

Outlook

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**THE UAB SCHOOL
OF EDUCATION**

*maximizing
human potential*

In the previous issue of *Education Outlook*, the “Viewpoint” section examined the factious issue of teacher training. Three Birmingham-area teachers expressed their views on how teachers should be trained and the pros and cons of education schools. In this issue, we continue with the theme of teacher training, presenting the views of Paul Hubbert, Ph.D., executive secretary of the Alabama Education

Association, who originally offered these ideas in the *Alabama School Journal*, a publication of the AEA. His comments are reprinted (and edited) with permission. J. Foster Watkins, Ed.D., professor of educational leadership in the UAB School of Education, challenges—but agrees with in some instances—Hubbert’s position that schools of education are falling short of their mission to train teachers.

PAUL HUBBERT: Teachers Flunk Education Schools

Alabama colleges of education would not be pleased with responses to an AEA survey that the association conducted several years ago. We asked first-, second-, and third-year teachers if their undergraduate programs fully prepared them to do their jobs, and in general, their response was “no.” When asked what part of their training was most helpful, they overwhelmingly responded that it was their student teaching experience.

Teaching consists of two major parts—knowing *what* to teach and knowing *how* to teach. The first—knowing what to teach—falls within the purview of college and university academic departments found in the schools of arts and sci-

ences. The second part of teacher training—knowing how to teach—is the responsibility of the colleges of education. And I don’t think education schools are doing a very good job.

Teachers, too, should have strong academic backgrounds followed by a long mentoring period with a master teacher—just as a medical student visits patients and treats them under the close supervision of an attending physician. This type of training program would increase training time, and it would cost both students and the state more money, but that would be offset by the benefits of having better-prepared teachers. Teachers trained in this manner would be well-grounded in academics, with a strong emphasis on an academic major, and would be well-acquainted with the process of guiding student learning and dealing with behavioral problems.

Prospective teachers should spend a year working with highly qualified classroom teachers, followed up with seminars led by college supervisors and teacher mentors to reinforce their in-school learning experiences. Such a

teacher training would also translate into better instruction for Alabama’s students.

As a society, we place high value on expertise. We expect our pets’ veterinarians to be qualified and licensed, and we certainly wouldn’t want to travel over roads and bridges that weren’t designed by qualified, licensed engineers. No waivers are granted to anyone who wants to practice in these fields without having gone through the proper training. We should expect and accept no less from those who would teach our children. We should insist on high-quality preparation programs and grant no waivers allowing anyone to teach without that kind of rigorous training. We should have assurance that teachers know both *what* and *how* to teach.

Today, teachers are allowed to teach outside their fields of training and can even be issued provisional teaching certificates. If we are serious about providing our students with world-class education, this practice of granting waivers to teach must stop.

J. FOSTER WATKINS: UAB School of Education Is Moving Forward

I hold Dr. Hubbert in the highest personal and professional regard. I shudder to think where we would be in Alabama public education without his dedicated service and leadership during the past 30 years, and I appreciate his interest in and thoughts about teacher education in our state.

Dr. Hubbert’s opening question asked beginning teachers if their undergraduate programs had “fully prepared” them to teach. In general, their response was “no,” which is not surprising considering the enormous challenge of teaching in today’s public-school classroom and the thoughtfulness evoked by the key word “fully.” I hope that all teachers view themselves as lifelong learners who are never “fully and



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ences. The second part of teacher training—knowing how to teach—is the responsibility of the colleges of education. And I don’t think education schools are doing a very good job.

A BETTER WAY?

Rather than maintaining the current system of preparing teachers, I believe teacher training should follow the two-tier model of training physicians. Medicine, like teaching, is both a science and an art. Medical schools provide students with strong academic backgrounds in medical science, while internships provide them with real-life clinical training under the direction of resident physicians.

system would provide prospective teachers with the opportunity to make their “clinical” (in-school) training more meaningful. It would be similar to physician training, wherein students learn to diagnose medical conditions and participate in case-study discussions about their patients. Teachers trained in this manner would graduate and enter practice as well prepared as their medical professional counterparts.

Certificates issued to prospective teachers under a program of this type would be equivalent to master’s degrees. Indeed, I believe this type of training would exceed that of many master’s programs. Higher standards for

finally prepared." One wonders what the response would have been to more realistic questions such as: Do you feel adequately prepared to begin your teaching career? Do you know how to seek resources and assistance when needed? This is more than just a play on words because I acknowledge that there is room for improvement in professional education preparation programs.

