore various solutions; c) teachers should establish policies and make them part of contract negotiations; and d) plans for the introduction of new teachers to the profession and continuing support throughout their first years should be developed and implemented at the local level. (HMD)

Survival Is Not Good Enough:

Overcoming the Problems of Beginning Teachers

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INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT

Kevin Ryan's piece on beginning teachers has a lot of familiar information and home truths. What he says can be repeated year after year, of course, without overdoing it. I hasten to add that Ryan introduces some new concepts as well. As you will see, this is a very readable piece. I highly recommend it.

David Selden

SURVIVAL IS NOT GOOD ENOUGH:
OVERCOMING THE PROBLEMS OF BEGINNING TEACHERS

Dr. Kevin Ryan
University of Chicago

"If we planned a worse method of introducing people into teaching, I am sure we couldn't do as well. It's hell on wheels." (Overheard in a teachers' lunchroom.)

Each year large numbers of eager young people enter our schools with their college degrees in one hand and their provisional certification in the other. It is a great moment in their lives. They are finally entering adult life. After years of being just a "kid," a youngster, a teenager, and continually being a student, they have arrived. Finally they are ready to make real money, set up a residence, and do such exotic adult things as to pay taxes. If they have not just been married, they are ready to engage seriously in the marital search. They are especially eager to begin their professional career. Most of them have been working and planning and dreaming about becoming a teacher for a long time. Although they don't expect teaching to be easy, they don't expect it to be very different either. After all, during the last sixteen years they have spent almost a third of their waking hours in schools and around teachers. And, too, they have recently completed practice teaching, which is supposed to be the test to see if they are ready for classroom teaching. They feel they are ready, and they come to their first teaching assignment with idealism, the vitality of youth, and hopes of finding a satisfying career. What they find, in fact, is something else.

Problems of the Beginning Teacher. The first year of teaching is frequently the most turbulent, frustrating and painful one in a young teacher's life. All too often he enters his first classroom with romantic attitudes and unrealistic plans for himself and his students. He is then confronted with a staggering array of difficulties which seems to him to be largely of his own making. While all beginning teachers experience problems and certainly not the same ones, severe problems are the norm. Research on the first year of teaching does, however, reveal the consistent experience of particular problems which can be organized into the following categories: culture shock, instruction, students, parents, administrators, fellow teachers, and extensive isolation.

Culture Shock. Culture shock is a reaction initially experienced by people when they are immersed in a foreign culture. Immigrants and travelers to foreign countries frequently are overwhelmed by the unfamiliar life-ways. Some of their symptoms are unusual fatigue, a numbing sense of disorientation, and the feeling that they have made a drastic mistake by coming to a foreign country. It is easy to understand how immigrants or Peace Corps volunteers would experience culture shock but not American teachers in American schools. The beginning teacher has spent at least sixteen years in schools. He has observed, perhaps, sixty teachers since he entered kindergarden or the first grade. The flux and flow of school is part of the very fabric of his conaciousness. The shock comes, however, when the beginner switches from audience to actor, from student to teacher. Too often the prospective teacher feels that since he is familiar with what teachers do, he can handle the job. He discovers that teaching is not

simply the other side of the coin from being taught. The beginning teacher finds amid a generally familiar setting, a great deal which he had not anticipated and which he cannot handle. Young teachers report being shocked by a variety of causes. They claim that they "love children," but they are totally unable to get students to be responsive or motivated about their school work. They drastically underestimated the amount of time needed to plan lessons. They feel totally inadequate to evaluate students and give them grades. The volume of administrative tasks and paper work staggers them. They find themselves emotionally vulnerable to the hostilities of children. They are unprepared for the seemingly invisible barriers which keep their students from understanding concepts and ideas. They are unprepared to teach children, plus take roll, read notices from the office, handle late-comers, and execute dozens of other small chores. The physical drain of teaching six hours a day and five days a week is beyond their worst expectations and certainly beyond their level of stamina.

The beginning teacher's initial culture shock is manifested in signs of mental and physical stress. In the first months of the school year it is not uncommon for the beginning teacher to experience depression and self-doubt, outbursts of crying, physical exhaustion, insomnia, uncharacteristic losses of temper, and occasionally fits of vomiting before school.

> Considering myself sophisticated enough to survive any experience the outside world was pleased to offer, I lent a deaf ear and bored spirits to academic discussions of the severe 'culture shock' we, who then dwelt in the University of Chicago, were likely to undergo on the job. I had attended the only public

school in my small midwestern hometown and had therefore been exposed, I thought, to the social, emotional, and intellectual lives of a socioeconomic cross-section of teenagers and to the academic dispositions of variously talented young students. I had known and liked very well the blacks with whom I became acquainted in college. Certainly, I asserted, I was altogether sympathetic with the plight of minority groups and totally without so-called prejudice. And I had traveled a lot on my own, and, afterward, had lived in Chicago's liberal melting pot, Hyde Park, for a year. On the whole, I concluded, I had met a varied lot of people and should no doubt find very little new--certainly nothing surprising--in anyone whom I should hereafter encounter.

