

THE BEGINNING
OF
ELEMENTARY EDUCATION and OFF-CAMPUS STUDENT
TEACHING AT PRAIRIE VIEW UNIVERSITY

by
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In 1933, Prairie View was proudly being recognized as Prairie View Agricultural and Mechanical College, rather than "Institute." Many former Normal School graduates were returning, for Summer School, to matriculate in a degree program.

The curriculum to be emphasized grew out of studies of the period of time, examination of the institution's objectives and purposes. Principal Banks stressed: "Prairie View College must serve the State of Texas at the points of her greatest needs."

The time seemed ripe to stress the improvement of Teacher Training Programs for training better qualified teachers for rural, elementary and secondary schools in urban areas as well. Principal Banks insisted that every student graduating from Prairie View must have credit in Student Teaching on his transcript.

In these days the Department of Education offered two courses in Rural Education; (1) Methods of Rural School Teaching, and (2) Rural School Problems. Only one course was labeled Elementary Education, a general course, Methods of Teaching in The Elementary School. The Schools of Arts and Sciences and Industrial Education sent their majors to the small Campus Training School for Student Teaching. It was felt that students were too limited and that they should be placed in situations conducive for observations, participation, followed by student teaching in typical classroom situations, under carefully selected supervising teachers.

Two members of the Department of Education were trained specialists in Elementary Education. They began concentrating on the needs of students who expressed interest in teaching in the elementary school. These instructors were given the "go-sign" to study, observe elementary school performances in good school systems both in and outside of Texas. They were appointed to develop a curriculum to meet the needs of students being trained to teach in elementary schools. They finally presented a curriculum that included: 6hrs. Elementary School Art, 6 Hrs. Public School Music, 3 Hrs. Teaching Reading in Elementary School, 3 Hrs. Teaching Science in The Elementary School, 3 Hrs. Teaching Social Studies in The Elementary School, 3 Hrs. Elementary School Arithmetic, 3 Hrs. Health and Recreation.

In addition to major requirements, students were advised of the college's basic or foundation courses required for graduation from the School of Arts and Sciences with a Bachelor's Degree in Education.

Student Teaching

Off-Campus Student Teaching became a reality during 1941. Students were assigned to schools in Waller County for 8 Weeks period, and returned to the Campus Training School for another 8 Weeks period. Many served on the campus first and then went into the county. They ended with 16 Hrs. of Observation, Participation, and Student Teaching. However, the enrollment grew larger each year, and gradually other counties and cities participated in the program. The State began accepting 9 Hrs. of Student Teaching.

The success of this new approach to Improvement in Teacher Education attracted nationwide interest. Dr. Carl Bigelow, Representative, American Council , Commission on Teacher Education, visited Prairie View in 1939 to review the work that had been done. As a result of his visit, Mr. W. R. Banks, Principal of Prairie View A & M College and Mrs. Anne C. Preston , Professor of Elementary Education, were invited as Prairie View College's representatives, along with 34 other colleges and school units, to Bennington Planning Conference, held in Bennington, Vermont, August 1939. This conference was financed by The Commission on Teacher Education.

The Bennington Workshop had the following objectives:

1. Clarification of major problems in Teacher Education .
2. Improvement of plans for utilization of resources of individual institutions in the attack upon the problems.
3. Agreement as to kinds of services the Commission might desirably undertake to offer cooperative institutions .
4. Agreement upon ways of using the study to influence Teacher Education in General Achievement.
5. To better understand our goals in Teacher Education.

Following the Bennington Planning Conference, the Commission frequently sent their representatives to Prairie View to aid the college in planning and organizing. The Commission also invited Prairie View staffmembers to attend meetings with other cooperating institutions with mutual problems.

All of this excellent aid added much to Prairie View's Teacher Education Improvement. It also gave a fine direction for our Graduate School Programs.