

(aa) Expository writing

(bb) The nature of language, and the historical development and present structure of the English language, especially as used in the United States.

(cc) Development of English and American Literature; intensive study of at least one major English or American author; theory and practice of literary criticism; analysis and interpretation of the various literary genres; literature for adolescents; literature of the 20th century and of at least one other century.

OR:

(2) A teaching minor in English or Language Arts of at least 18 semester (27 quarter) hours, including academic instruction in language, literature and composition beyond the freshman English requirement, plus academic instruction in speech as defined in the major in English or Language Arts (c) (1).

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#### THOSE NEW REGULATIONS

by Gerald Thorson, St. Olaf College

##### I.

Before long the new regulations for the certification of teachers of English in the secondary schools of Minnesota will be in effect: the official date is September 1, 1968. To many this date is none too soon, for there are few who will deny the need for more realistic laws stipulating who is qualified to teach English in the classrooms in the state. Not everyone will agree that the regulations finally adopted by the State Board of Education are the best, or the only, ones for the present situation. Yet most will agree that this move by the Board is significant.

Essentially, these regulations will bring about an increase in the minimum preparation of the teaching major in English and they will put more English majors into the classrooms. By assuring better-trained teachers and more teachers trained specifically to teach English, these new regulations will upgrade the teaching of language, literature, and composition in the schools.

Perhaps the chief effect of these regulations will be to reduce the number of teachers of English in the state who have

never been trained to teach English. That non-qualified persons have been teaching English is known to all, even though it has seldom been mentioned in connection with these new regulations.

No longer will it be possible -- as it has been, or is now, for that matter -- for someone with a year of Freshman English, a course in fundamentals of speech, a course in journalism, and a course in the American novel to teach English in the secondary schools. Now he will be required to have at least a minor in English, and that minor will have to include instruction in composition, language, literature, and speech. Furthermore, anyone with this minor preparation will receive only temporary certification in English. As a result, superintendents and principals are going to find it more expedient in the long run to demand that the English classrooms be staffed by English majors.

Improvement in the quality and breadth of the preparation of the English major will be less noticeable. This is true because the new minimum standards are not radically different -- except in quantity -- from those that have been generally required of the teaching major in English in the state's colleges and universities. At some colleges the teaching minor has for some time required more semester hours than those now stipulated in the new regulations. This has been less true of the teaching major simply because the colleges, concerned with the total education of the students in their teacher education programs, have not thought it educationally wise to demand an excessive amount of work in any one area at the expense of a broad preparation in the liberal arts. At the same time, however, college departments of English have been profoundly concerned with the content and the quality of their programs of teacher preparation.

## II.

Perhaps a brief review of what took place before the enactment of the new regulations is in order, especially for those new to the English classrooms in Minnesota. At least such a review can indicate the nature of the discussions, the background of the new regulations, and the concern for excellence in the teacher-preparation programs at the colleges and universities.

In this movement toward improved regulations the Minnesota Council of Teachers of English has made a significant contribution. When, during the first year of its existence, committees were set up, one of these was the Committee on Standards and Certification. Over half the members of this committee were from the colleges and universities; four of these were department chairmen; and one of these, Dr. John McKiernan, College of St. Thomas, was the chairman of the committee. For two years this committee met to outline a proposal for the preparation of the teacher of English. This proposal, presented at the annual meeting of the Council in April, 1963, was approved by the

members of the Council.

In the meantime, the State Advisory Committee on Language Arts and Related Humanities, under the direction of Dr. Harold B. Allen, University of Minnesota, also undertook a study of teacher preparation. This committee, since its membership overlapped with that of the Council committee, made use of the work that had already been done by the Council committee. In November 1962 and again in April 1963 the Language Arts committee made proposals to the State Board of Education for new regulations. These proposals, while they were similar to those adopted by the MCTE, contained some essential differences. Later, when the State Advisory Committee on Teacher Education presented its views on the preparation of the teacher of English, this committee's proposal was essentially that of the MCTE committee rather than that of the Language Arts committee.