Perhaps I had simply forgotten these people of my past. For it turned out that I was thoroughly shocked by a large portion of the high school community with whom I sought to involve myself. Only now can I see that these people should have been familiar from the beginning. I had read about them in books, in novels and poems, in psychology texts and anthropological studies. And most of them I had indeed known very well before.... But I did not know myself, and I did not know the role I haphazardly tried to play. I had known tyrant teachers and pushovers, bright ones, ignorant ones, but I had not known them as colleagues. I have known mischievous students and helpful ones, vicious ones and apple-polishers, but I had not known them as students in the class I was supposed to teach. I had known principals and assistant

> principals, counselors and truant officers, but I had not known them as one who expected to be treated as a college graduate, the lady, and the professional I wanted desperately to be. In short, I saw strange faces because I looked out through the strangely new eyes of a teacher. (1)

When things go well for the beginning teacher he is elated and confident. But when things go wrong, as they all too often do, they take a great toll.

> It got so that I hated eighth period. I looked forward to it with apprehension and self-doubt. In the eyes of the school, I was not failing. None of the kids were in the hall, and there were no 'undue disturbances.' But I knew I was failing. I brought in movies, had exercises with the newspaper, had the class write their own newspaper, did math exercises, had them work on problems I brought in, but I felt that I was only occupying them--a sort of military holding action. I sensed no growth.... I began watching the clock, hoping the minutes would race by. They never did. It seemed like eternity before the bell would ring. It would finally come and I would drag myself to the first floor and prepare to get away from it all. Thank G-d it was my last class. I would be completely drained of emotional and psychic energy. Some days I would come home and fall asleep from four o'clock until ten o'clock. I am sure that it was a symbolic return to the womb.

The next morning I would be reborn again and would trudge off to school to face another day of trying to be a teacher. (2)

Instruction. The ultimate goal of school is, of course, student learning. When the beginning teacher sees that his students are making progress, all other problems seem insignificant. However, when it appears that students are not learning, the teacher's world begins to cave in. Much of the beginning teacher's problem is making the transition from educational theory to classroom practice.

Now that it is over this whole first year seems unbelievable. So much has gone on. I have changed so. So many of my cherished beliefs about myself and education have gone down the drain or been drastically reshaped. I was so confident but so ignorant when I started. There were so many little things that I didn't know how to do, like passing out papers or assigning work. I had so many 'hot' ideas and, for most of them, not the foggiest notion about putting them into actual operation. I was a 'bug' on the importance of individualized instruction. I wrote papers on it during teacher training. I knew all the right words to say about individualized instruction, but I couldn't do it in my class. I still believe in it, perhaps even more, but I'm just not able to make it operational, to make it go with my kids. Whenever I think back on this year, the image that keeps coming to mind is of a farmer plowing a new field and breaking fresh ground. I didn't have any old furrows to follow. I never knew when I was going to hit against a rock...and I did hit some rocks. Sometimes

when I expected the plowing to be toughest, it was easiest. And the reverse was equally true. I have to be on my toes every minute of the year it seems. So much planning and adjusting and replanning. I'm glad it is over. I'm tired. (3)

A major problem is that there is so much to learn and so brief a time. An experienced teacher has developed her "bags of tricks" and files of "sure fire" materials. For the beginner, though, much of the first year is a search for "what works."

The overriding question of this year has been, 'What works?' I'm in a constant search for materials. It is never-ending. My kids aren't that bright, but they devour material and look at me as if to say, 'Well, what's next?' Our school has a curriculum guide that is only five years old, but it is terribly dated already. The students know a lot of the stuff already. They learned it in lower grades or just picked it up. They are bored by a good bit of the rest, too. I'm constantly squeezing ideas and tips from the other eight-grade teachers. They are helpful, but they are in the same box I am. Then there is the problem of getting a big buildup on a particular workbook or special unit by a teacher who has had fabulous success with it. I try it and I fall on my face. Then there are the kids. They are so fickle. A couple of times I took their suggestion on things they wanted to study and work on. After much work and many late hours, I'd get these classes prepared and the very same kids who were so anxious to make the suggestions now couldn't care less.

My school district has curriculum specialists. Some of them are very good, particularly the math specialist. He would give me too much material. I'd spend hours deciding about which approach to use to teach ten minutes worth of material. The language arts specialist was a sweet lady but rarely available and most of her ideas were really out-to-lunch. I was on my own. When you get right down to it, you have to make the curriculum and the materials yours before they are any good to you. Someone else's brilliant materials are nothing until you have made them your own. This is hard to do the first year. (4)

It isn't just materials. The instructional process, which seems so effortless in textbooks and in observations, can be a major stumbling block. The actual skills and strategies of teaching unfortunately don't come with the first teaching contract.

I'm living proof that teaching is harder than it looks. I've always been a good student. I did very well in my education courses. In fact, I got an 'A' in methods! However, I just about flunked once I had my own class. I really like working with the children independently and in small groups, but once I had to be up front, before the entire class, I'd have trouble. Little things that I had taken for granted became quite difficult to do well. I'd always admired teachers who can ask a lot of good questions and keep things really moving without having to step in and monopolize. Admiring is not doing, believe me! I discovered that asking questions is tricky business. First, it isn't that

easy to come up with good ones. Then, there is the matter of calling on someone who you think can answer it or explore it in an interesting way. Now, comes the tricky part: listening carefully to what the student is saying, at the same time evaluating what he is saying, thinking of an appropriate response to his remarks, and, on top of that, trying to figure out what the next move should be. Should I ask him another question? Where should I go? Should I correct what the first student said...meanwhile losing the train of thought I was trying to develop? It's very complex, this teaching game. (5)

Much of the first year, then, is spent in groping with materials and methods of instruction. It is a struggle in which the beginner gets little real help.

