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PREPARATION OF HIGH-SCHOOL TEACHERS OF ENGLISH
 A REPORT OF A COMMITTEE OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF
 TEACHERS OF ENGLISH

For the purpose of finding what, in general is the nature of the preparation of teachers of high-school English, and what things such teachers regard as of most worth in their preparation, a questionnaire has been circulated by a committee of the National Council of Teachers of English. About 1,500 copies were sent out and about 450 answers received. Some of these came too late to be included in this report; but a glance over a number of them seems to indicate that they would not alter the general nature of the findings of the committee.

The committee desires to express its obligations to Mr. Merle M. Hoover, of the Jersey City High School, for the careful tabulation and analysis of the returned questionnaires which this report presents.

Three hundred and twenty-nine reports were tabulated, of which 263 were in answer to the general questionnaire and 66 to the questionnaire sent out by Professor Paul, of the University of Illinois. This latter questionnaire was somewhat different from the general one, but wherever possible the results have been incorporated in those of the general questionnaire, and there have also been added some interesting data drawn out by the Illinois questions. Lest the results might be confused, the Illinois figures have been indicated by placing them in parentheses.

The questions with summaries of the answers follow.

2.¹ Have you a normal-school diploma?.....A college degree?.....A higher degree (A.M. or Ph.D.)?

(On the basis of 329 answers)

Normal-school diplomas.....	66	(13)
Diploma only.....	16	(4)
With other degree.....	50	(9)
College degree.....	293	(55)
Higher degree—		
A.M.	84	(18)
Ph.D.	9	(2)
Graduate work—no degree.....	43	(3)
No degree or diploma.....	18	(7)

Note the large percentage of college degrees, 89 per cent, practically 90 per cent; A.M. 25 per cent.

Only 5 per cent were satisfied with a normal diploma alone.

¹ The first question was, "What is your present work?"

3. How many years have you taught?.....How many in high schools?.....What subjects other than English if any?

(On the basis of 329 answers)

Taught less than five years.....	86	(12)
“ five to ten years.....	103	(20)
“ more than ten years.....	139	(33)

The second question could not be organized because the Illinois question was, “How many years have you taught English?”

Subjects other than English taught:

(On a basis of 263 answers)

Languages.....	76	French.....	24
History.....	130	Civics.....	12
Latin.....	90	Pedagogy.....	6
Mathematics.....	70	Greek.....	8
Science.....	69	Music.....	6
German.....	54	Economics.....	3
Commer. Geog., Spanish.....	4		
Domest. Sci., Bible, Gymnastics, Stenography.....			2
Drawing, Italian, Ethics, Manual Training.....			1

4. What courses in English have you taken in preparation for your work?

(On the basis of 329 answers)

Full course ¹ —specialized.....	225	(54)
Ordinary college course.....	89	(7)
Meager course.....	14	(3)

5. Which of these courses have been especially helpful to you in your teaching?.....Why?.....Which have not been profitable to you?

(On the basis of 263 answers)

Helpful:

All.....	116	(11)	Chaucer.....	11	(0)
Composition.....	91	(16)	General Survey ²	9	(9)
Periods of Literature... ..	43	(13)	Criticism.....	8	
Methods.....	34	(10)	Philology.....	6	(1)
Shakespeare.....	33	(9)	Modern Literature.....	3	
Poetry.....	31	(3)	Prose.....	3	(1)
Drama.....	20	(3)	Bible.....		
American Literature....	14	(7)	Phonetics.....		
Oral English.....	12	(2)	Bibliography.....	1	
Anglo-Saxon.....	11	(0)			

¹ A “full course” was the term adopted for five or more English courses in the four years at college. An “ordinary course” indicates three or four such courses.

² [Perhaps this should be included in Periods.]

Comments: "I think the English courses were more helpful than the education work, aside from the practice teaching." "The courses that have proved most helpful have been those in which the personality of the instructor has been most inspiring and illuminating." "The courses that count most are those where the method has afforded most stimulus to independent research."

Why?

The answers were so particular that it was almost impossible to classify them. See "comments" above.

