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ENGLISH IN A NORMAL SCHOOL

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Miss Alma Blount's interesting survey of normal-school English in the April, 1913, *English Journal* has led me to believe that some comparative value must attach to a somewhat detailed outline of courses offered in one particular normal school. The courses described, although far from ideal, suggest an attempt to adapt the preparation of elementary English teachers to the conditions under which they are to work. The principle of "localization" is the dominant note.

The fact that the population of Idaho is over 90 per cent rural has been a controlling factor in shaping the professional English work of our school. Most of our students go into country schools. Hence it became necessary to consider the conditions these new teachers would have to meet.

Two years ago a complete reorganization of the English work was made possible by the abolition of all academic courses. High-school standardization has reached the point where it is safe to assume that the four years of preparation in English are reasonably satisfactory. Furthermore, our efforts are concentrated upon the training of elementary teachers. Thus it is clear that, with an excellent high school in our city, it is in every way an economy to avoid duplication, and to give our undivided attention to professional work.

One important and desirable result of the reorganization was the possibility of determining the specific needs of the student and assigning him to the courses best adapted to the development of the qualities he lacks. Great aids to this adjusting process were the increase in the variety of courses, and the division of the English work into quarterly units.

A brief description of each course follows:

Quarters 1, 2 3, 4. Written Composition.—

To this course are assigned students who have not mastered the principles of correct and effective writing. The classes are small enough to enable the

teacher to give attention to the specific faults of each student. Constant practice in writing is the basis of this course. Theme subjects are chiefly of a professional nature.

Quarters 1, 2, 3, 4. Oral Composition.—

A large proportion of student-teachers take this work, which is definitely planned to teach more logical and orderly thinking and more correct and forceful oral expression. The class may talk from notes during the first two or three weeks. Thereafter prepared topical talks are required. Extemporaneous speaking and debates are also features of this work. Although emphasis is upon topics of professional interest, the better examples of periodical literature furnish broadening subjects for class discussion. The *Independent*, *Literary Digest*, *World's Work*, and educational journals afford the greater part of the material.

Quarters 1, 2, 3, 4. Practical Public Speaking.—

In this course attention is given primarily to improvement in the use of the voice. Drills for articulation and enunciation, and exercises to give flexibility are features. Continued practice in speaking, with constructive criticism, gives the prospective teacher excellent preparation for the effective use of the voice in teaching, as well as in addressing public gatherings.

Quarters 1, 3. Juvenile Literature.—

Extensive reading of children's books, together with practice in storytelling, is the work of these two quarters. The chief aim is to give the teacher the child's point of view in reading. This course is logically, though not necessarily, preliminary to the course in dramatization, a description of which follows.

Quarters 2, 4. Dramatization.—

This is a popular and valuable course, in a comparatively new field. During the period devoted to this work, teachers must become children in working out acting versions of juvenile stories and poems. Between *The Little Red Hen* and *Treasure Island* lies a realm of fancy that invites interpretation through action. The stimulus to imagination and originality of expression that this course gives is invaluable to an elementary teacher.

Quarters 1, 2, 3, 4. Sentence Structure.—

Those whose understanding of English grammar is insufficient for teaching have here an opportunity to study the sentence in its various aspects. Emphasis is upon analysis and synthesis of sentences.

Quarters 1, 2. Survey of English Literature.—

Since this is a review course, the intention is only to freshen the student's interest in the subject, and to give him a basis of good judgment in literature. In addition to obtaining a more accurate historical perspective, the student is expected to become better acquainted with the works of the best English writers, modern as well as classic.

Quarters 3, 4. Survey of American Literature.—

Acquaintance with our national and local literature is essential to the preparation of any teacher. Writers for children are given especial attention, since this course is intended chiefly as a background for the teaching of reading and literature.

Quarters 1, 2, 3, 4. English in the Rural School.—

This is an attempt to enable teachers of country schools to adapt their instruction in English branches to specific community needs. Emphasis is upon method. How to stimulate a desire for reading; how to enlarge libraries and get more books into circulation; and how to arouse greater freedom and frequency of oral communication are some of the problems discussed.

Quarters 1, 2, 3, 4. Language Methods.—

Some of the topics considered in this course are: the problem of environment; localization of language teaching (adapting it to local conditions); the use of the state texts; correlation; the use of devices; the place of grammar in the grades; the teaching of grammar; minimum requirements in language and grammar for each of grades IV–VIII inclusive (the first three grades are covered by the course in primary methods). Methods of teaching spelling are discussed during the last two weeks of the course.

Quarters 1, 2, 3, 4. Literature Methods.—

A distinction is made between literature and reading: the former is considered from a cultural, and the latter from a formal, viewpoint. The aim of this course is to enable teachers to approach children's literature with appreciation and enthusiasm, and to stimulate these qualities in their pupils. Oral reading and oral reports on children's books are a part of this work.

Quarters 1, 2, 3, 4. Reading Methods.—

To teach children to read aloud distinctly and intelligently—this is the goal of the members of this class. Drills in articulation and enunciation, together with other exercises for the improvement of voice-quality are given as preliminaries to practice in reading. The best methods of conducting efficient recitations are discussed during the quarter.

Underlying all the English courses described are several fundamental principles:

1. A realization of the basic unity of all English branches—language, literature, reading, spelling, and grammar.
2. A realization of the fact that normal-school teachers are ultimately instructing children through the medium of the teacher-in-training.
3. An understanding of the need of a good voice, and ability to use it effectively.

4. Appreciation of the value of much thorough reading, and of correct and forceful speech and writing.

5. Appreciation of the value of initiative and imagination, and an ability to see the needs of a community.

The following notice is sent out each quarter to the members of the normal-school faculty. The data furnished are used by the recorder as a basis for the assigning of students to English courses.

The English department desires to bring about more definite correlation and co-operation with the work of your department. To this end you are requested, as far as possible,

1. To suggest to the English teachers subjects for oral and written composition in your field, and to allow this work to count toward credit both in English and in your department.

2. To give attention to the effectiveness of your pupils' recitations. Clear, complete, sufficiently loud and distinct answers should be insisted upon.

You are also asked to leave with the recorder before the end of this and each succeeding quarter a list of students whose oral or written composition is poor. If you will specify each pupil's fault according to the following classification, it will be of advantage in assigning these pupils to the work each most needs.

(Refer to the numbers in making out your list.)

1. Training in the use of the voice and carriage of the body.

2. Training in clear-cut, accurate, and forceful speech; "straight-talking," in short.

3. Training in writing English.

4. Training in grammar and sentence structure.

Please use the attached blank for this purpose, and in case you find no students to report, sign the blank and return it.

The department will appreciate any further suggestions for more efficient co-operation. The results of English teaching in any school are what the rest of the school work makes them.