

SOME QUESTIONS PARTNERSHIP TEACHERS ASK

There are some questions that are asked repeatedly by partnership teachers. Many of these questions cannot be answered unequivocally, but an attempt will be made here to at least provide insights.

HOW FREQUENTLY SHOULD I LEAVE THE CLASSROOM? HOW MUCH SHOULD INTERNS BE ON THEIR OWN?

There are several concerns apparent here. A recent survey of partnership teachers found them most critical of other partnership teachers who spent an inordinate amount of time away from the classroom. The implication then is that interns should not be regarded as substitutes, as individuals who release teachers to do other tasks. Rather, they should be viewed as novice teachers placed in the classroom to grow professionally with the direct help and supervision of experienced teachers. Thus, without the partnership teacher's vital input, the intern's experience becomes decidedly diluted and much less effective for the participating intern.

WHAT SHOULD I DO WHEN THE UNIVERSITY SUPERVISOR COMES TO VISIT?

Essentially, go on with whatever you had planned to do if the supervisor were not there. You can find perhaps a few moments to discuss the progress of the intern, but this discussion need not interrupt your regular classroom schedule.

HOW MANY HOURS A DAY IS THE INTERN REQUIRED TO BE IN SCHOOL?

Interns are to be in the building the same time that the district requires a full-time, certified teacher to be there, unless there is a related intern activity which they are to attend. Partnership teachers will be informed of such adjustments at the beginning of the intern's semester.

WHAT SHOULD BE DONE WHEN EITHER THE INTERN OR THE PARTNERSHIP TEACHER FAILS TO ASSUME RESPONSIBILITIES?

Realizing that each may have a different perception of a situation, both parties should make an effort to communicate with the other on a one-to-one basis. If this approach fails to produce the needed results, one or both should contact the university supervisor who can then communicate with them individually and/or jointly to resolve the problem area.

WHAT IS THE BIGGEST PROBLEM PARTNERSHIP TEACHERS AND INTERNS FACE?

It is difficult to imagine that a Partnership teacher and an intern can spend many hours each week in the same classroom without communicating. But, the fact is that this is the most serious problem in the Teaching Intern Program. There are many roadblocks to effective communication, and some of the most frequently cited are:

1. No time before school or after school due to demands of preparation, university class schedules, and luncheon or playground supervision.
2. No time during the school day since one or both of the parties must be working with pupils.
3. Feelings of inadequacy or insecurity on the part of the partnership teacher or intern.
4. Overconcern for "hurting the feelings" of the intern.
5. No place to talk in private.

These obstacles are indicative of some of the difficulties in developing good communication between the intern and partnership teacher. However, as many excellent partnership teachers have demonstrated, the situation is not impossible.

WHAT SHOULD BE DONE WHEN THE INTERN POSSESSES UNDESIRABLE AND "TOUCHY" TRAITS?

First, make sure you are on firm ground by conferring with your principal and the university supervisor. Hair styles and clothing fashions are not easy to agree on. Probably the best criterion here is whether or not the intern's style is causing a problem with pupils.

Unfortunately, there are rare interns with problems of sloppiness, cleanliness, and odor. These matters need immediate attention and are frequently handled by the supervisor before the intern reports to the classroom. The best approach is to be direct and objective, but kind in dealing with an intern with such problems. We do no favors for interns by ignoring these matters, for the pupils will not be so kind.

WHAT CAN BE DONE ABOUT INTERNS WITH GLARING EDUCATIONAL PROBLEMS SUCH AS INABILITY TO USE STANDARD WRITTEN AND ORAL LANGUAGE?

One of the mysteries of interns is how an individual can be in the last semester of professional preparation and lack these skills. These individuals are rare and must possess an uncommon talent for concealing their problems. The inadequacies show up when the intern must write on the chalkboard before the class or give oral instruction. These difficulties must be corrected, requiring the attention of the partnership teacher and the hard work on the part of the intern. Often intern teaching provides the first motivations these individuals have had to correct their deficiencies and some of them can do it quite rapidly.

Some compensation can usually be made while the intern works on a problem. Chalkboard assignments can be written on paper in advance with the spelling corrected, for example. Since it will usually be impossible for the intern to hide these problems from pupils, the intern needs to deal with the problem openly.

WHAT IF MY INTERN FAILS? WILL I BE REGARDED AS A FAILURE AS A PARTNERSHIP TEACHER?

Partnership teachers become personally involved in the success of their interns. They sometimes feel guilty if their intern fails, wondering where they have gone wrong. In the vast majority of these cases, these guilt feelings are not warranted. Most partnership teachers go beyond the call of duty in helping their interns to succeed. Because of this, there is a very small percentage of failure. Typically, less than five percent of interns are dropped from the program each semester, and these interns frequently agree that teaching is not the career for them.

Interns with problems typically receive many more hours of help than do more successful interns. In addition to the partnership teacher, the university supervisor, building principal, and the Department of Curricular Studies are usually involved. No one person need feel responsible for the failure of an intern.

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