

Taking More Time for Teach

Some Experts Favor Longer Internships, Closer Supervision

By JAY MATHEWS
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When Marymount University education professor Shirley Smith was training to be a teacher, she had the usual abbreviated experience in a real classroom—12 weeks with a sixth grade in Greensburg, Pa.

It was not what she had hoped for. "I remember feeling totally overwhelmed by the amount of work I had to do and the energy it demanded simply to survive," she said. There was little time to reflect on what she had learned or to hear what more experienced teachers thought of her work.

So when she had a chance to train a new generation of teachers differently, she grabbed it. Her university in Arlington now runs one of a growing number of programs to give students a full year in the classroom, and sometimes even more.

The idea is to train teachers like doctors. New teachers, advocates say, should have long internships under the close supervision of mentor teachers so they can be confident and effective when they go out on their own.

Stanford University education professor Linda Darling-Hammond said two states, Colorado and North Carolina, now require at least a year of student teaching for those seeking teacher licenses. More than 200 colleges and universities offer a full year of classroom experience, some for undergraduates and some for professionals switching careers. Some universities—including Howard and the University of California campuses at Berkeley and Los Angeles—have two-year programs, with the teacher often earning a salary in the second year, Darling-Hammond said.

It is expensive, she said, but her research shows it is "cheaper to train someone well who will stay in the profession than to have a continual revolving door of recruits who are gone after two or three years."



Intern Larissa Lipani-Peluso, left, helps Buzz Aldrin Elementary teacher Erin Smythers make

Not all experts accept that analysis. Willis D. Hawley, professor of education and public affairs at the University of Maryland, said the lengthened internships increase the cost of becoming a teacher without doing anything to improve salaries and working conditions once interns become full-time teachers. Thus, fewer good candidates will enroll in training programs and the pool of good teachers will shrink, he said.

"Even with lengthy internships, student teachers would still likely experience a limited range of classroom problems and instructional situations," said Sharon J. Derry, professor of educational psychology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. "Not all mentoring teachers will have the time or capability to help student teachers think about, reflect upon, interpret and learn from the experiences they do encounter."

She applauds the growing use of vid-

eotaped case studies, which allow teachers to encounter a wider range of pedagogical problems in less time. Hawley suggested focusing instead on young teachers once they have full-time jobs.

At the five public schools in Fairfax and Arlington counties where Marymount trains would-be teachers, the school administrators and the one-year interns say they like the program.

The interns "arrive in the fall on the first day that the classroom teachers come back to school, and they are here to the last day of school in June," said Chris A. Brogan, principal of Sunrise Valley Elementary School in Fairfax County. "They are able to experience a whole year of hands-on learning."

They also take education courses at Marymount in the summer before school starts and on afternoons during the school year.

Each works in the same room with an

her Training



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name tags for the first day of school.

experienced teacher and occasionally covers for full-time teachers who attend courses to improve their own skills.

Larissa Lipani-Peluso, 25, said she quit her job as an engineer at MCI WorldCom when she decided that the high-tech position was not giving her "anything more than a hefty paycheck." She signed on for Marymount's Professional Development Academy, which will cost her \$19,000 (minus fellowship grants) by the time she finishes her year at Fairfax's Buzz Aldrin Elementary School, "because when I walk into the classroom, I want to feel confident and prepared."

Marymount's academy has 105 graduates teaching in 74 schools. Seven have been nominated for a Sallie Mae First Year Teacher of the Year Award, and one was named Phi Delta Kappa student teacher of the year. Barbara Gist, who at age 49 left her job as a vice president for administration at Raytheon to enroll in

the program, teaches sixth grade at Sunrise Valley and received Fairfax County's Outstanding First Year Teacher Award last year.

Many educators applaud such results but call for even more innovation. Jerry L. Swanitz, a Santa Ynez Valley (Calif.) Union High School vice principal, said his work with the Santa Cruz-based Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning convinced him that one-year internships are not enough.

"We need to . . . begin teacher preparation when students begin their college or university education," he said.

Katherine K. Merseth, director of the teacher education program at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, said computer technology could allow internship programs to expand without prohibitive cost. Education school professors, for instance, could monitor several interns from their offices using online interactive voice and picture capabilities. "We are hoping to launch a version of this vision in the near future," she said.

But most educators say the most important instruction must come from veteran teachers working in the classroom with the interns, instead of checking with them at the end of the day, as happens in most schools.

"Prospective teachers need to observe and work with highly qualified, experienced teachers in classrooms that are well run, effective and demonstrate a variety of techniques and strategies," said Donna Wiseman, associate dean for teacher education at the University of Maryland. Her university has set up professional development schools in the Washington suburbs for just that purpose.

"A lot of mentor programs fail because the mentor is not close by when the novice needs help," said Sandra Dean, a teacher and literacy coordinator at Shepherd Elementary School in Hayward, Calif. "When a teacher needs support and advice, later just doesn't work. . . . Most mentor programs ask way too much and provide too little time and compensation for the work involved.

"I only wish I believed that America cared enough about its children to commit the requisite resources to this issue," Dean added. "It isn't a quick fix, after all, and that is where the money seems most often to be allocated."