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Teaching Career Involves More Than Meets the Eye

By CATHERINE R. REED
Coordinator of Student Teaching

Editor's Note: Following is the first in a series of three articles on the roles of a teacher written by members of the Birmingham Education Association in observance of April as Teacher Career Month. This article deals with the teacher in the profession. The remaining articles will consider the teacher in the classroom and in the community.

"I'm helping my student teacher with lesson plans tonight."

"It only gives two hours credit for my Master's Degree — but I really need that science course Dr. Forbes is teaching for elementary grades!"

"Will you give a talk to our Child Study Group?"

"Will you write that up for the Social Studies Journal?"

"We need your help on our committee working on the new Certification Code."

"It's taken ten years of saving, but I'm finally going to see the Europe I've been teaching about!"

THESE ARE SOME of the "professional extras" which fill the lives of Birmingham teachers. Such enterprises have a direct relationship to extending and improving their own capacities to be good teachers. In such ways they meet their own standards of professional responsibilities.

Advanced study, speeches, writing for publication, organizational leadership and membership, directing the learnings of future members of the profession—these are some of the activities which absorb a teacher's evenings, holidays, summer vacations—hours beyond reckoning.

In every building in the Birmingham School System the office bulletin boards are blooming with varicolored announcements of six and eight-week summer courses being offered by universities across the nation. Spring is here and summer will be fast upon us!

A RECENT SURVEY indicates that up to forty such course announcements may carry the name of a Birmingham School faculty member as the course instructor. Anywhere from one-third to one-half of the local faculty might be found engaging in formal study at any given time during a 12-month period.

The survey revealed that 67 Birmingham teachers were recipients of graduate scholarships. Seventeen had studied in foreign colleges or universities during "vacation" periods.

So many new things are being introduced as better ways of teaching! Some ivory towers of educational methods are being leveled by the new technology of teaching machines. How to make best use of educational TV? What reorganization of my classroom is necessary for this independent reading program?

THERE HAS been such a rapid and vast expansion of what there is to know about every subject! This is obvious in the field of science, but is also true in other areas. Consider how the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls altered and increased knowledge in such an "unchanging" subject as Ancient History.

Teachers are increasingly aware that continuous education for educators is a professional requirement—a part of the job—as well as one mark of a good teacher.

Something over three out of every four teachers in Birmingham schools are members of one or more of the various professional organizations. Such organizations include National Associations of Teachers of English (or Science or Social Studies, etc.), associations of elementary and secondary teachers, associations such as the National, Michigan and Birmingham Education Associations. The latter, with their many subsidiary departments and committees, are concerned with studying and promoting public education in general. Their programs aim at improving both professional standards for educators and the welfare of members of the profession.

FIFTY-ONE Birmingham teachers were found to hold offices in some one of these state or national organizations; many others work through the special committees and departments to improve their own competencies and to contribute to the knowledge, understandings or welfare of their colleagues.

Over a period of time as many as one-fourth of the local faculty may be involved either as leaders, consultants, or participants in state or national study or demonstration workshops. All Birmingham teachers participate in local work and study sessions each fall before school opens—some for a day or two, others for as long as a week.

Within a year 22 of the local faculty have written articles or books for publication at the national or state level. Many more contribute to local professional and general news publications.

MANY BIRMINGHAM faculty members accept the responsibility of speaking about various topics related to education at meetings of community clubs and organizations. They recognize such ways of communication as one of the life lines between their profession and the people they serve. Or you may frequently recognize local names on reports of lectures given at meetings of other educators.

Travel is characteristic of our national culture. Travel is an occupational enterprise for educators. The forces and events which directly and indirectly influence the content and the purposes of education are rapidly changing and becoming more complex. Travel in our own country and elsewhere offers the laboratory for observation which sharpens an educator's understandings of what and why he teaches.

A biology teacher takes a "vacation" trip to explore the economic implications of the introduction of nutria in the bayous of Louisiana. An elementary school teacher traveling to Hawaii gains first hand understandings of the culture, traditions, geography and economics of the islands which constitute our fiftieth state.

