

TRADITIONAL VERSUS PROGRESSIVE PRACTICES IN  
TEACHING COMPOSITION IN THE LOWER GRADES

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Chapter	
I. INTRODUCTION . . . . .	1
II. COMPOSITION AS TAUGHT IN THE TRADITIONAL MANNER . . . . .	3
III. Aspects Common to Both Oral and Written Composition Oral Language Written Composition	
III. COMPOSITION AS TAUGHT IN THE PROGRESSIVE MANNER . . . . .	45
Correlation of English with Social Science Studies Creative Method of Teaching English	
IV. CONCLUSIONS . . . . .	87
BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	92

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to review and present the traditional versus the progressive practices in the teaching of composition as presented in the articles written on the teaching of composition in The Elementary English Review, volumes VIII - XVIII, years, 1931 - 1941, inclusive. The principles and methods of procedure found in these articles were organized and presented according to the teaching techniques which they propose.

The discussion was limited to the articles in volumes VIII - XVIII which deal with the principles and methods applicable to the lower elementary grades. Those that contained only suggestions for the upper grades were omitted. All other articles listed under the title of composition in the table of contents were included.

Some articles not listed under the title of composition were included. Often a portion of their content concerned the teaching of composition, while the remainder of the discussion was concerned with other phases of English. The ideas from the articles concerning composition were considered under the material dealing with the same subject.

The discussion of spelling was limited to the articles which contained teaching procedures for the spelling of words in written expression. The articles which dealt with spelling as a separate class were omitted.

The articles dealing with speech were included when they contained helpful suggestions for the teaching of oral composition. The articles dealing with other phases of speech were omitted.

The principles and methods of procedure suggested in the articles were presented in three chapters. Chapter II sets forth the methods which contribute to the teaching of composition in the traditional manner. In Chapter III the methods and devices by which composition is taught in the progressive manner is presented. Chapter IV brings together the conclusions deducted from the study recorded in the preceding chapters.

## CHAPTER II

### COMPOSITION AS TAUGHT IN THE TRADITIONAL MANNER

The study of composition naturally divides itself into two fields, namely, oral and written expression. Many of the problems in the teaching of these two types of communication are common, but some are related to only one phase of the subject. The material on composition found in The Elementary English Review falls rather definitely under the heads of composition taught in the regular class or in the traditional manner, composition correlated with other subjects, and the creative side of expression or the progressive practices in teaching self-expression. Those procedures involved with the traditional teaching will be discussed in this chapter. The articles dealing with this phase will be considered from the point of view of those picturing both types of composition and those peculiar to oral and to written work as separate topics.

#### Aspects Common to Both Oral and Written Composition

In considering the aspects of composition involved in both oral and written work, the following points will be discussed: importance of expression, objectives of the

curriculum, motivation, the choice of a subject, organization, the beginning sentence, sentence sequence, and the closing sentence.

#### Importance of Expression

The question of self-expression or communication is a most pertinent one. The importance of language as the means of expression in the life of an individual is stressed in the following statements:

"Language is one of the most precious powers that we possess. Not only does it reveal our culture, our interests, our health, and our personalities, but it is the very material of our thinking."<sup>1</sup>

"Language is involved in every educative experience and activity in the day's work, and in every contact that the pupil has, either with subject matter or with his fellows."<sup>2</sup>

Dewey Fristoe quotes from H. F. Seeley's paper "On Teaching English:"

Language - and in our case English - is man's chief instrument of social intercourse. By its means we communicate, record, apprehend, and comprehend what other people have said and done, and most important of all, by means of language we think...As such it deserves recognition as one of our most priceless possessions.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ethel Mable, "Releasing Language Power," The Elementary English Review, XII (1935), 64.

<sup>2</sup> Dewey Fristoe, "The Teaching of Language in the One-Room Country School," The Elementary English Review, XIV (1937), 121.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 37.

The importance of oral and written expression, with the school's responsibility or duty toward the teaching of this vital subject, is forcefully emphasized by the following statement:

One of man's most important activities is concerned with carrying on the communication of ideas. This is done by several different uses of language. Since one conveys his ideas to others by speaking or by writing, and receives the ideas of others by hearing them speak or by reading what they have written, it is the duty of the school to teach the uses of language which will enable the individual to communicate with others.<sup>4</sup>

#### Objectives

Due to such emphatic statements, teachers are very concerned over what to teach as well as which methods to use. Fristoe quotes from Paul McKee's "Language in the Elementary School," "surely one of the very important duties of the school is to teach those uses of language which will best enable the individual to communicate with others."<sup>5</sup> Howard R. Driggs contends that a serious lack of certainty in plans and teaching procedures still marks most of the English work in the elementary schools.<sup>6</sup> Regardless of the procedure taken, it is generally agreed that teachers must decide on

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<sup>4</sup> Cordia V. Callihan, "Language Training in the Oklahoma Course of Study," The Elementary English Review, XV (1938), 15.

<sup>5</sup> Dewey Fristoe, "The Teaching of Language in the One-Room Country School," The Elementary English Review, XIV (1937), 1.

<sup>6</sup> H.R. Driggs, "Life Lines in Language Work," The Elementary English Review, XVII (1940), 12.



goals to be attained. With definite objectives set up for oral and written work in each grade, John P. Milligan believes that satisfactory improvement can be made.<sup>7</sup>

To find the extent to which present-day texts agreed in setting forth objectives, fifty-three textbooks were examined by Douglas E. Lawson. Only fourteen, however, gave objectives for the teaching of language.<sup>8</sup>

"It seems fair, therefore, to state with a certain degree of finality that the writers of current textbooks in language for the elementary grades have reached no fundamental agreement in the matter of establishing objectives for the pupil's study in this subject."<sup>9</sup>

Therefore the objectives of language instruction and their grade placement are to be obtained from courses of study and the individual teacher's judgment. Many teachers and different school groups have formulated worth-while objectives and procedures to follow. One group of teachers, under the direction of the late Dr. S.A. Leonard at the

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<sup>7</sup>John P. Milligan, "The English Expression Program in the Bloomfield, New Jersey, Public Schools," The Elementary English Review, XV (1938), 5-10.

<sup>8</sup>Douglas E. Lawson, "The Content of Language Text-books," The Elementary English Review, XIV (1937), 40.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 122.

University of Wisconsin, found these five aims of a composition course to be practical:

1. To stimulate the thought of the student and his desire for communication by utilizing his experience
2. To discover individual interests and needs in composition
3. To teach careful organization of ideas
4. To establish social standards of judgment in matters of content and form
5. To encourage the daily use of an effective and active vocabulary.<sup>10</sup>

The following set of objectives was formulated for the fourth grade but the objectives are applicable to all elementary grades:

1. The activities of the fourth grade language-composition curriculum should promote the learning of the ordinary, necessary acts and arts of speech, so that children may be equipped to 'take their place in the world.'
2. Each expressional situation should bear on some 'functional center.'
3. School experiences comprising the language composition curriculum should resemble the experiences of daily life.
4. Expressional situations should be selected in the light of the interests, capacities, and needs of the pupils.
5. The language-composition curriculum must provide for pupils of the same grade or school age who may be several grades apart in language maturity and capacity.

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<sup>10</sup> Bertha V. Nair, "Stimulating Thought and Desire for Composition," The Elementary English Review, XI (1934), 71.

6. To provide for various ability levels, the language-composition curriculum should provide for a differentiation of activities, of minimal essentials, and of procedures.

7. Drill in language minimal essentials should be properly articulated with extended practice in expression, both oral and written.

8. The course of study for fourth grade composition should set up 'definite and socially defensible standards in the use of oral and written speech.'

9. The audience values of all expression should be emphasized.

10. The units involving expression situations should be drawn from other subjects, such as literature, history, and geography.

11. Principal emphasis should be given to the oral phases of composition.

12. Written composition should emphasize letter writing.

13. Any grammar that may be involved in the fourth grade language composition course of study must be strictly informal and purely functional. <sup>11</sup>

In summarizing, one may state that the characteristics of language expression which became worth-while objectives are courtesy, interest, naturalness, clearness, appropriateness, and correctness. <sup>12</sup>

In recent years, however, new trends of thought

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<sup>11</sup>Mildred A. Dawson, "Building a Language-Composition Curriculum in the Elementary School," The Elementary English Review, VIII (1931), 77-78.

<sup>12</sup>Mabie, op. cit., p. 64.

concerning the curriculum have altered the objectives sought and the methods used by some teachers. This attitude is characterized by Harry A. Greene in the following statement:

"The current beliefs that learning to express oneself is an individual matter, that the essential skills are habits acquired in accordance with certain laws of learning, that the child learns to express himself by doing so, not by learning rules about it or by reading the products of others, and that he masters skills more readily when they are brought into play in reasonably lifelike situations are only a few practical examples of the way in which point of view affects the curriculum and classroom practice."<sup>13</sup>

During recent years the trends concerning the teaching of English is that of integrating it with social science or some other subject. Another trend advocates the incidental teaching of English. Many of the articles in The Elementary English Review advocate a curriculum in which English is taught in a separate class or study.

In some curriculums, however, very little time is allowed for English and it is stressed or taught when a definite need or occasion arises. That is, if a reason

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Harry A. Greene, "Principles of Method in Elementary English Composition," The Elementary English Review, XIV (1937), 189-193.

for writing letters occurs, and the letters are not well written, additional instruction in letter writing is given, with particular emphasis on form. But in a fused program where the social studies or some other theme is the center of interest, composition is left to chance and immediate necessity.<sup>14</sup>

The editor of The Elementary English Review, C. C. Certain, has well expressed the opinion of many teachers who are not willing to abandon the English class: ... "The fact that children speak and write poorly in spite of much teaching does not mean that they will do better without any teaching."<sup>15</sup> Later, Certain also made this statement: "Let us improve language teaching - not abandon it. Make every class a language class, by all means, but keep the language course, too. Language is too fundamental to be taught incidentally."<sup>16</sup>

Cotner has stated, in the following statement, an example of an unsatisfactory method for teaching composition when an attempt is made to combine it with social science.

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<sup>14</sup>Edna Cotner, "English in a Fused Curriculum," The Elementary English Review, XV (1938), 11-12.

<sup>15</sup>C.C. Certain, "Abandonment Is No Solution," The Elementary English Review, XV (1938), 108.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

How might we make a mistake and injure the composition purpose if we kept to the incidental plan for English and correlated it with the major social-studies problem? Method and content in innumerable small ways can be faulty; for example: In working on their social-studies problem, children will learn about the New England colonies and about the Indians. We think that a group project involving Indians or colonial children is advisable, and that it will supply a motive for some incidental English. We suggest that the class write an account of an experience that a group of colonial children have had with Indians, imagining themselves relating the story as a colonial child would do it, one fourth of the class writing on one topic, another fourth on another, and so on. Their combined efforts will make the complete story. In planning such a project, we are keeping the activity in the social-studies field, but we are injuring rather than helping our composition course. Anyone who is skillful in leading children, or adults, to relate personal experiences effectively, in a natural manner, will not choose such a subject for a group composition, it is awkward and unnatural either to write or listen to such a narrative. 17

Cotner continues her suggestion in which the teaching of composition or social science will be taught in the incidental manner:

Turning the tables, and centering some of the problems of the fused program in English need not detract from the purpose of the social-studies problems. Many subjects concerned with places, peoples, and themes of the social-studies curriculum might supply content for the study of what, for the moment, is an English problem and part of a carefully planned continuity in English. Time out for incidental English, if it is to accomplish anything worth while, will be as long as time required for a major theme. How much better it is to plan that main problem and avoid the blundering that results from purposeless activity. A planned course is not necessarily a rigid course of a forbidding formal nature. It should be as flexible as

the plan for social studies and should permit children to develop gradually without annoying or disheartening self-consciousness. If the English activities are left to chance, they will lack a continuity that is necessary if fruitless effort and useless blundering are to be avoided; they will lack motive and logical presentation. Both the courses in social studies and in English could be planned and combined in an integrated curriculum so that neither one would be relegated to the incidental method. 18

An activity program for the English class is suggested in order to give opportunities for self-expression. Certain believes that many of the English skills used in work centered around an activity are practical. The skills are those of gaining information through direct questions, taking notes, and organizing information into a clear report.<sup>19</sup>

Bess Goodykoontz also emphasizes the value of an activity program by quoting from the Raleigh, North Carolina, public school course of study: "In an activity program there are many occasions for purposeful speaking, as: discussing plans, sharing ideas, selecting experiences, dramatizing stories, judging a piece of work to be done - a good unit of work gives many opportunities for gaining new ideas and for expressing these ideas."<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>19</sup> C.C. Certain, "A Question of Social Values," The Elementary English Review, XIII (1936), 116.

