

DISCUSSION DRAFT

Assisting First Year Teachers
and Other Beginning Education Professionals

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Northern Michigan University (NMU) preservice professional education program and assistance for graduates is based upon the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) standards (1987), NCATE's Approved Curriculum Guidelines (1992), Scriven's duties of the teacher (1992), the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium standards (1992), Smith and Sagans' taxonomy of field experiences (1975) and standards, guidelines and conceptualizations NMU has developed. Below are described the primary standards, guidelines conceptualizations, premises and postulates upon which NMU's efforts to assist first year teachers and other beginning education professionals are based.

NCATE *Standards, Procedures and Policies for the Accreditation of Professional Educational Units* criteria for compliance number 35 states:

The unit has developed arrangements with school districts in the area to provide assistance to its graduates who are first year teachers and/or who are beginning other professional roles as an extension of their professional education program. (1987, p. 42).

NMU's education program requires students to observe, reflect upon, evaluate, analyze and practice the professional roles for which they are being prepared. Some experiences focus directly on the diagnosing and solving of educational problems related to student learning; all as a preparation for their first years of teaching. Our students are given opportunities to combine theory with practice in ways that assist them to become reflective, capable and knowledgeable practitioners who will continue as lifelong learners to improve in their profession.

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NCATE approved curriculum guidelines are addressed for each program within our teacher education program. The new programs for the preparation of elementary education teachers at NMU were based upon these guidelines to provide study and experience in the many different aspects of becoming a teacher. Our professional education unit meets these guidelines through a combination of study and experiences. These guidelines offer the foundation upon which to extend support to our graduates.

The formal full time assumption of role and the beginning of role evaluation are the primary processes for our first year teachers. These processes are the last of the five role processes of our adopted field experiences taxonomy: orientation, conceptualization, learning and commitment, assumption and evaluation (Smith and Sagan, 1975). The final process, role evaluation, has its greatest importance in the ongoing development of the teacher, even though it is occurring to much lesser extent

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throughout the entire teacher education program. This ongoing evaluation is the process of revising and improving one's teaching based on new knowledge, skills, needs and dispositions and should continue throughout one's entire teaching career.

The duties of a teacher (Scriven, 1992) is a guide for developing our curriculum and field experiences of our preservice teacher education program, as well as for what needs to be mastered by first year teachers. The five main categories of duties: knowledge of subject matter, instructional competence, assessment competence, professionalism, and other services to the school and community are covered in NMU's teacher education curriculum and field experiences and can be used as an assessment model for our first year teachers.

The Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC) standards on what new teachers should know and be able to do also serves as a framework for organizing and evaluating

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our program and our first year teachers. The ten principles established in INTASC's draft statement each contain separate knowledge, disposition and performance standards. The knowledge standards are met in our undergraduate program, with the disposition and performance standards being primarily developed and assessed in clinical and field-based settings.

Our program provides the conceptual framework and field experiences to equip our students to perform the duties of the teacher and "to work effectively in specific education roles" (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, 1987, p. 41). The undergraduate preservice professional education curriculum is broadly conceived of as three stages: 1) Choosing to Become a Teacher, 2) Learning to Become a Teacher, and 3) Becoming a Teacher. Our inservice program is the fourth stage: Being a Teacher. To the four levels of knowledge in our preservice program: 1) Knowledge of the Institution, 2) Knowledge of the Student, 3) Knowledge of Teaching, and 4) Knowledge of Clinical

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Application/Knowledge of Educational Leadership, is added 5)
Reflection and Refinement of Teaching for our practicing graduates.
These are stages and levels in a process of helping students overcome their fancies and imaginings about teaching and be prepared for the realities of being a teacher. Student teaching is the students' first major encounter with the reality of teaching. The first year of teaching is the second major, and probably the most challenging, reality test. It is generally during the first year of teaching that our graduates move from the imagining stage in their career to the survival stage. Their survival will depend on their ability to deal with the realities of the classroom.