Students. One of the most vivid discoveries of the first year teacher is the discovery of what theologians call "man's fall in human nature." He discovers human frailty and perversity in many areas of school life, but particularly in his students. This discovery is acutely reflected in research done with the Minnesota Teacher Attitude Inventory, a test frequently given to college students planning to become teachers. The MTAI is designed to measure "those attitudes of the teacher which predict how well he will get along with pupils in interpersonal relations, and indirectly how well satisfied he will be with teaching as a vocation." (6)

The MTAI has been a very popular instrument for research on teaching. It has been used in over fifty research studies and is considered

by many as a good indicator of teacher attitudes toward students. A recent study using it demonstrated the existence of what is called the "curve of disenchantment." The test results show rather dramatically that during pre-service training, the prospective teacher's attitudes toward students become warmer and more positive. But among beginning teachers there is a sharp drop in positive attitudes toward students. In fact, beginning teachers' scores are significantly lower than those of students just entering teacher training. Further, the research on the MTAI shows that there is a sharp decline in positive attitudes during the first four months, after which a very slow rise begins to take place. Although the reason for this "curve of disenchantment" is unknown, one might guess that college students who are planning to be teachers forget what they and their friends were actually like as students. During their college years they study children in textbooks, fantasize about the children they will teach and, in general, develop very unrealistic views about their future students. Once they encounter the "real student" in their classes, they are confused and "put off." Students, even young ones, can sense the inexperience and insecurity of a beginning teacher; there are a good number of students who take advantage of the situation.

> I had trouble with Robert at the first of this week. He sits right in front of me and can talk to me. I'll be sitting at my desk, and he'll look over and take something from it. If I stand up and put something on my desk, he'll have to see what it is. He talks out constantly if I'm giving a lesson, and without raising his hand, he'll have the answers. He'll have wisecracks--like if

I "yell" at someone to do something--he'll turn around and yell, too. I have my own little assistant teacher in there, and I keep saying, 'I'm the teacher, not you. Why are you telling them what to do?' (7)

There is probably no single thing that causes beginning teachers more trouble and more anxiety than discipline problems. Few young adults have had any experience in being in charge of other people. When they take over their first class in September, however, it is their responsibility to be in charge. And it is one responsibility that many handle badly.

Bobby has been taken from my class. He was transferred to a 5/4 class. From the beginning of the term I have had discipline problems with him. I didn't call his mother because she was in the hospital having a baby. I don't know who the father is; I don't believe she does either. Anyway, I haven't been able to contact her. I did, however, speak to the guidance counselor about him, and she's been watching him for a while. She's started a file on him but I haven't seen it yet. Tuesday was an impossible day for me. I just didn't know what I was going to do with him. I came home. I was hysterical. I cried all afternoon, all evening, and all night. I really felt that this was the end. I was not going back and what was the sense of knocking myself out? It wasn't worth it. Here I was trying to help people. They don't want to accept you and this is exactly what I felt: very useless. I felt that I was not a teacher; I was a policeman. What did I need this aggravation for? (8)

Untrained and unskilled, the very fact of having to manage children undermines the confidence of some beginning teachers. As one first year teacher recently reported, "I couldn't get over the number of children in my room. I was crushed because I couldn't remember all their names. I thought, 'How can I ever do anything with these children when I can't even remember who they are!' That's one thing about a beginning teacher: you're miserable at first because you're afraid you are losing control and you can't relax with the children." (9)

Parents. One of the great surprises of the first year of teaching is the complexity of the teacher's relationship with parents. As one beginning teacher reported, "Before this year, I never would have believed there were parents who would really give a teacher a hard time or blame her for their child's problems. But I had a traumatic experience with parents this year." (10)

The beginning teacher expects that the parents of his students will be his natural allies in that they are both concerned with the child's growth and welfare. He expects to be backed up by parents, perhaps because his own parents always backed up his teachers. He expects to encounter in parents similar attitudes toward and perceptions of the child. Instead, he often discovers parents with intense emotional involvement with their child and highly divergent perceptions of the child from his own. Not uncommonly the attitudes and perceptions take this form: "This kid is really doing nothing in school. If only his family situation would straighten out." In the meantime the parents are thinking, "Our child was doing fine until she was assigned to this uptight teacher."

In recent years more and more parents are recognizing the importance of schooling for the future of their children. While this has yielded positive benefits, it can cause the beginning teacher some difficulties. For one thing, many parents become quite concerned when they discover that their child is being taught by an inexperienced person. Also, they find it hard not to communicate their lack of confidence. As a beginning teacher advised, "It is difficult for a first year teacher to meet parents. I would say that it's best not to mention that you're a beginner. Some parents feel insecure if they think their children have a first year teacher." (11)

Part of our heightened awareness of schools is the occasional overconcern on the part of parents for the performance of their child. Frequently the question "How is he doing?" really means "How am I doing as a parent?" Seemingly direct inquiry by the parent on the behavior and performance of the child can be an event requiring high diplomacy. The young teacher in the following incident, which occurred at the annual Parents' Night, was a good teacher but had much to learn about parental diplomacy.