<sup>20</sup> Bess Goodykoontz, "Four Questions about the English Curriculum and Their Current Answers," The Elementary English Review, XI (1934), 237.

Mildred J. Doty gives somewhat of a warning concerning the type of experiences in which the teacher should try to interest her pupils:

"Often work planned to enrich experiences in English grows to include such a multitude of interests, or facts in such an involved relationship that any reasonable thoroughness in using them results in a few long labored efforts rather than frequent and constant practice on the type of thing included in natural conversation or personal needs for written expression."<sup>21</sup>

Literature, history, geography and other subjects offer a rich background with various opportunities for vicarious experiences, but for the younger pupils, personal experiences and related types of subjects give a content which is much more effective.<sup>22</sup> "With this simple individual material the child can think whether he has complete sentences, has an effective beginning and ending, and the other requirements for his short efforts."<sup>23</sup>

Going still further and giving the grade placement of the content of a composition course, Greene mentions the following factors which should be considered:

<sup>21</sup>Mildred J. Doty, "One View of Elementary English," The Elementary English Review, XIII (1936), 66.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 67.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 67.



1. The frequency and cruciality of the specific skills in the language activities of adults

2. The frequency and cruciality of the specific skills in the language demands made on children both in and out of school

3. The readiness of the pupils to make use of the specific language skills

4. The relation of skills to each other in terms of facilitation and interference

5. The number of different skills which it is psychologically desirable to present to the pupil at any one grade level

6. The innate learning difficulty of the skills. <sup>24</sup>

An example of a reconstructed course of study in English with a grade placement outline is that of the State of Oklahoma. It is organized into an outline of abilities or skills to be developed in instructional jobs with a sample unit for each job.<sup>25</sup> These instructional jobs are divided into the three divisions of oral composition, written composition, and mechanics.

#### Instructional Jobs in Oral Composition

1. Conversation
2. Story Telling
3. Use of Telephone
4. Announcements, Explanations, and Directions
5. Talks, Speeches, Reports, and Meetings

#### Instructional Jobs in Written Composition

1. Letter Writing
2. Outlines and Summaries

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<sup>24</sup> Greene, op. cit., pp.222-223.

<sup>25</sup> Callihan, op. cit., p. 17.

3. Announcements and Advertisements
4. Records, Reports, and Reviews
5. Filling in Forms
6. Bibliography

#### Instructional Jobs in Mechanics

1. Sentence Concept
2. Good Usage
3. Capitalization
4. Punctuation
5. Paragraphing
6. Vocabulary 26
7. Speech Techniques

As a further help to the teacher, four approaches dealing with specific abilities, are given for each instructional job in each grade:

1. Abilities to be retained from previous grades
2. Abilities to be achieved in this grade
3. Suggestions for achieving new abilities
4. Suggestions for correlation <sup>27</sup>

#### Motivation

After the teacher has well in mind the goals to be attained by a certain class, and has planned some methods or activities by which these objectives may be reached, the next step is to motivate the teaching in such a way that the pupils will have a great desire to express themselves. Much depends upon the teacher's attitude, her method of procedure and ability to encourage. "To the pupil's freedom from fear of ridicule, and confidence that his efforts will be

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 16.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

regarded sympathetically, must be added a stimulating environment."<sup>28</sup> Some teachers do not realize this, however, and fail to create a situation or environment that encourages free expression. Mabie names criticism, competition, and constant correction as three of the barriers which create undesirable atmosphere.

"English teaching has been criticised, perhaps justly, because it has appeared to place too much emphasis on the remedial and corrective aspects of expression, and too little on the development of constructive expressional abilities."<sup>29</sup>

Nair expresses the need of overcoming the dislike pupils have for composition and gives as a means of doing so the following ideas:

1. The English class is a place where the exchange of ideas is made clear by the organizing of material into sentences and paragraphs.

2. Composition is the putting together of ideas in a standard form which is acceptable to others.

3. The mechanics of written composition should be mastered early.

4. The most commonplace experiences can be made interesting.

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<sup>28</sup> C.C. Certain, "Aids to Creative Writing," The Elementary English Review, VIII (1931), 47.

<sup>29</sup> Harry A. Greene, "Principles of Method in Elementary English Composition," The Elementary English Review, XIV (1937), 267.

5. A pupil must interest others in order to inform or entertain them. (The aim of oral and written composition).

6. The teacher is sympathetic and interested in any subject which appeals to the pupils. 30

Thus, the English teacher is confronted with the great task of creating a stimulating environment as well as creating in the pupils a taste for composition. A helpful suggestion by Trabue is that the instructor be a guide rather than a teacher of those who have thoughts to be expressed.<sup>31</sup> With the teacher following such suggestions, the classroom should be a place conducive to the effective teaching of self-expression.

Another suggestion for motivation is that of proposing certain work or making the assignment.

"It is very important that every lesson be planned and that an interesting and definite assignment be made often at the beginning of the period."<sup>32</sup>

#### Choice of Subject

Much has been said regarding the choice of subjects

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<sup>30</sup> Bertha V. Nair, "Devitalizing Elementary Language," The Elementary English Review, XII (1935), 71-72.

<sup>31</sup> M. R. Trabue, "A Council Program of Scientific Guidance in Elementary School Composition," The Elementary English Review, IX (1932), 12.

<sup>32</sup> Nora Woodal, "To a New Teacher of Grade Four," The Elementary English Review, XIV (1937), 101.

for composition. Sheridan's description of a good subject, in his discussion, "Speaking and Writing English," says it must be personal, definite, and brief. It is enough to say that short stories, anecdotes, jokes, and interesting experiences of all kinds should be welcomed in the composition class as an important form for either oral or written English.<sup>33</sup>

Interest is the key word in any choice of a subject and the child is most concerned in his own experiences. One way of knowing a child's experiences is by the private conference, in which time the teacher may learn of the problems, experiences, and life stories of the pupils. If he can gain the confidence of the child, he will have a number of experiences from which to draw material.<sup>34</sup>

Sometimes a mere incident in the classroom will suggest a subject for a poem or story.<sup>35</sup>

From a supervisor's bulletin the following list of composition subjects was found. Such a list of general topics would interest some children:

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<sup>33</sup>Bertha V. Nair, "Stimulating Thought and Desire for Composition," quoting R. M. Sheridan, "Speaking and Writing English," The Elementary English Review, XI (1934), 73-74.

<sup>34</sup>Eunice E. Leonard, "Helping Children Express Themselves Creatively," The Elementary English Review, XV (1938), 307.

<sup>35</sup>Cleo Rainwater, "Poetry in a Fifth Grade," The Elementary English Review, VIII (1931), 37.

1. Personal experiences
2. Nature study summaries
3. Social study activities
4. Descriptions
5. Criticism of work
6. Current event items 36

The pupil's own experiences are the most timely of all subjects according to many authors. When they choose from these experiences, Neva German found in her study that the majority of the pupils chose experiences which occurred outside of school.<sup>37</sup>

#### Organization

After a suitable subject is chosen, the organization of the story follows. S.A. Leonard in his English Composition as a Social Problem, and cited by Beulah Hickok, suggests that the class find the plan of organization from familiar stories.<sup>38</sup>

Hickok suggests that the teacher show her manner of organizing by writing on the board what she knows about a subject as it comes to her. After an examination she will likely add some ideas and eliminate others. This will teach the pupils to keep important ideas and units in mind and to eliminate unimportant ideas.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Ida O'Brien, "Drive on English in a Rural Supervisory District," The Elementary English Review, VIII (1931), 85.

<sup>37</sup> Neva German, "Topics for Composition," The Elementary English Review, VIII (1931), 105.

<sup>38</sup> Beulah Hickok, "The Revision Step in Composition," The Elementary English Review, IV (1927), 21, citing S.A. Leonard, English Composition as a Social Problem, 72-73.

<sup>39</sup> Hickok, op. cit., 21-22.

Hickok warns against the procedure of having pupils write on the same subject from an outline on the board by saying too much help is worse than too little.<sup>40</sup> She suggests, however, that much of the time spent in correcting themes could be used in showing pupils how to plan and organize a story, and that poor work is often the result of pupils not thinking the subject through before writing.<sup>41</sup>

#### Beginning Sentence

When a pupil is ready to give his individual story, the initial sentence becomes a most important one. Duggan urges that training be given in composing this sentence in order that pupils waste as little time as possible in getting to the climax of the subject.<sup>42</sup> Bradsmark believes that the following suggestions are helpful: the reader should be plunged into something that will attract his attention and make him want to read or hear further, and pupils should be encouraged to make the beginning sentence as interesting as possible. If a child says "Once there was a dog," or "One day I went down town,"

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<sup>40</sup>  
Ibid., p. 19.

<sup>41</sup>  
Ibid., p. 19.

<sup>42</sup>  
Anna E. Duggan, "Oral Composition in the Sixth Grade," The Elementary English Review, III (1926), 54.

the teacher should ask him if there have not always been dogs and if he does not go to town often. In the place of these trite sentences, the teacher should suggest, "Our neighbor's dog does funny tricks," and "As I was going to town, I noticed something shining in the grass."<sup>43</sup>

Some examples of interesting beginnings are:

1. Once when mother was away
2. When grandmother comes to our house
3. My favorite spot
4. Yesterday in our art period, we made
5. When I was four years old.<sup>44</sup>

#### Sentence Sequence

As the story progresses, the correct sequence and variety in sentence structure should be stressed. In teaching sequence, O'Brien suggests that the pupil be given a number of sentence beginnings, as:

1. After we had
2. Next
3. Soon
4. As we crossed the road
5. We had just crossed the brook when
6. Finally

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<sup>43</sup>(Mrs.) M.L. Brandsmark, "Written Composition in the Sixth Grade," The Elementary English Review, III (1926), 15.

<sup>44</sup>

O'Brien, op. cit., p. 85.



7. Afterward <sup>45</sup>  
 8. After a little while

### Closing Sentence

Consideration must be given the closing sentence of a story. This sentence should round out the thought and complete the story in a satisfying manner. <sup>46</sup>

### Oral Language

After the subject is chosen and the content is organized the pupil is to express himself in either oral or written language. Phases of oral language will be discussed under the following topics: extent of oral expression, objectives, stimuli, methods, and classroom opportunities for speaking.

### Extent of Oral Expression

Of the two types of expression, oral and written, oral language is used to far greater extent. Netzer, in giving the results from a study made by Starbird, states that "only one out of twenty-nine demands on language ability is of the written type." <sup>47</sup> With such a demand upon oral

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., pp. 85-86.

<sup>46</sup> Pauline Soroka, "Building a Foundation for Better Written Composition," The Elementary English Review, XIII (1936), 33.

<sup>47</sup> R.F. Netzer, "Stimuli for Oral Language," The Elementary English Review, XV (1938), 91.

expression, "it is difficult to conceive of a greater handicap than the inability to speak."<sup>48</sup>

### Objectives

A great responsibility rests on the school in preparing pupils to meet this vital demand of oral language. The objectives to be reached should be given first attention. The following aims of oral composition are desirable for any grade:

1. To encourage pupils to talk freely on account of genuine interest, but with a definite and clearly formed plan in the mind of the teacher for improving their use of language
2. To require equally good English in all classes and to cooperate with other teachers in the department and system
3. To develop distinct articulation, a pleasing tone, and freedom from self-consciousness
4. To eliminate a few errors of speech, particularly the most gross and prevalent
5. To strengthen sentence sense
6. To emphasize orderly arrangements of sentence material, to develop ability to stick to the point, and to develop good beginnings and endings in composition
7. To cultivate among the children a felt need for good English in social, business, and recreational life.<sup>49</sup>

Another list of helpful suggestions advocated by O'Brien is the seven points which commend the brief oral composition:

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<sup>48</sup> Jean H. Dukelow, "Vitalizing Beginning English," The Elementary English Review, VIII (1931), 79.

