

Toledo's Internship: The Teachers' Role in Excellence

In March; 1981, the Toledo Federation of Teachers negotiated with the administration a new approach to internships and teacher evaluation. The two components of this approach are the Intern Program and the Intervention Program.

The Intern Program is designed to offer the first year (intern) teacher the support, advice, and guidance necessary to make the first year's experience as successful and meaningful as possible. This support is provided by a peer (consulting teacher) who has been identified as a master teacher. This consultant has been released from regular classroom duties in order to direct and enhance the progress of the intern. The program allows the consulting teacher the time to conduct a complete and proper evaluation of the intern's progress and ultimate success (or lack of) in meeting the criteria of the Toledo Public Schools for employment. These standards and the step-by-step evaluation process are defined and outlined in The Toledo Plan of supervision, evaluation, and goal-setting.

The Intervention Program in the Toledo Public Schools is a cooperative effort on the part of union and management and is designed to assist non-probationary teachers who have been identified as performing in a way so unsatisfactory that termination or improvement is imperative. The intervention process, an outgrowth of teacher and administrative concerns about the quality of the teaching staff, begins after a joint recommendation from the principal and the Federation building committee is sent to the Federation president and to the assistant superintendent of personnel. A master teacher (intern consulting teacher) is assigned to the identified teacher who must then accept the consultant.

Since each intervention is unique, no standardized methods of raising teacher performance have been adopted. Released from official classroom duties and operating without time restraints, the intern consulting teacher may use a wide variety of methods in order to raise teaching performance to a satisfactory level.

Communication is stressed throughout the intervention so that building committees and local administrators remain knowledgeable about the format, progression and resolution of the intervention.

When the consultant feels that intervention is no longer necessary, the assistance ends, and depending upon the contractual status of the teacher in intervention, mandated and confidential reports are filed with the Federation and the office of personnel. Once the appropriate reports are filed, it becomes the responsibility of management to act upon or ignore the evaluations and/or the "status report."

The Intervention Program has received wide acceptance locally. Teachers, administrators, and the community view it as a means to strengthen the teaching ranks.

The program is governed by a nine member "review panel" composed of five union appointees and four management appointees. The panel decides to accept or reject the evaluation recommendations of the consulting teachers. The board of review also assigns consulting teachers for all other aspects of the program. The recommendations of the panel are sent to the superintendent who, under Ohio law, must recommend termination or contract renewal to the school Board. Chairmanship of the board of review is rotated between the president of the Toledo Federation of Teachers and the assistant superintendent for personnel.

The Intern Program can be terminated by either union or management. However, both parties are enthusiastic about its success.

OFFICE OF PERSONNEL
TOLEDO PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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TOLEDO'S INTERN PROGRAM
General Information

The Toledo Public Schools Intern Program is designed to provide assistance and evaluation by outstanding experienced teachers for first year teachers without previous experience.

In April, 1981, we advertised the position of intern teacher consultants in our staff bulletin. We listed as qualifications, a minimum of five (5) years outstanding teaching service and requested that each of the applicants provide us with four references -- three references from teachers who were currently teaching in the same building as the applicant, and a recommendation from the building principal. We received 75 applications. After a preliminary paper screening, we interviewed approximately 30 applicants for 15 intern teacher consultant positions. The teachers selected had a variety of backgrounds, including special education, physical education, elementary and secondary education. The number of teachers actually needed to implement the program in the fall of '81 would depend on the number of first year teachers that Toledo Public Schools hired. These 15 consultants attended a five day inservice session in August of 1981.

The consulting teachers are limited to three years actual experience in the program after which they return to their regular classroom assignment. Each consulting teacher works full-time in the program and is assigned no more than ten interns. They meet with their interns before the opening of school and spend a great deal of time observing classrooms and meeting with the interns after school. Each consulting teacher receives an additional \$2,500 in salary. Consulting teachers attend all meetings of the Intern Board of Review which are held during the school year.

The consulting teachers submit periodic reports to the Intern Board of Review regarding the status of each of the interns with whom they are working. During the first year, the observation and subsequent evaluations are done solely by the consulting teacher. The principal completes the principal's summary form (see page 11 of the Intern/Intervention/Evaluation book) and forwards it to the consulting teacher who shares the evaluation with the intern. During the second year of probation, it is the principal's responsibility to evaluate and make a recommendation regarding the status of the intern. The same evaluation procedures

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and standards are used. Four-year limited contracts are granted after the second successful year.

The program is governed by the Intern Board of Review consisting of five union representatives and four management representatives. The Intern Board of Review accepts or rejects the evaluation recommendations of the consulting teachers, assigns consulting teachers, controls applicable inservice, manages the budget and is responsible for all other aspects of the program. Recommendations of the Intern Board of Review are sent to the superintendent who, under Ohio law, recommends termination or contract renewal to the Toledo Board of Education.

The chairmanship of the Intern Board of Review is rotated annually between the president of the Toledo Federation of Teachers and the Assistant Superintendent, Personnel.

The intern program can be terminated by either union or management at any time; however, both parties are enthusiastic about its success.

TOLEDO PUBLIC SCHOOLS
TOLEDO FEDERATION OF TEACHERS

TOLEDO'S INTERVENTION PROGRAM

General Information

The Toledo Public Schools Intervention Program is designed to assist and evaluate non-probationary teachers who have been identified by a school staff as performing in a way so unsatisfactory that termination or improvement is imperative. It is designed to assist those seriously dysfunctional in performance unrelated to drug or alcohol abuse.

In Toledo, non-probationary teachers are third year teachers and beyond. Toledo grants four-year provisional contracts until tenure is attained. Tenure and a continuing contract are granted automatically. Hence, a continuing contract is available when the teacher obtains a professional or permanent certificate and completes three years (of the last five) service in the district. A professional certificate is granted when 27 months of successful teaching experience under a provisional certificate is achieved and 18 graduate semester hours beyond the bachelor's degree are earned. After probation, the only evaluation of teachers is one observation just prior to the renewal of a four-year contract.

An experienced teacher who is seriously dysfunctional is a potential intervention case. Identification can take place by the building principal or by the teachers through their Federation building committee which is elected annually. Before intervention can proceed, both the principal and the Federation building committee must give their informal approval. If either party refuses, no intervention is authorized. If approved informally, a joint recommendation is sent to the president of the Toledo Federation of Teachers and to the Assistant Superintendent, Personnel. These two people must then agree to authorize a formal intervention vote at the school after receiving the joint recommendation from the school.

The teacher having difficulty is informed by the Federation representative before the informal meeting that the building committee is going to discuss intervention. The teacher is extended the opportunity to meet with the building committee separately, or with the committee and principal if that is his/her desire. During this meeting, the teacher has the opportunity to explain why he/she feels the intervention should not go forward.

The Federation building committee must decide the union's position about the intervention by a secret ballot vote of the entire committee which includes the building representative. After the formal vote is authorized between committee and principal their agreement makes intervention mandatory. A letter of notification is delivered to the teacher specifying deficiencies, assistance offered in the past, and the name of the consulting teacher assigned to the case.

Included with this letter is a form for use (within five days) if the teacher wishes to appeal the intervention. An appeal is heard by a law

professor from the University of Toledo law school. He has complete authority to interview any party and issue a binding decision. The arbitrator does not decide whether the teacher is a good or poor performer. He does decide whether intervention is the most appropriate remediation since Toledo also has an employee assistance program and a voluntary, confidential teacher mentor program; and he checks to see if we have followed our identification procedures correctly.

