



You're in for a Surprise!

The Student Teacher in Resident Student Teaching

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INTRODUCTION:

A SURPRISE WE WANT YOU TO HAVE

As you look forward to student teaching, there may be many questions in your mind. Like others who have faced the same important step in the professional education sequence, you ask yourself: Will I like teaching? Will teaching prove to be what I thought it would be? Have I what it takes to be a teacher?

Any important step in life presents its own adjustment problems. So it is with the change *from student to teacher* that you are now approaching. No matter how much self-confidence you can summon, there will be significant adjustments to make after you get “on the job.” The better your college preparation the easier will be the transition, of course, but much of your success or failure depends upon your ability to take full advantage of the student-teaching experience.

This booklet should be helpful in clarifying your thinking about student teaching—what it is and what it demands of you. It is to your advantage to give attention to certain matters which often come as a surprise to student teachers. There are common misapprehensions about what student teaching means; you will know better what to expect by knowing more about *what will be expected of you* as a student teacher.

Although not everyone has the personality, patience, scholarship, and ambition necessary to become a competent teacher, we firmly believe that those who possess these capacities can, and should, consider becoming members of this profession. Schoolteachers continue to be in constant demand, and it is reasonable to believe that young people entering the profession can expect rewarding careers.

We hope that you are *surprised* with your own aptitude as a teacher. Like many student teachers before you, you may find classroom teaching thoroughly congenial. Student teaching holds many surprises for you, but this one is the happiest!

THE BIG STEP

You will soon be taking a big step. As you move into student teaching, you are making a transition from student to teacher. Although you are enrolled as a college student during the time of your internship, in a far more significant sense you are a beginning teacher. You may no longer behave like a pupil—the time has come for you to be the teacher! In other words, you are still a learner, but you must carry new leadership responsibility.

It Is Later Than You Think

Now that you are a teacher in a full-time student-teaching program, the classroom will seem to absorb your whole life. Day-by-day preparation will occupy what you used to call “free time.” Pupils will be facing you, looking to you for guidance and leadership, and expecting you to make decisions. The responsibilities you face may seem overwhelming. If you are looking toward student teaching as just one more step in a college sequence, you are in for a big surprise! When you first step in front of the class for your first day of “solo” teaching, you enter the profession in the fullest sense of the word.

To be a teacher demands many kinds of abilities, knowledge, and, beneath it all, a deep sense of responsibility to the agencies of society by whose means you are being given the opportunity to teach. You must understand that you do not teach within a world separated from the rest of society. A teacher is responsible to his pupils, to their parents, to the community at large, and to the state. The people of the community speak through their board of education, effecting decisions concerning teacher selection, curriculum organization, and school leadership. The children you look at across your desk have parents; these parents are vitally concerned about the welfare and progress of their

children. These agencies and these people cannot be ignored. They have a right to expect certain things of you. One of the reasons that full-time resident student teaching has become increasingly popular is that through experiences provided by such a program, you are better able to comprehend these forces and realize your responsibility to them.

Perhaps the full impact of the responsibility will not hit you until the day you attempt to make out grade cards or reports to parents on the progress of your pupils. Then you will certainly realize, as never before, the far-reaching implications of what you have been doing for these children. Has it been done as well as it should have been? Will parents be satisfied with the job you have done? Have you worked skillfully with *each* pupil? Have you been faithful to the principles of democracy which have provided public education? Are you keeping faith with those who support and determine what public education in this community should be?

Student teaching is one aspect of professional teacher education which has come under little public criticism during the recent waves of popular challenge in the press. This may be because it is so much easier for the public to understand the practical importance of real experience in a real classroom, working with real boys and girls, under competent supervision.

Most criticism has been leveled at educational theory and methods courses. There are even *teachers* who will laughingly take you aside and say, "Just forget all that theory they taught you back at the college, and we'll make a *real* teacher out of you!" The misunderstanding of the role of educational theory seems uncomfortably common. Theory, in any profession or art, is the undergirding body of knowledge about the field which enables its workers to operate intelligently in practice. In education, the staggering number of variable and individualized factors makes it impossible to develop a body of theory which gives complete directions as to how every situation which may arise in the classroom should be handled.