<sup>49</sup> Netzer, op. cit., p. 53.

1. It teaches sentence recognition.
2. It is brief enough to give time for all members of the class to participate.
3. It is brief enough that it may be written on the blackboard for class corrections and suggestions.
4. It may make organization of thought necessary, as only the high-spots in an experience can be told.
5. It teaches pupils to avoid giving unessential details, and incoherent, rambling accounts of experiences or events.
6. It enables pupils to see how words may be used most effectively.
7. It is a preparation for advanced work, as a series of these brief paragraphs may be used in developing longer stories. 50

Another important objective of oral expression is the audience situation which is most vital. The pupil should be faced with an audience to which he has something to say - something on which he is better informed than his listeners.<sup>51</sup>

There has been in the past entirely too much time spent in merely drawing out points of information.... There should be oral composition in the group when we really want the pupils to talk about a topic and get one another's views. 52

#### Stimuli

If the teacher can succeed in getting the pupil to

<sup>50</sup> O'Brien, op. cit., p. 53.

<sup>51</sup> Greene, op. cit., p. 268.

<sup>52</sup> Carelton Washburne, "Individualization of Instruction in English," The Elementary English Review, IX (1932), 137.

feel a need of speaking, the best stimulus will be provided. This need is felt only when the pupil has important and interesting information to give.

The desire to speak effectively and well comes as each child feels the responsibility to get his message 'over' not to the teacher, but to his peers, the children themselves. He should therefore form the habit of speaking to them rather than to the teacher. The children who form the audience should in turn feel the responsibility of letting the speaker know if he fails to make himself understood - to question and challenge statements with which they do not agree. 53

#### Methods

The teacher should use various methods by which to proceed with the oral composition after the pupils have a desire to talk. When pupils speak to a class, and the class has the responsibility of being an attentive and interested audience, as suggested above, standards to be followed are:

1. Did I speak distinctly and loudly enough to be heard?
2. Did I stick to the point and know when to stop?
3. Did I look at my audience - not at one person, at the floor, the ceiling, or out of the window?
4. Did I look at the speaker and listen attentively to what he said?
5. Did I make any helpful comments or ask any questions about things that were not clear to me? 54

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<sup>53</sup> Dukelow, op. cit., p. 80.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

Another helpful procedure for the teaching of oral composition is a rehearsal of the prepared talk before the teacher first. The advantages are that it gets the child's cooperation in wanting to do his best, that it gives the timid child confidence, and that the teacher can suggest without embarrassing.<sup>55</sup>

Conversation is the one normal language situation that plays a significant part in every one's life. Every day one has need to give directions, explanations, information, and to convey ideas to one's family, neighbors, and friends. Certainly, then, to learn to be interesting and effective in such situations is a practical English experience. Where better could the art of conversation be fostered than in the English classroom?<sup>56</sup>

During these discussions or conversations, there should be some standards for the pupils to follow. The class could set its own standards. Mabie has cited the following for the fifth grade which may serve for other groups:

1. If you are discussion leader, call on different pupils to give everyone a chance to take part.
2. Stop discussion that may take you off the problem.

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<sup>55</sup>Hickok, op. cit., p. 54.

<sup>56</sup>Leland B. Jacobs, "Teaching Conversation Through the Conference," The Elementary English Review, XV (1938), 101.

3. Know more about the problem than you tell.
4. Be sure that what you tell is correct. Know your source of information.
5. Be courteous especially when someone disagrees with you. Do not always expect to have your own ideas accepted.
6. Make no comments that might hurt another's feelings. Respect others' ideas.
7. Bring the discussion to a close by a summary. <sup>57</sup>

The teaching of oral expression becomes a very great problem when attempting to teach timid pupils or those with speech difficulties. The following suggestions are made by Mabie to aid in this situation:

1. Provide the best physical conditions possible.
2. Provide a feeling of security with the group.
3. Eliminate direct criticism.
4. Emphasize effort and achievement.
5. Place the timid pupil in a small group to give discussion with no outstanding leader.
6. Place the too aggressive pupil with a group where leadership demands its turn.
7. Draw the timid into games on the playground.
8. Do not compare reports with those of greater ability.
9. Encourage the pupils to contribute their interesting ideas and thoughts to the group. 58

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<sup>57</sup>Mabie, op. cit., p. 102.

<sup>58</sup>Mabie, "Language Ability and Personality Adjustment," The Elementary English Review, X (1933), 168.

After a pupil has given his talk or told his story, the class should consider the following:

1. Sticking to the point
2. Telling the events in order
3. Making the meaning clear.<sup>59</sup>

In teaching oral expression or coaching along these lines, the teacher should:

1. Exemplify a normal speech pattern
2. Give speech an important place in the curriculum
3. Be a judge of normal speech and diagnose deviations
4. Familiarize himself with exercises and methods for helping the child to overcome speech handicaps
5. Seek the cooperation of the parents and such organizations as the Parent-Teachers' Association
6. Believe that purity, truthfulness, and kindness are the chief requisites of language.<sup>60</sup>

#### Classroom Opportunities

Some of the classroom activities which provide opportunities for practice in meeting these life demands will now be mentioned. A few of these are: the planning of trips and excursions, the working of committees on various phases

<sup>59</sup>  
Hickok, op. cit., p. 55.

<sup>60</sup>  
Charles E. Weniger, "Better Speech Patterns and the English Course," The Elementary English Review, XV (1938), 3-4.

of activities in connection with room units, preparing assembly programs, announcements in other rooms of assemblies, the reading of original stories and poems, telling stories and reviewing new books.<sup>61</sup> Dukelow mentions two other opportunities which are free dramatization and showing visitors about the room.<sup>62</sup> Another natural interest in oral expression is that of the broadcast. Pupils enjoy an improvised microphone or a television radio set by which they can show illustrations while they talk.<sup>63</sup> From listening over the real radio, they have received many examples of oral language well presented, and this should inspire them to talk well over their radio. From regular broadcasts the story telling may be emulated, and the following may well be associated with broadcast models: interviews, inquiries, giving directions, making introductions, apologizing, making speeches, conversing, and leave-taking.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Claire Zÿve, "English - an Integral Part of All School Activities," The Elementary English Review, IV (1937), 153.

<sup>62</sup> Dukelow, op. cit., p. 79.

<sup>63</sup> Minnie Rosenbloom, "Teaching Typical Children Creative Writing," The Elementary English Review, IX (1932), 154.

<sup>64</sup> M. Irene Johnson, "The Radio in Teaching Fifth and Sixth Grade English," The Elementary English Review, XIV (1937), 27.



The newspaper furnishes many valuable opportunities for oral discussions.<sup>65</sup>

The various situations mentioned above are a few of the opportunities that may be offered in the classroom for improving oral expression or speech. Since speech is so important in each individual's life, it is the task of the school and the teacher to provide many opportunities by which a child may obtain adequate speech expression. This cannot be left to specialists.<sup>66</sup>

#### Written Composition

When oral expression is well motivated, written composition is often the result since "writing is an extension of speech,"<sup>67</sup> or "writing is merely a variant of speech." It is the oral work which leads to the desire to write. "During our oral English periods we discuss and relate the experiences which in many cases are the topics chosen for written work."<sup>68</sup>

"When a person is writing (except when he is writing private diaries or accounts), he is writing for someone,

<sup>65</sup> Marian M. Walsh, "The Newspaper in the Elementary School," The Elementary English Review, IX (1932), 34-35.

<sup>66</sup> Charles E. Weniger, op. cit., p. 68.

<sup>67</sup> Walter Barnes, "Language as Behavior", The Elementary English Review, VIII (1931), 16.

<sup>68</sup> Gorman, op. cit., p. 105.

to someone, he has an 'audience', a reader or a circle of readers."<sup>69</sup>

According to Miss Annie Moore of Teachers College, Columbia University, as quoted by Elsie L. Lorenz in an article,

....written language is employed for three main purposes: to record interesting and important facts and events; to communicate with people at a distance; and to create new values of a more or less original sort such as stories, sketches, verse, plays. The school should then provide opportunity for the fulfillment of these purposes. <sup>70</sup>

The problems of composition peculiar to written work will be discussed under the topics that follow: devices used, opportunities for written expression, class criticism, teacher's criticism, and marking.

#### Devices Used

In preparing a pupil to share his ideas in writing, many devices are used. From analysis of six sets of textbooks for elementary school English, Manruther, according to Josephine Maclatchy, gathered three hundred nineteen devices for teaching written composition. She found that those most commonly used are as follows:

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Barnes, op. cit., p. 24.

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Elsie L. Lorenz, quoting Annie Moore, "The Writing Vocabulary of Third Grade Children," The Elementary English Review, VIII (1931), 107.

1. Copying - to acquire the skills of capitalization, letter writing, punctuation, and choice of words.
2. Writing dictation - to teach capitalization, punctuation, sentence sense, and sentence structure.
3. Following a model - to teach form and letter writing.
4. Filling in blanks - to teach choice of words and language usage.
5. Assigning a subject - to teach explanation, outlining, paragraph sense and structure reports.
6. Writing sentences - to develop sentence sense, language usage, punctuation, capitalization, spelling.
7. Selecting topics - to teach story telling and sentence sense and structure.
8. Playing games and guessing riddles - to teach composition.<sup>71</sup>

#### Opportunities for Written Expression

Writing a story.-- When a pupil has had practice in many of these exercises and is ready to write, various opportunities occur for written expression. Usually, the first is a desire to write a story of his own. Later, the need arises for writing a letter. Then the opportunity to write for the newspaper occurs. The following suggestions will be helpful for the teacher to give the pupil as a guide:

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Josephine MacLatchy, quoting Farruther, "A Bibliography of Unpublished Studies in Elementary English," The Elementary English Review, XII (1936), 23-24.

(1) Select the topic, not necessarily the title, and limit it. (2) Write the rough draft, with attention concentrated on the content. Reading, searching, questioning, to secure additional information, may both precede and follow this step. It is in this step that such a dictionary as the Thorndike-Century Junior Dictionary is of the most value, and it should be used freely for meanings and synonyms with a view to securing a better selection of words for the production. (3) Copy the rough draft to make the mechanics of the final copy as accurate as possible. It is here that each child should have an alphabetical list of words needed for writing, to be referred to whenever he is in doubt about the spelling of a word. It should be a very much smaller volume than the dictionary and be free from diacritical markings and definitions. (4) Proof reading for errors before the composition is handed to the teacher. 72

A study was made by Dorothy Verner to ascertain what opportunities arise for teaching language in classes other than English.

The technique of the study was simple. It consisted of daily observation in the third and sixth grades, and the keeping of a diary of (1) expressional situations that arose and (2) the attention paid to language techniques during lessons other than English. The time used in observation ranged from two to four hours a day. The teachers were not conscious that this investigation was being made, since they understood only one of the purposes of the observation: namely, getting acquainted with teaching procedures. 73

When the data collected were classified, it was shown that many instances arose for the teaching of language.

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<sup>72</sup>Jessie L. Duboe, "Basal Problems in Grade School English Instruction," The Elementary English Review, XII (1935), 126.

<sup>73</sup>Dorothy Verner, "Opportunities for Incidental Language Teaching," The Elementary English Review, XV (1939), 105.

Mechanics was given more emphasis than any of the other classifications. "Situations for the teaching of technicalities occurred in many instances, particularly in conversation, corrections, and blackboard work."<sup>74</sup>

If teachers of other subjects will assist in the teaching of expression, it will be easier for the pupils to develop a language consciousness. This consciousness is quite necessary, for one cannot correct his errors if he is not conscious of them."<sup>75</sup> To have other teachers cooperating in this important task is the desire of all English teachers.

Experience in the use of simple, common words is necessary to gain confidence in writing. Primary words which lend themselves to careless spelling should be checked more frequently than weekly and bi-weekly written themes permit. When a child is thinking of the sequence of a story rather than of the isolated word, it is easy for him to be caught by a spelling demon. He will always write most words in sentences while his mind is occupied by the thought rather than by the form of his writing. To spell common words automatically in a thought sequence is a discipline.<sup>76</sup>

In the list of suggestions given by Gillett for teaching correct spelling in all written work, five may be helpful in written composition.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., pp. 105-106.

