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SYSTEMATIC GUIDANCE FOR TEACHERS-IN- TRAINING IN THE GRADES

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Consciously or unconsciously, training school students begin during their practice-teaching to form teaching habits. If the training during this period is to be effective, the students should be systematically guided to conscious effort in the formation of good teaching habits and those habits which are most important should stand out conspicuously as aims. It is therefore highly desirable for those in charge of this part of a teacher's training (1) to determine definitely the habits that should be the foremost aims of the practice-teaching term and (2) to arrange for systematic guidance in the formation of such habits.

In deciding what habits are most important as aims for the teacher-in-training, my conclusions are based on a study of training school graduates during their first years of teaching. Observation of their work, and their own testimony in personal conferences reveal certain common deficiencies. What they lack should, if possible, be given their younger sisters.

These are the lacks that seem to be most common and most serious:

First, young teachers lack the habit of reflecting on their own work for the purpose of profiting by experience. Instead of this many of them have unconsciously acquired the habit of mourning over their failures. "My children don't know a thing," has a familiar ring to most of us.

Can we train these young people from the very beginning to put their energy into reasoning instead of emotion? To keep intellectual side up? I believe we can if we go at it systematically. And it is certainly worth the effort. For the establishing of such a habit among any considerable number of our youngest teachers would make for a more professional spirit and a more scientific attitude of mind in our teaching force. It would produce teachers less reluctant to try out new methods after they have found one way that "works." It would make for happiness by putting a teacher's happiness in her own hands. We of New York were officially declared by the Hanus report on the New York elementary schools

to be "static and discontented." Awful combination! If such a state of mind does exist, the real remedy lies here. Teachers so often say now, "I am so discouraged. I never receive a word of praise." One who works at a problem with the mental attitude of the scientist, the thoughtful observer, has little need of praise from official superiors. Such a teacher is not likely to be either static or discontented. Satisfaction comes with the joy of discovery. Mental depression has little hold on a mind actually engaged in thought. Moreover there can be no one so interested in a teacher's work as she herself. No one on earth can know the breadth and depth of it but herself. None can improve it much but herself. This thought gives to the beginner a stimulating feeling of adulthood and prevents any attitude of slavishness.

Considerable emphasis has been laid and must still be laid on preparation of lessons. I would not decrease the time spent in preparation, but I submit that a very important factor in preparation is lost if reflection on the previous work of lesson giving and on the observation of pupils' response is neglected.

This brings up the second lack that young teachers exhibit; the habit of basing the work they present to their pupils on the needs of the individual children. It is a very difficult thing to gauge the abilities of forty-five or more human beings of any age. It is an equally difficult task to give to each the exercise that is the next logical step in his education. It is only by careful observation and study and deep thought that these two things can be done. But the more difficult it is the greater the necessity of beginning at the very outset to cultivate the habit of observing the individual child and adapting each day's work to his needs. Why not aim straight at the goal from the beginning?

It may be argued that to place such an aim before the beginner is bewildering and discouraging. This would be true if the work of training were not made systematic and obviously progressive toward the end of showing the students practical ways of observing and studying children and practical methods of using the knowledge thus gained. Moreover, the approach to the subject needs to be attractive and convincing. Otherwise a scare, and shaken confidence, may follow the first plunge.

This brings us to the third great lack of our young teachers. It may be called a lack of conviction rather than a lack of habit. Too many of them have escaped from the practice term unconvinced that the best discipline may be obtained through good teaching. They cling to the idea that if they

could "get discipline first," teaching would be a simple matter. The expression of the opposite view by critic or other school official usually is met by teachers-in-training with polite silence and among themselves they say, "It isn't the teaching. It's the discipline." This is not a matter to be glossed over and kept in the background. It is better to grapple with it at the outset, for so often unhappiness and loss of health and spirits are the result of this struggle to "get discipline first." An unusually frank young teacher told this incident of her experience. "I was told to go and take a class that I had had before. On the previous occasion I had tried to manage my work according to training school precept. The result had been Bedlam. As I walked toward the room this time, I said to myself, 'I'll just throw over my ideals. They don't work.' So I scolded. I punished. I hollered. At the end of the day, I had found out that those things did not work either."

