

THE NORMAL-SCHOOL CURRICULUM

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PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS

In practically all phases of education, a process of evaluation, reorganization, and readjustment has been going on for the last few years. This has resulted in a rapid evolution of the public-school system. A part of this movement has consisted of an effort to apply the principles of a valid scientific management to teaching and to school organization and administration. There has been an especially pronounced and vigorous effort to secure better results in school by devising ways of accurately measuring present achievements, establishing more valid aims, formulating more economical types of procedure in teaching, and selecting better subject-matter for the content of the school curriculum. All of this is, of course, well known even to the superficial student of education. It is also a familiar fact that activity along these lines has brought about great changes in both elementary and secondary schools.

It is but natural, as a result of these conditions, that equally great, and probably greater, readjustments need to be made in the agencies for training teachers, particularly in the case of state normal schools. If they are to be adequate to the needs of the day, these institutions must expect to make extensive modifications of their past practices. In fact, there is evidence that state normal schools are now undergoing a marked change in fundamental particulars. A comparison of the courses of study of such schools throughout the country with courses in existence five years ago shows certain marked developments in the prevailing conception of the teacher-training process.

It is highly desirable, at the present time, that descriptions of present practices, where reorganization has been undertaken, should be made and accompanied by clear statements of the fundamental principles on which the reorganization rests.

This article consists of a description of the form of organization of the State Normal School at Oshkosh, Wisconsin, with reference to the planning of the curricula. The object is to present a report in the form of a description of the curriculum-plan under which the school is operating with some discussion and explanation of the principles on which it is based. The discussion has reference only to the training of teachers for the elementary school.

AIMS OF NORMAL-SCHOOL TRAINING

It is impossible to consider most profitably what the most desirable elements in curricula for the training of teachers are until we have made clear what we mean by a trained teacher. It is necessary, then, to ask: What are the characteristics of a trained teacher? There are at least four essential qualifications without which it is impossible to lay claim to being trained in any real sense of the term.

1. *The teacher must be a person of sound scholarship within the range of his work.* Most young elementary teachers, even though they are recent graduates of state normal schools, do not meet this requirement. They are usually persons of extremely superficial scholarship. Their knowledge of the larger relationships of such subjects as geography, history, and elementary science is in most cases extremely meager. The teacher needs to have a thorough knowledge not only of the subjects which he teaches but also of related subjects. A teacher of elementary science, for example, needs some acquaintance with geology, meteorology, mineralogy, botany, zoölogy, physics, chemistry, and astronomy for his own proper orientation and grasp of his subject, although he will not teach all that he knows. The teacher of reading should have a good working familiarity with the field of children's literature. The teacher of history in any of the lower grades must have a good insight into the history of our own country beyond that which he expects to teach, as well as considerable familiarity with the history of other nations. One of the chief sources of failure of young elementary-school teachers is their lack of scholarship. It is not uncommon to see young teachers who are supposed to have had excellent training, but who have such a weak grasp of the subject-matter and relationships of the subjects which they are supposed to teach that their instruction is weak and flabby. They lack just

the element of good scholarship to make good teachers. The public has a right to demand more in this respect than it is now getting. The time has come when the state normal schools must improve this situation if they are to continue to serve the public in an entirely satisfactory manner.

2. *The teacher needs a knowledge of the facts concerning the mental processes of children and the laws of their growth and development.* Such knowledge as the teacher would get in a somewhat elementary study, with the material judiciously chosen, of significant individual differences in children, the process of habit formation, the development of original behavior through growth and experience, the laws of fatigue, the psychological characteristics of children at various levels of development, the laws of efficient and economical learning and similar topics, furnishes him with information for understanding child nature and gives him a basis for professional ability, adaptability, growth, and self-direction in teaching—qualities which constitute the difference between the trained teacher and the teacher who is guided in his work by a few rule-of-thumb methods of which he has little or no real understanding. Such knowledge is capable of rendering valuable service to the teacher if it is so taught that it bears a functional relationship to actual work in the schoolroom.

3. *The third essential of a trained teacher is an intimate knowledge of the best methods of teaching so far as they have been established up to the present time.* Teaching is still in the experimental stage and a final and entirely valid pedagogy has not yet been established. On the other hand, there is a good deal of knowledge in the case of most subjects and very definite knowledge in a number, concerning methods of procedure in teaching which are known to be effective. Conclusions have been experimentally determined in the schoolroom. Recent work in the measurement of results of teaching and scientific evaluation of different kinds of procedure by experimental methods have brought to light facts concerning educational processes of various kinds and have enabled teachers to determine with considerable definiteness what procedure is most economical and most efficient. In the last three or four years it has been possible to formulate new methods in accordance with these scientific facts. Although improvements are sure to be made, there is now in use in many schools a technique of instruction in such subjects as reading,

spelling, handwriting, and arithmetic which can be classed as scientific. The schools now have a reasonably adequate scientific technique of drill. Teachers know how to secure adequate motivation in most subjects. A good deal of progress has been made in finding out effective ways in which to teach pupils how to study. The problem of effective teaching is being brought yearly nearer and nearer to a solution by formulating better and better methods as information emerges to throw light upon the nature of the learning process with which teaching is so closely connected that the two cannot be easily separated. The time has come when the trained teacher must have an intimate knowledge of these things.