Below are described the activities that have been carried out relating to the NCATE criteria related to first year teachers and beginning professional. The beginning of full time teaching is seen as a continuation of the teacher education graduate's professional development at Northern Michigan University. It is the transition of student teacher to professional teacher and requires special super-

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vision and support to see that the teacher is successful in performing all of the duties and responsibilities of teaching. Attention is given at NMU to connecting theory and practice in educating teachers in field settings in the teacher education program so that the transition to full responsibility for a class can be made more smoothly. No matter how much authority and responsibility a preservice student in a field experience or a student teacher is given, the supervising teacher is still the higher authority and bears the major responsibility for the class.

The professional education unit of Northern Michigan University continues to provide assistance to its graduates as described in our 1989 NCATE report:

- 1 The Upper Peninsula Center for Educational Development has been established at Northern Michigan University. It is funded jointly by the University, the intermediate school districts, and the Michigan Department of

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Education. The Center sponsors training and professional development workshops for teachers and administrators and is involved in projects such as the Leadership in School Improvement Project, the Michigan Academy for Principal Preparation, the Upper Peninsula Principals' Academy, and through management consulting available to districts. The Center has recently begun a project funded by the Kellogg Foundation, the Michigan Department of Education, and Northern Michigan University to train professionals in teaching and learning through Effective Schooling. (Exhibit 2.1)

2. The Seaborg Center at Northern Michigan University serves the need for advancing the science and math programs in K-12 schools by providing faculty services to school districts. Training sessions for Upper Peninsula teachers are held throughout the school year and during the summer. The Seaborg Center works closely

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with NASA and the Michigan Department of Education to provide programs for teachers. (Exhibit 2.2)

3. The Teacher Education Advisory Council, which is made up of teachers and administrators involved in all professional education programs at Northern Michigan University and representatives from the Teacher Education Unit, holds in-service meetings once each semester. Districts are encouraged to allow beginning professionals who have graduated from the NMU program to attend the inservices. The Teacher Education Advisory Council reimburses the district for the cost of a substitute for the teacher for the day and will pay the cost of a substitute for the first-year teacher as well. (Exhibit 2.3)

4. Other types of general support available through Northern Michigan University include the following:

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- a. Materials and resources are available at Northern Michigan University's Learning Resource Center.
- b. Most first year teachers begin working on their 18 hour continuing certificate at NMU. Through these classes and contact with professors, support is given to first-year teachers.
- c. The Educational Administration faculty are involved in projects that are specifically for first year administrators. In 1988 a Springfield project was held for 20 new administrators in the Upper Peninsula. The project was offered through NASSP and MAPP and was specifically for first year administrators to help them develop strong leadership skills. A three-day simulation was held in May and then a one-day follow-up in October. During this time the participants worked on competencies they had identified as weaknesses. An assessment

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of their competencies was made through peer evaluation and work with a mentor. All mentors were trained assessors for the NASSP Administrator's Assessment Centers. (NMU NCATE Report, 1989, p. 104)

Little had been done beyond our preservice program and graduate programs in the past to formally aid our graduates in successfully being inducted into teaching at the place of their employment after students became employed.

We recognize that this is a critical period in a teacher's career and that induction into the profession is often left to chance. The beginning teacher is generally expected to perform the same duties as an experienced practitioner and is often given no special support or consideration. As a result, many beginning teachers fail to develop effective practices. Such failures to successfully negotiate the first years of professional practice causes many to either leave

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the profession or develop harmful coping strategies.

The first year of teaching is generally considered a time of great stress and challenge. As a result new teachers often experience a loss of self-confidence and a regression to more traditional patterns of teaching. As such, the need to see learning to teach as a continuum that stretches over a lifetime; not as something that begins and ends in college, is apparent. Different teachers will develop at different rates and will have different needs at different stages in their careers. The beginning stages of full-time teaching will most likely be the most demanding, as this is the time of most responsibility in relation to ability. At this stage, the beginning teacher has the same responsibility as a veteran teacher, but very little experience and limited abilities to deal with the intricacy, complexity, artistry and intensity of teaching. To develop the necessary abilities, understandings, attitudes and qualities to be an effective teacher takes time and effort that can only be acquired through practice. This level of expertise cannot be acquired entirely

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in college, even with student teaching which at best gives only a limited view of teaching, but must be developed while having full responsibilities as a teacher. Some support surviving these challenges and adjustments so that the teacher achieves a adequate mastery and competency is valuable.