This young woman's experience is typical, and the conclusion usually drawn is a hopeless one. "It is my personality that is wrong." The slough of despond into which this throws a teacher, too often, leads to a surreptitious use of the rod. Now the rod is forbidden and the only way to teach happily without the rod is to teach well. For this reason, if for no other, too much effort cannot be spent on establishing the conviction in the minds of the pupil-teachers that their salvation in "discipline" is to be sought in good teaching.

The following exercises are arranged to enable a critic teacher to give systematic guidance to the teacher-in-training along the three lines mentioned above. Their arrangement presupposes a weekly conference with critic and fellow students on the subjects suggested under the heading "oral."

CONFERENCE I

Daily Preparation

Written

Choose two successive lessons given by you, this week, in the same subject, to the same pupils. Write your preparation of the second lesson. Show specifically how the experience and knowledge of the children, gained in the giving of the first lesson, influenced your second lesson plan.

Use this outline.

1. Observation of the children during the first lesson.

Written work, if any.

Oral work, if any.

Time limit of power of attention.

Habits of industry.

Response to commendation.

Response to reproof.

2. Reflection on your own work in the first lesson.

- a. What had you done in the first lesson, that proved effective? Show how the children's response proved this effectiveness.

- b. What had you done during the first lesson that proved ineffective? Show how the children's response proved this ineffectiveness.

3. Resulting lesson plan.

Oral

Bring up for discussion any serious difficulties that arose in your work on topic one or topic two of the written exercise.

If you found yourself unable in your second lesson plan to provide suitable work for *all* of the children, bring up the difficult cases for discussion.

CONFERENCE II

Executive Ability

Written

Keep a daily record of your use of the children's time. Compare it with the allotment of time in the course of study.

How many times this week have you run over the time allotted for a lesson?

How many times this week have you been obliged to leave a lesson unfinished because the time allotted was gone?

How many times have you finished the lesson planned before the time allotted was gone?

State the cause or causes in each case.

What is your present plan for avoiding the repetition of such occurrences?

Oral

Make a daily estimate of the number of children in your class who spent any part of the day in idleness. Estimate the amount of time so spent.

Be prepared to discuss the cause of such idleness and to suggest remedies.

CONFERENCE III

Discipline

Written

Choose some occasion this week when your class did not follow your lead. Briefly state the circumstances and try to account for your trouble.

Was it due to peculiarity of external circumstance

lesson
teacher
class

If you could live that hour over again, how would you act?

Oral

1. Try to analyze the quality of leadership.
2. Why does a teacher need it?
3. Can it be consciously acquired? If so, how?
4. Consider some historic leaders of mankind.
 - a. What reasons are there for supposing them to have been experts in their field of work?
 - b. How did they show understanding of their followers?
5. Think of that teacher, of all those you have had in the past, whom you followed most willingly.
 - a. How did she show mastery of subject and method?
 - b. In what ways did she show appreciative understanding of her pupils?

CONFERENCE IV

Study of a Troublesome Child

Written

Make an appreciative study of a troublesome child.

His abilities.
His difficulties.
His achievements.
His efforts.

Oral

1. What ways did you find of studying this child in the class-room? Outside the class-room?
2. In what respect has your studying him helped him? You?
3. If you had known as much about him in the beginning as you do now, how would you have been enabled to avoid mistakes in dealing with him?

CONFERENCE V

Treatment of the Individual

Written

1. Make a study of an especially able child. (From the same grade if possible.)
2. Make a detailed comparison of the two children about whom you have written. Use the outline on your last mimeographed sheet for general topics, and use the lessons,—arithmetic, etc.—for sub-topics.

Oral

1. Give arguments for and against giving such children simultaneous instruction.
2. What are the probable results to each if they are treated alike?
3. What advantages are there to each if they are taught individually?
4. If you have given individual instruction when you were in charge of a whole class, how did you manage it?

Base your answers to the above questions on observations and experiments made this week.