Not helpful:

Anglo-Saxon.....	21 (3)	Composition.....	4 (2)
Detailed Analysis.....	10 (1)	Novel.....	5 (5)
Formal Rhetoric.....	7	Chaucer.....	3 (2)

Note the value placed upon Composition. The verdict seems to be against Anglo-Saxon. The criticisms against the "Not helpful" courses were hard to classify, for the fault was usually a personal one, either on the side of the student or of the teacher.

6. Mention courses in English whose omission, either in your own preparation, or in the college curriculum, you regret.

(On the basis of 263 answers)

Omissions regretted:

Composition, Advanced Work.	65	Poetry.....	16
Anglo-Saxon.....	33	Argumentation.....	14
Oral English.....	31	History of English Grammar..	13
Periods of Literature.....	31	Comparative Literature.....	11
Novel.....	27	Shakespeare.....	10
Methods.....	26	Literary Forms.....	6
Modern Literature.....	19	Social Aspects of Literature...	6
Criticism.....	19	Chaucer.....	5
American Literature.....	19	Prose.....	5
Drama.....	18	History of Rhetoric.....	1

Comments: "I never had any training that has helped me to think logically and quickly." "(1) Relation of English literature to classical literature. (2) Relation of English literature to Continental literatures. (3) More recognition of contemporary authors."

Note the high value placed upon Composition, Oral English, and Anglo-Saxon. "Methods," too, ranks high.

7. Do you think of any type of course that should be added to the college English curriculum—such, for example, as an advanced survey course on the study of literary movements?

(On a basis of 66 answers)

Additions:

Advanced Survey Course	18	American Literature	} 2
Oral Composition	16	History of English Grammar	
Modern Literature	11	Criticism	} 1
Comparative Literature	8	Periods	
Methods	7	Novel	} 1
Composition	6	Poetry	
Argumentation	4	Drama	

Comment: "A course in illustration by example from present life would help."

From these answers it is possible to make a list of courses in English of special value to the prospective teacher of English: Composition, Freshman; Composition, Advanced; Composition, Oral; Special Course, Short Story; Special Course, Argumentation; History of English Grammar; General Course on the Types of Literature; Special Course, The Novel; Special Course, The Essay; Special Course, Poetry; Special Course, The Drama; Periods of Literature; American Literature; World-Literature; Contemporary Literature; Shakespeare; Criticism; Methods.

8. What kinds and amount of training in English do you regard as an irreducible minimum for your work as a teacher of English?

(On a basis of 329 answers)

Irreducible minimum:

Less than a college		A college course plus	
course	87 (13)	Methods	31 (11)
A college course	173 (37)	Graduate work	17 (3)

Kinds: Replies were too various to be classified.

Comments: "I should require wide reading and power in writing." "Wide reading in the literature of the last fifty years." "A teacher should have some one thing she is doing for herself—some hard study to grow with and to keep in mind the student point of view. I am not sure that it matters what—a paper or two a year which forces study and organization of material about anything in which she is interested." "It seems impossible to teach composition and especially grammar without a good knowledge of logic." "Thorough training in written English." "A well-trained voice." "I think the irreducible minimum lies in personality, not in training." "Above all, common-sense, and a sense of humor."

9. How valuable do you regard a year or more of graduate study? What sort of graduate courses would you now elect?

(On a basis of 263 answers)

Graduate work:

Valuable.....	202
Not valuable.....	27
Of more value:	
Travel.....	3
Reading.....	2
Teaching experience.....	3

Comments: "Had I the power I should require one year, at least, after two years of teaching experience." "Am losing \$300.00 to take one next year." "Very, if you specialize." "Very valuable, if the time is spent on something more broadening than searching for some infinitesimal details that in no way help one to live better." "Valuable for its own sake rather than for teaching." "Good for a true student; in general develops 'authority-mongers.'" "As valuable as a change of climate." "Equal to an undergraduate year only." "Unessential but pleasant."

