

HOW TO PREPARE FOR STUDENT TEACHING

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The reader of this article is probably expecting to read something totally different from what I will write. Although specified education courses are required for a degree in education, these courses do not necessarily prepare you for student teaching. In my own case I drew heavily upon my background working in various fast-food restuarants.

Obviously a statement such as this deserves a detailed explanation. A lengthy analogy between these two experiences appears to be the best way to defend myself. The initial basis for comparison comes as early as applying for a job. Any determined job seeker methodically constructs a list of desirable positions and applies for them in that order. An applicant for student teaching also applies for his assignment in the same methodical manner. Like the job hunter, who is hired by his third choice of employers, the student teacher may be assigned his third choice of positions. Like the worker, who settles on a job for the sake of employment, the student teacher may settle on an assignment for the sake of his placement.

There are many other aspects of student teaching, which parallel the duties of the employee of the fast-food restuarant. For instance, that first day on the job usually reveals to the employee how little he actually knows about the mechanics of serving the public. The student teacher quickly learns how much she needs to learn about the interior functions of her school.

The employee tries to stand poised and confident behind her counter. The student teacher sits in the same manner behind her desk. Actually both of them are nervous wrecks. Then comes the onslaught of customers, the onrush of students. These times are classically known as the lunch hour or homeroom period. For both people there is the uncomfortable feeling that all those faces are staring at them.

In neither of these two situations is the employee or the student teacher ever really in full command. Some parallelling examples are easy to describe.

The waitress memorizes a menu pad for taking an order. The student teacher memorizes a seating plan for taking attendance. A customer asks to change his order after it has already been placed. A student asks to change his seat after he has already been placed. The customer can not eat mayonaise. The student can not see the board

The manager tells the waitress that the district supervisor may be observing store operations today. The cooperating teacher suggests to the student teacher that her supervising teacher may be observing her class today. The waitress is afraid she will confuse an order. The student teacher is afraid that she will present a poor lesson. The manager and supervisor discuss her faults and attributes as a waitress; the master teacher and supervising teacher discuss her faults and attributes as a prospective teacher.

The manager checks the receipts from the register of the waitress at the end of her shift. The supervisor checks the lesson in the plan book of the student teacher at the end of class. The waitress's cash draw is 5¢ short. The student teacher's lesson plan was 5 minutes short. Count your change more carefully next time. Plan your lesson more carefully next time.

By this time you may be saying to yourself that student teaching is like waitressing in a fast-food restuarant after all, or you may be thinking I am crazy. Or perhaps you are thinking it is like a job you had once. Well, if you are; that's good, because it was the intention and purpose of this article to point out that work experience may be the best preparation for the student teaching experience.