



Ray A. Johnson pitches in to help one of his industrial arts students during a semester of half-day teaching at Norman's West Junior High.

A Final Test o

education majors get a good view of a classroom career in some on-the-job training

By CONNIE RUGGLES

COLLEGES of education throughout the country are turning out hundreds of certified teachers every year. But merely graduating education majors is not enough; these colleges must be able to guarantee that each of these teachers is qualified to do the job and do it well. Each college has its own formula for achieving this guarantee; some are more successful than others. At the University of Oklahoma the acid test of teacher preparedness is a program of on-the-job training called practice teaching.

The education major has already had 3½ years of concentrated classwork before entering this extended laboratory in which each prospective teacher takes part in actual classroom situations. After completion of a semester in the classroom, the student-teacher has had a taste of teaching and can decide whether to go into this career or chuck it all and sell insurance or keep house.

Yet, the decision on who will teach and who will not does not rest entirely with the individual student. Throughout the teacher training program detailed reports are compiled on each student, and from these reports the final evaluation is made.

"Not just any student can become a teacher," George McCutchan, coordinator of certification and placement, emphasizes. "The College of Education is not a place for someone who couldn't make the grade in another college."

Each student goes through a screening process during his course of study. He must be cleared by his academic dean, the dean of student affairs and his education adviser with reference to grades, discipline record and overall achievement. Such a report is vital to teacher evaluation since O.U.'s teacher train-

ing program differs somewhat from other systems in the state.

At other state colleges teachers are trained entirely within the colleges of education. For instance, each college of education has its own English teachers, history teachers, mathematics teachers, etc., outside the regular English, history and mathematics faculties. Such an arrangement makes it comparatively simple for the education faculty to evaluate each student's progress in his work, but it also necessitates costly duplication of courses and faculty.

At O.U., however, teacher training is a campus-wide project, especially for majors in secondary education (junior high and high school). These students take regular English courses in the English department, history courses in the history department, and mathematics courses in the mathematics department. To coordinate what could be a hodgepodge system, there are teacher education advisers in the various academic departments. For instance, if a student is working in the language arts (English) program, then his adviser is in the English department.

Elementary education students, on the other hand, follow a more limited course of study. They still take courses within the various departments, but many of those courses are specifically designed for teachers. Too, elementary majors have their advisers within the College of Education.

Each student receives his professional training within the College of Education, which offers courses for certification for all students in the teaching program as well as offering a range of courses for electives and for special interest or graduate study. Certification requires a 2.0 overall average.

By the time a student reaches his last semester and enrolls in his

O.U.'s Student-Teachers



The kindergarten class at University School gives undivided attention to the story being told to them by O.U. student-teacher Linda Martin.

nine credit hours of practice teaching, he has had basic courses in the role of the school in American culture, psychology and curriculum planning and evaluation besides courses in his teaching field.

Elementary education majors have also studied the teaching of reading, speech, art and such things as library work and designing books and materials for children. They are assigned to teach full days for eight weeks. The other eight weeks of the semester are spent in classes on psychology, methods, demonstrations, illustrations and other tools that will help them become better teachers.

Secondary school teachers are usually assigned on a half-day basis for the full semester. They are allowed to schedule six hours of University classes for the half day when they are not practice teaching.

Student-teachers from O.U. are placed in Oklahoma City, Midwest City and Norman exclusively, thus keeping transportation problems to a minimum. The College of Education fills as many specific requests for teaching assignments as possible, and considerable assignment juggling takes place before the final list is made. Adjustments are made for students who must be on campus for required courses at a fixed hour or for similar schedule conflicts. However, the College makes no exception for students without cars. They must find their own transportation to their assigned schools, and they are expected to be there every day, on time, even if the University has a regularly scheduled vacation.

University vacations pose a real problem for student-teachers. During extended holidays such as spring vacation, the Univer-

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Linda Martin might have her own opinion of the merit of this work of art, but she would have to give her pupil an "A" for serious effort.

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sity dormitories are closed. But public schools hold classes as usual during this regular University vacation period, and the student-teachers are expected to meet those classes, even to teach full days if possible. So each individual must find temporary housing for that week as well as solving the problems of meals and transportation.

Despite the inconveniences, the teacher training program increases in popularity each semester, especially in the secondary division, where students with other fields of major interest are eager to have a teaching certificate as well. Two hundred student-teachers are in the secondary schools this semester, bringing the year's total to 301, compared with 220 in 1960. One hundred twelve prospective elementary teachers are also participating in the program this year.

All student-teachers begin work at the start of enrolment week at the University at the end of January and continue through spring vacation to the end of finals week in May, taking time off only to take their own final examinations.

The job of a student-teacher involves more than just sitting passively at the back of the room observing the regular classroom teacher at work. At first much of the time is spent in observation of the classroom situation, but gradually the student is worked into the teaching program. Most regular teachers working in the program (known as cooperating teachers) contend that the student-teacher must earn the right to teach by finding out in advance what materials are to be used in the classroom, becoming familiar with them and beginning to prepare ideas. With this

background the student is ready to take short periods of teaching time, gradually expanding to the full period.

Besides the actual work of teaching the class each day, the student-teacher gets experience in testing, grading papers and working with the students on group projects. Outside the assigned classroom the student-teacher is expected to fulfill the duties of a regular paid faculty member by taking his turn at hall patrol or in the lunchroom, attending P.-T. A. functions, faculty meetings and athletic events. For all practical purposes the student is a professional teacher except that instead of being paid for his work, the student pays the regular tuition charge for the nine hours of credit he receives.

Choosing cooperating teachers who will supervise the classroom activity of the student-teachers is a ticklish business. The College of Education takes care not to place students with teachers who are willing only to let them grade papers and show films. If a mistake is made in assigning students to a particular teacher, it quickly becomes evident and is corrected the following semester. The College is eager for each student to get as much actual teaching experience as possible.

Each teaching field has several University faculty advisers who visit the student-teachers on the job and evaluate their performances. At the end of the semester the cooperating teacher, the adviser and the student himself evaluate the program. The College studies these reports and makes changes accordingly; in fact, one of the major changes in the system was brought about through these reports. In previous years student-teachers were given letter grades for their nine hours of work. But it proved unwieldy for supervisors to evaluate the student's work on an A through F basis, so the grading was changed to a simple satisfactory or unsatisfactory.

"We are proud of the teacher training program here at the University," McCutchan says. "There are still things that need to be done to improve the program, but it works well and produces good teachers." McCutchan feels that O.U. is lucky to be able to place student-teachers in the Oklahoma City area. Oklahoma City is prominent in the nation for its new methods and is the national pioneer and leader in educational television.

McCutchan is in his first year as coordinator of certification and placement after being a superintendent of schools for 15 years. "I have seen a better crop of new teachers go out of here since I've been at O.U. than I saw in all my years of interviewing new teachers," he says.

Getting nine hours' credit for a few hours of teaching a day might seem like a pretty soft way to get a degree. But those who have gone through the practice teaching program will testify to the contrary. The student-teachers learn quickly that it is a big job to plan comprehensive, interesting work for a group of young people, to test them and grade their papers and supervise their activities.

"Most student-teachers say they've never worked so hard in their lives," McCutchan says, "but most of them love it, and when they tell us that—and mean it—we know we've produced a 30-year career teacher."



As a business education teacher, Sue Kaylor finds that students need an occasional personal pointer on getting the feel of the typewriter.