The consulting teacher is required to meet with the principal and building committee at the beginning of the intervention and at its close. Other meetings do take place. The consultant has complete freedom to use whatever techniques are necessary to bring the teacher's performance back to acceptable district standards. No time limits are imposed on the consultant. The career of the dysfunctional teacher rests in the hands of the consultant.

Intervention ends when performance has been brought to district standards, or when success has not been achieved after all reasonable efforts have failed. (A typical intervention lasts about eighteen months.) At its conclusion, the consultant issues a "status report". The report is a factual, documented history of the case. No recommendation is made.

The status report is forwarded to the personnel office and to the Federation. Management then decides whether a termination hearing is warranted based on the report, and the union decides through its own internal process whether to represent the teacher in a termination proceeding if that is the decision of management.

Two-thirds of Toledo's identifications have been initiated by teachers through their committee.

XVIII. EVALUATION OF FIRST AND SECOND YEAR TEACHERS, FOUR-YEAR CONTRACT TEACHERS, AND OTHER CERTIFICATED PERSONNEL.

- A. 1. All first and second year teachers are considered to be members of the bargaining unit.
2. Revised standards and criteria shall be published by the Board free of charge in booklet form to each member of the bargaining unit. "Supervision, Evaluation, Goal-Setting" is the evaluation standard for the Board. Subsequent changes must be mutually agreed by the Federation and the Board.
3. First and second year teachers shall have the right to answer in writing any written evaluation record of the teacher.
4. Non-probationary teachers who leave the system and return within five (5) school years shall be subject to not more than one (1) calendar year of probation upon return and not more than two (2) written evaluation reports to the Personnel Office.
5. Probationary teachers also should consult Article XXIV-B of this agreement.

B. Standardized lesson plan forms, as adopted in fall, 1969, shall be distributed and exclusively utilized in all schools. Lesson plans for an entire week shall not be required with fewer than four (4) school days advance notice, when such plans are to be turned into the school office.

C. General Provisions

Probationary service is four (4) consecutive semesters. One-year limited contracts are granted. All teachers shall accrue regular service toward completion of their probationary status provided such service complies with the above evaluation procedures.

D. For the purpose of advancement to four (4) year contract status, long-term substitute service shall be credited for each semester in which the substitute worked at least forty-five (45) school days. Long-term substitutes must serve one (1) year of the two (2) year probationary period in the intern program subject to waiver by the chairperson and vice-chairperson of the Intern Board of Review.

Some long-term substitutes may be placed in the intern program when it can be determined that service will be for one (1) semester or longer. Determination of placement is made by the chairperson and vice-chairperson of the Intern Board of Review.

Hourly teachers, tutors and other similar teaching personnel also shall be credited with semesters toward completion of their probationary status subject to the provisions of Article IX, H-3 and 4, but they must complete one (1) year of probation as an intern after a regular contract is granted.

Substitute service of one hundred twenty (120) days or more in one school year regardless of long term status shall be credited for salary purposes according to court rulings when contract status is granted.

Salary credit at the time a regular contract is granted to long-term substitutes, hourly teachers, tutors and other similar teaching personnel shall include each semester completed toward advancement to four (4) year contract status.

E. Teachers who are on a four-year contract shall be evaluated once during the last year of the contract for recommendation for contract renewal. One (1) classroom observation, prearranged between the teacher and the administrator for the purpose of making this evaluation, shall consist of at least twenty (20) minutes but not more than fifty-five (55) minutes. Other classroom visits shall not be used for this evaluation. If visitation is excessive, a limit on visitation may be imposed by mutual agreement of the Federation and the Board. Discussion of professional or teaching performance shall be private. The evaluation form agreed to by the Board and Federation shall be used. (See appendix.) This section is not intended to prohibit interviews for the record when rules and policies are violated as per Article XXXIV.

When the four-year contract evaluation is rated "unsatisfactory," the Intern Board of Review may assign a consulting teacher, or another peer, to observe and evaluate the teacher. This second evaluation shall be given equal weight with the first. If both evaluations are "unsatisfactory," the teacher could be assigned to the intervention program on a one-year contract should the Intern Board of Review so determine in lieu of dismissal proceedings.

F. The intern-intervention program shall be continued subject to cancellation in its entirety by either the Board or the Federation.

G. Consulting teachers in the intern program will be paid as per Article XXXVIII in addition to regular salary and supplemental contracts held. In the event a department chairperson is selected for active participation in the program, an interim chairperson will be elected to serve. The consultant, after completing his or her assignment, will return to the chairperson's position for one year after which a new election will be held to complete the two-year term or to fill a full two-year term, whichever is applicable.

TEACHER EXCELLENCE: TEACHERS TAKE CHARGE

Dal Lawrence Discusses the Toledo Plan

FOR MANY decades, teacher training and teacher evaluation have followed traditional models. Training typically consists of four years of college with a brief period of student teaching. Evaluation is hierarchical, with periodic assessments based on limited observations by the school principal.

With the country's attention focused on teacher quality, the conventional systems are increasingly being called into question. A number of states and localities are establishing new programs. One of the most interesting — and controversial — of the new proposals was launched in Toledo, Ohio, in 1981. Called the Toledo Plan, its emphasis is on professional development of teachers, by teachers. Probably its most unique feature is that it gives teachers the controlling voice in the establishment of teaching standards, the training and screening of new teachers, and the identification of teachers in need of intense assistance. The Toledo Plan has two components: the intern program and the intervention program. Through the intern program, all newly hired teachers are assigned for their initial teach-

ing year to an experienced, expert teacher. These "consulting teachers" are released from their regular duties and given responsibility for both the professional development and the evaluation of the interns. The intervention program establishes a process for identifying and aiding veteran teachers who are experiencing severe difficulties with their work. Both programs are overseen by a joint labor-management Review Panel on which teachers, through their union, hold a majority of the seats.

The major concepts behind the Toledo Plan originated with Dal Lawrence, president of the Toledo Federation of Teachers. A former high school history teacher, he has been president of the Toledo local since 1967 and also serves as a member of the Executive Committee of the Ohio Federation of Teachers and as recording secretary of the Toledo Area Council of the AFL-CIO.

Mr. Lawrence was interviewed by Liz McPike, editor of the *American Educator*.

We welcome the response of our readers and hope the ideas presented will spark a lively debate.

Question: *Obviously, the high quality and ability of the consulting teachers are key elements of this program. To a large degree, the success of the program rests on their shoulders. What qualities were you looking for in the consulting teachers?*

Lawrence: We were looking for several important characteristics: First of all, we wanted a good teacher. We wanted someone that other people recognized as being an outstanding teacher. We wanted someone who was good at human relations skills, good at communication. The last thing we wanted was to have a consulting teacher turn into a supervisor and be feared by the interns. We also wanted someone who could write, because consulting teachers have to write status reports, they have to write recommendations, they have to write clearly for the conferences they have with their interns, and so forth. We wanted to know how they reacted to stressful situations, to emergencies, to unforeseen circumstances. Finally, we wanted to know whether they would be able to recommend that an intern not be renewed for a second year if that's what the situation called for. That's never easy to do, but at the end of each one-year internship, we do have to grapple with that decision. The consulting teachers have to be very conscientious, thorough, and straightforward in their reports and recommendations. They have to be objective. They can't duck difficult decisions. So those are the kinds of things we looked for.

There were seventy-five applicants, and we chose fifteen people to go into a pool from which we draw to match as closely as possible the subject and grade level of both the interns and those teachers identified for the intervention program. The teachers selected went through intensive training, and we have continual in-service, consultation, and feedback. Currently, out of the fifteen consulting teachers in the pool, seven of them are working full time in the program.