AS IS CHARACTERISTIC of any true profession, educators, too, have a responsibility for the education of new members of the profession. The medical student serves as an intern under experienced physicians; neophyte educators serve as interns at or near the end of their four-year college program. They practice the acts of teaching with the guidance of able and experienced teachers and the supervision of a college or university faculty member.

The Birmingham School System has been selected by Michigan State University to serve as a full-time resident Student Teaching Center. Wayne State University, University of Michigan and University of Detroit are among the other teacher education institutions with which the local system cooperates in placing student teachers.

A 100 teachers in Birmingham schools have contributed the extra time and energy required to advise, guide and direct student teachers. These teachers are proven practitioners of their profession.

THEY SEE WORKING with student teachers as an opportunity to renew and maintain their own enthusiasm; an opportunity to stay alert to the "new" in the undergraduate education of teachers; a challenge to sharpen their own practices in the classroom; an opportunity to do for another what someone did for them, in thus participating in this phase of educating a teacher.

The Birmingham staff is proud to be able to make these contributions beyond the classroom role in the interest of a strong local and national profession.

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(Continued from 8-B)

missiles even after they were made obsolete by the development of mobile missiles. The entire missile program is now under the Air Force and concentrated on mobile missiles.

Another money saving act was the placement of all Intelligence Operations under the "Joint Chiefs of Staff" so we no longer have to pay for duplication of effort in that area.

More dollars will be saved through the closing down of obsolete military bases at home and abroad, an act performed in spite of tremendous adverse pressures from locally affected Congressmen and citizens.

SCIENTIFIC SPACE development has been placed and consolidated under NASA. Foreign aid, formerly disbursed through four unrelated and uncooperating agencies, will now be under one agency, ICA.

Try to imagine the red tape and paper forms in triplicate that have been cut off by the above actions, plus the reductions in personnel. If President Kennedy maintains this pace, he will have the Hoover Commission Report in full effect within four years.

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From where I sit ... *by* Joe Marsh

Silence, Please!

Cap Edwards' little boy started taking saxophone lessons a few weeks ago, and they tell me the noise on Upper Main Street was pretty bad.

Then, one afternoon, the Edwards' house was quiet again, and Mrs. Jackson next door figured the boy must have given up tooting his horn. Next time she saw Sis Edwards she asked her about it.

"Well," Sis said, "we knew that racket must be driving you folks crazy. So Cap got a soundproof telephone booth from the phone company second-hand. Junior practices in it to his heart's content. Even I don't have to hear him!"

(From where I sit, Cap is living up to one of our oldest American principles — respect for a neighbor's privacy and feelings. You can be sure a thoughtful man like this never tries to force his opinions and preferences on anyone. He's the sort of man who'll go out of his way to have a bottle of beer ready to serve his guests even though he may not prefer beer himself. We can all learn a "lesson" in tolerance from Cap's phone booth.

Joe Marsh

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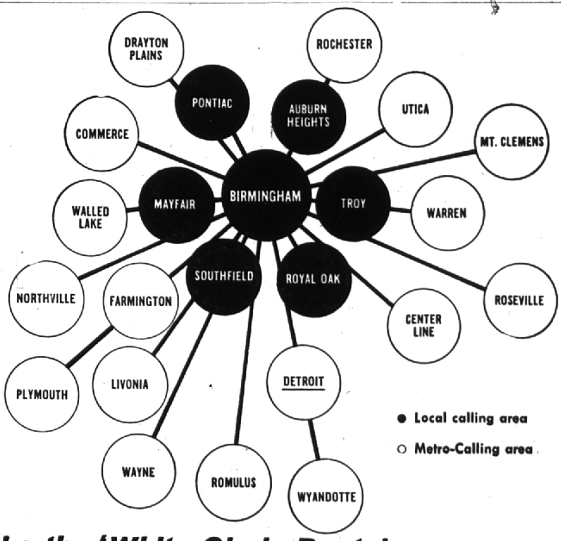

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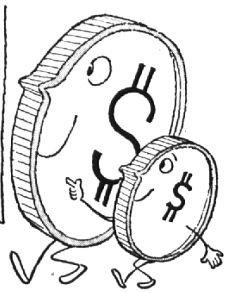

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