Student teaching will provide for you a rich sampling of the exciting, frustrating, vitalizing, and tiring experiences which a teacher faces. You will be able, through intelligent analysis of the experiences which confront you, to interpret their meanings and bolster your understanding of the theory of education.

Seminar sessions with other student teachers will provide further stimulation toward a deeper understanding of the meaning implicit in what you experience in the classroom. As you talk and study with other student teachers, college resource people, and community participants, you will be able to see new value in the professional books and source material which once may have seemed irrelevant. (Take your books with you to your assigned community—they should be handy for reference and review.)

One of the essential elements in being a good teacher is gaining skill in human relations. You will need to relate yourself well to other teachers, to the principal, to parents, and to the pupils. A good teacher is essentially outgoing; the introverted person is usually uncomfortable as a teacher. It is easier to help others become self-expressive and productive if one sets a good example through his own personality. It is not enough to be cheerful and optimistic "on the inside;" to communicate a positive outlook to others, you must *show* it on your face and in your actions.

Student teaching is almost here! Are you ready for the change from pupil to teacher? Your last chance to *prepare* for teaching has arrived.

How Much Help Will You Need?

It seems to be part of our American tradition to take special pride in achievements which we make "all by ourselves." The day of the self-made person may not be gone, but it is not necessary to develop a teaching career in this way. It is a sign of intelligence to know what kind of help you need. There are so many excellent resources and aids along the road to a teaching career! A newcomer should take advantage of them.

Your Supervising Teacher stands ready to give the help and support that you need. She will be watching you closely, trying to understand you well enough to give you individualized advice and assistance. You may be fearful as you face the prospect of teaching a class; or, on the other hand, you may be so confident already that you are eager to go into the classroom without any supervision whatsoever. Your supervising teacher will try to be alert to these characteristics. He will plan with you as best suits your personality and background.

There will be differences of opinion on some matters. Your supervising teacher will respect your ideas if you can intelligently relate them to principles or logical procedures. She is actually more apt to criticize you for not showing originality and ability to make your own decisions.

You can be of important assistance in this process by learning quickly to communicate with your supervising teacher. He needs to know what you want him to do for you; she wants to know how much support you need, when you are ready to work alone, where you feel strong, and where you feel weak. The best approach is to begin teaching where you feel most secure, capitalizing upon your strengths, and developing your confidence. Then you will be better able to deal with your areas of weakness.

The School Principal is one of the most misunderstood persons in the school today. Many teachers and student teachers are convinced that the principal is too busy with his or her own important business to have time to listen to their “little” problems. As a matter of fact, the principal has a basic responsibility to assist teachers with the various problems which confront them in the classroom. This is not to propose that the principal should be asked to do something for you just because he or she might be able to do it better than you can!

Your supervising teacher is the adviser to turn to first for help and advice, but as a new teacher, you may profitably develop the habit of *discussing* with the principal the more difficult experiences you are having. Assuming that you avoid discussing teacher personalities other than your own, it is a good idea to learn to talk freely with the principal while everything is going reasonably well, so that when you really “hit a snag” you will be able to approach him or her quickly and easily for advice.

The College Coordinator of student teaching is another of the resource people with whom you should learn to communicate. The coordinator will make a point of being accessible for conferences. However, most coordinators find it difficult, because of the number of student teachers with whom they have contact, to know all the details about the successes and difficulties you are finding and the perplexities which beset your thinking. The most productive conferences develop from requests that *you* make. If there is something on *your* mind that *you* want to discuss, the coordinator is better able to be of service. Ask him!

One of the basic requirements of student teaching is willingness to be helped. Student teaching is not a time for you to “perform” and to be evaluated on the strength of your performance. It is, instead, a time for you to develop and to progress. Evaluation will be made largely in terms of how well you take advantage of the opportunities available to you.

You will have to develop certain habits and skills for yourself—other people can be of only incidental assistance. One such habit is self-evaluation. Regardless of the criticism and evaluation given by the supervising teacher, the most lasting impact of student teaching comes from your increasing ability to recognize strengths and weaknesses in yourself, to face them squarely, and to be honest about putting workable improvements into action.