Question: *Are they paid extra?*

Lawrence: They're paid \$1,250 extra, plus they're paid for any supplementary contracts they might have held even though they are not doing the supplementary duty. This isn't enough but it is some recognition. As the program is now set up, consulting teachers can only serve in that role for three years; then they return to the classroom.

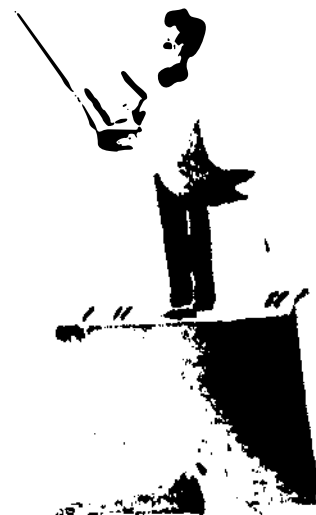
Question: *Let's concentrate first on the internship part of the program. Can you give us a sense of the relationship between the consulting teacher and the intern?*

Lawrence: A consulting teacher is a mentor to the new teacher. He or she is responsible for the professional development of the intern. It is a very personal and supportive approach, and it gives the new teacher a much better chance of succeeding.

A consulting teacher is assigned from seven to ten interns. If he or she is working with one or two teachers in the intervention program, there will be fewer interns assigned because we find that the intervention program takes a considerable amount of time. A consulting teacher will spend, on the average, half a day each week with each intern. If someone's having difficulty, he will receive more attention.

We've found that the areas in which the interns need

'Under the traditional system, there was little or no attention given to the professional development of the new teacher.'



the most help are classroom management and teaching technique. A considerable amount of time is spent in classroom observation, followed by extensive discussion of what worked well and what didn't. A seasoned teacher has probably experienced many of the same problems at some point in his own teaching and can spot the weak areas and offer alternative techniques. Often, interns are given the opportunity to observe other successful teachers in the field. Some consulting teachers videotape the intern and then they review the teaching process together. Teachers typically get very little feedback on their own teaching, so this is very useful.

Some interns need help with their questioning technique, others with organizing lesson plans, preparing IEPs, getting ready for a parent-teacher conference, finding out what resources are available, interpreting the results of standardized tests, and so on.

Also, new teachers are often overwhelmed by the bureaucracy, the system, the paperwork. The consulting teacher knows the system and can show the intern how to make things happen. What are the procedures for dealing with extreme discipline problems that can't be adequately handled in the classroom? What do I do when I'm out of supplies and the office says there's no money? When can I use the mimeograph machine? What if the janitor isn't cleaning the blackboards? The list is endless.



and I'd like you to look at it." I looked at it and it said "satisfactory." In fact, there wasn't anything in it that I would object to. I said, "How do you know I'm satisfactory?" And he said, "Oh, ah, ah, the kids let me know. I knew I didn't have to spend any time with you. You're doing a good job." I said, "Oh, thank you," and I left. The point is I might have been having all kinds of trouble and the same thing would have happened. He would have probably found it out from the kids. He certainly wouldn't have had enough time to help me. It was sink or swim. I was one of the lucky ones who didn't sink.

Question: *One of the major problems with the traditional system is that the principal or assistant principal does not have sufficient knowledge of the various subject matters, grade levels, and specialization areas — the old story of the ex-biology teacher trying to adequately evaluate, not to mention help, a French teacher, a math teacher, or a special education teacher. This program changes that.*

Lawrence: Yes, that's one of the major advantages of our approach. With a pool of consulting teachers to draw from, we have a great deal of ability to put a science teacher with a science teacher, an art teacher with an art teacher, an elementary teacher with an elementary teacher. That match makes a critical difference in both the quality of assistance that can be offered a new teacher and in the reliability of the evaluation.

Question: *Another perennial tension in teacher evaluation is that there is no firm consensus on what constitutes the proper standard of practice in a given teaching area. We may all be able to agree that certain methods are inappropriate, but we might not agree on what is the best or the right approach in the classroom. Given this lack of consensus, do the consulting teacher and the Review Panel make allowances for legitimate differences in teaching style?*

Lawrence: Yes, they do. We don't try to tell an intern what is the best technique. The consulting teachers know that their goal is not to make copies of themselves. We present the kinds of things that work in different situations. We do that by taking into consideration the interns' own abilities and interests, what they are doing best and what works for them. We are not, and we really stress this to the consulting teachers, here to tell an intern that this is the way you do it. We're here to present alternatives, to identify strengths and weaknesses, and to help them achieve proficiency in those techniques that really do work. There are some things, as you say, that we know won't work. You always see them in beginners, and they are very easily corrected. But so far as presenting a particular lesson, there is no magic, "right" way. We don't pretend there is, and we don't force people into a predetermined mold.

Question: *At the end of the internship, the Review Panel votes on whether to recommend the intern for a second year of teaching, is that right?*

Lawrence: Yes. We would have been receiving periodic reports from the consulting teachers throughout the year, all of which are gone over with careful scrutiny by the Review Panel. The consulting teachers have to justify what they are doing. We pepper them with questions, and there is a lot of back-and-forth discussion. We know that the intern isn't going to be

And sometimes it's just the idea of having someone there to reaffirm what they're doing, to tell them they are on the right track.

Some of the process is very formal. For example, the consulting teacher and the intern jointly establish objectives. These are always put into writing. We want to make certain the interns know exactly what they need to be working on to improve their performance. Then, twice a year, they're evaluated based on how well they are meeting those objectives.

Question: *How does this new program compare with the old system? Were new teachers pretty much in a sink-or-swim situation?*

Lawrence: Yes, always. A new teacher closed that door and, for the most part, was on her own. It was not uncommon, for example, for a teacher to begin the year without books. I had a teacher this fall who called the office and said she didn't have chairs or desks, but she did have kids. Under the traditional system, the principal would come in to observe and evaluate; there was little or no attention given to the professional development of the new teacher. If the principal got in three times during a semester, that was about the maximum. There were instances where they didn't show up at all. When I started teaching, I didn't have the principal come into my classroom at all my first year. I was called down to the office toward the end of the second semester and the principal said, "I have your evaluation here

perfect at the end of the year. But we have a definite set of criteria and standards that was developed jointly by the union and management and that we are continually refining.

The Review Panel is composed of five union and four management representatives. I wanted it to be all teacher representatives, but the administration didn't think that was the greatest idea in the world. So we agreed to a joint panel, but with teachers retaining the majority. We operate on a two-thirds-vote rule. No decision is made unless six of the nine members agree.

In the first year of the program, we had nineteen interns. We voted to recommend seventeen for renewal. Last year we had forty-five interns and voted to renew all except one. So, out of sixty-four new teachers over the two-year period, we recommended that three of them have their contracts non-renewed. You might be interested in how this compares to previous years: In the five years before the implementation of our program, only one new teacher had been terminated.

Question: *Now that teachers — through the union — are overseeing the development and evaluation of prospective entrants to the profession, aren't you moving toward a redefinition of the role of the principal?*

Lawrence: Yes, thank God, I think we finally are. And it's high time we did. During the intern year, the principal has only a very minimal role. He maintains a record of the intern's attendance and other noninstructional matters, but the development of the new teacher is in the hands of experienced colleagues. That's the way it should be. Principals don't teach school. And teachers, I should add, don't file reports with the state education department. You need good, competent people in both roles. We should stop this nonsense about a person who doesn't teach school being the instructional leader.