Choice of Courses for graduate work:

Composition.....	45	Philology.....	16
Periods and Authors.....	43	Novel.....	12
Social Sciences.....	36	Languages.....	10
Pedagogy.....	28	Poetry.....	9
Methods.....	27	American Literature.....	8
Drama.....	22	Chaucer.....	7
Anglo-Saxon.....	21	Shakespeare.....	6
Modern Literature.....	20	Forms.....	6
Philosophy.....	19	Natural Sciences.....	6
History.....	19	Essay.....	5
Comparative Literature.....	17	Prose.....	5
Criticism.....	17	Art.....	4
Oral English.....	16	Bible, Law, Business, Vocational.....	1

Comments: "Those given by a big personality." "Should take anything with a stimulating professor." "Anything to keep out of a rut." "I should take any work that interested me, not expecting to get instruction that I could hand on, but hoping to refresh my own spirit."

10. What educational (pedagogical) courses have you taken? In what way have they helped you, if at all?

(On a basis of 329 answers)

<i>Courses:</i>					
Rich—more than 5	18	(4)	Ordinary—less than 4	161	(24)
Full—4	64	(2)	None	60	(27)
<i>Afforded:</i>					
Theory	33	(8)	General Training	11	(00)
Methods	20	(8)	No help	39	(4)

Comments: "I consider all my twelve units of pedagogy a flat failure." "They gave me no help at all." "Not at all, for I never discovered what the course was about." "I regard pedagogical courses unimportant—valueless as compared with regular college courses." "Being more directly applicable to school work, I believe they were of much more value to me than the cultural English courses." "They have been a vital factor, giving me ideals and standards of judgment." "All emphasize the importance of the child, the student—very valuable." "Very much in giving me certain devices to lighten the labor of breaking in as a teacher."

11. Have you had a course in the teaching of English? In what ways, if any, was this course helpful to you?

(On a basis of 263 answers)

<i>Courses in the teaching of English:</i>			
Yes	117	No	138
<i>Afforded:</i>			
Theory	52	Inspiration	5
Methods	48	No help	20
General training	3		

Comments: "Saved working out things for myself." "The best thing about it to me was the chance to observe good teachers at their work." "It gave me, before I started to teach, the training that only years of experience in teaching could have furnished." "They would have saved me and my pupils many failures, if I could have had them twenty years earlier." "It gave me an apperceptive basis." "It has helped me to present my work according to the understanding of my pupils; not from the college point of view, but from the high school." "I have found my experience more helpful than this course." "Very little, because the instructors strayed from the practice as far as it was possible to do so." "Not at all. When we asked clear questions, we received the uniform and unvarying answer, 'It all depends.'"

12. Would you have been helped by a course especially designed for the training of English teachers? (a) Would this be equally helpful in composition and in literature? (b) Should such a course be given by

a member of the English staff, or by someone from the Department of Education? (c) Would such a course be more helpful after, or before, or during a period of actual teaching experience? (d) Should it be accompanied by practice teaching?

(On a basis of 66 answers)

Helpful:

Yes	(40)	No	(2)
(a) Equally	(31)	(b) By English Department . . .	(42)
More in Composition	(13)	By Education Department	(10)
More in Literature	(4)		
(c) Before	(22)	(d) Yes	(37)
After	(12)	No	(12)
During	(20)		

Comments: "It would probably do most good after a year of teaching, because only then does one wake up to his desperate need of help."

13. Were the general courses in education in any way related to the instruction in English? Were they recommended by the instructors in English, or did they bear in any way upon the teaching of English?

(On a basis of 263 answers)

Related to English instruction:

Yes	64	No	145
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Comments: "Only as I made personal application for myself." "They did not bear at all upon the teaching of English or of any other subject. I could have more profitably put in my time in special courses in English and Philosophy." "Most normal schools teach with the idea that you are going to teach grade work."

Recommended by English instructors:

Yes	22	No	45
	Advised against		2

NOTE.—The first and second questions usually combined.

14. Did any of your courses in education include practice teaching? If so, under what circumstances was it done? What guidance and criticism had you?

(On a basis of 263 answers)

Practice teaching:

Yes	94	No	120
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Guidance and Criticism:

Yes	70	Other teaching	15
No	15	Observation	6

NOTE.—It was impossible to organize the circumstances.