The coordinator, the principal, other teachers in your building, and your supervising teacher are the team of helpers during your term of student teaching. You are the center of their attention. You must be willing to accept their help in the constructive spirit in which it will be offered. You must evaluate yourself, recognize need for improvement, seek help from appropriate sources, and put your decisions into practical action.

Teachers May Surprise You

After all these years on the other side of the desk, you will soon be “in the club.” The ease of this transition will surprise you! Most teachers are friendly, accepting, and personable people. They will do their part, and more, to make you feel at home in your school. Of course, in a large school this may be tempered a bit by the sheer number of teachers who have to get to know you, but it won’t be long before you find yourself in the “inner circle” with a number of your colleagues.

Teachers show a high degree of loyalty among themselves—criticize one and you may antagonize ten more. But teachers are responsible people who know that they are accountable to others. Many teachers are able to discuss significant issues with you, and they will do so with a surprising degree of understanding and empathy for your position as a newcomer—and without making you feel uneasy or inferior because of your newness. You will be quickly assimilated into the school staff, included in meetings and some social activities, and expected to show the loyalty to others that they demonstrate toward you.

In your educational methods and theory courses, you have been told that pupils are different. Have you stopped to think that teachers are different, too? People are ready to accept two or three types of teacher—the stereotype of the worn-out “old professor,” the pleasant-but-firm type that you remember your favorite teachers to have been, and the occasional “mean” teacher. But teachers are individual personalities! Your acquaintance with teachers will enable you to see beyond superficial impressions, to recognize the goals and satisfactions, efforts and devotion, habits and characteristic behaviors of teachers—not only in the classroom but in informal situations.

You are older now, so teachers may not seem so old, by comparison, as they once seemed to you. You will find some teachers hardly older than you. You will be surprised by the youthful ideas and the frivolity which may characterize the faculty lounge.

Then you may be surprised, perhaps startled, by the sarcastic and derogatory comments which seem unprofessional and yet characteristic of discussions among some teachers. Up until now, you have been shielded from this side of a teacher’s life. During student teaching, you will be plunged “into the thick of it” without any insulation or protection except your own quick wit. As a beginning teacher, there are several ways you can react. You can follow the axiom “When in Rome, do as the Romans do,” temporarily throwing overboard some of the values and ideals which you hold to be significant for teachers. Or you may react defensively and crusade for some professional behavior among teachers. Perhaps the most sane approach is to realize that teachers often use one another as a sounding-board through which to release tensions and emotional stresses that accumulate during the day. If you are prepared to hear a certain amount of this sort of conversation in the faculty lounge, you will not be so startled when you first encounter it. Except for the attitudes and habits it fosters, it is usually innocent, if not harmless.

THE SPOTLIGHT IS ON YOU

You have probably heard that the largest single cause of job failures and dismissals is inability to get along with people. Because teaching is a highly socialized profession, it is very important for teachers to have well-developed skills in human relations. Almost everything you do in your professional and private life will bear, directly or indirectly, on your effectiveness as a teacher. It is hard to hold a teaching position if you don’t like to be closely associated with other people!

How to Walk a Tightrope

Too often there is a temptation to follow what appears to be a shortcut to acceptance and popularity: to rebel openly against what is accepted and traditional—and, therefore, stodgy. The concept of “conformity” is disagreeable to youth, for whom it connotes mediocrity and loss of individualism.

Nevertheless, to conform is *one* way to get along reasonably well with other people. It has become respectable enough that we have a phrase to describe it: “If you can’t lick ‘em, join ‘em.” Somewhere between the personality-wrecking abyss of conformity and the yawning cavern of utter social isolation is a narrow path. To find this path and to stay on it is a tightrope act—every step you take has to be carefully calculated.

Walking this tightrope between isolation and conformity is a matter of holding calmly and quietly to your own ideals and values regarding matters which you believe to be significant and, at the same time, maintaining a reasonable observance of the norms which are dictated by custom and school policy. Above all, avoid haughty attitudes which boost your own ego at the expense of your colleagues. Deliberately calling attention to your own “peculiarities” will isolate you sooner or later—often very quickly! It is *useless* to deviate from certain norms of behavior; it is *essential* to deviate from others. How can you decide which are which? On the one hand, you will be encouraged to observe the manner and custom of dress of other teachers in our building so that you can adopt such standards for yourself while you are among them. On the other hand, you will be constantly reminded that you must “be yourself.” This *does* sound contradictory!