<sup>75</sup> Greene, op. cit., p. 225.

<sup>76</sup>

Lucy M. Schwienher, "Sixth Grade Dictation Material," The Elementary English Review, XV (1938), 28.

1. The teacher may select words that pupils will probably use in their compositions and write them on the board. For a thank you note, for example, the words might be appreciate, thoughtfulness, grateful, and sincerely.

2. The pupils should ask for the spelling of words that they do not know. These should be written on the board, giving the visual image of the word. Too, other pupils may need to spell the same word.

3. From the fifth grade on, pupils can be taught to use the dictionary.

4. Errors from carelessness may be avoided by having the pupils check their written compositions for spelling mistakes.

5. If there are many spelling errors in a composition, the paper should be copied correctly before the work is accepted. 77

Writing a letter.-- Letter writing is important in helping a pupil to think clearly and feel deeply, and then to be confident that what he thinks and feels is worth expressing.

The fact that letter writing has been accorded increasing precedence over other forms of written composition in recent years is proof of its actual value and use. Courses of study have forcefully recommended that the art of correspondence should be taught. Supervisors and principals have urged teachers to create in their pupils an eagerness and to develop develop a skill in writing letters. 78

<sup>77</sup> Gillett, op. cit., pp. 55-56.

<sup>78</sup> Marian M. Walsh, "Letter Writing in the Elementary Grades," The Elementary English Review, X (1933), 169.

Letter writing involves many language skills, thus by giving letter writing a prominent place in the composition class, other kinds of writing will not be neglected, for the body of a letter is just composition.<sup>79</sup>

In her article on the teaching of letter writing, Walsh states that letter forms should be thoroughly learned.

Firm insistence on absolute perfection in form at the outset, is essential. When this is acquired early in the teaching of letters, time often wasted on that phase of the work may be released for enrichment of content. In fact, it is inexcusable to spend a long time on form or the mechanics in any kind of written composition. 80

Walsh also gives seven suggestions for the teaching of letter writing in her second article on this subject.

These suggestions are as follows:

1. Writing the letter forms on a card with the body omitted
2. Discussing the mistakes made on the cards before the entire group
3. Encouraging each letter written to be an improvement over the last one written
4. Showing those letters of merit written by the pupils to the group
5. Showing those letters of merit received by pupils to the group

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<sup>79</sup> Harriet J. Smith, "Letter-Writing as Composition," The Elementary English Review, XV (1938), 103.

<sup>80</sup>

Walsh, op. cit., p. 172.

6. Creating situations that will hold a pupil's interest until the skill of writing is permanent.

7. Comparing business and friendly letters (when introducing the study of business letters)

One important issue in the study of letter writing is whether the pupil is really to send or mail his letter to the person to whom he has written. Mabie says that all pupils should participate instead of competing for the best work.<sup>81</sup> Walsh states that a teacher should have all letters written in class sent to the individuals for whom they were written.<sup>82</sup>

Writing for Newspapers.--Writing for a school newspaper provided another method of obtaining written expression.

"Because a school paper is based on the needs of any wide-awake community, because with the exception of letter writing, it is the best motivation available for composition work, because such an enterprise helps to mould school and class spirit, and because it furnishes experience in

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<sup>81</sup> Ethel Mabie, "Releasing Language," The Elementary English Review, XII (1935), 67.

<sup>82</sup> Marian H. Walsh, "Letter Writing in the Grades," The Elementary English Review, X (1933), 171-72.



the practice of business-like methods, it is highly desirable as an activity for children."<sup>83</sup>

In mentioning the newspaper, Catharine M. Williams relates the following experience in the Ohio State University School:

In each room group would-be contributors read aloud their contributions. This reading was really group editing. Some standards of evaluation were of necessity set up in each group. As a child finished reading, suggestions for change, omission, and revision were made as well as appreciative comment on apt expressions and picturesque speech.<sup>84</sup>

This method appears to be a satisfactory one to follow when selecting articles for the newspaper.

When the selection is made, the question of correcting the spelling and punctuation is then most important. The teachers should suggest corrections but let the pupils do their own revising.<sup>85</sup>

One great difficulty in written expression is that of spelling.

The problem of insuring correct spelling in all written composition is not an easy one. To insist on correctness of form and spelling at the risk of losing spontaneity and ease of expression is to defeat the

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Marian Walsh, "The Newspaper in the Elementary School," The Elementary English Review, IX (1932), 34.

84

Catharine M. Williams, "The Student Publication; An Integral Part of the English Program," The Elementary English Review, XIII (1936), 113.

<sup>85</sup>Ibid.

purpose of the teacher who is trying to develop a free style of written discourse. To neglect such matters of correctness is, however, to condone slovenliness, and to permit the student to fix habits of incorrect writing. 86

Advancement can be made, however, for "the establishment of an awareness of spelling difficulties, and providing the pupil with the means of making spelling correct will go far toward improving spelling correctness in written composition."<sup>87</sup>

The fact that the teacher can propose interesting subjects or ways of arousing the imagination is suggested by Millard.

Interest in composition seemed to lag, so the teacher suggested that a play be written. The circus was chosen as the subject since it was spring. This suggestion produced an electrifying effect upon the class in general and an enthusiasm in certain members of lower mentality that was most gratifying. Pupils were eager to begin writing and satisfactory results were obtained. 88

#### Class Criticism

Definite standards upon which children can base their judgment and criticism must be set up for written composition. The following points are worth consideration:

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Norma Gillett, "Insuring Spelling Correctness in Written Composition," The Elementary English Review, XV (1938), 55.

<sup>87</sup>Ibid.

88

Louise Brand Millard, "What is Childhood's Native Language?" The Elementary English Review, VIII (1931), 34.

## I. Title

- (a) Does it make you wish to read the story?
- (b) What does it make you wish to find out?

## II. Beginning Sentence

- (a) Does something happen at once?
- (b) What makes the move immediately?

## III. Sentences

- (a) Does each sentence make you wish to read on?
- (b) Is each sentence worded differently?

## IV. Vocabulary

- (a) Are the words new and interesting?
- (b) Do the words make a picture of the story?

## V. Ending Sentences

- (a) Does it finish the story?
- (b) Is it necessary to the story?
- (c) Does it leave you satisfied?<sup>89</sup>
- (d) Does it explain your title?

Pupils can discuss all composition in an intelligent manner if these points are constantly before their eyes. As time goes on they will be able to criticize their own compositions as they write them. 90

Certain qualifications are minimum essentials of fitness for judging the worth of a composition. These should be the equipment of children, as well as teachers:

1. Familiarity with the standards of oral and written work, for at least the grade concerned and the preceding grades. By the fourth grade, if not before, children should be supplied with lists of these standards.

2. Knowledge of the characteristics of a composition whose content is acceptable.

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Pauline Soroka, "Building a Foundation for Better Written Composition," The Elementary English Review, XIII (1936), 23.

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Ibid.

3. Understanding of the treatment of errors, weighing some more than others.

4. Ability to offer good and sufficient reasons for the scores given; that is, the score for both the mechanics and content.

5. Ability to rate the composition and not the child.

6. Ability to use intelligently a simple system of symbols for indicating errors.

7. Ability to recognize that a child who is weak in mechanics of a paper needs a different type of treatment from the one who is weak in the story element. <sup>91</sup>

#### Teacher Criticism

This last idea expresses a viewpoint similar to that cited by Washburne in his suggestions for the criticism of papers by the teacher. This viewpoint is as follows:

"Written composition involves two vitally different aspects: expression and the technique of expression. These two should never be confused. They should be carefully differentiated at all times."<sup>92</sup>

#### Marking

When the final copy of a composition is in the teacher's hands, he should (1) evaluate the mechanics and content separately, giving a mark for each or making comments on each phase; and (2) use

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<sup>91</sup>Jessie L. Duboe, "Who Is Equipped to Evaluate Children's Compositions?", The Elementary English Review, XIII (1936), 33.

<sup>92</sup>Washburne, op. cit., p. 187.

a simple, useful system of symbols which not only gives definite instructions to the child, but which places upon him the responsibility of both finding and correcting his errors. 93

The following suggested set of symbols is usable in the upper grades but would probably need some simplifying for the lower grades: "sp for spelling; cap for capitalization; p for punctuation; n for neatness; m for margin; ✓ for correct item; inc for incomplete; o for omit; pen for penmanship f for form; ss for sentence structure; / for insert (a word or other material); and ok for an accepted item." 94

"The practice of having pupils rewrite and resubmit themes with marked corrections is distinctly open for question." 95

In regard to tests, G. M. Wilson states that " a chief aim in elementary language work is correctness of expression. When the teacher has located the specific errors of a child, she knows the points where emphasis should be placed." 96

If a paper shows more merit than usual, the teacher should recognize it. "When you find something good, have it

<sup>93</sup>Duboe, op. cit., p. 63.

<sup>94</sup>Ibid.

<sup>95</sup>Greene, op. cit., p. 269.

<sup>96</sup>

G. M. Wilson, "Right Uses of a Standard Language Test," The Elementary English Review, VIII (1931), 163.

typed, read aloud to the class or a group, use on a program, or noticed in some special way." <sup>97</sup>

Trends in English teaching today are, in the main, liberal. This is right and proper in a modern, democratic society. But in so far as these trends are proclaimed merely in reaction to past formalism, and in a shifting from right to left for the sake of appearance at a time when such shifting is fashionable, they may be regarded with suspicion. The English teacher must still be occupied with formal conventions and speech patterns. <sup>98</sup>

The study reveals that the wasteful and ineffective practices that are characteristic of the traditional methods of teaching language are:

1. Language is taught as a subject distinct from others, thus limiting its usefulness.
2. Traditional language instruction neglects the needs and interests of the pupils' daily lives.
3. The same language lesson is taught to the entire group. This mass instruction makes little provision for individual differences.
4. Often the same phases of work receive strong emphasis year after year - neglecting others.
5. Courses of study, whether based on a textbook or

<sup>97</sup>

Eunice E. Leonard, "Helping Children Express Themselves Creatively," The Elementary English Review, XV (1938), 307.

<sup>98</sup>

C.C. Certain, "English Must Still Be Taught," The Elementary English Review, XIV (1937), 110.

or not, are often unrelated to pupils' need and interests. Boys and girls cannot see the value of lessons that do not bear on their consciously realized needs and interests.

The following chapter in this study gives attention to the progressive practices of teaching composition.

## CHAPTER III

### COMPOSITION AS TAUGHT IN THE PROGRESSIVE MANNER

In making the transition from the traditional method of teaching composition to that of the progressive method, the correlation of English with the social science studies was first attempted. In more recent years the creative method has been widely advocated in the teaching of both oral and written composition. In this chapter the procedures of each method are discussed.

#### Correlation of English with Social Science Studies

In the modern elementary school, English has disappeared as a separate subject and has taken its place as a vital part of all school activities.<sup>1</sup>

Language is not a subject-matter field but a highly inter-woven fabric of skills which are perfected and used in dealing with other subject-matter fields. The correlation of English skills with subject-matter content for instructional purposes makes it more likely that the skills will be introduced and used in reasonable lifelike situations. Motivation is greater and learning is more effective when the learner feels that the situation is real. <sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Zyve, op. cit., p. 49.

<sup>2</sup>Greene, op. cit., p. 193.



Recent evidence obtained from many quarters indicates quite clearly that highly effective teaching of English composition abilities may be done under classroom conditions in which the child learner is not especially aware of the fact that he is learning English. Undoubtedly such close correlation of English with pupil needs in other subject matter is desirable and effective. However, no matter how unconscious the child may be of the emphasis on language skills, it should not be assumed that the instructor himself loses sight of this emphasis.<sup>3</sup>

An experiment was carried on for three years in the third grade of the University Elementary School in Iowa City, Iowa, in which composition work was correlated almost completely with the work in pioneer history to ascertain whether this method of teaching was effective. The following summary gives many of the situations which arose for both oral and written composition:

1. Stating and writing questions to be answered during the study
2. Making many outlines on various phases of the work
3. Writing arguments for debate
4. Planning trips and excursions. Summarizing what was learned

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<sup>3</sup>  
Ibid., p. 223.