CONFERENCE VI

Groups

Written

1. Mount the best device you have used for a group working independently of the teacher.
2. If possible, show specifically that
 - a. The device drills or teaches something.
 - b. The device does no harm.
 - c. The work planned is closely related to the work of the grade.
 - d. Simpler materials could not have accomplished the same result.
 - e. The device does not require too much preparation on the part of the teacher.
3. If your device is deficient in any one of these essentials, how do you plan to improve it?

Oral

1. On what basis had the class been divided when this device was used?
2. How did you induce the group working on this device to do their best?
3. How did you provide the children in this group with an incentive for better work next time?

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CONFERENCE VII

Presentation

Written

1. Choose the lesson given by you this week, in which the presentation was most nearly satisfactory to you. Try to account specifically for your success.

- a. Did the children gain in knowledge or skill?
- b. Was the gain made through
observation,
reasoning,
exercise,
being told?

Show that the way chosen was the best under the circumstances.

- c. Why did the children put forth effort? Was it due to
attractiveness of aim,
desire for knowledge,
delight in consciousness
of growing power,
hope of material reward,
fear of punishment?

Show that the incentives used were the highest that could be expected to appeal.

Oral

1. How do you judge of your own success in the presentation of a lesson?

2. What incentives have you found good to call forth the children's effort?

3. Should an aim be stated at the beginning of every lesson?

4. When have you found it wise to re-present subject matter?

CONFERENCE VIII

Drill—Oral—Silent

Written

1. Describe the best drill you have used for a group working independently of the teacher.

2. On what basis were the children who took the drill selected?

3. State any reason you may have for believing this drill independent of the teacher better than one conducted by the teacher.

Oral

1. How do you determine when a class is ready for oral drill?

2. How do you prevent a class from suffering through hearing wrong answers?

3. How do you provide for the extra drill which the child who fails needs?

4. How do you make sure that the children not reciting put forth effort?

5. When do you consider further drill unnecessary?

CONFERENCE IX

Blackboard Work

Written

1. Outline the best lesson plan you have used, in which children's blackboard work was an important factor.
2. In just what ways was the lesson more profitable than it would have been without any pupil's board work?
3. Were you able to train the children's sense of relative values by your method of criticism of this work? How?

Oral

Choose one of the following topics to talk on:

- Care of boards.
- Work to be left on the boards.
- Sketch maps, diagrams, illustrations, etc.
- Use of boards for organization.
- Children's criticism of children's board work.
- How to avoid the inviting of cheating.

CONFERENCE X

Interest

Written.

1. Describe a lesson given by you, in which you first saw signs of loss of interest and then took effective measures to regain interest.
2. By what means did you detect the first loss of interest?
3. How many had lost interest when you became aware of the trouble?
4. By what means did you regain interest?
5. By what means did you hold the interest after it was regained?

Oral

1. During the week make a daily list of the signs of lack of interest you observe.
2. What do you find to be the most frequent causes of flagging interest?
3. As a result of this week's reflection, what plans have you for foreseeing and preventing flagging interest?

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The following exercises show how the same ideas are carried out in special method:

CONFERENCE XI

Applications to Arithmetic

Written

1. Describe the best arithmetic drill you have given. Show specifically how it fulfills the requirements suggested by our oral exercise of conference VIII.

2. Describe the best arithmetic lesson plan you have used, which provides for every pupil's working arithmetic every minute of the arithmetic period. Show specifically how you used pupils' blackboard work, avoided inviting cheating, provided against wasting pupils' time, provided against wasting the teacher's time.

Oral

1. What is the most profitable arithmetic work you have found for a group working independently of the teacher?

2. What do you regard as the most important points to be considered in planning an arithmetic lesson? Refer to our paper on *daily preparation*.

CONFERENCE XII

English (Oral Composition)

Written

1. Make a study of two of your pupils, one, the ablest in oral composition, the other, the least able.

Rate each under the following heads:

Thought

Spontaneity

Content

Coherence

Language

Vocabulary

Pronunciation

Enunciation

Grammar

2. State specifically what you have done to raise class standards and add to class interest while giving the ablest child the exercise he needed.

3. State how you improved the work of the least able child without destroying class interest or lowering class standards.