A coordinator of student teaching occasionally finds student teachers who complain that they does not feel free to do things the way they want to—to use teaching methods they believe in. They think their supervising teacher would look askance at any deviation from established procedures. This erroneous idea becomes doubly striking in the light of the common complaint by supervising teachers that student teachers seem unwilling to utilize their own resources—they study the cooperating teacher’s methods and try to copy them. Obviously, someone must misunderstand someone else!

A supervising teacher does not want to develop an imitator. You are under no compulsion to be a carbon copy—*nor does anyone want you to be*. What is desirable is to observe your supervising teacher closely so that you can profit from his example. Also, as you begin to take over the teaching responsibility in a particular class, it is to your own advantage to make a *gradual* transition from the method and approach of the supervising teacher to your own method and plans. A sudden and abrupt change (especially if you make the mistake of calling pupils’ attention to it by saying, “Now *I* believe in doing things differently”) can result in severe reactions and unpleasant attitudes.

As you begin student teaching, remember that a new observer in a schoolroom, especially an inexperienced observer, rarely sees all the significant factors in a situation. Assume, as you watch your supervising teacher at work, that there may be something which you haven’t discovered which makes her behave as she does—especially when you are certain that she is doing things “wrong.” Save your critical evaluations until you have had several weeks’ classroom teaching experience. Things may look different then!

As you are given more of the teaching load and more responsibility for planning lessons, include your own understandings of method in your planning. As long as your supervising teacher sees your written planning in advance and has an opportunity to discuss with you any fears he might have about the merit of your ideas, you will find him agreeable to your own initiative. He may tell you that he wouldn’t try it that way himself, but will give you all the support and encouragement *you* need to make it work. Much can be said for developing the kind of mutual respect and confidence between you and your supervising teacher that will allow this free communication. He wants you to “be yourself,” but he has a right to know, through evidence and discussion, that *you know what you are doing!*

As a teacher, you are given a trust by the community and by the parents of your pupils. They expect you to maintain certain standards; they have a right to expect you to live up to these standards and behave in a reasonable manner, considering the tremendous influence of your example. Teachers have a responsibility to these people, because public education in America owes its very existence to the public which has created it.

The really significant way to express your creativity and imagination is through your own *resourcefulness*. How well can you use the materials and methods which are available to you? Is your file of teaching aids up-to-date? Can you think of alternative ways to accomplish your goals—or does there always seem only one way to do something? What happens when your intentions are blocked or thwarted—can you rise to the occasion with a smile? If so, you'll be surprised at how skillfully you are walking the tightrope.

Remember the Old Gray Mare?

You will discover that your pupils don't all think and act as you believe you did when you were their age. Like many others, you may be going into teaching partly because of some pleasant memories of your own schooldays. Maybe you want your pupils to learn to love poetry (or mathematics, or music, or calisthenics) as you did. Deep within, you carry the conviction that if you handle things "just right" you will have your class thrilling with the spirit and meaning of the Constitution of the United States. You are in for a surprise!

In the first place, it is likely you come from a middle-class socio-economic background. (Most teachers do.) You are more industrious than the average person. (You have made it almost through college!) You have been favored with more opportunities than most people. (You went to college in the first place.) This is a way of saying you aren't as typical as you may assume yourself to be.

Prepare yourself to confront pupils whose values, ideals, beliefs, and behaviors differ greatly from your own. Unless you were a very unusual high-school student, you probably selected your circle of friends from among your own social set. Consequently, your experiences with different types of young people have not been nearly so diversified as they will be now that you are a teacher. You went to school with "all the children of all the people," but *you could select your friends*. Now you are a teacher and you have an equal responsibility and almost equal contact with "all the children of all the people." And your first reaction is apt to be: "These kids aren't the sort *I* went to school with!" You're probably wrong—the difference is that now you are able to perceive more of what people really are. Don't let it upset you.