> When I finished my talk, I handed out folders of their children's work and told the parents I would be happy to talk with them individually. Most of my students had been doing fairly well so most of the evening went well. The parents of my two prize 'ding-a-lings' didn't show, an event I greeted with mixed emotions. Although I had been quite apprehensive about talking

to these strangers, things were going well. I had been trying to be as direct and honest as possible. Looking back on it, I think I was especially intent on being honest because I felt the whole showboat atmosphere and intention of the Parents' Night was dishonest. My overreaction got me in trouble though. One set of parents hung back. I hadn't met them yet, but I knew immediately who they were. They were Dickie K's parents. He, poor kid, had gotten the worst features of both. Dickie is a great big happy kid. He is not bright and he is quite lazy. All he likes to do is play his guitar. He is pretty good at it. The only time I have gotten any work from him was during a unit on the Civil War. I got him to look up the folk songs and marching chants of the war. He gave a "singing and strumming" report to the class. But after that: nothing! I'm an easy grader and he was carrying about a C-minus at that time. Well, they asked a lot of questions and I stayed with my straight-facts approach and avoided generalizations. Then Mr. K glanced anxiously at his wife, looked over his shoulder to see that none of the other parents was within earshot, and said, 'Tell me. We're both college men. My son, Dickie, is he, you know, college material?'

I didn't know what to say, so I said, 'What do you mean?' 'We just want to know if we should be saving to send him to college. Does he have it for college?'

All I thought of was that here was a guy who really wanted a straight answer, so I said, 'No.' Then I looked at Mrs. K.

I should have looked at her before answering. Her calm face just seemed to break up, to dissolve before my eyes. After the tears came the hostility. 'How dare you prejudge my boy! Admit it, you don't like Dickie. You are trying to ruin his chances. We work hard to raise our only son and then some young know-it-all teacher ruins everything!' Underneath the hysteria, which subsided in about five long minutes, she was right. I had no right to make the judgment. Also, I didn't have enough data. Well, I made another appointment with them. During this I saw that frightening intensity behind their desire to get my class's number one guitar player into college. Some good things came out of this conference though. Dickie's work picked up. I learned a good lesson, too. Somewhere T. S. Eliot says that human nature can stand just so much reality. I believe that. (12)

Normally, what parents learn about school and what is going on in a classroom is almost second-hand information, coming from their children and other parents. There is a great potential for distortion here. Occasionally parents misinterpret events and gang up on a teacher, as in the following incident.

I was having a great first year. Everything was going well. I was especially pleased by my rapport with parents. That is why I was so shocked when the principal called me into his office and told me he had just received a visit from two parents complaining about me. They were the parents of two of my boys. They claimed

that I favored the girls. As evidence of this they charged that I systemdtically assigned excessive homework on the nights the boys had Little League games. I was stunned. Homework! When I did give it, there was only about fifteen minutes worth. I only gave it about twice a week, and there was no special day, just when I thought it was needed. I was furious. Why hadn't they come to me! They had told him that they were afraid I would take it out on their children. That was even worse! I couldn't believe my ears. I left the office, stopped for a cigarette to calm myself and went back to my room. I certainly wasn't going to bring this up with my children, but I had to know one thing. I asked the boys what evening they played Little League baseball. Almost exactly half the class chimed out "Monday and Wednesday" and the other half said "Tuesday and Thursday." I went right to the principal's office and brought him back with me. I asked the question again. The boys chimed out like last time, but all--boys and girls--were very confused. The principal burst out laughing and after a few seconds so did I. (13)

The already complicated relationships between parents and teacher is further complicated when there is a difference in social class. This is strikingly true in a case of middle-class teachers and lower-class parents. The parents of the poor and minority groups themselves often have had disappointing and unpleasant experiences with schools and, as a result, they regard schools and teachers with suspicion. They see school from two conflicting vantage points. First, they are one of the only avenues

available to their children to get out from underneath the poverty and discrimination that they have experienced. Second, they see schools as just another part of the cold, oppressive social system which is keeping them down. Therefore, when they encounter a teacher, particularly a teacher of an obviously different social or ethnic or racial background, it is a complicated human interaction. As a result, while the young teacher may be convinced that he is helping a poor child, the parent may see the teacher as part of the problem, rather than part of the solution.

Faculty Peers. Many young people become teachers because of great admiration for some of their own teachers. Others are attracted to the idea of working with an idealistic group of people who are dedicated to improving the human condition. Others enter education because they wish to be a part of a community of scholar-teachers. Naturally, then, these new teachers look to their faculty colleagues for psychological support and professional skills. They realize that experienced teachers represent the richest available source of knowledge about teaching, about materials at work, and those all-important "tricks of the trade." Unfortunately, however, the manner in which most schools are structured forces teachers to do their work in isolation from one another. They see one another in the teachers' lounge, the lunch room, and the halls. They rarely work in close enough proximity to allow for mutual observation and sustained professional discussion. The few contacts the beginning teacher has with his colleagues in a lunch room or teachers' lounge are often discouraging to the beginner.

> The older teachers who have been there three or four years usually sit together. Yesterday I had yard duty, which meant I

had to eat lunch a little earlier than the rest of the teachers, so I ate with two of the older teachers. We discussed some of the idealism behind teaching. I was told they wouldn't advise someone to come into the school system. When I asked the reason, they told me that the children were getting too hard to handle. They also told me that in a couple of weeks my idealism would wear off, that it's easy to work with a slow class which is well-behaved because you don't have to work too hard, that I should not expect too much from these children whose I.Q.'s are in the high 60's and low 70's, and that I should just try to teach them as much as I could.

Ms. H was a teacher last term. Now she is the library teacher. She usually takes my class if I have yard duty or a conference. She told me, 'I feel sorry for you having those kids for the whole term because they're a wild group.' ...There's a teacher whose line is always behind me.... She is an experienced teacher. I don't know how long she's been teaching, but she's another one who reassures me that I'm doing well, and I have a bad class, and I have to make the best of it. (14)

Not infrequently beginning teachers are a great curiosity to their older colleagues. Sometimes their ideas or life-styles threaten experienced teachers. Sometimes this is the result of the beginner's indiscretion and misguided zeal. Whatever the causes are, the beginning teachers are the losers.