MONEY FUELS PROGRESS

The positive responses to the question about student-teaching shouldn't surprise anyone in education, as the importance and perceived value of student teaching has been well documented. Dr. Hubbert introduces the "medical model" as a possible paradigm for preparing teachers. I tend to agree with him on that point. That type of clinically-based approach has been

Despite its many critics, public education in Alabama is actually a success story. Considering the paltry level of funding, the daily educational and behavioral challenges teachers face, and the belief of many people that schools can solve all of society's problems—without support from the larger community—one must come to that conclusion.

A TOTAL UNIVERSITY RESPONSIBILITY

Dr. Hubbert divided teacher preparation into two components: "what to teach" and "how to teach." But that leaves out an important third component—"the foundation in general education"—which is crucial for all teachers, especially elementary and early childhood teachers. General education courses help teachers learn to relate academic content to life's larger realities, and education schools need to devise methods for assessing how well

admissions requirements to its teacher education program. One step incorporates a "portfolio approach," which takes into account the personal and academic experiences of students entering the pre-teacher education program. It also includes interviews and on-the-spot writing exercises. Another step seeks to strengthen the academic preparation of prospective secondary-education teachers by requiring them to pursue a dual major in education and their teaching subject.


UAB's Fifth-Year Program does an admirable job of providing education career opportunities for professionals from diverse backgrounds. It is an excellent example of a quality response to a possible teacher shortage. Those of us in higher education must be open to other alternative approaches and redouble our efforts to enhance our ongoing offerings.

A "NORMING" CULTURE

A recent experience with a promising Fifth-Year Program graduate teaching his first full year of social studies allows me to make a point not addressed by Dr. Hubbert. Enthused with techniques he had learned at UAB, the student decided to implement inquiry-based instruction and collaborative learning groups in his classroom—much to the delight of his students. It wasn't long before the "norming" influences in the school, including the principal, pointed out the importance of maintaining an "orderly classroom" so that neighboring classes aren't disturbed. It was also suggested that the new teacher use an "assigned chapter, lecture, study questions, and quiz" approach, as that track might be more "manageable."

Schools too often cultivate a climate in which expectations of teachers are "limited and controlled." I have long maintained that we do a better job of preparing beginning teachers than of preparing instruction-oriented principals who would provide the necessary support and leadership to help teachers reach their full potential in the classroom. That is a heavy admission for one who for more than 40 years has helped prepare aspiring principals to reach their goals.

In the recent Report Card on Teacher Preparation Institutions in Alabama, school superintendents note that teachers need better preparation in using technologies that support instruction, in the recognition of students with special learning needs, and in the ability to deal with special needs students in their classrooms." I believe their concerns should be added to Dr. Hubbert's thoughtful reflections—and our own—as we strive to improve how we prepare teachers. Alabama's children deserve no less than our collective best efforts.



"I believe one problem we face in teacher preparation is the misguided perception that content and pedagogy are two separate components and that the 'twain do not have to meet.' —J. Foster Watkins

at the top of every reform agenda that I've seen during my 40-year involvement with teacher and administrator preparation programs. However, funds have never been forthcoming to support such a personnel-intensive approach.

Also, it should be pointed out that teachers and prospective teachers may rank student-teaching as a positive experience because it takes place in a real-world classroom rather than in a university "model classroom" setting. Therefore, as Dr. Hubbert notes, a longer student-teaching period in multiple, field-based locations with increased collaboration between university professors and classroom teachers would be desirable.

UAB is making progress on a number of fronts with support from BellSouth, including reconfiguring its teacher preparation programs. Once the new programs are in place, courses offered in pre-student-teaching semesters will use a team-teaching approach. UAB faculty and classroom teachers will collaborate in both field settings and at the university. The challenge now is to find the money to implement this intensive approach. I encourage Dr. Hubbert to help find the funds to effect these changes, as well as implement the medical-model approach in teacher preparation that he outlines so effectively.

they and the university as a whole are doing in those two vital aspects of teacher preparation.

Competence in a discipline, which is at least a desired part of "what to teach," implies an understanding of how to seek knowledge, process that knowledge, and apply it to current settings. Those abilities should be enhanced by those who train teachers. I believe one problem we face in teacher preparation is the misguided perception that content and pedagogy are two separate components and that the "twain do not have to meet." In reality, a prospective teacher must know how to combine content with pedagogy to awaken student interest in learning.

A MEETING OF THE MINDS

I found myself thinking "I wish I had said that" when Dr. Hubbert commented on a number of public-policy responses that have been made in anticipation of the "pending teacher shortage." He voices his concern about emergency certificates, teaching out of field, lower standards, and almost overnight preparation programs. I hope he will use his influence to ensure that statewide responses to meet potential shortages do so with quality, accountability, and oversight.

Again, I would be remiss if I did not mention recent steps taken by UAB to strengthen