At the beginning of the program, the principals hated it, naturally. They felt they had lost a lot of power and influence. You know, it took us eight years at the bargaining table to win this. We first put the idea of an intern program in our bargaining package in 1973. We argued and argued and the principals fought and fought and we didn't get it. It was one of the last things we pulled off the table, and we were right back at it in 1975 and continuing right up until 1981, when management finally agreed to give it a try. Now, after two years of the program, I would say 90 percent of the principals are supportive because we've demonstrated that the process works.

Question: *Let's move now to a discussion of the intervention program. This is an excerpt from the official description: "Intervention is designed to bring direct, concentrated assistance from a consulting teacher to a teacher experiencing severe problems in the classroom. These problems might include, but not be limited to, classroom management, teaching techniques, emotional instability, or stress." Could you elaborate on that?*

Lawrence: Intervention is only intended for someone who has had a problem for a considerable period of time. By that I mean not just a couple of months but a year of problems or ten years of problems, during which time they have gone without help. They have developed a lot of bad habits. Parents are complaining, the teachers in the building are complaining. Their deficiencies are

generally known throughout the staff if not the entire community. Those are the types of people who will be identified and recommended for the intervention program.

Question: *What is life like for a teacher who is having such problems, whose professional life is in turmoil?*

Lawrence: Their lives and their reactions are just like anyone else whose life is not successful, whether they are teaching school or trying to sell a product or whether it is an engineer whose bridge just fell down. They are very unhappy people. They are frustrated, and many times they are cynical and bitter. As a defense mechanism, they often make scapegoats of everyone and everything. Before we initiated this program, severely troubled teachers just lived with the problem. They couldn't hide it. You can't hide those kinds of problems in a school setting. But they would live with it. They lived with it very unhappily, very frustrated. There was no help. There was no place they could go to get help.

Question: *Because to get help was also to place yourself in trouble?*

Lawrence: That's right. If you go to the principal and say, "I need help," you're asking for trouble, and they knew that. The other interesting point is that their colleagues many times wouldn't give them help because they didn't feel it was their responsibility and because the situation was often so bad, they didn't have the time to give the kind of intense assistance that was needed. In very severe cases, it is typical for the other teachers in the building to say, "Well that's just the way he is," or, "I wish she'd quit, I hope I don't get her kids next year," that sort of attitude. Now we hear comments that it's a shame we didn't have this program five or ten years ago, that if we did, such and such a teacher could have been saved.

Question: *What happens during a typical intervention process?*

Lawrence: The interventions are really, really tough, and they're exhausting for all parties involved. You pour yourself into it and then little things begin to happen. Some improvements are shown, and the tension begins to ease. We can now identify the stages of a typical intervention. The intern consulting teacher goes in with the teacher in trouble and there's hostility: I've been identified, I'm not this bad, I'm afraid. There is a breaking-in period, in which the consulting teacher is establishing rapport with the person in trouble. It takes a while. At first, you don't get very much accomplished other than trying to build confidence and trust. Once you get over that hurdle, which takes about a month, you get into the phase of identifying the problems, trying to isolate those problems, and also building confidence in the person based on what they're doing right, because no one does everything wrong. And so you're building in a positive kind of way and isolating the things that are causing problems and offering suggestions about how to improve those techniques while giving the person ideas that they may have missed somewhere along the line.

In almost all of the intervention cases, the teacher has one teaching method only, which he uses over and over again. It isn't working, and he doesn't know where to go next. He's afraid to try anything different. So you begin to introduce new techniques, new procedures. You

'At the beginning of the program, the principals hated it, naturally. They felt they had lost a lot of power and influence.'



take one at a time. You do a good job at that, then take another one. You do a good job at that. This phase might last several months depending on the individual and how longstanding the bad habits are. And then, the good part is when the person finally begins to succeed with some new technique, some new approach. You can see him begin to smile for the first time, maybe, in ten years. You can see him saying to himself: "Gee, that does work, and I can do that." Self-confidence, missing for so long, begins to return. And the kids begin to respond in different ways to the teacher. At that stage, the rapport between the consulting teacher and the person in trouble is usually very solid. A very close professional bond develops.

I should add that there is no limit to the duration of the intervention process. There is no hastiness. We have some interventions that are in their second year.

Question: *To date, what have been the outcomes of the intervention program?*

Lawrence: We have had twenty-four people identified for intervention. Four of those are now out of the program, doing acceptable work on their own again. We were successful in obtaining disability retirement for a couple of people. Another individual wanted to leave the teaching division and move into the nonteaching division. We arranged that transfer, and that person is much happier than he was in the classroom. One person, who was on a one-year contract, was terminated. Fifteen teachers are still in the program.

Question: *At the end of the intervention process, does the Review Panel make any recommendation concerning the status of the teacher who has been in the program?*

Lawrence: No, and neither does the consulting teacher. This is very different from the procedure followed in the intern program in which the Review Panel makes a formal recommendation. In the intervention program, the union's involvement is almost exclusively in terms of participating in the decision to place the teacher in the program. Unlike the intern program, the Review Panel does not play a part in the status reports or get involved in other details. When the consulting teacher determines that the intervention process is completed, he prepares a report detailing the work that has taken place. If the administration, at that point or any point, decides to initiate termination proceedings against the teacher, and if that teacher requests representation, the union treats the situation like it would any other grievance. We would not be in the position of having put our imprimatur on the status reports. So if there's a good case to be made, we would be able to arbitrate the dismissal.

Question: *But the union is intimately involved in the decision to place the teacher in intervention, which means, as you've said, identifying that teacher as someone who is having serious problems. And as I understand it, once the decision is made, the teacher has no choice but to enter the program or face possible charges of insubordination. As you know, the union's involvement in this kind of peer review is a controversial idea. In the intern program, the Review Panel — with the union in the majority — actually makes a recommendation as to whether a first-year teacher will be renewed. And in the intervention part, the*

union is party to the decision to place a teacher in the program. Do you see a conflict of roles here for the union?

Lawrence: The intervention component is obviously more controversial than the intern idea where we are dealing with probationary teachers who are not yet full-fledged members of the profession and who traditionally do not have the same rights as tenured teachers. There are other examples in the labor movement — for instance, the apprenticeship programs run by the building trades unions — in which the union is involved in the training and evaluation of new people.

The intervention program is much more in the development stage. We went into it with our eyes open knowing that there were going to be things that had to be changed as we learned and worked our way through some of these problems. We are not presenting any of this as the best that can happen, but we are learning as we go, taking it one step at a time.

