

# TEACHING

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## AN INTRODUCTION

D. CECIL CLARK  
BEVERLY ROMNEY CUTLER

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# TEACHING: AN INTRODUCTION

D. Cecil Clark      Beverly Romney Cutler  
*Brigham Young University*



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# PREFACE

*We know in our bones that over the long haul  
what we do in education has the greatest  
relevance to building the kind of society we  
want.—John Gardner*

With this book, the authors offer a conversation about the wondrous field of teaching—its challenges and frustrations, its joys and disappointments, its laughter and tears. Above all, we emphasize the fact that what *you* as a teacher do matters. Sometimes we enjoin you, providing armchair advice based on our experience, on available research, and occasionally on just our hopes. Sometimes we stand alongside, simply pointing out this tree or that boulder on the landscape of teaching. Sometimes we raise a question, as you confront a new valley, or provoke you to consider, as you climb a bluff. But always we pursue a single goal: to introduce you to the field of teaching, to paint as best we can a realistic picture of what your life as a modern-day teacher would be, and to excite you about the possibilities of becoming stunningly good at what you do. In doing so, we have tried to anticipate your feelings, your perceptions, your anxieties, and even your background. Furthermore, we have constantly pressed ourselves to select relevant topics and present them in meaningful ways, forever asking, “Why ought a new student of education learn about this topic?” As a result, we have omitted some topics traditionally addressed in introductory texts, while developing others in considerable detail. This book is well suited for an introduction-to-education course for students going into either elementary or secondary teaching. Indeed, it is appropriate for anyone interested in an overview of the field of teaching.

Our style is personal. We have resisted the temptation to write this book for our professional colleagues as well as for you. You have won out. We have stripped it of jargon and have tried to use plain, communicative language with some vitality to it. Introducing you to the field inescapably

reveals our own values and beliefs about teaching. We believe, for example, that superbly good teachers become that way not so much because of native ability, or even training, but because of a passionate commitment to teaching. Uncommonly good teachers are not making small contributions to the lives of their students—they are making giant ones! Finally, the complexity of today's classroom invites, indeed demands, a higher level of professionalism in teachers than ever before.

Each chapter begins with a short list of Main Points and concludes with some Expansions, which mostly invite you to expand on the concepts presented in the chapter. Section I introduces you to the preparation required to enter your teaching life: your teacher education program and that ever-challenging first year. Section II takes you into your workplace: your school and your classroom. We introduce you to your students and your relationships as well as to the curriculum, governance, finance, and, very importantly, the law. Section III introduces you to emerging knowledge in the field, acquainting you with effective schools, effective classrooms, the study of teaching, and the use of technology in teaching. From this section we hope you will see that the art of teaching rests more and more solidly on a scientific basis. Finally, Section IV focuses on the professional and personal challenges facing you as a teacher. Throughout all thirteen chapters, we try to connect you with the topic—we discuss you and the law, your role in the governing and financing of your school, you and the effective school, and your role in the curriculum.

This book is full of examples and vignettes that provide glimpses into the lives of teachers. The vignettes are typically conversations, revealing the rich variety of perceptions, attitudes, and orientations that exist among teachers. We hope you focus on the tone of these conversations rather than on the specifics and that you think about how you would react in similar situations.

We express appreciation to our colleagues—Don Norton, Malia Howland, Reese Hansen, Paul Merrill, Rulon Garfield, and Richard Sudweeks—who provided valuable suggestions about content, order, and style and to our reviewers—Wallace Draper, Ball State University; Shari Hatch; Cynthia Ledbetter, Texas A&M University; James Leming, Southern Illinois University; and Peter Soderbergh, Louisiana State University. We are also grateful to Julia Berrisford for her gentle vigilance and continual support throughout the project; to Cece Munson for her superb and pleasant coordination of the production process; and to Meredy Amyx, whose editing taught us what truly good writing is all about. And we thank our families, who have spent many nights and Saturdays patiently going about their lives without a father and a mother. Beyond that, they have goaded, coaxed, and cheered us on when we felt overwhelmed, and provided unending love, regular encouragement, and total faith in our ability to complete the project.

D.C.C.  
B.R.C.

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## SECTION ONE

# THE JOURNEY



# CHAPTER 1

## YOUR ENTRANCE INTO TEACHING

*Education is too significant and dynamic an enterprise to be left to mere technicians; and we might as well begin now the prodigious task of preparing men and women who understand not only the substance of what they are teaching but also the theories behind the particular strategies they employ to convey that substance.—Lawrence A. Cremin*

### MAIN IDEAS

- Teaching is at once a complex, multifaceted, and indeed wondrous activity.
- Current teacher education programs have been molded by trends and movements such as mastery learning, programmed instruction, and “back to basics.”
- Teachers today leave their training programs with a general education background, knowledge of the subject matter to be taught, and pedagogical skill in teaching that subject matter.
- We are on the brink of a sweeping restructure of teacher education programs.
- Your first year of teaching is satisfying, frustrating, full of joy and anxiety, and, above all, utterly exhausting.
- Developing a can-do perspective enables you to reap the greatest success from your first year of teaching.