Students were not the only people who I confused during the course of the year. When one is a new teacher he is looked upon as some kind of threatening animal ready to prey upon the older teachers, to turn the students against them, and to subvert the social order which they have carefully constructed over the many years they have been there. Any innovation that one tries in the classroom or in operation of the school is looked upon as incompetence, negligence, or even worse, treason.

If one wished to take his students on a field trip, he was cross-examined at various levels as to the nature and purpose of the trip and was usually discouraged from taking it with stories of control problems, transportation and substitution difficulties. If one wished to eliminate a portion of the curriculum for something he felt was more relevant to the particular needs of the students at that time, he was reprimanded for not performing his task properly or was questioned (even by members of other departments) as to what he was doing. (15)

In the same manner that the new teacher, like it or not, good or bad, is an example to his students, so too is the experienced teacher a model to the beginner. As he grows up and struggles in his new career, he naturally looks to his older peers. Frequently the models he encounters leave much to be desired. Among his colleagues he often finds teachers who gossip and complain about their children with total lack of respect, teachers who horde ideas and materials, teachers who are more concerned

with flashy bulletin boards and neat rooms than with the minds of children, teachers who have been teaching for years but in reality have stopped thinking about it and are now simply coasting toward retirement. Fortunately there are teachers who are excited anew each day by their work and they pass this excitement on to their children. However, the beginning teacher encounters a good deal of human frailty from his faculty peers and this takes its toll.

Administrators. The new teacher's relationship with his principal and other school administrators has never been simple. However, the new spirit of militancy among teachers has altered their relationships to administrators. Whereas the principal was once considered the school's senior teacher, he is now a representative of management. The principal, nevertheless, plays a number of very different roles for the new teacher. He is the official leader of the school. He makes many of the decisions himself or acts as a funnel for the decisions of higher authorities. Decisions made by teachers or students are normally checked with him. He is usually the official spokesman for the school. Second, he is the facilitator. He keeps the school open and running, providing a good working environment and the necessary resources to teachers. Third, he is the dispenser of rewards. Often, he is the one who actually hires. He decides what classes and what extra-curricular duties the new teachers are assigned. He is also a major source of psychological reinforcement for the teacher. Fourth, he is a judge. He is the one who makes the decisions on the teacher's performance, and this immediately affects whether or not the teacher is rehired or in fact whether or not he remains in the profession. Fifth, the principal is higher authority for the teacher. He acts as a disciplinarian

in cases the teacher cannot handle. He arbitrates many of the differences among teachers. Finally, the principal is a buffer between the beginning teacher and the angry parents and, occasionally, students. Usually, the principal's office is the complaint department and he must bring about some resolution of the issues brought to his office. For the new teacher, who is already vulnerable on many fronts, the relationship with administrators calls for tact and diplomacy. As complex as the administrator's job is, it is even more complex and more difficult for the new teacher. He must be aware continually of "which administrator" he is dealing with! Is the principal sitting in on my class as the judge, or as a helper or what? It is not at all uncommon, therefore, for the beginning teacher to come in conflict with the administrator.

> Thursday was the day when I almost handed in my resignation. I just felt that there was no place for me to turn. The principal had come into my room after Freddy and Thomas had had a fierce fight in the classroom, and he asked me about Freddy's record. Now, Freddy had just been transferred into my class; he was just admitted three weeks ago. I received his records only last week and I have not had the time to go through them. I told him, also, that I didn't like to make a practice of reading records before I knew the child. He told me that I was supposed to read them and I said that I disagreed. Then he said something to me which really made me feel very, very bad. He said, 'When you have had twenty years' experience, then, perhaps, you can disagree with me.'

> This was the first time I had ever said I disagreed with him. I always went along with what he said because he was the principal and he had experience where I didn't. I felt that he was very wrong talking to me like this and I was very upset. (16)

Although the administrators and teachers are bound by the common task of educating children, frequently they march to different drummers. The young teacher can find himself torn between his own sense of what the children need and the administrator's desire to build a school's reputation.

> As far as the principal and the assistant principal sometimes taking advantage of the teachers and myself, I'd like to give three examples. First of all, there is one teacher who just came into the school this year, Ms. S, and somehow or other the principal found out that she was a professional dancer at one time. This was a big mistake on her part to let him know this. What happened was he told her he wanted her to start a dancing class for the children after school, without being paid, and that she would have to be responsible for a program in dancing for the assembly. This was an example of how the principal takes advantage of the teachers.
>
> Another example is Ms. D, who was my cooperating teacher last term. She also is given an awful lot of assignments. She has special course work in library, so she is given the job of ordering all the books and taking care of the library when the librarian is not there. Also, being a very good teacher and being able to

get the most out of her children, she was given the added responsibility of the science fair. She is completely in charge of the fair and has to make sure that everything is going according to what is expected.

As far as I am concerned, I am in charge of the music assembly and the glee club. My principal went to a meeting at the superintendent's office and he heard other principals talking about a good glee club, so he figured he had to have one to show off, too, and I am not kidding, this is just how he feels. Everything for him is show, so he came to me and insisted in harsh words that I have a glee club. I never worked with a glee club before. I didn't know what to do. And besides, my class is not that bright that they can afford to lose me for an hour. (17)

Self-doubt. The first year of teaching is for many beginners a year of insecurity and isolation. Many beginning teachers are living in new and strange communities. They are separated from the supports of family and college friends. When they are depressed there is no one to turn to. When they have successes there is no one with whom to share them. Being young and inexperienced, they have doubts about their personal and professional competence. For many, teaching is their first real job and the prospect of failure is a fearful one. It is clear to them, as it is to the majority of the adults with whom they deal, that they are on trial. Not only are they on trial with their particular school, but they are on trial professionally since they are usually teaching on a provisional certificate.