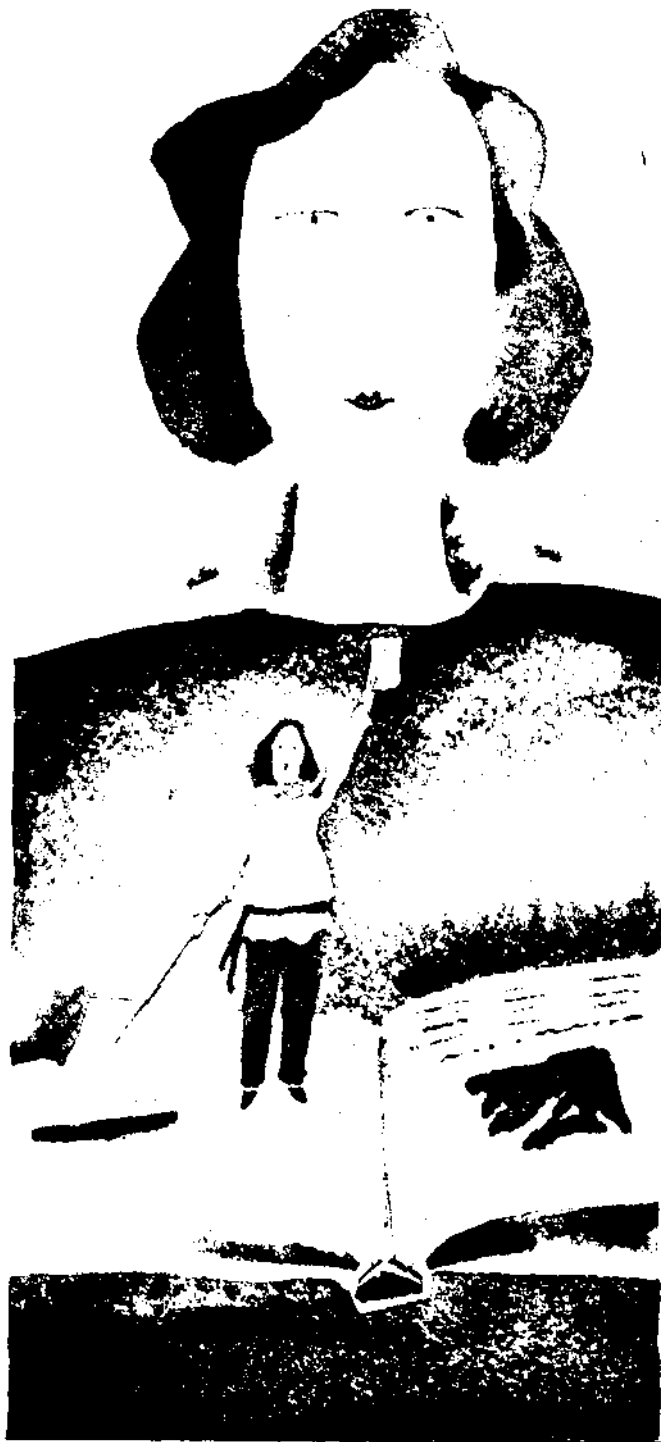
You first have to recognize that being identified for intervention is not synonymous with having your job placed in jeopardy. Our goal, our first responsibility, is to improve the performance of that person so that the individual is not in jeopardy, so that his or her job is not in jeopardy. Without doubt, we are saving the careers of some teachers, because if their performance continued to deteriorate and discharge proceedings were brought by management, we could lose a lot of those cases if they went to arbitration.

We are doing everything we can to see that there are safeguards against hasty or unfair treatment. For example, let's say a principal wants to place a teacher in the program. If the union committee does not think that's an appropriate program for that teacher, it can veto the principal's recommendation. And it has been our practice that before a decision is made to place a teacher in intervention, there must be a unanimous, confidential vote of the union building committee at that teacher's school. That committee of teachers is elected annually by the other teachers in the school, so it is very cautious about going out on a limb. It knows it has to maintain the confidence and the trust of that teaching staff. In addition, before the building committee is empowered to even consider the case, there is a review of the situation at the level of my office. Finally, to afford as much due-process protection to the teacher as possible, we are now looking into the establishment of an appeal process through an independent, neutral third party. As we envision it, any teacher who feels he or she was erroneously or unfairly identified for intervention could have a review by this third party to determine if the identification was warranted.

I don't have all the answers, but if there are further points of conflict or tension that we haven't yet faced, we are determined to work them out so that we can keep teachers rather than administrators in charge of setting standards for the profession. I don't see any unresolvable conflict between this program and the responsibility of the union to protect people against unfair treatment or unfair dismissals.

Question: *I know from looking at your contract that the Toledo Federation of Teachers has been quite successful in its attempts to put teachers in charge of professional decisions. For example, teachers serve on*

'The key factor in building a quality system is to place professional decisions in the hands of the teachers themselves.'



all committees related to curriculum, testing, and staff development. The committee that oversees inservice training is composed exclusively of teachers. Teachers elect their own department chairpersons, and monthly meetings are required between the union and the administration "to discuss matters of educational policy." Do you see this new program as one more step in that direction?

Lawrence: Yes, that's our goal. The first thing we did in this school district, in our first contract, was to do everything possible to get control of inservice training. We've been building from that point ever since. We've used the bargaining process to build a real profession and to establish those conditions that make quality teaching possible: smaller class size, preparation time, training and assistance, salaries that will attract good people, and so forth. The key factor in building a quality system is to place professional decisions in the hands of the teachers themselves. Historically, every profession has exercised control over who is deemed acceptable to enter its ranks.

Through our involvement in this program, teachers stand now more than ever at the center of the professional endeavor. We are involving large numbers of teachers — the consulting teachers, the interns, the teachers experiencing serious difficulties, the union building committees — in examining, refining, and overseeing the standards of teaching practice. I think that's an important role for the union to play.

We would like to place other professional decisions in the hands of teachers. I want to get away from the idea that the teacher is a hired hand who shows up and there's the class of kids — someone else has made all the decisions, and sometimes made them badly, without adequate information. That's not acceptable for two reasons: First, the educational output has not been satisfactory under these conditions, and secondly, no one can behave like a responsible professional unless he is given responsibility. I would like teachers everywhere to draft the class lists like we do in Toledo. I would like to see placement determination decisions made by teachers. I would like to see teachers take the lead in the discussion of what can be done next year at their schools to improve the instructional program as a result of what they learned this year. We can only accomplish these things through collective bargaining. That's our tool. Nothing is going to be handed to us on a silver platter.

Question: What has been the reaction of the public to this program?

Lawrence: Very positive. The parents are enthusiastic. They are curious. They like it. The press has been enthusiastic. The teachers themselves are taking pride in the program. There's no doubt that this is contributing to heightened public confidence in the schools. Toledo, like many other urban school systems around the country, had its share of problems during the 70s: a declining industrial base, a serious recession, a shortage of funds, two school closings. Morale was very low. We were forced to go on strike in 1970 and 1978.

Now the system is on its way back to sound health. We even passed a large operating levy recently. It's a constant uphill battle. You absolutely must have a public school system that works and one that parents per-

ceive as working. Otherwise, they're going to put their kids in private schools. Then you add the idea of tuition tax credits, which is nothing less than paying people to leave the public school system, and we can see how important it is to convince the public of the excellence of our schools. I think our program can have a dramatic impact on public opinion. Certainly the public is going to be listening and appreciative if the teaching profession itself makes it clear that we take seriously the responsibility for high standards for new teachers and for improving the performance of those teachers with serious problems.

Question: As you know, a number of other school districts and AFT local unions around the country have expressed interest in the Toledo Plan. What advice do you have for those who might be considering the establishment of something similar in their areas? What conditions are necessary to make such a program successful?

Lawrence: First — I guess this goes without saying — there must be widespread support from the membership. We first posed the idea of an intern program to our members in 1973, and the response was 5 to 1 in favor.

Second, the union must be very strong. It must have the trust and confidence of its members. It must have a solid contract that firmly protects the rights of teachers. It must be effective at the school level, with an active union committee at every school site. And, of course, this program cannot exist in the middle of a jurisdictional dispute with the NEA. The teaching force must be unified.

As for the administration, they have to be willing to admit that the traditional system hasn't been working well. They have to be willing to change the existing relationships, to give up some of their power, to give teachers more responsibility. They have to re-think their attitudes toward evaluation and agree that evaluation must be tied to a strong professional development system.

I should also caution people to make sure they are protected against any *Yeshiva*-type legal decisions. Collective bargaining laws should be reviewed to ensure that consulting teachers will not be excluded from the bargaining unit and that the assumption of these new responsibilities will not in any way jeopardize the union's status as collective bargaining agent.

