

NEWSCLIP BRIEFS

From the Office of Public Relations

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Editors' views:

Testing the teachers

Intelligence tests continue to chart the drop in student achievement. Not only have the the Scholastic Aptitude Tests scores declined since the mid 1960s, but more and more high school graduates are not even functionally literate. Last week the National Assessment of Education Progress, a federally sponsored project for monitoring the nation's schools, reported that reading skills are continuing to worsen in the high school years.

In an attempt to reverse this trend, and meet the growing concerns of parents, the state Board of Regents has just voted to require certification examinations for all new teachers.

We believe the idea is a good one.

Some teachers have objected to the proposed examinations, saying other professionals — doctors, for example — are not required to pass a state-imposed test and teachers should not be singled out. They also say that a written examination may provide a gauge for judging how much a teacher knows, but it can do nothing to predict who a good teacher will be, it cannot measure such intangible things as creativity or sensitivity, and it cannot measure a teacher's effectiveness in maintaining classroom order.

There is much merit to these arguments. Indeed, it is probably true that any written test the Regents may choose will have at least some of the deficiencies these teachers have predicted. On the other hand, the procedure for determining competency that has been proposed does, to some extent, take these objections into account. After having passed the initial exam, prospective teachers will be required to spend a one-year internship teaching under the supervision of a "mentor," an experienced teacher specifically trained for the task. It is during this period that the specific, intangible, teaching abilities of the intern will be able to be observed and, in some sense, graded.

Regarding the objections to testing in general, the principle of testing public workers — namely, the Civil Service workers — is long established. When public dollars are expended to pay the salaries of public workers, the public has a right to know how well those workers are performing.

But hand in hand with the increased requirements, we believe there should be an increase in pay. If we demand competent, high quality teachers, then we will have to offer the financial inducements necessary to attract them.

Historically, the brightest college students have been attracted to areas other than education. One recently conducted survey, in fact, found that the poorest students were in the education program. To change this, it will be necessary to make teaching a financially rewarding field.

The teacher tests in combination with increased monetary incentives should, we believe, go a long way toward providing a better public school education.

NYEA co-founder new president

Associated Press

BINGHAMTON — The co-founder of the New York Educators Association has ousted as president the man he joined to form the union in 1976.

Thomas Pisa of Buffalo, who banded with two-term NYEA President Edwin J. Robisch of Wappingers Falls to form the union, defeated Robisch 183-150 in an election here Saturday. Paul Rubin of Plainview-Old Bethpage received 30 votes.