4. *The teacher needs to know a good deal about the best methods of school organization and management.* This subject is coming to mean more than learning out of a book a few maxims about conducting schools. A modern course in school organization and management in a state normal school should certainly include a study of such topics as acceleration, retardation, elimination, and age-grade statistics; the hygiene of study; the educational value of play and athletics, and the conduct of the different forms of physical education; the factor of fatigue in the distribution of subjects; time apportionments; the use of standard tests; and many other similar topics. Elementary-school teachers, as trained at present, too often do not have a workable knowledge of these matters. The superintendent, or principal, who desires to put modern methods of supervision into operation in his schools too often finds that he has a teaching force which has an inadequate conception of the meaning of many things with which he wishes that they had become familiar in the normal school.

On the basis of these essentials it is possible to state with some definiteness certain main aims of normal-school training which should be embodied in curricula for preparation for teaching in the elementary school. There are three chief objectives which summarize what a state normal school should do for its graduates who expect to teach in the elementary grades. These are: (1) to broaden the scholarship of the prospective teacher within the field of his specific work; (2) to develop child-sense, professional ability, educational intelligence, and adaptability through the study of child psychology, principles of elementary education, educational sociology, school organization and management, and

similar studies; (3) to develop school-sense and specific ability to teach effectively through observation of excellent teaching in the training school and through actual teaching under the supervision of competent and experienced critic teachers and supervisors. Experience indicates clearly that all three of these factors are necessary if the highest efficiency is to be attained.

DIFFERENTIATED CURRICULA

The school is organized on the plan of differentiated curricula. Each of these curricula is designed to prepare for a *specific type of teaching service*. It is recognized as an impossible task to prepare students in a two-year course to teach competently all subjects in all grades of the elementary school. In most states it is difficult at the present time to extend beyond two years the course of instruction for teachers of the first six grades. For this reason, it is necessary in the interests of efficiency to adopt the principle of differentiated curricula. With these ideas in mind, the several curricula have been laid out with the purpose of giving teachers as broad an education as possible and as thorough specific training for a given line of teaching as the limitations of time will permit.

TYPICAL DIFFERENTIATED CURRICULA

The following curricula have been formulated to conform to the preceding statements concerning aims and principles. The curriculum designed especially to prepare for teaching in the first, second, and third grades is as follows:

I. CURRICULUM FOR TRAINING TEACHERS FOR PRIMARY GRADES

FIRST YEAR			
First Semester	Periods	Second Semester	Periods
Educational Psychology IA	3	Educational Psychology IB	3
English A	5	Children's Literature	3
Arithmetic	3	Drawing	5
Music	5	Primary Handwork	4
Geography	3	History	5
Library Methods	1	Apprentice Teaching	1
Nature Study	4	Observation of Teaching	2
Apprentice Work	1	Elementary Education IA	2
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	25		25

SECOND YEAR			
First Semester	Periods	Second Semester	Periods
Elementary Education IB.....	5	Elementary Education IC.....	3
Educational Sociology.....	3	School Organization and Management	2
Educational Tests and Measurements.....	2	Supervised Teaching.....	20
Plays and Games.....	3		
Appreciation of Music.....	2		
Sanitation and Hygiene.....	2		
School Law.....	1		
Children's Literature.....	3		
Observation of Teaching.....	2		
Apprentice Teaching.....	2		
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The curriculum designed especially to prepare for teaching in the fourth, fifth, and sixth grades is as follows:

II. CURRICULUM FOR TRAINING TEACHERS FOR INTERMEDIATE GRADES

FIRST YEAR			
First Semester	Periods	Second Semester	Periods
Educational Psychology IA.....	3	Educational Psychology IB.....	3
English A.....	5	Arithmetic.....	4
Drawing.....	5	Music.....	5
Civics.....	2	Nature Study.....	3
Children's Literature.....	3	Geography.....	5
History.....	5	Apprentice Teaching.....	1
Library Methods.....	1	Observation of Teaching.....	2
Apprentice Work.....	1	Elementary Education 1A.....	2
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	25		25

SECOND YEAR			
First Semester	Periods	Second Semester	Periods
Elementary Education IB.....	5	Elementary Education IC.....	3
Educational Sociology.....	3	School Organization and Management	2
Educational Tests and Measurements.....	3	Supervised Teaching.....	20
Appreciation of Music.....	2		
Plays and Games.....	2		
Children's Literature.....	3		
School Law.....	1		
Sanitation and Hygiene.....	2		
Observation of Teaching.....	2		
Apprentice Teaching.....	2		
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The curriculum designed especially to prepare for teaching in the seventh and eighth grades is as follows:

III. CURRICULUM FOR TRAINING TEACHERS FOR UPPER GRAMMAR GRADES

FIRST YEAR			
First Semester	Periods	Second Semester	Periods
Educational Psychology II A.....	3	Educational Psychology IIB.....	3
English A.....	5	Children's Literature.....	3
Music.....	5	Drawing.....	4
Arithmetic.....	5	Elementary Science.....	3
Geography.....	5	Mathematics for Junior High Schools	2
Library Methods.....	1	History.....	5
Apprentice Work.....	1	Apprentice Teaching.....	1
		Observation of Teaching.....	2
		Elementary Education IIA.....	2
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	25		25

SECOND YEAR			
First Semester	Periods	Second Semester	Periods
Elementary Education IIB.....	5	Elementary Education IIC.....	3
Educational Sociology.....	3	School Organization and Manage-	
Educational Tests and Measurements	3	ment.....	2
Civics.....	3	Supervised Teaching.....	20
Physiology and Hygiene.....	3		
Children's Literature.....	3		
School Law.....	1		
Observation of Teaching.....	2		
Apprentice Teaching.....	2		
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The curriculum designed especially to prepare principals for Wisconsin State Graded Schools is as follows:

IV. CURRICULUM FOR TRAINING PRINCIPALS FOR RURAL ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS WITH ESPECIAL REFERENCE TO WISCONSIN STATE GRADED SCHOOLS

FIRST YEAR			
First Semester	Periods	Second Semester	Periods
Educational Psychology IIA.....	3	Educational Psychology IIB.....	3
English A.....	5	Children's Literature.....	3
Arithmetic.....	5	Junior High School Mathematics....	2
Elementary Agriculture.....	5	Elementary Agriculture.....	4
Geography.....	5	History.....	5
Library Methods.....	1	Elementary Science.....	3
Apprentice Work.....	1	Apprentice Teaching.....	1
		Observation of Teaching.....	2
		Elementary Education IIA.....	2
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	25		25

		SECOND YEAR	
First Semester	Periods	Second Semester	Periods
Elementary Education IIB	5	Elementary Education IIC	3
Educational Tests and Measurements	3	School Organization and Manage-	
School Law	1	ment	2
Physiology and Hygiene	3	Supervised Teaching	20
Civics	3		
Manual Arts	6		
Observation of Teaching	2		
Apprentice Teaching	2		
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	25		25

In addition to these curricula there is a special three-year curriculum for training teachers and principals for junior high schools and also a two-year curriculum for training teachers for rural schools. A four-year course for training high-school teachers is under consideration and will probably be adopted in the near future.

NATURE OF SUBJECT-MATTER COURSES

It will be noted that in the first year of each curriculum the work is largely concerned with courses in music, drawing, arithmetic, geography, history, and similar subjects. It is intended that this work shall be very largely subject-matter. It is believed that a somewhat new kind of course is needed in these first-year academic courses. This work is not simply a review of previous elementary-school work, nor is it the old-time, so-called professional review, which attempted to illustrate methods of teaching by reviewing the subject-matter appropriate to children in the various grades. Neither is this work purely academic in the sense that the term is used in connection with academic courses in a college of liberal arts. It is not knowledge for its own sake. These courses are none of these things, but they consist of a type of subject-matter which is advanced work, strictly of college grade, the purpose of which is to lay a broad foundation of scholarship and appreciation for prospective teachers, giving a larger insight and a broader conception of subject-matter than the students have previously had. The breadth and richness of scholarship and appreciation which the students get help in a large measure to remedy one of the great weaknesses on the part of young teachers—their lack of scholarship. No attempt is made in these courses to teach methods, except in the most incidental way.

DIFFERENTIATED SUBJECT-MATTER

In the various curricula there is a differentiation in the type of subject-matter which is taught. For example, to the students who are under training for primary teachers, a type of history is offered which pertains particularly to the first three grades. In the intermediate curriculum, which deals with the fourth, fifth, and sixth grades, an entirely different type of history is taught. The history in the grammar-grade curriculum is unlike that in either the primary or intermediate curricula. In the training of teachers for rural schools, the work in history is especially adapted to the needs of the country schools and is, therefore, different from that in any of the other curricula. What has been said about history is true of practically all subjects, including psychology, elementary education, and school organization and management.

FUNDAMENTALS OF GOOD ENGLISH

A course in the fundamentals of good English, called English A, is given in the first semester of the first year, and is required of all students in school. It treats the fundamentals of English which should form a permanent part of the equipment of a teacher and deals primarily with the problem of correct oral and written speech. The fundamentals of good English are taught intensively and all students on completing the course are required to meet a definite standard of proficiency. Further work is required of any who fail to attain—and maintain thereafter—a satisfactory standard of written and spoken English. Students who show a satisfactory standard of proficiency at any point in the course are immediately excused from the class on condition that this standard shall be maintained in all that they do in school. Students who fail to reach this standard at the end of the course are required to take further work without credit and students who at any later time show deficiencies in written and spoken English are obliged to go back into this class.

Two forthcoming articles deal with professional courses and practice-teaching in the state normal school.