Question: One last question: The union's emphasis in these two new programs is on excellence in the teaching profession. What about excellence among principals? Shouldn't there be a similar program for them?

Lawrence: Absolutely. As a matter of fact, this school district is now very close to putting in place an intervention program for school principals. Principals are not appointed by God as perfect and forever will remain perfect. They have to learn their role, and they need help and support in doing what they do the same as teachers need help and support. Some of them need to be taken out of the school business. The way we have gone about appointing and policing the managers of our schools doesn't make any sense. Everybody can agree that we need good, competent principals, supervisory personnel, and curriculum people. But we have to re-define the parameters of those jobs. □

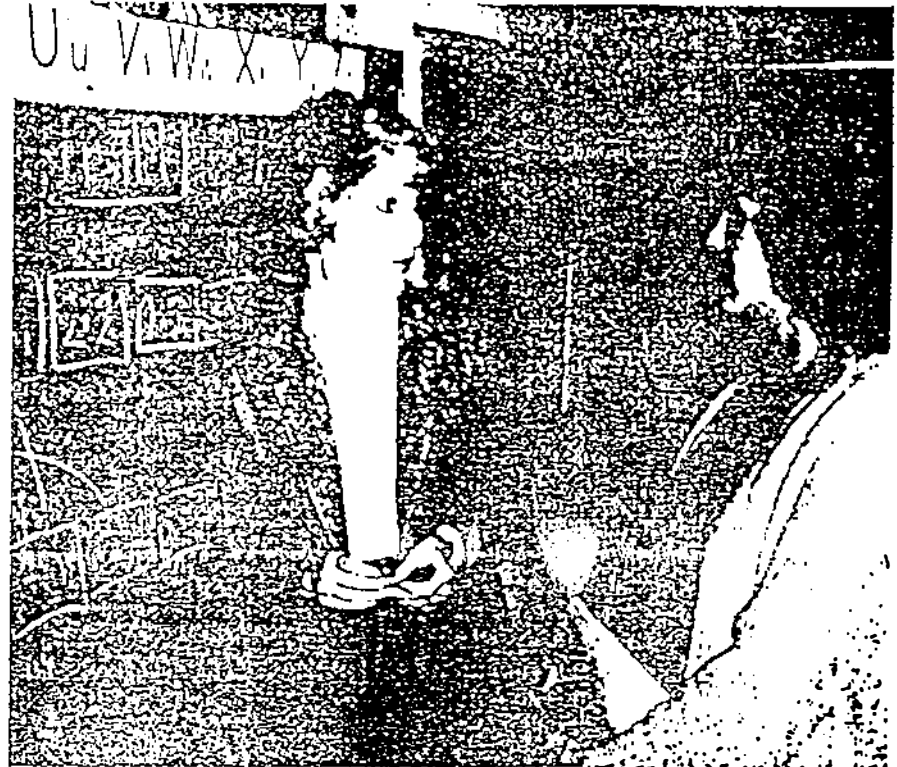
and an enthusiastic supporter of the program.

Before 1981, Toledo teachers were evaluated by building principals. But traditional methods of teacher evaluation had proved ineffective and burdensome, and battles between labor and management flared up over botched or incomplete evaluations. As a result, the top administrators in the district began to look seriously at involving the union in the training and professional development of staff members. (The fact that the TFT was both strong and respected played no small part in management's decision to review the situation.)

The system of evaluation used by the Toledo principals stressed many of the same skills that are now emphasized by teacher "consultants." But principals rarely had adequate time for evaluating and assisting new teachers, and too often all but the poorest teachers were routinely recommended for continuing contracts. (Only one new teacher was terminated in the five years immediately preceding the start of the new program.)

Moreover, due process procedures were often ignored, and the number of individuals doing the evaluating — some 70 principals — made uniformity impossible to achieve. Problems of due process and nonuniform evaluation procedures sometimes made it necessary for the school district to retain teachers who would otherwise have been terminated.

Today, seven consulting teachers oversee the professional development of nearly 70 beginning teachers. Uniformity and due process can be more closely monitored, and seven interns have been denied contract renewal since the new program began. There can also be a close match between the teaching field of an intern and that of a consultant. Since the consulting teachers are released from regular classroom duties, they are free to channel all of their energies into training the beginning teachers. Their effectiveness has won over many detractors.



Principals have not been excluded from the evaluation process. Toledo has a two-year probationary period for its beginning teachers. During the second year, principals conduct the evaluations, using the same standards and criteria as those used by the consulting teachers during the first year. There have been no instances in which an unsatisfactory rating was given in the second year, a fact that attests to the effectiveness of the first-year screening by the consulting teachers.

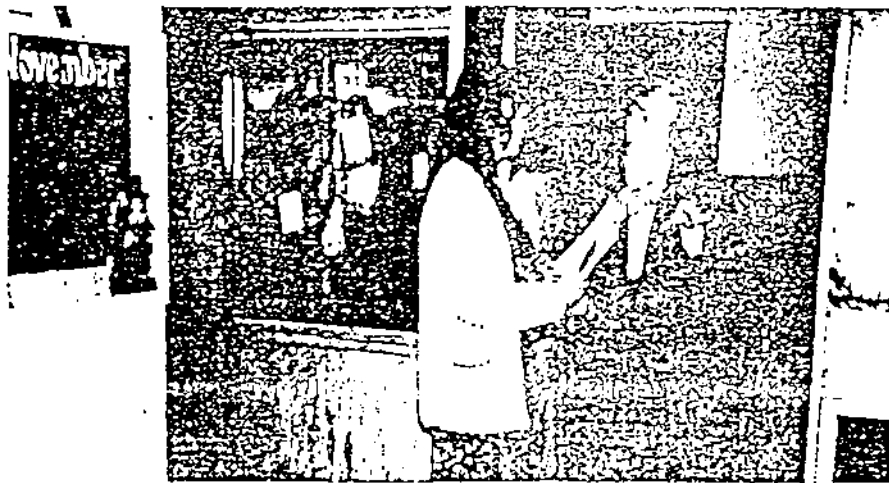
references from the principal, the TFT building representative, and three other teachers. Applicants were also asked to demonstrate their verbal ability in written and oral expression.

Fifteen consultants, trained in various specializations in elementary and secondary education, were chosen. The consultants agreed to serve for three years, after which they were to return to their original classroom assignments. All consultants received special stipends to compensate them for the additional hours of work that their new role entailed.

Teaching techniques, classroom management skills, and content knowledge are the major areas stressed in the program. In judging the progress of a beginner, a consulting teacher is required to examine such things as the beginner's ability to ask meaningful questions that lead learners through a lesson, the beginner's ability to interact appropriately and impartially with students, and the beginner's ability to measure student progress.

Under the Intern-Intervention Program, the evaluation of a beginning teacher is a process of continuous goal-setting, based on detailed observations and follow-up conferences, during which an intern and a consultant can analyze the novice's teaching behaviors and set practical goals. The consultant may point out a deficiency, suggest a new teaching method, or demonstrate a sample lesson. A booklet outlining procedures and guidelines for the evaluation of beginning teachers has been distributed to every teacher and administrator in the Toledo school system.

THE FIRST TASK in organizing the Intern-Intervention Program was the selection of the teacher consultants. Seventy-five of the district's 2,364 teachers applied for the position. Each applicant was required to have five years of outstanding teaching service, substantiated by confidential





The governing body of the Intern-Intervention Program is a nine-member panel composed of five TFT appointees and four individuals named by the school district's personnel office. The watchdog efforts of this panel help insure the consistency and integrity of the program. The panel accepts or rejects the recommendations of the consulting teachers at the end of each evaluation period (December 15 and March 15).