*The calling of a teacher is so intimate, its duties so delicate, the things in which a teacher might prove unworthy or would fail are so numerous that they are incapable of enumeration in any legislative enactment. His habits, his speech, his good name, his cleanliness, the wisdom and propriety of his unofficial utterances, his associations, all are involved. His ability to inspire children and to govern them, his power as a teacher, and the character for which he stands are matters of major concern in a teacher's selection and retention.—Board of Trustees v. Stubblefield, 1971*

- During this first year, some of your hopeful expectations are abandoned, others modified. Still others, tenaciously clung to, lead you to unanticipated successes.
- You face and work through culture shock during this first year: being a teacher rather than a student, starting up a complex classroom, burning the candle at both ends, feeling a sense of isolation, and entering challengingly different relationships.
- Getting off to a good start and moving positively through your first year is imperative; whether you continue teaching after the first year is at stake.
- You are socialized into your school culture. The environment will mold your ideas and ways of doing things and, believe it or not, *you* will have an impact on your school's culture.

## INTRODUCTION

You may now be sitting uneasily in your first education course, thinking, “What, *really*, am I doing here? Ought I to be back in my music (biology, English, history) major, where I feel at home? Have I made the right decision about going into teaching?” It is normal for students entering the study of any profession—engineering, nursing, psychology, medicine, law, and yes, education—to wonder about their vocational choice.

In this chapter, and throughout the book, we assume you have tentatively made up your mind that teaching is the field for you. Now that you have done so, jump into your training program with full commitment! This is your surest course of action at this point. Only by immersing yourself in your newly chosen field will you come to know with certainty whether you have made the right decision. Merely surveying the field, comfortably contemplating its possibilities from the outside, will not bring about a final decision. Making the commitment will force you to confront yourself—your own abilities, interests, and values. You may indeed change your mind about

becoming a teacher. But for now, stepping in with an open and receptive mind will give you the experience and perspective you need in order to make an informed choice at the end, even if it's a decision *not* to go into teaching. If you decide to go ahead, you'll have the force of a wholehearted commitment behind you.

So plunge in. Anticipate. Discover the realities, the hardships, the joys that await you in a teaching career. Our role will be to introduce you to the life of teaching—to offer you a peek at its challenges, its complexities, and its wonders. We will acquaint you with its many facets by illustration rather than by exhaustive description.

To help crystallize your thinking as you begin, why not conduct a brief self-inventory of your current knowledge and feelings about teaching? Ask yourself these questions:

1. What beliefs about teacher education do I bring with me?
2. What, in my mind, distinguishes good teaching from poor?
3. What characteristics did my own best teachers display?
4. What emotions do I experience in approaching my teacher education program? confidence? fear? excitement? resolve? wariness?
5. What are my expectations as I go into my teacher education program?

Probably the easiest of these questions is number 5, because the folklore of education still rings in your ears:

“Education courses are boring. They contain too much fluff.”

“Education courses are overly theoretical. Where is the practical?”

“The courses you endure; the student teaching is the fun.”

“Instructors have been out of classrooms for twenty years. They're oblivious to what takes place in the trenches.”

And from students currently in the program you receive on-the-spot reports:

“Standing in front of twenty-two kids for fifteen minutes leaves me totally drained!”

“I can't believe the time I'm putting in on this one course—there is so much make-work involved.”

“You learn rules about how to manage students, but you're on your own standing in front of that class!”

“Most of my education courses are a lot more informative and enjoyable than people said they'd be.”

“One thing's for sure: classrooms are circuses. You're making decisions every minute—and they'd better be right!”



“I’ll be so psyched up by the time I get to student teaching, I’ll probably blow it when I get in front of the class.”

## YOUR TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAM

Let’s start with a preview of what you may encounter in your teacher education program.

### Your Instructors

Teacher educators, those who will instruct you in your teacher education program, are not easily characterized as a group. Your professors of education probably entered teacher education later in life, usually after a teaching career in the classroom. In fact, 70 percent have held teaching positions in elementary and secondary schools before coming to teach in a school of education.

Among the responsibilities of your professors are the following:

1. to expose students to teaching theories and practices
2. to demonstrate teaching practices and help students acquire minimal competency in their use
3. to establish good relationships with principals, cooperating teachers, and others in the schools where their students will be training
4. to ensure that students are placed with cooperating teachers who will provide optimal learning
5. to help solve problems that arise during student teaching
6. to document the progress of the student during the program.

In all likelihood, your professors will be conservative in their training approaches. You will undoubtedly be schooled in the teaching techniques that your professors have used and found successful during their careers in the classroom. You will not likely be encouraged to try new and extreme approaches falling outside the usual ways of doing things. Likewise, your professors will tend to emphasize the practical over the theoretical; that is, acquiring specific skills and techniques and “getting the job done.” This commitment to the practical grows out of their own experience as classroom teachers. They believe that specific help in day-to-day teaching will prepare their students to have the greatest positive effects in their own classrooms.<sup>1</sup>

### Your Fellow Students

Teacher education students coming into the program will generally have the same orientation as their education professors: a desire for concrete and practical training. They fully expect professors to tell and show them the