Pupils are like the "old gray mare"—you can't even *expect* them to be "what they used to be." Wouldn't it be fascinating to look back at yourself through your more mature eyes and see exactly how childish you were as a high-school junior! Do you really know how you thought and behaved then—or do you remember just what you thought of yourself *at that time*? Occasionally secondary student teachers evolve the idea (usually assuming themselves to be the first teacher it has ever occurred to) that if they treat high-school seniors like college students—and, of course, explains to them that they are helping them get ready to go to college—they will respond eagerly and apply themselves studiously. In their imagination they envision these pre-collegians avidly taking notes, listening attentively to lectures, and excitedly discussing vital issues in the classroom. It is a blow when they discover abruptly that they can't make this dream come true. It simply won't work. You gain little by these "short-cut" attempts to "age" young people overnight by talking them into it. Besides, is this really the way college freshmen perform? Not exactly!

It is important that you have a clear understanding of what is to be expected of children or young people of the age you intend to teach. Such expectations should be based upon careful study of the findings about child growth and development. Expect a six-year-old to behave like a six-year-old, a fifteen-year-old like a fifteen-year-old. "And with your wisdom get understanding." Know that there will be many, many variations in behavior, ability, and interest, and deviations from the norm—both ways!

Are You Ready to *Work*?

Unfortunately, there are some college students who believe that student teaching is a “performance.” They approach the experience as a time to prove just how well they are able to teach. Indeed, they often do a very convincing job of playing the part of a teacher. Such worthy intentions should not be discouraged, but student teaching is far more than a performance test. Perhaps you may have wondered why so many weeks are devoted to it. No doubt you can show how well you can teach in much less time! Does this “test fever” have you in its grip? Relax! Student teaching is not a test; it is a realistic situation wherein learners place in action their skills and understandings of teaching, striving for maximum improvement and professional growth during the designated time. In other words, the real measure of success in student teaching is the degree to which student teachers take advantage of all the various opportunities for growth and development which are made available to them.

It is the task of the supervising teacher to provide development opportunities for the student teacher. These opportunities should be sequential—designed to move you toward increased professional competence. Your actual growth and development will depend upon your ability to recognize and avail yourself of these experiences. Your supervising teacher doesn’t do the learning for you!

Because teaching is a process involving several participating roles rather than an overt act on the part of one person, we ask the cooperating teacher to minimize the “observation” aspect of student teaching. We hope that you will begin *participating* in the teaching process from the very first day. Instead of sitting in the back of the room to “watch” what is going on, we want you to be a functional part of the process of instruction.

This does not mean that you are expected to teach “lessons” the first day. For some time after you arrive, your cooperating teacher will continue to plan the activities and overall instructional program. But we want him or her to include you in some small way from the first. This may mean nothing more than the little tasks of the routine at first, but there should be a conscious attempt on your part to assume more and more of the routine responsibilities of the class, so that sometime between the second and fifth weeks you will take responsibility for planning a class and assume the leadership.

Student teaching requires time and energy. It is a time-filling experience! Its intensely practical nature makes it easy for you to put your whole heart into it. Consequently, you will probably find yourself emotionally involved to such an extent that you find it difficult to break away at the end of the term. To achieve this sort of vital interaction is a good thing, because it contributes even more reality to your perception of teaching.

Many student teachers are momentarily staggered by the amount of time and energy needed to do a competent job. The characteristic impression by the end of the term is that student teaching has been the most concentrated, time-consuming, and difficult part of a college career, but it has also been the most meaningful, practical, and rewarding. The stimulation of the student-teaching experience itself seems to turn the work and effort into enjoyment.

Student teachers are counseled to take no other college, extension, or correspondence courses during the term. Similarly, other employment should be avoided, except on weekends in case of financial hardship. Student teaching is intensely demanding of your physical and emotional stamina.

Even travel, such as commuting to and from your assigned school, can become the “straw that breaks the camel’s back.” Some of the values of resident student teaching can be negated by living outside the community you are assigned to; furthermore, travel adds unfortunate pressures to your school day. “I wish I could stay, but I have so far to drive” is the excuse plaintively offered by the student teachers who commute too far. Sooner or later, their inability to participate in evening activities, their tardiness, and general separation from the heart of the student-teaching experience will work to their disadvantage.

