



Supervised Teacher Education Programs at the University of Florida and Michigan State University¹

The Supervised Teacher Education (STE) programs at the University of Florida (UF) and Michigan State University (MSU) illustrate principles that are transferable to leadership development. The STE reflected a negotiated relationship with District Superintendents, principals, and on-site teachers willing to supervise student teachers in their final or next to last semester in the College of Education.

Student teachers at UF had the option of completing their student teaching in a laboratory school, but at MSU all student teachers were required to complete their program in a district public school.

Faculty, though they approved the program, often were reluctant to uproot from university responsibilities and personal residences in order to be present at the local schools. Therefore, a coordinator role was established—with full-time responsibility for coordinating and supervising the experience in the schools.

Through Ted's experience at both universities, essential elements emerged and remained relatively constant:

1. The superintendent of schools was consulted concerning the placement of student teachers in schools. Obviously, good rapport with the superintendent was essential.
2. Teachers were given the opportunity to volunteer as supervising teachers with the condition that they would engage in professional development seminars, and would meet with Ted on a regular basis to discuss student teacher progress and other logistics of the program. Typically, the volunteers were the senior teachers in a school.
3. The coordinator's role shifted from responsibility for supervising students to providing professional development for the supervising teachers.
4. Supervising teachers were released half a day a week to participate in seminars about the supervisory role. The student teachers, even from the beginning of the semester, were the replacement teacher for these half days.
5. To participate, student teachers had to be in their junior or senior year at the university.
6. The supervising teachers were the primary observers and assumed the chief role in debriefing the students. Ted would typically sit in a classroom for about an hour and then spend the rest of the time meeting with the supervising teacher, sometimes acting as a mediator in the event of disagreements between the teacher and student—which typically reflected relatively minor the differences in perspective about how to organize a classroom, when to use certain approaches, and so on.

As the coordinator, Ted was able to call on other of the College faculty, specialists in particular teaching areas. Most would drive out to the schools to demonstrate certain specific skills in the teaching of their specialization. (For example, mathematics or language arts)—but in Ted's judgment, this practice was never a strength in the program. And, in reality, it was often the residential teacher who was best equipped to model teaching a specialization.

¹ Notes from an interview with Ted Ward, 2014

There was no conscious selection of certain schools over others. All students were in one or more schools for one semester or quarter (which satisfied the State standards for teacher certification.) There was no firm limit on the number of student teachers assigned to a school. More than one student teacher per school was preferred; and three to four was considered the ideal.

Evaluative procedures tended to be less formal and more intuitive. Essentially, the coordinator conferred with the supervising teacher to judge whether or not the student teacher would be able to fulfill the teaching role. If it is judged that the student teacher would not succeed, he or she was withdrawn from the program. It is the responsibility of the supervising teacher to alert the coordinator of signs that the student teacher will not be able to function as a teacher. When alerted, Ted would typically ask something like, "When is that behavior likely to occur again?" He would then arrange to be present in the situation to verify the judgment. In this way, Ted never relinquished "responsible autonomy" in evaluation. In other words, as the university representative and coordinator of a university program, he would assert final authority in evaluation. All student teachers were expected to keep a log of their experience. Those who failed to keep a log seemed to be those who had the most difficulty.

Ted's assessment is that one semester/quarter is a sufficient time period for strengths and limitations to emerge. Clearly, the same strengths will show up once the student is employed; and hopefully limitations can be addressed before the student teacher completes his or her internship. For the semester/quarter, the students were full-time student teachers. They were not permitted to take courses or work on other aspects of their university program. Evaluation of performance and competency took place near the end of the student teacher's program in the College of Education. However, it was typically not their final experience before graduation.

In 1960 and 1967, respectively, Ted wrote two pamphlets: "You're in for a Surprise!" for student teachers, and "What Makes the Difference?" for supervising teachers.