

COLLEGE REQUIREMENTS FOR ELEMENTARY TEACHERS

Committee on Preparation of Elementary Teachers

(At last May's Spring Conference in Bloomington, one of the sessions concerned the newly-completed study of requirements in English and Language Arts for elementary teaching candidates in undergraduate colleges of the state. This report and the resolutions approved by the Council at its annual business meeting were prepared by the Committee on the Preparation of Elementary Language Arts Teachers, Sister M. Andre Marthaler, St. Cloud, Chairman.)

The Minnesota Council of Teachers of English in its concern for, and interest in, the language arts instruction in the elementary schools of Minnesota, appointed a committee to examine the preparation required in English and Language Arts of the elementary education majors in teacher training institutions in Minnesota.

Membership on the committee was based on willingness to explore, and interest in, the committee's objective, current involvement in elementary instruction, and a commitment to attend all committee meetings. Members were elementary instructors from each grade (1-6), a college education department member who advises elementary majors and teaches methods in Language Arts instruction, and one Language Arts consultant. Members were graduates from state and private teacher training institutions.

The committee began its work with a few basic assumptions: (a) today's student lives and will continue to live in a primarily verbal society, (b) the student whose performance in language arts competencies is weak is also weak in those other areas of the curriculum which require reading, writing, speaking, handwriting skills, (c) the responsibility to adequately prepare the elementary major for classroom teaching belongs to the teacher training institution involved. But it may be that the English departments should be alerted to the proportion of graduates in elementary education in respective institutions and then, to examine whether these majors are prepared to teach with some degree of competency in a classroom ori-

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ented to language, reading, speaking, and writing.

Four members who work closely with student teachers as supervising and critic teachers and one who works closely with teachers in the classroom believe that college English departments need to become aware of the elementary major in their institutions; experienced teachers and the student teacher show a lack of awareness of current research in language, literature, and composition for elementary instruction. The committee believes that English and Education department chairmen should examine the program of required courses in Language Arts in their respective institutions so that the program is current, relevant, and realistic, and so that it evidences an awareness and study of the guidelines for the preparation of elementary teachers in Language Arts as proposed by the National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification, the National Council of Teachers of English, and the Modern Language Association.

A survey of required courses in English and in Language Arts was implemented by committee members in three areas: General Education, Subject-Matter Specialization, and Professional Education. They wrote to English/Education department chairmen of all the state and private teacher training institutions in the state. These chairmen were asked to send the Committee a composite of all courses in English and Language Arts required in the three areas for all elementary majors. The committee believed that a composite would produce a more reliable report than could be obtained by checking bulletins.

On the basis of the correspondence, the committee identified eighteen elementary teacher training institutions in Minnesota. Seventeen sent some form of composite. The eighteenth was visited by a committee member and a composite was obtained. The information is complete for all such institutions in the state.

The tabulations were then compiled and charted in three categories:

(a) General Education: English courses required of all students matriculated in the institution;

(b) Subject-Matter Specialization: English / Language Arts courses required only of elementary majors;

(c) Professional Education: English/Language Arts cour-

ses related to methods in teaching required of all elementary majors.

Teacher training institutions reported in this tabulation are: Bemidji State College, Bethel College, Concordia College (Moorhead), Gustavus Adolphus College, Hamline University, Macalester College, Mankato State College, Moorhead State College, Dr. Martin Luther College, Saint Benedict's College, Saint Catherine's College, Saint Cloud State College, Saint Scholastica's College, Saint Teresa's College, University of Minnesota -- Duluth, University of Minnesota--Minneapolis, University of Minnesota--Morris, and Winona State College.

The tabulations showed that there are three types of required language arts programs for elementary majors in the teacher training institutions of Minnesota. The types generally are related to the kinds of program requirements in the freshman year of college.

In departments of English and/or Education, in the 18 teacher training institutions of Minnesota, the tabulations indicate:

GROUP I (13 colleges): In addition to a requirement of 6-15 hours of literature and composition in general education, six colleges require 3-9 hours of literature, one requires three hours of language, four require 3-4 hours of speech, two require 3-6 hours of speech as needed, with exemptions based on interviews. Of the thirteen, eight require 1-1 1/4 hours of children's literature as a subject matter specialization requirement. Nine of the thirteen require 3-5 hours of reading and language arts methods and one requires four hours of speech correction as part of the professional education requirement.

GROUP II (four colleges): In addition to a requirement of 3-12 hours of literature in general education, two colleges require 6-8 hours of composition, one requires four hours of language and composition, and two require four hours of speech. Of the four colleges, two require three hours of children's literature as a subject matter specialization requirement. One college requires three hours in methods in reading and language arts as part of the professional education requirement, one requires three hours in developmental reading, one requires nine hours in reading, language arts and curriculum methods, and one has

no language arts or English in the professional education program.

GROUP III (one college): In addition to three hours of speech in the general education program, this college has no English/Language Arts requirement in the subject-matter specialization and requires five hours of methods in elementary education.

Summary

Of the 18 teacher training institutions in the state of Minnesota:

++Sixteen require no preparation in language for elementary teachers.

++Fourteen require no preparation in American literature, the native literature of the majority of elementary school children in Minnesota. The four which do require American literature are included in Group I above.

++Nine require no preparation in oral English/speech.

++Eight require no study of children's literature, either in English, in Education, or in Library Science.

++Two require no work in composition.

++Five require no work in special methods in reading or language arts.

MCTE Resolutions

As a result of the report and discussion, the membership of MCTE passed the following resolutions at the May business meeting:

"WHEREAS,

The Minnesota Council of Teachers of English has studied the college requirements in English Language Arts for elementary majors in the teacher training institutions of Minnesota, and

"WHEREAS,

"The Minnesota Council of Teachers of English is interested in the teaching of English Language Arts in the elementary schools of the State of Minnesota,

"THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED

"1. That the Minnesota Council of Teachers of English direct letters to the English department chairmen and the

Education department chairmen of the teacher training institutions in Minnesota stating its concern with the inadequate college preparation of elementary teachers in the English language arts.

"2. That the Minnesota Council of Teachers of English direct or appoint one of its members to send stories/articles to all major newspapers in the State of Minnesota to inform the citizens of Minnesota of the importance of English Language Arts instruction in the American system of education and invite them to examine the English Language Arts curriculum in the schools in their communities.

"3. That the Minnesota Council of Teachers of English send letters of commendation to academic deans of the teacher training institutions of Minnesota which have regularly offered or which now offer in-service courses particularly for teachers of elementary Language Arts and English.

"4. That the Minnesota Council of Teachers of English encourage, by letter, academic deans of the teacher training institutions of Minnesota to provide in-service education, in literature for elementary children, in the English language, and in composition.

"5. That the Minnesota Council of Teachers of English encourage English and education department chairmen to become alerted to the English Language Arts needs of the elementary teachers whose formal education in Language Arts is dependent on English and Education departments of the teacher training institutions which accepted the students' applications for admission."

A NOTE ON SECONDARY ENGLISH IN MINNESOTA

Gerald Kincaid, State Department of Education consultant in language arts, provides this estimate: Of approximately 3,700 teachers of English in the public secondary schools of Minnesota, about 60 percent are not full-time English teachers.