The consultants are called before the review panel to explain, annotate, and justify their recommendations. After the spring review, the recommendations of the consultants are sent to the superintendent to be submitted to the school board for action. The review panel also monitors and carefully scrutinizes the work of the consulting teachers; it asks interns to critique both the evaluation program as a whole and the services of the consultants who worked with them. TFT President Dal Lawrence and Assistant Superintendent William Lehrer serve alternately as head of the panel.

THE SECOND PHASE of the Toledo Intern-Intervention Program offers assistance to in-service teachers whose performance is so poor that they must either improve or face termination. Often the difficulties that these teachers are having involve classroom management or an inability to present material clearly. Twenty-two troubled teachers have been assigned consultants as part of the intervention portion of the program. The consultant assigned to a case is from the same academic area as the troubled teacher, and the goal of the intervention is to improve the classroom performance of that teacher to an acceptable level.

The first task of the consulting teacher is to establish a sound working relationship with the troubled teacher. The relationship between the two is often intense, and the kind of relationship that they develop is left entirely to them. No time limit

is imposed on any part of the intervention process, and this flexibility allows consultants to use a wide variety of resources to improve the performance of troubled teachers.

Teachers are assigned to intervention for a variety of reasons. Many of them have lost their ability to control, direct, or motivate students. The reasons for these difficulties range from such traumas as a recent divorce or the death of a family member to drug dependency or what is commonly called teacher burnout. Although consultants are not specifically trained to handle personal problems, they are able to seek professional help for troubled teachers through the district's Employee Assistance Program.

Other teachers are assigned to intervention because they have never mastered basic teaching techniques. Those who fall into this category include teachers who had inadequate student teaching experiences and teachers of vocational subjects who were recruited from industry and who lack college training. The consultants have noted that the chances for improved performance are better in cases in which no outside personal problem is evident.

The process by which a teacher is assigned to intervention has deliberately been made slow and meticulous. The initial referral can come from the school principal or from the TFT's building-level committee, but both the union and the district personnel office must concur before intervention can be authorized. Once these two offices have agreed that intervention is justified and represents the best way to provide immediate help for the troubled teacher, a series of meetings between the principal and the TFT building-level committee is authorized. Another vote is taken, and, if both the principal and the committee agree, a consulting teacher is assigned to the troubled teacher.

A teacher identified for intervention has the right to appeal the placement to a neutral third party. A law professor from the University of Toledo College of Law serves as referee and has the authority to make a decision that is binding on all parties. In order to determine whether the placement procedure was properly conducted and whether the placement itself is reasonable, he may call anyone he wishes to give testimony.

During an intervention, communication is vital. The two groups that authorized the intervention need to be kept abreast of its progress. Consultants are careful to respect the rights of the troubled teacher, but they must brief the principal and the union's building representative at the start and at the end of the intervention.

The intervention ends when the con-

sultant determines that assistance is no longer necessary. This happens when the teacher has achieved a satisfactory level of classroom performance, when the consultant determines that the teacher can no longer benefit from further assistance, or when (after a reasonable time) the consultant has not been able to improve the teacher's performance. When the relationship between the consultant and the teacher ends, the consultant issues a "status report."

The status report is submitted to the school district personnel office and to the TFT office. Management then decides what action, if any, it will take. If the district seeks termination, the union bases its decision about whether or not to represent the teacher on the same criteria that would be applied to any other grievance. Final and binding arbitration is available to the teacher if the union chooses to defend him or her. Other statutory hearing rights are available if the union chooses not to defend the teacher. Unlike the intern program, the review panel does not make any recommendation about the future status of a teacher placed in intervention.

Twelve of the 22 teachers placed in intervention are still in the program. Five of the others have been restored to a satisfactory level of performance, one was dismissed, two chose to leave teaching, and two were granted disability retirements by the state.

Toledo's evaluation program has won plaudits from most of the principals who initially opposed it. Several have written letters commending the work of the consultants. Others have suggested that consultants be involved in the second-year evaluations. Assistant Superintendent Lehrer says, "We get consistency, we get competent people closely matched in training to the teachers they are assigned to, and at last we have a way to assist teachers who are experiencing difficulties, without the usual confrontation with the union."

Lawrence, the TFT president, points out that Toledo teachers can now show the public that they care about quality and that they will not tolerate unacceptable performance. "It is important for teachers to accept the ultimate responsibility for policing their profession, if we expect any real changes in the future," Lawrence says. "I see no reason for a union not to use collective bargaining to build a profession for teachers." □

*For further information about the Toledo Intern-Intervention Program described in this article, write to Dal Lawrence, President, Toledo Federation of Teachers, 320 W. Woodruff, Toledo, OH 43624, or to William Lehrer, Assistant Superintendent, Personnel, Toledo Public Schools, Manhattan and Elm Sts., Toledo, OH 43608.

Action

A NEWSLETTER FOR AFT LEADERS

NO. 40, JUNE 26, 1987

NewsWire

Cincinnati Teachers Back Carnegie Report Support for Reforms Widen

TEACHING OVERSEAS Longing for something completely different in your teaching career? The chances to teach, travel or earn credit overseas are outlined in a new brochure from the AFT International Affairs department entitled *Opportunities Abroad for Teachers*.

The brochure lists U.S. government agencies that offer teaching positions, the education departments of various U.S. territories and outlying states and private agencies that provide teaching and education opportunities worldwide. It provides a concise summary of those opportunities.

Copies of the 16-page brochure are 60 cents each and available from the AFT order department. Ask for item #589.

'CREATION SCIENCE' RULING

The AFT is hailing the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling in the Louisiana "creation science" case. The ruling found unconstitutional those state laws that require public school teachers to also cover "creation science" if they teach the theory of evolution. "The Supreme Court has rescued the nation's public school students from those trying to impose their beliefs on others," AFT president Albert Shanker noted. "We need to guide students in the democratic values we cherish but advocating a religious doctrine belongs in the church and the home." The logic used by the justices also bodes well for the outcome of other cases waiting in the wings—particularly the textbook cases pending in Tennessee and Alabama, Shanker pointed out. The AFT had argued against the Louisiana law in an amicus curiae brief filed before the Supreme Court.

TEEN PREGNANCY American teenagers who are poor and lack basic academic skills are almost six times more likely to become pregnant than their more affluent and academically successful peers, concluded a new report by the Children's Defense Fund. "Preventing Adolescent Pregnancy: What Schools Can Do" found that teens with similar family incomes and basic skills in reading and math—whether white, black or Hispanic—have nearly identical rates of teenage childbearing. To decrease teen pregnancies, the report urges that schools take measures to identify at-risk youths as early as possible, improve links with parents and community institutions and incorporate life planning courses into the curricula. For copies, send \$4 to CDF, 122 C Street, NW, Washington, DC 20001.

Support among teachers for the reforms advocated by the AFT and others interested in professionalizing teaching continues to grow.

In Cincinnati recently, a public forum on the Carnegie Report, *A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century*, brought together corporate leaders, superintendents of schools, school board members, representatives of parent-teacher associations and community organizations, teacher union leaders and others from throughout the Cincinnati area to discuss the need for education reform.

Spearheaded by the Cincinnati Federation of Teachers (CFT), the forum featured Marc Tucker, executive director of the Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy.