5. Writing letters for information or permission, and writing invitations to parents and guests
6. Listing materials needed, committees improvements, and articles to be catalogued for the museum
7. Making out a program for assembly
8. Summarizing interesting projects for the school news and local paper
9. Preparing dramatizations from factual materials
10. Writing pioneer stories and poems
11. Asking pioneer questions <sup>4</sup>

After using both formal and informal tests, it was found that the pupils have gained in the skills needed for composition writing. There was no proof that the correlated method was responsible for the improvement, but the experiment showed that isolated language skills need not suffer when taught through correlation with content subjects.

"There is much reason to believe that the gains made by the children during the period of investigation were due to the practice of specific composition skills in situations which possessed purpose and meaning for the child so that a knowledge of correct practice became a real essential to him." <sup>5</sup>

In a unit on transportation, the following language activities occurred:

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<sup>4</sup>Gillett, op. cit., pp.81-82.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 86.

1. Discussion after visits to airports, railway yards, and other points
2. The writing of a play for assembly
3. The writing of stories for booklets
4. Oral reports

In several ordinary elementary schools it was found that pupils from the fourth to the eighth grades found more need for language in all its forms in the social-studies classes first, and in the science classes second. Therefore, some experiments were carried on in modified platoon and departmentalized schools in which the social-studies teachers had the responsibility of the pupils' growth in language arts. Programs were altered to give these teachers more time in a class period. A capable teacher was available for those who were slow or absent. The results were that pupils showed growth in all the language arts.<sup>7</sup>

From the experiences cited above, it is readily seen that social science furnishes numerous opportunities for expression. The daily home and community life of the pupils give an opportunity for spontaneous speech and organized composition. Therefore social studies include

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<sup>6</sup> Grace E. Storm, "Social Studies: a Basis for English," The Elementary English Review, XIV (1937), 70.

<sup>7</sup> A.J. Foy Cross, "A New Approach to Teaching the Language Arts," The Elementary English Review, XV (1938), 96-97;

oral and written composition as well as many other phases of English.<sup>8</sup>

The situations requiring expression are not confined to social studies alone. The keeping of a diary record in a science experiment is just as real a language need. The writing of minutes for the citizenship club is another. Put it this way: Every situation in the classroom requiring language expression should be considered by the language teacher as an opportunity for improving the children's expressional ability.<sup>9</sup>

An activity similar to the science diary is the making of a science booklet. From an observation made while one boy experimented to prove that wind was moving air, each pupil wrote what he saw. A series of illustrations were drawn on the same subject by various pupils, and these were explained by written stories. Each pupil then made a booklet of his individual illustrations and written work.<sup>10</sup>

In the following discussion, Dora McElwain cites another instance where science and English were correlated effectively:

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<sup>8</sup>Storm, op. cit., p. 43.

<sup>9</sup>Ethel Mabie, "Releasing Language Power," The Elementary English Review, XII (1935), 66.

<sup>10</sup>Pauline E. Soroka, "Multiple Composition," The Elementary English Review, XV (1938), 110.

One Monday our science teacher, Mr. Bent, taught a fifth grade class three facts about air. He performed three experiments to prove them. On Tuesday, the English teacher based her composition lesson on the science lesson of the previous day. The procedure in the English class followed these principles of composition: (1) Oral work always precedes written work. (2) The teacher anticipates as many errors as possible before and during the written period of the lesson. (3) The composition work is aided by some visual work on the blackboard. (4) During the actual writing, there is absolute quiet in the room. (5) The teacher corrects all papers that night, indicates all errors, and returns them to their owners the next day. All mistakes are corrected by the pupils themselves. (6) The time-distribution of the forty-minute period is: twenty minutes for oral discussion; fifteen minutes for writing; five minutes for reading aloud and self-correction. 11

This procedure gave the pupils practice in expressing themselves clearly, writing coherent, unified paragraphs, and using transitional words between paragraphs. 12

Literature is another subject which is correlated with composition. One possibility of this correlation is that of considering the literature class in which pupils have to express themselves orally and in written discussion. Then such natural occasions as the following give opportunity for oral and written composition: giving book reviews, preparing reports on the background of the passage studied,

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Dora McElwain, "Based on Science," The Elementary English Review, XV (1938), 110.

12

Ibid.

giving details of an author's life, and discussing the meaning of certain thoughts.<sup>13</sup>

Lina L. Linstad gives a procedure by which literature, social science, and composition are correlated. Since children's literature gives the pupils a more complete picture of peoples of other countries than books do dealing only with factual material, it is an opportune time to have books read in the English class after the study of a foreign country has been initiated in the social science class.<sup>14</sup> Linstad's suggestions for such a study are as follows:

Skillfully selected questions and a brief presentation of each book will serve to arouse the desire to read. Children should be helped to select books that are within their abilities. Set a definite time for the discussion of the books presented, and encourage each child to read one or more books before that time. Have ready a list of questions which will bring about discussion of the life of the people studied; such questions furnish an agreeable substitute for the written check on reading. They should not be in the nature of a test, but rather a sharing of reading experiences. They should be thought-provoking and should lead to an interpretation of the material.<sup>15</sup>

Another reading activity which provides an opportunity for oral expression is the Reading Club each Friday.

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Percival M. Symonds, "The Correlation of English with Other Subjects from the Point of View of Psychology," The Elementary English Review, XI (1934), 176.

14

Lina L. Linstad, "English and the Social Studies," The Elementary English Review, XI (1934), 209.

15 Ibid.

Weekly oral reading contest is held at which each child is given the opportunity to read, or recite on any interesting topic or story. The winner of the contest is chosen by the class. These points are used for judging:

1. Was the topic well chosen?
2. Was the audience interested?
3. Did he express himself well?
4. Did he speak clearly?
5. Were the words pronounced correctly?
6. Did he have poise? 16

Because of the very nature of the social studies, their richness of content and their informality they encourage initiative and establish in the schoolroom normal social relations, thus encouraging helpful intercourse and communication.

#### Creative Method of Teaching English

In recent years there has been a demand for the teaching of oral and written composition in the creative manner. Creative expression is one of the chief objectives of progressive schools<sup>17</sup> and progressive teachers recognize the vital place that creative composition has in modern education.<sup>18</sup> This method strives for the release of the

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<sup>16</sup>

Soroka, op. cit., p. 100.

<sup>17</sup>

Grace M. Parkinson, "Creative Expression Through Poetic Language," The Elementary English Review, VIII (1931), 27.

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Certain, "Active Education," The Elementary English Review, (1934), 170.

inner self and lets the individual express himself in his own personal style.

In the following statements the author presents a most modern view concerning the methods used in teaching composition.

I think we ought not to think in terms of specific methods but rather in terms of attitudes. If we can only establish the point of view that under no condition is composition to be considered a special topic by itself, but rather the outgrowth of life situations and needs in and out of school, the method and practices will follow. 19

Instead of problems of teaching English in the lower grades there is only one problem with two angles: the unreality of our practices, and the impossibility of our standards. English teaching has been for the most part a failure because we have set up too high standards and because what we teach is far removed from the lives of the children. My solution is that we reverse the practice of having adults set standards. Let the children develop standards as they go along. My solution is further to make our school practices conform to the reality of the children's lives. 20

"In composition the emphasis is to be, not on the completion of set assignments, but rather on such topics and such matters as form a direct, not an artificial part, of the children's experiences."<sup>21</sup>

"In other words, English teaching will be successful in the elementary grades only if it is an outgrowth of the immediate experiences of the child."<sup>22</sup>

<sup>19</sup>Caribaldi M. Lapolla, "Problems of Teaching English in the Elementary Schools," The Elementary English Review, XVI (1939), 189.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid.



"If we teachers become more sensitive to the creative moods of children and are willing to readjust our carefully planned daily school work to the true moods of the children, we may succeed in getting more genuine artistic expression from them."<sup>23</sup>

We find that the teacher is to create the atmosphere and set the scene.<sup>24</sup> "An environment of freedom gives opportunity for the rich creative development of the individual; this environment is of vital importance in stimulating his creative spirit."<sup>25</sup>

One important factor influencing the success of oral composition is a pleasing speaking voice. Speaking is humanity's universal means of communication. It is not enough to know what to say, we must know how to say it. A new understanding of the importance of good speech is spreading. People realize that poor speech is a handicap to their personality.<sup>26</sup>

Another vital factor in the success of oral composition is an adequate vocabulary.

<sup>23</sup> LaRue, Garnette, "The Turned-Into-Outs," The Elementary English Review, VIII (1931), 40.

<sup>24</sup> Adole Bailey, "A Lesson in the Appreciation of Poetry," The Elementary English Review, VIII (1931), 41.

<sup>25</sup> Grace M. Parkinson, "Creative Expression Through Poetic Language," The Elementary English Review, VIII(1931), 27.

<sup>26</sup> Weniger, op. cit., p. 3.

The development of a pleasing, ready, and fluent vocabulary depends upon the type of environment in which a child lives and the experiences he has through the environment. The freedom, concreteness, and variety of experiences which the child has out of school are now his experiences in school, with the added privilege of the guidance of a trained and interested teacher. 27

"The richest field for the development of the vocabulary is in the center of interest."<sup>28</sup> Excursions afford vast opportunity for vocabulary development. Walks with the children offer rich possibilities for ways of saying things.<sup>29</sup>

Pupils should be encouraged to talk about things they have seen or felt, to make them clear to others. It helps to talk about "smells I like most," sounds that please me," "sounds that make me lonely," or "colors that make me glad." Poetry and prose of established worth can be woven into these discussions without invidious comparison.<sup>30</sup>

Individual and class lists of colorful and interesting words and ideas should be kept. The teacher should keep her own and share it occasionally with pupils. These

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<sup>27</sup> Bertha Victoria Leifeste, "Developing the Vocabulary, in a Second Grade," The Elementary English Review, XI (1934), 133.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Mabel F. Altstetter, "The Approach to Creative Expression," The Elementary English Review, XVIII (1941), 17.

lists may be made up of things heard or seen. Placing on the board a list of words from which to choose the most interesting or colorful is helpful.<sup>31</sup>

Collecting beauty from the community is worth the effort. Watching for objects silhouetted against the sky brings its reward. The slender finger of a church steeple, a soaring buzzard, a pine tree with twisted branches, a smokestack, a bent man plowing on the hilltop, an old horse with drooping head alone in a hilltop pasture, an airplane soaring, all these and many more are in every community. One should not neglect other things that the community can offer: the arch of a viaduct, shadows in the water, the curve of a stair-rail in a public building, pleasing color arrangements in a vegetable stall or store window, a wisteria vine in bloom on a weather-beaten cabin, trees bare in winter or with black trunks shining in the rain, the line and proportion of a beautiful house, furniture that has functional beauty, color in children's clothes as they play in groups, the charm and beauty of a well made bed or a table set in simple but graceful fashion, the pleasure of fresh sheets, crisp napkins and towels, the beauty of clean hair and skin, the color of a field of cabbage, the symmetry of a field of corn shocks,

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<sup>31</sup>  
Ibid.

the wind in a field of buckwheat - the list is endless.<sup>32</sup>

While these things are being enjoyed the reading and discussing of poetry and prose should go on. Words with beautiful meanings should be watched for and talked about.<sup>33</sup> Thus "the child's vocabulary is an outcome of his day's activities - not of a language period of fifteen minutes set aside twice a week with all untimely remarks suppressed the rest of the time."<sup>34</sup>

The vital importance of the social situation is emphasized in the following statement:

Language begins in the social situation. It is the social situation which calls it forth, which nurtures and develops it. It is the social situation we must return to teach or to learn language. It is to the social situation we must look for a proper measure of the effectiveness and appropriateness of language usage.<sup>35</sup>

Young emphasizes his statement by quoting from the New York state bulletin, English: A Handbook for Teachers in Elementary Schools:

The one aspect of language that is perhaps the most important, at least from the standpoint of elementary education, is language as a means of social adaptation.