One of the most accepted way of assisting beginning teachers is to offer support as they take their first critical steps in professional development. One level of support is to acknowledge the difficulty that a beginning teacher experiences and help them to understand that this is a normal process that beginning teachers go through. Often they are put in "sink or swim" situations with some of the worst conditions, i.e., unruly classes, heavy loads, extra assignments, few materials. New teachers are not allowed to gradually assume their responsibilities as is customary in other professions. In most induction programs, the beginner is allowed to develop skills and understandings gradually with support and guidance from their co-workers. Because beginning teachers are often

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not afforded this opportunity, they often lack understanding of the school and community and the ability to deal effectively with them, have to adjust to other life changes at the same time they are adjusting to teaching, are viewed as inexperienced, and must quickly establish themselves in their new surroundings. Because of the importance of teaching and possible negative lifelong consequences on the students, teacher and institution of a beginning teacher who fails to do a good job, the need for an adequate induction becomes all the more vital.

NMU's endeavors to deal with the above problems and concerns by assisting first year teachers and other beginning education professionals include:

1. Met three times with the superintendents of the upper peninsula of Michigan at Region 1 Michigan Association of Superintendents Association (MASA) to share our willingness and desire to assist any beginning teachers from NMU who were employed in their districts.
2. Wrote to all superintendents, principals and coordinators in the

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schools our student teachers are normally placed to inform them of our policy of assist all our graduates in their beginning years and our willingness to work with the district in whatever ways we could to support our graduates. (E1)

3. Published articles in each issue of eight issues of TEACH about first year teachers, which is distributed to 1,000-2,000 student teachers, teachers, administrators and others connected with our teacher education program twice a year since 1989. (E2)
4. Established and advertised an toll free number that schools and beginning teachers could use to access assistance from NMU.
5. Invited all first year teachers to attend Teacher Education Advisory Council meetings and volunteered to pay for their substitute teachers so that they could easily attend.
6. Informed our students in ED 450 Seminar in Teaching and in other meetings that we are committed to supporting them during their induction to teaching.
7. Informed university personnel through memos and meetings that we will assist our graduates in their first years.

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8. Informed area educators and administrators of our willingness to work with our graduates who are employed in their schools through group and individual meetings.
9. Requested the Career Placement and Planning office to assist us in tracking our graduates.
10. Offer support to recent graduates employed in our student teaching sites from our University faculty who visit these schools on a regular basis as part of their responsibilities supervising student teachers.
11. Offer workshops and graduate courses both on-campus and in off-campus regional sites that assist teachers in developing professionally.
12. Have invited all first year teachers to participate in a computer network to promote professional growth with other first year teachers, student teachers and university personnel and offered them free training and the free use of the computer hardware, software and telephones.
13. Invited all first year teachers in our region to a special conference

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for first year teachers and volunteered to cover all costs and meals.

Our attempts to interest our graduates who are beginning careers in education have met with limited success. Part of the limitations result from the distance and differences between our institutions. As the induction process is based in the school building, and often in isolation from other more experienced colleagues because each teacher often teaches in a classroom without close contact with other teachers, little opportunity exists for meaningful interchange with the university or fellow teachers unless it is initiated by the individual. Graduates look upon asking for guidance or assistance as a sign that they are not competent, and therefore try to deal with whatever problems they may have on their own.

A few points to note in considering the accomplishments of NMU in complying with NCATE criteria 35 are:

There are very few of our graduates employed in our region as there

are very few openings in teaching.

There is a general reluctance to seek outside help by first year teachers.

Most graduates who are teaching are located at distances from campus that make direct support difficult.

Assistance is often sought and given through informal channels, i.e., informal talks with NMU Department of Education personnel.

The process of educating our graduates and their employers to the existence of assistance from NMU to beginning educators is ongoing, but the response is limited.

There is limited understanding of the need and value of induction programs by area educators.

It may take some time to develop full acceptance of the need for an induction program and acceptance of assistance from NMU.

We will continue to use and develop NCATE's standards, NCATE's Approved Curriculum Guidelines, Scriven's duties of the teacher, the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium standards, and Smith and Sagans' taxonomy of field experiences as ways to conceptualize our program and a basis for evaluating effective teaching and support of our graduates.

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