"Marc's presence helped us to focus the attention of the entire Cincinnati community on the schools and teacher professionalism," explained CFT president Tom Mooney, adding that the forum has helped build a broader base of support for reform among those outside the school community.

A survey commissioned by the CFT shows that Cincinnati teachers are solidly behind the major reforms called for in the Carnegie Forum's task force report. Nearly 60 percent of the teachers responding to the poll endorsed the creation of a national certification board for teachers. Also, 91.8 percent agreed or strongly agreed with the career-ladder concept, which would allow them to advance without having to enter administration and leave teaching.

When asked to rank possible criteria for advancement on a career ladder, "assessment of teaching skills" was highest, with years of experience, advanced education and level of certification receiving some support.

Some 83.1 percent agreed that "standards and criteria for effective teaching should be determined by the teaching profession rather than by professional

administrators."

The teachers also supported the expansion of peer evaluation and the involvement of teachers in performance review of their principals. Respondents to the survey "feel teachers should have a greater role in educational decisions and they support reforms in teacher training and certification," read a statement by poll researchers.

Teachers also clearly believe that reducing class size is the most important step in efforts to improve student achievement and increase teacher effectiveness.

Over 40 percent of Cincinnati teachers said they have considered leaving the school district or the teaching profession during the past two years.

"I was shocked to see 40 percent of the teachers considered leaving," reported Mooney. "Changes need to be made."

One-third of the district's 3,200 teachers completed the 156-question survey.

Rochester Administrator's Lawsuit Dismissed

Ruling that the district's mentor teacher program does not harmfully affect school administrators, a New York state judge has dismissed an administrator's lawsuit against the Rochester Teachers Association and the city's school district.

The president of the Association of Supervisors and Administrators of Rochester sued last year, claiming that the district's Peer Assistance Review (PAR) program impinged upon administrators' responsibilities and that teachers were not certified to participate in teacher evaluations. State Supreme Court Justice Andrew Siracuse

(Continued on page 2)

Reform Update

Here's \$150,000: Now reorganize the school

'Teachers hungry for this kind of freedom,' says Cincinnati AFT

Next September, two Cincinnati schools will undergo dramatic changes in order to give "high-risk" students a totally different—and successful—experience of school.

The Cincinnati Federation of Teachers and district administrators have agreed on a pilot project to restructure two elementary schools to improve social and academic skills and decrease drop-out rates among the "high risk" students at the schools. Union and school system representatives have spent nearly a year working out the details of the experiment.

When the two demonstration schools open their doors in September, they will be featuring an expanded staff to provide all-day kindergarten, reduced class sizes of between 15 and 18 students, more visiting teachers to work with students with serious attendance, behavior and social problems, more social skills development programs, greater parental involvement in school operations and a Head Start program for

four-year-olds. Each school has been given a \$50,000 planning grant this summer, and each will get an additional \$100,000 over the next year to be used as the staff decides.

"It's time to acknowledge that our present delivery system is not working for many students," says CFT president Tom Mooney. "We have persistently low achievement, high failure and drop-out rates in an entire set of schools."

Part of the problem has been a lack of investment by the district in educating disadvantaged students, "but money alone won't solve the problems," says Mooney. "We have to be willing to rethink the entire delivery system: organization, staffing, curriculum, books and instructional materials." The demonstration schools are being given the freedom to rethink the traditional delivery system, he notes.

The two demonstration schools were selected on the basis of their staff's enthusiasm and creativity and the extent to which administrators, teachers, parents and the community appeared willing to work as a team.

"It was clear from the interviews that we hit a nerve," said Mooney. "Parents, teachers and even principals are hungry for the



Cincinnati's Taft Elementary School principal Paul McNeely and AFT building representative Susan Schmidt go over ideas for restructuring their school.

kind of freedom this project offers, anxious to be creative once some red tape and over-regulation are removed."

During the summer, school leaders will plan services for students and prepare teachers for the participatory management process that parallels recommendations by the Carnegie Forum on Teaching as a Profession.

The project has drawn praise from outside the education com-

munity. *The Cincinnati Post* in an editorial said: "Unlike many top-down plans for reform, this one is fresh and promising. In considering it, the school board should remember Owen Butler's (former chair of Procter & Gamble) warning: Given the human waste and social cost of educational failure, a community can make no better investment in its future than to rescue its low-achieving public schools."

PROF-ISSUES-9

Keeping teachers in the profession: Mentor Sondra Richman (right) and intern Kathleen Gittens with students



DAVID GROSSMAN

Research Tips

Reading readiness: Get an early start

Kindergarten is not what it used to be: many more youngsters today already have the experience of day care and preschool not to mention "Sesame Street" by the time they first enter school. Many are already comfortable working with unfamiliar adults and already know the names and sounds of letters of the alphabet.

Thus the traditional activities of cutting and pasting, hopping and jumping may no longer be enough for many kindergartners suggests "Becoming a Nation of Readers: Implications for Teachers," a new booklet distributed by the AFT that

of Readers" report issued last year by the U.S. Department of Education.

"Researchers have demonstrated that early experience in talking and learning about the world and written language is more appropriate for developing reading skills," says the booklet.

A good "reading-readiness" program, says the booklet, includes such activities as:

•**Daily reading aloud.** Listening to a teacher helps children develop important reading comprehension concepts; these benefits are greatest when children are active participants

•**Class collaborative stories.** As the teacher records stories dictated by the group on the blackboard, chart paper or computer, children learn about the conventions of language, such as how words are composed and the importance of the written word in communicating over time and space.

•**Daily individual writing.** One of the most effective ways for children to learn about written language is for them to write themselves. When children do not feel constrained by requirements for correct spelling or penmanship, writing activities to extend their knowledge of letter-

Voice of experience

In New York City, veteran teachers are mentors for interns

When Brooklyn teacher intern Kathleen Gittens is on release time from her class at P.S. 41, she can be found in the classroom of mentor Sondra Richman or those of other experienced teachers, "viewing" their work, their methods and their style. The rest of her time is spent in her own classroom, with her assigned mentor Richman helping out.

In the joint UFT-board of education mentor teacher project, which was funded by the state for \$1.6 million, approximately 45

mentors have been selected to help out 80 interns. The project is running in 28 schools within 13 districts in New York City.

"We hope to encourage experienced senior teachers to remain in the teaching profession and to improve the retention rate of new teachers coming into the system," says Ann Rosen, UFT project coordinator and a Brooklyn elementary school teacher. "We believe that through a collegial program of this nature we can achieve these goals."

Mentors are released three periods a week for each intern with whom they work; the interns, who comprise regularly appointed elementary school teachers, are released six periods to work with the mentor. During common release time [when mentor and intern have the same time off], the two spend their time in conference and during intern release time, the intern is either visiting the mentor or another experienced teacher in the school, says Rosen. What the intern and mentor do when they're in one another's classes fits into a plan of action that they have agreed upon, she says. "Mostly it's viewing so they can discuss it later."

While temporary per diem substitutes are not yet eligible under the legislation for the mentoring programs, even though they are considered to be the ones most in need of help, the Board of Regents has asked that the law be changed so TPDs can participate next year. Although all mentors selected for this first year program must have at least five years of teaching experience within the

every object in the room and keep a plentiful supply of good books. Children should not only listen to stories and watch adults read to them — they should also have the chance to hold the books themselves and imitate adults reading.

•**Class discussion of events.** Teachers should capitalize on every opportunity to engage children in thoughtful discussion, to give them a chance to exercise their memories, reflect on experiences, to give complete descriptions or tell complete stories.

"Becoming a Nation of Readers: Implications for Teachers"