If you are looking toward student teaching as a sort of off-campus lark, you are in trouble! But if you are frightened at the staggering amount of labor which you foresee, you are probably making yourself insecure. In either case, you may need to think more about what *you* want student teaching to do for you. You may need to be reassured or stimulated. Ex-student teachers can provide you with an understanding of what is ahead.

Mother Still Loves You

The pupils may or may not regard you as a collegiate hero; but to their parents you represent additional teaching manpower. Today, when Americans are more conscious than ever of the necessity for education and are apprehensive concerning over-crowded classrooms and over-worked teachers, to have one more person working with “little Bobby” is a good idea!

One of the fixed misapprehensions of supervising teachers facing their first term with a student teacher is: “What will the parents think? Won’t they be upset at having a student teacher working with their children?” It is interesting to see how readily most parents accept a student teacher. They soon realize that the supervising teacher is not leaving the scene. His influence and guidance are always effectively present. Then, too, student teachers are truly an “over-and-beyond” teaching resource and stimulus to the class.

You have to do your part in order to make this concept work. First of all, you have to be a real addition to the classroom, not just a piggyback rider on someone else’s ideas. Also, you must build good relationships with parents, taking advantage of every opportunity to become better acquainted with the families of your pupils.

In some communities (more than in others) it has become unfashionable for the teacher to contact the parents for any reason except trouble or difficulty at school. This provides an excuse for the student teacher to ignore home visits and routine parent contacts. Nevertheless, nearly all school administrators regard the growing “distance” between parents and teachers as deplorable.

Whatever the practice in your school may be, you are in for a pleasant surprise as you actually make home visits to some or all of your pupils’ parents. Although your cooperating teacher may not have made such visits, she can certainly be expected to help you plan them where she knows you will be well received—if not, the principal will!

One of the basic reasons why you are expected to attend PTA and similar school-community meetings is that you will meet many parents. Some schools schedule periodic sessions wherein parents confer with the teacher about the progress in academic and social adjustment of their children. Don’t miss out on any of these experiences! During the first few contacts of this sort, you should be a more-or-less silent partner with your teacher, but after you observe how he handles these conferences, you may participate in or, perhaps, even take full responsibility for some.

As you meet parents, bear in mind that their basic interest is their child, but their curiosity is about *you*. Many interesting discussions with parents have begun with the student teacher describing his student teaching program and, little by little, leading into conversation about his classroom experiences with “little Bobby.” You will be agreeably surprised at the tremendous increase in your understanding of the children after you become acquainted with their parents and learn something of their home lives. And if you are tactful and communicate a wholesome interest in the child, their parents will love you for it!

PLAN—TO BE SUCCESSFUL

Student teaching is the big step into the actual responsibility of teaching. What you do in student teaching will affect your early years in the profession. As you avail yourself of opportunities to develop during student teaching, you are making investments in your future success as a teacher.

On Your Mark

A strong background in the theoretical, or “thinking,” side of education makes you better able to deal with the practical, or “doing,” part. Especially if your education course work doesn’t show up very well on the record book, there are several specific things you can do to become better prepared for student teaching:

1. Read one more methods text for your subject (a general curriculum text if you are in elementary education.)
2. For practice, write a unit plan, using a form you find in a methods text as an example. Remember that a unit plan must clearly define the *purposes* and *objectives* which make it necessary to teach the particular material.
3. Write a sample lesson plan based upon a part of the unit plan which you have just completed. Think carefully about *how* you will go about teaching this particular material. What will *you*, the teacher, do? What will the pupils do? Will they all be doing the same thing? How will you get them started? How long will the various activities last? How will you know if the lesson is working out well?
4. Read a professional book which describes, in detail, the characteristics of children at the age you will teach. Be sure that you know what to expect of them. Though it is true that “teachers have to be ready for anything,” there is still a need to anticipate what children are *most likely* to do in various situations.