Given their precarious state and natural uncertainty, beginning teachers look for signs of success and acceptance. They become especially sensitive to signals they receive from their colleagues, administrators, and students. They normally receive a great mixture of signals and this leads to further confusion. Their uncertainty heightens their sensitivity and vulnerability, so that they read too much into the comments and reactions of others.

The combination of the beginning teacher's insecurities and the various problems he encounters feed upon one another. His inexperience and insecurity set the beginner up for problems, and the problems breed insecurity, and this insecurity breeds more problems.

The Effects of the Beginner's Problems. It might be argued that the effect of these problems on the beginning teacher is not especially harmful and that they, indeed, may be beneficial. Certainly, doctors go through a rugged period of training and internship before fully becoming doctors. Enlistees go through a notoriously taxing "boot camp" before they are considered soldiers. Many consider the first year of teaching a year of initiation during which the beginner earns the right to be called a teacher. Those who perservere and can "take it," earn the right to continue in the profession. Undeniably, too, the beginning teacher learns an immense amount from the trials and tribulations of the first year. The trouble with this line of reasoning, however, is that it ignores many of the harmful effects of the first year of teaching. The teaching profession has an incredibly high drop-out rate, and it is difficult to imagine that this is not connected to the initial difficulties encountered by beginning

teachers. Even during the period when teaching jobs were plentiful, 30% of those trained never entered the profession. One out of five beginning teachers reports that he or she does not anticipate teaching five years later. Perhaps the most devastating figure of all is the fact that each year 12% of trained teachers leave teaching.

This drop-out rate makes it almost impossible to build a strong, stable professional group. Such a turn-over of personnel would be inconceivable in other professional and occupational groups such as doctors, lawyers, veterinarians or airline pilots. While there are, undoubtedly, many competing causes for the high drop-out rate among teachers, such as marriage and the lure of higher paying jobs, it appears clear that many people leave because they feel they have failed. Often this sense of failure and inadequacy is linked with a sense of personal dissatisfaction with teaching as a career.

Many of those who stay in teaching, of course, go on to become excellent teachers. They become excellent, however, not as a result of the carefully thought-out introduction into teaching. They excel because of their personal qualitites and efforts. Indeed, they excel in spite of the manner in which they are introduced into the profession.

There are many who stay and who do not excel. They spend their first year groping with their problems. They learn to deal with them but in a trial-and-error fashion. Many of the solutions they come up with work against children. For example, the fourth grade teacher tries to teach science but finds that the course she took during her training does not help.

She does not have any materials and no one to give the sustained help she needs. Frustrated on all sides, she learns to ignore science and spends the time on subjects with which she feels more confident. Then there is the situation where the teacher learns new attitudes. She started out confident that her children learned a great deal. However, through her own inexperience she is not able to find the right "match" of materials for her students. The students are not learning and the young teacher projects the cause of her failure on to the students. In a book about the first year of teaching, Teachers Talk: Views from Inside City Schools, Estelle Fuchs showed how the "curve of disenchantment" affects a group of 22 elementary school teachers. Using the teachers' own words in descriptions of their experience, she showed how they respond to the problems they confront by adjusting to some of the worst elements of school life. In her final chapter Fuchs stated:

> As they move through their first semester, the beginning teachers experienced emotions ranging from a state of euphoria to panic, exhilaration and disappointment, restiveness and calm acceptance of their new position. In the process, the beginning teacher underwent a period of induction of the employing school, which asserted a powerful influence on her accomodation to a bureaucratic system, sometimes resulting in the abandoning of the lessons of her own pre-service education. (18)

Fuchs finds this particularly true among teachers in inner-city schools, a finding which simply deepens the problems confronted by the urban poor.

The way we introduce people into teaching leaves much to be desired. The beginner often is assigned the heaviest work-load of any on the staff. He has to teach a curriculum that is frequently strange to him, often with a sketchy curriculum guide and old textbooks. He is often saddled with the most difficult classes, while his more senior colleagues have the best students and best schedules. He is given the full complement of extra duties, often the mc onerous. As Charles Silberman stated, "The beginning teacher, after all, is thrust into a situation fraught with anxiety and fear that do not necessarily evaporate with experience. He sees himself as on trial before his pupils, his colleagues, his superiors and above all, himself." (19)

While admittedly the first year of teaching is a year of much learning, the beginning teacher is primarily learning how to survive. He learns in a sink or swim fashion. He struggles to keep his head above water. While many drown, some survive. But as a goal for the first year of teaching, survival is not good enough. We must design a better way to introduce people into teaching.

How Teachers Can Respond. A major characteristic of a professional group, whether it be dentists or architects, is that the members of the group have a major say in how people entering their profession are trained. They feel a direct responsibility for the training system and the state of training of beginners. One thing that keeps teachers from getting full recognition as a profession is that teachers have little control over the manner in which they are trained. Nor have they shown a particular interest in this area.