In February 1964, when the chairmen of the liberal arts colleges met in Minneapolis, they supported the proposals of the Teacher Education committee and made known this support to the State Board of Education. When the Minnesota Association of Department of English Chairmen was founded in April 1964 in St. Cloud, this group also supported the recommendations of the Teacher Education committee. They did not support the recommendations of the Language Arts committee because of the exclusive use of the term language arts to replace the common term English, its prescriptive and ambiguously stated requirement in speech, and, most importantly, the interpretation of the regulations which translated into specific, mandatory courses what were intended to be elaborations of three major areas of study. Opposition to this proposal, therefore, was voiced to the State Board of Education. When the Language Arts committee subsequently also proposed an amendment which would, in effect, allow a student to be certificated to teach English if he possessed a specific program in speech, the English chairmen again stated their opposition.

As a result, in October 1965, the State Board of Education voted to delay action on the proposed regulations. In December of that year Dr. Allen called a meeting of representatives of college departments of English, college departments of speech, and the Language Arts committee to discuss the proposals. The result was the statement which was, in October 1966, approved by the State Board of Education, effective September 1, 1968.

## III.

To state, as has been done, that the new regulations came about because the college English departments had "abdicated their responsibility" toward providing teachers for the secondary schools, is sheer nonsense. In the majority of the colleges in Minnesota most of the students who prepare a major in English

have also been enrolled in teacher education programs, and the primary effort in these departments has been devoted to their preparation -- too often at the expense of those majors planning to enter graduate school or some other vocation.

It was not alarm over the possibility of new state regulations that has involved the college English departments with the secondary schools. This interest and concern has been of long standing. Back in the early 1950's departments of English were cooperating with departments of Education in the supervision of student teachers, visiting the classrooms where their majors were doing their student teaching. Members of these departments did not, it is true, lobby for new regulations or even form an organization to discuss their views. After all, the post-war years brought other problems as they sought to strengthen the programs on their own campuses. But there was discussion, and there were those who expressed concern over various aspects of teacher preparation long before the State Advisory Committee on Language Arts and Related Humanities became involved in the subject.

Back in 1955, for example, at the invitation of Sister M. Joselyn, chairman of the department of English at the College of St. Scholastica, the private liberal arts colleges of Minnesota participated in the first of what has become an annual Conference for English Majors. Although this conference has not been directed specifically to the preparation of the future teacher of English, it has tended to focus attention on the quality of the preparation of the English major and has served to bring the various departments together. Back in 1957, when the National Council of Teachers of English held its annual conference in Minneapolis, there was no lack of cooperation, either in the planning or in the participation, among members of the college English departments. In 1959, I presented a paper at the thirtieth annual conference on teacher education at the University of Minnesota on the subject-matter preparation of the teacher of English. When the Minnesota Council of Teachers of English was organized in 1960, representatives of college departments were among those who participated simply because their interest in the teaching of English on all levels of instruction in Minnesota was a very real one.

#### IV.

Why, then, once the State Advisory Committee on Language Arts and Related Humanities made its proposal for changes in the regulations, did so many years elapse before new regulations were adopted by the State Board of Education? Why did the College English departments seem to "interfere"? That there has been discussion, even controversy, over the regulations cannot be denied. But controversy is not to be deplored -- indeed, it should probably be welcomed. For any subject is more likely to be viewed from a broader perspective, to evoke a greater degree of interest among a large group, and to result in a more refined

statement of purpose when that subject has passed through a controversial discussion.

The progress toward new regulations may have been slow, but the discussion has been necessary. To simply increase the number of hours of the English major and to include in that major a rigid list of mandatory courses of study would be detrimental to the teacher education programs in the state, for no program can attain the quality of excellence required if its creativity, its urge for experimentation, and its concern for individual differences among students are stifled. The aim of the college departments is -- and has been -- to send into the classrooms of Minnesota teachers adequately prepared to meet the demands that will be placed upon them. If quality in teaching is desired, then the new state regulations must permit those institutions preparing teachers of English to realize their goals.

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Dr. Thorson is Chairman of the Minnesota Association of Department of English Chairmen. In 1960-61 he served as President of the MCTE.