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<sup>32</sup>Ibid.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid.

<sup>34</sup>Leifeste, op. cit., p. 138.

<sup>35</sup>William E. Young, "Language as Social Adaptation," The Elementary English Review, XVIII (1941), 63.

Language is probably the most important way of social reaction that the child acquires. The learning and the teaching of the language arts should be founded in social responsiveness rather than in literary niceties and grammatical correctness. 36

Language should be considered as man's chief way of social adaptation. Literature is an expression not only of the facts, but also of the thoughts, ideals and yearnings of the human race. When teachers thus view language and literature they will inevitably center the language arts in social understanding and responsiveness. 37

It is difficult for the curriculum makers to know just what to include in the curriculum and the English teachers are today faced with a curious dilemma. On the one hand, they are exhorted to be liberal, to shun the teaching of certain literary conventions because the conventions themselves are stilted, outmoded, and pedantic, and because, in any case, the attempt to teach them has proved quite useless. Of equal volume are the protests of those who declare that graduates of public schools can not spell, punctuate, speak pleasantly, or write grammatically, and who call for a return to the intensive teaching of grammar and the mechanics of composition. 38

On one point, however, all critics seem to agree. They believe that the schools should emphasize letter writing as one of the most needed skills of everyday life. 39

Letter writing is eminently practical, a business technique, and at the same time, "the gentlest art." 40

Of all forms of written composition, letters are

36 Ibid.

37 Ibid.

38 Julia Lockwood Certain, "Common Ground," The Elementary English Review, XVIII (1941), 111.

39 Ibid.

40 Ibid.

most closely allied to conversation. "The adequate oral language integrates naturally with letter writing, and forms a unit of instruction singularly adapted to every-day language needs."<sup>41</sup>

"If we take time to have simple conversations with children they can easily be taught to use the same style in writing. Just say, 'Imagine you are talking to me when you write.'"<sup>42</sup>

We cannot ignore form in our letter instruction, but we can make it secondary in importance, simplify it, and stress only essentials. Let us teach the simplest possible arrangement for heading, the block form, and eliminate all unnecessary punctuation. In the lower grades we may even have letter paper hectographed with the heading supplied so that the child need only fill in the salutation, write the letter itself, and sign his name.<sup>43</sup>

One factor in making letter writing easy is the availability of the necessary materials for writing. All of us have experienced the unusual stimulus to writing

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<sup>41</sup>M. Lucille Harrison, "Need for an Adequate Oral Language Program," The Elementary English Review, XVIII (1941), 99.

<sup>42</sup>Zeligs, op. cit., p. 89.

<sup>43</sup>Ethel Mable Falk, "Letters to Enrich Children's Experience," The Elementary English Review, XVIII(1941), 81.

which comes when we are in a hotel room where paper, ink, desk, and pen are all provocatively easy to find. If one corner of the cupboard in school is kept for letter writing materials, we may have more spontaneous writing.<sup>44</sup>

It is suggested that the teacher discuss with parents the problem of keeping suitable writing material available. Discourage the purchase of a small decorated, folded note paper that is entirely unsuited to children's clumsy writing, and ask parents to keep available paper that is of typewriter size. If paper, envelopes, stamps, and even desk pen or pencil are always handy in the child's room, perhaps so much parental pressure will not be needed to get letters written. Emphasize with parents the infectiousness of attitudes. If mother sits down at her desk complaining about the task of answering letters, or if father boasts that he leaves the letter writing to mother because he dislikes doing it, the son or daughter comes to think of letter writing as a tiresome duty to be postponed as long as possible.<sup>45</sup>

We should not fail to emphasize the need to give children some of the accepted customs and courtesies in letter writing. The importance of promptness in writing should be stressed. Explain the confidential nature of

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<sup>44</sup>  
Ibid.

<sup>45</sup>  
Ibid., p. 82.

letters, which forbids the reading of another's mail unless one is asked to do so, or the opening of an envelope addressed to someone else.

Discuss what to do with letters that are delivered to one's home by mistake or with letters that are found on the street. Emphasize the importance of spelling names correctly, because of the sensitiveness which nearly everyone has about the pronunciation and spelling of his name.<sup>46</sup>

Children sometimes embarrass their teachers and parents by their frankness and their naive disregard of convention, yet those very qualities constitute the charm of their speech and letters. Gradually they will learn to sense the many 'mustn't say that's' of our conventional social intercourse, but let us not rob them of all spontaneity and naturalness of expression and make them - too early- the kind of dull, reluctant letter writers that most of us have become.<sup>47</sup>

Mabel F. Rice, who at one time worked in the Chicago office of one of the greatest mail-order houses in the world, makes some timely suggestions which will prevent letters from becoming candidates for the Dead Letter Office.<sup>48</sup>

She mentions first the responsibility and opportunity for the school. "If the teacher, particularly the one in the foreign quarters and the one out in the

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<sup>46</sup>Ibid.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., p. 82.

<sup>48</sup>Mabel F. Rice, "Dead Letters," The Elementary English Review, XVIII (1941), 83.



'sticks' or the desert, will teach her pupils to write effective business letters, she will render no mean service." She stresses the value of using the typewriter when writing business letters; also the importance of appropriate business stationery and the correct and proper signature.<sup>49</sup>

Rice's timely suggestions add up to this:

1. Clear, legible, clean-cut handwriting
2. Typewriting preferred to longhand whenever possible
3. Attention to all details of the letter, as address, signature, enclosure of money
4. Complete return address on the envelope
5. No abbreviations! Name of city and state written out in full. 50

Many opportunities for letters are being neglected in some schools. Children write invitations to other classes to enjoy a story hour, but the response comes verbally, when a written acceptance or refusal and explanation would be practical and valuable. A child who is planning to take a trip with the class might explain it in a note to parents and ask that the mother sign the note to indicate her consent to the child's going. In some classes notes are written to suggest to parents some places that the child would like to go in connection with a unit of study

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., p. 88.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

at school. There should also be opportunities for children to write letters of apology or explanation. If some neighbor objects to the children's behavior in passing the house or crossing through the yard, the class, rather than the teacher, should accept the obligation to improve the relationship by writing a letter of apology and assurance of future cooperation. Another frequently neglected type of letter is the message of congratulation or greeting. "When the father of a pupil was elected mayor of the town, her classmates wrote him a note of congratulation and told him they would like to have him come to tell them about city problems." We need to use many such occasions for letters.<sup>51</sup>

Occasions that a twelve-year-old has for letter writing are: friendly letters, thank-you letters, letters of sympathy, of apology, of congratulation, invitations, fan letters, letters to a pen friend,<sup>52</sup> and letters concerning radio programs. The radio provides children with many reasons for writing letters.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup>Ibid., p. 78.

<sup>52</sup>Zeligs, op. cit., p. 89.

<sup>53</sup>Ethel Mable Falk, "Letters to Enrich Children's Experience," The Elementary English Review, XVIII (1941), 77.

Falk offers still another reason for the teaching of letter writing in the following excerpt:

Lewis Mumford in his recent book, Faith for Living, makes a plea for the culture of the family, the keeping of family records of a diary or scrap-book type. In the cultivation of family tradition letters will have a large place. Perhaps we in the elementary school can make no greater contribution to education for home and family living than to give children the desire and ability to write the kind of letters that enrich their relationship with other persons. 54

"If we want children to write letters we must saturate them with ideas for writing and with the feeling that letters are as natural and as necessary as conversation."<sup>55</sup>

A background of real and vicarious experiences through reading will supply material for children's letters, while writing stimulating letters to them, containing leading questions and suggestions in line with their interest, will bring forth productive replies. Topics dealing with school life, adventure, hobbies, politics, and variety of opinions are of interest to the children.<sup>56</sup>

"Ignoring all else that we might wish to teach about letters, if we achieve only one goal, enjoyment of letter writing, all the rest will come easily. No rules for

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., p. 79.

<sup>56</sup> Zeligs, op. cit., p. 95.

good letters can be given because every letter is an individual problem.<sup>57</sup>

The writing of short stories, poetry, and plays is the expression of the creative energy of child life,<sup>58</sup> therefore, each is due much consideration. The sentence, which is the foundation of all good oral and written expression, should be given much attention. Talking and writing in good sentences should begin in the first grade and continue through all the grades. In the first grade the teacher may begin sentence development by asking children to tell two things about a pet, their mothers, their daddies, their play, their toys, and the like.<sup>59</sup> Milligan suggests that children dictate their stories. As the dictation was taken, the teacher took occasion to point out all possible aspects of language, vocabulary, phonics, spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and the like.<sup>60</sup>

After developing the concept of a sentence, the ability to paragraph correctly is the next most important

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<sup>57</sup> Ethel Mable Falk, "Letters to Enrich Children's Experiences," The Elementary English Review, XVIII (1941), 82.

<sup>58</sup> C.C. Certain, "Active Education," The Elementary English Review, XI (1934), 170.

<sup>59</sup> Callihan, op. cit., p. 112.

<sup>60</sup> John P. Milligan, "Learning About Punctuation in the Primary Grades," The Elementary English Review, XVIII (1941), 96.

skill in both oral and written expression. It seems that children in the fourth grade have no concept for the word "outline," but do have a concept for the word "pattern", because they have seen their mothers select or use patterns for dresses. All oral and written compositions are made out of sentences, in order to make a story, sentences have to be grouped according to thoughts and several sentences about one thought make a paragraph.<sup>61</sup> By way of explanation the teacher asks, "How many have seen an airplane?" This was followed by a discussion in which they talked about the parts of an airplane, its name, head, body and tail. After some discussion they decide that it would not be complete if any part of it were missing. The paragraph, too, must have a name, a head or beginning, a body, and an ending. A paragraph may be written on the blackboard and all these parts pointed out.<sup>62</sup>

The schoolroom with a place for creative writing reflects joyousness rather than drudgery. Here is a phase of education that is intrinsically a part of school life, because it belongs essentially to youth. It is the one subject in the curriculum that does not need to stand the test of ultimate usefulness in adult life. Children cannot grow normally without opportunities for creative expression.<sup>63</sup>

In giving the advantages of creative writing, Nell Owens expresses the following viewpoint:

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<sup>61</sup> Callihan, op. cit., p. 112.      <sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> C.C. Certain, "Active Education," The Elementary English Review, XI (1934), p. 170.

The value of creative writing lies in the formation of habits of accuracy and truth in the spoken and written word. Blurred images, half-truths, indirectness and slipshod workmanship vanish in time before a high standard of creative writing. The growth of individuality in the writer is of incalculable benefit, giving him a proper self-esteem and the respect of others. 64

Certain has also expressed his idea of the value of creative writing in the following statement:

Back of all questions of form in creative writing is the refinement of expression at its very sources. Exercises in observation have their place then, in telling truly what one sees, in seeing more clearly, more completely. There are problems of gaining skill in securing emotional sympathy, of translating into effective expression the fleeting sensation, or flashing idea, the elusive wisp of a passing reverie. Very, very gradually, upon such bases as these, artistic creative expression may be developed. 65

When one considers the methods to be used in securing creative writing from the pupils, the teacher's attitude is of paramount importance. Her part in stimulating the pupil's creative spirit is to help him see the beautiful, to read him good poetry, thus providing a literary background, and to help him have varied experiences. 66 While endeavoring to aid pupils

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<sup>64</sup> Nell Owens, "Creative Writing in the Upper Grades," The Elementary English Review, X (1933), 9.

<sup>65</sup> C.C. Certain, "Course of Study in Creative Writing for the Grades," The Elementary English Review, XII (1935), 232.

<sup>66</sup> Grace M. Parkinson, "Creative Expression Through Poetic Language," The Elementary English Review, VIII (1931), 27.

in creative expression, the teacher should strive...."to develop in the child-mind a sane, well-balanced personality, and a mind encouraged to think without fear of consequences; an imagination vivid enough to visualize both past and future; an emotional nature taught restraint and sympathy."<sup>67</sup>

The creative writer must be let alone about two-thirds of the time except for the teacher's surrounding him with favorable working conditions. The teacher may easily do the wrong thing even in offering suggestions. Creative composition is keyed in particular instances rather definitely either to the sensuous, or the intellectual, the emotional, or fanciful.<sup>68</sup>

Rather than adapt a strictly 'hands off' policy regarding the guidance of children in their creative work, it would seem well to plead for a more sympathetic understanding between parent and child or between teacher and child so that direction might be given where needed without destroying that natural beauty of child expression.<sup>69</sup>

Anderson's viewpoint concerning guidance is expressed in the following statement:

Both parent and teacher are more prone to lead than to guide the child, yet the very word 'creative' suggests the intimate, the personal, the original. In his writing the child should find self-expression; the

<sup>67</sup> Alma Paschall, "What Is Creative Expression?", The Elementary English Review, XI (1934), 151.