Oral

1. What steps have you taken to provide your pupils with an interested audience for oral composition work?

2. What individual or group work have you done to insure good oral composition?

3. How have you used the blackboard in oral composition?

4. How have you found it possible to secure progress toward more correct speech without interfering with spontaneity?

CONFERENCE XIII

Physical Training

Written

1. Choose one or more of your pupils who are deficient under one or more of the following heads:

a. Posture habits

1. Well poised head
2. Broad high chest
3. Erect trunk
4. Weight forward

b. Motor habits

1. Prompt response
2. Accuracy
3. Strength of motor contraction.

2. If, after studying these deficient pupils, you dealt with them in class exercise, tell exactly how you did it.

3. If you have used team or group work or have given individual instruction, tell exactly what you did in each case.

Oral

1. What do you do when a small number perform an exercise badly? A large number? One?

2. What incentives have you found effective in your effort to get vigorous work? To create play spirit?

3. Present for discussion any puzzling case that comes up in your study of individuals for the written exercise.

CONFERENCE XIV

Geography—History

Written

1. Give a lesson in one of the subjects named above. Let your lesson end with a short written test.

2. Write out the questions.

3. Tell how many answered each question correctly.

4. Make a carefully detailed lesson plan for the next lesson on the subject. Show by reference to the children's papers that your lesson plan, if followed, will give to each pupil the instruction he needs and will waste no one's time.

Oral

1. If the first lesson about which you have written involved the oral reading of text by the class, tell exactly how you amplified or questioned to induce the children to imagine or realize the facts. What points did you emphasize? By what means did you make them stand out?

2. If the lesson involved the use of material or maps, tell exactly what material was used and how it was used.

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CONFERENCE XV

Drawing

Written

1. Choose from a set of drawings made under your supervision those in which the child's last effort was worse than his first. Tell briefly in what respect each paper was unsatisfactory.

2. If you could give the lesson over again, how would you prevent this from happening?

Oral

1. How many drawings do your pupils make during one drawing lesson? How do you decide?

2. How do you provide for improvement in the successive drawings?

CONFERENCE XVI

Penmanship

Written

1. In the first written lesson you give this week, note the children who are deficient under one or more of these heads;

- a. ability to take good posture
- b. ability to maintain good posture
- c. ability to use correct movement.

2. Tell concerning each child what you did for him during subsequent lessons and the result.

Oral

1. What plan have you used to prevent children who fail to maintain good writing position from continuing to write in bad position?

2. How do you induce pupils to write better when they make a second line of the same exercise?

CONFERENCE XVII

Teaching. (A Summary.)

Written

1. State all the ways for avoiding "lock-step" teaching suggested in this term's work in note book, class discussion, written criticism or interview.

2. Describe the lesson given by you this term, in which you most nearly provided every child with exactly the work he needed.

Oral

1. Why do your pupils obey you?

2. Why do your pupils put forth effort?

The following exercise is a sample of the sort of guidance given to pupil-teachers who show marked deficiency along specific lines:

SPECIAL EXERCISE FOR A STUDENT INCLINED TO DOMINEER

Write this exercise every day for a week.

Watch yourself from two-fifty till the children are dismissed. As soon thereafter as possible, write down all you can remember having said during that ten minutes.

How many remarks were unnecessary?

How many remarks were repetitions of commands?

How many were commendatory?

How many were reproving?

I. Character of commendation.

1. Did you commend often enough to minimize discouragement?

2. Did you commend so as to

emphasize exactly what was good?

leave in the mind of the child commended a desire to do better yet?

3. Did you make use of a smile and nod of approval?

II. Character of reproof.

1. Did you avoid all unnecessary reproof?

2. Did you reprove with impressive gravity?

3. Did you administer punishment justly?

4. Did you give reproof in private when possible?

5. Did you make use of a reproving shake of the head?

III. Character of commands.

1. Were your commands reasonable?

2. Did you succeed in giving each command once only?

3. Were your commands given in a quiet forceful manner?

IV. Character of children's response.

1. Did your pupils obey exactly?

2. Did they obey promptly?

3. Did they obey willingly?

4. Did they smile at you readily?

At the end of the week examine your exercise papers and state in what respects you have made your greatest improvement.