15. What foreign languages, ancient or modern, can you read? In what ways, if any, has this ability helped you in your teaching?

(On a basis of 329 answers)

<i>Languages:</i>			
One	30 (10)	Spanish	31 (5)
Two	94 (24)	Italian	23 (6)
Three or more	184 (21)	Anglo-Saxon	17 (00)
None	4 (3)	Swedish, Gothic, Hebrew	2 (00)
German	255 (56)	Danish, Norwegian, Por-	
Latin	245 (29)	tuguese, (Dutch),	
French	220 (41)	Flemish, Highland	
Greek	92 (9)	Gaelic, Esperanto . . .	1 (00)

(On a basis of 263 answers)

<i>Afforded:</i>	
Linguistic training	167
General literary appreciation	102
No help	10

Comments: "A feeling for language. A love of accuracy in speech and writing." "A certain subconscious self-respect, and a general background." "All are helpful as forming a general cultural background—a thing which gives confidence to any teacher." "A sense of power." "So far as foreign literature is concerned, I have been helped more by translations than by the original." "Merely as an adornment."

16. What courses, other than English or education, have you found most helpful in your teaching of English (e.g., languages, history, the social sciences, natural sciences, etc.)? Be specific in your answer.

(On a basis of 329 answers)

<i>Other helpful Courses:</i>			
Languages	276 (37)	Literature	9 (1)
History	242 (46)	Mathematics	7 (2)
Social Sciences	94 (5)	Oral English	7 (00)
Natural Sciences	69 (12)	Music	7 (00)
Philosophy	46 (20)	Bible	6 (1)
Psychology	40 (14)	Journalism	3 (00)
Education	15 (15)	Mythology	3 (3)
Art	18 (5)	Law, Hygiene, Library	
Economics	17 (6)	Science, Logic	1 (00)

Comments: "English History especially, as a background for the English Literature." "I find History most helpful, because of the relation between the record of the acts and the thoughts of the nation." "Social sciences have broadened me personally, and made me more

capable of linking English work to life." "Natural Sciences absolutely useless." "Was more benefited by a course in Poultry Husbandry than by either French or German."

NOTE.—Note the high value placed on Languages and History, though the Social Sciences and Natural Sciences rank high. Only one avowed indebtedness to Logic.

17. In general what part of your own training has been of the greatest value to you? Of what did you most feel the need when you began to teach?

(On a basis of 263 answers)

Received most help from:

Experience	46	Practice teaching	9
Literature	29	History	8
Reading	29	Philosophy	5
College work	26	Oral English	5
Composition	22	High-school work	5
Methods	22	Travel	2
Teacher	18	Natural Sciences	2
Languages	15	Social Science	1
Graduate work	12	Art	1
Psychology	12	Music	1

Comments: "The unsupervised reading of childhood and youth." "An early home atmosphere that fostered a love of reading." "Contact with my best teachers, much reading and working out of problems, such as theses, for myself." "Everything except pure Mathematics." "Everything except College Algebra." "The courses in Composition were the staff of life to me." "I value a good training in reading aloud, so that pupils appreciate the spirit of the literature." "My experience in actual teaching has been of greater value than any training in the University." "That which cultivated soul-power." "Life, with its depths of sorrow and joy—a soul responsive to all about me—and an imagination to make the world mine, have meant most to me in my work."

Felt need of:

Information	56	Methods	81
Experience	56		

Comments: "More information and a better knowledge of kinds of textbooks and their relative values." "I felt the need at first of definite information as to what the schools are trying to do and specifically what English means other than passing college examinations." "I felt the need of instruction in teaching composition, both written and oral."

“I regret that I have not had more training in Oratory.” “A broader knowledge of the vast field of Literature and the ‘Humanities.’” “The wisdom of Solomon.” “Greatest need—how to present the subject-matter.” “I thought at first that I felt the need of methods; but I have since concluded that it was an understanding of pupils that I lacked—of their views, their stock of ideas, and their capacity for assimilation.” “Not more information, but experience.” “Self-control and common-sense.” “To be let alone.”

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