In recent years teachers have found a new solidarity. They are working together to improve their working conditions, salaries, and their voice in educational decision-making. For the most part, however, they have left the training of beginning teachers in the hands of others: university professors, administrators, and state department officials. Although teachers for long have been aware that undergraduate, pre-service training is only a beginning and that there should be much more on-the-job training, they have chosen to do little about this. It would appear to be in the best interest of teachers to make a serious effort to improve the introduction of beginners into teaching. For one thing, the high drop-out rate makes it extremely difficult to develop a stable professional group. This limits the impact of teachers on educational decisions. Second, the poor classroom performance of beginning teachers and the crippling effect the experiences have on many reflect poorly on the profession as a whole. What is needed is a positive program to reverse the situation. Teachers and their organizations should change the first year from a problem-ridden, discouraging experience to a year of learning and growth.

What We Can Do. The poor start that most beginning teachers experience is not an insolvable problem. In fact, the plight of the beginning teacher could be changed quite radically with a small investment of time, money, and energy. What can be done? First, teachers and their organizations must take the need for an adequate introductory system to teaching as a priority problem. Second, we should study the problem and explore various solutions. Third, we should establish policies. Fourth, these policies should be made part of contract negotiations. Fifth, plans should be put into effect at the local level.

A Possible Plan. Right now we do not know what it takes to provide a good introduction to teaching for the majority of those entering the field. The following suggestions are presented for the purpose of illustration and as approaches that should be tested.

Pre-orientation Program: Many school districts have special orientation programs for new teachers. They vary in length from a little more than a half day to as much as a full week. They vary in content from a florid pep talk by the superintendent on "The Challenges of Today's Youth" to the workings of a particular school district. Even the best of these programs underestimate the job of orienting a new teacher. They also overestimate how much an individual can learn in a relatively short period. They attempt to cram into a few days staggering amounts of directions, procedures, and advice about teaching. The beginning teacher heads for his first class with his arms filled with memos and directives and his head swimming with elaborate procedures for handling late-comers, transferees, milk money, book cards, and nuclear attack. The result of this quick and dirty orientation has been beautifully captured in the opening chapters of Up the Down Staircase. Perhaps a better approach would be to have the new teacher become familiar with procedures, policies and district-wide directives before school begins. When a teacher is hired routinely he should be given all the materials he will need to know and put into effect in September. In addition, he should have a full set of the curriculum materials so that he can master them over the summer.

Orientation Week: Although the entire first year should be considered as "orienting," for the beginning teacher, there should at least

be a week prior to the arrival of students during which he can make final preparations. A number of events might take place during:

(1) The new teacher should be told by his department or grade level chairman the specific details of his assignment (unless he has been informed earlier). He should be given the names of his students so he can memorize them. He should be given keys to his room and be helped to get it ready.

(2) Throughout the week there should be a carefully spaced series of meetings with the principal, counselors, nurses, librarians and other specialists. The purpose should be to provide the beginner with a basic orientation to the various routines. These meetings should not just be out-pourings of information but should allow time for clarifying questions and issues.

(3) Each new teacher should be assigned a "buddy" teacher. For the experienced "buddy" teacher, this should be considered a legitimate extra-curricular duty, since it is anticipated that he would give substantial time to helping out a younger colleague. During orientation week the "buddy" teacher should provide a source of information, help the beginner set up his room, and familiarize him with the procedures for fire drills, accidents, disciplinary referral and so forth. He also should be ready to help the beginner in planning for his first lessons. As the year goes on, the "buddy" teacher's

role should change, adjusting his help toward attendance reports and grading as the year progresses. Most important, he should be a ready source of psychological and professional support.

(4) The new teachers should be given a complete tour of school buildings so that on the opening day they are familiar with all of the basic facilities.

(5) The new teachers should be thoroughly introduced to their colleagues. Instead of simply having them stand up as their names are called during the first faculty meeting, the new teacher should be presented in some detail. Ideally, the "buddy" teacher should provide a five or ten minute description so that the newcomer is not just a strange name and face in the lounge. On larger faculties these full introductions should be done in smaller units.

(6) Community people should be asked to help orient the new teachers. During this first week, the orientation might be confined to a basic description of the community and a tour of the neighborhood served by the school.

(7) The local teachers' union should explain to the new teacher the nature of his rights and responsibilities. Before the teacher actually begins working with children, he should have a clear understanding of his legal status and the

procedures to follow if difficulties arise. (Not only should the teachers be oriented to the community, but the community should be oriented to the new teachers.) Instead of a group picture of all the new teachers appearing in the local newspaper, the new teacher should be given a more thorough exposure. Each teacher should be given a "feature" write-up during the early months of the school year.

(8) During the orientation week, consideration should be given to the new teacher's non-school needs. Usually he is moving into new quarters and is faced with innumerable details from finding groceries to getting a telephone installed. He should be allowed ample time to take care of these important affairs. Also some social life should be made available to the new teacher. Special dinners, picnics and parties should be built into the orientation week. This, however, should not be something that abruptly ends with the beginning of school.

The Colleague Teacher: Normally, provisions are made to evaluate the new teacher but not to aid him; he is assigned a judge but not a helper. The beginning teacher needs a master craftsman to help him learn on the job. He needs, in effect, a teacher of teachers who has the time and the training to respond to the full range of his needs. Such a teacher's teacher might be called a colleague teacher, reflecting the fact that he is there to aid, not to evaluate. The colleague teacher would be someone chosen by the

other teachers for their teaching skill and human relation qualities. Also he should possess special skills in the helping relationship. A colleague teacher would be responsible for six or seven teachers. To compensate for responsibility, he would be given a half-time teaching assignment. The colleague teacher would perform a number of functions, such as the following: (1) He would regularly visit the classes of beginning teachers and hold private conferences with them. (2) He would open his class for their visits and for conferences following each visit. (3) He would be a special source of "highly teachable" materials for the new teacher, maintaining extensive files, lesson plans and resources. (4) He would employ technology, such as audio- and video-tape recorders, to help the beginning teacher understand his strengths and weaknesses; he would be available for regular professional help and counsel. (5) He would organize an in-service program specifically for beginning teachers.