Perhaps a summer session will intervene before your student teaching begins. Consider a camp counselor’s job for the summer. Although camp counseling calls for a different role than classroom teaching, the experiences in working with boys and girls can be of tremendous help. You will learn more about the way they behave, what they really like to do (and what they don’t like to do,) what happens when they are idle or bored, and something about their responses to you as an adult. Also, camping experiences with children or youth can help you become better acquainted with yourself, especially if you haven’t yet become wholly adjusted to meeting what is expected of an adult. The continuous and sustained responsibility required of a camp counselor is excellent training for the teaching responsibility which will soon be yours.

Another helpful experience is visiting classrooms before your regular student-teaching assignment. A word of caution: most campus cities are so crowded with education students wanting this sort of experience that you should make your visiting arrangements only after consultation with the campus student-teaching office. You may discover some accessible community where you would be welcome for several hours of observation. The most likely may prove to be your hometown, especially if public schools are in session during your vacation. Often just before Christmas, education students can get several days’ full-time experience working with a teacher who is pleased to have help in preparing the Christmas program. Such arrangements are always made through the principal’s office—no matter how well you may know the particular teacher you wish to visit. Whenever possible, plan several sessions consecutively with the same children, watching them and working with them over a period of time, rather than jumping from one group to another on a “pop-call” basis.

Coordinators of student teaching vary in their operating procedures. These variations are often the product of local school policies. In some cases, it is not advisable to contact your supervising teacher directly until your coordinator has had an opportunity to introduce you. Certainly, in no event should you contact a particular teacher in advance of your assignment, assuming that he or she (perhaps a teacher that you specifically requested) will be assigned as your supervising teacher. However, after you have been introduced, the coordinator will probably give you the “green light” to make further contacts with the supervising teacher, and to borrow textbooks and manuals in order to become acquainted with the teaching materials.

Get Set

On your first visit to the school where you have been assigned, be on your best behavior in manners and dress. It is better to be on the safe side in matters of dress: a coat and tie (or for women, hose, heels, “dress-up” clothes) will show that you are at least one step removed from “College Joe.” During your visit, observe the costume of other teachers in the building. Take a lead from this observation in planning your wardrobe for student teaching. This does not mean that a young woman should avoid bright, cheerful colors just because most of the teachers in the building may be older and dress sedately; children respond favorably to attractive, youthful clothes on their teacher. But avoid the garish and the sloppy!

Many details will be worked out with the coordinator assigned to the area in which you will do your student teaching. Be alert for instructions about housing, roommates, any local restrictions on allowable commuting distance, or other regulations which may be in force. Some student-teaching programs have restrictions on outside work, most expect your attendance at numerous evening activities. Keep your ears and eyes wide open, especially when the coordinator meets with you the first time!

Bear in mind that student teaching is a time for rapid growth. You may be required to do a number of things which seem to be over-and-above what the regular teachers are expected to do. Detailed written lesson-planning is an example. Student teachers who do extensive and careful written planning seem to be more aware of what is happening, more able to take advantage of every situation that arises. Although, for the more experienced teacher, planning seldom takes such a detailed form, there is little question that it helps a student teacher grow faster. You may also be expected to write a case study of one of your pupils, turn in a weekly report, or prepare a daily log of your activities. Try to approach these tasks in a positive and constructive spirit. Remember that they give you an opportunity to think more deeply about your experiences: they necessitate and provide a more thorough comprehension. Writing often makes the difference between a *basic* experience and a *superficial* one.

Although you can't be sure that they will give you an unbiased report, you should talk with your friends who have completed student teaching. So many student teachers come back with enthusiastic and helpful suggestions that their comments should not be overlooked. No matter how much orientation your instructors are able to give you, an hour in conversation with a friend who has been “through it” can be of considerable help. Be sure to ask her what she would propose that you do to become better prepared. The chances are that he, himself, would make more preparation in advance if he had it to do over again. What would he do? Find out!

Go!

Student teachers who have been through a resident student-teaching program ahead of you have made these suggestions:

1. Co-operate with your supervising teacher and coordinator.
2. Be interested and enthusiastic about your work.
3. Don't miss anything—take advantage of every opportunity for experience.
4. Ask questions—even if you think you may know the answer already.
5. Know your subject matter—go far deeper in your own study than you expect the pupils to go.
6. Be punctual, precise, and prepared.
7. Know what to expect of pupils—be reasonable, but knowing!
8. Be firm and consistent—it is easier to win the friendship of pupils by first gaining their respect.
9. Be proud to be a teacher—it is a privilege!
10. Be yourself—and make it good!