<sup>68</sup> C.C. Certain, "Course of Study in Creative Writing for the Grades," The Elementary English Review, XII (1935), 232.

<sup>69</sup> Millard, op. cit., p. 34.

expression of that self which differs from all others and will differ from itself with the passing of time. Provision must be made for these changes, for he will no longer care to read or produce material once of great interest to him. <sup>70</sup>

The pupil's readiness to write has a great deal to do with the success of teaching creative writing. <sup>71</sup>

Teachers should not force the creative self into the open or coerce too much. <sup>72</sup> Stevens states...."that the only way to obtain creative work is through patience and watchfulness." <sup>73</sup>

In considering the starting point of composition, the teacher finds that one of the laws of life is a yearning for expression. "For a child is naturally motivated by a primitive and urgent desire to communicate with others. He is primarily interested in his own thoughts, and believes in their importance." <sup>74</sup> The teacher also finds that creative writing is one of the best forms of expression to satisfy this desire of the child. <sup>75</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> John E. Anderson, "Principles of Growth and Maturity in Language," The Elementary English Review, XVIII (1941), 249.

<sup>71</sup> C.C. Certain, "Course of Study in Creative Writing for the Grades," The Elementary English Review, XII (1935), 233.

<sup>72</sup> Olive Stevens, "The Third Graders Write Poetry," The Elementary English Review, X (1933), 6.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., p.7. <sup>74</sup> Anderson, op. cit., p. 249.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.



The starting point may be in the urge of an idea; it may be in emotional glow, or in a warmth of feeling of some undefined character, a mood, a strong sense of joy or sadness; or it may be in the sudden vividness of sense expression. It may be in some gleam of fantasy mirrored in a day dream. 76

In the teaching of creative writing, two problems are outstanding. One of these relates to the sources of expression or to literary origins, and the other to patterns or forms of expression. There is, of course, the danger of thwarting or destroying the spirit of creativeness by undue emphasis upon either of these. Nevertheless, to insure proper guidance and intelligent direction of the teaching processes, both the sources of creative expression and the patterns and forms of this expression must be well considered factors in the right curriculum development. 77

Children do not need facts as much as they need to grow in ability to use facts. Facts can get just so far every year, anyway, but taste is a matter of living with the best every day. 78 Instead of just learning the fact that Hannibal crossed the Alps, a class may be made much more interesting by using creative expression, as:

Write a description of Hannibal's march. Make the reader hear the crunching of the snow, the trumpeting of the frightened war elephants, and the cracking of the whips of the drivers of pack-animals.

Let a little mountain boy tell what he saw the day the soldiers of Hannibal passed his home.

Tell the life story of one of Hannibal's elephants.

Write a poem about the flower which lay sleeping under the snow as the elephants tramped over it.

<sup>76</sup> C.C. Certain, "Course of Study in Creative Writing for the Grades," The Elementary English Review, VII (1933), 232.

<sup>77</sup> C.C. Certain, "Sources and Patterns in Creative Writing," The Elementary English Review, X (1933), 47.

<sup>78</sup> Stevens, op. cit., p. 6.

Dramatize the scene in which the soldiers catch their first view of the plains of Italy.<sup>79</sup>

This is an example of creative teaching, the pupils being called upon to use their individual ideas for expression.

While teaching poetry, one finds that children confuse it with rhyme. Some pupils have the idea that they are the same. Dorothy Anne Kinsey believes that rhyme should be discouraged because it hampers free expression.<sup>80</sup> It is all right if it is obtained without straining or a sacrifice just for a rhyme. The pupils should realize, however, that the best writers depend upon poetic expression and clear imagery rather than rhyme and regular meter.<sup>81</sup>

Little or nothing should be said about rhyme and nothing about meter or verse forms at first, according to Altstetter. With pupils in the elementary school, probably no stress should be placed on them at any time. The striving for a rhyme may interfere with the expression of the idea. Later, after facility in handling words and ideas has come, rhyming begins. Verse and

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<sup>80</sup> Dorothy Anne Kinsey, "Poetry Writing in the Grades," The Elementary English Review, VIII (1931), 35.

<sup>81</sup> Owens, op. cit., p. 10.

prose should always be evaluated in terms of "Is the idea worth writing about?" and then, "Has it been said in the best way possible?"<sup>82</sup>

Norma Gillett raises the following important question in the teaching of poetry writing:

How can we help children to be sure of the fundamental elements in poetry without destroying the urge which prompts children to write spontaneously and without self-consciousness? Attention to this problem over a period of several years has not solved it, but it has helped to isolate some procedures which have been effective in directing children's efforts at writing poetry.<sup>83</sup>

A few of these suggestions are as follows:

1. Give the pupils a sense of poetry by reading them much good poetry, many different types and various rhythm schemes.
2. Discuss, briefly, the characteristics of a poem.
3. Give the pupil an awareness of various ideas expressed poetically by reading poems suggested by topics in various studies, placing poems on the bulletin board and taking advantage of the children's fancies for a poetic expression.
4. Establish a rhythm scheme and list rhyming words.
5. Help the pupils to feel that poetry is a desirable means of expression.
6. Give the less self-confident pupils an

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<sup>82</sup>

Altstetter, op. cit., p. 17.

<sup>83</sup>

Norma Gillett, "Some Poetry Writing Experience in the Third Grade," The Elementary English Review, XI (1934), 152.

opportunity to participate in writing a composite poem, pointing out clearly the steps in writing. <sup>84</sup>

In preparing her class for the creative writing of poetry, Kinsey makes the following statement:

We discussed the selections I read for: first, the story, if any, or the general idea in the author's mind; second, the 'mind-pictures', and the words that make you see them; third, the rhythm, noting that different kinds of poems had different music; and fourth, explanation of any words or phrases whose non-comprehension prevented the child's enjoyment of the poem. <sup>85</sup>

The children then wrote with the idea that a good poem has something new to tell and that it must be told in an original way. <sup>86</sup> One class collected their best poems on birds and after illustrating some of them, called the book "Songs." Another book on flowers was called "Rose Petals," and a third book was arranged for miscellaneous poems. <sup>87</sup>

In connection with poetry appreciation lessons, Cecil B. Hall suggests that pupils may write original verse from some thought or situation suggested by the poem. <sup>88</sup>

<sup>84</sup>  
Ibid., p. 152.

<sup>85</sup>  
Kinsey, op. cit., p. 35.

<sup>86</sup>  
Ibid.

<sup>87</sup>  
Owens, op. cit., p. 12.

<sup>88</sup>  
Cecil B. Hall, "Expression in Poetry Appreciation," The Elementary English Review, VIII (1931), 249.

Naturally, it is not expected that children's poems are of superior quality or of permanent value.

Not even the most successful teacher of creative writing would suppose that much of the verse written in elementary school will survive. But, how many of the millions of 'themes' written every year on traditional subjects are immortal? The permanency of such productions has nothing to do with their value. 89

In considering the gifted child, one finds that the school is not doing as much as it should in discovering and encouraging the talents of its pupils.<sup>90</sup> We cannot tell their future, and the teacher should be very cautious, not discouraging any desire or stimulus a pupil might have. "Try to give them all a chance, and when the class in composition assembles, replace the feeling of pressure with a sense of leisure."<sup>91</sup>

"We can help develop real leaders by seeing that the<sup>92</sup> creative personalities have every opportunity to develop." Since we should always assume that we have some gifted children in our group, we should provide for their artistic development in our daily program.

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C.C. Certain, "The Wrong Uses of Precocity," The Elementary English Review, X (1933), 21.

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Harrison, op. cit., p. 236.

91  
Ibid., p. 237.

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Stevens, op. cit., p. 6.

The gifted children in the past have been the most poorly taught of all our pupils. Creative writing as a regular course in English should have as one of its chief justifications, the fact that it will provide for the systematic development of our talented children. <sup>93</sup>

One teacher tried the plan of meeting once a week with pupils who were interested in this type of work but wished more help than the English teacher could give, and they could afford to absent themselves from the English class. There was no formal recitation. Some read and others wrote while the teacher had conferences with those desiring assistance. <sup>94</sup> In this type of writing, however, the teacher should be cautious in the selection of source books and materials of stimulation. <sup>95</sup> She should help the pupils to realize that common experiences are worthy of expression if the expression is individual. <sup>96</sup>

In A Course of Study in Creative Writing for the Grades, Certain sets up three strands: (1) spontaneous writing, (2) inspirational writing, and (3) writing for technique. <sup>97</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> C.C. Certain, "A Course of Study in Creative Writing for the Grades," The Elementary English Review, XII (1935), 231.

<sup>94</sup> Marian M. Walsh, "Letter Writing in the Grades," The Elementary English Review, X (1933), p. 71.

<sup>95</sup> Anderson, op. cit., p. 249.

<sup>96</sup> Owens, op.cit., p.11.

<sup>97</sup> C.C. Certain, "A Course of Study in Creative Writing for the Grades," The Elementary English Review, XII (1935), 232.

The spontaneous and the inspirational give but the initial product and fragmentary results. The vital spark, it is true, comes more often than not, through the spontaneous and the inspirational. But artistic form is lacking. The labor of sustained composition and the work of revision are necessary to successful accomplishment. These three phases, then, of creative writing are inextricably involved the one with the other." 98 ....Therefore, the teacher should provide the pupils with occasions for the writing of the three strands, for 'the law of expressional readiness demands all three.'99

One hundred practical activities for such provisions are given in Certain's course of study under the three strands, each of which has the following divisions: verse writing, prose writing, and dramatization and play writing. In order to give examples of the situations which make a creative writing course practical, three especially interesting ones from each group are stated:

#### Spontaneous Writing

##### A. Verse writing

1. To organize a poetry club and have voluntary contributions. (If these are acceptable, they may be presented orally or bound as a club anthology of poetry).
2. To have a group whose members write spontaneously, being free to write or not to write, and doing what they wish with the results.
3. To follow class periods of listening to poetry and writing poetry under the teacher's directions by the writing of imaginative poems during free periods. 100

98  
Ibid., p. 237.

99  
Ibid.

100  
Ibid., p. 279.

## B. Prose Writing

1. To write three-sentence puzzles about birds, animals, or plants studied for pupils of the lower grades to guess.
2. To write a booklet containing the autobiographies of the members of the class.
3. To write short paragraphs on one's favorite color, and what it means to him, the paragraphs being bound into a booklet. 101

## C. Dramatization and Play Writing

1. To write a play concerning the daily routings of a traffic policeman.
2. To dramatize one of ten sentences written on the board, the members of the class guessing which one.
3. To pantomime representations of familiar literary characters extemporaneously. 102

## Inspirational Writing

## A. Verse Writing

1. To organize a verse speaking choir to interpret poems of the intermediate level, the choir reciting before guests (Lindsay's "Dirge for a Righteous Kitten" or "The Turtle," A.A. Milne's "The King's Breakfast," and the Twenty-Third Psalm are suggested).
2. To write verse for special occasions as Valentine and Mother's Day.
3. To give a poetry party when everyone is prepared to read poems from various books. 103

101  
Ibid., p. 278.

102  
Ibid., pp.279-280.

103  
 C.C. Certain, "A Course of Study in Creative Writing for the Grades," The Elementary English Review, XIII (1936), 29-30.