Since the colleague teacher will be focal in the new system to introduce people into teaching, he should be chosen with great care. It should be a position that carries status and reward. It is imperative, however, that the colleague teacher be chosen by his faculty peers and that he keep his identification with teachers. If he is chosen by the school administration, his link with the administration and the evaluative process will doom his effectiveness. Further, the colleague teacher should be reviewed regularly in order to insure that only the very best people continue in this position.

A Realistic Teaching Load: The assignment of the first year teacher should be severely cut back to recognize the beginner's state of

training and to assure the possibility of his successful start. The elementary school teacher ideally should be on a team with four other teachers of the same grade level. He should be given an opportunity to teach the subject matter with which he is most confident, but others should be ready to step into areas where he is uncertain or untrained. While one of the other teachers on his team takes over his class, he should observe and be ready to discuss the lesson with the teacher. Also, the elementary school teacher should be given first choice of specialist teachers in art and music and the other areas. While these specialist teachers are taking over his classes, he should be allowed to observe other teachers and to plan his own strategies.

The beginning high school teacher should be given no more than two different preparations daily. Instead of having to move to and from several different classrooms, he should have one stationary room assignment. His teaching load should be limited to three classes and one homeroom. Like the elementary school teacher, he should use some of his free time for visiting other classrooms and for planning.

The beginning elementary and secondary school teachers should not be given, as in the common practice, the most taxing, difficult students. They should be given neither the brightest nor the most troublesome. The average student is challenging enough to the beginning teacher without having to deal with special problems associated with students at the extremes.

Extra-curricular Assignments: Beginning teachers should be given extra-curricular duty and assignments; however, they should not be given

the most difficult ones, those calling for the voice and bearing of a Marine sergeant. Ideally, he should have extra-curricular duties that reflect his strengths and which allow him to come to know students in a reasonably relaxed environment.

Special In-Service Training: Finally, the new teacher should be part of a special in-service program organized by the colleague teacher. Such an in-service program might have two components: one designed to deal with the issues and problems faced by the beginning teacher; the other to extend the orientation beyond the first weeks. In each week there should be two sessions of an hour and a half length devoted to these components. The size of the groups should be limited to approximately a dozen or fewer beginning teachers. The agenda should be the experiences of the beginning teachers. As discipline problems emerge, they should become the focus of the discussion. They should, however, be more than complaint sessions which tend simply to heighten frustrations. Instead they should take a problem-solving approach, attempting to clarify difficulties and propose practical classroom-tested strategies. The beginning teacher should be encouraged to come up with workable strategies rather than passively rely on "instant answers" from colleague teachers. As the year goes on, the character of this on-going seminar should change to reflect the growth and development of the beginning teachers.

The second component should provide fresh ideas and understanding to the new teacher. Here the colleague teacher should introduce new curricula ideas and bring in special resources. The aspects of school life

that were touched upon in the orientation week should be given a thorough exposure. Administrators, consultants, and specialists should be regularly invited to share their ideas and clarify how they can help. Things which were begun during orientation, such as introduction to the community, should be fully elaborated. Groups of community people should give the beginning teacher a fuller understanding of the unique character of the community, including the power structure, the industrial and social profiles, problems and special features. This should be an opportunity for parents to communicate in depth their concern for the education of their children and exchange ideas with young teachers free of hostility. Finally, the colleague teacher should call upon other teachers to make presentations on innovative aspects of their teaching. In this manner, the success of the beginning teachers becomes more than a concern of the colleague teachers but intimately involves many teachers in a building.

Conclusion. The program for first year teachers, as sketched above, is certainly not the only program possible. It has been presented in order to be suggestive of the kind of effort we need to make to more adequately introduce people into teaching. In actual application it undoubtedly will have to be modified to meet local conditions. One "objection" to such a plan is that it would cost money. While this is true, communities need to realize that while they have asked teachers to take on one of its most critical tasks, they have provided the teacher with relatively meager training. We must recognize that the high drop-out rate is a very expensive waste of society's resources. However, teachers are well aware that change in education is hard to come by. No one is going to

improve the lot of the beginning teacher unless organized teachers take the initiative. Constructive programs for the introduction of first year teachers must become a priority item for all teachers. Programs to meet this problem should become part of the contractual agreements between teachers and employing school boards. It also should become a problem that individual teachers recognize and work to eradicate. All of us either have personally felt inadequate or have seen around us the effects of our sink-or-swim introductory system into teaching. It is unfair to children. It is a waste of taxpayer's money. It takes a painful toll on the beginning teacher in personal disappointments and professional frustrations. Ashley Montague remarked in The Cultured Man that "The deepest personal sorrow suffered by human beings consists of the difference of what one was capable of becoming and what one has, in fact, become." This statement is true for too many beginning teachers.

NOTES:

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16. Estelle Fuchs, Teachers Talk. p. 65.

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19. Charles E. Silberman, Crisis in the Classroom: The Remaking of American Education. New York Random House, 1970. pp. 494-5.