YOU CAN TAKE IT WITH YOU

No matter where you are assigned for student teaching, there will be important parallels between what you learn there and what you will need to know later as you accept a salaried position. There are two aspects to what you will be learning during student teaching: the *immediate*, as you gain understanding of a particular community, its school, and its children; and the *related*, as you develop habits of teacher behavior and skills in discovering ways to become a part of a school, its faculty, pupils, and community. Communities and schools will differ, indeed, but the skills and understandings necessary to becoming a productive classroom teacher are universal.

Seminar experiences with other student teachers are the cornerstone in the development of “transferable” skills. As student teachers working on different instructional levels, in various subjects, and several different schools get together to study their varying experiences, a wider grasp of what it means to be a teacher emerges. Student-teacher seminars can give attention to analysis of experiences in the classroom and to an organized approach to community study.

One of the exciting possibilities afforded by full-time resident student teaching is the utilization of a specific community as a study laboratory in school/community relations. Seminar groups of student teachers can study, in a realistic way, the relationships which exist among schools and people, agencies and institutions. Thus, theoretical knowledge can be put to practical use and test in the laboratory—while the student teacher is himself a vital part of both the school and the community.

“The community” is not an abstraction. During student teaching, you will come in contact with the real people who make it up. You will be surprised how “approachable” they can be. You need to take the initiative—on your own and in community study groups—to present a friendly, sociable, and politely inquisitive attitude. There is much to learn from people of various walks of life.

Student-teacher seminars help to bridge the unnatural gaps which have grown up among the various instructional levels. It is amazing how little sixth-grade teachers know about what happens in the junior high school, how little science teachers know about what English teachers do, and so on. Yet, regardless of subject or level, we are all teaching the same boys and girls. As student teachers discuss and analyze their various teaching activities in the light of what others are doing, each gains a deeper insight into the educational potential and responsibility of their own subject or level. Through these shared experiences, student teachers also learn more about themselves, as they bring their ideas into the area for discussion. They learn to recognize quality in their teaching; to assess their own strengths and weaknesses. They gain, in addition, a broader grasp of the meaning of education and of the part played by each subject and level.

In the classroom, you will have abundant opportunity to put into use the ideas and materials which you have collected and organized. Although student teaching is hardly an appropriate place for random experimentation, there will be freedom for you to “be yourself.” Your cooperating teachers will know how important it is to your self-confidence that you get plenty of experience working “on your own” and making your own decisions about method. You must accept a reciprocal obligation to your cooperating teachers—maintaining the quality of the educational program and behavior standards which are their legal responsibility.

The attitudes you form about pupils during student teaching will be carried into your first years of teaching. If you adopt a defensive attitude and habitually interpret every behavior problem as a personal insult, you will soon find yourself very unhappy with teaching. Pupils have an uncanny ability to sense your expectations of them and to demonstrate conduct which fulfills your expectations. If you enter a class expecting trouble—on guard, perhaps—the chances are very strong that you will get it! On the other hand, if your polite and kind manner indicates your expectation of a productive hour with a well-behaved class, you are much more likely to find that to be the case.

It is to your advantage to be in a full-time resident student-teaching program, where the pupils are not “hardened” to student teachers. In resident student teaching, it is possible that you will be working with pupils who have had only two or three student teachers previously. The pupils will not be prepared to “bait” you and to make your life uncomfortable. Far more commonly, pupils respect their student teacher as they do their regular teachers—especially if you deal with them firmly, fairly, and politely. Friendship with your pupils is best built upon mutual *respect*.

If you form well-planned and positive habits, you will be moving toward realization of your dream of being a successful teacher. You will be using *your* ideas and *your* materials. You will apply *your* understanding of the interests, needs, abilities, and behaviors of boys and girls. You will know the satisfaction of seeing your teaching plans result in real learning for them. All this is just ahead.

Make the most of it!