### B. Prose Writing

1. To write the legends for posters for special occasions as Safety First Week and Kindness to Animals drives, the posters being prepared by the art department.
2. To write stories about toys.
3. To have each pupil write an interesting beginning for a story on a slip of paper, and after exchanging slips, to write the story suggested by the other pupil. 104

### C. Dramatization and Play Writing

1. To dramatize parts of well known classics such as Robinson Crusoe, Robin Hood, Rip Van Winkle (third, fourth, and fifth grades).
2. To build a marionette stage and let the class select the story from which a play will be dramatized.
3. To write simple pageants for class production about incidents of American history or for special occasions, and to invite guests for the presentation of the pageant. 105

### Writing for Technique

#### A. Verse Writing

1. To write a group poem, using it as a song for the entire school to sing at an Arbor Day ceremony.
2. To have a festival of children's own poetry and let them present short seasonal poems.
3. To write a ballad on some stirring school event (football victory or whatever the pupil may choose). 106

104

Ibid., pp. 30-31.

105

Ibid., pp. 68-69.

106

Ibid., pp. 68-69.

## B. Prose Writing

1. To report sounds heard on the way to school.
2. To write a letter telling a friend of some personal achievement, as learning to roller skate, winning a prize, and similar undertakings.
3. To write short descriptive essays, using such subjects as five o'clock traffic, a country road, or any other familiar subject. 107

## C. Dramatization and Play Writing

1. To rewrite the first draft of the dramatization of some story.
2. To write a play based on the story of some picture that the pupils have enjoyed.
3. To write a play using the facts learned concerning some industry or the life of people of a foreign nation. 108

In his course of study for creative writing, Certain has given the technique and tastes which should be established by the teaching of each of the three strands. Those of the first, that of spontaneous writing, are given below:

### A. Verse Writing

To become thoroughly aware of rhythms

To observe surroundings

To become sensitive to the poetic aspects of surroundings

To enlarge vocabulary

To shake off constraint, timidity, and self-consciousness in creative writing

- To become sensitive to poetic moods
- To gain sense of drama in poetry
- To gain discrimination and critical sense
- To record spontaneous expressions
- To exercise originality and inventiveness
- To gain consciousness of rhythms of thought and phrases as well as syllable
- To heighten enjoyment of poetry through associative images
- To contribute willingly to school activities
- To write verse spontaneously

#### B. Prose Writing

- To increase power of accurate phrasing
- To develop descriptive ability
- To utilize, as literary material, personal experiences
- To record spontaneous interests for later development
- To keep audience or readers in mind while writing
- To recognize humorous aspects of a subject
- To give point to stories, eliminating the non-essential
- To develop dramatic sense and spirit of adventure in literature
- To interpret meanings imaginatively
- To copy, read and edit spontaneous composition
- To take part in literary activities of the school
- To keep a writer's journal

## C. Dramatization and Play Making

To gain experience in treating, dramatically, familiar incidents

To recognize the dramatic elements in literature

To gain knowledge of settings and properties incidental to drama

To gain originality and variety in dramatic expression

To acquire dramatic sensitiveness to character

To acquire ability to reveal character through action

To gain experience in dramatization of familiar stories

To recognize and record dramatic incidents

To reveal character dramatically. <sup>109</sup>

Certain has also published a list of periodicals and books concerning creative writing. This list includes some helpful suggestions for teachers on literary technique and appreciation. <sup>110</sup>

"These are the goals of a teacher of creative expression: to develop in the child-mind a sane, well-balanced personality, and a mind encouraged to think without fear of consequences, an imagination vivid enough

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C.C. Certain, "A Course of Study in Creative Writing for the Grades," The Elementary English Review, XII (1935), 230.

110

C.C. Certain, "Creative Writing in the Grades," The Elementary English Review, X (1933), 16-18.

to visualize both past and future; an emotional nature  
taught through restraint and sympathy."<sup>111</sup>

From the analysis of the articles in The Elementary English Review that gave suggestions for creative writing, it was found that the outstanding characteristics of creative writing are its possibilities in developing the personality, in securing accuracy of expression, and in giving the talented pupils an opportunity to develop.

It was found that the teacher should inspire, encourage, and not criticize too quickly in order to produce an atmosphere conducive to writing. In fact, the teacher's role is a most important one in setting the stage for creative expression and knowing when to be silent and when to give assistance.

In the study of creative expression, it was also found that the writing period is to be one of pleasure in which the pupils can express their own experiences or any ideas they have in their own manner and style. Revision will usually have to come in order to have a finished product, but the mechanics of writing should never interfere with the thought process.

The pupils' readiness to write has much to do with the results of creative effort. Therefore, the teacher

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<sup>111</sup>Paschall, op. cit., p. 151.

should readjust her plans and give an opportunity for such efforts when the pupils have this desire.

The main points concerning creative writing seem to be best summarized by the following idea taken from five of the articles. Creative writing is not a game whose rules are easily explained and followed, but it is rather a scientific experiment whose final outcome is not yet known.<sup>112</sup> A teacher must know the nature of her subjects and must clearly understand the meaning of creative writing to teach it.<sup>113</sup> Although it is not the aim of creative writing to establish a colony of poets, there is a place for creative expression to glorify the commonplace around one, and to enable the pupil to express his innermost meditations to others.<sup>114</sup> When creative juvenile expressions are written, they should not be published or exhibited as art.<sup>115</sup> The teacher should sense the feeling of her pupils and give an opportunity for creative writing when they are in a mood for such activity.<sup>116</sup>

Anderson formulates the general principles which, from

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<sup>112</sup> Paschall, op. cit., p. 149.

<sup>113</sup> C.C. Certain, "Definition for Expediency," The Elementary English Review, XI (1934), 193.

<sup>114</sup> Verner, op. cit., p. 72.

<sup>115</sup> C.C. Certain, "The Wrong Uses of Precocity," The Elementary English Review, X (1933), 21.

<sup>116</sup> La Rue, op. cit., p. 31.

the child development point of view, would seem to hold in the building of an instructional program for grade children in the language arts. In a sense these principles describe a child-environment relation that will facilitate spoken and written linguistic skill. There are seven as follows:

1. The general context should be stimulating and of high quality and should provide much opportunity for participation in language activity, both oral and written.

2. Within this context there should be developed materials, excursions, and situations in which the child has a high degree of personal interest and which will generate within him a feeling of the need of communicating his experiences to others. These specific experiences should be adapted to the child's level and should have an exciting quality.

3. Reading materials that will be read avidly and which are related to children's interest should be chosen.

4. Language, both spoken and written, should be viewed by both teachers and children as a primary tool of social intercourse, operating in a speaker or writer audience relation rather than as literary art. Neither speaking nor writing is done for its own sake, but as means for modifying the behavior of others.

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<sup>117</sup>Anderson, op. cit., p. 250.

5. Since the child passing from grade to grade is the same child, a problem of vertical integration arises. The teacher should know what has gone before and what is to come. And back of the teacher there should be a planned curriculum, not necessarily in terms of traditional subject matter, so much as in terms of the experiences to which the child is exposed. And this also implies horizontal integration, that is, the effective tying in of linguistic processes with other school subject matter.

6. From the beginning there should be a clear recognition of the fact that skill comes only with substantial opportunities for its practice and organization in meaningful relations. Mere casual concern with momentary interests will not produce long-time effectiveness. And as children move along in their educational experiences, larger blocks of linguistic experience developed about more remote goals and more substantial projects, furnish the opportunity for degrees of skill that can never be obtained by activities that are sharply limited to the immediate moment or are of narrow scope.<sup>118</sup>

7. Finally, there must be an audience to whom the child's spoken and written products are addressed in order to give him the feeling of reality and tangibility in what

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he is doing. One neither speaks nor writes in a vacuum. And with children the audience must be close at hand, not remote. For language, whether spoken or written, is our most fundamental and primary social tool. Its meanings and patterns are not intrinsic; they gain their significance from the person and object-relations in which they develop and from the effects which they produce in other persons.<sup>119</sup>

After all is said and done, language teaching need not be a complicated process. In the last analysis, all a teacher can possibly do for a pupil is to help him find something to say and help him to say it well. This means that the teacher's main business is to create conditions wherein the young learner will feel impelled, not compelled to express himself, not someone else; and also that she train him to bring out his contributions clearly, correctly, convincingly. It is, in brief, discovery, development, and drill based on the pupils' revealed language needs.

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## CHAPTER IV

### CONCLUSIONS

In The Elementary English Review, volumes VIII to XVIII, inclusive, there are 147 articles which deal with the different aspects of composition. Since this study concerns the lower grades, eighteen of these articles were omitted from the study because they deal only with upper elementary or higher grade work. In these articles the writer found three distinct groups expressing as many different views regarding methods of teaching composition. These are: the group favoring the traditional method, the group emphasizing the correlation of English with other major subjects, and the group advocating the creative method of teaching English.

From the study of these articles the writer reached these conclusions:

There is a common ground on which both the formalists and the expressionists meet. Both groups recognize the importance of expression in any individual's life, and the school's duty toward teaching the uses of language. Another point on which all agree is the importance of letter writing. Since letters reflect cultural background, interests

and attitudes, it is the duty of the school to develop the art of letter writing.

Letter writing is adjustable to a wide range of ability. The elementary schools in our democracy have the problem of training all children. A few of them possess rich, expressive natures. Most of them are run-of-the-mill. Some are meagre personalities and have sluggish intellects. But a great part of this varied enrollment can be taught the requirements of a business letter, and given some sense of social obligation. And in many cases letter writing will go far beyond these essentials. It will add richness and joy to lives - the children's own - and those of their correspondents. And, for the weary curriculum-maker, letter writing offers an unassailable position, approved by parents, advocates of vocational training, liberals, and even by those who habitually mourn the "good old days."

There are distinct differences between the formalists and the expressionists. The formalist or traditionalist emphasized mechanics and form in letter writing, while the expressionists or progressives emphasized content, leaving mechanics and form for secondary consideration.

The traditionalists emphasized written expression while the progressives emphasized oral expression.

The study reveals that oral English is used to a far

greater extent than written English. The importance of oral English, popularly known as talking, can be readily recognized when attention is called to the great amount of conversation the average person past school age carries on in the course of a day in comparison with the amount he writes.

Good speech is the highest accomplishment of the human mind, since man is the only animal that can talk. It is also the recognized principle which holds civilization together. Because of modern means of transportation, the telephone, the radio, clubs, associations, conventions, and other organizations, the amount of useful speaking is increasing. Training in effective spoken English will aid in the development of personality, or will at least develop that medium through which personality is disclosed to one's associates and the public.

According to the progressives, the writing of short stories, plays and poetry is the expression of the creative energy of child life. It has long been acknowledged that imaginative writing in the school benefits the talented child, but only recently have educators come to recognize its value to children in general.

There is a necessity for such training and the teacher has a duty toward this training. When a child has power to write about his experiences, he feels not only the joy of recording and reading these personal happenings, but he

ultimately realizes the satisfaction which comes through sharing his experiences with others. The child's whole realm of expression takes on new purpose as the power of speaking and writing grows. Interests widen, thinking broadens, people and doings become more meaningful. In truth, he eventually breaks the barriers of time by acquiring the ability to preserve in permanent form experiences of the past. He also overcomes distance by being able to project his thoughts in writing to far-away places.

Any child's efforts in the field of creative expression should be met with sympathetic understanding, followed by studied guidance and meaningful teaching. It is the task of the teacher to assist children in reaching his maximum power of expression at each of his developmental levels.

The study reveals that the trend from the traditional to the progressive practices in teaching composition has greatly increased during the last ten years. At the beginning of the period considered many writers were of the opinion that English should be kept in the curriculum as a separate class, and that mechanics in written composition was to be given more emphasis than content. At the close of the period considered most writers agreed that the teacher should create an environment which will

stimulate the pupil to express himself more effectively in his everyday living and that the content of any kind of written composition should be given more emphasis than the form or mechanics.

Teachers are striving for an integrated course of study. Grammar is thus dovetailed into everyday composition; the pupil is aided to see spelling in its relation to sentence structure; and to see reading as a means of thinking and understanding and an avenue to worthwhile content for expression. To achieve these ends, grammar, spelling, word study, composition, reading are all taught in mutually supporting relationships, always based on the needs and interests of the pupils.

This study indicates a definite trend away from the traditional method toward more progressive practices of teaching composition in the lower grades. The content and emphasis of teaching tends to be centered around the needs and interests of the pupils rather than around formal mechanics of the subject.

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